Autonomy in a Networked World

Te Tū Motuhake i te Ao Kōtuitui

ILAC Selections

5th Independent Learning Association Conference 2012

30 August – 2 September 2012
Rutherford House, Victoria University of Wellington,
New Zealand

Edited by Moira Hobbs and Kerstin Dofs

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Editors' introduction

Moira Hobbs
Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand

Kerstin Dofs
Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology, Christchurch, New Zealand

For the 5th Independent Learning Association Conference (ILAC), in 2012, delegates came from far and wide to join us in the antipodes. It was very interesting to see the extent to which some of the attendees travelled and their countries of origin. Of the 207 people attending the conference, here is the breakdown of the percentages coming from each country:

Japan	38.6
New Zealand	31.9
Hong Kong	10
Australia	7.2
USA	2.9
China	1.4
Finland, UK, Mexico, Taiwan	0.9 each
Bahrain, India, Indonesia, Iran, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, UAE	0.5 each

The actual conference was held over two and a half days from Friday 31 August – Sunday 2 September 2012, and delegates could enjoy some optional pre-conference workshops on the afternoon of Thursday 30 August. Of course some folk took the opportunity to pre- or post-load their trips with a bit of fabulous sight-seeing as well!

This conference was primarily of interest to teachers, learners, and researchers who are passionate about the field of independent learning. Previous conferences have been held in: Melbourne, Australia; Auckland, New Zealand; Chiba, Japan; and Hong Kong. The main conference was a mixture of keynote speakers in plenary sessions, and break out parallel sessions – and of course there were the obligatory but optional social functions at the end of each conference day!

This time round, the hosts were the Victoria University of Wellington (VUW, fondly called 'Vic'), which is, as the name suggests, in Wellington, New Zealand. The steering committee meetings were held in a physical space at VUW, with Skype and/or phone input on occasions when Moira and Kerstin had to make do with virtual attendance! Here is the full list of the hard-working committee members:

Averil Coxhead, Victoria University of Wellington
Co-convenor, Finance, Sponsorship, Promotion

Edith Paillat, Victoria University of Wellington
Co-convenor, Website

David Crabbe, Victoria University of Wellington
Programme, Journal Proceedings

Irina Elgort, Victoria University of Wellington
Programme, Journal Proceedings

Peter Gu, Victoria University of Wellington
Programme, Journal Proceedings

Kerstin Dofs, Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology
Learning Fair, Swap Shops, Sponsorship, Promotion, Selections Proceedings

Moira Hobbs, Unitec Institute of Technology
Learning Fair, Swap Shops, Proof-reading, Selections Proceedings

Kirsten Reid, Victoria University of Wellington
Proof-reading

Karen Boxall, Victoria University of Wellington
Finance

Tatyana Protsenko, Victoria University of Wellington
Promotion, Sponsorship

The appealing logo has special meaning for New Zealanders (affectionately called 'kiwis') and was designed by Tatyana after a brainstorming session in the committee. It reflects two enduring symbols of Aotearoa/New Zealand i.e. the

kiwi; a remarkable flightless native bird, and the koru; the spiral shape which is a Maori motif based on the shape of the uncurling fern. The koru expresses the idea of eternal movement and embodies new life and regeneration. These are both iconic emblems of New Zealand and its people, and were combined with the pre-existing symbol of the Independent Learning Association.

The theme of the conference was “Autonomy in a Networked World: Te Tū Motuhake I te Ao Kōtuitui” and it was chosen so that delegates would be encouraged to explore the theoretical and practical meanings of learner autonomy in the socially and technologically connected world we live in today. Conference participants were invited to share their thoughts, research findings and practice in order to illuminate the relationship between the individual learner and the learning opportunities afforded by ever-changing learning environments.

The programme was developed around a set of sub-themes which were intended to capture dimensions of these relationships, namely: the personal, social and cultural identity of the learner, the self and the ‘other’ as agents of learning, the learning environment, and the role of assessment for the autonomous learner. These sub-themes were:

1. Framing learner autonomy in today’s world (where we are now and where we are going)
2. Autonomy and identity
3. Autonomy and agency (motivation and strategies)
   a. Promoting learner autonomy in teaching
   b. Self and other
   c. Learner strategies and self-regulated learning
   d. Motivation
   e. Anxiety
   f. Impact of learner autonomy on learning outcomes
   g. Learner choices

4. Autonomy and the learning environment (classroom, distance, technology, independent learning centres)
   a. Focus on design for learning
   b. Focus on learners' take up
   c. Focus on teachers
   d. Focus on agency
   e. Teaching and learning vocabulary
5. Autonomy and assessment

These Selections follows similar threads, and we have placed keynotes as leading articles at the beginning of a thread, as appropriate.

There were five esteemed and popular keynote speakers, three from overseas and two from New Zealand. Each keynote spoke at plenary sessions for 60 minutes, including question time and all presentations (except Mike Levy) were video recorded and placed on the conference website. Our keynotes were:

1. Mike Levy, Professor of Second Language Studies, The University of Queensland, Australia
2. Sue Starfield, Director of The Learning Centre and Associate Professor in the School of Education, The University of New South Wales, Australia
3. Andy Gao, Associate Professor, English Language Education Division, Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong
4. Peter Gu, Senior Lecturer, School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
5. Paul Nation, Professor of Applied Linguistics in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

The three pre-conference workshops were very well-attended and were held concurrently on Thursday. They were:

1. "Advising in language learning: Working effectively in diverse contexts" very ably presented by Sara Cotterall in her inimitable informative participatory and very enjoyable style!
2. "Encouraging independent vocabulary learning in another language" presented by the ever-popular Paul Nation
3. "Writing for publication in academic journals" presented by the highly experienced Sue Starfield

Throughout the conference delegates could wander through the nine posters installed, and all but one was also part of the innovative and very well received Interactive Independent Learning Fair thumbnail presentations. This enabled them to get a lot more exposure.

The Interactive Independent Learning Fair was timetabled on the first day to provide an activity which enabled delegates to interact at an early stage. With

the above nine poster presenters and three other submissions, there were twelve presenters in this new concept for ILA (and for the southern hemisphere we think!). It was framed in the same way as the successful model at the Harrogate IATEFL Conference in 2010, and it certainly got a lot of positive feedback both from delegates and presenters. We were delighted with the crowds who subsequently went upstairs to interact with the contributors after the two-minute thumbnail presentations by each of them.

When the audience had to wait for the presenters to get to their places, we believe it was also a very good move to ask them to introduce themselves to a person they hadn't spoken to before and talk about and compare their experience of the conference so far. This created an even greater sense of belonging to/ownership of the conference and also created another opportunity for interaction.

Swap Shops was another new idea that Moira and Kerstin introduced to the ILA "palette" of offerings and because it was new, we were very pleased with the uptake of these. A total of 4 submissions were timetabled, and the sharing of ideas was much appreciated by the participants. It would be great if this could be expanded on at the next conference. Both the Interactive Learning Fair and Swap Shop provided practical vehicles for exchanging ideas and considering independent learning from a range of perspectives.

Another very important aspect of most conferences is the opportunity for some friendly yet very professionally-important networking, and this was achieved in part by incorporating a Self-Access Centre Special Interest Group (SAC-SIG) meeting into the programme. SAC-SIG is a community of practice open to people with an interest in self-access language learning, self-directed learning, learner autonomy, language advising and learning centres. It was formed about twelve years ago in New Zealand and has had physical meetings at different centres and at conferences over the years.

Members are centre managers, teachers interested in promoting learner autonomy, staff in centres, and language advisors. It is open, informal and independent. To maintain contact with each other, a LinkedIn group has been set up with the aim of creating a place to network online. It can be used for a number of different reasons: to share resources and research; to discuss issues, ask questions and get advice; to post jobs; and to coordinate meetings. Basically, the group is there to support each other with the issues and challenges we're all having! We were very pleased that we could host the latest meeting at the ILA conference, as it is often hard to get the members physically together at other times.

Here are the instructions for becoming a member of the SAC-SIG so please feel free to pass them onto anyone who may be interested. If you are already on LinkedIn, search for SAC-SIG. If you do not have a LinkedIn account, go to **http://www.linkedin.com** and sign up first … Hopefully we'll see you all online soon!

Another exciting development at this conference was the inclusion of the Extensive Reading Foundation Learner Literature Awards for 2012. These were given out by Averil Coxhead at the conclusion of Paul Nation's keynote presentation on the

closing afternoon. They celebrated the best new works of language learner literature in English. There were 15 finalists in 2012 over five categories. The entries were judged by a panel of expert judges who took into account the votes and comments of students and teachers of English worldwide.

Ako Aotearoa launched their “Guidelines for Maximising Student Use of Independent Learning Centres: support for ESOL learners” researched and written by Kerstin Dofs and Moira Hobbs, during the conference, and this took place prior to Peter Gu’s keynote address on Sunday morning. A free copy of this publication can be accessed at **http://akoaotearoa.ac.nz/ako-hub/ako-aotearoa-southern-hub/resources/pages/guidelines-students-using-ILCs**

Between wrestling with some challenging, very theoretical perspectives of autonomy, and other more practical research and descriptive studies during the conference sessions, there was also ample time for everyone to network, get to know each other better and have some relaxing fun times together, have extended conversations and discussions, as well as allowing the committee to showcase our wonderful capital city and what the country has to offer.

The opening ceremony itself and a welcome function were held on the Thursday as a formal greeting to the international conference and to Wellington and New Zealand in general.

This lovely warm addition to the social programme was sponsored by Victoria University of Wellington Library after the Mihi and Official Conference Opening. Drinks and nibbles were provided to approximately 153 delegates and invited guests, including such tasty canapé delicacies as:

- Plump Nelson scallops wrapped in bacon with plum dip
- Sesame crusted cones filled with salmon cream fraiche
- Lamb fillet skewers with yoghurt raita
- A selection of vegetarian nibbles
- Twice roasted maple glazed pork belly
- Fragrant Thai chicken pie
- Panko crusted prawns with lime aioli

Later during the conference, 62 delegates (plus a few extra hangers-on!!) partook of a fabulous wine and cheese evening with Glengarry Wines, a Wellington based wine supplier.

Some of the ‘extras’ had actually been on the Language Learning Centre Tour at Victoria University of Wellington. A large number of other practitioners from around the world had the chance to see how it’s done down-under as they had a quick look through the centre prior to the wine and cheese tasting.

The highlight of the social calendar was the trip to the conference dinner, the yummy meal itself and the thoroughly enjoyable after-party. It took place at Pencarrow Lodge on Saturday night. Ninety four intrepid delegates were taken by ferry from Wellington to Days Bay, Eastbourne, and then picked up by bus and taken to the Lodge with a quick stop at the lighthouse for a whiskey and photo opportunity.

Guests were invited to enjoy drinks and nibbles on the veranda overlooking Cook Strait and then enjoyed a two course buffet in the cellar room. There was no specific entertainment provided during or after the function though background music was supplied by the venue. However, that didn't put our revellers off – they entertained themselves, dancing on into the night and having a great time, finally wrapping it up at around 10pm when the last bus had to leave to take us all back to our various accommodations.

The on-going hosting of the Independent Learning organisation website will be managed and updated by Paardekooper & Associates through to 2016 on **http://independentlearning.org**

There are two double blind refereed outputs arising from this conference, one a journal, the other, an ILA Selections. The Conference Programme Committee was approached by the Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching Journal to include some of the papers from the conference in a special issue of the journal. A selected number of speakers were invited to submit their paper for this edition, which is being peer reviewed and edited by the committee, and this special issue of the journal is expected to be published in November 2013. Kerstin and Moira are editing an alternative proceedings called "ILA 2012 Selections", which is a double blind peer reviewed online publication of extended summaries of the presentations, as well as extra information about the associated educational, academic and social events. This will enhance the outcome of the conference in a couple of ways. Firstly, as no-one could attend all of the presentations, this allows everyone to learn about a whole range of presentations from many of the contributors, and they can easily contact the authors if they want to know more. Secondly, this Selections publication is also especially valuable because every contributor to the conference has an opportunity to have a double blind refereed output, not just the few who were invited to contribute to the special journal.

Editing these Selections has given us a first-hand insight into the vast number of Autonomous Learning (AL) actions, achievements, practices and performances present in the world today. It has been fascinating to see how people from so many different parts of the world, and from so many different educational institutions, are all, in their own way, trying old and new ways to develop and improve AL. The contributions in the Selections represent a good range of ideas and practices that we certainly feel we would like to try out and implement in our own learning environments. More than one of the contributors has mentioned that it has meant so much for them to be able to get their ideas published. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the contributors for sharing their experiences with the wider AL community.

We would also like to say a heartfelt thanks to this community for the overwhelmingly broad support in making this publication possible; to the reviewers for great and knowledgeable advice both to the editors and to the contributors, and to the proof readers for their capabilities with picking up on details that needed to be amended.

Our wonderful reviewers were:

Natanael Delgado-Alvarado
Martin Andrew
Heather Baba
Andy Barfield
Jo Bone
Desiree Castillo
Alice Chik
Paul Collett
Phil Cozens
Menaka Ediriweera
Anne Feryok
David Gardner
Andy Gao
Marié-Jose Gremmo
Peter Gu
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John Jones-Parry
Leena Karlsson
Chris King
Marina Mozzon-McPherson
Terry Lamb
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Bruce Morrison
Garold Murray
Jo Mynard
Aoki Naoko
Paul Nation
Mike Nix
David Palfreyman
Gillian Skyrme
Alison Stewart
Katherine Thornton
Peter Voller
Cynthia White
Maggie Zhong

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Elizabeth Avery
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Karen Haines
Pat Hall
Mark Hornby
John Jones-Parry
Caroline Malthus
Nick Moore
Mark Smith
Ingrid Vinkenvleugel

We hope you all enjoy reading these Selections

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From the conference convenors

Edith Paillat

Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand

We want to thank all 207 delegates who attended another successful ILA conference in Wellington. Eighteen countries attended and clearly represented the diversity of topics that came out for discussion during the two and a half day conference.

The 2012 conference's theme "Autonomy in a Networked World" was chosen to explore the theoretical and practical meaning of learner autonomy in the socially and technologically connected world we live in today. The conference sub-themes were intended to capture dimensions of these relationships: the personal, social and cultural identity of the learner, the self and the 'other' as agents of learning, the learning environment, and the role of assessment for the autonomous learner.

The ILA conference 2012 was kick-started with three well-attended pre-conference workshops presented by Sara Cotterall (Advising in language learning), Paul Nation (Independent vocabulary learning) and Sue Starfield (Writing for publication in academic journals). The main conference was framed with five eminent keynote speakers whose topics ranged from designing optimal Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) environments by Mike Levy, strategic learning vs learning strategies by Dr. Peter Gu, reflective and reflexive thinking in learner autonomy by Dr. Xuesong (Andy) Gao, becoming an independent doctoral scholar by Sue Starfield, to Paul Nation who questioned the effectiveness of formally teaching vocabulary in class.

The programme also contained three colloquia, 90 break-out parallel sessions, poster sessions, the Interactive Independent Learning Fair and Swap Shops. The Interactive Independent Learning Fair certainly got a lot of positive feedback both from delegates and presenters as it engendered useful hands-on discussions and ideas amongst attendees after two-minute thumbnail presentations. The 30-minute Swap Shops created another interaction opportunity and thus also received very favourable comments from delegates who found them a useful forum to swap projects and research ideas. Both events stimulated practical discussions and suggestions between delegates and created an even greater sense of belonging to/ownership of the conference and also created another great occasion for communication and networking. Social functions at the end of each conference day included a wine and cheese tasting evening and a tour of Victoria University of Wellington's Language Learning Centre. The conference dinner at Pencarrow Lodge allowed for great conversations over food, with views of the Pacific Ocean and the entrance to Wellington Harbour. After two and a half informative days of presentations, the conference closed with the Extensive Reading Literature Awards.

At this point, we would once again like to thank everyone who submitted abstracts; the abstract reviewers; all the presenters, workshop leaders, and attendees; the exhibitors and sponsors; the local hosts (Victoria University of Wellington and the Language Learning Centre); Dr. Averil Coxhead, who was the co-convener, and Moira Hobbs and Kerstin Dofs, who instigated and ran the Swap Shops and the Interactive Independent Learning Fair, and have been working very hard since the conference to compile the proceedings into this double blind reviewed publication.

We hope you had a great time and hope to see you June 13-15, 2014 in Thailand. For more information keep an eye on our website **http://www.independentlearning.org**

1 Conference events

1.1 Interactive Independent Learning Fair

Tanya McCarthy
Osaka Institute of Technology, Osaka, Japan

Kerstin and Moira introducing the Interactive Independent Learning Fair

The fifth ILAC, held in Wellington between August 30 and September 2, was certainly one of the highlights of 2012 for those involved with learner development. The theme of the conference, "Autonomy in a Networked World: Te Tū Motuhake i te Ao Kōtuitui", saw a wide range of paper and poster presentations on a variety of topics over three days. The conference program included plenary sessions with expert speakers, parallel sessions with presenters old and new to the field of learner autonomy, several opportunities for networking, and a few fun events at the end of the day to balance out the 'hard work' of attending interesting and informative presentations. However, what was most impressive to me at ILAC 2012 was the Interactive Independent Learning Fair (IILF), which was a new addition to an already successful conference.

In past ILA conferences, poster presentations were assigned to a specific time slot, at which time presenters would go and stand next to their display. In the IILF

however, poster presenters were given a 2-minute 'thumbnail slot' to introduce themselves and their posters in the plenary hall before heading toward their posters. This gave attendees the opportunity to get a preview of the posters and decide which ones suited their interests.

One of the interesting features of the IILF for me was the behind-the-scenes nerves of presenters, who were unaccustomed to speaking in front of large crowds. As the 11 speakers from Japan, Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand took their seats, there were several nervous whispers heard about having to speak in front of a large group. Some presenters could be seen practising quietly and timing themselves, to make sure that they met the 2-minute requirement. As each presenter approached the microphone, a PowerPoint with a single slide played behind them. And as soon as it began, it was over. Those who were a bit nervous laughed at how fast it went by. Presenters then moved to the display area where they waited for conference attendees. This format was new to ILAC 2012, but something presenters agreed should continue in future conferences.

While the poster presenters were setting up their display areas, hosts Moira Hobbs and Kerstin Dofs asked attendees in the hall to reflect on their experiences at the conference up to that point with a person they had not spoken to before, in order to create more opportunity for interaction.

Upstairs in the display area, presentations took several formats such as traditional posters, posters connected with activities on laptops, and table displays. Presentation topics were as wide-ranging as the paper presentations in parallel sessions and included topics such as collaborative learning, corpus-based learning, new software, practical ideas to encourage self-directed learning, advising for language learning, and assessment.

After five minutes, the attendees were let free from the plenary hall to find out more about the presentations they were interested in. There was a buzz of excitement as the poster area suddenly swarmed with people. For an hour, presenters fielded questions and talked with researchers who had similar research interests. As the poster session was held during a break in parallel sessions, there was a lot of activity. Those who were not able to see posters over the heads of those in front of them came back later. The energy in the room remained at a high level for the entire poster session.

When the parallel sessions began again, the crowd slowly dispersed and presenters were able to finally take a breather. The IILF was brilliant and presenters seemed impressed with the new format as they were able to make new connections, talk about their research with people new to the field of learner autonomy, as well as receive comments and suggestions from those more established in the field. The new format created a vibrant and active poster session for all, while at the same time allowing presenters to speak closely on a one-to-one level with delegates.

This was my second ILAC and I found it a great opportunity once again to mingle with people in various capacities during the conference, all involved in some way or the other with the development of the learner. All in all, the IILF was considered

to be a positive introduction to the conference, despite the initial nerves at having to speak in the main hall, and presenters commented that the interest shown was significantly more than they were accustomed to.

Kia Ora New Zealand for a wonderful conference. I look forward to ILAC 2014 which will be held in Thailand, and another successful Interactive Independent Learning Fair.

1.2 Report on one of the Swap Shop sessions

Alison Ringer, Karen Falconer, Helen Howarth, Kristine Shann and Angela Joe
Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Background

The Swap Shop strand of the conference offered conference attendees the chance not only to hear about some practical ideas but also to share their own ideas in a session facilitated by a presenter or group of presenters.

Four Swap Shop sessions took place:

1. Networking through the classroom, the teachers and the self-access centre: A trial of study guides to foster autonomous learning, presented by Dofs, K. and Hobbs, M.
2. Evaluating one's own speaking skills: Reflecting on conversation journals, presented by Fritz, E.
3. From DIY to Web 2.0: An overview of autonomy and innovation in language learning, presented by Barbara, N.
4. Collaboration projects promoting autonomy, presented by Falconer, K., Howarth, H., Joe, A., Ringer, A., and Shann, K.

More about Swap Shop number four

The presenters in the fourth group are all from the English Proficiency Programme, a content-based EAP programme run by the English Language Institute at Victoria University of Wellington. Their presentations dealt with collaboration among students, among teachers, and in a teachers' course. The first two presenters dealt with two ways of promoting collaboration among students. Falconer focused on an oral presentation by students whereas Howarth focused more on writing.

Falconer talked about The Link, which is a collaborative project promoting autonomy in an ESP setting. This collaborative project arose in response to a round table evaluation of a programme for young leaders from an emerging

democracy. It became clear that alumni who were returning to their home country felt a strong connection with the programme and wished to be kept informed. The next intake of students, who all wished to improve their written language skills, decided to produce the inaugural alumni newsletter, The Link, and distribute it electronically to past programme participants and other key stakeholders. Themes that were explored in the Swap Shop session were the processes for collaboration, including how decisions were reached in terms of responsibilities, deadlines, content coverage and meeting management. The newsletter producers were heartened by the positive feedback they immediately received from alumni and rated the experience very highly because of the opportunity it provided for them to work together collaboratively in a way that they wished to foster in their own workplaces on return.

Howarth's part of the presentation was entitled 'A group research and presentation project'. She talked about an intermediate level class in which a student project involved small groups of students choosing one 'sustainable' business from a selection provided, researching it, and giving a group presentation to the class. Students from one class each wrote a reflection on the process and quotes from these illustrate how an independent learning project can contribute to student motivation and the development of other valuable skills which may be required in future studies.

- There was an interesting topic with opportunity for individual choice; 'I think sustainability is very good topic and thinking about sustainability is essential for our future'.
- Learners could research independently or in groups; 'I felt that it is easier to research sustainable business by myself than with group, however it is crucial to share our idea and listen to other opinion'.
- Skills for teamwork were developed; 'Studying independent project in group actually motivates every member of group to participate', 'It can enhance my ability of working together with other people'.
- Difficulties were overcome; '… but sometimes it is difficult to work in group because everyone has own work or there may be someone who is not interesting about the topic'. 'The first trouble is to find an organiser to integrate all the different opinion and then he should make a decision of arrangement. Fortunately we got unified opinion at last'.
- Self-awareness developed; 'My research not exactly enough. Also my practice to speak was not'. 'It encouraged us to think deeply'.

Ringer's part of the presentation dealt with one example of teacher collaboration resulting in a high quality student learning opportunity. This presentation compared two very similar projects that were developed by teachers for their students. Both tasks involved the students conducting a survey and then writing a report on their results. One of the tasks was developed by teacher A working alone; the other was developed a year later by teacher B, who bounced her ideas off teacher A as she planned the project. Both projects were successful – all students participated fully and produced adequate reports. However, when teacher A later compared the two projects, it was obvious that the one that had been planned through

collaborating was of much higher quality – it provided more opportunities to the students to learn and more opportunities for them to develop autonomy. One of the facets of the second project that gave improved learning opportunities to the students involved group work by the students. This had been an option of the first project but few students took it up whereas in the second project every student except one worked in a group. As well, in the second project the students developed their own survey questions. This was an option in the first project, but instead the students used the questions. Even such a simple collaboration as one teacher discussing her plans with the other enabled students to learn more and to develop their independence.

Joe presented relationship management challenges that occurred in one assignment in a teacher training course, which required students to work collaboratively on an electronic poster presentation. Trainees were assessed on their individual presentation of one aspect of the project and their conceptualisation, coherence, selection of evidence and presentation of the poster as a whole. When trainees encountered relationship management difficulties within their group, they were almost always able to resolve these by following guidelines outlining teachers' professional behavior, which the class had drawn up at the outset of the course.

Appraisal of the Swap Shop format

The attendance at this Swap Shop session was fairly low and some of the attendees did not realise that the session crossed a break and so only attended one or other half. However, despite the low attendance, the discussion that followed the presentations was lively and useful. The presenters themselves enjoyed collaborating when deciding what to present and how to do it.

It is suggested that it is worth continuing with the idea of Swap Shops, because the people who presented and the attendees found them valuable. The intention to discuss ideas could be emphasised, rather than attendees having to bring materials to share, because that requirement might have discouraged attendees. If these Swap Shop sessions were timetabled separate from other presentations, like the IIL Fair was, then a lot more conference attendees would attend, because there would be little other choice in that time slot!

1.3 And the winner is…

Averil Coxhead
Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand

Paul Nation and Averil Coxhead shared the very great pleasure of announcing the winners of the Extensive Reading Foundation Learner Literature Awards 2012 at the Independent Learning Association Conference (ILAC). Paul and Averil are both founder members of the foundation, which has been running the learner literature awards annually since 2004.

The connection between extensive reading and independent learning is a particularly strong one. Many publishers of language learning materials also publish graded readers and many language teachers encourage their learners to pursue independent reading as a language learning strategy. The purpose of the awards is to highlight the talented writing and illustration that go into graded readers. Presenting the awards at ILAC 2012 was a great opportunity to share the awards and the work of the foundation with colleagues, teachers, and hopefully their learners too.

The Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF) system for judging the awards involves two independent judges who select their own finalists individually and then negotiate on the list of finalists. An open round of online voting by students and teachers follows. The judges then appoint the final winner based on the voting and comments of the voters and their own opinion. The books are nominated by publishers, and might be fiction or non-fiction. They may be original pieces of work or existing books that have been simplified for learners.

A list of the 2012 award winners and finalists can be found on the foundation website at **http://erfoundation.org/wordpress/.** The actual winners are listed below. You will also find past winners and finalists since 2004 on the webpage. These books would be useful starting points for a new extensive reading library or for adding to an existing collection.

Below are the winners of the 2012 Extensive Reading Foundation Learner Literature Awards at each of the five levels of competition. Some of the comments from the online voting and the judges are included to give a flavour of what people liked about the books.

Young Learners

Uncle Jack and the Meerkats
Author: **Jane Cadwallader**
Publisher: **ELI Publishing**
Illustrator: **Gustavo Mazali**
ISBN: **978-88-536-0627-3**

Judges' comments
This story is good for young learners because it is a nice mixture of adventure, fantasy and reality, with an animal conservation angle. It also has a cool family theme and intelligent child characters. Well-written, nice design, and fun to read.

Online voters' comments
I really like this book. It is quite worthy of being read by the youth. This book particularly makes difference in inspiring us to protect the animals and our environment.

Adolescent and Adult Beginners

Arman's Journey
Author: **Philip Prowse**
Illustrator: **Paul Dickinson**
Publisher: **Cambridge University Press**
ISBN: **978-0-521-18496-0**

Judges' comments
This original story is filled with adventure that compels the reader through to the end. The content is especially relevant for adult learners — touching on conflict, economics, prejudice, and romance. The illustrations are supportive of the meaning. There are no exercises to distract from the story.

Online voter's comment
It is good because it has unique background, and I enjoyed his journey, quite adventurous.

Adolescent and Adult Elementary

Harry's Holiday
Author: **Antoinette Moses**
Publisher: **Cambridge University Press**
Illustrator: **Mikela Prevost**
ISBN: **978-84-8323-858-5**

Judges' comments
This is an intriguing book, with an excellent plot. The reader is kept on edge, wondering what will happen to Harry. Will he get to go on a holiday?

Online voters' comments
This is a very good book which reflects very common social problems…. After I finish reading this book, I understand something. So it is a very meaningful book. It is much more profound than it appears to be. It has a happy ending which give us a sense of happiness and hope. The illustrations in this book is very good which go well with the whole story and can arouse readers' interest in reading it.

Adolescent and Adult Intermediate

A Christmas Carol
Author: **Charles Dickens**
Retold by: **Sean Michael Wilson**
Illustrator: **Mike Collins**
Publisher: **National Geographic Learning, a part of Cengage Learning**
ISBN: **978-1-4240-4287-6**

Judges' comments
This version of A Christmas Carol is a graphic novel which has the rare combination of excellent artwork and skillful retelling that can engage readers from start to finish. Graphic novels have the potential to attract students who might not find regular graded readers appealing, and this is a good example of how to make a graphic novel work as a graded reader.

Selected student's comments
I found this book really amazing. I have heard of this book and have frankly tried to read this novella many a time but never felt like it. I have even seen the BBC movie version but never read the book. I should say that this Graphic Novel version is totally readable and this is the book that I read first in this series of books. I found the glossary with the pronunciation very useful. I would love to read the other classic comics in this series.

Adolescent and Adult Upper Intermediate and Advanced

Joe Faust
Author: **Frank Brennan**
Illustrator: **Redbean Design Pte Ltd**
Publisher: **National Geographic Learning, a part of Cengage Learning**
ISBN: **978-1-4240-1796-6**

Judges' comments
This is a gripping story, and a moral tale for our times that speaks across different cultures and societies. As one reader put it, this is a "good story that sends across a very important, influential message". It is a clever up-dating of the legend of Doctor Faustus, relevant to us all. The Devil has many disguises...

Check out the ERF website at **http://erfoundation.org/wordpress/** and the awards. It would be great if you read the books, encouraged others to do so, and voted for the ones you like best. Perhaps you might even like to try your hand at writing one and getting it published.

Finally, hearty congratulations to the winners and finalists of the awards in 2012. Here's to learner literature which is not just for learners.

2 Social functions

2.1 Tour of the Victoria University Language Learning Centre

Jo Bone
University of Otago Language Centre & Foundation Year, Otago, New Zealand

On Friday evening on 31 August, a large group of intrepid conference delegates headed from the main conference venue down by the harbour's edge and the train station up to the Kelburn Campus of the Victoria University of Wellington. We walked from the conference centre to the base of the cable car in the central business district. The cable car has actually been operating since the early 1900s and was originally built as a private development. It is still running today as a useful link between Lambton Quay and Kelburn, very handy for students and people who want to wander through the fabulous Botanic Gardens! Most of our conference colleagues took the easy and very scenic route via the cable car, however a few went ahead by bus.

Picture 1: The cable car in Wellington

Once we arrived at the top we enjoyed beautiful views out over the gorgeous harbour and took many photos before walking down to the Kelburn Campus.

The Language Learning Centre is situated on Level 0 of the von Zedlitz Building, 28 Kelburn Parade. It is part of the university library, although it is located in a different building, close to the language schools. We were shown around the centre by Edith Paillat (Language Technology Specialist and Conference Co-convenor) and the Language Learning Centre Advisors. It was evident how passionate they are about their centre and how they are abreast with the latest language learning technologies and developments.

The Language Learning Centre is free for current students and staff at Victoria University, - see Picture 2. It is available to members of the public for a fee (for either three or six months) and offers language learning materials in around 50 languages, including English, with a focus on those being taught at the university.

Picture 2: Students in the Language Learning Centre

There are many activities available to students, such as: watching films and television series; listening to audio recordings; and accessing reference material, books, language software and online resources. Students can be matched with a language buddy to improve conversational skills. They are also able to search the library catalogue, book a study room or computer and do their own printing. Helpful staff are on hand to give advice.

The centre includes a variety of spaces for students to use. There is a multimedia zone with PC computers, a printer, LCD screens and audio CD players. The self-access library contains a variety of materials and multimedia resources for language learning and reference. There is a study space for quiet independent learning, a sound space for individual listening and group work, plus a seminar room, an audio-visual room and two interactive computer classrooms.

Regular events are held in the Language Learning Centre such as film screenings and foreign language weeks. Technology training is offered to staff, as well as support for designing web-based material.

We all took note of the excellent facilities and were inspired by the tour, leaving with thoughts of how to enhance further the independent learning areas of our own institutions. Anyone wishing to view a virtual tour of the Language Learning Centre can visit: **www.victoria.ac.nz/llc**

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2.2 Wine and Cheese Evening at Kelburn Campus, Victoria University

Jo Bone
University of Otago Language Centre & Foundation Year, Otago, New Zealand

Picture 1: Glengarry Wine shop

A wine and cheese evening followed the tour of the Language Learning Centre. Tickets cost NZ $30.00 and it proved so popular that the number of tickets sold doubled on the first day of the conference! New Zealand wine has a growing international reputation and is appreciated by many a New Zealander at weekends... or maybe even on a nightly basis!

The conference delegates made their way to the Hunter Common Room. This was a beautiful example of architecture of a bygone era. According to the university website, 'In 2004, Victoria University proudly celebrated the 100th birthday of its first home, the Hunter Building … [which provided] the first official home for the students and staff of the fledgling University, [and it originally housed] the entire university… Today, the building acts as the centre of the university, housing the offices of the Vice-Chancellor, official reception areas including the Council Chamber and the Victoria Room, and a number of pieces of the Victoria University of Wellington Art Collection.'

It was in these very auspicious surroundings that the manager of Glengarry Wines, a Wellington based wine supplier, gave a talk about the New Zealand wine industry and the background to the wine and cheese that was to be sampled that evening.

Following the very informative talk in the beautiful formal room, the budding wine tasters then moved into a long room set with tables and chairs where everyone was able to sit and get to know each other better whilst tasting the delicious wine, cheese, breads and other nibbles on offer. The evening was extremely well attended and the room was full to the brim. It was a bit daunting initially to see 6 glasses set out in front of each person!! ... but the evening proceeded with an interesting yet light-hearted description of each wine, moving from whites through to reds and after-dinner drinks. Hardy folk could even have a top-up of their favourite at the end, as not all bottles had been fully emptied!

The general consensus was that everyone was most impressed and left very satisfied, to head to the centre of the city for a night on the town.

The wines that were showcased were:

- Te Pa Sauvignon Blanc 2011
- Jules Taylor Sauvignon Blanc 2012
- Nga Waka Chardonnay 2011
- Burton Rd Chardonnay 2010
- Nga Waka Pinot Noir 2010
- Rockburn Pinot Noir 2010
- Rua Pinot Noir 2011
- Three Paddles Pinot Noir 2011

The cheese selection included:

- Talbot Forest CanterBrie
- Kapiti Aorangi Traditional Brie
- Kapiti Kikorangi
- Karikaas Leyden Young (with seeds)
- Gouda

Picture 2: Selection of cheeses

Picture 3: Wine for tasting

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2.3 When a conference dinner isn't just dinner

Garrold Murray
Okayama University, Japan

Whenever I talk about imagination and identity in language learning, at some point I mention imagined communities. My favourite example of an imagined community is the Independent Learning Association. You are probably thinking, "Imagined community? Hold on, the organization has held regular conferences over the last decade and I'm now reading the proceedings from the last one. There's nothing imaginary about that!" Well, guess what? The Independent Learning Association does not exist. There is no association, no executive, no membership, nothing to join or belong to. Yet, every couple of years, it emerges out of the ether, and educators who are passionate about their common interest, learner autonomy in language learning, and who feel a sense of belonging to this group of scholars, get together for a conference. Personally, I feel a strong affinity to this community which has been instrumental in shaping my identity as a researcher.

In addition to a strong commitment to an ideal, there are other elements which have supported this sense of belonging and contributed to community building – one of these is the conference dinners. It all goes back to that first night of the inaugural conference in Melbourne in 2003. The dinner, which was held in a Greek restaurant, was well attended, very noisy, and a lot of fun. I wonder if others who were present have the same recollection of there being something electrical in the air that night. I cannot recall many details about that evening, but I do remember the dinner being a celebration and an opportunity for me, a first-time autonomy conference goer, to make new friends and to feel a part of a community of like-minded educators. The dinner at the 2012 conference in Wellington was such an occasion.

In Wellington, a key aspect of the communal experience was actually getting to the dinner. In the late afternoon we all boarded a boat near the conference venue for a ride across the bay. It was a beautiful sunny day and everybody wanted to be on the top deck to enjoy the open air and the view. Despite a warning that if too many people stayed on top, the boat would be top-heavy and easily capsized should it be hit by a large wave, I did not see many people move below. As the boat set out across the bay, the conference organizers stood on the pier and gave what seemed a worried wave of farewell. Happily, we reached the other shore where buses waited to take us to Pencarrow Lodge, perched high on the headland overlooking the entrance to Wellington Harbour.

The bus ride was scenic and a bit of an adventure in itself. The buses wound their way along a narrow coastal road hemmed by high cliffs. To our amazement, we spotted sheep clinging to the hillside grazing on the sparse vegetation. The ride

was made more memorable by a stop at a lighthouse where we enjoyed a dram of whiskey on a windswept beach. Once back on the bus, it was a short ride until we started our ascent up a narrow, hairpin road to the lodge.

Picture1: Preparing whiskey drams at Pencarrow lighthouse

We arrived at the lodge at that magic time of day, referred to in the south of France as *entre chien et loup* (between dog and wolf), when dusk is about to fall. Still, there was enough light to provide stunning vistas of a jagged coastline and a moody wintery sea. Our mood was lightened by glasses of wine that seemed to appear from nowhere as soon as we got off the bus. While we stood outside admiring the view and sipping wine, we were given an exhibition of a modern day shepherd and sheepdog at work. As the light faded, we moved inside to a warm fire where we had time to mingle and drink more wine before dinner.

When it came time to be seated in the dining room, the mood was set for a lively dinner. Amid animated conversation and laughter, we made new acquaintances and renewed old ones. The evening passed quickly and all too soon there was an announcement about buses leaving for the city. Nevertheless, before the last bus left, there was time for dancing.

Once again, for me, the dinner was the highlight of the conference. Liu and Noppe-Brandon (2009) contend that oftentimes the best things at conferences take place in the corridors between sessions and during breaks. I believe this to be the case for the ILA conferences where many inspirational, memorable moments occur outside the presentation rooms. This was certainly true of the Wellington conference dinner which showcased New Zealand hospitality. In

Picture 2: Conference diners at Pencarrow Lodge

addition to the lamb, wine and pavlova– which were delicious – the taste we got of the country's rugged natural beauty made the evening truly unforgettable. To top it all off, there was the opportunity to spend time with old friends and the possibility of making new ones. This conference dinner strengthened our sense of belonging to a community and left us with a feeling of anticipation for our next meeting in 2014.

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3 Autonomy and learning environment

3.1 Keynote: Is it worth teaching vocabulary?

Paul Nation
Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand

This paper takes a predominantly negative view towards the teaching of vocabulary. It does this for several reasons. Firstly, the teacher has many more important jobs than teaching. Secondly, across a balanced range of opportunities that are needed to support learning, teaching has only a small role to play. Thirdly, research shows that teaching is only moderately efficient, with only a small proportion of words that were taught actually being retained.

The roles of the teacher

The roles of the teacher are to plan, organise, train, test, teach.

Planning

Planning involves making sure that vocabulary learning occurs across the four strands of meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning, and fluency development (Nation 2007). Three of these strands are message-focused where the teacher is not teaching. Teaching needs to occur largely in the language-focused learning strand. Table 1 lists the twenty most useful language teaching techniques classified into the four strands (Nation 2012).

Skill area	Technique	Strand
Listening	Listening to stories	Meaning-focused input
	Read and listen	Meaning-focused input
	Dictation	Language-focused learning
Speaking	Problem-solving	Meaning-focused output
	Pair conversation	Meaning-focused output
	Prepared talks	Meaning-focused output
	Same or different (pronunciation)	Language-focused learning
	Identifying (pronunciation)	Language-focused learning
	4/3/2	Fluency development

Reading	Extensive reading Paired reading Intensive reading Speed reading	Meaning-focused input Meaning-focused input Language-focused learning Fluency development
Writing	Writing with feedback Information transfer Substitution tables 10 minute writing	Meaning-focused output Meaning-focused output Language-focused learning Fluency development
General purpose	Linked skills Issue logs Word cards	Meaning-focused strands Meaning-focused strands Language-focused learning

Table 1: The twenty most useful language teaching techniques

It is very helpful to look at activities across the four strands from the point of view of whether they involve individual work, pair/group work, or teacher-focused work. Table 2 looks at a range of activities in an English for Academic Purposes course, to show how different activities can become the responsibility of different individuals and groupings within a class.

	Teacher-led	Group responsibility	Independent work
Listening	Training in note-taking styles Listening to mini-lectures	Evaluating note-taking styles	
Speaking	Training in oral communication skills	Discussing academic reading Problem-solving discussions Role plays	Prepared talks
Reading	Linked skills activities	Issue logs Speed reading	Library tasks Intensive reading Extensive reading
Writing	Analysing research reports	Writing under time pressure	Reading like a writer Making a list of references Touch-typing practice Writing assignments
Language learning			Dictionary use including etymology Word cards

University requirements	Reading course outlines		
Test preparation	Test instruction Test practice		

Table 2: Allocation of responsibility for activities and learning in an EAP course

Planning also involves making sure that the learners are focusing on the vocabulary which is most suitable for them at their present level of proficiency. To do this well, teachers need to know about the following things (Barker 2007).

1. They need to know where to access sources of information about word frequency and lists of useful words.
2. They need an understanding of the nature of word frequency.
3. They need practice in considering personal language needs.
4. They should be aware of the importance of knowing roughly how many words a learner knows and what a reasonable learning goal should be in terms of number of words.

They should also know how to work out the ease or difficulty in learning a particular word, and they should also be familiar with a range of options for dealing with vocabulary. Table 3 shows how much vocabulary needs to be known to deal with a range of different kinds of texts.

	95% coverage	98% coverage
Novels	4000	9000
Newspapers	4000	8000
Academic	4000	8000
Movies	4000	6000
Conversation	3000	6000

* The coverage figures include proper nouns, transparent compounds, and hesitations etc.

Table 3: Vocabulary size needed to get 95% or 98% coverage of various texts

Taking 98% as the ideal coverage, a 8000-9000 word family vocabulary is needed for dealing with written text, and 6000-7000 families for dealing with spoken text. Spoken language makes slightly greater use of the high frequency words of the language than written language does. Greater text coverage than 98% may be needed to cope effectively with the transitory nature of spoken language (Nation 2006).

Organising

The teacher's second most important job is organizing which involves making sure that the conditions that favour vocabulary learning have a chance to occur. These conditions include repetition, noticing, retrieval, meeting and using words in varied contexts, elaboration, and deliberate attention. These conditions need to occur in activities such as extensive reading, problem-solving speaking, extensive listening, linked skills activities, learning using word cards, writing with feedback, reading fluency development and speaking fluency development. The skill with which the teacher designs and runs these activities can have a major effect on the learning conditions that occur and thus on the vocabulary learning that occurs.

Training

The third job, that of training, involves helping learners become proficient in the most useful vocabulary learning strategies of guessing from context, using word cards and flash cards (Nakata, 2011), using word parts, and dictionary use. These strategies can be used with thousands of words and thus easily justify the amount of time spent on learning how to use them. Strategy development needs to occur over a reasonably long period of time until the learners find it easier to use a strategy than to not use it.

Testing

The fourth job, testing, is important because it is difficult to plan a good vocabulary program without knowing your learners' vocabulary sizes. Testing is also an important way of getting and giving feedback on progress. The four jobs of planning, organising, training and testing should occupy most of the teacher's time.

Teaching

The fifth job is teaching. The definition of teaching used in this paper is a rather narrow one. Teaching occurs when the teacher is the source of information, the teacher is the focus of attention, and the teacher determines the pace of the learning. It includes both the teacher explaining words and the learners doing vocabulary exercises. It should only occupy a small part of the language-focused learning strand sharing that time allocation with using word cards, intensive reading, spelling and a deliberate focus on aspects of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Let us now look in detail at why vocabulary teaching is of limited usefulness.

The inefficiency of vocabulary teaching

1. The size of the task. Vocabulary size is measured in thousands of words and so any teaching is likely to be able to deal with only a very small part of what needs to be learnt. The high frequency and mid-frequency words of the language needed to reach 98% coverage consist of 9,000 word families, and teaching could not possibly cover all of these.
2. The rate of teaching. To affect learning there needs to be rich instruction where a reasonable amount of time needs to be spent on each word. At a minimum this is probably somewhere between 3 to 5 minutes. Some published studies of

vocabulary teaching show that it can be a very time-consuming process.

3. The amount of learning. Typically, on immediate post-tests of receptive knowledge following vocabulary instruction, less than 50% of the words taught are actually remembered.
4. The efficiency of word card learning. Learning using word cards, or flash-card programs, typically results in close to 100% learning. The nature of the procedure aims at such a high level of learning. Such learning does not require any teaching beyond training in the strategy of using word cards.

Vocabulary teaching has a role to play in a language course, but its role is limited and teachers need to acknowledge that vocabulary learning can and does occur mainly through other means.

Where English is taught as a second language, vocabulary teaching needs to focus on items of immediate use to the learners (Nation 2012b). For recent low proficiency immigrants this will mean quickly learning a survival list of useful words and phrases. For learners in the school system who already know the high frequency words, this will mean focusing on topic-related and subject-related vocabulary. For learners preparing for academic study, this will mean learning academic vocabulary and technical vocabulary. Where English is taught as a foreign language, the focus of teaching needs to be on the high frequency vocabulary. Learners need encouragement to take control of their own learning of the mid-frequency vocabulary, because this group of several thousand words is too large for teaching to have any significant effect.

Learner training versus teacher training

The major way to encourage more independent learning of vocabulary primarily involves a change in what teachers do. Teachers need to be aware of the range of jobs that they do, that there should be a balance of the four strands, that a lot of learning occurs through independent and pair/group tasks, and that a useful teaching focus is to train learners in vocabulary learning strategies.

Teachers also need to know how to apply the four strands, particularly through organizing an extensive reading program, and setting up communicative pair and group activities, and through including fluency training activities in their courses.

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3.2 Autonomy in the learning environment: using webcams to improve language skills for ESL students

Veronica Dickson and Ruta Broze
Holmesglen Institute, Melbourne, Australia

Introduction

Video streaming is a digital technology where videos can be easily made, viewed and shared by teachers and students. The Independent Learning Centre piloted video streaming software for English as a Second Language (ESL) students and our research focused on the efficacy of three different forms of feedback to improve speaking skills.

Research project

An action research project was devised to find out how video streaming could be useful for developing speaking skills for our students. Students at beginner level English gave a one-minute biographical talk. These were videoed then watched by the students, who were subsequently involved in a designated feedback process. The different forms of feedback were: teacher; self; or peer. The students then re-videoed their talks on the same subject a week later.

Prior to the recordings all students were given a short introduction to the new software. The teacher involved with the teacher-feedback and self-feedback did not change her teaching program prior to the research. The teacher involved in the peer-feedback group encouraged her students to work together to create a positive environment for speaking practice prior to the research. Both teachers used a variety of techniques to improve speaking skills in their regular classes prior to the research.

In the teacher-feedback group, the teacher made notes while she and the student watched the video together. She explained errors in pronunciation and grammar and the student would attempt to repeat what the teacher said but their responses ranged from understanding to confusion about how to correct their speech. The teacher gave notes on a variety of vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar points

to the student to study and practise before the re-videoing the next week. The students' follow-up videos were generally more confident, with some corrections, but there were also new errors as the talks themselves had inevitably changed.

In the student self-feedback group, the students made and watched videos on their own. When the students redid the videos a week later it was low key and very similar to their first video. Overall, it was difficult to assess any progress.

In the peer-feedback group, the class watched the videos on a DVP in the classroom. The teacher had prepared the class for a feedback discussion and the group were supportive and friendly (though a small group of weaker students did not contribute). Some students were vocal and repeated grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation points. Other students supported variations of these corrections. Students liked to make suggestions on how to correct pronunciation and grammar, with variations on what was correct. For example, the word 'trombone' was mentioned in a video. The class all tried to guess what word the presenter had said. The student presenter then repeated the word, mimed it, and the students understood and enjoyed practising saying the word. In this group, the second videos showed improvement in fluency, grammar and pronunciation, but there were other new errors as the talks had changed in content.

Reflections on feedback

- Video streaming is an inherently visual and shared technology which has great potential for social communicative methods for improving speaking skills.
- Peer feedback seemed to provide greater motivation to improve.
- Students who watch themselves immediately after making a video concentrate deeply on their performance.
- Teachers gave feedback as an ordered process but students gave peer-feedback in a disorganised, animated discussion.
- The teacher-feedback method created a more passive, teacher-centred environment and the peer-feedback created a complex, student assertive environment.
- Teachers found the videos a valuable tool for analysing student's speaking skills.
- Students, and occasionally teachers, sometimes gave unclear or ambiguous feedback.
- Videos show physical aspects of communication and after watching their videos many students realise they look and sound unanimated.

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3.3 Developing learner autonomy in online learning: restricted freedom, responsibilities and reflection

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Introduction and background

As the Internet has become an integral part of modern life, ICT tools like emails, online instant chat, and discussion forums, have opened up new possibilities for teachers and students to communicate. Sharing an optimistic view that the application of these ICT tools would maximize learning opportunities, a group of English teachers in a private university in northern Taiwan initiated, in 2004, an online English program titled "Advanced and Intermediate English Distance Learning" (AIEDL). Over the past nine years, 15 teachers have offered more than 20 different English courses to non-English majors. During an 18-week long semester, instructors upload lectures, collect assignments, and interact with students on a Learning Management System (LMS) platform, and reduce the number of face-to-face meetings to only four. Students depend largely on themselves to manage their day-to-day practices of language learning.

As part of the AIEDL programme, between 2005 and 2011, a process-based listening course was offered 5 times to 248 students in total. Students were required to keep weekly listening diaries to summarize their listening practices, to raise questions and to reflect on their use of listening strategies. They also participated in asynchronous and synchronous discussions. The greatest challenge was how to promote online interactions. Students preferred expressing their views in their listening diaries rather than sharing ideas in forums. However, when interactions in forums are limited, online learning can become very solitary and sometimes demotivating. To ensure purposeful, stimulating forum discussions, student engagement is definitely the key.

Literature review

Lurking - merely observing threads of discussions but not contributing - is considered by Kollock and Smith, as cited in Nonnecke, Andrews and Preece, (2006) as; 'draining the community of its social capital because it is 'taking' without giving back' (p. 8). Little (1991) points out that; 'the freedom conferred by autonomy is never absolute, always conditional and constrained' (p. 5), and Trebbi (2007) adds that freedom comes down to recognizing; 'whether we are victims of constraints or not' (p. 35).

Although students communicate with their peers through social networking sites frequently, they do not always know how to provide quality posts in forums as part of the coursework. Therefore, in 2012, an Action Research (AR) study was conducted to study students' reactions to implemented changes that would better facilitate interactions in the forums.

Methodology

In order to triangulate data about students' perceptions of online interactions and their actual use, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Clear deadlines were set for forum discussions, and specific discussion questions for the week's listening materials were assigned. At the beginning of each week, one forum was opened, and students only had one week to respond to the questions.

In week two, a questionnaire about students' prior experience of online learning was distributed. To avoid the teacher-student power hierarchy, group interviews were conducted by teaching assistants (TAs). The first group interviews were conducted in week five, to understand students' experiences of the first weeks so that necessary training could be provided in week six. In week sixteen, TAs conducted some more group interviews to establish reasons behind active participation or lurking behavior. Records of threaded discussions on all 12 forums were analyzed. During the process of content analysis, a list of predetermined codes related to students' attitude and perceptions was applied, and three main themes across different datasets emerged - restricted freedom, responsibility and regular reflection.

Main findings

The interview data indicated that students new to online learning felt lost at first when they no longer needed to go to classes. One sophomore reported that;

> the first three weeks were quite weird to me that suddenly I did not need to get out of my apartment and go to classes. I then decided that I still need to log online every Tuesday evening; otherwise, it is too free for me.

Students mostly welcomed the deadlines for forum discussions, not taking it as a restriction. One student commented that, when regulations were clearly spelled out, students knew the teacher's expectations better, and thus, adjusted their behavior accordingly. In short, the deadlines reminded them that participating in forums was part of their responsibilities. Furthermore, since all the discussions were recorded online, they became aware that they needed to be more responsible for what they posted. Finally, students reported that it was easier for them to reflect on the listening tasks in the diaries first and then share their ideas in the forums.

Conclusion

The results show that it is important for language teachers to assist their online students through a fairly structured but supportive online learning environment, and to help students understand that having deadlines, regulations and rules in online courses is not to restrict the freedom of expression.

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3.4 A learner-centered approach to teaching English team presentations in an EFL classroom

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Introduction

Recent surveys show that about 40% of National Taiwan University (NTU) seniors have trouble with oral presentations while striving for better English (Center for Teaching and Learning Development 2009, 2010, 2011). Many freshmen also indicate improving oral proficiency as their major goals for taking the freshmen English course. Activities to help enhance students' team presentations are very effective, not only to improve their oral proficiency, but also to develop their teamwork and communication skills (Doyle 2008).

This study describes a learner-centered approach to the instructional design for the teaching of English team presentations. Such design incorporates presentation-related class activities into the metacognitive learning tasks in the learning-strategies-based (LSB) framework (Yang 2003; Cohen and Weaver 2005) to help students optimize their English learning and promote learner autonomy. This study aims to explore the effectiveness of the design.

The study

A total of 31 college students from a freshmen English class participated in the study. Students were divided into eight teams according to their own choices. Each team made one presentation per semester.

Methodology

The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research methods. A pre-test and a post-test on students' general English proficiency, including their speaking abilities, were administered. Information about students' reactions to, and reflections on, the instructional design was collected through individual interviews in the first semester, and through a questionnaire at the end of the academic year. The pre- and post-tests, as well as the questionnaire, served the purpose of evaluating overall effectiveness of the design.

Instructional design

The instructional design of the study included a series of learning tasks. These tasks were implemented in four stages as follows:

1. **Diagnosis:** A speaking pre-test was included to serve as a diagnostic tool for collecting information about students' speaking skill levels and for fine-tuning the lesson plan.
2. **Preparation:** First, a team contract was agreed among teammates for goal-setting purposes. Next, a presentation proposal was made by each team as a guiding plan. The instructor guided and monitored progress by approving the proposal and discussing the presentation outline with teams. Finally, rehearsals with Teaching Assistants (TAs) gave students help with their speech preparation and correction of their pronunciation before the presentations.
3. **Instruction:** Formal lectures and demonstrations about how to make effective presentations were given, including the structure, components, and strategies. The criteria used for the evaluation were also given.
4. **Evaluation:** Team presentations were evaluated from various aspects: by the students themselves, by their peers, by TAs, and by the instructor.

Selected findings

The results of this study illustrates the benefits of taking a learner-centered approach to the teaching of team presentations in an EFL classroom. About 75% of the students interviewed agreed that the presentations helped to improve their oral proficiency. A paired t-test also indicated this improvement, as a significant difference was found between their speaking pre- and post-tests.

The questionnaire results showed that most students thought they benefit from the instructor's and TA's timely guidance and support at different stages of the course in various areas, such as grammar and vocabulary (93%), pronunciation and intonation (80%), presentation contents (77%) and structure (76%).

The results also showed that 90% of the students felt positive about the multi-dimensional evaluation mechanism experienced in this study. Over 70% of the students found that comments and suggestions offered by peer and instructor evaluations were helpful to pinpoint their weaknesses and areas for improvement.

Conclusions

The study took a learner-centered approach and adopted the LSB framework to design and teach team presentations to EFL college students. This approach was found to be effective in facilitating students' learning about making presentations. As students were guided to perform a series of metacognitive learning tasks, they were able to explore more effectively how to make successful presentations by themselves and with their teammates. Their chances of success greatly increased with the proper use of some metacognitive or self-management strategies to help them make the best use of the acquired knowledge and skills about presentations.

In addition, using team presentations in the study helped to create a supportive learning environment which encouraged teamwork and collaborative learning. This context not only motivated students to learn from each other, but it also worked well with the LSB framework to empower students to take more control of their own learning in order to reach their goals for learning English.

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3.5 Keeping self-directed learning on track

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In our first-year university English program, where English class contact time is limited and studying for other (content) subjects competes for learners' attention, we have tried to provide meaningful, out-of-class practice opportunities through three required elements within our regular courses: individual self-access work, student contributions to the self-access centre, and projects.

Self-access work

Our self-access centre (SAC) has grown over time from a miscellaneous collection of graded readers, examination copies of textbooks and video and audio tapes housed in a former science laboratory, to a larger, better equipped and updated resource centre. Certain principles have guided its use: having a qualified resource person always available to guide its users, requiring students to document their SAC activities, and giving credit for their documented independent work. Students use the SAC independently or in groups after class to work on skills they identify as needing improvement. To ensure they will take this aspect of their learning seriously, each student must complete a designated number of hours during the semester. Evidence of work done is kept in a file in the SAC, including a form completed for each visit, documenting the date, time, work accomplished and any comments about the activity. The form is signed by the SAC resource person, who verifies the accuracy of student documentation.

Periodic surveys reveal that students generally agree they improve their skills and learn new ways to practice English in the SAC. University administration, students and instructors have all endorsed it as a constantly evolving, worthwhile facility to improve students' English language ability.

SAC contributions

As some students entering our program are already quite proficient in English, another self-directed initiative asked them to contribute to the SAC as experienced, competent language learners. The rationale for this task was to enhance students' investment in the SAC as a dynamic entity that was culturally and contextually relevant to their particular learning needs. Suggestions for contributions were given by course instructors, who also guided and encouraged the students, giving them a token mark for task completion. Sample worksheets, based on those in Gardner and Miller (1996), were distributed, and students were instructed that 'a contribution is something you give that will be useful for others. This can take the shape of something written or recorded or can involve giving

time or material'. Contributions included making worksheets, posters, games, flashcards, cataloguing and labeling materials, or donating useful books, movies or magazines. While some students made unique and thoughtful contributions, others did the minimum to fulfill the assignment. Student response was closely related to teacher enthusiasm and support for the initiative. Some instructors were not convinced about the relevance of student contributions, viewing them as a time-wasting imposition on their teaching obligations and probably conveyed their negative opinions to their students, so this initiative was eventually discontinued, as reported by Malcolm (2011).

Self-directed projects

The third self-directed course element is individual student projects on an aspect of English that the student and instructor agree needs improvement. After discussion and negotiation with the instructors, the student signs a contract detailing the goals, steps and materials to work on. Project work is kept in a file to be handed in at specified intervals. The completed file is submitted at the end of the term, along with a reflective paragraph detailing the student's reaction to the project. Projects are assessed according to these criteria: effort (completing the plan), reliability (meeting deadlines) and originality (i.e. not copying from another source). While some students plagiarize or procrastinate, most complete their projects on time and successfully. The teacher-student interaction required during the various steps of project completion helps to break down barriers and facilitate individualized support and feedback.

How to keep self-directed learning on track

Certain factors in our setting have helped keep our students on track with their English learning. Awarding marks or some other form of recognition is probably the biggest motivator. Regular teacher guidance and follow-up is imperative. Validation of the SAC as a centre for language improvement from upper year students encourages new users. Easy access to the SAC and instructors is another important factor, along with the benign role of administrators, who provide support without interference.

Conclusion

Each institution has its own constraints and culture, and not everyone is willing to put in the effort and time required to promote self-directed learning. Nevertheless, we have found helping our students plan and accomplish their language learning goals through these initiatives enabled many to increase their confidence in using English as well as improving their ability to do so.

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3.6 The effectiveness of the integration of a self-access language learning component into a taught course

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Introduction

Attempts have been made to integrate a self-access language learning (SALL) component into taught English courses in various tertiary institutions in Hong Kong and around the world, with the aims of providing learner training and raising learners' awareness of their responsibilities for their own learning. The integration was done because it is believed that SALL should not be seen as an adjunct to formal teaching but rather as an integral part of the whole learning and teaching process. It is hoped that learners can be equipped with independent learning skills that they can exploit in different learning contexts.

The study

The study presented at the conference was conducted at a tertiary institution in Hong Kong. A SALL component was integrated into a 12-week (24-hour) English enhancement course for 2nd year science students, with the aim of enhancing learners' individualization and language proficiency. The students were required to set language learning goals, complete at least 8 hours of SALL activities (out of the 24 hours) throughout the course and fill in a SALL record after each SALL activity. This pilot study was to investigate learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of integrating SALL into the taught course, in terms of promoting learner autonomy and the students' perceived learning gains after attending the course.

Methodology

The data in the study was collected by administering a post-course student questionnaire to 86 students and conducting two student focus-group interviews. The focus group interviews allowed more in-depth probing of issues emerging from the questionnaire data. Table 1 shows a summary of the selected findings in the questionnaire data.

	Strongly disagree	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Guidelines and instructions for doing SALL				
When I received instructions about doing self-access learning in this course, I understood clearly what I had to do.	2%	23%	65%	9%
Monitoring and evaluation of SALL				
The in-class discussions on SALL helped me evaluate my SALL progress.	2%	30%	63%	5%
The in-class discussions on SALL enabled me to swap ideas with classmates for good self-access activities and materials.	3%	26%	58%	13%
Keeping the SALL record				
Keeping the SALL record helped me monitor and reflect on my learning progress.	2%	34%	55%	9%
Learners' perceived learning gains from SALL				
The SALL component of the course has helped me to improve:				
- the language skills which are stated in my learning goals.	0%	23%	74%	3%
- my ability to set learning goals for myself.	1%	14%	76%	9%
- my ability to create an effective learning plan.	5%	44%	49%	2%
- my time management skills.	4%	50%	43%	3%
Learners' continuation of SALL after the end of the course				
I will continue to do self-access language learning after the end of the course.	5%	40%	53%	2%

Table 1: Summary of the selected findings in the questionnaire data

Selected findings

Guidelines and instructions for doing SALL

The students were asked what guidelines and instructions for doing SALL they expected to get from the teachers. Their responses in the questionnaire and focus group interviews show that they were still heavily teacher-dependent; for example, they wanted the teachers to set language learning goals for them and show them examples of SALL records.

Monitoring and evaluation of SALL

The findings show that explicit in-class discussions about SALL are necessary to help students monitor and evaluate SALL progress. The students expressed their enjoyment at discussing their SALL progress with other students in class since this enabled them to share ideas about useful learning materials and effective learning methods. Some students were confident that they could do self-check and peer evaluation in groups if the teacher could suggest ways to evaluate their progress.

Keeping the SALL record

The students found keeping the SALL record the most irritating part in the SALL process since they had to record what, where, when, why and how they completed a SALL task. Although the students seemed to understand the importance of reflection in the learning process, they found the process of writing the record repetitive and boring. Some students suggested other reflection methods such as giving an oral presentation in class, having a collaborative evaluation meeting with the teacher etc.

Learners' perceived learning gains from SALL

According to the learners, the greatest gains from SALL were in their ability to set learning goals and improvement of the language skills stated in their learning goals. However, the smallest gains from SALL were in their ability to create an effective learning plan and their time management skills. In the focus-group interviews, the students explained that science students tended to give a lower priority to language learning and therefore they were not motivated to allocate time for language learning.

Learners' continuation of SALL after the end of the course

The results of the questionnaire reveal that a large majority of the students affirmed SALL could contribute to their long term language development, but it is quite disappointing to note that only just over half of the students said they would continue to do SALL after the end of the course. The students seemed to be reluctant to spend time on language learning if they were not required to do it. In addition to being unmotivated, they explained they had no confidence in overcoming the difficulties in language learning on their own. Therefore, they did not plan to do SALL in future.

Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal that students were generally positive towards the integration of SALL into the taught English course. In order to enhance the effectiveness of the SALL component in a taught course, explicit training in strategies for example, goal setting, devising an effective learning plan, peer group monitoring and group evaluations could be introduced in class to support students'independent language learning.

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3.7 Connecting university classrooms to a language interaction space

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Introduction

Foreign language learning consists of at least three complementary aspects: input, interaction and output. While comprehensible input is of course vital for learners, it is their actual output which allows them to test and restructure their knowledge. Between input and output, learner-to-learner interaction both inside and outside the classroom also plays a very important role. However, in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts such as Japan, class time is insufficient (non-English majors have two ninety-minute classes a week in their first year of studies), and 'students do not have ready-made contexts for communication beyond their classrooms' (Brown 2001; 116).

There has been a slow but steady response to this challenge in Japan. It began with the introduction of Self-Access Language Learning (SALL) in the 1990's, culminating in the proliferation of Self-Access Centres (SACs) in the 2000's. These are all well intentioned innovations for getting students to use English, which is central to the overall teaching aims of many teachers in Japan. However, some SACs have an over-supply of, and over-reliance on resources and form-focused materials. In response to this, Language Interaction Spaces (LIS) have been set up, and these have less obstruction from an overabundance of resources. This has resulted in more emphasis on meaning-focused, learner-to-learner interactions, and these are becoming an increasingly important part of SALL.

This paper focuses on one such space at a Japanese university, which was set up in 2005 as part of the English program's pedagogical innovations.

The project

The language interaction space called World Plaza (WP) at the Seto Campus of Nanzan University in Aichi Japan was set up to provide non-English majors with the activities that would enable them to take the all-important step from being language learners to language users. The activities were of such type and intensity that they not only linked the in-class learning to the interaction space, but they also enabled learners to actually use the language as themselves – that is, as agents with unique identities and histories (Ushioda 2011). Thus, the students ultimately made this space different from the resource-oriented traditional SAC where silence was a golden rule.

This presentation covers the first four years (2005-2009) of the WP as the centre was being established. It was developed using the 'material-light, activity-focused' principle of SALL, and it was based on a 'learner-centred, skill-integrated' pedagogical rationale of encouraging speaking. Speaking in the WP was planned through teacher-directed and learner-directed activities. The former were called push activities, during which students could do interactive homework set by their teachers. They were designed to link in-class learning with SALL, and they served to introduce students to the WP. While completing their homework, some learners realized the benefits of SALL and started including WP visits in their weekly schedules. The latter were called pull activities, where learners could participate voluntarily in activities organized in the space. These were offered to students with higher motivation for using the facility and interacting in English. They were designed to reflect the assumption that learners have favourable attitudes towards the language, and that they are willing to widen their knowledge both of the global society and of core language content issues.

The nature and types of these activities (World Plaza Activities, WPACs for short) are presented below in a four-quadrant framework - see Figure 1. They were designed according to teacher and learner-directedness and the number of materials required to do the tasks. Everyday planning strove towards the ultimate goal of a learner-centred language interaction space with learner-directed events that required few or no materials at all.

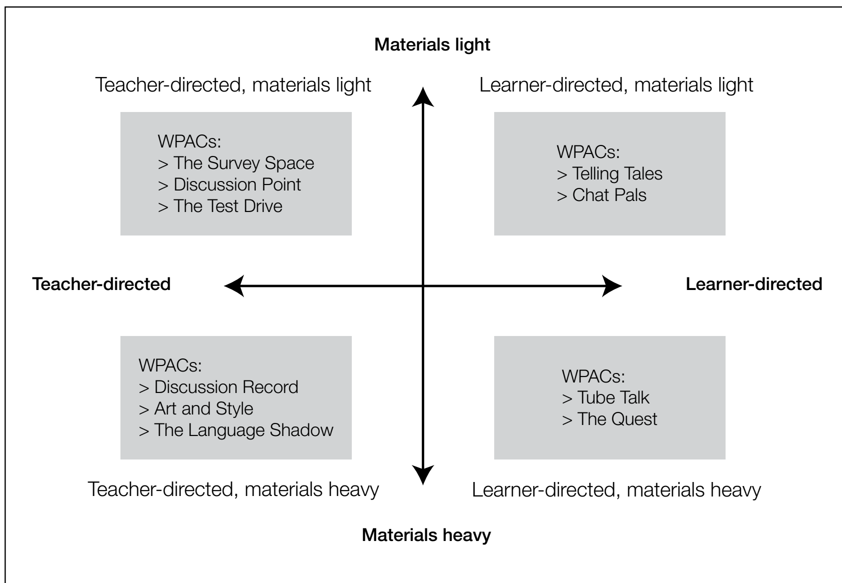

Figure 1: Framework showing the nature and types of WPAC; teacher-directed v learner-directed, materials heavy v materials light

Implications

The set-up described is still in place six years later. Prior to the conference, observations were made and discussions were held with the current coordinator and student assistants, and there was an air of optimism about the project. The WP has been extended to the main campus where it works even better as it has a big English department and many more foreign students and Japanese returnees. The WP at both campuses remains a place where learners can concentrate on speaking English in an environment that lends itself to target-language only communication. As the current coordinator stated:

> Bigger numbers would mean even more satisfaction, but how much do you want to push the students? We are satisfied anyway with those who come and keep the magic.

The key word is space and the importance learners attach to it. This is what Murray and his colleagues also underlined in their presentation at the ILAC 2012, 'The power of place: autonomy and space.' They explored the ways in which the learners attach meanings to a space, transform it into a place, and how this impacts on their language learning. It does so, as Hughes et al. (2001) have noted, by enabling the learners to engage in a kind of socialization that 'encourages language development as learners experience a wider variety of patterns of L2 interaction than they would otherwise not have access to' (p. 289). The World Plaza at Nanzan Seto is one example of possible innovations that EFL teachers can undertake; to connect in-class input to modified

interaction outside the classroom; to provide learners with ready-made contexts to mitigate for the insufficient classroom time for language practice; and ultimately to enable them to take the step from being simply learners of English, to becoming confident users of English as the lingua franca of international communication.

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3.8 Overlapping lines between learner autonomy and the use of ICT in a Mexican blended-learning English course

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The current strong interest that our School of Languages has in both autonomous learning and the use of technology comes from two main issues: its development of a self-access centre and the design and implementation of a Blended Learning Educational Model (BLEM) for the teaching of English to undergraduate students attending all other schools of UJED (Duran Howard and Reyes Fierro 2006).

It is the second of these issues, the BLEM, which forms the context for this study. In BLEM, two learning modalities make one significant aim possible, that is, 'face-to-face classes and technology-based instruction are systematically converged to support and enhance learners' interaction' (Graham 2006). Accordingly, tasks are designed to be performed within three spiral stages of activities, as can be seen in Figure 1.

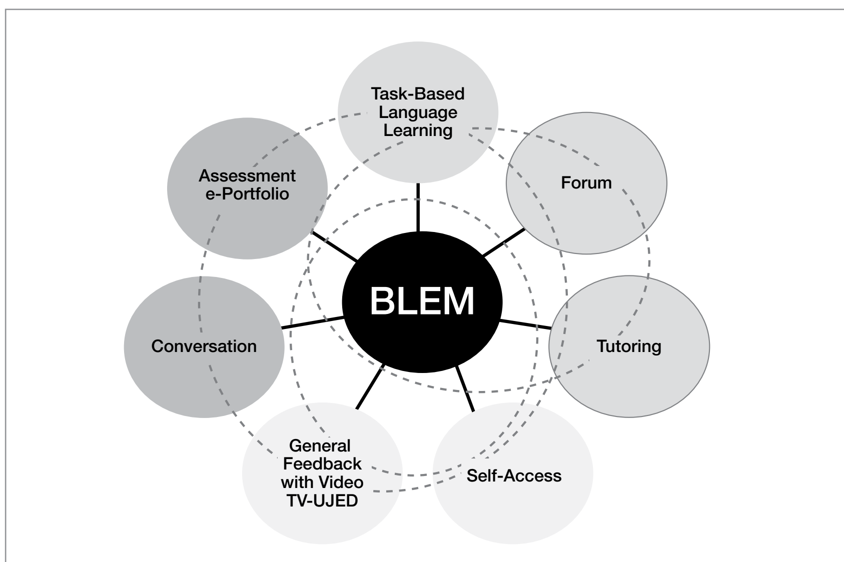

Figure 1: Blended-Learning Educational Model (BLEM) (Durán Howard and Reyes Fierro 2006)

In the first stage, learners complete an independent task with the support of online interaction through a forum (Moodle). Then, tasks are peer-assessed and feedback is received within a face-to-face tutor-moderated session. The second stage starts with self-access independent work with the use of software, online resources and learning objectives for self-study of grammar and pronunciation, with the aim of making changes to the outcomes presented in the first stage. After this, the students watch a pre-recorded video containing explanations and examples related to commonly observed problems, so that learners can self-assess their updated outcomes. In the third stage, learners participate in face-to-face oral interactions to use the language acquired up to that point. Then they integrate their e-portfolio using a blog (Blogger) and an online media delivery system (DivShare), as a means of self and peer-evaluating the samples of learning. At this stage, learners also use other technological tools to produce their learning samples, such as PowerPoint or VideoLive Mail with a Webcam for recording their own videos and Before you Know It, for designing and studying their glossaries.

Study and methodology

The study presented at the ILA Conference was aimed at evaluating the effect of the strategic use of ICT tools for fostering learner autonomy in an e-blended learning English course taught to elementary undergraduate students within the aforementioned teaching-learning framework. The research question was formulated as: What is the relationship between the strategic use of ICT tools and the fostering of language learner autonomy? Four learners from the BSc in Human Medicine were interviewed and answered a survey with indirect questions.

Selected findings

There seems to be a relationship between ICT and the fostering of language learner autonomy, since the strategic uses of the tools encouraged 'learners' capacity to exercise control over their own learning' (Benson 2011). However, the following four issues arose:

1. Learners showed disagreement with peer-assessment and feedback, and complained about the poor interaction between students and the tutor in the forums.
2. Most of the participants seemed to require a high level of tutor support. In addition, they showed dependence on the tutor rather than on their peers when addressing the need for help with some of the tools that could be used independently, such as learning objectives for grammar and glossaries.
3. Although one of the learners considered the e-portfolio valuable only in terms of learning to use ICT, the others valued it as a means for evaluating their progress and promoting reflection on their learning.
4. Self-motivation appeared to be present in only 2 of the 4 the learners, who acknowledged the variety of tools, the fun factor and the increasing (spiralled) complexity. The other two learners were still attached to face-to-face, teacher-centred classes and considered that the use of technology was excessive.

Conclusions

Considering these findings, it appears that most of the strategic uses of the tools were not effective in terms of promoting language learner autonomy. For this reason, beyond revising the scaffolding processes involved, there is also a need for training learners to be more aware of their learning and equipping them with 'learning to learn' skills. Similarly, meaningful face-to-face and online interactions, both peer-to-peer and peer-to-tutor should be strengthened in order to facilitate real, social uses of language that, in the words of one of the learners, 'make one feel part of a group'.

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3.9 Installing independent learning devices into a learner corpus-based e-learning platform for EFL students who are writing academic papers

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Introduction

Writing academic papers requires EFL students to have strong language knowledge and multiple skills for using the target language (Bailey 2011). In this research project a web-based independent learning support system, which included five learning tools, was developed to assist the students in writing graduation papers in English. This paper presents an evaluation of these tools and reports on whether they fostered autonomous learning.

Background

EFL university students must develop competency and independence in the area of 'proper word choice' and 'natural and effective use of phrases' when writing an academic paper on a self-chosen topic in English. To acquire such a competence level, they first have to become independent learners through a long repetitive process of trial-and-error. Throughout this process, the students need an efficient study-aid system for individual support comprised of suitable materials for reference and consultation, as shown by Fukushima, Watanabe, Kinjo, Yoshihara and Suzuki (2012).

Purpose

The purpose of this project was firstly, to clarify the developmental process of acquiring academic writing competence and secondly, to develop a web-based independent learning system supporting students in acquiring that competence. As an example, the students' academic writing showed competence in using basic academic vocabulary but they were lacking proficiency in using conjunctions and modal adjuncts in the proper position or with the most suitable collocations.

Finally, the whole independent learning system was evaluated by analyzing student feedback written in the learners' L1.

Independent learning devices: design features

Preceding the introduction of the independent learning tools, an investigation into the type of support the target students needed was conducted by analyzing a corpus of 900,000 running words of students' graduation papers from several standpoints, and by comparing the data from this corpus with the General Service List (GSL), Academic Word List (AWL), and Michigan Corpus of Upper-Level Student Papers (MICUSP). Based on the findings from the initial studies, the following five features including outsourcing materials were set up on an e-learning platform:

1. Sentence Search System, which provides students with data of model papers
2. Weblio, a web-based multimedia compendium of dictionaries, bibliographies, and encyclopedias developed by Weblio, Inc.
3. NativeChecker, an online service developed by Kaisei Hamamoto to offer corpus data collected from web texts produced by native speakers of English
4. Tutorials, which provide students with opportunities to learn certain problematic points with example materials
5. AWL exercises

Empirical study results: student system evaluation

To improve the system, all of the negative comments (mainly requests for additional functions) were taken into account in the development of a newer version. In addition, the positive comments were carefully analyzed, particularly for signs of students' awareness of, or change of attitude toward, independent learning.

The mini-corpus of positive comments totaling 4,339 running words clearly brought out some characteristic features of students becoming independent learners. For example, the high frequency of the phrase sentaku-dekiru (be able to choose) occurred in the contexts as follows: subject areas (disciplines); graduation years; more than one item; display of pre- and/or post- sentence; and/or search. This shows that the students realized that they could search for answers to their individual questions themselves, by choosing from a corresponding discipline, category, and/or focus point.

Other comments suggesting the learners' focus toward independent learning were:

- 'anybody can use it' (7 cases)
- 'to feel closer to the sample materials because they were all written by students who previously graduated from the same department' (4 cases)
- 'will serve as a good reference' (2 cases)
- 'I really want to use the system when I write my graduation paper', ' It'll be a powerful support when writing a GP', and 'It will surely help me acquire a good language foundation' (1 case each).

The usage frequency of the word, jibun, meaning 'I myself' was definitely high. It

was 0.737% (32/4339 words), compared with a ratio of 0.199% (36,408/18,253, 088),which was calculated based on the Japanese standard corpus complied by Tanaka, Izawa, Saito, Tanahashi, Kondo, Kawauchi, Suzuki, and Hirayama (2011). Furthermore, it was used with various verbs and auxiliary verbs as illustrated in Figure 1.

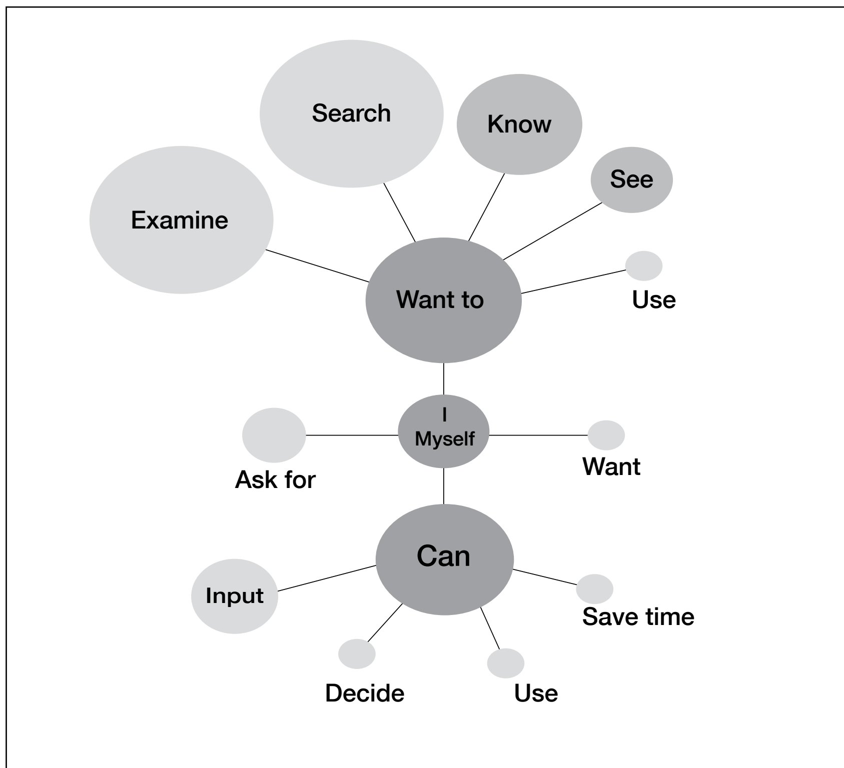

Figure 1: Usage frequency of 'I myself' (jibun) with verbs and auxiliary verbs indicating 'independent learning'

Conclusions

Empirical data from the Japanese EFL students' comments about the mini-corpus showed that the system has potential for supporting students to become independent learners. Furthermore, to improve the system, all of the students' improvement requests were acted upon. In addition, the data acquired by examining the students' input when using the Sentence Search System will be utilized when developing the Tutorials section. Students' performance progress with the use of the system remains to be confirmed.

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3.10 Perception of independent learning in a technical course for engineering students

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This summary reports on the findings of a study of independent learning (IL) perceptions yielded from a cohort of engineering students before and after taking a technical English course titled Professional and Technical Oral Communication for Engineers (ProTech), offered in a Hong Kong university. ProTech deals entirely with technical presentation skills; participants were required to give three presentations over the length of the course. Recycling and improvement of the skills learnt were expected. In addition to assessing students' on-the-spot presentation performance, ProTech required that students take part in out-of-class independent learning, and reflect on it to improve and refine the skills taught, practised and assessed in class (Lau 2012). Three weaknesses were identified by the teachers and the students themselves, after initial presentations, and the students then looked for learning resources to improve those weaknesses in two to three weeks. The teachers would indicate to what extent students made improvements in those identified areas based on the performance of the next presentation. This arrangement not only made the learning experiences coherent, but students could also see the immediate impact of their IL efforts, which would in turn sustain their motivation of participating in IL.

Two online questionnaire surveys were administered to course participants before and after taking ProTech, to track if there were changes in their perceptions of IL. A word-association question was introduced to the questionnaires, in which respondents were asked to come up with three terms that they associated with 'independent learning'. The technique was adapted from the concept of 'semantic proximity' (Bahar and Hansell 2000: 352) suggesting that more relevant and central

concepts tend to be retrieved faster, and that associated words give rise to mind maps/webs which may reflect some kind of relationship or network of meaning from the subject's perspective. The word-association technique was modified for use in this study to collect general understanding from a large group of respondents. In this study it was impossible, and also irrelevant, to verify which word came to a participant's mind first. More in-depth accounts of responses were gathered through conducting semi-structured interviews with consenting participants.

In order to track perceptual changes (if any) emerging from the course participants, only the findings yielded from those who completed both questionnaires (n=95) were included. In the pre-course survey, the 10 words/terms most frequently mentioned by respondents were: active, reading, library, individual, alone, self-study, free, difficult, internet and self-disciplined. As for the post-course survey: active, reflection, reading, improvement, myself, self-access, resources, important, learn and internet were mentioned most often. Comparing the participants' pre- and post-course responses, a number of observations were made. In the first instance, the term 'active' apparently has a strong connotation with IL as it had the highest frequency in both surveys' responses. An interviewee explained his choice of this term by linking IL to life skills, recognising the importance of taking an active role in learning instead of being spoon-fed 'you cannot just wait for others to feed you… you have to be motivated and have the thirst for learning'.

Another noteworthy observation is that the terms cited were predominantly evaluative (pre-course: 37.9%; post-course: 33.6%). There were mainly two kinds of evaluations, one pointing to the nature of the IL and the other to personal judgment. In the pre-course responses, the solitary nature of IL was highlighted through popular choices of the terms individual, alone, and self-study and negative sentiments were reflected in the term difficult.

As for the post-course responses, the instrumental value of IL appears to have been recognised through the positively-evaluated term 'important', together with terms of relatively lower frequencies such as: 'useful', 'helpful', 'lifelong', 'motivating' and 'worthwhile'. Such differences in evaluations largely came down to the course planning where the learners' efforts and time spent on IL had an immediate impact on their subsequent presentations. One of the participants interviewed had a very vague idea about IL before the course began and considered it hard because he had never had any experience of it. However, he picked three very positive terms: 'necessary', 'valuable' and 'new' for his post-course responses. He even reiterated that he had not chosen the term 'hard' because he had already got used to IL. He considered IL 'very, very necessary' because it not only improved his presentation skills but also his research skills, which were both valuable for the study of other subjects. IL also changed his way of thinking about learning, as he had been used to a teacher-oriented approach in Mainland China whereas ProTech provided him with a learner-centred experience:

> I have to think in this new system but I don't have to think in that system … you really do something responsible to yourself but previous experience told me teacher is very resourceful.

Lastly, the importance of reflecting on independent learning experiences (Gardner and Miller 1999) was also recognised, as evidenced by the fact that the term 'reflection' was never mentioned by any of the 95 participants in the pre-course survey, but it became the second most frequently mentioned term in the post-course survey. It is pleasing to see that ProTech participants considered reflection inherent in IL.

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3.11 Assisting low socio-economic status (SES) students' transition to tertiary education: scaffolding online

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Introduction

The majority of online, self-access materials, aimed at developing the academic and disciplinary language and literacies skills of students in tertiary institutions, are generic in focus and provide information and instruction at the basic level of general essay/report writing. Even when a website differentiates between disciplines, the focus is still generic (for example, 'scientific writing' or 'how to write a lab report') rather than tailored to specific assignments of individual courses. Admittedly, the creation of such online materials at the course-level can be very time-consuming and costly, and this, compounded with a diminished target audience size, negates one of the main benefits of online instruction: being cost-effective and delivering instruction to a large number of students (Reinders and White 2010).

Pedagogical approaches influenced by socio-cultural theory however, suggest that instruction in the form of guidance in a particular task should be situated in context and tailored to the task and the specific learner (Hammond and Gibbons 2001). In addition, much literature on online self-access materials has reported poor uptake (Reinders and White ibid.) and it is possible that part of the reason for this may be a perceived irrelevance of the materials to the actual tasks that the students are faced with in their various courses.

Materials

In an effort to examine the feasibility and benefits of task- and course-specific online instruction of disciplinary language and literacies skills, optional online self-access materials were created for two compulsory undergraduate first-year courses. The materials were created as part of a project aimed at providing language and literacies support for students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds during their transition to undergraduate study at a university in Sydney, Australia. This was because it had been suggested that one of the challenges facing these students was a relative lack of familiarity with the written genres they may encounter at university.

Four online modules were created: three for a physics course and one for an information technology course. Each module presented information and activities aimed at developing understanding of textual/linguistic features typical of the genre and context represented by a particular assignment. Drawing on principles from socio-cultural theory, genre-based literacy pedagogy (systemic functional

linguistics), and transition pedagogy (Kift 2009), each module guided students in exploring the context(s) of the assignment, as well as the student-instructor interaction and the professional communicative genre. It discussed the assignment and its relation to content, organizational and presentational choices in the text. For example, an assignment may assign a student the role of professional consultant for a non-IT client; yet, the instructor may desire more technical explanation than may be appropriate in a typical IT professional-layperson interaction. The online materials attempted to raise the student's awareness of the impact of such contextual factors and develop skills by which the student may successfully navigate them. Interactive features such as multiple-choice questions and pop-up annotations were included to raise student engagement with the materials and to elicit student knowledge, as opposed to simply presenting information.

Findings

Student response to the materials was quite positive. Access and usage of two of the modules were high: 78% and 62% of all students in the course. Access rates for the remaining modules were lower: 40% and 38%. Timing, frequency, and the method of promotion of the materials seem to have influenced uptake. For example, one of the less-accessed modules was presented to students electronically (e-mail and Blackboard/WebCT) during the semester break. Prior knowledge may have influenced the other modules; one less-accessed module was about writing a lab report, a genre many students may have felt they already understood from previous experience.

Feedback through responses to a survey was very positive, with 86.5% of respondents reporting that the materials were easy to use and understand, and 87.9% reporting that the materials were useful. The overwhelming majority of open-ended comments were also positive, including comments such as 'I found it very easy to understand because it was short, concise, and the information was relevant.'

The t-test analyses, comparing the final assignment scores of students who accessed the materials with those who did not, also revealed a positive evaluation of the materials in small but statistically significant differences in three of the four modules ($p<.05$).

Moving forward

Interviews with individual students could provide more specific insight into which aspects of the materials are most useful. A module creation/editing system has now been developed through which additional modules can be created and maintained with no further expenditure on webpage development. It is intended that a bank of materials will be created for a large number of courses in all faculties of the university.

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3.12 Online orientation to promote student success

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Introduction

The Open Polytechnic Learning Centre promotes student success by offering several online study skills workshops. These workshops are made up of a series of modules, designed using Moodle (a learning management system), which contain activities that students work through at their own pace. These online activities are supported by a Learning Adviser who can answer queries directly via an online forum. The latest development has been a full online orientation which has modules covering what it means to study online and how to access key student support services. It is aimed at first-time students in a distance/online environment and is a stepping stone to other online workshops such as those focused on specific study skills or exam techniques. This summary provides a brief overview of the online orientation, its aims, contents and approach, and ends with feedback from students and ideas for future development.

Background

Most Open Polytechnic students are mature students who fit study around work, family and other commitments. They choose to study by distance because it suits their needs even though they may be new to academic or tertiary study and the online learning environment. The Polytechnic provides a range of courses from certificate to degree level, in subject areas ranging from psychology to education to vocational fields such as engineering and pharmacy. To succeed in these courses, first-time students in particular, need to be able to quickly adapt to the

online, distance environment, and it is with this aim that the online orientation was developed.

Students need to feel comfortable, capable and in control of their learning to be successful (McAlpine 2009). Considering this and the average student profile, the online orientation is designed to be welcoming, interactive, informative, motivating and easy to navigate. It includes key information required by first-time students and is designed to be completed across several hours. Information is presented in several formats including text, graphics and video, so students can access it in several ways. All modules are voluntary and students can pick and choose what areas they would like to cover.

In addition to this, the online orientation follows e-learning design principles outlined by Elias (2010). These include using a simple and intuitive interface which is easy to understand regardless of learner experience; allowing flexible use by providing a range of resources accessible anytime and anywhere; and providing learner community and support through discussion forums. The modules were designed using Moodle, with Smart Board software to develop screen capture video guides and Adobe Creative Suite CS6 to create animated videos.

Promoting student success

A review of the literature in the areas of student retention and achievement reveals that successful students are organized, habitual in their learning, proactive in seeking help and reflective of their individual strengths and weaknesses (Zimmerman 2001). To address the first two factors, the online orientation includes content on time management, planning and goal-setting. Then, throughout the online orientation, students are given information via mini-video tutorials on the support services available. This support may include discussions with their tutors, the Learning Centre, library and helpdesk, and students are encouraged to connect with them as soon as possible. Students also begin the process of reflection through a series of quizzes where they are asked to consider their study environment, habits and test their understanding of how things work at the Open Polytechnic.

In addition to time management, planning and goal-setting, support services and reflection as outlined above, the online orientation includes the following five sections:

1. A Welcome section with an introductory video from a learning adviser, a link to a welcome video from the chief executive of the institution, and the means for students to look forward to their final successful outcome – a video of interviews with Open Polytechnic graduates at their graduation ceremony.
2. A Getting Started section with useful information about distance learning and how to succeed in an online learning environment.
3. An Online Campus guide with information on the Open Polytechnic's online interface and course management systems.
4. A section on Common issues for first-time students which uses animated video

clips to address key issues that first-time students face, such as how to submit assignments or get help.

5. A where to go next section which shows students how to connect with the Open Polytechnic community via its Facebook page and provides information on further online workshops run by the Learning Centre.

Participant feedback

The feedback from initial participants was generally very positive:

- 'A fantastic introduction to online study'.
- 'It helps to connect through the forums, but also with the videos showing how to use the campus, Learning Centre, library and so on'.
- 'It empowers and would definitely motivate new students'.

There was also some negative feedback mainly relating to technical issues, such as long download times for videos, which will be addressed in the second iteration.

Conclusion

The online orientation is a new initiative that aims to support first time students to become familiar with the online campus environment, services and community. It aims to support student success by offering a positive and engaging experience, as well as key information and tools that align with student success factors and e-learning principles. It has received positive feedback from students so far. In the future, further research needs to be done on the actual impact the online orientation has on student success in their studies. In addition to looking at retention and pass rates, tutor feedback will be obtained to help judge any improved student performance as a result of participating in the online orientation.

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3.13 How do learners change their attitude towards learning through collaborative learning?: a report from a JSL classroom

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Background

Currently, the importance of learner-centred education has increased in Japanese language teaching. However, the majority of research focuses on the importance of the teacher's role and effective teaching methods, and it is rare for research to focus on the learner's development and their attitudes towards learning through learner-centered education. Therefore, this research was conducted to examine the influence of learner-centered education upon learners.

Research participants

Research participants were ODA technical trainees who came to Japan mainly from Southeast Asia. They study Japanese as a Second Language (JSL) and culture for 6 weeks before going into training in Japanese companies.

Introducing collaborative learning

In the training center for ODA trainees, Japanese lessons were mainly taught through the Audio-Lingual Method because it has the advantage of helping beginners build up their Japanese skills quickly over a short period of time. Nevertheless, their abilities are generally limited to situations that they have studied in the lessons. Furthermore, it is difficult for them to continue studying independently after going on to training in companies. The students were organised into two classes and collaborative learning was introduced to overcome the weak points associated with teacher-centered learning, firstly in terms of maintaining student motivation, as discussed in Dörnyei (2001), and Dörnyei and Murphey (2003), and secondly, development of the skills necessary to manage their own learning and independent study.

Data collection

Data was collected from learners in three classes from June to November 2011. Field notes about how the classes were progressing and how learners acted were taken, during 156 hours of instruction. In addition, eleven learners took part in a questionnaire and had counselling about their Japanese studies. The students were also interviewed individually once or twice a week for approximately one hour each.

Teachers' strategies and learners' reactions

From the beginning of the course, pattern practice between the eleven learners was introduced as well as group activities, such as playing games and competing with other groups in the classroom. During these activities they were asked to correct each other's errors as much as possible. However the following examples illustrate that negative attitudes were observed and that students had complained about this kind of learning.

> *'When I instruct them to ask their classmates, only a few trainees (learners) do. They seem reluctant to do it.'* (02/06/2011 field notes).

> *'Why doesn't the teacher teach us?'* (02/06/2011 interview).

At the same time, learners' special abilities were consistently monitored with the specific focus of forming pairs or groups of trainees who would complement each other's strengths and weaknesses. The result of this was that, after about three weeks, learners' feelings and attitudes gradually improved.

> *'They seemed to enjoy conversation using a dictionary and correcting each other'* (21/10/2011 field notes).

> *'I can find friends who can explain things I can't understand.'* (11/08/2010 interview).

In the beginning of the course, they wanted the teacher to tell them the answers. However, after they learned that their classmates could give them the answers as well as the teacher did, they began asking not their teacher but their fellow trainees.

In the middle of the course, learners were asked to conduct a short vocabulary lesson every morning in which they took on the role of the teacher. Through this activity, they said they seemed to gain confidence in their own abilities. Jacky said to Jira:

> *'teach me please, Sensei'.* (28/07/2011 field notes).

He began to ask his classmates rather than the teacher for help.

> *'In this class, I really enjoy studying; because everyone is different [each learner has a special skill]. That is why I don't need to feel anxious'.* (23/09/2011 interview).

Beyond the classroom

Initially learners reviewed and prepared for lessons in their rooms by themselves. However, midway through the course, there were some changes in their methods of studying outside the classroom.

> *'We have recently begun studying in the lobby after lessons. We memorize the words and quiz each other. Bin always quizzes us on Japanese characters'.* (11/10/2012 interview).

> *'We quiz each other in advance on new words, dictation of letters, and pronunciation'.* (11/10/2011 interview).

The most notable aspect in the development of individual learner's self-directed learning is that they began to adopt the role of the teacher and organize learning activities.

Conclusions

There are three methods that teachers can use to encourage collaborative learning:

1. They need to make their students aware that every learner has their own unique abilities, and that they can manage to solve problems and develop their learning themselves.
2. They need to introduce activities which the students can conduct independently. Through these activities, students get used to collaborative learning.
3. They should encourage their students to 'play the role of a teacher'. By simulating the teacher's role, learners can consider learning from the perspective of managing learners' learning and activities. This experience broadens their view of language learning and encourages active learning.

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3.14 Development of a corpus-assisted writing system for research papers by science and technology students

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Introduction

Using corpora as a resource to support foreign language writing has been a focus of study in recent years (Yoon 2011). This paper discusses the effectiveness of a corpus-based Web application, the Technical English Tool (TET), that aids non-native speakers of English (NNSs) in writing academic English documents in science and technology.

Writing academic papers in English is a challenging task especially for students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings where their first language is used for content learning, and the number of English language classes is limited (Evans and Green 2007). TET aims to support students' out-of-class autonomous learning with accessible and relevant information to carry out the authentic task of academic writing.

Key features of the TET application

The TET application with built-in corpora aids NNSs in writing technical academic documents in English. A screenshot of the application is shown in Figure 1. Its features include:

1. retrieving sentences that are similar to the users' input, based on calculated similarities
2. retrieving these similar sentences a second time with keywords replaced by synonyms
3. considering domain-specific multi-word-expressions of the relevant field
4. summarizing long output sentences in order to show the underlying basic structures (Miyazaki et al 2011)

The corpora currently available for the TET application are journal articles of natural language processing, bio-engineering, and the journal Nature.

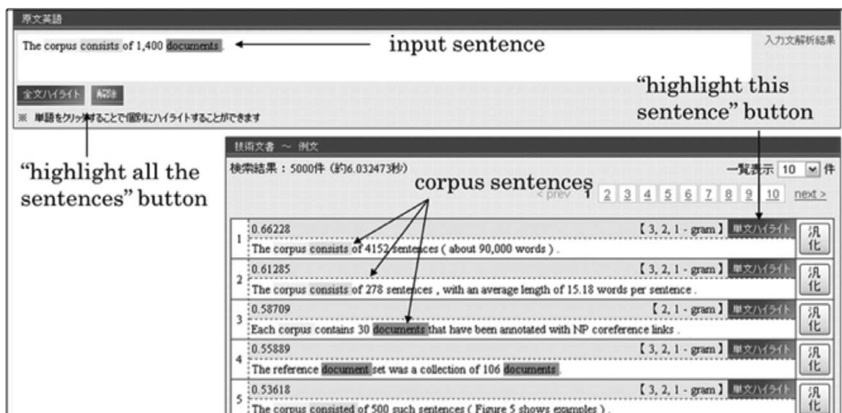

Figure 1: A Screenshot of the TET application

Experimental method

For formative evaluation of the TET application, an experiment was conducted. One paragraph from a Japanese edition of Nature and one paragraph from a journal of natural language processing were chosen. Two sentences from each paragraph were selected to be translated into English.

Fourteen Japanese researchers and graduate students from engineering faculties were asked to translate the Japanese sentences into English. Participants first translated the sentences using only an ordinary Japanese-English dictionary. Then, the participants edited the English sentences using the TET application. Both non-TET and TET versions of the sentences were recorded and kept for comparison.

Three NNSs and two NSs, all university professors, rated the two sets of English sentences, 112 in total, using a 5-point scale, from 5: Accurate both in grammar and in meaning to 1: Very poor both in grammar and in meaning. Pre- and post-task questionnaires were given regarding the participants' demographic data such as English use and proficiency levels, and participants were asked for their comments on this experiment. The part in italics is an example from one of the tasks:

> *Agama lizards jump quite well, and have a remarkable ability to land safely. In a paper published on Nature's website today, Libby et al. describe a study in which they filmed agamas jumping from a horizontal platform to a vertical wall.* (Nature, 4 January 2012)

Results and discussion

There was no significant difference between the scores of the sentences which were written without the use of the TET application, and those which were revised using the application. The average score of the response to a post-questionnaire item, 'The application gave good information to improve the originally written

sentence' was 2.6 out of 5, indicating a somewhat low satisfaction level among the users about its utility. One possible explanation for this is the time constraint in the design of the experiment. Nine out of fourteen participants responded that the allotted time was too short. This could possibly lead to insufficient revisions.

In the post-questionnaire 'the synonym group search' and 'relevant word highlight' functions received positive responses, 3.8 and 3.4 out of 5 respectively. Still, the overall evaluation was not particularly positive. Participants' comments indicated that the application would be useful when they achieved mastery of it, or when they became proficient enough to be able to choose the most appropriate word among the proposed synonyms in the given text quickly.

Conclusions

A corpus-assisted research-paper-writing application was developed, and its key features were introduced. The experiment results indicated that the application did not improve users' writing explicitly. The application was useful in offering alternative expressions, although this did not lead to an improvement during evaluation. Removing the time limitation could allow participants to use the TET more efficiently as an autonomous learning tool. The relevance of the corpus from which the TET's suggestions are selected to the user's research field could be another factor influencing its usefulness. Equipping the application with a wider selection of corpora seems necessary. Also, closer observation of user interactions could lead to more accurate evaluation of the utility of the TET application.

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3.15 Training new teachers to promote self-directed learning

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Introduction

This paper reports on a small-scale project to work with teachers who have little or no familiarity or previous experience with self-directed learning (SDL). The goal is to raise the level of awareness of those teachers about issues related to the promotion of SDL. This project is situated within the context of a tertiary level institution in Hong Kong where the curriculum is about to undergo vast changes which necessitate the integration of SDL into 33 English-in-the-Discipline (academic literacy) courses. The project is the second stage in an attempt to understand existing challenges and to prepare teachers, willing or not, to embrace the integration of SDL into the curriculum. These teachers will need a clear understanding of the concept of SDL and its connection with learner autonomy in order to support the learners required to engage in it.

Background

The researchers collected data from teachers who are novices to SDL teaching on one existing course already containing a substantial SDL component. Students' attitudes to SDL on this course were studied earlier (Gardner 2007). More recently, Lai (2011) examined the challenges the teachers face and their perceptions of the support they need. In that study Lai proposed a programme of in-service teacher development aimed at preparing teachers to support their students' SDL. The Orientation, Workshops and Learner Autonomy Facilitation Resources (OWL) outlined in the programme match exactly the support those teachers requested.

Context

The current project is a first attempt to actualize some aspects of OWL by providing an orientation package consisting of a pre-course briefing; a tour of the university's Language Resource Centre (LRC); and a bibliography.The pre-course briefing explained SDL and its role in the taught course, and included a question and answer session. The tour, which was conducted by the departmental self-access manager, provided insights into issues students face with English and the resources and activities available to help. The annotated bibliography directed users to the most accessible literature for both an overview and for areas of focus within the field. The annotations guided users to the recommended read for each section and to other further reading.

Six teachers who were new or nearly new to SDL participated in the study. Pre- and post-course questionnaires were used to find changes in participants' perceptions of: SDL, the teachers' own roles, and their self-reported capabilities in promoting SDL. An evaluation of the training package was also conducted. After the course, teachers were interviewed to discuss in greater depth their questionnaire responses.

Findings

There are a number of interesting aspects to teachers' perceptions of SDL but in summary it was found that even though the teachers were clearly not well informed about SDL, four of them were positive about it from the outset and became even more positive after teaching the course. The other two were uncertain at the beginning and became positive by the end. One initially uncertain teacher was influenced by memories of his own behaviour as a student but changed his opinion when he experienced his students' seriousness towards SDL. The other initially uncertain teacher had doubted her own ability to relinquish control but was happy to discover she could do it during the course and thus became positive about SDL. All evidence of teachers' positive perceptions relates to their students' level of engagement with SDL.

Findings about the orientation package are also interesting but in summary show that the teachers were largely not impressed with it. They found the tour of the LRC useful and the annotated resource list not useful at all. In fact, some did not even look at it. This is surprising because the request by teachers for such a list featured strongly in Lai's (ibid) earlier research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in the attempt to support teachers who are novices to SDL it was found that they were largely positive about SDL but it was not because of the orientation package. In particular, the previously much-requested annotated resource list was not well-received. OWL is undoubtedly necessary given the challenges ahead but ways need to be found to make it more relevant to the users. The feedback received in the interviews has triggered a range of ideas revolving around content and mode of delivery that will be used to upgrade the package.

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3.16 English: a case study of a Japanese learner

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Background

Tandem learning is a mode of learning in which two partners with different mother tongues work together to learn language and culture from each other, based on the two principles of learner autonomy and reciprocity (Little and Brammerts 1996). Previous research has shown that tandem learning is effective in improving communicative competence, intercultural awareness, and learner autonomy (Lewis 2003). It also fosters motivation (Ushioda 2000). However, it is hard to find research shedding light on the changes in participants' attitudes towards learning a target language through tandem learning. This paper reports on how tandem learning changed one Japanese learner's attitude towards learning English.

Data

The research is based on multiple data, including recordings of tandem sessions, learning diaries, resources used in tandem sessions, email logs, field notes, and post-research interviews.These data are analyzed and constructed into a story. The protagonist is Kimura, a Japanese university student learning English in face-to-face tandem learning.

Kimura's story

Before participating in tandem learning, Kimura felt awkward when addressed by foreigners and he had a complex about English conversations although he had studied English for about ten years. Kimura had several classmates from overseas and he envied their ease in speaking English. He said 'It would be really fun if I could talk in English as well as they could.' After deep consideration, he decided to take part in a face-to-face tandem learning programme in order to improve his English conversation skills, communicate with foreigners, and share ideas and differences in value and culture with people from diverse cultures. He was paired with an English speaker, Arnold, from India. Shortly after joining the programme, Kimura started listening to English learning tutorials on his MP3 player during his daily two-hour train ride to school. He tried to use the key phrases he learned from these tutorials in his conversations with Arnold during tandem sessions.

Their tandem sessions continued for about 6 months. They had 14 sessions in total, each session lasting one and a half to two hours. In the beginning, Kimura and Arnold practised by doing role-plays of some situations such as how to ask and explain directions. After some weeks, they started exchanging information about Japanese and Indian cultures. In later sessions, Kimura and Arnold talked about

everyday topics and discussed one topic in their target languages for the entire session.

In the 14th session, when they talked about their favourite food, Kimura told Arnold that he couldn't cook at all, because his mother always cooked for him. Then Arnold taught Kimura in English how to make tandoori chicken and cheesecake with the help of drawings. After the session, Kimura added Japanese translations to the recipes in his 'tandem notebook', then he asked his mother to cook these recipes for dinner. Through the tandem sessions, Kimura came to know Arnold better. He said 'I hadn't had a long-term foreigner friend before. I made one in tandem learning for the first time and I am interested in global culture more'. He discovered that there was a person from another part of the world with whom he could build up a good relationship. His horizons expanded and that made him happy.

One day, Arnold invited Kimura to an Indian party and Kimura used English in a real situation and enjoyed talking with international students. After that, he attended another international party with his friends because of the opportunity to speak English in order to improve his new-found skills. Moreover, his attitude towards his research changed. He said 'I will actively use English abroad ... If I work on my research hard, I will have more chances to give presentations in English. So I will work harder'. In this way he is demonstrating a process that Ushioda (2000) describes, i.e. he overcame his reluctance to speak English and developed a positive attitude towards learning English. In fact, Kimura's affective learning experience through tandem learning helped direct his autonomous learning. Moreover, it changed his attitude toward learning English from negative to positive.

Conclusion

Kimura's story suggests some potential benefits of tandem learning that have not been reported in previous research. It helps learners to overcome awkwardness and reluctance to speak in a foreign language. The mechanism behind this change seems to be that tandem learners are able to practise their target language without feeling insecure, because their partner is a language learner as well as a proficient speaker of their target language and this enables the learners to speak the foreign language confidently.

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3.17 Learning Japanese beyond the classroom with internet resources: a case study of a Japanese major university student in Mainland China

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Introduction

For the past few years, there has been a growing interest in language learning beyond the classroom in the field of language education research. This is thought to have considerable implications for the theory of autonomy (Benson 2011a, 2011b). With the dramatic changes taking place in the language learning environment, such as the development of the internet and digital devices, Aoki and Nakata (2011) put forward a possible new approach; learner autonomy development without pedagogical interventions, in order to consider learners' spontaneous creation of out-of-class learning opportunities.

The study

The study focused on the story of a Japanese major university student in Mainland China, Li, who extensively used popular culture on the internet as a resource for his out-of-class learning activities. His story reveals what resources Li chose online, why he chose them, how he used them, and how his choice of resources and learning strategies changed over the four years of his university life.

Findings

There are four significant findings from Li's story. Firstly, the choices of out-of-class learning activities are related to the previous experiences of the learner. Li was a fan of Japanese games and animation when he was a child. He often watched Japanese animated shows on the internet for fun even before entering university. This led him to use these shows as a resource for learning Japanese after choosing Japanese language as his major.

Secondly, animation aided Li's self-motivation and self-evaluation. When Li was a first year student, although he understood the value of animation to help learn Japanese, he did not use it for this purpose but watched only for enjoyment. However, when he found out that he was able to understand some words as a result of watching the shows, he began to use it as a learning resource. In this regard, animation acted as a resource to keep Li motivated about learning Japanese, and provided him with a language environment for evaluation of his own language level.

Thirdly, while using internet resources for self-directed language learning, Li kept

changing resources and strategies according to the changes in his learning goals or the development of his proficiency. In the beginning, Li would watch any show he felt like simply for entertainment. After learning Japanese for about half a year, he found that he could understand some words in the shows, and as a result he started purposely using animation for the sake of learning. Li started looking up new words he heard in the shows, and he took notes and tried to remember them. When Li became a third year student at university, he realized that some shows were more useful than others for learning. He made short clips of dialogues that could be used in real life situations and put them into his iPod Touch in order to listen to them anywhere and anytime he liked. In order not to waste any time watching shows that would be useless for learning, Li sought out synopses of the latest animated shows online before watching them. He also started looking for shows without Chinese subtitles when he realized he understood most of what was said after watching them several times. After Li became a fourth year student at university, his ability had improved in such a way that he started making use of other resources on the internet, including Japanese songs, novels and comics.

Finally, out-of-class learning activities utilizing internet resources were influenced by other activities the learner took part in and by people close to him. In Li's second year, he took a compulsory beginner level Japanese class at university. This was the first time for him to have the chance to talk with a native Japanese speaker in real life. However, Li faced difficulties talking with the native Japanese teacher, and felt so down that he told his problems to his two other teachers. When he did so, the other teachers shared their own experiences of learning foreign languages with him, which encouraged Li to keep learning. After that, he tried to learn more Japanese, not only in class but also beyond the classroom, by watching animated shows online. In the following semester, Li had a chance to have a language exchange with one Japanese exchange student and he found that he was able to speak Japanese naturally.

Implications

Li's story has several implications for foreign language education:

1. Internet resources are a powerful means to provide learners with opportunities to exercise and develop learner autonomy.
2. It is crucial to encourage learners to find connections between their interests and language learning for them to utilize these opportunities.
3. Foreign language teachers can support learners' out-of class language learning by creating more chances for learners to use the target language to check their progress, as well as to maintain their motivation in out-of-class activities.

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3.18 Learning advisors in a classroom: fostering meta-cognitive skills through a self-directed learning course

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Introduction

Fostering learner autonomy has been a frequent theme in language teaching and learning. In the context of the Self-access Learning Centre (SALC) at Kanda University of International Studies, Learning Advisors (LAs) are engaged in individual support to foster autonomous learning outside the classroom setting. Although learners can consult an LA about their learning in an advising session, very few learners generally take advantage of the opportunity to do so.

For this reason, the SALC offers a self-directed learning course designed and taught by LAs to provide learners with an environment where advising sessions are embedded within a language learning context, namely, classroom-based advising (Carson 2012). Compared with regular advising sessions, which tend to be one-shot experiences, classroom-based advising sessions have a more positive impact on promoting learner autonomy because learners can obtain personalized guidance from LAs within the framework of a semester-long self-directed learning course.

Course description

The course is a 15-week English elective for third- and fourth-year Japanese university English majors. Classes meet twice per week for 90 minutes each time. Unlike other English electives, in which linguistic ability is the central goal, this course places more emphasis on improving meta-cognitive skills, which are considered to be indispensable for autonomous learning. Meta-cognitive skills are introduced to the learners as 'PIME': Planning, Implementing, Monitoring and Evaluating (Navarro and Thornton 2011). In light of the need to provide one-to-one classroom-based advising sessions for a class of up to twenty-four students, two LAs collaborate on the course implementation.

The key components of the course are four weeks of preparatory teacher-fronted lessons, then two 3-week learning cycles of self-directed learning, bookended by

30-minute one-to-one classroom-based advising sessions. During the preparation stage, the learners consider their beliefs about language learning and learn about the diversity of learning styles. They also have a chance to explore various learning materials so that they can expand the range of resources in their repertoires.

Following the teacher-fronted lessons, the learners implement their self-directed learning in two learning cycles, during which they monitor their PIME skills. The LAs shift roles from teacher to advisor, working with twelve students each and giving written feedback to the students about their weekly reflections on their self-directed learning. The reason for having two learning cycles instead of a single long one is to give learners another opportunity both to improve their PIME skills based on their reflection on the first cycle and to work on a different learning goal. During the second cycle, the learners are asked to upload their weekly reflections to a class blog and to give feedback to their peers online. The purposes of this assignment are to encourage learners to learn from each other and to promote the development of critical evaluative skills which they can apply to their own learning.

Integral to the course are two one-on-one, 30-minute classroom-based advising sessions for each student. The first session takes place before the first learning cycle and involves the learners talking through their learning plans, discussing their choices and rationales. The learners can also ask their learning advisors questions about materials and learning strategies as well as discuss any affective issues related to their learning. The second session comes at the end of the second learning cycle to allow the learners to reflect on their self-directed learning experiences and their self-evaluations of PIME. To enhance the learners' reflective processes, a visual tool called a PIME Chart is used, which was inspired by the Wheel of Language Learning (Yamashita and Kato 2012).

Recommendations for adaptation or adoption

The results of the end-of-course evaluations suggest that learners feel they benefit from the course in general, improving their awareness of meta-cognitive skills through the combination of their actual self-directed learning and the classroom-based advising. One consideration for future courses, however, is the online sharing of feedback among peers, which has received mixed evaluations. The positive feedback has mainly signaled the advantages of sharing learning affordances (for example, materials, activities and tips other students used). The negative feedback, on the other hand, suggests that some students are too busy with their own self-directed study to think about their peers' work deeply and to be able to provide thoughtful comments. Thus, some respondents question the value of their feedback to others. In short, learners might need more explicit guidance on the importance of learning from each other, even in self-directed learning.

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3.19 Using screen casts for writing feedback

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Introduction

Screen casts are live recordings (videos) of a computer screen as a lecturer shows how tasks are done on the computer. These recordings can also have audio recorded at the same time and the option of an embedded webcam, so that students can see the lecturer's face as well. Screencasts are particularly useful for writing feedback via email, and also for scaffolding to support interactive vocabulary or grammar revision. Russell Stannard (2012) has advocated for the importance of ongoing feedback via video and screen casts for years but in New Zealand they have not been used much in ESOL. Screen casts are useful for several reasons. They use visual, aural and kinesthetic ways of learning; they allow students to learn when they want, at their own pace; they let students learn from each other; and they give personalized feedback from the teacher. They have also been shown to be useful for writing feedback and for scaffolding instructions (Hynson 2012).

The interactive workshop at the ILA conference in Wellington demonstrated the free sites **www.screencast.com** and **www.screencast-o-matic.com**. It showed their relative advantages with examples of screen casts from ESOL adult learners, and illustrated the Internet Technology (IT) and language scaffolding via the Moodle-based 'Language Learning Centre'.

Background

Between 18-22 students in an Elementary class at Unitec had screen casts for weekly writing feedback on ten different portfolio tasks per semester over two years. Although portfolio tasks were not part of the final mark, the writing

assessment included a task based on the genres taught and learned in class. First drafts of a writing genre were submitted by email every week, each student received an email with the link to the screen cast feedback and they resubmitted a final draft with the suggested corrections. A final feedback with a screen cast was then to then sent to each student, shared with students in a class folder and printed out in hard copy.

The Elementary Moodle shell contained screen casts to revise vocabulary and scaffold instructions. In addition, all the students in the Department of Language Studies were also enrolled in two online language learning centres, called Student Zones. These contained IT scaffolding screen casts for language sites and email instruction.

Findings

The findings can be divided into those related to writing feedback with screen casts and those derived from Moodle.

There has been a noticeable improvement in engagement and autonomous learning of the writing process. Time is also saved using screen casts once a teacher is familiar with how to make them. Students were accessing mobile technology as well as computers at home to view their feedback.

There was positive feedback from the Elementary students in a survey specifically about writing feedback recorded on the Moodle shell last semester. Through the report function on Moodle, it could be seen that all Language and IT screen casts were used by students across all courses, levels and campuses. The number of students accessing these was increasing every semester.

Conclusions

Workshops outlining how to use screen casts for scaffolding and writing feedback have been given to colleagues in professional development sessions, at conferences and at seminars for several years now, but uptake has been quite slow. However using screen casts can be a lot more efficient than handwriting responses to students, and more rewarding, so other lecturers should be encouraged to use them. It may difficult to change entrenched perceptions of successful writing feedback and even more difficult to persuade colleagues how easy screen casts are to make, so time may need to be allocated during Professional Development sessions at the institute so that this development work can be undertaken.

In 2013 there is an opportunity to use screen casts for writing portfolio feedback with international students in two Pre Intermediate classes, which means one could be a control group. Portfolio submission accounts for a percentage of final assessment so the compulsory element may provide extrinsic motivation as well.

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3.20 Fostering polytechnic students' independent language learning through classroom and self-access language learning

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Introduction

One of the educational goals in Indonesia is to develop students' autonomous learning. It should therefore be systematically taught and practiced in all subjects including the compulsory English reading classes. This paper reports on an attempt to foster learners' independent language learning. The learners were 24 first-year civil engineering students at a polytechnic in Indonesia.

Background

This study was based on three main concepts of learner autonomy. Firstly, independent learners are capable of integrating various learning strategies to manage, determine objectives, select methods and techniques, monitor the procedure, and evaluate their learning (Holec 1987). Secondly, the level of autonomy depends on the learner's motivation, self-confidence, knowledge and skills (Littlewood 1996). Finally, in order to develop learners' autonomy, teachers are advised to encourage learners to direct their own learning by applying a learner-centred approach in the classroom and collaborating with learners during decision-making processes (Dam 1998).

The study

Following a suggestion by Dam (ibid.), autonomous learning for engineering students was developed by applying some inductive action research with the learners for two semesters, both in the classroom and in the Self-Access Language Learning (SALL) room. This research had a diagnostic phase followed by three cycles each consisting of three stages - planning, action, and evaluation. The diagnostic phase was to determine the students' learning goals and preferences, to assess their language levels, to determine their learning experiences and discover any problems perceived by the students and the teacher. At the planning stages, the teacher and students discussed and planned the learning activities to address the students' learning preferences and problems perceived in the previous cycles. The action stages were the interventions (teaching and learning activities) which had been agreed on at the planning stages. The evaluation stages were designed to appraise the interventions and the students' achievements.

Results

The results of the diagnostic phase revealed that the learning goals of the students and the English class were mismatched. Most students wanted to improve their speaking and writing skills rather than their listening and reading skills. However, they were reluctant to speak English and preferred to have fun activities and to communicate in Indonesian. When reading, all students reported that they had problems with their limited vocabulary and grammar. They were novice readers, dependent learners, and their motivation was to pass the tests.

Actions

Integrated learning activities were introduced, to accommodate students' interests and needs, and to improve the learners' direct and indirect learning strategies. Learners' reading skills, vocabulary, and grammar were improved by providing 'what you Know', 'what you Want to know', and 'what you Learn' (KWL) strategies, and compensation strategies by Guessing Meaning From Context (GMFC), using authentic texts. Writing skills were developed by writing reflective and thinking process journals, and the students had to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words. Speaking and listening skills were developed by presenting models of appropriate strategies orally. These direct and indirect strategies were introduced and practised in the classroom and the SALL.

Learning activities

The learning activities consisted of three cycles and each had different learning foci. The first cycle introduced learning strategies and allowed the students to explore these strategies for five weeks (100 minutes per week), with four sessions in the classroom and one in the SALL. The direct strategies taught were GMFC, memory strategies, and mind mapping. To model one of the techniques, two students shared their strategies when guessing meanings of unfamiliar words. Strategies were also learnt indirectly by encouraging students to determine their own learning

objectives and further learning activities based on their problems and reflections after working in the SALL.

The second cycle, which lasted for three months, focused on providing teachers with models, and encouraging students to practice GMFC whenever they encountered unfamiliar words in texts especially selected by the teacher. During this cycle, four students reported on their processes of GMFC. Indirect strategies were again practised by allowing the students to select materials in the SALL once a month.

Finally, in the third cycle, GMFC and indirect strategies were practised by providing various reading texts and GMFC materials in the SALL. The students studied for three weeks in the classroom, then four weeks in the SALL. Every week, two or three students presented oral reports about their indirect strategies and what they learned in the SALL. They also reported on their processes of GMFC whenever they encountered unfamiliar words when reading texts.

Conclusions

By planning together with the students, catering to their learning preferences, and applying integrated learning activities in the classroom and SALL, it was found that the students' learner autonomy improved. The students' motivation, language knowledge and skills improved, especially when their learning goals were aligned with their weaker areas. Writing journals and oral modeling developed the students' self-confidence in expressing ideas in English. In addition, peer models developed the students' strategies better than the teacher's models.

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3.21 Developing autonomous learning strategies through a content and language integrated economics curriculum

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Introduction

Autonomous learning can be seen as central to academic success in study abroad contexts as students are faced with the dual cognitive burden of content knowledge and language acquisition. Arming students with a 'toolkit' of study strategies may be beneficial, as Wenden (1991) characterized successful autonomous learners as those who possessed and used learning strategies effectively, flexibly and independently. This is in line with Little's (1991) widely accepted definition of autonomy that requires the transfer of strategies and critical analysis to wider contexts. A structured framework for the development of such learning strategies was created within an English-medium economics curriculum at a university in Tokyo, Japan. The curriculum incorporates the explicit, structured instruction of study strategies and the implementation of these strategies within the context of content-based economics courses. The objectives are the supported instruction and practice of study strategies for transfer to new contexts as students move to study abroad programs.

Participants and context

The thirty-one participants in the study were second year students of the International Program (IP), an English-medium economics curriculum. The IP consists of a macro/microeconomics course taught by a native English-speaking professor of economics supported by an English of Academic Purposes laboratory that supports the language, academic writing and research aspects of the economics lecture. The TOEFL scores of the participants ranged from 490 – 530 on the paper-based test, and twenty-nine of the thirty-one students intended to study abroad upon completion of the IP.

Methodology

The study focused on the student perceptions of the value, instruction, and the transferability of the skills taught within the curriculum. The study had three research questions:

1. What is the value of the strategies taught within the curriculum as perceived by the students?

2. What are the students' perceptions of the structured, explicit instruction of the strategies?
3. How likely are the students to transfer the strategies to new contexts?

The data was collected in the form of a questionnaire filled out upon completion of the course. The study strategies incorporated into the adjunct EAP economics laboratory were:

- Time management
- Outlining of texts
- Drafting process for academic essays
- Peer / self editing
- Independent study planning
- Group management and project planning for the research paper
- Research skills

Findings

The majority of the students considered the skills taught within the curriculum to be valuable as 29 of the 31 participants either agreed or strongly agreed that all the skills were a necessary part of the course and valuable for future academic success.

While some participants in the course expressed a desire for more freedom to experiment with the strategies in their economics coursework, over half the students stated that the structure of the instruction provided the necessary support. Students felt that the instruction and the implementation of the skills for economics research provided a sufficient balance between structure and authentic use.

The explicit instruction of the strategies led over 90% of the students to state that they were comfortable enough to transfer the skills to future study abroad contexts as shown in Table 1. The majority of the students answered that they would use the skills to assist their learning in the appropriate contexts without being required by the teacher. Some respondents wanted clarification, so the % ranges were provided as a means to ensure that all respondents had similar understandings of the response options, for example, 'Not likely' = would use the skill in 0-9% of the situations in which it would be useful to assist my learning (without being required by the teacher).

Skills	Not likely (0-9%)	Sometimes (10-49%)	Often (50-79%)	Very often (80%+)
Time mgmt.	0	1	9	21
Outlining	1	7	13	10
Drafting	2	2	12	15
Peer editing	2	4	10	15
Self-study	1	2	9	20
Group mgmt.	0	5	14	12
Research	0	1	7	23

Table 1: Responses to 'Without being required by your teacher, how often would you use these autonomous skills to assist in your learning in future contexts?

Conclusion

A structured approach can be effective to foster autonomy if the goal is for students to acquire strategies for independent flexible use in future contexts. The students in the IP have stated that the support and structure within the curriculum allow for acquisition of study strategies, which may help them become more autonomous in the future. Furthermore, the students' strong intentions for the future use of the skills in study abroad bode well for the transfer to new contexts. The content-based curricula may be an ideal context to blend the structured teaching and authentic practice of study skills. Follow-up research will be conducted to investigate the actual transfer of the strategies to new contexts after students return to from study abroad.

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3.22 'Say again?': in-house, online, self-access pronunciation activities for ESOL students

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Introduction

This self-access online pronunciation project arose in response to academic and general English language students asking Waikato Pathways College (WPC) English Language Resource Centre (ELRC) staff for extra help with their pronunciation. In 2010, a newly introduced screen-capture application, Panopto, at the University of Waikato, seemed particularly suitable for the creation of online pronunciation activities designed especially for WPC students.

Rationale

The objective was to create free online activities which showed the articulation points such as the lips, tongue and teeth. The authors also wanted to create pronunciation activities with a 'Kiwi' accent, as published materials often had British or American accents. The content was created with classroom teachers, so the activities were underpinned by pedagogy, not just technology-led.

Technical approach and access

Panopto allows multiple inputs, including PowerPoint slides. For more details see **http://online.waikato.ac.nz/esl/pronunciation**. The Vocaroo recorder allows students to record their own pronunciation. The activities were audio and video recorded by teachers as pronunciation models, as 'Technology, specifically the use of podcasts, could offer opportunities for contextualizing tasks, while at the same time honing pronunciation' (Ducate and Lomicka 2009: 68). Each recording can be accessed via a separate url or podcast downloaded onto a mobile device for eLearning and mLearning. Recordings are accessible 24-7, as an open source resource, with a Creative Commons Licence. This ready access of learning materials was also supported by Mike Levy in his key note speech at the ILA conference 'The need is for learning material to be created for the various devices (phones, tablets and laptops), to be used anywhere, anytime'.

Pedagogy

Nunan (2005) asserts that the use of technology for oral language development remains both problematic and contentious. The ELRC project facilitates an independent learning focus on pronunciation by affording free, easy to access

individual on-line activities which are optional and additional to classroom work on pronunciation. Students can also work together in pairs, or with a tutor, or teachers may use the materials in class to reinforce or replace their own input on pronunciation, i.e. as input for blended learning.

Pronunciation

Miscommunication can result from language inadequacy in grammar, lexis and pronunciation, but more than other errors, mispronunciation generates negative or positive value judgements in relation to status as a native speaker or non-native speaker, and proficient or less proficient language user. Accent especially is a recognised source of humour and raises issues of identity, prestige or stigma. Theorists such as Jenkins (2006) have recently discussed Global, World, or International English versus English as a Lingua Franca and related issues surrounding the choice of teaching methods and resources for pronunciation.

The desired outcome from this project is to enable communicative clarity, rather than phonetic knowledge. The project agenda is thus restricted to segmentals, or phonemes, specific features of connected speech, and supra-segmentals, i.e. stress, rhythm, and intonation, which all may affect communication in terms of meaning, mood, and attitude.

Description of activities

The project has sought teacher input at all stages of development. The tasks and content topics are suitable for intermediate to advanced academic levels and IELTS preparation, and they include around 25% academic vocabulary. Class teachers have introduced the material and students have subsequently repeated activities independently.

There are now two types of tasks; phoneme practice, following the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) chart, and vocabulary items (words and phrases). Individual students can view the teacher pronouncing words which exemplify the phonemes, or target lexical items, and they can record themselves and play back to compare their own production. They can also listen to and repeat phrases and sentences which illustrate social communication.

Feedback from users

Feedback from surveys conducted with teachers and students has been largely positive and has served to improve activities, for example, by providing diagrams of the mouth to show the articulation points of phonemes, and by developing new activities, such as integrating activities with the materials used in class. Activities have also been revised and re-recorded to improve quality, content and length of recordings.

This on-going project has provided professional development for WPC teachers and so far has given students the opportunity for in-class and independent improvement of their pronunciation.

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3.23 Teaching language autonomy: you put your 'I' in the world

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Background

Autonomy means being willing and able to take charge of learning management, processes, and content (Benson 2001) by exercising choices and responsibility (van Lier 1996). Sociocultural theory addresses autonomy through the zone of proximal development (ZPD), where what learners do with assistance today shows what they can do autonomously tomorrow.

Guk and Kellogg (2007) described classrooms as mediational spaces where teachers create ZPDs for whole classes. Teachers organize interactions by providing models, asking leading questions, and setting up tasks, which students can use, internalize, and transform. These techniques help teachers lead student learning so it contributes to the developmental processes underlying autonomy.

The research questions were:

1. How did a teacher promote learner autonomy in an intact language-learning classroom?
2. How did a teacher create a whole class ZPD in an intact language-learning classroom?

Methodology

This case study was of an experienced ESL teacher of Japanese college students in an English language immersion program. The data, collected over nine months, included twelve observations with notes (four were also videotaped) of the teacher's practices and three immediate recall interviews (of three videotaped observations) of the teacher's cognitions. Data were deductively coded based on Benson (2001) and van Lier (1996) for autonomy and Guk and Kellogg (2007) for the ZPD. Multiple data sources and lengthy engagement triangulated the study.

Findings

Observations showed how the teacher addressed autonomy, his primary stated goal, by establishing three routines. The first involved language-learning notebooks, through which the teacher held students responsible for controlling content and managing learning by: modeling how to notice, write down, and practice new language; reminding students to use them; and reviewing them individually. The second was conversation activities, which, as the teacher described during interviews, was aimed at developing student responsibility for topics (content control) and conversation strategies (learning management). The third was aimed at control of learning processes; the observations showed the teacher asking students to spontaneously repeat his utterances. During interviews he said his aim was for students to notice new language, difficult structures, and unstressed sounds. Growing student autonomy was highlighted when they requested grammar lessons: students were observed teaching grammar lessons in which they controlled content, managed learning, and demonstrated control of learning processes.

Conversation activities illustrated how routines supported individual needs in a whole class ZPD. Observations showed how the teacher distributed written topics and supervised procedures until they became routine. He then handed over topic selection and procedural management to students, but provided support as needed. Initially, needs differed: some students needed procedural prompts; others needed topics. Eventually, all students proposed their own topics and managed activity procedures, both involving autonomously using language for their own purposes.

Conclusions

The teacher promoted autonomy through routines where students were responsible for learning content, management, and processes (Benson 2001). The teacher led learning by organising it in curriculum structures that were expressed through routines, routines that were shaped by procedures, and procedures that were performed in interactions. In his own interactions with the class he also led learning by providing models, prompts, and practice. Through these techniques the teacher created a whole class ZPD (Guk and Kellogg 2007) where developmental processes could be awakened as he provided and withdrew support to individual students, until all students could exercise language-learning autonomy through their choices and responsibilities (van Lier 1996).

Implications

One practical implication is that this teacher supported learner autonomy by initially exercising considerable control over the routines. Students initially needed teacher control to follow routines; they gradually and fitfully could use them independently (and even alter them) but they always had teacher guidance if they needed it. The routines therefore provided an ongoing but varying support for individuals to develop autonomy. Underlying the teacher's practices, however, was his freedom to construct his own curriculum, involving considerable expertise and reflection. The teacher also commented on how the research process pushed him

to reflect. In fact, the research process pushed him to objectify his cognitions and practices by articulating them in his interactions with the researcher, making them available for research and professional development.

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3.24 Increasing capacity for autonomy: a model for distance language learning

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Introduction

Distance education is a common means of meeting the increasing demand for tertiary education worldwide and providing the flexibility to accommodate today's diverse learners. However, success in these contexts requires learners to possess some degree of autonomy, particularly the ability to control factors that affect learning. Learning a language by distance presents additional challenges in terms of opportunities for interactivity.

The Model of Self-Regulated Distance Language Learning provides course designers and instructors with a specific structure for fostering autonomy in distance language learners (Andrade and Bunker 2009). The model is based on theories of language acquisition, distance education, and self-regulated learning (Dembo, Junge and Lynch 2006; Moore 2007). As learners interact with course components and complete self-regulated learning (SRL) activities, they increase their capacity for autonomy, persistence in the course, and language proficiency.

The model integrates the elements of interaction, structure, and dialogue within a course to help learners develop English language proficiency along with autonomy or self-regulation. Structure is provided through the study guide, calendar, audio and video presentations, and the textbook. Dialogue, which occurs through feedback,

e-mail, discussion boards, and live tutoring, offers support and opportunities for language practice. As students engage with the content, practise the language, and participate in SRL activities, they can increase their self-regulation and the likelihood of persisting in the course.

The study

To assess the effectiveness of the course design model, two studies were designed. The studies examined the degree to which the model helped intermediate level English language learners increase their self-regulation, capacity for autonomy, persistence, and language proficiency. The first study consisted of a review of student learner journals to identify how the features of the model assisted students in overcoming the challenges inherent in distance learning and achieve desired learning outcomes. The second study consisted of face-to-face interviews to determine if student gains in SRL were sustained over time and applied in new learning contexts. The studies were conducted with two different groups of participants preparing for university study in an English-speaking country.

Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative data included course completion rates, advancement information, and reflective journals. In addition, student interviews were analyzed to demonstrate the model's short and long-term effects and its benefits on learner autonomy and English language proficiency. Twenty students over two different semesters participated in the learner journal study while ten students participated in interviews for the second study. Participants for each study were distinct and were from Asian and Pacific Island countries.

Selected findings

In the first study, the learner journals demonstrated student perceptions that course assignments had increased their awareness of SRL, capacity for autonomy, commitment to the course, and English proficiency. Students identified appropriate times and places for study, managed their time more effectively, and applied course content and study strategies. They had a positive attitude toward learning and reported improved test scores, grades, language learning, and overall learning skills. Their capacity for autonomy increased through recognition of their strengths and weaknesses, having a positive attitude for getting help, and goal-setting. The journals specifically mentioned aspects of the course related to the six dimensions of SRL: motive, methods of learning, time, physical environment, social environment, and performance. Course completion and level advancement rates were slightly lower than for on-campus students, but respectable.

Findings from the second study indicated that learners overwhelmingly attributed the course to helping them improve their English language proficiency, specifically the ability to pass the entrance exam for university admission, obtain speaking and writing practice, benefit from live interaction with peer tutors, and increase their knowledge of academic vocabulary. Secondly, they learned the academic culture

of an educational system different from their own, including specific academic language skills such as writing patterns and avoiding plagiarism as well as teacher pedagogical approaches, specifically in the form of teacher encouragement.

When prompted, students recalled various aspects of the SRL activities and provided examples as to how they continued to use these skills in their current university courses. They mentioned methods of learning such as using writing and oral interaction patterns and vocabulary strategies. They valued goal setting, time use (for example, balancing work and study) and priority setting, seeking help, eliminating distractors in their physical environments, and reflecting on their learning in order to make needed changes.

Conclusions

The studies demonstrate the importance of learner autonomy in distance learning contexts. They illustrate the role of course design and teacher support in advancing learner autonomy. Future research involving direct measures, rather than self-report data, is needed to further explore the impact of the model.

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3.25 Manage your learning: facilitating autonomy in an online course

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Introduction

Autonomy involves two components: choice and capacity. Choice refers to the freedom to make decisions about learning, specifically setting goals, selecting materials, determining how and what to study, and evaluating performance (Moore 2007). Capacity refers to the ability to be self-directed, taking control, and using learning strategies (Hurd 1998). When learners have the freedom to make choices and the capacity to be autonomous, they are more likely to achieve success in a distance learning context.

Learners who enrol in an online course may not be prepared for autonomous learning; developing this capacity can be facilitated through course activities and corresponding teacher feedback. Incorporating self-regulated learning activities into the course design, and emphasizing the value of these activities with meaningful teacher feedback, help students control the factors affecting their learning and develop autonomy.

Supporting autonomy through course activities

Online course design can facilitate learner autonomy. Carefully designed activities encourage learners to be independent and self-regulated. To illustrate, we provide examples from a high-intermediate English language reading/writing course. Students in the course aim to study in English-speaking countries and are predominantly from the Pacific Rim. While the course focuses on developing students' academic reading and writing skills, required self-regulated learning activities, referred to as Manage Your Learning (MYL), are the backbone to the course and provide opportunities for distance language learners to be more successful in their online studies.

The MYL activities are based on the six dimensions of self-regulation: motivation, methods of learning, time management, physical environment, social environment, and performance (Dembo, et al. 2006). Learners complete a total of 8 out of 13 activities in addition to a diagnostic survey, and midterm and final self-evaluations. They have 2-3 activity choices for each dimension. For example, one of the motivation activities directs students to identify values, set goals, and reflect on ways to stay motivated in their studies. Students can also complete a survey about their learning styles and analyze how this information might help them improve their language study as they explore various methods of learning. One of the time management activities

involves students keeping track of their activities for a 24-hour period after which they reflect on how they spent their time and how they can find more time for study.

An example of a physical environment activity is a comparison of different learning environments. Students evaluate possible study locations and identify the location most conducive to successful language study. A frequently-selected social environment activity requires students to think about how they can make the most of their weekly live interactive 30-minute tutoring session and then put those ideas into practice. One of the performance activities asks students to consider their strengths and weaknesses as language learners, review their progress in the course, determine how to improve their weaknesses, and set related goals.

Throughout these activities, students are engaged in the iterative process of setting goals, reflecting on progress, and making useful changes in their language learning and study strategies. Thus, they are simultaneously increasing their levels of autonomy and developing language skills.

Supporting autonomy through teacher feedback

Effective completion of the MYL activities helps students increase awareness of their approach to language learning and develop strategies that encourage greater independence from the teacher and increased responsibility for their learning.

To support this, the teacher should provide dialogue in the form of assignment feedback, e-mail correspondence, and monitoring of student performance. The appropriate balance of dialogue and structure needed may vary from student to student. Feedback should focus on encouraging students to recognize their own responsibilities for learning. Although the MYL activities support the development of learner autonomy, a lack of appropriate structure or dialogue can undermine the effectiveness of the activities.

The ultimate goal of the teacher's feedback is to help students progress from asking questions such as "How can I improve my score?" and from setting goals such as "I will study hard," to recognizing and implementing specific strategies that address their linguistic weaknesses. Targeted teacher feedback on content, organization, and grammar in writing; on goal-setting and student self-evaluations; or on student engagement in the MYL activities themselves, based on the principles of autonomy, helps facilitate learner responsibility.

Conclusions

In summary, in addition to designing activities that support student development of autonomy, appropriate teacher response encourages learners to reflect more deeply and obtain optimum benefit from the MYL learning tasks. As one of our students indicated, "MYL became my second tutor." As students apply appropriate strategies, their capacity for autonomy increases.

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3.26 It's not where you go; it's what you do when you get there

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The number of self-access language learning centres has been rapidly increasing since the 1980s, following an increase in awareness of the importance of learner autonomy, triggered by Holec's seminal paper (1981). Since that time, both self-access centres and the concept of learner autonomy have evolved. One major realisation has been that learners do not become autonomous learners through the provision of resources alone, but require pedagogical support (Benson 2011). The project described below was an attempt to optimise a comprehensively equipped self-access centre (SAC) for fostering learner autonomy by providing pedagogical support through the integration of self-access learning into the curriculum.

The self-access centre in question provides support for students' language learning at a highly ranked, bilingual, liberal arts university located in northwestern Japan. Language learning is central to all aspects of university life, as all students are required to study one year abroad and encouraged to become multilingual.

Steps were taken to integrate principles of learner autonomy into all phases of the students' education. Within the preparatory language course framework, faculty members collaborated with the SAC staff in taking a two-step approach: integration of the SAC into the preparatory language curriculum; and the provision of events to give opportunities for autonomous learning. Curriculum integration involved: the inclusion of activities to be carried out using the resources in the SAC, such as extensive reading or watching DVDs to be discussed in class; and guidance in learning management through completion of Personal Learning Plan (PLP) and keeping a Daily Learning Log (DLL). The second step was for students to utilise the skills they had acquired and continue to use the services of the SAC autonomously. The introduction of workshops and events focusing on

various aspects of language learning served to broaden the learning opportunities available to them.

In evaluating the initiatives outlined above, the research questions were:

Do students feel better able to manage their own learning than they did at the beginning of the semester?

Do students feel the curriculum integration measures helped to develop this ability?

Do the students feel that they are likely to continue to use the SAC independently after finishing the course?

Do the teachers feel that the students have demonstrated more learner autonomy than in previous semesters?

In addressing these questions a three-pronged approach was used. All students on the preparatory English course were surveyed about their impressions of the SAC and the curriculum integration. They were asked to write reflections on the SAC sessions. Teachers were also asked to write reflections on changes in the students' performance and working style.

The results of the survey showed that generally students felt that they were better able to manage their learning than they were at the beginning of the semester and that they intended to continue using the SAC after the course was finished. It was also evident that the majority of the respondents felt that SAC tasks set in the preparatory English classes were helpful. However, the majority of the respondents deemed the PLP and the DLL ineffective.

The student reflections did not yield any useful data about the curriculum integration and related mostly to opening hours and the range of available DVDs.

The reflections written by the teachers indicated that the extensive reading was well received by the students, with some of them doing more than the mandated amount. It was also claimed that the DVDs watched for homework in the SAC led to 'deeper discussion'.

In addressing the issue of students lacking the ability to optimally use the wealth of resources available to them in the SAC, there was evidence of modest success. In general the students said they felt better able to manage their own learning and intended to continue using the facilities of their own accord. However, the materials used to help foster this ability, the PLP and the DLL, were not well received and on inspection were not used properly. This leaves the question of how they achieved these perceived improvements. This is an important question that begs further investigation, as is the question of why the PLP and the DLL were not properly used by the students. A weakness in the research was the reliance on the students' perspectives of their ability to manage their own learning. While this is one valuable aspect to consider, a more objective assessment of these abilities would have yielded more valuable results.

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3.27 Alternative classroom models: online instruction and autonomy

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Introduction

This paper reports on an e-learning project carried out during the fall semester of 2011 at a University in Japan. In this project, we experimented with three modes of instruction: a blended learning, a distance education, and a standard classroom model. In these classes, which were designed for students with a TOEIC score below 435, the participants worked with an online interactive program. In our study we focused on the effects of the three alternative instructional models. We looked especially at the participants' language improvement, learner autonomy according to Holec's (1981) model, and motivation in terms of Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System - the Ideal Self, the Ought-to Self, and the learning experience.

The learning contexts

The blended learning model class had eighteen students. In this class the students mainly used a TOEIC preparation textbook and practised TOEIC quizzes every week. The online program served as required supplementary material which the students worked with both in and out of class. The distance education model class consisted of ten students who, except for orientation and summary sessions, did not have to attend the class. The teacher monitored students' progress through the program's classroom management features and communicated with them by email. In the standard model class the sixteen students used the program as they would use a textbook. Students worked individually with the online program for forty-five minutes. In the other half of the class, the teacher explained the content of the e-learning program to the whole class and used the dialogues as models for speaking activities.

Method and results

The 42 participants took the TOEIC test and responded to a language beliefs

questionnaire at the beginning and end of the project. They also completed a course evaluation questionnaire at the end. Several students from each class volunteered to be interviewed.

The TOEIC results were analyzed quantitatively. The descriptive statistics, means and standard deviations (SD) are summarized in Tables 1 and 2. The results indicate that the blended learning class had the greatest TOEIC score improvement in both listening and reading, resulting in an 84.95-point gain on the total score. The distance education model had the least improvement among the three classes, showing a 51-point gain, which was 10 points lower than the standard model class. For all three classes, the listening scores showed greater improvement than the reading scores. Regardless of which class the students were in, their listening scores showed a notable improvement.

Group	Total mean (SD)	Listening mean (SD)	Reading mean (SD)
Total (44)	405.00 (92.39)	224.43 (44.84)	180.56 (57.91)
Blended learning (18)	414.21 (94.98)	230.27 (46.16)	183.88 (57.28)
Distance education (10)	411.00 (100.98)	231.50 (48.30)	179.50 (65.33)
Standard (16)	390.93 (88.28)	213.43 (41.78)	177.50 (57.53)

Table 1: Pre TOEIC test results

Group	Total mean (SD)	Listening mean (SD)	Reading mean (SD)
Total (44)	473.52 (97.64)	264.77 (50.55)	208.75 (57.67)
Blended learning (18)	499.16 (70.59)	279.44 (41.08)	219.72 (37.67)
Distance education (10)	462.00 (108.29)	257.50 (50.84)	204.50 (65.42)
Standard (16)	451.87 (115.19)	252.81 (58.45)	199.06 (71.44)

Table 2: Post TOEIC test results

A thematic analysis of the qualitative data

Six open-ended questions on the course evaluation questionnaire and the interview transcripts revealed that most of the students enjoyed the learning experience. Students in all three models said they appreciated the flexibility of being able to work at their own pace, when and where it suited them. A number of the students demonstrated raised metacognitive awareness, recognizing that autonomy was accompanied by the responsibility to plan and manage their learning. However, on the down side, some students said they got ‘lazy’ working on their own and others wanted more social interaction, as the program itself did not provide for student-student interaction.

Interestingly, the qualitative data did not provide strong evidence of the emergence of

Ideal L2 Selves. Rather, the majority of the questionnaire responses seemed to reflect what Yashima (2009) has defined as an international posture, i.e. 'a tendency to see oneself as connected to the international community, have concerns for international affairs, and possess a readiness to interact with people other than Japanese' (p. 146).

Discussion and conclusion

In this study we explored the effects of three instructional models in terms of students' language improvement, autonomy, and motivation. Each of the three models was based on the use of an online interactive program. Language improvement was measured by TOEIC test results. Not surprisingly, the blended learning model with its TOEIC focus led to the greatest improved test performance. Nonetheless, students in all three models showed improved listening performance, indicating that improvement was more dependent on the material used than on the instructional model in which it was delivered.

As for motivation across the three instructional models, there was no evidence of emergent L2 Selves. However, students in all three groups did indicate that they found working with the interactive, video-based program enjoyable, which enhanced their motivation in the actual learning context. Nonetheless, students in the blended and standard groups expressed the desire for more social interaction in the learning environment. The standard model responded best to this need and on the course evaluation questionnaire students expressed their appreciation for this aspect of these classes.

In regard to learner autonomy, students in all three models expressed appreciation for the flexibility of being able to work with the computer program at their own pace, where and when they liked. However, it was the distance education model which provided students with most independence. This model showed great potential for meeting the needs of students in special circumstances where coming to class each week was difficult; for example, mothers with small children, or students busy with lab work. While all three models offered varying degrees of autonomy, the possibility of enhanced motivation through the use of enjoyable materials, and the potential for improved language skills, it is ultimately students' needs and circumstances that will determine which model is the best fit for any particular group.

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3.28 Learning autonomously while improving language proficiency

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Introduction

Researchers in language education have examined autonomy theory for over 30 years and research about autonomy-in-practice has solidly emerged. According to Benson (2011), in the past ten years, one change is an increased interest in autonomy itself. Other changes are the emergent importance of socially-situated approaches to autonomy, and a growing tendency for learner autonomy to blur with other constructs such as motivation and learner strategies. Benson also says that there is a renewed debate over the role of teacher autonomy in the development of learner autonomy. However, there has not been a change in autonomy research related to the development of language proficiency, yet many learners wish to improve it. An example of the aforementioned is notable in the series Learner Autonomy. In the 10 volumes to date, merely four studies analyze English language proficiency gains e.g. Gardner (2002 and 2007).

Methodology

When learners take control of their learning they can conceptualize their goals more clearly, but can these translate into increased language proficiency? Considering the reliability of the IELTS exam, the results of pre- and post-tests of 20 university students in Japan were compared with their autonomous language learning practices. The learners and researcher met voluntarily for one weekly ninety-minute seminar over a total of 23 weeks. The participants were believed to already use autonomous language learning practices to various degrees. They were merely encouraged to design their own seminars and study plans with reflection questions, and they continuously received learning support and general language advice.

Based on the methodology and context, this research explores the question: do language study plans designed autonomously by the learners and their self-reported amount of time spent on desired learning skill(s) (listening, reading, writing, and/or speaking) contribute to greater language proficiency on the IELTS level bands in the four-skill sections of the test? The data collected were the learners' self-reported reflections on their language learning practices and goals including the time spent on them, an exit survey, researcher notes, and the pre- and post-IELTS test scores. In addition, this study was illuminative and unexpected findings appeared in the data that might be of interest to the reader.

Emerging findings

The following five findings have emerged from the data collected so far:

1. Eighteen learners reported doing listening activities on their own for personal enjoyment. Ten received a +.5 increase in their listening scores and four remained unchanged. A common factor over 23 weeks was that if they spent a minimum of 7.5 hours per week on these listening activities, then their scores improved or remained the same, suggesting merit for extensive listening for pleasure.
2. Fifteen learners chose to develop their English writing proficiency on their own. One learner received an increase of +1.5, three of +1, and five of +.5. A common feature among them was that if their writing duration was a minimum average of 6.5 hours per week, their writing scores improved.
3. Eighteen learners practised speaking through shadowing or speaking with others. The scores of the 10 who spoke for at least 8.5 hours per week improved considerably. Three learners earned an increase of +1.5, two of +1, and five of +.5.
4. Previously studying abroad or preparing to study abroad in the target language was significant for 19 of the 20 participants, which is an unexpected finding and strikingly different from the general student population.
5. Sharing stories about travelling abroad, joining exchange programs and volunteering for non-profit organizations led to a natural travel bug where 13 of the 20 participants visited 16 different countries during the research period. This suggests that the learners' socially-situated nature generated themed discussions in the seminars which influenced their personal lives beyond this language learning experience.

Conclusions

This research attempted to explore the question: do language study plans designed autonomously by the learners and their self-reported amount of time spent on desired learning skill(s) (listening, reading, writing, and/or speaking) contribute to greater language proficiency on the IELTS level bands in the four skill sections of the test? Two limitations noted were; the low number of participants and the short duration of the study. Initial findings indicate that learners who spend an average of 6.5 to 8.5 hours a week engaged on self-selected language activities for pleasure make evident proficiency gains. Considering the learners' needs and the fact that tertiary institutions worldwide are looking for increased proficiency in their language programs, it is hoped that more studies about learner autonomy and the possible connection to language proficiency gains will be considered.

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4 Autonomy and agency

4.1 Internal conversation, agency and learner autonomy

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Drawing on Archer's theorization of internal conversation, this paper contends the fundamentality of reflexive and reflective thinking in appreciating the interaction between agency and autonomous learning (Archer 2000, 2003). Agency, 'as a point of origin for the development of autonomy' (Benson 2007: 30), is related to a human being's self-consciousness, reflexivity, intentionality, cognition, emotionality, etc (Sealey and Carter 2004). It is also logically connected to power, which 'is very often defined in terms of intent or the will, as the capacity to achieve desired and intended outcomes' (Giddens 1984: 14-15). With regard to language learning, powers resting in language learners and 'proper agency' allow them to 'open access to learning opportunities within power structures and seek culturally alternative paths to learning' by effecting changes in their contextual conditions (Gao 2007: 261).

As language learners face specific learning tasks in particular contexts and effect changes in their contextual/structural conditions, they go through an ongoing interaction between themselves as language learners (agency) and contextual conditions in the form of 'internal conversation'. Internal conversation helps language learners identify contextual/structural conditions as well as prioritize concerns, desires and visions for their committed language learning efforts. Archer (2003) claims that we can;

> be both subject and object to ourselves. It has been maintained that we can do this through our internal conversation by formulating our thought and then inspecting and responding to these utterances, as subject to object. This process is itself the process of reflexivity; it is how we do all these things like monitoring,

> self-evaluation and self-commitment. (…) Internal dialogue is the practice through which we 'make up our minds' by questioning ourselves, clarifying our beliefs and inclinations, diagnosing our situations, deliberating about our concerns and defining our own project (p.103).

The 'internal conversation' of language learners has three important components (or stages). First of all, agency facilitates learners to make 'all kinds of discoveries about the 'me' through internal conversation (Archer 2000: 264), including their concerns and desires ('discernment'). Secondly, it helps them become aware of the various constraints and enablement within contextual and structural conditions. Finally, language learners undertake a process of deliberation, in which concerns and desires are prioritized and reprioritized, until ultimate concerns in language learning are identified, something they may pursue even at enormous cost ('dedication'). These ultimate concerns or desires may be visions of 'ideal self' or 'the representation of the attributes that someone would ideally like to possess (i.e. a representation of personal hopes, aspirations or wishes)' (Ushioda and Dornyei 2009: 3).

It must be noted that language learners' decisions to pursue these visions have been made after evaluating contextual and structural conditions. In other words, agency operates in the forms of reflexion and reflection, in which language learners introspectively and retrospectively look into their own thoughts, feelings, emotions and desires, as well as critically engage with various contextual and structural conditions to identify constraints/enablement with reference to their visions (or goals) before making decisions in language learning. For this reason, autonomous language learning may be the option that language learners decide to adopt, but it may not be a favoured choice after they consider their various concerns, desires and visions together with contextual conditions (in terms of constraints and enablement relative to their desired goal). Moreover, autonomy also may not be the choice because language learners are still in the process of identifying their top priorities (concerns, desires and visions) for commitment. In other words, agency may be universal but autonomy can be relative to specific individuals at different learning stages in particular contexts.

This conceptualization of internal conversation, agency and autonomy confirms the critical importance of reflexive and reflective dialogues that language educators have with learners in helping learners identify language learning goals. This is a top priority for enabling 'committed' efforts amongst students. Our best opportunity to intervene is to get involved in language learners' 'internal conversation', in which they discern their concerns, desires and visions for deliberation. Such intervention opportunities may arise in our engagement with learners in consultation meetings at self-access centres, class discussions and/or in social media exchanges. In these interaction events, we need to constantly challenge our learners as to whether they place the right priority on the right concerns, desires and visions. We also need to help them see a clear pathway out of the chaos of concerns, desires and visions so that they may place top priority on what they really need to commit to and work on, and thereby assume control of their language learning.

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4.2 Capitalizing on life experiences for L2 motivation and autonomy

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Introduction

Teachers are familiar with how a class of students develops, over the course of the semester or year, into a group of individual learners with their own approaches, successes, failures, needs and personalities. Students with the same proficiency level in the target language and exposed to the same instruction in the class diverge as their studies progress. Some show motivation and improvement, while others stall and make little or no progress. In the ILA Conference presentation, one student's (Makio) developing agency was introduced, showing how he utilized experiential capital to sustain his ideal future self and the studies necessary to achieve it.

Background and methodology

The research was a longitudinal, mixed-method project, started in 2010 and scheduled to finish in 2014. It explored the learning decisions, motivation, and development of Ideal L2 self in six Japanese university students studying English. Of particular interest was whether Ideal L2 self can act as a self-guide in the language-learning process.

The theoretical framework for the research was Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (2009), which consists of three components: the Ideal L2 self, the Ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience. The Ideal L2 self is what we wish to become, and the Ought-to L2 self is what we feel we should become. It is argued that these possible selves can act as motivational guides and stimulate attempts to close the gap between the self now and the desirable future self. The third component is L2 learning experience, which refers to the immediate learning environment. For this presentation the last component was focused on and it was expanded to include the idea of experiential capital.

Data was collected primarily from semi-structured interviews, which explored the students' learning decisions, experiences, and goals. These were held three times a year, conducted in Japanese, and lasted between 30 minutes to one hour. The focus was mainly on their L2 studies, but the interviews ranged over wider educational and life experiences (Brewster and Irie 2013).

Makio's story: capitalizing on experiences

Makio entered university with an unusually clear and successful future self-image, including an Ideal L2 self, and strong self-efficacy. He aimed to start a sustainable business in a developing country, and believed it would be vital to become a functional user of English. Makio appeared to illustrate the theory of the L2 Motivational Self System well. The presentation discussed where his future self-imagery came from and how Makio's experiential capital encouraged agency as he worked towards his ideal future L2 self.

Several key experiences were introduced that seem to have impacted on Makio's Ideal L2 self, such as his positive reaction to losing an automatic place at university, his apprehension of an arsonist in a neighbor's house, and a solo high school graduation trip to Italy. Makio developed his agency by looking back and interpreting experiences such as these, and by discovering and confirming his strengths. For example; he realized that, after being denied an automatic place at university, his own hard work led to his ultimate success in passing the entrance exams. He also specifically mentioned how he gained confidence through his karate training, displayed in his subduing of the arsonist, and feeling comfortable when travelling alone. The interviews revealed how his overseas graduation trip led him to understand the usefulness of English in an international setting, turning the language from a dry academic subject into a practical tool for communication.

It can be argued that investing in experiences is an important factor in enabling learners to envisage future possible selves. Many Japanese university students do not have such images - while at high school they typically spend their time in class, undertake club activities after school, and also attend cram schools for university entrance exams. This limited range of experiences does not stimulate their curiosity and imagination enough to have vivid future self-images. It is posited that the L2-learning-experience component of the theoretical model needs to be expanded beyond the immediate learning environment to include wider life experiences.

Conclusion

A member of the audience at the ILA Conference asked what could be done to encourage more 'Makios'. The answer to that question, at least in Japan, lies in a root-and-branch rethink of an English education system which is too reliant on testing, grammar translation, and rote learning. This approach seems to have contributed to the phenomenon of uchimuk or inwardness (Yashima 2013), and an inability in learners to imagine themselves as functional users of English in an increasingly globally connected world.

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4.3 Integrating learner autonomy into the design of a reading curriculum

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This paper reports on a curriculum renewal project in progress at a private Japanese university. A group of teachers is in the process of designing a new reading curriculum for freshman students to replace the existing course. One of the key features in the current syllabus is its focus on learner autonomy and its aim to provide learners with a personal curriculum. A personal curriculum is defined by Johnson (2002) as;

> a course of study which is specially crafted on the basis of the differing aptitudes, needs, interests, and preferences of each student in which the student has a large measure of control and responsibility for progress and achievement (p. 6).

While an admirable goal, the handing over of such responsibility to learners has been problematic in practice. Nevertheless, the promotion of learner autonomy remains one of the guiding philosophies of the institution.

In order to ensure that the new reading curriculum satisfies the current needs of the learners, the teachers, and the institution, the design group is using a model proposed by Nation and Macalister (2010), as shown in Figure 1. The model illustrates the need to reflect on the Environment analysis, Needs analysis, and general teaching and learning Principles when making decisions about the Goals, Content and sequencing, Format and presentation, and Monitoring and assessment of a curriculum. These elements of the design model are informed through ongoing Evaluation.

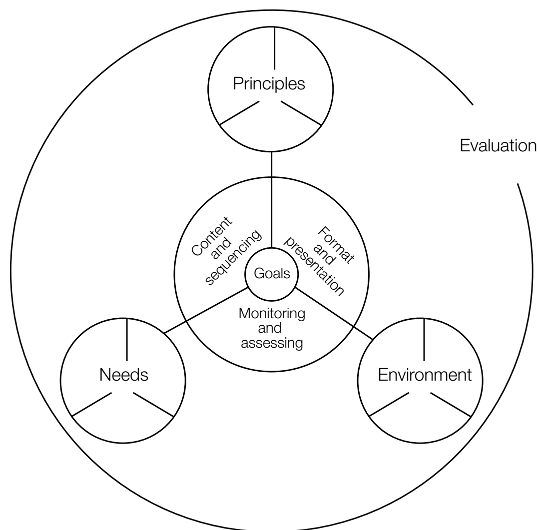

Figure 1. A model of the parts of the curriculum design process.
(Nation and Macalister, 2010).

At the environment analysis stage the design group identified a number of important environmental constraints, with the development of learner autonomy viewed as the most critical factor. As noted earlier, in the existing course learners are given the responsibility of planning their own route through the classroom material, which is in keeping with the idea that the provision of choice is a key feature in supporting someone's autonomy (Deci and Flaste 1995). However, Deci and Flaste also emphasize the importance of providing people with sufficient information to make informed choices. Without such information the provision of choice may constitute a burden on the learners rather than promote autonomy. For instance, interview data collected through the current study indicated that many learners who wished to improve their reading skills were choosing activities which failed to address their needs.

The design group proposes that one way to provide learner choice, and therefore promote autonomy in the new curriculum, is to include an extensive reading (ER) component. As part of this component teachers would initially orient learners to the concept of ER, explain the rationale behind it, and provide learners with opportunities to experience different kinds of reading material from within a limited set. In the second semester, the responsibility of selecting books and setting reading targets would be handed over to the learners. The ER component would also complement a number of goals of the new curriculum, which include a focus on vocabulary learning and the development of reading fluency. Table 1 outlines the proposed application of the principle of learner autonomy on the elements of content and sequencing, format and presentation, and monitoring and assessment, and how we propose to integrate this principle within the classroom.

	Semester one	Semester two
Content and sequencing	Manage student choice by using a limited number of class sets of graded readers. Use a range of different genres such as mystery, romance, non-fiction. Ensure the books are at the appropriate level through the use of diagnostic vocabulary tests.	Ask learners to self-select graded readers now that they are familiar with a range of genres and their vocabulary level.
Format and presentation	Ensure extensive reading (ER) is given attention in each lesson. Introduce learners to the concepts behind ER, such as reading faster, and that the purpose of ER is related to reading for pleasure. Ask learners to complete a brief reflection for each graded reader they finish.	Ask learners to complete reflections of their choice from the range introduced in semester one.
Monitoring and assessment	Monitor students in class through observation and discuss with them their experiences of ER. Read through their reflections.	Continue monitoring progress as in semester one. Give learners the responsibility of self-assessing their performance.

Table 1: The effects of applying the principle of learner autonomy on three elements of the design model

This practical application of the curriculum design model ensures learner autonomy is considered at all stages of the design process and is successfully integrated into the new curriculum. The ER component of the new curriculum will encourage learners to make informed choices about the reading material available to them while at the same time addressing their goals of expanding their vocabulary and improving reading fluency.

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4.4 Project-based learning breeds new learning strategies

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Introduction

As a result of our search for challenging learning environments that strengthen autonomous learning strategies, we have integrated project-based learning environments into the curriculum of Spanish and Japanese business communication at Aalto University School of Business in Finland. These courses are based on study tours to the countries where either Spanish or Japanese is spoken and with which Finland has growing trade relations.

The first project group consisted of students studying Spanish. The group's goal was to plan and organize a study tour to Latin America consisting of visits to local companies that do business with Finnish counterparts. The groups studying Japanese have organized research projects on the marketing of Finnish design in Japan and made study tours to Japan, where the students interviewed representatives of Japanese companies.

Pedagogical framework

These project-based learning environments are based on a model created in 2001 by five language teachers in Finland called "Crossing Cultures – Learning Environment" (Aalto et al. 2001). The model divides the project into four phases: orientation, implementation, reporting and evaluation. During the orientation phase the students are selected for the projects and then they apply for funding. The students also plan timetables, make journey arrangements and coordinate company visits. After that, they decide topics for their independent project papers and arrange business interviews. In the implementation phase companies are visited as part of the study trip. During the last phase, reporting and evaluation, students write either project papers in pairs or research publications as a team based on their observations, the interviews, and the materials collected during the trip. The teachers evaluate the reports and give feedback. All projects are finally evaluated by both students and the teacher.

The pedagogical framework is strongly influenced by Yrjö Engeström's (1987) Activity theory. Vygotsky, in his original model of activity theory, saw that a person (actor) is always connected to the environment by means of cultural tools and set symbols such as a language. Engeström added rules, community and division of work to the model. In activity theory the main interest lies in the goal, which is reached through a chain of activities using tools or artifacts. The essential idea in the theory is that by the means of the activities, constant development occurs

in the actor (oneself) and in his environment. The project activities, such as visits and interviews at companies, are seen as tools for learning and the teacher and students in the project teams initiate the learning process together (Engeström 1987; Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström, 2001).

Projects

The Spanish business project

The Spanish project has so far made two study trips to Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, in 2007 and 2011. These market areas were chosen because of the strong presence of the Finnish forest industry. Both projects had various goals, including exploring and establishing contacts with different sectors of the local business community, visiting Finnish companies operating in these countries, and studying the challenges posed to the companies´ communication in the context of Latin America and regional economic integration.

The Japanese projects

The report from the first project consists of lots of information about the differences in communication, meeting arrangements, decision making, etc. between Finnish and Japanese companies. At the end of this project a seminar at our university with panelists from the companies was arranged, so the project-activities initiated learning on a broader scale and generated change not only in the students, but also in the environment. The second project was more effective as it was implemented in cooperation with the Department of Marketing of our university. The third project was very professionally organized and involved various companies and actors.

Conclusions

In both groups, the student feedback was very positive. Students appreciated the opportunities for contacts with businesses in the regions. They also believed that they could apply the skills gained in the project in their future careers. These skills included not merely improved language skills but also deeper knowledge about the culture and the business environment. The project as a whole created an inspiring learning environment, in which they could utilize and enhance both their business knowledge and language skills gained during their university studies. Students also saw that the possibility to personalize the goals and the whole learning process is very inspiring and motivating. As teachers we have noticed that the projects have increased the commitment to independent learning.

We also found that our projects made the learning process more personal, autonomous and authentic and it also supported personal study strategies. We therefore argue that the assessment of project-based learning activities cannot be measured on the individual level alone. As the projects involve many different actors, we also need to assess their benefits on a broader scale, for example, how learning outcomes affect learning environments in our academic institutions and how society at large benefit from these projects.

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4.5 Creating a community of learners to promote students' autonomy

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Introduction

This research presents the effectiveness of creating a community of learners to raise students' level of autonomy in English learning in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment. The researchers work for a Japanese university, whose programs in the English department are designed to foster student autonomy by connecting the study within the curriculum to some co-curricular and extra-curricular programs. Developing a community of learners takes planning. What may appear to be unrelated activities are in fact all based on decisions made with an understanding of the underlying principles.

Objective

Our context is an English language department at a relatively low-level university. Entry-level student scores are in the range of mid to high 300's in the TOEFL paper-based test. Our objective in the creation of a community of learners was to increase results in the TOEFL score, and to increase the number of graduates from the department becoming employed in public schools as full-time English language teachers. There were two major underlying principles in establishing the community: that every student should have the opportunity to develop to the best of his or her own ability, and that each teacher is an important member of the community and therefore should be involved in the community.

Activities

There were various activities set up in our community. They included formalized social interactions like 'get-to-know-you' games with freshmen students and teachers during freshmen week. The English Lounge, a student self-access learning center where English was the only language used, was utilized for co-curricular programs that were connected to the English department's curriculum. The lounge also provided extra-curricular programs including activities such as English drama, and an English Speaking club. The daily operations of the lounge were run by students from the department. Successful language students would often use this area to spend time between classes. They were encouraged to help other students who may visit the lounge for assistance with their studies. Another type of activity was a student-organized social club that ran events such as bowling nights or going to festivals with the aim of using only English at these events.

The key point of these activities was that they focused on differing parts of a student's life but they were all set up to develop language skills and provide positive autonomous learning experiences. For many of our students, studying had been considered as something that is done only during class time, never outside of class, and never done without the instruction of a teacher.

Communication

A crucial element in the success of any activity is communication. All teachers and students were given adequate information about activities and their purposes. For teachers, this went beyond merely informing them of each activity. Details were given as to why the activity was important in building the students' social network, and how it might affect group make-up for classroom assignments. Teachers were also provided with talking points to bring up in class. For example, a view often spread among Japanese students of English is that the differences between the Japanese language and the English language prohibit students from being able to communicate effectively in English. A talking point for teachers may be to talk about this issue and identify particularly successful senior students who have attained a high level of fluency in English.

Communication is not a one-way street. It is equally important for administrators to listen to teachers and students and find out what they are thinking about the process. Valid concerns are as important as unsubstantiated fears. Once a member of the community has a worry, it needs to be addressed. The optimal way for concerns to be voiced is directly to someone who can deal with them. It is important that the response be both effective in addressing the concern, and evident as having addressed the concern.

Outcomes

In our department, TOEFL scores rose from an average of 350 to 440. Our enrolment went from around 30 students to meeting our recruitment limit of 50. The results were less clear about students attaining full-time employment as teachers. The number of students who received contract positions has

increased from two to all students who wanted to find employment in this field. However, there was also resistance to the program, which resulted from a lack of communication among the department teachers and the administration, as well as from a growing sense of discomfort that an increase in English ability would lead to a demise of Japanese ability. We hope that improvements in communication will further benefit students in the future.

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4.6 Investigating the relationship among self-efficacy, self-regulation strategy use, willingness to communicate, and English oral proficiency

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Introduction

Developing autonomous language learners who have confidence in learning and can deploy effective self-regulation strategies in learning English has recently been an important agenda in diverse English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. In educational psychology, self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and self-regulation strategy use (a strategy for learning, guided by metacognitive awareness such as planning, motivation and evaluation) have been well documented as important predictors of academic achievement (Pajares and Schunk 2001). However, investigations into factors that promote self-regulated language learning and the relationships among predictor variables that facilitate L2 learning achievement are still at an early stage, and the findings are rather limited.

The study

This study was carried out in order to gain a better understanding of the relationships between the following factors: self-efficacy (SE), intrinsic motivation or willingness to communicate (WTC), effort regulation strategies (ERS - a type of self-regulation strategy), and the English speaking skills of Japanese university English learners. The results of the study have pedagogical implications for high school and university teachers because they support the importance of promoting self-efficacy and effort regulation strategy use, which are claimed to strongly influence English oral skill development.

Methodology

The study posed the research question: What are the relationships between SE, WTC, ERS, and English speaking skills of Japanese university English learners? As indicated in the hypothesized model in Figure 1, the following three research hypotheses were tested:

1. That SE influences ERS use which is a predictor for English speaking skills.
2. That ERS is a predictor for WTC which in turn influences English speaking skills.
3. That SE influences WTC which in turn influences English speaking skills.

The study employed a quantitative approach, and the results were interpreted statistically. The participants were 331 sophomore English majors in the same course at a Japanese university. A self-efficacy and self-regulated learning questionnaire was derived from three sources: a Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire, a WTC questionnaire developed by Yashima (2002), and an in-house English group speaking test measuring fluency, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, and communication effectiveness. The questionnaire was administered to the participants in 2011. In order to examine how well the data fit the hypothesized converged model (Pajares and Schunk, ibid.; MacIntyre and Doucette 2010), the data obtained were analyzed in two ways. The first analysis used the Rasch model (a psychometric model for analysing such data) and the second used structural equation measurements (an integration of exploratory factor analysis, correlation, regression, and path analysis) to analyze cause and effect relationships of the factors in question.

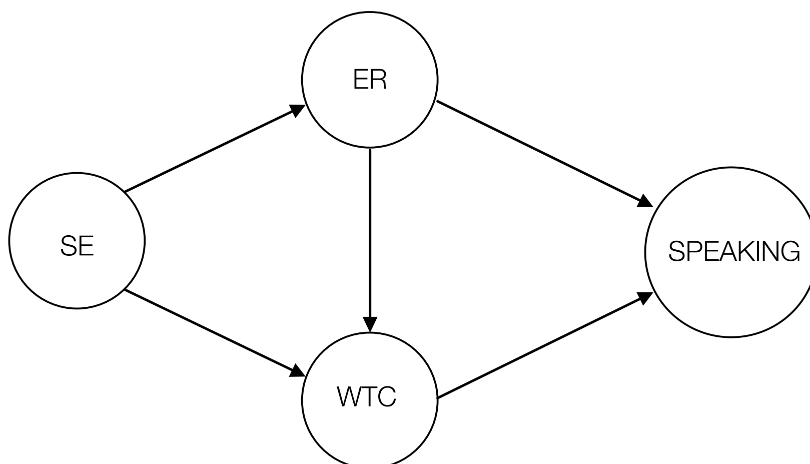

Figure 1: A hypothesized model showing the relationships between SE, ERS, WTC, and L2 speaking skills.

Results

Results revealed that the hypothesized model was confirmed statistically by the sample data, and all the hypotheses were supported, as shown in Figure 2. The goodness-of-fit statistics for the model met the multiple criteria for adequate model fit: CFI = .911, RMSEA = .055, SRMR = .058.

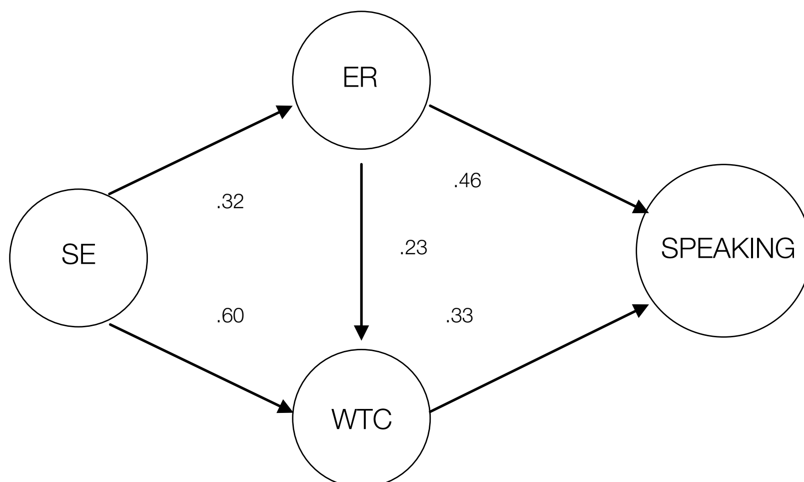

Figure 2. Observed data overlayed onto the hypothesized model.

SE influenced ERS (ß = .32, $p<.001$) which is a predictor of L2 speaking skills ß= .46, $p<.05$). The results indicate that highly self-efficacious learners demonstrate a strong will to focus on language learning. As a result, they improve their L2 speaking skills.

ERS influenced WTC (ß= .23, $p<.001$) which is also a predictor of L2 speaking skills (ß= .33, $p<.001$). This indicates that learners with strong wills in general, are more willing to communicate in English, and as a result, their English skills improve. This is understandable because in EFL contexts, learner contact with native speakers is infrequent, so learners need a strong will to initiate and maintain oral interaction in English with native speakers. It should be noted that the results are different from those of Yashima's (2002) study which did not include speaking test scores, and which revealed that L2 perceived competence was also a predictor of WTC.

SE influenced WTC (ß= .60, $p<.001$) which in turn influenced L2 speaking skills (ß= .33, $p<.001$). Thus, it appears that learners who are confident and capable in learning English communicate in English more frequently and willingly, and the more they speak, the more they enhance their English speaking skills.

Conclusions

The observed data provided support for the relationships between SE, ERS, WTC, and L2 speaking skills, as demonstrated in previous studies (MacIntyre and Doucette 2010). This study demonstrated that ERS (willpower for example) are important for developing L2 speaking skills. In addition, it is worthwhile for educators to understand the importance of developing learner SE and WTC because both have a profound effect on L2 speaking skills.

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4.7 An ethnographic research study on learner autonomy developed through collaborative learning in EFL classes at a junior high school in Japan

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The study

The research outlined in this article was conducted on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading classes at a junior high school in Japan. It was a project in which ethnographical research was carried out by investigating classroom discourse and in addition, retrospective interviews were carried out with some of the participants at the end of the school year (Tsuda 2012).

Methodology

The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of collaborative learning in fostering autonomous learning attitudes, by revealing the interaction among group members. The classroom discourse was analyzed based on socio-cultural theory (Norton and Toohey 2001).

Participants were ninth grade students in English reading classes with varied English proficiency levels. They were divided into groups of four and were seated facing each other.

The reading was conducted as follows:

1. In each class, a new reading passage of about 300 words was presented, followed by comprehension questions. The students worked individually on the reading task for five minutes.
2. Each group discussed the reading materials and questions for twenty minutes.
3. The students worked on the comprehension questions individually for five minutes.
4. They shared their answers with the whole class for five minutes.
5. At the end of each class, they reflected on their learning and set goals for the next class using a feedback sheet.

This collaborative learning method was introduced to reading classes and conducted once a week for about eight months.

Selected findings

A qualitative analysis of the interaction among group members in the collaborative learning style classes showed that the students became aware of the diversity of learning processes, which helped them deepen mutual understanding, and they acquired greater ability to reflect on their own learning. They also learned how to manage group discussions without relying on the authoritative support of a teacher, and consequently, they learned to regulate their own learning. In other words, collaborative learning was successful in allowing the students to cultivate their meta-cognition, and also led to positive learning attitudes and active participation in their own learning.

A social hierarchy among group members was occasionally formed, enabling group members to learn from each other. One of the students assumed the role of the teacher, asking somewhat arrogantly, 'Do you have any questions? Nanika shitsumon wa arimasu ka?' and a 'miniature classroom' framework was established. In this way she tried to change her status, establishing a hierarchy among the group, with her at the top. The hierarchy, however, was unexpectedly overturned when another student asked her questions in rapid succession, and the 'pseudo' teacher answered, 'I don't know! Wakan'nai!', looking flustered, just like a learner at a low-proficiency-level. Due to the unstable social standings of group members such as this, no one person consistently deferred to another. On the contrary, the balance of power was continuously subject to negotiation. This kind of fragile hierarchy was one of the major characteristics found in the collaborative learning classes.

Another finding was that students would sometimes exert a strongly positive influence on other students. One girl was persistent in trying to urge another group member to join the discussion. He did not have confidence in his English competence and therefore rejected her suggestions at first, but in the end accepted her advice. After that he

gradually changed his learning attitudes. It had been difficult for the class teacher to persuade him to cooperate with his classmates in learning. It is assumed that his classmate's utterances reached him through 'an internally-persuasive discourse' as described by Bakhtin (1981: 424-425) and this prompted a change in his attitude.

Group discussion took a lot of time, because in this class, which had a collaborative learning style, students were allowed to continue discussing a task until all the group members fully understood it. In this research, students exchanged their opinions and asked each other questions. They also sometimes stopped talking to self-reflect. In contrast, within teacher-centered style classes, teachers control the learning process, informing students of short-cuts to the completion of tasks through 'an authoritative or top-down discourse' (Bakhtin ibid), and this may promote passive and obedient learning attitudes among students rather than encouraging learner autonomy.

Conclusions

The study demonstrated the benefits of a collaborative learning method, even though there were some problems with it. The learners were encouraged to regulate their own learning and to cultivate awareness of the diversity of learning processes, spending sufficient time to understand the task. It can be concluded that collaborative learning is an effective method for raising meta-cognitive awareness and consequently fostering autonomous learning attitudes in EFL classes at the junior high school level in Japan.

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4.8 The social mediation of self-regulated learning

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Background

As part of a research program working on the development of a study progress guide (SPG), a supplementary learning resource aimed at promoting self-regulatory learning strategies with English learners at a university in Japan, interviews were conducted with students who had used the SPG for two or more semesters. Analysis of the interview data revealed a clear dichotomy amongst subjects, with one group accepting the SPG and the other rejecting it. The analysis also pointed to several factors related to this dichotomy which were categorized as catalysts, social discourses, and shared understandings. When these catalysts come together under the correct conditions they work to underpin and support effective use of the SPG, in effect working as foundations for successful engagement with self-regulated learning.

Mediating factors

Catalysts are inspiring experiences and encounters with role models which lead to a clear(er) self-vision. They have purpose-building effects which assist learners with goal setting. This goal-orienting nature of catalysts allows learners to identify the potential usefulness of the SPG. Social discourses of learning are the cultural narratives which students bring with them into the classroom, mediating their understanding of themselves as learners, and their engagement in learning. How students respond to social discourses dramatically shapes (both positively and negatively) their interpretation of the meaning and inherent usefulness of the SPG. Clear messages about the function of learning resources and activities need to be effectively conveyed to students and at times co-constructed through dialogue to ensure shared understandings; this latter foundation seems to be fundamental if we are to see catalysts and social discourses combine in a manner positive for learning.

The salient point is that each foundation alone is not enough for successful use of resources. It can be argued that it is the interaction among the foundations that ultimately informs learners' use of the SPG. For example, the teacher's positive positioning of this resource in class (formation of shared understandings) can highlight its utility to the student as a resource for challenging and overcoming the notion that he/she is inherently lazy (a common social discourse in reference to Japanese tertiary students), as well as its potential role in helping him/her to develop as a successful language learner, a goal originating from parental encouragement of learning (catalyst). Indeed it is this catalyst which originally motivated the learners to engage in positive and effective learning, thus promoting emergence of the other two foundations.

Implications

The SPG, like any other learning resource, has its own emergent properties. Its functionality is mediated by students' social experiences, but, at the same time, it appears that it functions as a means of helping students reformulate their images of themselves as learners and the learning practices they engage in. In this way the SPG is itself a catalyst that can potentially reinforce and transform student conceptions of themselves as learners. Thus, the concept of shared understandings is crucial as the utility and purpose of the SPG has to be clearly communicated to its users to ensure they understand its intentions. One potential difficulty here is creating a consensus amongst all course instructors regarding the efficacy and value of new resources and frameworks so that a consistent narrative can be conveyed to students.

Another point relates to the importance of role models, such as non-native speaker English teachers and parents as early catalysts (Lamb 2011). While encounters with role models and parental influence might be out of the control of the classroom teacher, providing a rich assortment of learning opportunities and artifacts, as illustrated by Murray (2011), is one possible way toward helping students find a catalyst. It is also important to remember that catalysts need not be past experiences, but can also be future-based, as in the idea of possible selves (Markus and Nurius 1986).

Social discourses are deeply embedded in society; however, students should be encouraged to think about and question these, especially in cases where they have a limiting effect. How students' own theories of learning are mediated and how this relates to their willingness to engage in activities or use resources is an important issue. Learners bring theories of learning and theories of themselves as learners to any situation; this has to be accepted and accounted for and it needs to be understood that these theories will work to transform any teaching/learning situation. Learners need to be recognized as discrete individuals, and their transformational potential and the social nature of any learning situation need to be accepted, in order for a positively co-constructed understanding of the learning resources.

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4.9 A naturalistic inquiry of the relationship between learner beliefs and learner autonomy

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Introduction

Learner autonomy has received increasing attention in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Many educators believe that the ultimate goal of teaching is to help students become life-long, independent learners. Holec, who was one of the first to explore the concept of learner autonomy, defines autonomy as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (1981: 3). Over the last few decades, in the field of SLA, considerable effort has been expended in identifying environmental and individual factors affecting learner autonomy and conditions for fostering it (Benson 2007). However, a review of the literature on learner autonomy indicates that studies examining the effects of learner beliefs on learner autonomy are less frequent. It can be argued that it is essential to discover and identify learners' beliefs when promoting autonomous learning. This is simply because human beings are designers of their own actions (Argyris and Schön 1974). Behind all actions there are underpinning beliefs; hence, learners' autonomous learning is also governed by their beliefs.

Methodology

The present study addressed two main research questions;

1. What are the beliefs that Chinese learners hold about language learning?
2. In what ways do these beliefs affect their autonomy?

The study was carried out within an interpretative paradigm using a qualitative approach to collect data about five Chinese migrant learners over an 18 week period. The five learners were all full-time language learners, studying at a language school in a tertiary institution in New Zealand. Their age ranged between 21 and 41. Two were learning at the elementary level and three at the pre-intermediate level. To enable triangulation, data was collected using a number of instruments: one or two weekly learning journals, two in-depth interviews along with two classroom observations, as well as two follow-up stimulated recall interviews.

Major findings

The beliefs emerging from the data fell into five categories:

1. The most salient belief surfacing from the data was the significance that the learners attached to the role of exams in their learning. Four out of the five learners were of the view that exams could exert pressure and 'push' them

to revise and summarize. Shaped by these beliefs, these learners reported 'responding to test demands on the course'; 'relying on tests' as an external incentive to motivate them to learn; and 'counting on test results' to provide feedback on their learning progress.

2. Another noticeable theme was their concern for accuracy. They reported 'frequently consulting grammar reference books' and 'doing discrete grammar exercises in their own time'. Moreover, all the learners were of the opinion that error correction was 'crucial' and 'important' in their learning and they always wanted to be corrected. The consequence of these learners' concerns for accuracy was that they paid a lot of attention to formal, grammatical features of English. This led to their neglect of the communicative function of the language and their high expectations of teachers to impart correct knowledge to them.
3. All the learners held a firm belief that their own efforts were pivotal to the success of their language learning. With this emphasis, these learners were willing to take individual responsibility and strive to achieve their goals. This was evident in their consistent and substantial use of metacognitive strategies to regulate their learning by determining their own learning objectives, selecting their learning methods, and self-assessing their own progress. During this process, most of the learners demonstrated a high level of control over their own learning.
4. While they believed their own efforts led to successful learning, all the participants except one held a predominantly traditional view of the role of teachers: to teach and transmit knowledge. They expected teachers to deliver interesting lessons, clarify the confusion they had in their English learning and correct errors from their course work. They believed that teachers should exert pressure to push them to learn by giving them more exams and homework and monitoring their learning.
5. The five learners' self-efficacy beliefs varied. While three of them were doubtful of their abilities to learn English, two were very confident. The data revealed that those learners who perceived themselves as competent and capable were most likely to assume responsibility for their own learning. They tended to plan, monitor and participate actively in their learning. They also persevered in the face of obstacles during their learning and were more successful.

Conclusions

The findings indicate that learner beliefs about SLA are a complex system consisting of a set of sub-beliefs. They are not always in harmony but they are influential. The learners' levels of autonomy are related to the beliefs they hold about SLA. Some of the beliefs are more congruent with learner autonomy while others are at odds with it. It is essential for teachers to uncover these beliefs in order to promote learner autonomy and better understand how they affect the levels of learner autonomy.

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4.10 The accuracy of metacognitive monitoring in self-directed learning of L2 vocabulary depth of knowledge

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Introduction

It is not uncommon to hear L2 learners complain about the gap between knowing what a word means and knowing how to use it, with the former generally considered much easier than the latter. In vocabulary research, this distinction is characterized as size versus depth. Size boils down to connecting word forms and meanings, whereas depth goes beyond meaning to include lexical features such as collocation, register, and syntactic behavior. Because L2 learners are generally expected to self-direct much of their own vocabulary learning, this study undertook to ask how well-prepared they are for the depth-related aspects of the task.

Evidence already exists in the L2 lexicography literature that learners have trouble with vocabulary depth of knowledge insofar as they often ignore such features in dictionary entries and instead focus only on the more basic and easily accessible information. In particular, recent studies for example, by Chan (2012), suggest learners lack conceptual understanding of lexical features such as transitivity, complementation, and grammatical collocation. These features were the focus of the present investigation, subsumed under the umbrella term 'pattern' for ease of instruction and reporting. To evaluate preparedness for self-directed learning, the study centered on the process of metacognitive monitoring. This is where, for example, a learner looks at a lexical item she has just used in a composition and asks, "Am I using this word correctly?" The internally generated response to such questions are the basis on which students make strategic decisions about learning, so it is important for monitoring to be reasonably accurate.

There is a long tradition of psychological research into the accuracy of metacognitive monitoring, based on concepts such as calibration. Calibration studies usually involve giving participants some sort of objective test of knowledge

or skill, which yields a score of actual performance, and then comparing it to the participants' own assessments of their performance, which are referred to as measures of confidence. Confidence can take the form of a prediction made before the test or after the assessment, in which case it is referred to as post-diction. Poor performers or those who lack knowledge or skills generally demonstrate extreme overconfidence, while a tendency toward slight under-confidence has often been observed among top performers (Kruger and Dunning 1999).

Methods

This study involved 64 students in an English as a Second Language (ESL) composition course at a large US research university, most of whom spoke Mandarin Chinese as their L1. On separate occasions, they took a size-related test and a depth-related test, and post-dicted their scores on each immediately afterward. While they were required to use existing knowledge on the size measure, they had access to a variety of online dictionaries, including learner dictionaries, while completing the depth measure.

The size task was an online version of the Vocabulary Levels Test, or VLT (Nation 1990), worth a maximum of 120 points. The depth-related measure created for the study was called the Pattern Identification and Correction Test, or PICT. It required learners to spot and fix a pattern-based error in each of 10 sentences, for a maximum score of 20 points. The performance and confidence scores were then analyzed statistically and visually as Figure 1 shows.

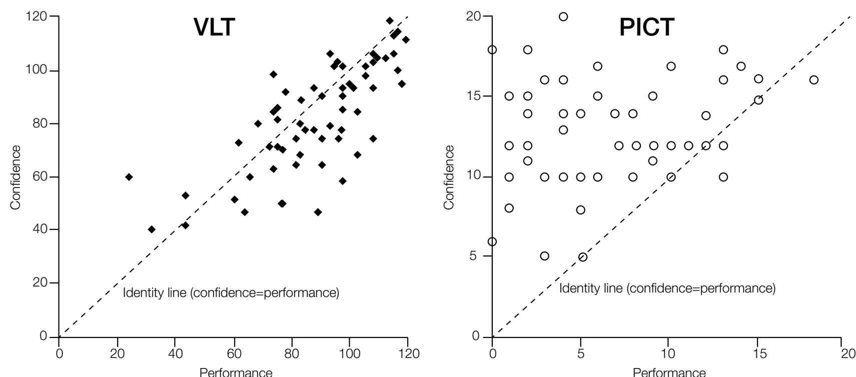

Figure 1: Scatterplots of performance and confidence data for the VLT and PICT, with identity line representing perfect monitoring accuracy

Key findings

1. In terms of actual performance, the average score as a percentage was twice as high for size versus depth, 74.4% and 32.2%, respectively. Average miscalibration on the size measure was 4.9% versus 30% on the depth measure.
2. Visual analysis showed a clear trend toward slight underestimation on the size measure versus considerable overestimation on the depth measure.
3. Correlations showed a much stronger performance-confidence relationship on the size measure, $r(61) = .764$, $p < .001$, than the depth measure, $r(62) = .327$, $p = .008$.

Summary and conclusion

The tertiary-level ESL learners in this study demonstrated much less accuracy in monitoring their own performances on a depth-related measure than they did on a size-related measure. The inaccuracies were large enough in many cases to raise the question whether these learners even recognized a gap in their own lexical competence. Without such recognition, there is little possibility for self-initiated remedial action. This suggests many L2 learners may be poorly prepared to self-direct their learning and use of lexical patterns. Future research should investigate these issues in relation to other features of vocabulary depth, such as lexical collocation.

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4.11 Learner-generated materials: motivational effects on Singaporean primary school learners and teachers

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Introduction

The desirability of learner involvement in materials development has been promoted for almost 30 years and enthusiastic reports of experimentation have occasionally been published (Swales 1992). Yet, despite the potential of learner-generated materials for encouraging learner autonomy, there is little evidence that this notion has achieved widespread acceptance in terms of teacher practice. This paper describes a study in which 73 Singaporean primary school teachers experimented with learner-generated materials in their own classes. The teachers were attending modules concerned with materials evaluation, selection and development as part of in-service B.Ed. (upgrading) and M.Ed. programmes in 2010-2012 at the National Institute of Education, Singapore.

The argument

The term 'learner-generated materials' can be used to refer to either or both of the following:

1. learner products (written and spoken) which result from any classroom activity, but which are then exploited by the teacher as a basis for further learning;
2. teaching/testing materials prepared by learners, with teacher guidance.

Allwright (1978) argued that teachers are typically 'overloaded' and learners 'under involved'. Involving learners in creating materials would therefore seem to have obvious benefits. However, in addition to reducing the time spent by teachers on preparing materials and increasing learner involvement, other benefits from involving learners in materials development (see 2. above) have also been suggested. These include enhanced learner motivation and group solidarity; raised teacher awareness of learner difficulties; and, for both learners and teachers, increased interest deriving from the unpredictability of learner products (McGrath 2013).

Teacher attitudes

For a minority of the teachers in the study, 'learner-generated materials' was both a new term to describe what they were already doing (see 1. above) and a concept that allowed them to situate their existing practices and consider how these might be extended. For the majority, however, it was a challenge to their

firmly established beliefs about the organization of learning and the roles of teachers and learners. Despite their experience, many admitted to feelings of doubt and anxiety, with concerns ranging from the practical and relatively predictable (time required, noise, learner readiness – linguistic and psychological) to considerations of administrator/parent expectations.

The experiments

Pupils were asked, for example, to make/respond to invitations (Primary1), jumble their own sentences (Primary 2), transcribe 'show and tell' transcriptions (Primary 2), create information booklets on frogs and toads (Primary 3), and devise cloze tasks (Primary 6). The choice of task seems to have been influenced by teachers' judgements of learners' maturity and linguistic and cognitive capacities; by the teachers' own levels of confidence; by the examples used in introductory sessions about the topics (learner questions on texts); and according to whether the teachers' starting-points were known areas of weakness (e.g. a specific language point or a component of the primary school leaving exam).

Learner responses

Teacher reports frequently refer to pupils' excitement when told of the tasks and to the pupils' pride in their achievements. Levels of engagement were high. Pupils often solved any queries by asking each other rather than the teacher, and spontaneously offered constructive suggestions for improvement of another group's work. In some cases, their enthusiasm led them to do more than the teacher asked. Asked for their comments, the vast majority responded positively, in some cases suggesting ways in which activities could be made more challenging.

Teacher learning

On a general level, the teachers realised that they had been underestimating their pupils. They noted that active involvement in the kinds of materials design activities described above stimulates learner motivation, that learners are capable of producing materials which can be used for their own and other students' learning, and that the learners' performance levels improve. What they also observed was that learners approach materials design tasks with greater care than they would normal classroom activities; they transfer and integrate previous learning; they naturally support each other; and that, given the freedom to be autonomous, even young learners display autonomous behavior. At the same time, the teachers emphasized the importance of very careful teacher planning, modeling, and the need for constant monitoring and linguistic support during the production stage. Time-estimates, it was generally acknowledged, had been unrealistic.

Conclusions

The study provides persuasive evidence that:

1. involvement in materials generation can have a positive effect on learner motivation and stimulate autonomous activity
2. with appropriate support, even young learners with limited language proficiency are capable of producing re-usable materials, and gain from the process
3. experimentation with learner-generated materials has value for teachers as well as learners, and can have a dramatic effect on teacher attitudes towards teacher-learner roles.

The benefits of learner-generated materials are such that all teachers should be encouraged to experiment with similar materials for their own students. Encouragement alone may not be enough, however. The teachers in this study were experienced, had been prepared in various ways, and the experimentation described here took place in the context of an assessed in-service course. Those new to this concept are likely to need guidance and concrete examples.

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4.12 Technology-based project work: enhancing English learning motivation in Japanese university students

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Introduction

There are two significant foci of this project: one is technology, and the other is collaborative learning. Students are surrounded by various technologies that often have a huge capacity to enhance their natural usage of English. Moreover, collaborative learning has been proved to accelerate learner motivation, for example in a study about storytelling by Agawa (2012). In order to examine students' experiences of a video making project which included these two features, their reactions and reflections were observed by teachers.

Method

Participants

Twenty-eight second-year students at a Japanese university participated in this study. There were 18 male and 10 female students. Their majors included Japanese literature, foreign cultures, history, philosophy, law, and economics. For the project, they were randomly divided into 6 groups. Each group consisted of four to five students.

Procedure

For the fall semester of the 2011-12 academic year, students were assigned a project to make videos introducing some of Tokyo's tourist spots to Australian students. The Australian students were studying Japanese at a private high school in Australia and planning to visit Tokyo in a few years time, on a school trip. Thus, this project was designed for a real target audience, which would presumably influence the motivation of the participants.

The length of the video had to be about 5 minutes and the narration had to be done in English. Students had six weeks to finish the project. They had some preparation time each week in class. During the preparation time, the teacher joined their discussions for a few minutes, answering questions and giving advice.

After each preparation time students recorded their progress on a preparation sheet and handed it in to the teacher. The following week the teacher returned the sheet with some feedback.

In the sixth week, students presented their videos in class. Their peers, using a peer evaluation sheet, evaluated the videos. The students and the teacher both awarded points. The teacher then uploaded the videos to Youtube.

Group	Chosen topic
A	Harajuku
B	Harajuku & Shibuya
C	Shibuya
D	100 yen shops
E	Tokyo tower & other spots
F	Shibuya

Table 1: Topic chosen by each group

Results

Since the school is located in the center of Tokyo most groups chose Harajuku and/or Shibuya which are very popular spots among young Japanese students (Table 1). They might have thought that, since they themselves were fascinated by these places, the Australian students would also like them. Only one group chose 100 yen shops as their topic. In the peer evaluations, group D received the comment that their chosen topic was very unique, while group B received the highest scores.

After the presentation and peer evaluation, each group reflected on their project. Their reflections contained positive reactions such as, 'Our video flowed smoothly and the sound was clear. It was fun to work collaboratively to make a good video' (Group B) and desire for improvement such as, 'Our voices were not clearly heard because of some noise. We should have spoken directly into the microphone in a quieter place' (Group E).

Discussion and conclusions

Competing with other groups

In this project, students made great effort to make better videos than the other groups. Students checked the progress of the other groups during the preparation weeks, in order to not be left behind. Competing with other groups facilitated their motivation.

Collaborating with their group members

The students brainstormed ideas, decided their work schedules, and decided the roles of group members. The teacher decided to not give them concrete steps to finish the product but instead let them decide for themselves how they would accomplish their work, which resulted in students taking more responsibility. This approach seemed to free them from a sense of being controlled by the teacher. Furthermore, the project required not only English ability but other knowledge and skills as well, such as computer technology. It also encouraged the slower

learners of English to be actively involved in their groups. For example, less competent students could contribute by taking responsibility for digital skills or finding and collecting information. One student competent in computers took charge of making the video. Another student, who was more competent in English than the others, checked the English of his group members.

As shown in the students' comments, the group members worked collaboratively to make a good video. This project encouraged a positive attitude toward English learning.

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4.13 Does ethnicity influence the choice of language learning strategies?: a case study in New Zealand

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Introduction

There has been very little research on learning strategies used by learners of Japanese as a foreign language (Grainger 2006). Furthermore, ethnicity has not attracted much attention as an influential variable in such studies (Grainger 1997).

The study

This study aims to fill the gap by investigating the types of learning strategies used by learners of Japanese in New Zealand and the relationship between their use of learning strategies and their ethnicity.

The research questions of this study were:

1. What types of learning strategies are reportedly used by learners of Japanese as a foreign language?
2. To what extent does the use of language learning strategies vary depending on learners' ethnicity?

Methodology

Twenty-nine participants were divided into two groups: those of Asian Background (AB: n=16) and those of English-Speaking Background (ESB: n=13), according to their self-reported ethnicity. Data were collected through the questionnaire 'Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) Version 5.1' developed by Oxford (1990) and semi-structured one-to-one interviews.

An interview schedule was designed to elicit what types of learning strategies the participants found useful and were using for their own learning of Japanese. There were 25 participants who agreed to be interviewed: 14 (56 %) were in the AB and 11 (44%) were in the ESB categories. Both questionnaires and interviews were carried out in English. This was considered appropriate as all students learning at this institution needed to obtain 6.5 or higher in International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examinations before they enrolled.

The questionnaire and interview data were analysed by means of Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS), which is a quantitative analysis tool, and NVivo, which is computer software designed to manage qualitative data and assist qualitative analysis.

Findings

Types of learning strategies

The descriptive statistics indicated that, for both the AB and the ESB groups, compensation strategies were most frequently reported, while memory strategies were least frequently reported. However, in the interviews, memory, cognitive, and social strategies were frequently reported, while compensation strategies were rarely identified.

There are some possible explanations for this phenomenon. Regarding memory strategies, the learners of Japanese frequently reported the use of lists as a way to learn vocabulary, but this strategy was not offered in the questionnaire, although the use of flashcards was included. Therefore, the rigid nature of the wording of the questionnaire items may account for the discrepancy. Compensation strategies such as guessing the meanings and using body language were included in the questionnaire and received a high mean. However, they were hardly mentioned in the interviews. It can be argued that some learners might not have recognized these as language learning strategies unless they were explained.

Some statements could not be grouped into any of Oxford's categories. Therefore a new category was created, named avoidance strategies.

Ethnicity and language learning strategy use

The results of the independent-samples t-test analyses indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of the reported use of the six language learning strategies. However, an ethnicity difference was identified in the interview data related to social and affective strategies. The learners in both the AB and the ESB groups were keen to find opportunities to use the Japanese language outside the classroom, but a difference was that the ABs

tended to involve people they knew and felt comfortable with whereas this was not the case for the ESBs.

Several statements relating to affective strategies were reported by learners in ESB, but not by those in AB. These statements were related to self-encouragement and willingness to make mistakes.

Conclusions

Although the results did not show a statistically significant difference in the preferred use of learning strategies depending on learners' ethnicity, it can be argued that teachers should be aware of a possible difference. The analysis of the interview data suggests some limitations in the SILL: the questionnaire did not capture all possible strategies; the learners of Japanese were not necessarily aware of all the measured language learning strategies; and the influence of ethnicity on the use of language learning strategies may not be identifiable through SILL. Researchers should therefore collect both quantitative and qualitative data to capture a more complete picture of the role of ethnicity in the use of language learning strategies.

This study was the first one to investigate the relationship between the use of language learning strategies by learners of Japanese in New Zealand and their ethnicity. Further research, involving bigger numbers of participants, is however necessary to see whether the findings in this study can be generalised.

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4.14 Autonomy in reading: student attitudes toward choice in graded readers

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Introduction

In guidelines for extensive reading (ER), learner choice over materials is often suggested as a key element to foster autonomy in self-directed reading projects. However, student attitudes toward the provision of choice over simplified books (graded readers) used for ER have been inadequately investigated in learner autonomy research. The present study explored student attitudes under choice and no choice conditions for the elements of interest, motivation, enjoyment, confidence, and anxiety. Implications from the results of this independent reading project and classroom learning activities are discussed along with future research directions.

Extensive reading

In second language acquisition and foreign language teaching research, a large body of evidence can be found in support of the effectiveness and utilisation of reading graded texts extensively. However, as recently as 2011 at the 1st Extensive Reading World Congress in Kyoto, Bill Grabe built a case for the development of more and better controlled studies into ER. Grabe identified how relatively uncertain we are on many aspects of ER teaching, learning, and materials or activities. This study looked to delve into the relatively unexplored aspect of learner choice in graded reading materials.

Extensive reading principles (Day and Bamford 2002)	**Reading circles guidelines** (Furr 2007)
1. Reading materials are easy.	a) Graded level materials
2. Wide variety of material & topics.	b) Groups read the same text.
3. Learners choose what they want.	c) Teachers select material.
4. Learners read as much as possible.	d) Motivation to "read extensively" = a lot
5. Purpose of reading is pleasure, information, and general understanding.	e) Group discussions and extension activities are used.
6. Reading is its own reward.	f) Meet in groups - notes for informal talk.
7. Reading speed is usually fast not slow.	g) Read without a dictionary.

8. Reading is individual and silent.	h) Combines 4-skills (R/Wr/Sp/L).
9. Teachers orient and guide students.	i) Teacher facilitate and train students.
10. Teacher is a role model.	j) Teacher is not a discussion member.

Table 1. A comparison of extensive reading principles and reading circle guidelines

Choice

Table 1 shows a comparison of the principles for extensive reading from Day and Bamford (2002) and the guidelines for reading circle discussions from Furr (2007). The distinction in the second and third items provided the impetus for this study into learner choice of graded readers in ER projects. A meta-analysis of 41 studies by Patal et al. (2008) examined the effect of choice on intrinsic motivation and related outcomes. Results indicated that providing choice enhanced intrinsic motivation, effort, task performance, perceived competence, and preference for challenge.

Autonomy and ILA 2012

In the presentations at ILA 2012, Mike Levy looked at 'options' and Andy Gao spoke of 'deliberation'. For better learner support, 'structured autonomy' was mentioned, as was 'making informed decisions' in one of the Swap Shop sessions. In personal discussion, David Crabbe brought up 'ego-depletion' where inner resources are used up in the challenge and stress of making choices and people no longer have the energy to focus on making good decisions. Stefanou et al. as cited in Patall et al. (2008) have suggested that autonomy can be supported in the classroom in three ways:

1. Organizational autonomy, for example, allowing students to choose seating or classroom rules
2. Procedural autonomy, for example, allowing choices about materials used in classroom tasks or assessments
3. Cognitive autonomy, for example, allowing students to generate and evaluate solutions.

Along a cline of increasing personal and instructional relevance, choices over procedural and cognitive autonomy are considered more useful to enhance engagement and learning. Arguably the most important step teachers can take toward enabling autonomy is to provide students with choices.

Participants and method

This study followed an intra-group counterbalanced design and was conducted over two semesters with students' out-of-class reading in an intensive English program at a private university in Japan. A convenience sample (N = 80, Male 13, Female 67) of intermediate-level university sophomores in four discrete classes each read six graded readers under each of two conditions: 1) No choice (NCH) with books selected by the instructors, and 2) Choice (CH) with books from the program library, chosen by students. At the end of the second semester, participants completed

a survey translated into their Japanese L1. Self-report data collected on a 4-point Likert scale was used to examine learners' attitudes toward NCH and CH for interest, motivation, enjoyment, confidence, and anxiety.

Results

Table 2 presents the relevant survey questions and the mean responses. Even-numbered questions were reverse coded. All means less than 2.5 indicate stronger endorsement for choice over no choice.

Survey questions	M
1. Overall, I could choose interesting books to read better than my teacher.	2.01
2. Overall, I felt more motivated to read the books the teacher chose.	2.20*
3. Overall, it was more enjoyable for me to read the books I chose than the books the teacher chose.	2.15
4. Overall, I felt more confident reading books chosen by the teacher than reading books I chose.	2.09*
5. Overall, I felt more anxious choosing books by myself instead of having the teacher choose them.	1.77
6. Generally speaking, in the case where the teacher is doing the evaluation and grading of the reading project, the choice of books for students to read is the teacher's job.	*2.04

Table 2. Survey questions and mean responses
*Reverse coded

Conclusions

Under the procedural autonomy of choosing their own materials for reading outside of class, the participants endorsed choice over no choice for each of the elements examined: interest, motivation, enjoyment, confidence, and anxiety. However, qualitative data from some students indicated that, although they may have found meaningful and instructionally relevant options, making these multiple choices had a detrimental effect leading to ego-depletion.

Applications

In addition to empirically supporting student choice in graded reading materials, this study highlights areas for further studies into autonomy and choice. Since cognitive autonomy support is believed to have the most enduring motivational learning benefits, choices of method, pace, or outcomes should be investigated. More balanced, heterogeneous samples would allow for an examination of associations for the variables of gender and ethnicity. Data for the CH – NCH and NCH – CH sequenced groups could also be compared. Flowerday and Shraw, as cited in Patall et al. (2008) looked at teacher beliefs and practices in studying what, when, where, and to whom teachers offered choice. These, as well as the area of choices made over an extended period, are areas deserving of further exploration.

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4.15 Empowering students' independent learning through service learning in a Hong Kong primary school context

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Introduction

In order to participate well in tomorrow's world, children need to be equipped with specific skills, such as problem solving and independent learning skills. Of particular interest is how we can integrate those skills into classroom activities to develop our children to become independent problem solvers, while without supervision of teachers and within a learning context other than classrooms. This study examines the use of 'service learning' as one of the keys to develop independent learning skills in a primary school in Hong Kong.

Background

There are various definitions of service learning. According to Learn and Serve America (2012), service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. Service learning is commonly practised in high school curricula in some countries for example the U.S.A. In Hong Kong, service learning is not a compulsory component in the educational curriculum however it has been implemented in the New Secondary Education in Hong Kong recently, but only a few primary schools include service learning in the curriculum. Service learning, as a new experience for Hong Kong primary school students, involves students in community activities that complement their classroom studies and provide a real life environment which strengthens students' social responsibilities.

Methodology

This study focused on two service learning projects within a Hong Kong primary school that involved 16 students in Grade 5 (G5) and 150 students in Grade 6 (G6). The G5 students conducted their designed activities during two English lessons in another school and the G6 students joined a flag selling activity. Questionnaires and interviews were conducted to address the following research questions:

1. What problems do students encounter while doing community service practice?
2. To what extent does Service Learning empower students' independent learning?

The G5 students taught other students in a Joint School Programme in November 2011 and April 2012. Data was collected through non-participant observation, focus group interview (5 students), and a questionnaire & reflection form for students. The G6 students joined a flag selling activity in February 2012. Feedback from students was collected from an evaluation questionnaire and a reflective journal.

Findings

The G5 students reflected that not everyone had the same resources like books, audio, and video supports for language learning. The boys adopted an interactive approach by designing their own games. As shown in the students' responses, their service learning developed their critical and creative thinking skills. Moreover, they developed a sense of sharing with other community members. It was a unique opportunity to meet others outside their own social circle. This would also hopefully instill a positive sense of civic duty in their lives.

The G6 students' reflections were mainly positive about their flag selling experience. They were able to integrate their classroom learning into experiential learning and develop a sense of civic responsibility. Findings of student reflections generally fell into three categories: knowledge and skills, self-development, and community involvement. Data showed that students' service learning experiences impacted greatly on their independent learning in terms of opportunities for expressing their opinions, for decision-making, for social communication and for developing a sense of responsibility. Although students encountered various problems in the community service practice, such as being too shy to approach others and/or fearing being ignored, they enhanced their problem solving skills in the real life learning environment through service learning.

Conclusion

Not only does service learning allow students to apply their prior knowledge to solve real-life problems, it also facilitates their active participation within the community and helps them to become actively contributing citizens and community members through the service they perform. This study also sheds light on how to implement service learning in the context of primary schools in Hong Kong.

One suggestion that arose from the presentation at the ILA Conference was to let students design their own questionnaire for evaluation. This is something that may be considered in the next cycle of the study, to enhance greater student involvement.

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4.16 Going beyond classroom walls to enhance learners' agency in the classroom

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Introduction

The standard school curriculum often tends to ignore the resources that culturally diverse students bring to the classroom from their communities. This can result in a home-school disconnect and make classroom learning an alienating experience for these students. This study is about how learning from students and their communities can be used to build productive relationships between teachers, students and communities to enhance students' agentive roles in an inclusive learning environment. This study is particularly relevant in educational contexts that serve a population of culturally diverse students.

Background

The context for this study is the researcher's role as a teacher educator and teacher in a two year after-school program for 14-18 year olds in India from 2010 to 2012, called ACCESS Micro-scholarship program, a US State Department initiative. Its main objective was to provide socioeconomically disadvantaged students access to English teaching that promoted their ability to communicate and enhanced their identity through participation in the classroom and the social world outside. The teachers were expected to follow a task-based, learner-centered approach in order to achieve the proposed objectives. However, the progressive goals of ACCESS were diametrically opposed to the regular school goals which emphasized rote practices as a way of preparing students to 'jump through the hoops' of standard examinations. The standard school curriculum which seemed to replace students' ways of being in the community, their learning and experiences there, also appeared to smother their 'voice' and mute their autonomy as learners.

Theoretical orientation

The effort to unlock and capitalize on the knowledge that these students already possessed is framed by a 'funds of knowledge' approach. This is a concept associated with the work of González, Moll and Amantha (2005). Based on the idea that people are competent due to the knowledge gained from their life experience, the funds of knowledge approach claims that this competence and knowledge opens possibilities for 'positive pedagogical actions'. It suggests a guided, inquiry-based strategy that gives an active participatory role to learners to engage in the process of learning from their cultural, experiential and imaginary location.

Methodology

Data for this ethnographically-oriented study have been gathered from multiple sources over two years: interviews of regular school teachers and students; observation of the regular school class by the researcher; audio and video recording of house visits; audio and video recording of a few ACCESS classes and other programs associated with ACCESS; student scripts; photographs; field notes; and the researcher's reflective journal. Data about learner development was categorized by identifying emergent themes. With regards to the development of ACCESS, students showed a zigzag path responding to the divergent pulls exerted by expectations and practices in the students' school and out of school contexts on the one hand, and the alternative practices in the ACCESS class on the other. Therefore, the data analysis is presented as sets of tensions, as learners negotiated conflicting conceptions of learning. Two salient tensions that the data analysis show are 'product vs. process' and 'dependence vs. independence'. The analysis also shows signs of increased agency reflected in the data, and the mutual learning and support in a relationship of trust between parents, students and the teacher.

Findings

Product vs. process

Although engaging students in the 'process' of learning while using topics related to their culture and experiential base helped bring out their spontaneity and move them away from an unthinking focus on 'product' which is normally emphasized in the school context, the two tendencies still co-existed. The ACCESS class and the regular class worked at cross purposes rendering their development non-linear.

Dependence vs. independence

Students came with deep-rooted beliefs and attitudes developed in their communities that made them surrender their agency and let parents and communities make decisions about matters pertaining to their education and lives. This collided with the independent disposition promoted in the ACCESS class, making them reflective about issues that had earlier been taken for granted.

Signs of increased agency

The following signs of increased agency were seen in the students: moving away from rote learning to understanding and using autonomy motivated strategies (Hill 2004); investment in developing their knowledge and language; an increased sense of accountability; meta-reflections on the process of learning; critical reflection; and an improvement in their academic achievement.

Relationship of trust and mutual learning

While the teacher was able to learn from the communities and relate this knowledge strategically to classroom teaching, the parents, for their part, began to rethink some of their tacitly held beliefs that were voiced in conversations, such as the issue of educating the girl child and early marriage.

Conclusion

Autonomy-motivated learning can be promoted effectively by acknowledging students' funds of knowledge as worthy of pedagogical notice and by strategically relating it to classroom teaching.

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4.17 Choice-based listening with podcasts

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Introduction

Once considered a disruptive technology (Godwin-Jones 2005) podcasts have become a popular resource for language learning (Rosell-Aguilar 2007). The universal access to foreign language podcasts on iTunes or other online audio and video repositories reverses traditional teacher and learner roles as it enables language learners to select their own listening materials. This report on the use of podcasts for extensive listening explores the factors that can lead to the development of effective listening skills.

Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) metacognitive approach to extensive listening is based on three principles, which are well supported by the podcast technology.

1. Variety: The podcasts on iTunes provide a range of types of texts, themes and topics for individual interests at different proficiency levels. This variety enables learners to make their own listening choices and exposes them to different listening experiences.
2. Frequency: Podcasts are online subscriptions, which are downloaded at regular intervals on a personal device (e.g. computer, iPod). This mechanism can support learners in developing a routine of sustained listening.
3. Repetition: The repeated exposure to podcasts familiarises the listener with their structure and general content, developing top-down knowledge. The podcast technology also provides the listener with control features, such as pause and replay, which enables them to focus on selected sequences of the text, strengthening bottom-up skills.

The podcast project

A metacognitive approach to extensive listening with podcasts would provide guidance and structure to support language learners to find relevant podcasts, to listen to these podcasts frequently and to apply appropriate strategies to deal with difficult text. Learner blogs were used in this project to encourage individual learners to reflect on and to share their listening experiences with each other.

Method

The participants were 28 students from an intermediate German language class. As part of their course requirement, they were asked to subscribe to one or more German podcasts of their choice, to listen to them on a regular basis and to write about their listening experiences in their weekly blog for 12 weeks. In the final week, they wrote a podcast review with recommended listening strategies.

The analysis of the participants' listening experiences is guided by the three principles and seeks to establish the factors that lead to effective listening. It draws on data from the blogs, podcasts reports, a questionnaire on podcasts use and metacognitive strategy use (n=28), and focus group interviews (n=15). Quotes from the focus group interviews are included to support the findings.

Findings

Variety and frequency

Participants were provided with a list of 25 podcasts, including podcasts for language-learners such as slowgerman, comedy (Schillerstrasse), telenovelas (Alisa), news (RTL news), literature, science podcasts and children's programmes. They chose from this list, read each others' blogs for recommendations, or checked out the German iTunes store.

Data from the questionnaire and the follow-up interviews indicate that personal access (1) and choice of podcasts (2) influenced their willingness to incorporate a listening routine in their private life: 'by the end of the semester I was watching 6 or 7 Podcasts a week, which I didn't really have to but I could watch what I wanted, so I did'. Most students preferred authentic podcasts (3) as opposed to those made for language-learners, as it allowed them to: 'get an insight into what it is actually like to be a German person'. Humour (4) was perceived as: 'entertaining but also gives you insights into the culture that you don't get from the news'. Participants found that: 'you go more out of your way in trying to understand it'.

The data further suggests that these four factors promoted the use of appropriate listening strategies, including the replay function.

Repetition

The participants made extensive use of the replay function, which they adjusted according to podcast type. For example, the news triggered 'pause and repeat' to understand specific news segments. The same function was used in current affairs programmes for technical terms.

Repetition was considered impractical for the longer telenovelas (40 minutes); learners relied instead on the familiar format, predictability of plot, body language and tone of voice. In comedy shows, they often repeated whole scenes to capture the jokes. In learner-podcasts the replay function was used to repeat and vocalise new words, supported by transcripts and the dictionary.

Conclusions

The questionnaire on strategy use revealed that participants were aware of a range of metacognitive listening strategies (in problem-solving, person knowledge, directed attention, and planning and evaluation) and the data from the podcasts reviews showed that they were able to orchestrate their use of listening strategies. The appropriate use of metacognitive strategies was reinforced by the blog activity which ensured that learners engaged more thoroughly with the podcasts, allowing

them 'to think about it more', and to apply themselves 'to write something good', 'because if it was just for yourself and you didn't understand it, you might have said "oh well nobody is going to know that". Yet, being able to listen for oneself and to share these experiences with classmates seems to have prompted the development of effective listening skills.

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4.18 Self-awareness of L2 listeners and listening fluency development

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L2 listening anxiety

Previous research has demonstrated that there can be a great deal of emotional vulnerability involved with communicating in an L2. This negative affect influences learners' views of their self because there is a gap between the true L1 self and the more limited L2 self (Horwitz et al. 1986), and this gap is likely to make L2 users more self-aware about their performance. L2 listening might be taken as not so much anxiety-provoking as L2 speaking, but efficient communication largely depends on how well the listener understands the intended meaning; thus, learners' perception of poor L2 listening abilities can be intimately connected with feelings of fear and nervousness. In social situations, L2 listeners can become all the more anxious and self-aware because their (non) understanding can overshadow their interpersonal relationships (Kimura 2011).

The possible sources of listening anxiety vary, but oftentimes learners focus too much on accuracy of their understanding of an incoming aural message rather than the overall meaning. They make efforts to assemble the speaker's message piece by piece and become overwhelmed by simultaneously thinking irrelevant thoughts about their mal-functioning self as an inefficient L2 listener. Beyond their comfort zone, they are too self-conscious to be efficient, especially in social situations where interlocutors communicate their true self to nurture mutual understanding.

Classroom application

Teachers and researchers have made suggestions for managing anxiety. One of the common understandings is that language anxiety derives from learners' perceptions of their competence rather than their actual competence. Recent development in neuroscience supports this claim; Sousa (2011), for example, showed that data for generating emotions should be processed ahead of data for learning - the former can either facilitate or hinder learning of the latter - as learners process cognitive data more efficiently when they are emotionally secure.

Development of listening fluency is likely to contribute to managing L2 listening anxiety. Fluent listeners are unlikely to become trapped by irrelevant thoughts about self; instead, they devote their attention capacity to aural input and efficiently process the message. Listening fluency can be trained, but the information learners are supposed to process should be personally interesting and relevant. It is better tied to specific emotionally charged facts and events in their lives outside

of English classes in order to arouse genuine curiosity between or among learners; then, exchanging information becomes meaningful, and listening to what others say becomes enjoyable.

Meaning-focused listening activities for fluency development are easy to plan. Let your students share what they can in easy language. Topics can be anything of personal relevance, but make it clear that they can only choose facts and events of their experiences or lives that they are ready to share with others openly. Have them repeat sharing with a new partner or in a new group. Students produce the same information about themselves many times while they listen to similar but different language use from different speakers on the same topic. Students will encounter common expressions and structural patterns in their partners' talk often enough to develop listening fluency and reduce listening anxiety. Students will also appreciate empathy from each other, a genuine reward of sharing.

Discussion and conclusions

Affective filter is a well-known construct, and it has now acquired support from neuroscience, but the filter may possibly be cognitive as well. One student gave feedback in her class evaluation as follows:

> I did all I could to learn English. However, I don't understand any English. I'm not suitable for learning English. In particular, I don't like grammar. If I don't understand grammar, I don't understand any other thing.

This was very surprising because she seemed to be okay with the sharing activity described above. It was not just that her beliefs were not in line with what was expected but she also had negative attitudes (which were not noticed all semester).

There seems to be a general agreement amongst researchers on learner beliefs and metacognition that our cognitive belief system is our perception of the world, and this influences our thinking and learning. The student's experience, as described above, might indicate that we should expand the idea of affective filter into a combination of a cognitive and affective filter, for a better model of language learning. Future studies on L2 anxiety in general, and L2 listening anxiety in particular, should deal with relationships between learner affect and cognition in a more systematic way.

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4.19 Autonomy as agency in listening portfolios

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Introduction

In contexts beyond the classroom, 'autonomy as agency' describes students' motivated initiatives to apply learning. This paper describes a situated pedagogical approach to teaching and assessing listening for advanced adult EAL learners, using portfolios. These portfolios chart participation in authentic listening events. This pedagogical approach responds to new understandings about learners' needs to apply listening strategies in sociocultural settings while fostering awareness of paralinguistic features. The students in this qualitative study emerge with 'memorable and meaningful tools' (Mora, Somalia) for their futures. This use of portfolios points to the possibility of developing agential participants in communities not merely students demonstrating application of strategies.

The study

This study emerged out of concerns within a Bachelor of Arts in English as an Additional Language course at Unitec Institute of Technology in Auckland. First, there was the need to ensure that students, largely migrants, were equipped for their future imagined communities. Second, the boom in CALL produced such resources as Connected Speech which teach the paralinguistic and suprasegmental features of spoken English, often reported as barriers to understanding in authentic environments. Lecturers developed listening portfolios, authentic learning and assessment instruments. Over an 8-week period, learners were taught listening strategies including some targetting paralinguistic features such as pitch, intonation and linking. Students applied strategies to four real-world contexts or digital texts weekly. They described their roles in the transaction and reflected on their application of strategies and communicative development. The portfolio represents an album of literacy performances and makes for a valid mode of assessing the development of strategic learning beyond the classroom.

Methodology

Forty adult students with a minimum IELTS of 5.5 completed listening portfolios and wrote 350-word reflective memoranda about their 8 weeks of applying listening strategies beyond the classroom. The students, aged between 22 and 60, comprised migrants (25), international students (12) and refugees (3). They came from China, Korea, Japan, Iraq, Somalia, Ethiopia and Pacifika nations. All signed consents. Notional thematic analysis of portfolio and memorandum texts uncovered many themes and moments of experience.

Selected Findings

Future value of applied strategies

Alongside psychological, socicultural and political-critical dimensions, technical autonomy (Benson 1997) involves students taking charge of their learning in physical environments. They independently select and apply strategic and communicative learning to accomplish goals. Jenny (China) reported the impact of her concentration on key lexis and linking words in authentic conversations. This approach 'is not only about how to get improvements now, but also how to do in our future life'. Bing (China) also attended key words, assessing 'this is good practice because they are speaking naturally and not for us as language learners'. Jawan (Iraq) reflects on overhearing Kiwi idioms presented in class: 'I'm happy these tasks gave me a chance to evaluate my listening skills.' These and other comments reveal learners' investments in future selves and communities as key to technical autonomy.

Activation of metacognition

Metacognitive strategies help learners think about learning tasks and monitor their own learning. They include planning, monitoring, reflection and evaluation. They are prerequisites of autonomous learning as they enable understanding of the processes underpinning it. Students described many instances where metacognitive strategies were applied. Cara (China) applied key word and context knowledge strategies to listening to digitised BBC news, evaluating this as 'a useful way to improve my listening.' Jean (China) predicted lexis in preparation for communicative events and reported increased confidence. Hina (Ethiopia) enthused how reflecting on 'how' English is spoken impacted her progress and self-confidence in real-world contexts.

Agency in real world contexts

Agency is a co-constructed relationship that engages students' learnings, changing identities, and ability to act with initiative in the social world (Hunter and Cooke 2007: 74-75). Rosa (Samoa) applied strategies in her workplace, commenting 'these are live conversations in my life that I was able to learn from.' Additional purposefulness impacted on Wei's (China) telephone interaction: 'I solved the problems successfully because I predicted and guessed the operator's meaning.' John (China) applied strategies in two-way communication. His agentiality resulted from strengthened confidence: 'I believe that if English speakers can say it, so can I.'

Conclusions

Listening portfolios afford learners a window onto their strategic learning, metacognitive development, and increasing confidence and agency. Using data from learners' evaluations of listening experiences, this study demonstrates that metacognition is tied to learners' exercise of agency 'when they attempt to take control of their learning' (Gao and Zhang 2011: 28). Therefore, in real world contexts and authentic assessments, agency is a point of origin for autonomy. The study suggests, too, that motivating learners to communicate as agents enables them to acquire the language of identities they desire for future communities.

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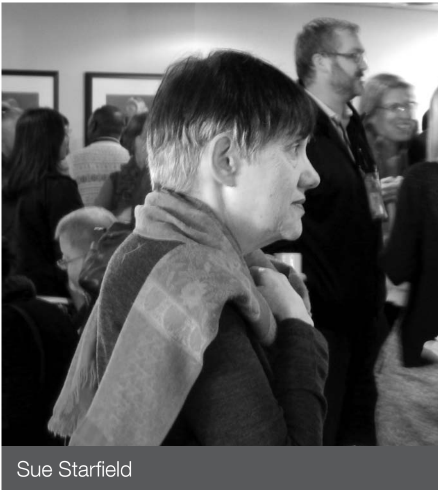
5 Framing learner autonomy in today's world, Autonomy and identity, and Autonomy and assessment

5.1 Becoming a doctoral scholar: independence, identity, community

Sue Starfield



Sue Starfield

'Identity: a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities' (Wenger 1998: 5).

'Writing the dissertation involves the mutual tasks of both becoming and belonging' (Kamler and Thomson 2008: 508).

Independence/neglect?

The notes for examiners of doctor of philosophy theses at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) state that 'the writer of a thesis is, among other things, proving that they can conduct research, are capable of independent and critical thought and can see the work in relation to the work of others'. In a section on 'the principles underlying the degree' there is a statement that 'A candidate works under

supervision but is expected to demonstrate independence of thought'. Examiners are advised that the award of the degree should be taken to certify that 'the candidate has become sufficiently familiar with a significant area of the discipline within which they have worked to be able to assess critically the present state of knowledge in the subject and to conceive original ideas for further investigation with an increasing independence.

The focus of this keynote is the idea of the independence of the doctoral scholar and the notion of becoming increasingly independent. There are numerous accounts in the literature on doctoral study of less than successful transitions to the desired state of independence, so the pertinent question is, how this becoming can be better supported within our institutions to help doctoral students reach the desired state of independence.

Johnson, et al. (2000) argue that a fundamental problem with doctoral pedagogy is the unexamined supervisor-student relationship. They use terms such as 'neglect, abandonment, isolation, indifference' to characterise the supervision relationship arguing that these negative conditions have come to be seen as a necessary 'condition of the production of independence and autonomy' in doctoral students. They argue that doctoral pedagogy still largely frames the doctoral candidate as already able to be an independent, autonomous scholar.

The literature on doctoral supervision as neglect is abundant. Researchers have identified a 'culture of institutional neglect' and have called for greater institutional support for doctoral students based on 'transparent procedures'. They comment that 'unless there is institutional commitment to structural change, students will continue to experience the same cultural practices of neglect' (McAlpine et al. 2012: 521).

Imagining community

Several studies (Casanave 1995; Dong 1998; Deem and Brehony 2000) have pointed to second language and international students' access to the academic research culture of their field of study, to student peer culture and to research training more generally, not being equal to that of local, native English-speaking students, despite the students' strong desire to access these resources. What are academic research cultures? Academic research cultures include disciplinary or interdisciplinary ideas and values, particular kinds of expert knowledge and knowledge production, cultural practices and narratives, departmental sociability and intellectual networks. Knowledge of these practices is typically tacit, and therefore available to successful 'insiders' but not easily articulated by supervisors to newcomers who are 'outsiders'. Student access to these cultures and to research training appears to depend, particularly in the social sciences and humanities, on 'chance and supervisors' (Deem and Brehony, 2000: 158).

Deem and Brehony (2000) found that international students mentioned informal academic networks and encouragement to attend seminars and conferences much less often than did local students and concluded that implicit exclusion may be marginalising students who are not native speakers of English and international students.

International doctoral students who are not native speakers of English have to cope with what Casanave and Li (2008: 3) refer to as a 'triple socialization':

- into the role of graduate student
- the preparatory socialisation into the profession of academic (in most cases)
- and the 'immediate socialization into a language and culture that their mainstream peers have been immersed in for a life time'

It is this third element that distinguishes their enculturation from that of native speakers of English. Casanave and Li argue that non-native English speaking students need to be consciously included or may remain constantly on the margins of the new community.

Many international students who enrol in doctoral programs far from their home countries have imagined themselves becoming members of new communities 'not immediately tangible and accessible' (Kanno and Norton 2003: 241). As Kanno and Norton also point out, imagining community has the potential to 'expand our range of possible selves' (p. 246) through envisioning an imagined, possible identity in the desired community. Yet for many international students, the desired community remains imagined, intangible, even once they have arrived in their destination of choice and enrolled in their doctoral program.

While the Deem and Brehony study was carried out in the UK and published in 2000, a more recent study carried out in 2011 in Australia by the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA) of the research education experience of higher degree by research students confirms that a number of the issues identified by Deem and Brehony are still prevalent and impact on the experience of all doctoral students, not solely on international students. While the CAPA study identified quality and continuity of supervision as key factors in student attrition, it also identified what they named 'collegiality' as being of great importance in students' research education experience. How was collegiality understood in this study? Environments likely to foster collegiality are inclusive places where doctoral candidates' contributions are sought and valued by academic staff. Collegiality is fostered by the provision of office space on campus, preferably embedded in the department with academic staff; collaborative working environments and inclusion of the students in departmental seminars, morning teas, etc. Access to minimum resources such as research equipment, printing and stationery were considered important by students and their absence commented on. While at first glance apparently trivial, their impact is not negligible as they impact on the students' developing identity and sense of being valued and included in an academic culture as well as a sense of becoming part of a community and gaining access to networking opportunities. The study concludes that a key determinant of successful higher degree by research completions is a sense of connection and integration within their discipline, faculty or university. The fields of studies in which students are most disengaged from other students and university life are also those most likely to have students contemplating withdrawal. As in the Deem and Brehony study of access to research culture, the CAPA Australian study also found that many of the students they interviewed attributed their positive experience of

being a research student to ‘luck’ rather than to any systemic institutional, faculty or disciplinary practices.

Negotiating identities of becoming and belonging

A number of studies of international students’ successful and less successful transition to doctoral study suggest that the self is strongly implicated in successful transition. The intricacies of identity negotiation as experienced by international students need to be considered, and mentoring discussed as a way to support students to more legitimate participation in the communities they seek to join.

Hirvela and Belcher (2001) point out that many of the international students who enrol in postgraduate study are already successful writers in their first language and have established a strong sense of self as a writer in this language or, in fact, in several languages. However, limited language resources can mean that writing a thesis in English and ‘sounding like’ the sort of person they would like to sound like becomes extremely threatening and frustrating. Established professionals or academics in their home country can experience ‘extreme difficulty […] making the transition from holding a position of professional respect in the native country to the anonymous and relatively powerless life of a graduate student in the new country’ (p. 99).

Shen (1989) describes the extent of the conflict a student may experience as they struggle to find an academic English ‘voice’. He eventually arrived at an innovative resolution of his sense of having to become a different person when writing in English:

> First I made a list of (simplified) features about writing associated with my old identity (the Chinese Self), … and then beside the first list I added a column of features about writing associated with my new identity (the English Self). After that I pictured myself getting out of my old identity, the timid, humble, modest Chinese ‘I’ and creeping into my new identity (often in the form of a new skin or a mask), the confident, assertive, and aggressive English ‘I’ (p. 462).

Yuriko Nagata (1999), a Japanese woman who completed graduate studies in the USA and Australia, writes of the pain of investing in a new self-identity:

> I used to suffer from my own double perception of myself - the mature socially functioning person in my native language and the incompetent non-communicator in the target language’ (p. 18).

Dong (1998) emphasizes that many supervisors are not aware of the sense of isolation that many international students experience. Mentorship has been identified as a key component of successful supervision. In the CAPA study, the supervisor’s ‘active mentoring [of] doctoral candidates in all aspects of becoming a researcher’ is identified as best practice as is their introduction of the students to research and industry networks, the encouragement and provision of advice of suitable publications outlets; co-authoring of journal articles and/or conference papers, guidance in grant applications and encouragement to attend departmental seminars and social forums.

Simpson (2008) describes the multiple opportunities his advisor Matsuda provided for his doctoral students to engage in a range of tasks and activities authentic to the academy, yet beyond the thesis. Matsuda (2008) describes his approach to mentoring as providing opportunities for 'attenuated authentic participation' - activities that both challenge and support the new student. He views his role as:

- Creating opportunities for attenuated authentic performance
- Providing resources and support to help my collaborators succeed
- Providing examples by sharing what I have done or by inviting mentees to observe what I do
- Introducing my mentees to the social network of professionals in my field (Simpson and Matsuda 2008: 93)

Baker and Lattuca's (2010) study of the role of 'developmental networks' on the identity development of doctoral students emphasises the importance of networks of mentoring relationships in supporting the student over time. They point out that participation in the activities associated with an identity engages individuals in the process of identity development.

Peer learning for research education

If sociocultural theory helps us understand learning as situated and located within a notion of communities, as learning through participation that becomes less and less peripheral, participation can be understood not only as apprenticeship to a supervisor-figure but participation in a community of peers. All students desire to join a community of researchers and Boud and Lee (2005) provide us with a very interesting way of theorising doctoral pedagogy as peer learning for research education. They argue for reconceptualising what has been a primarily vertical relationship between supervisor and student as a distributed and horizontalised one. Distributed learning refers to networks of learning in which learners take up opportunities in a variety of ways without there necessarily being involvement of teachers or supervisors. They conceptualise research education as an environment - a pedagogical space involving multiple and overlapping communities in which learning is distributed among multiple players and across multiple sites and reconceptualised as 'a process of becoming peer' (Boud and Lee 2005: 504). Their reconceptualisation sits well with some of the work referred to earlier, particularly to the importance of networks, communities, and identities of becoming and belonging.

Johnson et al. (2000) ask whether it is appropriate to continue to retain the seemingly unproblematic status of autonomy or independence as the goal of postgraduate pedagogy. They argue that autonomy 'can be recognised as a set of capacities, a mode of conducting oneself that can be learned-and-taught rather than a capacity which already exists in the individual' (p.146).

Examining the accounts of successful doctoral students and those supervisors who actively build productive mentoring relationships, learning from the literature on the less productive experiences of students, and looking at ways in which doctoral learning and teaching can be better distributed and horizontalised, and

the power of networks to support doctoral students, can all go some way to better enable the becoming of doctoral students as they move to from peripheral to more central participation in their academic community and build the authoritative identities that lead to independence.

Supporting trajectories to independence

In the Learning Centre at UNSW a number of programs are offered for doctoral students to support their trajectory to independence. In addition to the fairly standard workshops on writing a literature review or a thesis proposal, several semester-long courses in thesis writing are offered in different faculties. These courses have been taught for a number of years and the student feedback regularly highlights that they value the opportunity of being part of a group, and learning about one another's research. The Faculty of Engineering (which has about 400 new doctoral students each semester, the majority of whom are international) and the Learning Centre offer a credit bearing course 'Engineering Postgraduate Research Essentials' over the first year, which includes sessions on writing annotated bibliographies, a literature review, and writing for publication. It has a very long list of aims, including:

- Introduce the students to the postgraduate research environment in the engineering disciplines
- Reduce student isolation and fear of change and growth
- Create a multidisciplinary collegial environment for future networking
- Increase students' confidence in and control over research writing genres, particularly the literature review, report conventions and thesis proposal
- Provide extensive feedback and peer review on draft and final writing, and speaking

Students can also attend thesis writing support groups, in which doctoral students who are writing their thesis commit to sharing 2-3 pages once a fortnight with others in a group of 4-5 fellow students plus a facilitator for five sessions. These small groups are highly valued by the students and a number continue once the formal group has ended. A specific course on advanced oral communication skills for doctoral students: 'Talking about your research' is on offer. Students in this 12-hour course are asked to actively take on the 'role of a researcher' and engage and participate in communicating their ideas to other researchers by writing, designing and performing an oral presentation.

A couple of years ago, we started conversation classes for international ESL students, facilitated by local UNSW students. It had become clear through numerous surveys and focus groups that international students desired not only to develop their spoken academic English skills but also the more colloquial everyday 'Aussie' English needed to 'make friends'. These sessions are proving particularly popular with international research students.

Clearly, many doctoral students attribute their ultimate success to chance. The challenge for supervisors and institutions is to reduce this contingency by learning from stories of transition both good and not so good, how to better facilitate

participation of new students in the doctoral community of scholars so that they can better engage in the mutual tasks of both ‘becoming and belonging’.

In understanding the experiences of doctoral students and their relationships with their research environments let me conclude with words by McAlpine et al. (2012) ‘can we move beyond cultural narratives of neglect?’

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5.2 Supporting autonomous learning in an independent learning centre

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Introduction

Although advancement in technology facilitates learners' access to resources to learn independently, only those who have autonomous learning skills and abilities can make good use of these. With the easy electronic access to learning materials and the diminished resource function of independent learning centres, these physical entities today need to re-adjust their role in supporting learning. This paper suggests that they need to focus more on offering personalised support to address individual learning needs and help learners develop their critical reflection skills for self-learning.

This paper reports on attempts in an independent learning centre (ILC) in a university in Hong Kong to support the development of autonomous learning skills by offering one-to-one and small-group reading and writing discussion sessions. With suitable teacher scaffolding to facilitate metacognitive development (Gibbons 2002; Irie and Stewart 2012), and adjustment of teacher directiveness (Mynard and Thornton 2012), according to the requirements of the learning contexts and needs of the students, these learner-centred support sessions help to develop different types of learning strategies to suit individual learning needs.

The implementation of these reading and writing discussion sessions in the university is discussed to show the benefits of suitable scaffolding.

Individual (one-to-one) writing conferences

The writing conferences are one-hour writing assistance sessions offered on a one-to-one basis, in the ILC, in which students can request the type of help they need, based on a piece of writing they bring for discussion. The writing conferences are semi-structured to guide students to reflect on and discuss their writing skills with the teacher. They focus mainly on content, organisation, and language. Major problems in content and organisation include a lack of sufficient contextualisation and elaboration of ideas, a lack of focus within paragraphs, and failure to use specific words to convey ideas clearly. Language problems often involve the use of vocabulary or expressions which may be inappropriate, imprecise, unnecessary, include collocation problems, or lack variety. Furthermore, there may be grammatical mistakes such as those related to tenses, word forms, sentence structure, use of singular and plural forms, prepositions, and active or passive voice. Prompting questions are used in different parts of the conference to help students reflect on and revise their own writing,

especially those parts of the conference which require a higher level of teacher directiveness.

Small-group reading discussion sessions

The one-hour semi-structured reading discussion sessions aim to encourage the development of L2 learners' interests and abilities in extensive reading of general interest materials intended for L1 learners. Small groups of three to five students first read a short fiction or non-fiction extract for 10 to 15 minutes. They then follow the activities suggested in the task sheet designed specifically for the reading extract: they discuss answers to a few comprehension questions, and then they have a ten-minute discussion on a topic based on the text and connected to their lives. At the end of the session they reflect on their learning experience.

Technological support

Web materials which are accessed through a computer and used in these support sessions facilitate the provision of teacher guidance to tackle specific problems or learning areas. The teacher also suggests ideas for further self-learning based on these materials. The following are examples of online materials used in the writing conferences:

1. Online concordances for checking word collocations
2. Online dictionaries for checking usage of words
3. Writing models of different genres for illustrating improvements in content, organization, and language
4. Grammar web links for checking up on unfamiliar grammatical structures

The online references at the end of the task sheets for the reading discussion sessions provide materials to cultivate students' reading interests further. These can be online reviews or critical analyses of the book from which students have read the extract, as well as multi-media materials for stimulating interest, such as film titles and audio-recordings.

Conclusions

Very positive student feedback has been received for these learner-centred support sessions, which can be used flexibly with different levels of directiveness to address various learning needs. They can also be easily replicated by small groups of students working on their own without teacher guidance by following the suggested structures or materials.

In a technological age where digital access to information is becoming easier, individualised personal instruction with suitable teacher scaffolding can focus more on the development of critical engagement and higher order thinking skills. With initial support to make (extensive) reading and writing in a second language a less intimidating task, students can gradually develop into self-directed readers and writers with autonomous learning skills.

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5.3 Exploiting affordances (or not): a Filipino woman's path to becoming an English teacher in Japan

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Background

The purpose of this paper is to examine affordances in the social networks of a Filipina teacher of English living in Japan, in order to explore wider dimensions of autonomy and personal development. Gloria's narrative of her career development contains a common feature of episodes in which she participates in situations that might appear to afford her opportunities for action or learning, but that, in fact, pose difficulties arising from public attitudes towards Filipino migrants, particularly women. Gloria's career history, which she recounted in an interview within a larger ethnographic study of Filipino teachers in Japan, highlights the salience of social class and social networks in the exercise and development of personal autonomy.

Affordances for learning

The concept of 'affordances' alludes to the way in which an individual interacts with her physical or social environment in order to gain some benefit, including increased knowledge and skills (Van Lier 2000; Menezes 2011). Menezes' definition of affordances as 'emergent' rather than as inherent properties of the environment is drawn on here, since this helps us to see the individual as an agent of her own learning.

Gloria's story

Gloria came to Japan from the Philippines in her early 20s. Working in hostess

bars she met a Japanese man with whom she had a child. When her son entered kindergarten she started teaching English to his classmates and within a short period of time her teaching had expanded to the point where she was teaching around 200 students. In order to learn more about teaching, Gloria joined a group of Filipino teachers, and also started to attend as many public seminars and workshops for English teachers as she could. With the experience and qualifications that she gained, she was able after a few years to obtain stable employment as an assistant language teacher in local elementary and junior high schools.

Affordance or obstacle?

This brief sketch of Gloria's career gives little indication of the struggles that she underwent in her personal and professional development. Two episodes from Gloria's narrative are selected here because of the light they shed on the constraints to autonomy that she experienced. In the first, Gloria describes how she first came to start teaching English:

> A Filipina friend of mine suggested starting an English class. We planned it together and started renting a room in a community center ... My friend was the one who set it up, actually. I was afraid to talk to the mothers. I felt that they wouldn't approve of me because of my work in the evenings.

What is most interesting about this extract is that Gloria does not feel she had the social standing to negotiate the classes herself, and so had to rely on the help of a friend. Gloria does not say what became of her friend but it is clear that, once she started teaching and more children started to enrol, she was then able to continue on her own. Thus, although Gloria found herself in a 'niche' (Menezes 2011: 60), that is, a place where she had a special opportunity to take action, she was unable to do so by herself because of the stigma, real or imagined, of working at nights in a bar.

The second example shows Gloria's feeling of inadequacy at a teachers' workshop that she attended in Hiroshima:

> I was afraid to speak or perform in front of a group. I was afraid to talk about my classes. Even when I was in Hiroshima, I couldn't speak up. The other participants were mainly native speakers and I felt left out.

Here, although Gloria paid to attend the workshop, and thus positioned herself in a niche, she felt unable to participate or benefit from the experience as much as she could have. It was only a few years later, when Gloria had been teaching for longer and had been conducting teacher training sessions herself among Filipinos, that she felt able to 'speak up' at such workshops and exploit the opportunities they afforded for learning.

The two extracts from the narrative illustrate a pattern of Gloria's inability to take advantage of apparent affordances for self-development. In the wider framework of success, these episodes of initial failure offer an intriguing insight into connections between personal autonomy and social position. As a Filipina migrant, single mother, and 'non-native' speaker of English, Gloria's pathway

to success as a teacher in Japan was forged through her connections with Filipino friends and teachers, who provided help, experience, and confidence.

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5.4 Do they even know what self-directed learning is?: investigating students' autonomous learning needs

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Through its Self-Access Learning Centre (SALC), Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) offers a programme of autonomous learning courses for first and second year students which aims to develop their self-directed learning skills. This curriculum is currently undergoing a systematic evaluation and modification (Thornton 2012). During the needs analysis stage of the project, four groups of stakeholders were consulted: learning advisors, teachers, students and members of senior management. This summary reports on the development and findings of a questionnaire to discover students' subjective needs (that is, their 'wants') concerning self-directed learning. The following research question was used to guide the study: 'What do sophomore students feel they wanted to learn in their freshman year, in order to conduct self-directed learning successfully?'

In order to solicit the views of as many students as possible it was decided that a questionnaire format would be most appropriate. Eleven classes of second year students were selected, with all departments and tiers represented in the sample (approximately 20% of the year group). Second year students were chosen rather than first year students, as it was considered that they would have a clearer understanding of the requirements of the first year curriculum, and therefore be able to express more informed opinions.

Instrument design

While two taxonomies of self-directed learning needs from the literature were used (Knowles 1975; Reinders 2010), it was also felt to be important to collect as many

authentic student voices as possible to inform the curriculum design. For this reason, the questionnaire items were developed based on students' own ideas, and administered in Japanese, following the procedure below:

1. Eleven students were asked to respond to the following open-ended written prompt with a follow-up interview: 'Think of students you know who are effective at doing self-directed learning (working independently, but not necessarily alone, on work which is not homework). What characteristics do they share?'. Several pilots were necessary before the wording of this prompt above was finalized, as students had a quite limited understanding of the concept of self-directed learning.
2. The resulting data were grouped into six categories and 23 questionnaire items were developed, based on the student responses.
3. A questionnaire was designed and piloted using the following instruction: 'Think back on your freshman year. Think about whether you would have liked the opportunity to learn about the following things in your first year, and choose the most suitable response.'.

Four possible responses were given, two for yes and two for no. An open-ended question was also added to elicit any 'needs' not included in the 23 items. The instrument was then administered to 234 second-year students.

Selected findings

The six categories that emerged from Stage 1 were:

1. Time management (scheduling, and prioritizing)
2. Managing learning resources - human & physical (knowing how to access support from advisors/teachers, making contact with speakers of English, and knowing how to access SALC facilities effectively)
3. Learning activities (knowing a variety of strategies, and incorporating English into daily life)
4. Learning environment (choosing the right environment for the right task)
5. Attitude (motivation, endurance, and effort)
6. Goal Setting (prioritizing needs, and breaking goals into achievable tasks)

The fact that many of these topics also appeared in the needs analyses conducted with other stakeholders reassured us that students do have some awareness of self-directed learning.

A quantitative analysis of the percentage of students responding positively to each item revealed the following findings:

- All 23 items were 'wanted' by more than half the students. Students were most strongly focused on how to communicate with and access support from human resources such as advisors, teachers, and international students, but they also wanted support for using the physical resources and services available, such as the Writing Centre.

- While teachers and advisors perceived time management and goal setting to be important, items relating to these categories were less prominent in students' minds.

Implications for the curriculum

The analysis revealed students' priorities and current levels of awareness about self-directed learning. Some of the items which had strong support in the questionnaire, such as how to make use of human resources for learning, may warrant more attention in the curriculum. Others which are considered important in the literature and by advisors, such as goal-setting skills, were not considered as important by students, and therefore may require more awareness-raising.

By comparing the results of this research with data gathered from other stakeholders, a comprehensive document of self-directed learning needs has been produced, which will be used to evaluate the current curriculum.

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5.5 Learner autonomy for personal autonomy

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Introduction

This is a position paper of a symposium. It focuses on experiences of adult women living in a second language environment and, based on existing literature and the other papers presented in the symposium, tries to develop three separate, though related, arguments:

1. L2 users design a 'personal linguistic landscape'.
2. Non-L2 cultural capital is prerequisite for social participation, recognition and upward mobility.
3. L2 learner autonomy is only relevant when it contributes to achieving personal autonomy.

The reason to focus on women is that previous research has shown that women's experience of learning a second language is often affected by their gendered positioning. Researchers in learner autonomy should take gender into consideration.

Defining some technical terms

In order to make coherent arguments, definitions of some key terms are necessary. Learner autonomy is, as most practitioners and researchers now agree, the ability to take charge of one's own learning.

Unlike learner autonomy, personal autonomy is often defined as a state or actions. This paper is based on Freidman's (2000) definition of personal autonomy as 'choosing and living according to standards or values that are, in some plausible sense, one's 'own" (p. 37).

Block (2007) sums up that identity is; 'socially constructed, self-conscious, ongoing narratives that individuals perform, interpret and project in dress, bodily movements, actions and language.' (p. 37). Although he does not define second language identity it could be understood as identity constructed through second language. This paper argues that having an identity or identities of one's choice is part of personal autonomy.

There is no widely accepted single definition of agency. However, it could be defined by a synthesis of existing definitions and descriptions, as suggested in Table1 below, where agency is an ability to act upon the world with intentionality, forethought, self-regulation, and self-reflectiveness to bring about a change that one desires. It is the ability to make personal autonomy possible as learner autonomy makes self-directed learning possible.

	Ability	Actions
Life in general	Agency	Personal autonomy
L2 learning	Learner autonomy	Self-directed learning

Table 1: Summary of definitions of agency

Personal linguistic landscape design by second language users

This paper equates 'Personal linguistic landscape design' with configuration of languages in one's life. In other words, second language users exercise their agency, whenever possible, to determine what language to use in what areas of their lives. A personal linguistic landscape of one's choice is part of personal autonomy. There are difficulties that a woman may encounter in trying to design her personal linguistic landscape, for example, choice of language for communication in a couple. Other possibly problematic areas include parenting, relationships with in-laws, friendships and religious activities.

Non-L2 cultural capital for participation, recognition and upward mobility

Second language proficiency may be a necessary condition for social participation, recognition and upward mobility in the host society, but it is by no means the only condition. A second language user needs some cultural capital other than the language of the host society in order to be recognized as its legitimate member. Whether to invest often limited time, energy and resources in second language learning or in something else that may return non-language cultural capital is a matter of agentive choice.

An issue here is that, for women, cultural capital that facilitates social participation is often their own first or proficient language. In some parts of the world, however, language work is heavily feminized and language teachers work in 'casual, part-time relatively poorly paid jobs with little job security' (Piller and Pavlenko 2007: 20). For those who wish to or have to be financially independent, language work may be far from ideal.

Second language learner autonomy for personal autonomy

Second language learner autonomy cannot directly solve structural problems women face in the host community. Nor is second language learner autonomy necessary in every aspect of their lives. It is argued in this paper that learner autonomy is only relevant if it contributes to achieving personal autonomy. One way in which this might happen is that learner autonomy facilitates self-directed learning, which leads to development of second language proficiency. This may directly contribute to achieving a higher degree of personal autonomy by making more choices available. Improved proficiency may also enhance a second language user's agency by giving the user a better ability to act upon the world with language. This may also contribute to achieving a higher degree of personal autonomy.

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5.6 How women in cross-linguistic marriages reconstruct and redefine their identities: two case studies from the Japanese context

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Background

This research focuses on women who came to Japan after marrying Japanese men. A large percentage of international cross cultural marriages are between a Japanese man and a woman from another country. There were 34,393 of these marriages registered in Japan in 2009, a figure which comprised 5% of all marriages. Eighty percent of them were between Japanese men married to women from other Asian countries.

Kawahara (2004) claims that while the number of female spouses from foreign countries is on the rise, these women face challenges in terms of their identity, ethnicity and language. In the field of second language acquisition research, Block (2007) examines literature on adult migrants' second language acquisition and argues that adult migrants must reconstruct and redefine themselves if they are to adapt to their new circumstances, but that the process of reconstruction and redefinition doesn't take place in a predictable manner.

However, little research has examined cross-linguistic marriages in terms of second language acquisition. Based on these facts, the research being discussed here has two purposes: firstly, to reveal how women in a cross-linguistic marriage reconstruct and redefine their identities, and secondly, to reveal how women's language choices are related to their identities and autonomy.

Data

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two women, Guang and Huan. Through the questions asked during the interviews, their lives before and after marriage were explored, including their acquisition of the Japanese language, communication with their children, and their visions for the future.

Guang is a 32-year-old woman from Shanghai, China. She has lived in Japan for 11 years and has a three-year-old daughter. Huan's story follows similar steps to Guang's, so only Guang's story will be introduced in this paper.

Story

When Guang first came to Japan, she couldn't do anything that involved using the Japanese language, and because she communicated with her husband in Chinese she didn't feel the need to learn Japanese. Her only source of Japanese input was TV programmes, and when new words were emphasized through voice or caption, they caught her attention, so she asked her husband what they meant. After one and a half years living in Japan, Guang began to feel bored staying at home because in Shanghai most wives work, the same as the men do. She decided to find a job, and through her part time jobs at a factory and a fast-food restaurant she acquired a new identity of 'someone who can deal with daily conversations in Japanese.' After that, she set the goals of becoming 'someone who can get a high salary' and 'someone who can speak business Japanese,' and she took action to achieve those goals. Her efforts, however, were not only in regard to learning Japanese. Guang also made the effort to be 'someone who raises her child in Shanghainese,' because she wanted to send her daughter to primary school in Shanghai. Her Shanghainese identity is still involved in this wish. She has discussed this with her husband and he encourages it, so through his support Guang will be able to take action.

Conclusion

Guang and Huan have five features in common:

1. They stayed at home all day after they moved to Japan, but they found it boring and wanted to work outside the home.
2. They had the goal of getting a high-level job.
3. Through their first jobs in Japan, they realized that they had to improve their Japanese.
4. They talk with their daughters in their mother tongues for specific reasons.
5. They discuss their desires with their husbands, and their husbands support them.

To rephrase these five points in terms of these women's identities, it can be said that although Guang and Huan have been learning Japanese since they came to Japan, their purposes for learning have changed over time, and these changes are related to the reconstruction of their identities. It was also observed that although they are immersed in Japanese, they make efforts to use their mother tongues in some areas of their lives, most notably when communicating with their daughters.

This is also related to the identities these women aspire to.

According to Block (2007), adult migrants' identity and their sense of self are most often 'put on the line' because all previous support systems in terms of history, culture and language have been removed and must rapidly be replaced by new ones. In this research, however, it was found that Huan and Guang still relied on previous support systems.

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5.7 Evolving teacher perceptions on learner autonomy

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Background

If L2 learners are to shift from the traditional perception of English as knowledge to one of English as mediation (Gibbons 2002), they need opportunities to autonomously engage in authentic social practice (Gee 2004). Meaningful activity contexts can help learners to acquire both linguistic knowledge and to expand communication skills by inviting them to adopt interactive, productive roles. Many English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Japan's secondary schools, however, continue to perceive the goals of productive activities as limited to comprehension of the original code and manipulation of its forms.

Nurturing a perception shift through teacher development

The presenters outlined the rationale underpinning an in-service teacher development in English (TDE) programme at School S. The teachers were encouraged to draw on their own students' background knowledge, previous learning, and skills acquired through everyday cognition (Rogoff 2002) in order to extend traditional reading textbook units through communication activities. Ideally, by recognizing students as advanced learners capable of interaction and leadership, each unit plan would foster gradually increasing student autonomy.

Evaluating the teacher development program

In order to assess evolving participant perceptions of learner autonomy, the presenters collected and analyzed narrative data, teaching materials, and student outcomes from one teacher. In a previous research project, he had described his own role as having evolved from 'connecting the dots for students' to 'supporting students to connect the dots for themselves', so the expectations of his flexibility and empathy with students were relatively high. Two research questions were posed:

1. How successful would the teacher be in shifting his stance from instructor to facilitator?
2. How would this shift impact on his assessment of his students' autonomy?

Unit plan and materials design

The teacher asked students to reconstruct the text of the first part of a passage, by summarizing and sharing their impressions of the contents. Although they were invited to draw a picture to accompany their summary, their role was that of L2 learners writing for a teacher who would evaluate them only on accuracy. The phrase bank included on the first worksheet featured model stems such as 'My favorite line is ___ because it is ___', and provided adjective choices. As the teacher admitted, 'Actually, it was not interesting to read their impressions, and I wondered if they really felt the way they said they did'.

However, by the time he distributed the third worksheet, the teacher had situated the passage within a clear activity context; now the students were asked to imagine themselves as newspaper journalists working from a far less restrictive phrase bank. For the students, even the third part pre-reading vocabulary phase was invested with new meaning; the teacher reflected 'Usually we ask them to fill in the vocabulary list so they can read well in later classes, but this time they could anticipate what would come after reading'. A second activity situated students in groups as an 'editorial staff', choosing the members' most impressive pictures and texts with their 'readership' in mind. Students were now acting as the activity agents, using English as mediation. The teacher reported 'I think they enjoyed expressing in their own way, although they were recycling from the textbook'.

Evaluation of student outcomes

In assessing his students' written output, the teacher was still concerned more with the quality of their language than their 'journalist' and 'editor' stances. He admitted that it had not occurred to him to ascertain whether they were writing as themselves; students who simply wrote more – and more accurately – were graded higher. He also cited a lack of collaboration and discussion with the other two teachers as an obstacle to shifting his perspective.

Conclusions

Returning to the research questions, the teacher's materials and narrative indicated that he had, in fact, begun to shift his stance from instructor to facilitator

over the course of the unit. He established an activity context to promote his students' acquisition of the target language. His appreciation for learner autonomy is still evolving, however; even after clarifying student roles within the activity, he had not considered whether they had autonomously adopted L2 selves.

Recognition of the teacher's limited perspective shift has informed the ways in which the presenters are supporting and advising participants in subsequent TDE programs. In sessions and materials creation workshops, more discussion time is devoted to nurturing teacher collegiality and viewing language learning from student perspectives, in addition to ways teachers can cultivate students' autonomous self-expression.

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5.8 Incorporating culture into the measurement of language learner autonomy

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Introduction

This paper reports on a study which involved the development of a measurement of language learner autonomy in the Japanese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, with a specific focus on how the cultural aspect of learner autonomy could be incorporated into such a measurement and what we could learn from the measurement about Japanese university students' views of the cultural aspect of learner autonomy. This paper concludes with implications for theories and practices of promoting language learner autonomy, especially in Japan or other Asian EFL contexts.

Background

The construct of learner autonomy has been widely considered as multidimensional. Thus, it seems sensible to view the construct from several different aspects, such as its 'technical', 'psychological', 'political-philosophical', and 'socio-cultural' aspects (Murase 2010). Among these different aspects, the cultural aspect is an important issue, especially when it is concerned with learner autonomy in language learning, since 'language cannot be isolated from the particular contexts in which it is used' (Pennycook 1997: 47).

In relation to its cultural issues, learner autonomy can be claimed as 'an appropriate pedagogical goal in all cultural settings' (Little1999: 15). However, Pennycook (1997) notes:

> to encourage 'learner autonomy' universally, without first becoming acutely aware of the social, cultural and political context in which one is working, may lead at best to inappropriate pedagogies and at worst to cultural impositions. (p. 44).

Therefore, when developing the measurement instrument of learner autonomy in this research, reflecting the culture of Japanese EFL context in the measurement was an important aspect so that it could be used as an effective tool to measure learner autonomy of the learners in the particular cultural context and to encourage their autonomy.

The study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the cultural aspects of learner autonomy of Japanese university students by using the measurement which incorporated cultural aspects relevant to language learner autonomy. Data was collected by administering the Measuring Instrument for Language Learner Autonomy (MILLA), which was developed in previous research (Murase 2010), to 1517 Japanese students at 18 different universities in Japan.

The MILLA was designed to measure the degree of Japanese university students' autonomy as EFL learners from multidimensional perspectives. Based on an interdisciplinary literature review, learner autonomy was operationalised as consisting of four main sub-constructs: technical, psychological, political-philosophical, and socio-cultural, all of which were covered in the MILLA. The paper-based questionnaire consisted of 113 items on a five-point Likert scale.

For the purpose of this study, responses to seven items in the MILLA, which were designed to elicit the learner's view of cultural aspects of learner autonomy, were statistically analysed. Based on the results of descriptive statistics of these items, the students' perceptions about learning in the context of both Japanese culture and Western culture were compared in order to see if there were any differences in their perceptions about these two cultures which would affect their views of learner autonomy.

Findings

When promoting learner autonomy in language learning, it is important to take account of the culture of the particular context in which the learning takes place. By incorporating culture into the measurement, researchers could learn about the students' views of cultural aspects of learner autonomy, which would affect their development of learner autonomy. For example, the MILLA data indicated that Japanese university students seem to believe that:

- Western students tend to take initiative in their learning, but Japanese students do not
- Students' initiative in learning is expected in Western culture, but not in Japanese culture
- Japanese students have the ability for autonomous learning, but they do not have much opportunity to engage in autonomous learning.

The results also indicated that the rather stereotypical idea of Japanese students feeling comfortable about following their teachers' directions may not be true.

Although it should be noted that these findings largely rely on their image of Western cultures, these could be used as useful input into pedagogical practices for promoting learner autonomy. For instance, encouraging the idea of learner autonomy as a universal goal would be effective in promoting the learners' positive attitudes toward autonomous learning, which could be effectively achieved by using a MILLA-type instrument as a reflective tool. In order to utilize the MILLA as a useful tool for measuring (and promoting) learner autonomy however,

further revision and sophistication of the instrument, by incorporating learners' perspectives of cultural and other aspects of learner autonomy, would be necessary.

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5.9 Assessment of students' development in a self-access learning Japanese language course

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to outline the development of a Self-Access Learning (SAL) Japanese course offered at Akita International University, and to discuss ways to assess the students' progress in this course. As Benson notes, there are various methods of self-assessment depending on students' language study experience and proficiency level, and the teacher's role is very important in enhancing students' self-assessment abilities (2001).

Background of the study

Each semester, Akita International University accepts more than 100 international students from all over the world, most of whom choose to study Japanese. In addition to regular Japanese language courses, a SAL course was offered in 2008 to satisfy the students'diverse needs and enhance their autonomy in learning Japanese. This one-credit, pass/fail course expects the students to spend a required amount of time studying Japanese on their own during the semester. They can choose the learning materials, methods, and distribution of study time

as they like, but are expected to report on their progress at a weekly meeting with their peers and instructor. The instructor serves as an advisor and resource person, however, it is the students themselves who take responsibility for their own study.

According to the course evaluation, the participants' satisfaction level with these courses is very high. However, as this current evaluation is mainly based on the students' subjective judgments, a more effective way to assess their development was needed. As a first step, a self-check list was created, which would enable the students to assess their progress during the course more precisely.

The study

In order to select items to include in the self-check list, some of the participants in the SAL courses were interviewed to find out how they judged their own progress in Japanese. In this study, the results of these interviews will be outlined, followed by a discussion about possible ways to create a system which could hopefully more appropriately measure the development of each student's language ability.

Methodology

At the end of spring semester 2012, eleven students were selected from different SAL courses and participated in a one-hour group interview with three different groups. The number of interviewees in each group and their proficiency levels were as follows:

Interview 1: 3 students (upper-beginner level)

Interview 2: 4 students (intermediate level)

Interview 3: 4 students (higher-intermediate level)

One of the three researchers of this study played the role of main interviewer during the interview sessions. Each interview was recorded and partially transcribed for analysis.

Selected findings

Some of the findings were:

1. Students with lower proficiency levels had fewer ways to monitor their own progress and depended more on their subjective feelings to assess it. Comments from the interviewees include "I became able to converse with Japanese friends about daily life with more ease."
2. As the learners' proficiency levels developed, their ability to articulate how much their Japanese proficiency improved seemed to develop as well. For example, the more advanced level students said they could monitor their own progress by the less frequent use of a dictionary or by the shorter time required for a particular task. Some said they utilized online tools to make quizzes and record scores to check their progress. They also began to use standardized proficiency tests as a tool to judge their progress.

Conclusion

The original purpose in conducting this study was to create a self-check list for the SAL courses. After analyzing the interview data, however, it was realized that a uniform self-check list for all students with varying proficiency levels would not be effective. It would be more useful for students to create their own tailor-made self-check list according to their personal plans and objectives. As the findings above indicate, to achieve this, the instructors need to provide more explicit guidance and assistance, especially for the students at a lower proficiency for example, in the regular meetings, instructors need to help the students break down what they want to achieve into simple statements of specific goals, which will serve as a 'can-do' list for each student. Suggesting the use of numerical criteria such as percentage or frequency, or various more advanced online tools for more advanced students, will also be useful.

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6 Evaluations and looking forward

6.1 Reflections and evaluation of the conference from a participant

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The 5th Independent Learning Association 2012 was held at Victoria University of Wellington from Thursday, August 30th to Sunday, September 2nd. It was under the theme “Autonomy in a Networked World”. With three pre-conference workshops, five plenary sessions and over 110 presentations, practitioners and researchers had lots of chances to exchange ideas on fostering learner autonomy in a rapidly changing language-learning field. The beauty and calmness of Wellington; the wonderfully relaxing location of Victoria University; the sincerely welcoming spirit of the Kiwis; and the meticulous precision of the organizers, all helped make this conference a memorable occasion. I tried to attend as many sessions as possible in order to have as a wide a feel for the conference as I could.

Mike Levy, a professor of second language studies at the University of Queensland, was the first keynote speaker and he talked about the need for teachers to find ways of making the best use of the technologies students bring to class. The title of his presentation was “The Students’ Voice in Designing Optimal CALL Environments: Approaching Questions of Autonomy and Independence in a Networked World”, and he succinctly summarized what the conference was mainly about. He argued that teachers should tap into such popular tools as mobile apps, online dictionaries and many others. He argued that although they may not be perfect, they will be very useful in the creation of effective technology-mediated learning environments in the future.

Another keynote speaker who went to the core of the theme of autonomy in language learning was Andy Gao, an associate professor at The University of Hong Kong. He expounded on what he called, ‘the fundamental interaction’ between the currently popular concepts of autonomy and agency. He claimed that autonomy, traditionally defined as ‘the ability to take charge of one’s own learning’ (Holec 1981:3), is specific to the individual learner and is self-regulatory. He described Agency, on the other hand, as the total sum of the universal, sociocultural factors that drive learners on to the path of autonomous language learning. He argued that agency is therefore the universal prerequisite for the genuine practice of autonomy.

Japan and JALT were noted for their big presence. Over 70 of the 180 or so delegates were Japanese-based teachers and researchers! Many of them described the various programs they are involved in at their respective institutions, to help students take the all-important step from being language learners to being language users.

One of my own favorite presentations was by Garold Murray, Naomi Fujishima, and Mariko Uzuka of Okayama University. Their presentation, "The Power of Place: Autonomy and Space", outlined the importance learners attach to language interaction spaces as they transform them into places of action in their language learning process. The presenters' descriptions of events and the results of a survey-based study that investigated learners' self-efficacy beliefs and self-regulation strategies, and the English Café they set up at Okayama University, are both examples of what I discussed in my own co-presentation which was about the necessity of teachers and innovators expanding classrooms into language interaction spaces.

Overall, the presentations and plenary sessions I attended were of very high quality. Not only the big names in the field of independent learning, but also other researchers and practitioners from all over the world, gave well-researched and inspiring reports on the efforts at their respective institutions to develop and nurture autonomy in language learning.

The organizers must also be commended for a job so well done. From the scheduling of the presentations to the constant supply of relevant information, I have no doubt that most, if not all the delegates, appreciated the good work that went into the organization of this international conference. From the student interns to the conference co-conveners themselves, all the organizers were always at hand to guide the participants in any way required. The catering is another area that must be commended. Being provided with food and snacks during both tea and lunch breaks spared us the hassle of running in and out of the venue to look for shops and cafes. One would sometimes feel we were getting more than what we had paid for.

One area that I found wanting was the size of rooms. They were too small for almost all the presentations I attended. Many attendees could be seen squatting or standing during sessions. Apart from this, the 5th Independent Learning Association Conference was a pleasure to attend, and personally I am already looking forward with high hopes to the next one in Bangkok, Thailand in 2014.

Reference

Retrieved with the author's permission from http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/grassroots/articles/2012-2012-independent-learning-association-conference-wellington

6.2 Evaluations and recommendations for subsequent conferences

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Kerstin Dofs
Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology, Christchurch, New Zealand

Most recommendations for subsequent ILA conferences have come from the delegates themselves through the conference evaluation survey.

Interactive Independent Learning Fair

While the following comments show that it was generally thought to be very successful, there were a few ideas for further improvement. Several points were noted about the Interactive Independent Learning Fair:

- It worked really well to include all the Poster presenters (only one person couldn't be in the Fair because they had to return home early). In effect, the Fair presenters also had a Poster presentation, as the displays remained up throughout the conference, albeit without the interactive aspects of technology and/or presenters to talk to.
- It allowed Poster presenters to get extra exposure.
- The 2m x 1m size displays, with a table and chairs for those with computers etc. worked very well.
- We had feedback from one Fair participant that they would have liked to have more than one opportunity for people to walk through and talk to the presenters (maybe advertise another lunch time for this when presenters would be there as well? Even if it was listed in the programme at the lunch break it seemed easier for people to remember if they were reminded in the plenary hall.)
- It was really good having a dedicated time slot for the Fair when nothing else was happening at the conference.
- It was also great to have the 2-minute presentations from all presenters in the Main Lecture Theatre, followed by the viewing of displays nearby which were set up alongside an open public space.

Swap Shop

Once again, while this was regarded as a valuable new addition to the programme, a few points were noted for the next organisers:

- Several attendees made very favourable comments about the practical focus of

these and how beneficial it was to be able to discuss research, issues and ideas in a more "workshoppy" way with colleagues (rather than having most of the conference a more "listening" experience about academic research and theories).

- Only a few delegates appeared to have prepared anything to bring along "swap", but they still engendered good discussions and suggestions for all who were there. Maybe get information out earlier, in the "call for paper" stage, about what the presenter wants the audience to bring? Alternatively delegates could be told they can still attend even if they do not bring something to swap.
- It worked very well to have a whole separate thread during the 2 days that the Swap Shops were on.
- The 30-minute slot was a bit too short to both present an idea and to engage in swaps of ideas. We would suggest 40 minutes. The 60-minute slot for multiple presenters was too long so maybe a 40-50-minute slot when there are between 3-5 presenters.

Online conference evaluation

Delegates were invited to complete the online survey via an email sent on the 6 September with a reminder sent on 12 September 2012. Ninety responses were received. This survey tool proved to be a very efficient, effective way of collecting the conference feedback. The results were provided to the conference convenors.

Ideas from the conference organisers

In addition to this, the following points have been noted by the conference organisers:

- Ensure all symposium/colloquium paper titles are included in the programme structure
- Finalise programme earlier to allow presenters time to obtain visas and funding
- Use social media tools for early promotion
- Keep the website updated with programme links, rather than within email blasts
- Have larger classrooms for parallel sessions, or more attention to scheduling potentially popular papers in larger rooms
- Ensure venue location and access routes within the venue are easy to negotiate and locate.

Self-Access Centre Special Interest Group meeting

There were a few suggestions made for future planning, to improve accessibility of this very popular event to all those who would like to attend:

- Next time it would be better to have the SAC-SIG timetabled during the conference, and not after the conference had been formally closed, as many people had mentally finished with the conference. Some had left and/or were heading home, or had planned their time and other personal arrangements around the official opening and closing, without noticing this extra SAC-SIG meeting or allowing time for it.

- It could perhaps, next time, be a “Pan Pacific” or international SAC-SIG meeting to encompass all the other groups that meet to share ideas about managing centres e.g. Centre managers from; Hong Kong, the Middle East, Japan, Europe, etc. A need/wish for such a meeting was mentioned by more than one of the delegates.

Next conference in 2014

The next conference is titled ”Doing Research in Applied Linguistics II/6th Independent Learning Association Conference 2014” (DRAL 2/ILA 2014). It is being organised by King Mongkut’s University of Technology Thonburi in Bangkok, in association with Macquarie University and the Independent Learning Association. It is scheduled to run from 12-14 June.

The goal of this ‘dual theme’, combined international conference is to share and learn about a variety of aspects of research in applied linguistics, independent learning, and learner autonomy.

Topics for DRAL 2

- purposes and uses of research in applied linguistics
- research paradigms and their applications
- issues in data collection and analysis
- experiences of research and development as a researcher
- research into autonomy and lifelong learning

Topics for ILA 2014

- autonomy inside and outside the classroom
- teacher and researcher autonomy
- self-access learning
- autonomy and learning environment (classroom, distance, technology-supported, language learning centres, etc.)
- autonomy and assessment
- autonomy and identity
- autonomy and agency (motivation and strategies)

On days 1 and 2, papers will focus on research issues, rather than subject area issues. For example, papers could discuss the appropriateness of a particular research paradigm, problems and solutions in data analysis, or the ways in which conducting research affected teaching. Papers can report on findings concerning the subject area, but should at least include a substantial discussion of issues concerning conducting research.

On Day 2, papers will combine research issues and autonomy.

On Day 3, papers will concern issues of independent learning and learner autonomy.

The conference will include:

- papers (30 min)
- papers by PhD students (30 min), a forum for novice researchers, i.e. teachers who want to begin their research career (10 min + audience feedback)
- poster presentations.

Plenary speakers include:

- Guy Cook (King's College, London)
- Phil Benson (The University of Hong Kong)
- Phil Chappel (Macquarie University).

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To view the conference website, go to
http://sola.kmutt.ac.th/dral2014

We look forward to meeting a lot of you again in Thonburi (Bangkok) in 2014!

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Photo gallery

Happy delegates at one of the Interactive Independent Learning Fair presentations

Delegates participate in the Interactive Independent Learning Fair

Irina welcomes delegates from all over the world

Mike Levy

Awesome food at one of the breaks

The two conveners; Edith and Averil

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