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Visualising Learner Development: An Introduction

Hugh Nicoll, Miyazaki Municipal University

Darren Elliott, Nanzan University

We began editing this first issue of the journal with a shared interest in metaphors for learning. Darren locates his interest in his current research focusing on learners' metaphors for learning, and ways in which learners' metaphors connect to autonomous actions and beliefs. He writes, "... when this theme was suggested I saw an instant connection. Of course, metaphor is just one way of "visualizing." I wanted to see how other teacher-researchers in different contexts interpreted the theme. I am really happy with the diverse range of ideas and voices we will be presenting in the first issue."

Hugh connects the theme of visualising learner development to his awareness of learning environments as new worlds that he needs to imagine fully in order to navigate and understand them. He recalls, "I am remembering first my work with elementary school children who lived in the neighborhood of the church my family attended in Washington, D. C. in the 1960s. We had moved to D. C. from rural Maine, so acting as a reading and writing tutor (as a junior high school student myself) with mostly 8 to 10-year-old African American boys constituted a challenging and engaging introduction to the complexity of the world. My second shaping experience began just after I graduated from high school, when I started training to become a mountaineering instructor. Those experiences took me back to the woods of my early childhood, but also triggered efforts on my part to link the physical, conceptual, and leadership challenges of working in outdoor education to ideas of an intuitive sense that my natural way of framing learning and teaching questions is essentially kinaesthetic. Having later become a professor of American literature and cultural history, I see all of the key issues in learner development as part of a great interdisciplinary continuum, where, just as for Darren too, the centrality of metaphor is fundamental to the journeys we undertake as learners and as teachers."

From these shared perspectives, as we worked with the teacher-researchers whose work is collected here, we became increasingly aware of the complexity of the puzzles we all face in trying to share our understandings of autonomy. For some writer-researchers, for example, the importance of metaphor may be thought of as a way to represent abstract concepts, while for others metaphor may entail more concrete images. In other cases, narratives combined with images—such as *The Language Learning Tree* in Porter and Hilton's paper (in this issue), or in the free drawing learner self-portraits Alice Chik has used with Hong Kong learners of English—provide the basis for reflection and feedback, in which learning and language learning selves are transformed into artifacts for reflection and dialog on learning practice and learner identity. This is the same process (and struggle) we enter into as researchers and writers, as we build bridges between our teaching worlds and our professional communities of practice as academics and/or administrators of language learning programs.

Our views have been shaped by our individual experiences of learning, researching, teaching, and writing and by the communities to which we belong—especially the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) Learner Development SIG, and sister communities of teachers and researchers around the world who endeavour to understand and promote holistic learning. In seeking to encourage curiosity and empathy with communities of learners and teachers, we unashamedly align ourselves with the principles of Exploratory Practice (EP) and other models for participatory research and practice. We thus face many of the same dilemmas that Judith Hanks (2017, p. 1) identifies when she states that “it has become axiomatic that research into classroom language learning and teaching should be participatory, egalitarian, and empowering.” How to reach those aims remains open to lively discussion, as Hanks also notes. This led us to several recurrent puzzles that we asked the authors and ourselves to contemplate as we worked on the papers in this issue:

- In what way does visualising learner development advance the principles that learning and teaching should be “participatory, egalitarian and empowering”?
- How, in turn, does this mesh with what we perceive as our institutional responsibilities (i.e., to adhere to a curriculum and to assess learners)?
- How can we envision our institutional constraints differently, thus transforming them into affordances for learning and research?
- How can we picture identities, our learners’ and our own, differently? Similarly, how can we learn to see our research field otherwise and make connections with neighbouring disciplines and ways of knowing?
- ABeAnd, importantly in the inaugural issue of a journal seeking to promote exploratory practices in research and writing, how can we visualise the writing of research in new and engaging ways?

Using metaphor, narrative, and visualization innovatively, the contributors to the first issue of *The Learner Development Journal* each try different ways to make the invisible aspects of learner development (more) visible. Four of the papers were written by Japan-based individuals or author teams. It is our pleasure too to share papers from the Italian teacher/researcher Luciano Mariani and a pair of language counsellors working together at the University of Helsinki, Fergal Bradley and Leena Karlsson. We are also delighted to include a final reflective commentary from Alice Chik, who, looking back over the whole issue, draws our attention to the issue’s fundamental thematic puzzle: “... how do we explore different ways for learners and their development to be seen?” Using visualisation of identity and learning, Alice’s research has grown out of her studies of children in Hong Kong who deepened their interest in English outside of school. The research featured in this issue, however, comes from puzzles that arise in school and university classrooms, which brings us to how learners and teachers within different institutional settings may conceptualise learning and autonomy, and visualise learner development.

In the first paper, “One Year Later: Students’ Visualizations of ‘Independent-Mindedness’ in the L2 University Classroom,” Tanya McCarthy reports on her use of an Independent Learning Scale (ILS), adapted from Toyota’s Kanban Board Technique (KBT), to help her students visualise their “thoughts and feelings” about learner autonomy and their independent learning abilities. McCarthy notes that autonomous learning, viewed as essential for learner engagement and achievement is being assessed in relation to Japan’s Ministry of Education, Sports, Science, Culture, and Technology’s (MEXT) policy of goal of increasing “independ-

dent minded learning.” Interestingly, the MEXT policy documents link “independent-minded learning by individuals” to the achievement of greater “independence, collaboration and creativity” in Japanese institutions and in society as a whole. Universities, McCarthy observes drily, “have tried to adopt new measures in the L2 classroom...with mixed results.” Our familiarity with Japanese university settings, and the pressure to adhere to MEXT guidelines elicited a nodding empathy on our parts, and a strong measure of respect for McCarthy’s efforts to research *with* her students, rather than *on* them.

The second article, by Mathew Porter and Scott Hilton, explores the use of a visual metaphor, *The Language Learning Tree*, to help students—at a Faculty of Nursing and a high school respectively—reflect on their language learning goals, practices, and attitudes, in two different institutional settings. Their paper discusses the challenges and discoveries the teacher/researchers made with their respective groups of students, and also provides readers with a narrative of collaborative professional development across institutional boundaries, the benefits of which Porter notes towards the end of their paper with this observation: “Although it is easy to see how learning a complex system such as language can be represented by a growing tree, discussing how the tree could be used to introduce a growth mindset added a new dimension to my understanding of the metaphor.”

Then Luciano Mariani’s “Exploring Italian High School Students’ Metaphors of Language Learning” reports on a survey conducted with Italian secondary school students studying a variety of foreign languages: English, French, German, and Spanish. Mariani is particularly interested in what students mean by “knowing a foreign language” and how they see, i.e., what they understand as the processes, the *how-to(s)* of learning a foreign language in their school (institutional) settings. Participants were asked to visualise their learning through the use of metaphors, in their L1, Italian. Mariani uses this analysis to identify key metaphors that learners use to represent their language learning experience—and to uncover what he defines as “aspects of the ‘hidden curriculum’”—students’ attitudes and beliefs about language learning and how those beliefs affect learning outcomes.

In the fourth article, Mayumi Abe’s “Integrating Metacognitive Knowledge for Planning in Self-Directed Language Learning” returns us to Japan and reports on a case study conducted with two students enrolled in a Self-Directed Learning course Abe teaches. Her goal is to help learners develop a greater metacognitive awareness of their learning practices in an effort to help them more effectively plan and reflect on their learning goals. Her work also highlights the inevitable tensions teachers and learning advisors will struggle with as they formulate and reflect upon their efforts to help their students acquire more expertise in taking control of their own learning, or, in becoming more successful, more effective in defining and meeting their next language learning goals.

Yoshifumi Fukada, Tetsuya Fukuda, Joseph Falout, and Tim Murphey—although based at different Tokyo-area universities—research and write as a collaborative team. Their paper, “Collaboratively Visualizing Possible Others,” takes a multi-faceted approach to “collaborative, self-reflective research” in working and researching with students imagining ideal classmates and themselves as more collaborative possible L2 selves. Their collaborative arrangement has allowed them to explore inter-institutional peer feedback systems, giving them a learning experience that in some ways parallels those of their students. They explore these interconnections through reflective discussions and shared narratives of their classroom lives as teachers and researchers.

Our sixth research paper, by Fergal Bradley and Leena Karlsson, returns us to two key themes introduced in previous papers—learner metacognitive awareness, i.e., “learning how

to learn,” and learner advising as a mode of helping learners to plan and evaluate their own learning. Bradley and Karlsson describe their learner advising work (*language counselling*) as a parallel journey, in which their conceptualization of their counsellor selves is the counterpart to the work they encourage their students to do as they conceptualize “learning and themselves as language learners.” One intriguing aspect of Leena and Fergal’s work is that while the language is primarily conceptual and abstract, rather than explicitly visual, the metaphors of learning, research, and writing as “journey” link the inherently emotional, intersubjective experience of working and learning with others to the reconstruction of understandings in more formal (academic) senses.

All of the papers collected here serve as touchstones: testimonies to an inescapable conclusion as we struggle yet again to re-construct the fundamental questions and tentative understandings at the heart of the learning-teaching relationship. They help us to remember that we need to be reminded from time to time—especially when we are under the pressure of curricular requirements, course content, assessment rubrics, notions of language as a technical skill, grade and ranking systems, and so on—not to draw conclusions about our learners without ensuring that they have been given the opportunities to fully tell their own stories.

And that also brings us to the story of how the two of us as editors visualised working—and worked—on this inaugural issue of *The Learner Development Journal* together. We tried to offer writer-researcher-practitioners a chance to collaborate much more closely than they would on a regular journal. We, therefore, worked fairly closely with the writers of each paper, and at various stages, each of the writers has read and commented on other papers submitted to the first issue. A couple of the papers we received were almost complete, but have been re-written after commentary from other writers. Some of the papers started off as research notes or proposals and have taken a lot more work to build into the final versions we are now publishing. We also looked to members of the journal’s Review Network who responded to later iterations of each paper and gave yet more useful feedback. In the end, each paper was seen by at least half a dozen people, all of whom have made astute observations, before completion.

Our aim was to develop papers, rather than accept or reject submission. The paper we worked on the most was one that came to us as a proposal rather than a piece of completed research. For various reasons, the research didn’t go entirely to plan... but the process of reworking the goals was really interesting. It is actually rare that research does work out exactly as intended, of course. What was particularly interesting from an editorial perspective was assisting the “writer-researcher-practitioners” in repositioning themselves within the data they had, and discussing with them how they could come up with a paper quite different from the one they had originally proposed. It has been a great pleasure for both of us to work together with teachers who are committed to research writing that grows out of their exploration of the dynamics of the teaching-learning relationship as they have engaged with visualising learner development in quite different ways.

In the end, tantalizingly, the deeply puzzling and mysterious aspects of trying to visualize learner development often seem as opaque and resistant as ever. Perhaps this comes with the territory, given that efforts to answer questions about how people learn things and what any of us can do to help are so difficult to resolve coherently. We therefore hope, in sharing this collection of writing in the inaugural issue of *The Learner Development Journal*, to inspire both contributors and readers to puzzle out new understandings of visualization in language learning and teaching for, by, and with both learners and teachers.

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Editor bios

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One Year Later: Students' Visualizations of "Independent-Mindedness" in the L2 University Classroom

Tanya McCarthy, Kyushu Institute of Technology

Over the past two decades, Japan's Ministry of Education, Sports, Science, Culture and Technology (MEXT) has proposed several action plans for curricular reform which state that upon graduation from tertiary institutions, students should be able to function effectively, in English, in an international setting. Each year, there has been an increased emphasis on "independent-minded learning." This study examines whether students, after one year of tertiary education, could reflect on their current situation, visualize changes in their development, and consider what it meant to be "independent minded" in their approach to learning. An Independent Learning Scale (ILS) was introduced to students as a horizontal line drawn across the whiteboard, with the numbers one to five evenly interspaced along the line. The number one represented a learner dependent on teacher instruction, while the number five represented a proactive, independent learner. Students were asked to choose the number which best represented their perception of themselves. Data showed students' perceptions at each of the five levels. Interpretation of the findings suggests that learners were indeed capable of reflecting on learning, but felt they needed training in how to learn in order to become more "independent-minded."

過去20年にわたり、文部科学省は、高等教育課程修了段階で、学生が国際的な舞台や状況において英語で不自由なくコミュニケーションがとれるようになることを明言したカリキュラム改革に対するさまざまなアクションプランを策定してきた。その中で、年々、高等教育レベルでの「主体的な学び」の必要性が高まりを見せている。本研究では、高等教育を1年間受けた学生が、現況を省察し、自己成長過程における変化を視覚化し、自身の学習の「主体性」の意味に関して考察できるかを検証する。調査手法として「主体的学習指標 (Independent Learning Scale: ILS)」を用いた。ホワイトボードに描かれた横線に1から5までの番号を等間隔に振り、1は教師の指示への依存を示し、5は自発的、自律的な学習者であることを説明した後で、学生には学習者としての自己について最もよく当てはまる番号を選ばせた結果、回答は5段階のレベルそれぞれに分かれた。本研究結果より、学習者は学習を省察する能力を身につけているが、より主体的になるために学習方法のトレーニングが必要だと感じていることが示唆された。

Keywords

learner autonomy, visualization, reflection-on-learning, independent-mindedness, EFL

キーワード

学習者オートノミー、視覚化、学習の省察、主体性、外国語としての英語学習

Being an independent learner assumes a readiness to be proactive about one's learning or as Holec (1981, p. 3) defines it, "the ability to take charge of one's learning". In an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, this idea of independence in the L2 classroom is considered to be beneficial in empowering learners by helping them to understand their stage of development, reflect on their capabilities, adopt strategies that would best suit their specific skill-set and learning style, evaluate their progress, and visualize their future selves based on their reflections. This is the kind of learning environment that many higher education teachers strive to achieve; however, as is the case in many L2 situations, there are a variety of approaches to learning.

Learner Autonomy (LA), or the idea of becoming a self-reliant learner, has its roots in western cultures and is in many ways in direct conflict with the Asian concept of collectivism (Wu & Rubin, 2000). Studies around the world have shown that there is a definite relationship between the mainstream cultural practices in a particular society and to what extent LA

is accepted as a part of institutional culture (see Palfreyman & Smith, 2003). After working for several years as a teacher in various secondary institutions in Japan, I found that the concept of "taking charge of one's learning" was largely non-existent at the secondary level, due to teachers preparing students (typically using a grammar-translation methodology) for the competitive university entrance exam tests rather than engaging learners in practices of self-efficacy. Participants in this study also mentioned the lack of training in learning how to learn while in high school. Students further reported that trying to cope with this new expectation of independent-mindedness in university was not only difficult in their language learning classes, but also a challenge in their Math and Physics classes.

Over the past decade, Japan's Ministry of Education, Sports, Science, Culture and Technology (MEXT) has proposed several action plans for curricular reform. With regard to English education, MEXT (2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2015) states that upon graduation from tertiary institutions, Japanese students should be able to function effectively, in English, in an international environment. Each year, there has been an increased emphasis on independent-minded learning. In MEXT's 2015 Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education, they state:

what is truly needed in Japan is independent-minded learning by individuals in order to realize independence, collaboration and creativity. (MEXT, 2015)

As a result, institutions have been charged with adapting curricula to reflect MEXT guidelines. In order to facilitate this change, tertiary institutions have tried to adopt new measures in the L2 classroom—but with mixed results.

The notion of being an independent learner has been around for decades, but it is still a novel idea within many Japanese institutions. I became interested in understanding this phenomenon after changing jobs from an advising position in a private university to a teaching position at a prestigious national university in Japan. At the time, the university was undergoing extensive curriculum reform which saw Learner Autonomy in the classroom as one of three main principles underpinning the new curriculum. The underlying philosophy was that students would take ownership for their learning by making decisions about their study plans, plan their learning, monitor progress, and evaluate outcomes (Yasuda, 2015). Interviews with instructors at the institution post-curricular change found that, in particular, older instructors who had research experience and training in fields outside of TEFL methodology struggled somewhat with not only the new concept of "independent learning," but more so, with *how* to incorporate it into their current teaching practices. On the other hand, the instructors who had recently completed a degree in TEFL, and therefore had some training in and knowledge of current TEFL theories, found it less challenging to adjust their teaching to fit within the new curriculum. As such, efforts to assist learners in becoming more active participants in their learning were varied, depending on teacher training and practices. Thus, one of my aims in doing this research was to create a snapshot of students' visualization of their stage of learner development so that I could form a clearer picture of the degree of autonomy that students were realizing under the current curriculum.

Contextual Overview

Prior to this study, I had disseminated a questionnaire (see Appendix A), which sought specifically to identify transitional difficulties between the high school and university L2 classroom, to approximately 400 non-majoring English freshman students (135 females and 268 males) at the end of their first semester as freshman students. Students across eight departments (Agriculture, Design, Economics, Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Aeronautical Engineering, Literature, and Medical Sciences) participated in this study. Based on student responses, I perceived the three main adjustment difficulties to be:

1. Poor language skills to cope with university-level classes (45.35%)
2. Lack of independent learning skills (30.52%)
3. Lack of ability to reflect on learning (20.93%).

In this current study, students in each language class were of mixed-proficiency levels and took two mandatory 90-minute English courses per week: A Writing/Speaking class and a Reading/Listening class over a 15-week semester for a total of 22.5 hours of teaching instruction per semester. Students changed English instructors each semester as a way of exposing them to different teaching styles, accents, and nationalities. Although there was a core curriculum, creating a culture of autonomy in which each teacher introduced a centralized concept of independent-mindedness proved to be challenging. In essence, this was because timely meetings between faculty members and the mainly adjunct instructors could not be easily organized as adjunct instructors were each teaching on different days and times during the week.

The current study thus follows up on the earlier questionnaire-based research and examines whether students, after one year of tertiary education, could reflect on their current situation, visualize changes in their development, and consider what it means to be “independent-minded” in their approach to learning.

Methodological Framework

Participants in this study were 125 male and female freshman students at the end of their first year of tertiary education. The participating students were purposefully selected as they had already been involved in a study I had conducted previously. In the previous study, they had identified Learner Autonomy as one of their major challenges in transitioning from high school to university. As participants came from different faculties, had learned from various language instructors with varying teaching styles, and had mixed levels of English proficiency and attitudes towards language learning, I was able to get a wide cross-section of views.

Students were asked to take part in a reflective activity in their final English class of their second semester. The aim was to identify to what extent students’ understanding or personal visualizations of learner autonomy had developed at the end of one year in a tertiary L2 environment. As the collected data were to be used for research purposes, I asked the students not to write their names or any other personal information that could be used to identify themselves. The three questions the students reflected on were:

- What knowledge have you gained in your language learning after one year at university?
- How do you visualize your development as an independent learner?
- What action can you take to be a better learner in your second year?

Students answered the first question in the format of an open-ended written response and then compared responses in groups. The third question was answered as a whole class activity to raise awareness of the various services and resources that students could access for self-directed learning. For the second question, students were first given a worksheet (Appendix B) with examples of a Level 1 student and a Level 5 student transcribed from interviews in the previous research in order to clearly understand what was expected of them. Students first responded to the prompt in written form in English on the worksheet before participating in the teacher-facilitated discussion. The discussion was prompted by using a student-centred Kanban Board Technique (KBT).

The KBT (Ohno, 1978) emerged early in the 1940s as the Toyota brand restructured their approach to their manufacturing and engineering production systems. The KBT was intended to help employees visualize their work (using coloured paper to differentiate task importance), work effectively in their limited time, focus on flow, and practice continuous improvement. I decided to use the KBT style of data collection as visuals (such as charts, graphs, mind maps, photos, drawings or diagrams) have typically been used in research to represent concepts that are difficult to explain. Students were thus asked to visualize their thoughts about their feelings of autonomy in language learning.

Due to its highly visible nature and ability to facilitate communication, the modified KBT worked as a quick and effective method to help students:

1. understand the meaning and importance of learner autonomy in learning
2. reflect on what it means to be an autonomous learner
3. become aware of how each student is unique in his/her visualization of themselves as autonomous learners
4. visualize their current situation and future goals
5. think about how to take action to improve their current or future situation based on shared experiences.

Using the visual format of the KBT, an Independent Learning Scale (ILS) was then introduced to students to gauge their developmental level. In practice, a horizontal line was drawn across the board, with the numbers 1 to 5 evenly interspersed along the line (see Figure 1).

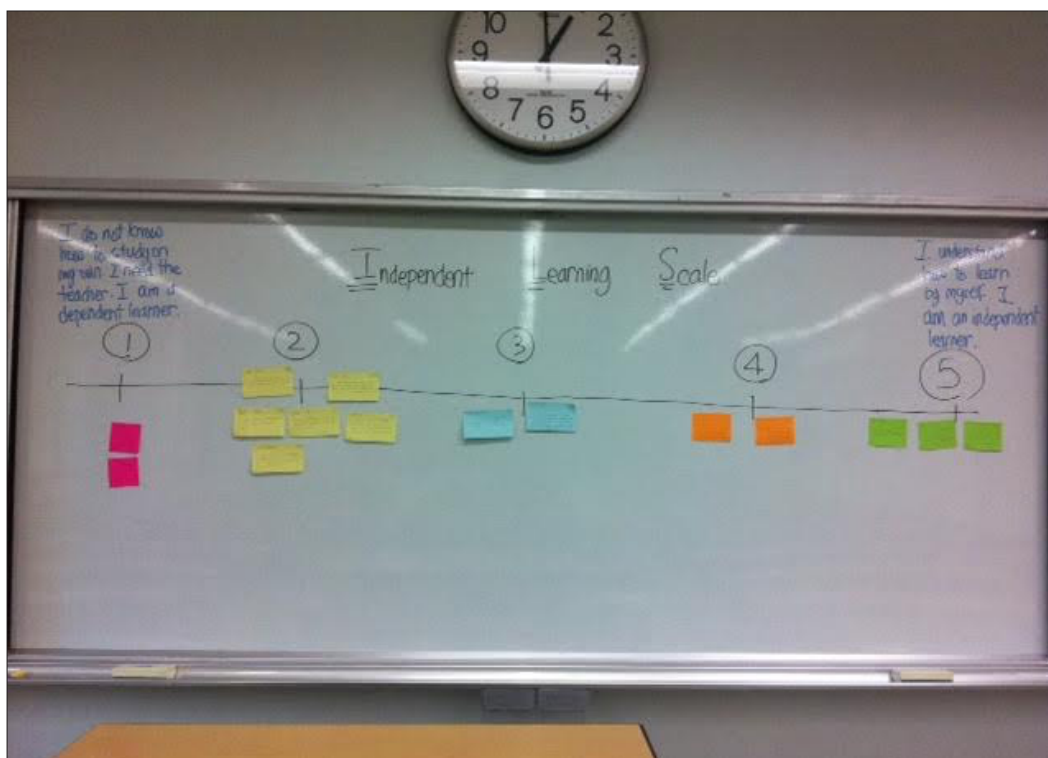


Figure 1. Independent Learning Scale.

The number 1 was representative of a learner who perceived himself or herself to be largely dependent on teacher instruction, while the number 5 represented a learner who considered

himself/herself to be a proactive, independent learner. The students were then asked to choose the number which they felt best represented their perception of themselves as an independent learner. They were given Post-it notes in different colours representing the five numbers, asked to write the reasons why they had chosen the particular number, and then place it next to the number on the board. This exercise worked as a meaningful visualization tool for students' perceptions of what it meant to be an independent-minded learner.

Students were given time to walk to the board and read the other students' ideas and then return to their groups to discuss the results with the following prompts:

1. Which number were you on the Independent Learning Scale?
2. Why did you choose that number? Give examples.
3. How do you think you can improve your English in the future?

Visualizing these insights was a critical step in order for students to deepen their reflections about their current developmental state as well as their progress as independent-minded learners. ILS data were collected and compiled in a table format to identify students' perceptions of Learner Autonomy at each of the five levels. Results are discussed below.

Students' Personal Visualizations of an Autonomous Language Learner

Students' personal visualizations of themselves as autonomous language learners were separated into five distinct levels ranging from one to five. For each level, it was found that students were indeed capable of reflecting on their learning. Level 1 learners tended to be more self-deprecating of their language skills and write surface reflections (McCarthy, 2013), while Level 5 learners, although critical of some aspects of their learning, had a more positive outlook for the future and concrete ideas of how to improve their language skills. For all learners, it appeared that more support and training from teachers were needed to see further development.

The following descriptions indicate how students rated themselves in each category during the reflective activity.

Level 1

A Level 1 learner showed characteristics of a learner lacking confidence. Of the 125 participants, there were seven students who considered themselves to be lacking independence in their language learning. Specifically, students showed negativity through the vocabulary they chose to express themselves:

I do not study outside of class

I only do homework

I only want credit

I think that I do not need English in my future. I regret now.

Words such as "do not," "only" and "regret" are a good illustration of stereotypically unengaged students. For a few, there was little effort to do more than simply the basics to gain the course credit. Others felt a sense of frustration that they did not possess the required skills to participate actively on their own in class. Level 1 students in general thus showed a preference for full teacher instruction.

Level 2

Of the 125 participants, 50 students considered themselves to be Level 2 learners on the ILS. This was the largest grouping. These students showed some aspects of negativity. Like the Level 1 students, some were concerned mainly with passing tests or doing only enough to gain the credit required to graduate. Lack of interest in learning English or using any English-related resources was also a point raised by several students. However, underlying the negativity, there were usually some ideas of how to improve specific aspects of their language learning:

I can't speak, listen or read, but I enjoyed presentation

I am not good at English, but I study at home and look back after class

It was difficult for me to write an essay, but after the teacher taught me structure, I was able to make it.

I am not interested in English, but I think I can learn English very well through watching movies.

I cannot communicate with anyone, however, I visited SALC and listened to English songs. I don't have English skills, but I will make effort in the future.

Looking at the language itself, many students added "but" or "however" as a way of showing that they were aware that they had the capacity to develop further. In many instances, there was the realization that they *should* study, but there was no concrete action planning even though they had some idea of their future goals. As such, these students found it difficult to make improvements in their language learning:

I should study more

I should have done new things and been more active

I have a plan that I want to do in the future, but I do not try to achieve it

I want to study with more potential

Although I know to speak English is advantage in the future, I reject learning English.

Learning how to learn seemed to be the biggest challenge for Level 2 students as they had received little training during their first year as freshman students:

I want to learn but I don't know what to do

I think we can learn "how to study" and "what to study" from our teachers

One of the main problems identified was students' anxiety in and outside of the language learning classroom, which affected their participation and overall performance:

I don't like English class. I feel painful in English class. I have a sleeping disorder so I can't wake up. I'll try more.

I do my homework certainly, but I always don't study by myself. I want to go to SALC but I couldn't go there.

Trying to speak I get upset and can't say anything.

Having worked with Japanese students for over a decade, I have learned that talking to the teacher was found to be a cause of anxiety for some students (mainly due to the language barrier), thus opportunities during class time and also in the final 10 minutes were always provided for students to communicate with friends in their L1. The social-interactive dimension of LA has been explored extensively by Dam (1995), Brown (2001), Richards (2006), Little (2007), La Ganza (2008), and Benson and Cooker (2013). They suggest that the learner's capacity, as well as willingness to be an active participant in their learning, depends not only on individual-cognitive thinking, but interdependence through cooperation with others. I found that whereas only a few students in each class chose to work alone, most students considered their friends as a major source of academic and emotional support:

I don't ask the teacher or friends for help

I often ask my friends to tell me the contents of the class

I am not good at speaking, but I am able to notice my mistakes in my presentation when my friends listen to it and tell me.

Despite many students mistakenly believing that becoming an independent learner meant studying alone (an idea reinforced by being instructed to complete the independent learning CALL course in isolation), student reflections illustrated the importance of having some form of support on the road to becoming an independent learner.

In essence, Level 2 learners, although showing a preference for teacher instruction, expressed an interest in receiving some guided instruction as well as learner training in how to be more autonomous rather than simply being told what to do.

Level 3

Level 3 was the third largest grouping on the ILS behind Level 2 and Level 4 respectively. Of the 125 participants, 29 considered themselves to be Level 3 learners. In this group, student motivation for language learning was higher and there was some recognition of the necessity of improving English skills for future purposes as well as efforts to set goals and make plans to achieve them:

I do English for a long time however I cannot speak English well. I have a little plan that I want to do in the future. I am going to clarify my plan.

I think my language skills are not good. I know I should learn English for my future so I start learning these days

In the future I will need English skills, so I want to learn English now and in the future.

Having a future goal was thus important in helping such students to become more passionate and responsible about their learning (McCarthy, 2011). Personal responsibility in completing assignments on time and asking others for help when needed also played an important role in helping students become more independent-minded in their thinking:

I often have my homework done before the deadline

I can communicate at the minimum. I often ask teachers only when I cannot find the answers by myself such as specific vocabulary

I study for tests, presentations and essay in English by myself. I also study points I cannot under-

stand in my house

I am sometimes dependent on my friends, but I always finish by myself

*I cannot speak English well and have little time to study English, but I submit my reports on time.
I can achieve with effort.*

In this way, Level 3 students demonstrated a good understanding of their language learning strengths and weaknesses, which can be taken as evidence of having the capacity for autonomous learning. Not only did they recognise areas of weaknesses, they also had concrete ideas of how to learn, knowledge of useful resources connected to their interests and motivation to be more active in their learning:

I don't like to read English, but I like to watch movies in English

I like to read books for example Harry Potter, so I sometimes read such books that are not directly concerned with English classes. However, I don't speak English good so I do not practice it.

I cannot speak with foreign students but I like to watch TED videos every week

I've been interested in English for several years, but my English skills still leaves much to do. However, my friends and I enjoy talking in English in LINE so it helps us to get accustomed to English.

Here again we see a level of anxiety about communicating with others. At the same time, being able to use applications such as "LINE" (a free social networking application) was viewed as a means through which students could experience authentic English with peers. This idea of encouraging out-of-class learning that is directly connected to students' real-world interests is an area that the researcher felt could help to foster a culture of autonomy within the institution.

Students at this level, although having some feelings of anxiety about their lack of language skills, were in general somewhat active in their language learning and were in most cases willing to ask friends and the teacher for support:

I can communicate at the minimum. I often ask teachers only when I cannot find the answers by myself

I couldn't ask the teacher for help before I started university, but now I can ask the teacher for help.

For Level 3 learners on the ILS, although they were motivated to do some self-study and had a learning goal and ideas of how to achieve their goal, similar to Level 2 learners, they seemed to need teacher instruction on specific areas to complement their self-study:

I cannot speak English well so my homework is very hard, but my English teacher is friendly and explains good. I want to be better so I need my effort and teacher's advice

I think advice of the professor and professionals is necessary to acquire a right scientific learning method, but I think that to learn by the method of talking with foreign student in English by oneself is also important

I would like to study at my own pace. However, I can't understand contents of class for example Philosophy and I don't know where I make mistakes in essay. Therefore I need my teacher's help.

Level 3 students thus showed a preference for a balance between taking responsibility for their own language learning and relying on the teacher for specific training.

Level 4

The second largest grouping on the ILS was Level 4 students at 34 of 125 students. In this group, students had a strong awareness of language strengths and weaknesses and showed more effort and motivation in trying to achieve goals. Like Level 3 learners, there was recognition of the necessity of improving English skills for future goals, however for these students, there was a stronger connection between future goals and motivation to learn (McCarthy, 2011):

I study for what I want to do in the future. Sometimes the teacher advises me about subjects or how to study, but usually I plan my schedule and study by myself

When I entered university, I made some goals. First, doing my best at learning English. Second, communication with many people. Third, having my own opinion about every event. I achieved these goals.

In addition, class participation for Level 4 learners was quite strong and students actively tried to learn outside of the classroom:

Before and after class I review work to become interested

I am independent from teacher's support I think. For example, I find interesting areas myself and research

My English level may be average but I got able to speak English words more exactly. These days I care about overseas news not only Japanese news. I want to be more active to English movie, TV, music.

My English skill is not high however I did my homework hard. Of course I faced many problems at home, but I achieved my task by myself. I got confidence.

Although Level 4 learners in many cases considered themselves to be lacking in English ability, they had a positive attitude to language learning and were thus able to improve. For many of these students, the idea of being an independent learner was a novelty which they tried to embrace:

I study liberal arts more harder now, not enforced by teacher or parents than when I was a high school student. Now I haven't become a completely independent learner because I'm lazy and not active. Recently I speak what I should do in order to improve myself, so I am becoming more independent

I can learn Physics very efficiently when I realize theories of it. It is true that you listen to the teacher, however I think the most important thing is realization by myself in learning

In my high school, my homeroom teacher told me everything we should do. I don't like to be told to study so I was frustrated by the system. In university, there is no homeroom teacher, so I can make my schedule on my own and study the things I want. It is a good situation for me now.

This self-awareness, reflected in the students' abilities to make plans and find appropriate resources to achieve learning goals, is indicative of a good independent learner. The comments below are examples of how students participated actively in the learning process:

I watch TED during my part-time job. Although I don't understand it all, I can scan it

I am learning German and I enjoy comparing the grammar and pronunciation to English

I think my style is independent learning because I know how to do "active learning." Active learning focuses on "metacognition" which is for example writing a mindmap

I watch TED and listen to podcasts. If I improve my skill more and more, I can go abroad by myself! It has been 10 months since I have entered this university and I think I have become more independent. For example I research the meaning of words, listen to music and study IELTS by myself.

Part of these learners' success was actively seeking help from others or offering help to those who needed it. This is a crucial point to note when trying to create a culture of autonomy within an institution. In situations where the learner could not get assistance, it sometimes led to frustration:

My problem is Mathematics. Almost all teachers consider it as independent study and I get no help at all

I always know what I should do, but I sometimes need others' help and advice. For example, I want to be an engineer. Although I should study Math and Physics, it is difficult for me to do these subjects by myself. I need others' help for these

I teach my friends about how to write an essay in English

When I do my homework, I do it by myself, but sometimes when I don't know how to do it, I ask the teacher or my friends for help

When I can't solve the problems, I searched websites, asked my seniors at club and emailed the teachers. I don't like to leave questions unsolved. I sometimes meet with my friends to study.

To see evidence of these behavioural attributes in students who state that they have experienced little or no learner training (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989; Sheerin, 1989; Dickinson, 1992) is a good argument for encouraging peer-support, active learning and knowledge-sharing.

Examining the language of Level 4 learners, we can see a more critical awareness of various aspects of language learning, including not only linguistic but also affective and social concerns. Level 4 students thus recognised the necessity of applying themselves more rather than depending solely on the teacher. In general, they showed a preference for teacher-facilitated instruction in that they would take on more responsibility for their learning with timely teacher feedback.

Level 5

As might be expected with a group of freshman students still in their first year of tertiary education, only 5 students of the 125 participants rated themselves at Level 5 on the ILS. These students had the most confidence and for them, the key points were similar to Level 4 learners in the effort they put in to improve their skills and in having a clear goal for their future. What distinguished these students most from the others was their interest and curiosity in learning new things:

For the first time I wrote an academic essay and was able to learn many new things

My goal is to become a diplomat. To achieve my goal, I try to put in my maximum effort into English work. To improve my English work, I always try to fix every problem that was pointed out by my teacher

I entered this university because I wanted to study by myself. If I need a teacher individually, I will contact with someone who can advise me

University itself is not how we only get education. I am an active learner because I am inquisitive about everything.

This intrinsic motivation in their learning led to social and academic empowerment as students could find enjoyment, interest and relevance in their learning activities. By satisfying these three needs, students were able to create meaningful connections with their language learning and social grouping in class as well as feel comfortable in the knowledge that they were able to self-regulate their learning. In essence, Level 5 students had developed the capacity to work both independently and interdependently depending on the situational context.

Table 1 summarizes students' personal visualizations of what it meant to be an autonomous learner.

Table 1. Summary of Students' Personal Visualizations of an Independent Learner

Total N=125	Level	Anxiety (affective issues)	Knowledge of resources	Goal-setting planning	Asking for support	Self-control	How to learn	Be active / effort	Curiosity and interest
7	1	0							
50	2	0	0						
29	3	0	0	0	0				
34	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
5	5		0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Discussion

As the notion of learner autonomy continues to play a major role in MEXT discussions, it is important that studies continue to be conducted to show whether training students to be more reflective and goal-oriented about their future is beneficial or not. My interpretation of the findings indicates that learners were indeed capable of reflecting on learning, some more critically than others, but there was a general consensus that some level of training in learning how to learn was required in order for students to become more "independent-minded." This idea is in line with a previous study conducted by the author (McCarthy, 2013).

In this study, students reflected on their independent-mindedness using the simple prompt:

How do you visualize your development as an independent learner?

Because students had been taught by a variety of teachers during their first year, exposure to autonomous principles differed. As such, it was difficult to know how much influence previous instructors had had on student development. Interestingly, student ideas about what

constitutes an autonomous learner were similar to concepts found in widely-read research articles about LA from the last 30 years or more:

- Recognizing strengths and weaknesses, setting goals and/or achievable targets and making plans to achieve targets (Holec, 1981)
- Understanding language learning styles and strategies and selecting appropriate materials (Skehan, 1989; Oxford, 1990)
- Working individually, without supervision (Geddes & Sturtridge, 1982; Brookes & Grundy, 1988; Nakata, 2014)
- Working collaboratively with peers and teacher (Brown, 2001; Richards, 2006)
- Asking for support (Little, 1994; Dam, 1995; Littlewood, 1999; Umeda, 2004; Benson & Cooker, 2013)
- Affective issues such as anxiety and motivation (Benson, 2001; Cohen & Dornyei, 2002; Dornyei, 2002)
- The need for learner training (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989; Dickinson, 1992).

After discussions about the ILS, the students were once again reminded that learning was a journey, that at each step of the way there would be successes and pitfalls and also that they would possibly move upward and/or downward on the ILS several times over the course of their studies. Further, understanding the developmental process was instrumental in helping them to become more aware that each student was unique and that everyone had specific strengths and weaknesses. It was thought that through this reflective activity students would be more cognizant of the effort that would be required of them if English is to become a part of their future professional life.

Based on students' written visualizations, the following figure (Figure 2) was created to reflect their ideas of the role and responsibility of the learner and teacher:

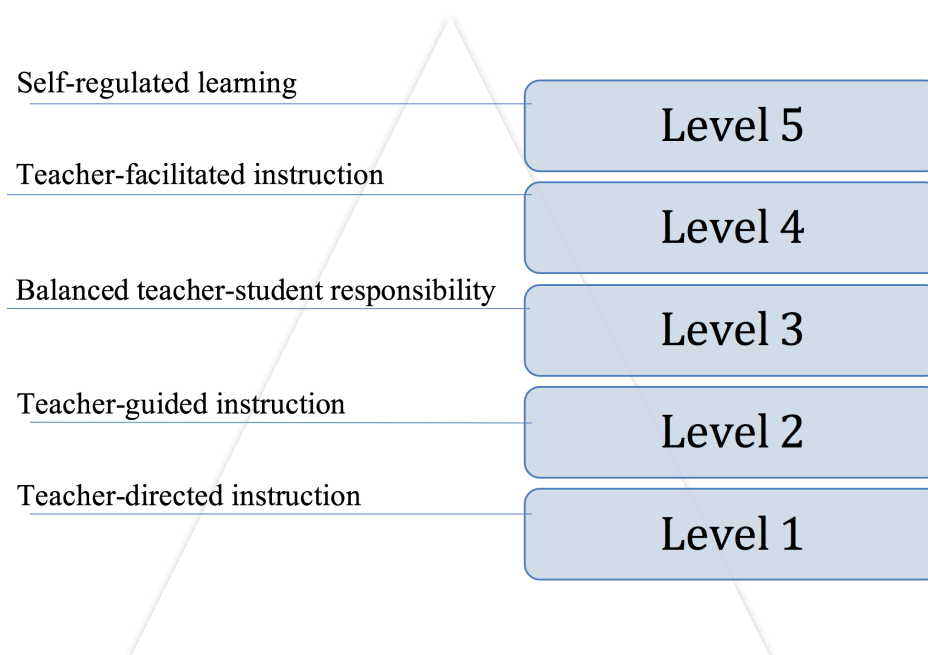


Figure 2. Students' Personal Visualization of the Breakdown of Responsibilities in the L2 Classroom.

I found the results of this study interesting as research into Learner Autonomy in the Japanese context has largely presented students as being passive or teacher-dependent due to cultural factors of “oneness” (Dore & Sako, 1989; Holliday, 2003). However, many of these students showed a strong capacity for independent-mindedness without having experienced much (or any) training in the way of reflection-on-learning or in learning how to learn.

Further Considerations

Three main areas lacking in data collected from the student reflections which might be examined further are:

1. How students evaluate progress and reevaluate goals based on evaluation
2. How perceived level of language proficiency correlates with perception of independent-mindedness
3. How students transfer independent-minded skills to new situations.

As previously stated, students at the university in which this research took place changed instructors each semester. As such, creating an institutional culture of autonomy remained a challenge. Having a core definition of learner autonomy and ideas of how to implement it within the classroom should therefore be a careful consideration in future curriculum development. This would help to guide instructors in helping students to set goals and learn how to self-assess growth. Having students reflect on language proficiency using a framework such as The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2017) would help both instructors and students to see if there is a relationship between language level and autonomous practices. This could then serve as a springboard for classroom discussion on how to develop into a more independent-minded individual. Most importantly, if students could understand how skills learned in university classes connected to other situational contexts as well as their future lives, they would be more cognizant of the relevance of classes and feel more motivated to participate actively.

As the role of support and training was a central theme in student reflections, this is the core area that could be built into how teachers manage their classrooms. By connecting more closely to Japanese cultural practices, such as the *senpai/kohai* (senior/junior) bond, it is possible to engage students further in learning. This could also reduce anxiety about asking teachers for help. Another consideration in how to encourage out-of-class learning is to assign points to English learning connected to student interest such as LINE. Although the university’s Self-Access Learning Center (SALC) offered language services to help students, texting seemed to provide a bridge for students not yet ready to engage in conversation. The CALL program which instructed students to work independently would need to be discussed further to see how it could be adjusted to encourage more collaboration and to evaluate progress. As intrinsic motivation (through enjoyment, interest and relevance to future goals) was the main factor connected to the development of Level 5 students, how to cultivate this within the classroom should also be considered.

Final Thoughts

This research has shown a snapshot of 125 students’ personal visualizations of their autonomous stage of development at a top national university in Japan. For students who had received no formal training from the university in how to take more responsibility for their

learning, the fact that over half the students identified as Level 3 or above was quite positive. This is particularly surprising for two reasons: First, although Japanese students usually tend to select the middle point (3) in a scale (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995), results showed a mixed distribution (see Figure 3).

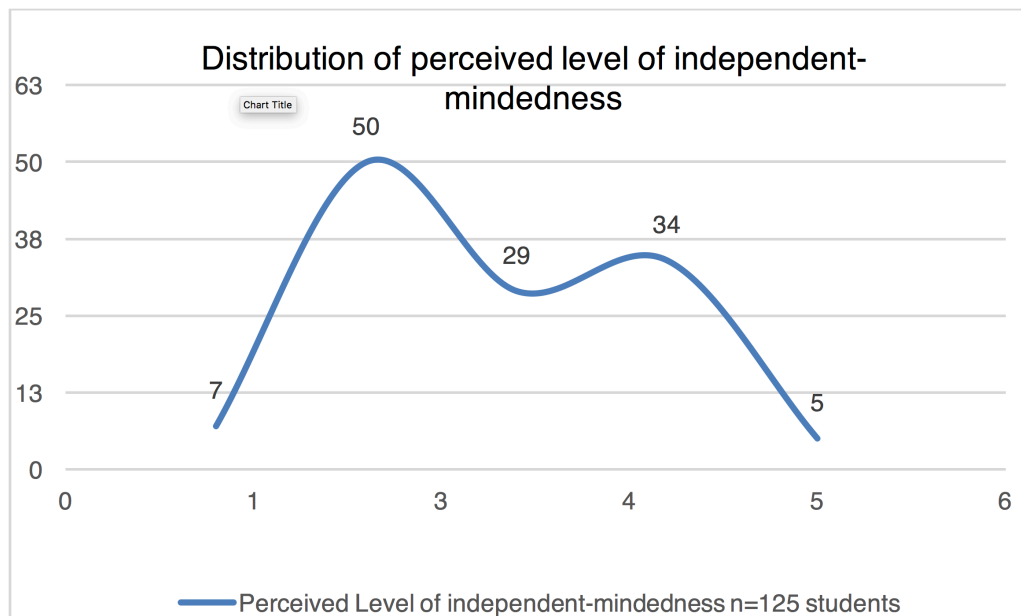


Figure 3. Distribution of Students' Perceived Level of Autonomy.

Second, in the “training” students received from the university to facilitate autonomous behaviour upon arriving as freshman students, a CALL programme was introduced to students only twice—once during their orientation upon entering the institution and once again through flyers distributed at the beginning of the semester during an English class—and done in isolation.

There are two factors that could have led to these surprising results. First, since 2011, MEXT has made significant efforts to introduce conversational English into primary educational institutions, which may be contributing to students' confidence, language gains, and ability to reflect on learning progress. The institution in which this research took place was considered to be one of the top universities in the country, and, as such, the students entering had already developed strong study habits. Replicating this study at a lower-ranked tertiary institution would possibly have very different results as motivation and attitude to learning might be lower.

A second factor could be students' exposure to a larger number of external influences through smartphone technology. Having constant access to the outside world may be one of the factors which influences students' ability to be more autonomous in their approach to learning. As students in this study reported reading world news through other news outlets than Japanese outlets, learning about interesting topics through resources such as TED Talks and engaging in casual English talks through smartphone applications such as LINE can be encouraged. There has been a considerable amount of research focusing on the connection between student interest and motivation to learn (Guilloteaux & Dornyei, 2008), which can be explored further. In particular, student ideas can be passed on to SALC staff as a means of knowledge-sharing to assist other students.

It can thus be assumed that if top universities in Japan continue to accept high-performing students, the current trajectory of students with the capacity to be independent minded will

continue. For students who did not achieve the results to get into top universities, it is important that out-of-class learning be incorporated into existing curricula in order to tap into student interest and increase motivation. As the main change agents in curricular reform, it is important that clear guidelines and definitions of autonomy-in-practice be decided by teachers in order for the change to be meaningful. It is only by fostering a culture of learner autonomy within an institution that any progress in turning students into “independent-minded individuals” will be seen.

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Review Process

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Appendix A

Survey questions in first semester research [English translation]

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your major?
3. Which of these, if any, do you have a problem with in your university classes? [select from the choices below]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher's speed of talking • Teaching style • Language skill • Course objectives • Group work • Independent learning • Reflection on learning • Give details for your choice: _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher's accent • Computer skills • Amount of homework • Textbook content • Class size • English-only class • Relationship with peers
--	--
4. What are the differences between your high school and university English learning experiences?
5. If there were a short English program to bridge the gap between high school and university, would you be interested in participating in it?
6. What do you think could have facilitated the move from high school to university English language classes more easily for you?
7. What kind of support or guidance have you had to help you with your challenges?
8. How have you changed your approach to learning since entering university?

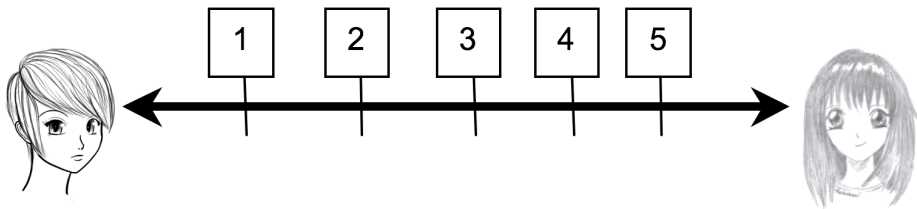
- 9. What advice or suggestions do you have for students to assist in the transition from high school and university?
- 10. What advice or suggestions do you have for teachers to assist in the transition from high school and university?

Appendix B

Worksheet for ILS reflective activity showing example responses of a Level 1 and Level 5 learner

LEVEL 1 Learner: I cannot speak English well and I do not know how to study. I think I am bad at everything. I don't know what I want to do in the future so I have no plan. I prefer the teacher to tell me what to do because it is difficult for me to learn by myself. I do homework but I don't ask the teacher for help. So sometimes my homework is bad. I know there is a SALC but I am nervous to go there.

Independent Learning Scale



LEVEL 5 Learner: When I started university, my language skills were average and I could not communicate well. But now I know my weak and strong points. I have made a goal for myself and I try to achieve it. In the future I want to use English so I know I have to learn how to study by myself. I prepare before every class, I do research, I talk with foreign students to improve my speaking and I watch TED videos. When I need help I ask the teacher for advice. I have become very independent in my thinking at university. I am excited about the future!

The Language Learning Tree: A Tool for Supporting Collaborative Reflection

Mathew Porter, Fukuoka Jo Gakuin Nursing University

Scott Hilton, Kure Miyahara High School

Reflection and metacognition in second language learning, particularly in the context of learner development, are important and yet challenging to introduce successfully in the classroom. Aiming to address this challenge, the authors identified two tools to support students as they begin practicing reflection: a collaborative reflection protocol developed by Degeling and Prilla (2011) for use in the workplace and adapted by the authors for use in the classroom, and *The Strategy Tree* (Abe, Yoshimuta, and Davies, 2014)—a visual metaphor representing a learner's evaluation of their language abilities, experiences, and attitudes. In this paper, the authors describe a classroom activity using the *The Language Learning Tree*, a modified version of *The Strategy Tree*, to aid learners in beginning meaningful reflective practice. They also discuss how classroom teachers can support improved metacognition via collaborative reflection in a first-year nursing university setting (Porter) and a first-year high school setting (Hilton). Learner artifacts from the authors' respective contexts are presented and analyzed. The authors conclude by engaging in a reflective dialogue that explores their collaborative journey as researchers, as well as understandings that emerged from both their learners and their mutual work. Foremost among these is the recognition that, while no single activity will transform a learner's metacognitive capabilities, their experiences with the collaborative reflection protocol and *The Language Learning Tree* provide several indications that they are effective catalysts for reflective practice.

第二言語学習における内省とメタ認知は、特に学習者ディベロップメントを考える上では重要であり、教室での導入を試みるべき価値がある。これを実現すべく、筆者らは学習者の内省をサポートするためのツールとして以下の2つのものを用いた。まず一つ目は学習者が内省の練習をするため、職場での利用を目的として Degeling and Prilla (2011)によって作られた協働的内省プロトコルを教室場面に応用し利用した。もう一つはAbe, Yoshimuta, and Davies's (2014)が提唱した ストラテジーツリーで、これは言語能力や経験、態度についての学習者自身による評価を図式化するものである。本稿では、学習者の初期段階の意味あるリフレクティブ・プラクティスを支援するストラテジーツリーの修正版であるランゲージ ラーニング ツリーを使った教室活動を記述する。そして、看護学校の1年生 (Porter)と高校の1年生 (Hilton)のクラスにおいて実施した協働的な内省活動を通して、教師がいかにメタ認知能力の育成をサポートすることができるのかについて議論する。それぞれの調査校で得られた学習者の成果物を分析した結果、内省的な対話に従事することで、教師である筆者らは研究者としての協働的な道のりを切り開くと同時に、学習者と彼らの相互作用から理解が生まれることが明らかになった。また、この中で最も重要なのは、単独での活動は学習者のメタ認知能力を変化させない一方で、協働的内省プロトコルやランゲージ ラーニング ツリーを通じた経験はリフレクティブ・プラクティス効果的に誘発することが示された。

Keywords

reflection, metacognition, collaborative reflection, peer-/self-assessment, scaffolding learner assessment

キーワード

内省、メタ認知、協働的内省、ピア/自己評価、学習者評価のスキヤホールディング

Any teacher who has used reflective activities with learners understands how challenging it can be. Using a simple prompt or two, teachers expect learners to be able to describe their efforts in detail, relate new insights to previous learning, and examine attitudes about learning. Welch (1999), writing about reflection in service learning, describes a “clumsy” approach to reflection which fails to engage learners and results in blank stares and shallow written reflections. This can be true with diaries as well, where students may only provide a general narrative of what they did and comment on how hard they worked or what they liked (Little, 2001). Additionally, reflection can seem contrived when it is part

of graded coursework, especially when it requires some sort of confession or fails to meet a teacher's expectation in terms of depth or quality. The problem may be that reflection is ill-defined and therefore difficult to characterize and teach (Jay & Johnson, 2002), so why should teachers bother including reflective activities in a course curriculum? In the domain of second language acquisition, reflection is considered by many to be an essential skill for language learners. Benson (2011) has provided an overview of reflection and its relationship to language learner autonomy. He explains how reflection on language itself, the learning process, and one's existing beliefs and practices has been promoted within the field as a way to support learner autonomy. Little (2004) included learner reflection as one of three pedagogical principles governing the development of autonomy in language learning, stressing that learners must be able to "think about their learning both at a macro level (for example, reviewing what has been achieved in a school year) and at a micro level (for example, trying to work out why a particular learning activity was or was not successful)" (p. 22). Ridley (1997) identified four interrelated areas that can make up the content of classroom learners' reflections:

- i) the target language, its structures and rules, ii) the long-term process of their language learning, both past experiences and expectations for the future; iii) themselves as language learners, and how they measure up to the demands of the course; and iv) the various tasks, activities, or longer-term projects which they undertake (p. 6).

This focus on the learning process often highlights being able to diagnose one's needs, setting one's own learning objectives, choosing one's learning resources and strategies, and evaluating one's learning—skills synonymous with practicing metacognition.

Metacognition refers to the concept of thinking about one's thoughts (Hacker, 1998). As originally described by Flavell (1979), it refers to both "one's own knowledge concerning one's own cognitive process and products or anything associated with them" and "the active monitoring and consequent regulation and orchestration of these processes in relation to the cognitive objects or data on which they bear, usually in the service of some concrete goal or objective" (p. 232). The object of metacognition can be "what one knows (i.e., metacognitive knowledge), what one is currently doing (i.e., metacognitive skill), and one's current cognitive or affective state (i.e., metacognitive experience)" (Hacker, 1998, p. 3). A recent review of research on metacognition highlights that "metacognition improves with both age and appropriate instruction, with substantial empirical evidence supporting the notion that learners can be taught to reflect on their own thinking" (Lai, 2011). For this reason, it is important for teachers to find ways to effectively use reflection activities in their courses. Lin (2001) identified two basic approaches to supporting metacognition in the classroom: strategy training and the creation of a supportive social environment where learners aren't afraid to struggle, fail, or question.

Group Reflection

The learner's social context has a pronounced effect on metacognition and reflection, and the use of collaborative and cooperative learning methods can help to create a supportive social environment. Consider the example of a group discussion. Bandura (1977) suggests that greater interpersonal interaction can improve reflection by enhancing motivation and increasing engagement towards the activity. We see this when one learner is inspired by a peer's contribution to join the discussion, or rethink a position. When this learner connects that classmate's experience to her own it is illustrative of social context and interaction shaping self-concept, as "knowledge about the self-as-learner is usually developed using social modeling provided by other people" (Lin 2001, p. 27). This may lead to new insights about her learning experience, demonstrating that collaborative and cooperative learning methods sup-

port learners' metacognitive development (Lai 2011). Little describes his principle of learner reflection in terms of social interaction, explaining that it is "implemented interactively: the individual learner's capacity to evaluate his or her learning grows out of the group's ongoing discussion of the learning process" (2004, p. 22). But how is a teacher to orchestrate a collaborative reflection activity?

Degeling and Prilla (2011) have developed tools to support collaborative reflection for the informal learning of skills in the workplace. Within their context, collaborative reflection is a technique for thinking about mutual experiences and the common meaning that participants find in collective work. They have found that successful collaborative reflection demands an ability to articulate understanding of personal experiences, link those experiences and perspectives to those of others, and reflect together on differences in individual experiences. The result of this is skill development through social practice. They describe three tasks requiring support for collaborative reflection to be successful: articulation, scaffolding, and synergizing. First, articulation calls for the use of formal or informal text, such as stories, notes, or even annotations on another document, to help trigger reflection during the reflection session. In the classroom, this could be extended to any learning artifact that the learner wants to share with the group. Next, scaffolding is a structure imposed on the reflective discussion to guide it and the participants. Finally, synergizing describes the process of connecting insights gained from collaborative reflection to outcomes (Degeling & Prilla, 2011, pp. 3-4). Degeling and Prilla recommend providing support to facilitate and maintain a sustained shared context and move the reflection forward. We believe that the approach they have developed may translate well to the context of language learning classrooms.

Objectives

Our project has two objectives: first, to design a classroom activity for learners to gain experience with meaningful reflective practice, and second, to improve our understanding of how we, as classroom teachers, can support improved metacognition in our contexts. To achieve our first objective, we designed an activity for collaborative reflection on language learning following the tasks described by Degeling and Prilla. Our second objective was achieved through the process of regular teleconferencing and correspondence while designing materials and writing this account. The remainder of this paper is divided into five sections. In the first and second sections, we introduce our contexts and present the three stages of the collaborative reflection activity. In the third section, we share some artifacts and responses from learners, as well as our observations of learners engaged in the activity, in order to provide a representative impression of the activity from the learner's perspective. Then, in the fourth section, we reflect separately on both the activity and this project, followed by a commentary on each other's reflection. In the final section of the paper, we offer an assessment of the activity and recommendations for its adaptation by other educators. We hope this account may act as a helpful roadmap for other language educators looking to explore reflection and introduce it to their learners.

Our Contexts

Scott

I am an assistant language teacher on the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, an international cultural exchange program operated by the Japanese government. I team-teach approximately 500 high school students enrolled at two public high schools in a small city in western Japan. I see most learners once in two weeks. Class size ranges from 16 to 40, and I

team teach with 10 different Japanese teachers of English. Our syllabus follows a Ministry of Education–approved textbook, and the lessons I teach are generally supplemental to that text. My lessons focus on a target language ability and key expressions that support that ability. Learners engage in a culminating project at the end of each term beginning with a conversation test in the first term, an essay in the second, and an original speech contest in the final third term.

In my previous teaching position at a K–8 public Montessori school in California, learner metacognition, application of inquiry–based strategies, and regular reflection had been given institution–wide importance. In my work in Japan, after determining that my desire to replicate these goals was supported by the Japanese English teachers I work with, I began working to design an introduction to reflection. It was my hope that by engaging learners in reflective practice they could gain a deeper metacognitive awareness of themselves as learners. I hoped this would lead them to develop better understanding of the learning process and greater control of their own learning.

Mathew

I currently teach around 220 first- and second-year Japanese university students majoring in nursing in southern Japan. My classes are made up of 50–60 learners of varying ability, and meet once a week for 90 minutes over a 15-week semester. The learners are required to take just three semesters of English, finishing required English courses at the end of the first semester of their second year, just as they experience their first clinical training. The three required courses follow a situational syllabus based on oral interactions with patients. These situations are expressed through “can-do” statements that are shared with the learners. Each semester consists of 3–4 assessment tasks (e.g., “conducting a physical assessment on a patient”) targeting one or more can-do statements (e.g., “I can describe what I am going to do to a patient using simple words spoken slowly without looking at anything”).

I incorporate reflective activities into these three semesters. For example, learners record themselves completing the assessment tasks and upload their videos to Google Classroom so that they can be shared and self- or peer-evaluated and reflected upon. Learners also complete a mid-term and end-of-semester reflection in which they evaluate their ability to accomplish the can-do statements that were practiced in the tasks and reflect on their overall performance in class. My goal is to help my learners see that they have a role in managing their language learning to prepare them for continued learning once they enter the workforce and experience caring for patients who lack Japanese skills, a growing concern as the number of foreign tourists and short- and long-term residents in Japan continues to rise.

The Activity

In the following section we will introduce the activity we designed to support collaborative reflection. In the first stage, the articulation stage, learners prepared an artifact to support personal reflection on their English learning experiences. In the second stage, the scaffolding stage, learners participated in a group reflection session guided by a worksheet comprised of four tasks. In the final stage, the synergy stage, learners identified a goal and created a learning plan in collaboration with their peers, based on insights from the first two stages.

Stage 1: Articulating Content for Reflection Using The Language Learning Tree

As described by Degeling and Prilla (2011), articulation is a means of triggering the reflective process that is supported by an artifact, and we believed that an activity called *The Lan-*

guage Learning Tree could serve as a suitable artifact for this purpose. *The Language Learning Tree* is based on *The Strategy Tree* (Yoshimuta, Davies, & Abe, 2015), an activity designed to be used by teachers and language learning advisors to help their learners “see the whole picture of language learning, raise their awareness of learning strategies, and consequently develop self-regulation to proceed with their learning autonomously” (Abe, Yoshimuta, & Davies, 2014, p. 278). Whereas elements of *The Strategy Tree* and its ecosystem represent different categories of learning strategies taken from Rebecca Oxford’s Strategic Self-Regulated Model (2011), *The Language Tree* has been adapted to emphasize the metacognitive knowledge and skills encountered in the self-directed learning process (Wenden, 1998).

In *The Language Learning Tree* activity the four skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading) and three systems (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) of language are represented as the leaves and trunk, respectively, of the tree. The tree’s growth is supported by its roots and sources of nutrients such as water, fertilizer, and the sun. Here, the roots represent the specific affective factors of motivation, confidence, interest, and activeness (or initiative). Water and fertilizer represent learning resources and strategies used by the learner, and the sun represents the learner’s language goals. This results in a metaphor representing the learner’s current language ability as a living, changing tree. This representation of language ability as a tree creates a simple, yet powerful model learners can apply to their own language learning experiences as they work to improve their foreign language abilities. The model is accessible to learners via the metaphor because they know water (resources) and fertilizer (strategies) and sunlight (goals) help trees grow stronger and taller, just as their corollaries in the metaphor help language ability flourish.

A model of *The Language Learning Tree* can be found in Figure 1. To determine the shape and size of their trees, as well as other elements of the drawing, learners complete an awareness-raising survey with a mix of Likert-style and open-ended questions, which can be found in Appendix A.

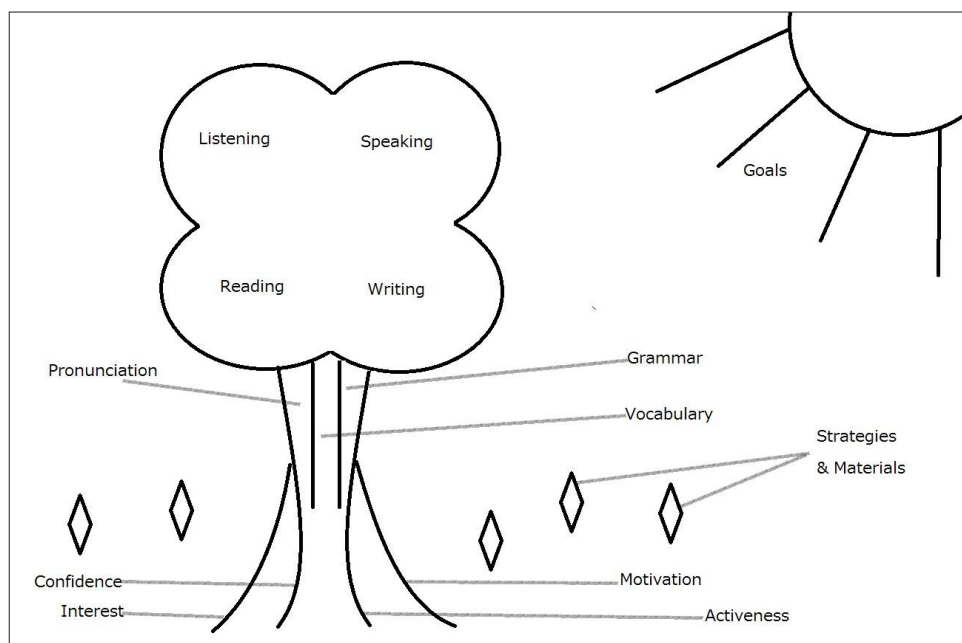


Figure 1. The Language Learning Tree.

Our sequence of activities begins by introducing learners to *The Language Learning Tree*. There are two goals that should be accomplished at the beginning of this stage. First, learn-

ers should understand that the tree is a metaphor for their current level of language ability. Second, they should understand that the size of the different parts of the tree are relative to each other, not to an external standard. In other words, the tree is a tool for comparing your language skills and knowledge to each other, not to the skills and knowledge of other individuals. The resulting personalized drawings make it easy for learners to articulate their English learning experiences to others.

Stage 2: Scaffolding With the Collaborative Reflection Worksheet

The visual representation of the self-as-learner provided by the language learning trees make them particularly well suited to sharing with others, and that is what learners will use them for in stage two. In Degeling and Prilla's (2011) model, scaffolding provides a common context and direction for reflection. Scaffolding can also help learners take on different roles during the reflection and draw their attention to rich data to reflect upon as a group.

With this in mind, we designed a four-task worksheet (see Appendix B) to guide learners through a discussion about their trees. In task 1, the worksheet directs groups of 3-4 learners to compare their trees and find similarities and differences. This is intended to provide learners with a common context, and lead them to insights about themselves as learners in relation to their peers. In tasks 2a-b, learners are directed to discuss the parts of their trees that stood out for being particularly developed or undeveloped, focusing on the underlying reasons for these assessments based on their language learning experiences. Task 2c asks learners to share the goal that they most want to achieve and the reasons for selecting that goal. This prompt provides an opportunity for learners to discover they have similar goals or already have experience pursuing similar goals. The final task, 2d, requires learners to share learning strategies and resources that they have found to be effective. Together, tasks 2c and 2d set the stage for a content-rich discussion that can help learners in the final stage of the activity where they will identify a goal and create a learning plan.

The collaborative reflection was designed to support learners in sharing their language learning experiences with a community of peers pursuing the same overall goal—improved English language proficiency. In doing so, learners find a point of reference for themselves as learners by listening to the experiences of their peers. They also are exposed to a variety of strategies and resources used by peers, as well as their peers' attitudes to language learning. These personal aspects of individual learners' experience rarely find their way into standard classroom activities. Throughout these steps, learners take on a variety of roles, from advisor to neophyte, as they reflect on the value of their groups' diverse experience as learners of English. During these conversations, learners were expected to note the content of their discussions. There was also a highlighted box where learners wrote down the goal they chose and effective learning strategies and/or resources introduced during the discussion.

Stage 3: Setting Goals and Planning Language Study

During the first two stages, learners should have gained insight about themselves and language learning through creating their individual trees and working through the collaborative reflection with their peers. The third stage of this activity is aimed at linking those insights to the learners' desired outcomes and identifying appropriate actions suggested by the reflective process, which Degeling and Prilla call synergizing mechanisms. As Degeling and Prilla explain, "Learning by collaborative reflection may then occur when an individual links her knowledge to the experience of others or when a group combines different viewpoints stemming from its members' experience and reflects on them collaboratively" (Degeling & Prilla, 2012, p. 135). Synergy is supported by the last question on the reflection worksheet in stage

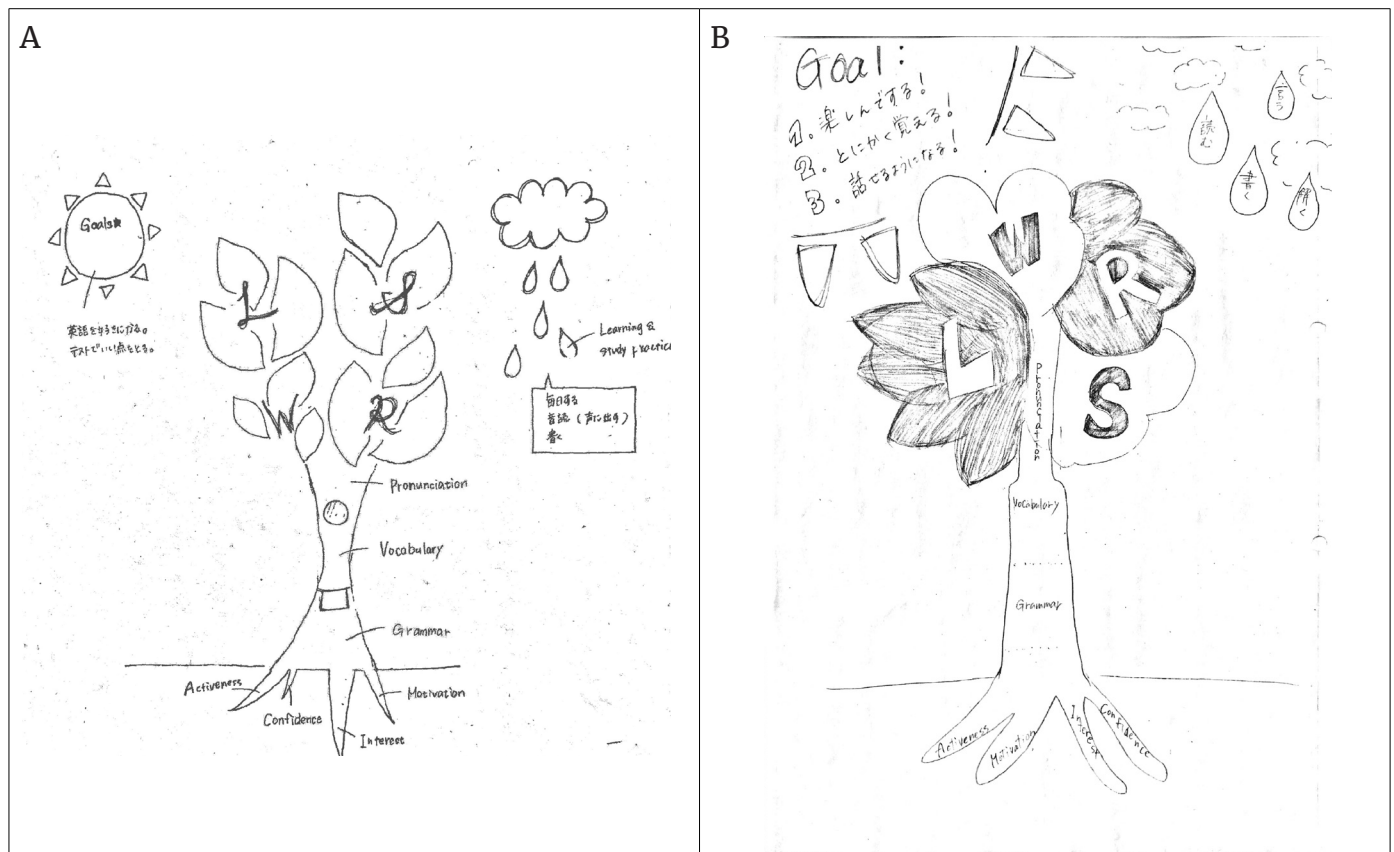
two, which asks learners to set a goal and create a learning plan for achieving that goal by the end of the school year. Then, groups discuss each learner’s goal and peers give advice about how to achieve the goal.

The Learners

At the conclusion of stage 3, learners completed a reflection assessment survey about the experience of making their trees and participating in the collaborative reflection. This survey can be found in Appendix C. Their responses revealed some interesting points about how they viewed the value of making the language trees and the discussions that followed. In the following section, we present a few representative samples of our learners’ trees and summarize learners’ responses to the activity.

Stage 1: Learners’ Trees

We carried out this activity with over 300 learners and examined the trees that they produced. The articulation artifacts produced in stage 1 showed a wide variety of learner engagement with the metaphor of language ability as a tree whose growth is supported by water, soil, and sunlight. In Figure 2, the ways in which learners interpreted the activity and their general enthusiasm for the project of creating their own language learning trees is evident. Figure 2 shows four examples of learners’ trees. It is notable that the learners interpreted the activity in distinct ways and also that the project of creating their own language learning trees generated a great deal of enthusiasm. In looking at these samples, we hope to demonstrate the images learners have of themselves as English language learners, the diversity of those images, and the power of the tree as a tool for articulation and self-assessment.



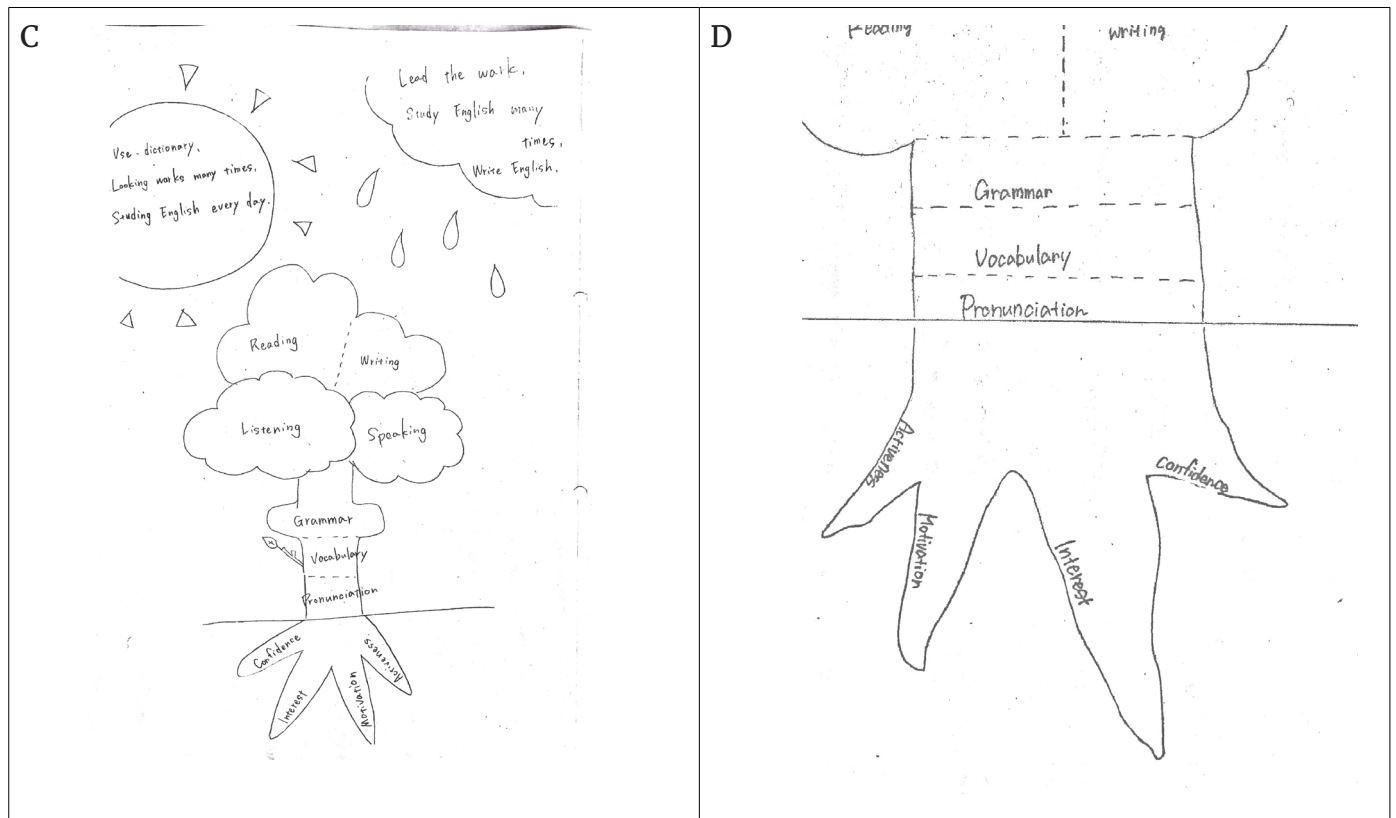


Figure 2. A Representative Sample of Learners' Language Learning Trees.

The trees show that the learners were successful in using the metaphor to represent how they perceive their L2 knowledge, abilities, and attitudes. Looking at Figure 2, you can see that there are clear differences in the relative size of the foliage (representing ability in the four language skills). Tree D clearly shows reading as the largest, and therefore strongest in the eyes of its author, while speaking is the smallest (weakest). In contrast to this is Tree A, in which speaking and reading are nearly equal in size while writing is clearly the smallest. These variations continue as we move down the tree to the trunk, representing language knowledge. Here we can see in Trees B and D that the learners feel weakest in pronunciation, while Tree A shows vocabulary as the slimmest portion of the trunk. These areas of learners' L2 learning are often assessed in other ways, which allows instructors to compare the learners' self assessments with more traditional metrics. However, the socio-affective components that are represented by the roots are less readily measured by standard assessments, which makes them of particular interest.

The socio-affective components of the tree—motivation, interest, confidence, and active-ness (initiative)—are presented as the foundation of learners' language study that supports the growth of knowledge and skill. Though learners are likely aware of these aspects, the role, value, and influence of socio-affective factors on learning as represented by the tree, makes their foundational importance explicit. In looking at this portion of the trees in our sample set, A and D both clearly differentiate between the different socio-affective components of their trees, with both trees indicating a strong interest (longer, deeper, broader root) and comparative lack of confidence (shorter, more shallow, narrower root). This type of difference is less clear in trees B and C, which could indicate less confidence from their creators about their self assessment of these factors, but could also be the result of a different stylistic approach or because those learners didn't feel there was a significant difference between these factors for them.

A common theme that emerges from looking at the learner responses to the survey is that

making the tree was an act of self-discovery for most learners. Learner comments often express new understanding of their own language learning capabilities, needs, and desires. The new perspective offered by these realizations appears to be one that learners are positive about, expressing optimism about their increased understanding and motivation to take advantage of what they have learned moving forward. Many note that, though the information in the tree came from them, the way the tree provided a framework for organizing this information allowed them to understand, at a glance, insights about themselves as learners.

Stage 2: Scaffolding With the Collaborative Reflection Worksheet

Using the trees in Figure 2 and the prompts from the scaffolding worksheet, we will describe an idealized conversation based on notes taken while observing learners engaged in the activity.

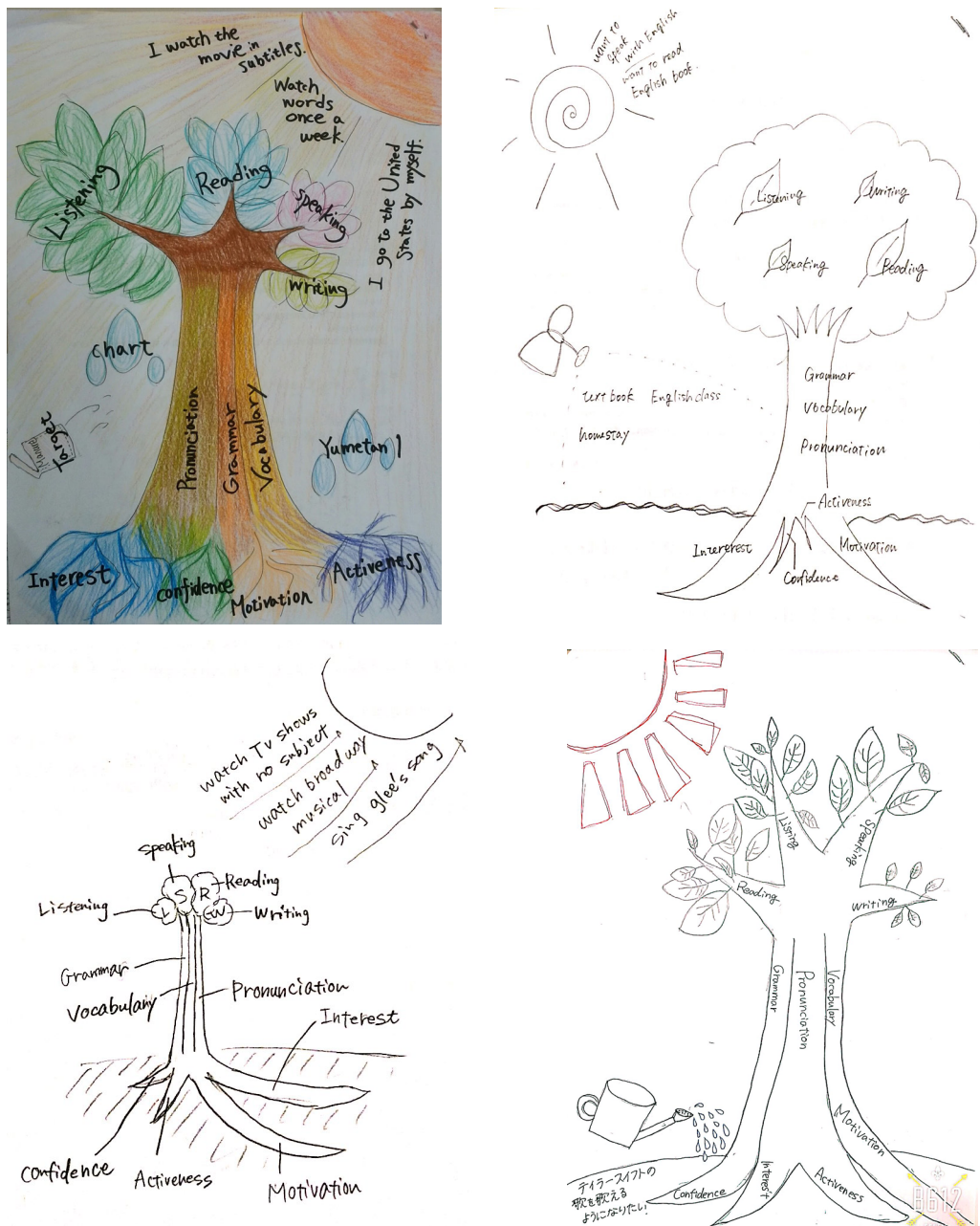


Figure 2. Language Learning Trees for a Group Discussion

First, the learners look for their similarities and differences. Examining the canopies of each other's trees, the learners realize they all believe they have poor writing ability, but are strong at reading. C says she feels speaking and reading are her strongest skills, whereas A, B, and D say their listening skills are strongest. D wonders out loud why everyone is so different. Looking at the roots, our four learners notice that they all lack confidence in their English, but they are all quite interested and motivated to learn English. A and D declare that they are fairly active in their English language study and give some examples of their study habits. The group then talk about their goals, with C and D both talking about how they want to be able to sing in English and how much they like Taylor Swift. A talks about how much she wants to go to the United States, and B shares her experience homestayng with a family in Illinois.

Next, learners spend 10 minutes talking about the parts of their trees that stood out for being particularly undeveloped or developed, focusing on the underlying reasons from their language learning experiences. C starts off complaining about how she can't catch the lyrics in songs despite her love of English music. Prompted by this, A and D talk about what they have done to improve their listening ability. A starts off explaining how she watches TV shows with the closed captioning turned on so she can see what's being said. D talks about how she looks up lyrics using Google and finds videos with embedded lyrics to help her learn the song and listen for the lyrics. Although the final step is to talk about effective strategies and inspiring goals, in many discussions, one learner's goal was tied to a weakness, and, as that learner spoke about that weakness/goal, peers responded by sharing effective strategies that were tied to their strengths.

Looking at the survey responses relating directly to the scaffolded collaborative reflection, it is clear that learners benefited in several distinct ways. First, they gained a broader perspective on how to study L2 by reflecting on their peers' approaches. Many learners characterized the experience of talking about their trees as providing them with new ideas about how to study and new information about study resources. Second, they became part of an explicitly recognized community of learners, discovering how their classmates were facing the challenges of learning a foreign language and imagining ways to support each other. One common sentiment was that their relative strengths and weaknesses could complement each other, and that when they faced a common challenge it would be easier to overcome it together. Finally, they also noted several changes to their socio-affective perception of English as a subject. These were most commonly related to motivation, with many learners expressing renewed desire to tackle the challenges of learning another language. There were also a number of learners who felt that the collaborative reflection had given them a chance to have their struggles and worries validated, which helped them feel relieved and find empathy.

Stage 3: Signs of Learner Synergy

In the final stage, learners reported on their goals and learning plans. Learners' goals could be described as general or specific. General goals addressed skills, systems, and socio-affective factors, such as speaking better, improving vocabulary, or having more confidence. Specific goals identified a function or task that learners wanted to achieve, such as being able to give directions in English. Learning plans consisted of lists of strategies, which were either specifically connected to a skill, system, or socio-affective factor, or generally related to study. Specific strategies that were frequently reported include writing a certain number of English sentences per day or studying a certain number of new words per week. General strategies included using a dictionary or creating a daily study habit. Survey responses showed some evidence that the collaborative reflection played a role in this final stage. For

example, some learners indicated that they were able to clarify their goals as a result of the discussion or were interested in using a strategy introduced during the reflection.

Based on our learners' artifacts and their responses to our survey, as well as our observations of the learners engaged in the reflective activity, it appears to us that the basic structure of this activity is effective in providing meaningful reflective experience to learners, that *The Language Learning Tree* is an effective tool for helping learners examine and express their conception of themselves as language learners, and that scaffolded group discussions provide learners with a valuable opportunity to develop the socio-affective elements of the self-as-learner. In the next section, we offer our individual reflections on the activity and our collaboration followed by responses to each other's reflections.

The Teacher-Researchers

Scott's Reflection

I met Mathew at a local teaching conference where he was presenting *The Language Learning Tree*. I was seeking new ideas to inspire the learners I worked with to reframe their conception of themselves as learners in a more growth-oriented way. Carol Dweck developed the idea of the growth mindset as the understanding that learners' skills and attributes grow and change in response to their belief that effort and strategy are the factors that determine intelligence and learning success. Specifically, she found that when learners are taught that learning a new idea changes the physical structure of the brain in a way analogous to exercise changing the body, this changes their beliefs and related behaviors to promote resiliency and learning (Dweck, 2010). Though I had no particular insight into my learners' view of themselves, I had noticed little change in their facility with English over the course of each term. I believed this was the result of their perception of themselves as learners, or of English as a subject, and I was looking for ways to help them reevaluate these ideas.

Creating my own language learning tree as an intermediate Japanese learner was exactly the kind of experience I was hoping to provide. It forced me to consider the current state of my language ability, my feelings about that state, my hopes for the future, and my ideas about how I could attain them. I'll give one example. I have always struggled with *kanji* (Chinese characters in the Japanese writing system), and as a result, with reading and writing Japanese. The process of making my tree highlighted this weakness in the structure and appearance of my tree, but, as I analyzed the goals and practices I employed as a language learner, I noticed that much of what I do and aspire to relates to in-person communication, not reading or writing. This gave me pause, as I considered the possibility that my difficulty with *kanji* may be the result of my goals and approach, not anything inherent in *kanji* or myself. The reflective process of creating my language learning tree had given me new ideas about how to tackle an old problem, and unlike journaling or writing reflections, activities I always felt were artificial and cumbersome, I had enjoyed creating my language tree.

Creating their trees, learners invested focused effort based on conscious choices about how to depict their learning, leading to unique and beautiful trees. A sense of ownership and autonomy developed from the freedom to choose how to represent their ideas. The trees proved to be a powerful tool for learners to assert their individuality, opening my eyes to the diversity within the groups I work with. This served as a timely reminder that the 55 minutes a week I spend with them provides only a glimpse into the kaleidoscope of their varied experience. My presumption that mindset would be a one-size-fits-all solution to the challenges of second language acquisition seems quaint and misplaced in the face of their individuality. However, based on the generic nature of their survey responses, it seems that they do share a

need for continued support as they develop their metacognitive skills. My aspiration to alter the view they had of English and their relation to it was not achieved by this one activity.

The Language Learning Tree is an ideal tool for helping learners contemplate their autonomy as language learners, and for encouraging them to develop a growth mindset. The tree's focus on metacognitive strategy assessment, its usefulness as a tool for collaboration between peers, and the growth implied by the tree metaphor closely mirror the main components of effective mindset interventions outlined by Yeager and Dweck (2012). The sole element that is lacking is explicit instruction in the idea of neural plasticity; that struggling to accomplish a challenging task grows new neural connections, changing the physical structure of the brain. My experience with *The Language Tree* convinced me that it can contribute to a shift in learners' attribution of the source of their successes and failures away from a fixed, innate aptitude-based understanding and towards an incremental, growth-as-a-result-of-effort-based understanding. However, it cannot do so overnight.

Mathew's Response

This collaboration has been rewarding on so many levels. Scott mentions his desire to support the development of a growth mindset in his learners and the suitability of the metaphor of *The Language Learning Tree* to illustrate this mindset through the relationship between the roots and nutrients and the size of the trunk and canopy. My interest in the tree focused more on its ability to represent how the learner saw her language learning experience at the moment she created her tree and relating this image to the process of self-directed learning, which I explain in my reflection below. Although it is easy to see how learning a complex system such as language can be represented by a growing tree, discussing how the tree could be used to introduce a growth mindset added a new dimension to my understanding of the metaphor. Incidentally, Abe, one of the designers of the original *Strategy Tree*, commented on an earlier draft of this paper that they envisaged the tree metaphor as a way to support the notion of a growth mindset. I hope to find a way to make this connection more explicit when I use *The Language Learning Tree* in the future.

Scott and I first met during a workshop where I was introducing *The Language Learning Tree*. Working together as partners, we shared our trees with each other and discussed our learning experiences. During that conversation, Scott realized his efforts to study Japanese did not align with his goals. Furthermore, he realized he had misattributed his failures with *kanji* and was able to see how he might address this. These are the kinds of insights we would ideally like our students to experience too, but Scott and I are both experienced users of our second languages as well as seasoned educators. I think these two factors give us an advantage when analyzing and discussing our trees, and could be a reason why the original tree is such a good tool for language advisors or in discussions where one participant is a teacher. A question that remains for me is how capable our learners are at making similar observations working with peers and near-peers.

Mathew's Reflection

Commenting on an earlier draft, one of our readers reminded us to consider this activity as one step on the learners' journeys to developing reflective ability and encouraged us to focus more on that journey. In this reflection, I would like to locate this project within my own journey as a teacher who has tried to support the development of his learners' metacognitive abilities through reflection. My interest in reflection began when I became a language learning advisor at a self-access center in 2012. In this capacity, I taught a class on self-directed

learning in which learners were expected to reflect on themselves as learners and use insights from reflection when identifying needs, setting goals, choosing strategies and resources, and evaluating their progress. I struggled to understand why the learners I was working with had such a difficult time reflecting on themselves and the self-directed learning process. At first, I thought these learners just needed a framework for reflection, or an illustrative analogy, or examples of “good” reflection.

It was at this time that I saw a poster presentation by Davies, Abe, and Yoshimuta (2013) reporting on *The Strategy Tree*, and I enthusiastically introduced it to my colleagues. We adapted it for our context and used it as a tool to help learners integrate and visually represent reflections about their language learning experiences. However, my earlier use of *The Language Learning Tree* was limited to stage 1 of this project, after which learners would introduce their trees in groups and then reflect on what they noticed about themselves by looking at others’ trees. Although this seemed to help them to recognize their individual differences and common struggles, my learners’ were still struggling to be insightful and connect their insights to changes in their learning habits. I began to consider how my age could be influencing my beliefs about my learners’ abilities to use reflection effectively in their learning. Was I able to effortlessly reflect on my learning and take appropriate action when I was their age? Dynamic Skill Theory (Fischer & Yan, 2002) seemed to suggest otherwise. Fischer and his colleagues examined the development of cognitive functions and concluded that we move through predictable stages as we develop, but the expression of our cognitive skills is variable. Normally we perform at a functional level appropriate to our developmental stage, but we can perform beyond this functional level with contextual and environmental support. There are two implications of this theory that teachers working with teens should take note of: first, high order cognitive functions are still developing in our learners, even if they are university students, and second, much as Vygotsky suggested with his Zone of Proximal Development, the development of learners’ abilities can be optimized when working in collaboration with stronger learners or supportive materials.

Around this time, I began collaborating with colleagues on a project to support collaborative learning groups. Groups of learners were given bespoke TOEIC study packets, which they completed together. Then they collaborated to identify resources and strategies, and create a study plan for additional practice (Porter, 2015). This helped me see that it is not enough to just get learners to reflect and share ideas. If they could be guided through a process of applying insights to a learning plan, perhaps they could improve their learning. Although learners collaborating on a learning plan might be able to produce a better learning plan than doing so alone, those learners would certainly gain practice thinking about themselves as learners and the learning process as they negotiate the creation of the learning plan with peers. This project left me open to experimenting more with collaboration and metacognition.

At the beginning of this project, I had just read Degeling and Prilla (2011) and their recommendations for supporting collaborative reflection resonated with me. As Lin (2001) summarized, metacognition grows in supportive environments, where learners feel safe to question and experiment, and can benefit from peer support. The tree, itself, is an effective activity for learners to examine themselves and their learning, but the ensuing discussions go further to support the development of metacognitive abilities. These abilities are important to my learners, not just because I believe that greater metacognitive ability will help them to improve their English, but because self-reflection and learner autonomy are valuable skills in nursing. I hope this attention on reflection in English classes helps my learners to strengthen their overall metacognitive capacity.

Scott's Response

Mathew's reflection resonated with me in several ways. When he described his past experiences teaching reflection, I couldn't help but identify with the challenges that he described in trying to encourage learner reflection that was insightful, deep, or even simply accurate. Mathew writes about his search for a "good" example that would help learners achieve his goals for their reflection, and of how *The Strategy Tree* fulfilled this need. I couldn't agree more with his assessment of the tree as a game-changing tool for enabling reflection about language learning.

I am also struck by the fact that we both seem to have arrived at the beginning of this project with the needs of young adult learners in mind. Though the learners that I have worked with (11-16) are younger than Mathew's (18-19), the need to approach all learners with an understanding of where they are in their cognitive development, particularly with regards to executive function and the relative importance of social connections, is equally important in both age groups. The Montessori philosophy that framed my approach to working with learners aged 11-14 was predicated largely on the understanding that a learner's successful comprehension of any given material is dependent on her developmental readiness for that material and the possession of tools necessary to engage with it. This sensitivity to learners' cognitive development is something that we did not address explicitly in our collaboration, yet it can be seen throughout.

Finally, Mathew and I seem both to have arrived at our interest in pursuing reflection and metacognition as necessary skills for our learners out of a belief that the ability to reflect on and therefore influence one's ideas about the self-as-learner are fundamentally about more than learning a language. Reflection and metacognitive awareness are more than study or learning tools. They are fundamental skills for self-understanding and their practice has the potential to alter every facet of our lives, and the lives of the learners we reach. Though this experience may not have been transformative, it could mark the beginning of a journey that leads learners to destinations they couldn't previously have imagined.

Conclusion

We designed *The Language Learning Tree* activity to encourage metacognition through reflective practice. It was envisioned as a first experience with reflective practice on foreign language learning for learners who have a diversity of past experiences and aspirations. As the learners went through the activity, they had a wide range of responses to it, and were supported in different ways at different points in the activity. *The Language Learning Tree* showed itself to be a tool of remarkable explanatory power for our learners to reflect on their language learning experiences. The metaphor of the tree, sun, and water provided a wonderful starting point for exploring the needs of each learner, and the clarity of the metaphor allows learners to access its benefits. The structure provided by Degeling and Prilla for this reflection activity was an effective way for learners to move through the reflection, and, although not all participants reached the goal we set for their reflective journey, the journey itself was of value, as was sharing it with peers.

A strength of the metaphor of the tree is that trees grow and change. Ideally, reflecting on the tree could be incorporated into a syllabus at regular intervals to show learners how they are growing, allowing them to assess the effectiveness of their current practices. In the third stage of our activity, setting a goal based on the insights achieved during reflection, learners needed support beyond what was provided by the reflection worksheet and survey. Specifically, they needed support identifying elements of their trees that were significant, and with applying the self-knowledge gained to the task of goal setting. However, goal setting is a skill

all its own that we did not address. Additionally, the activity does not provide follow through on the goals that learners developed, nor did we create an expectation that the learners would follow up on their own. Teachers hoping to capitalize on the benefits of reflection should consider adopting an approach that addresses goal setting explicitly, or engages learners individually.

Collaborating on this activity has made us more aware that reflection is a skill that develops over time in conjunction with metacognitive awareness and as a result of repeated practice and refinement. It cannot be forced to proceed at a predetermined pace or in accordance with the artificial requirements set by teachers. Looking back on this experience, we hope the story we have shared communicates to the reader the value of introducing reflection as a metacognitive practice and that our experience provides a useful guide to those who are interested in doing the same. We can unreservedly promote the use of *The Language Learning Tree* as a tool to help learners develop and express their understanding of themselves in the context of their language learning. It is our belief that this type of understanding is vital to learners' long-term success, and that the benefits of reflective practice extend beyond the language classroom. Although our learners' experience with reflection is just beginning, we hope that we've sown seeds that, with the right combination of sunlight, water, and nutrients, will grow into towering trees bearing the fruit of carefully cultivated goals and targeted study practices.

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Review Process

This paper was open-reviewed by the following Review Network members: Chika Hayashi, Ann Mayeda, and Ted O'Neill. (*Contributors have the option of open or blind review*).

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Appendix A

Self-Assessment Survey and Instructions

Each learner is different. This activity will help you realize how you are different from your classmates and how much you've already accomplished in your study of English. Read the topics below and circle the answer that is most appropriate for you.

Leaves	Low			High
Listening	1	2	3	4
Reading	1	2	3	4
Speaking	1	2	3	4
Writing	1	2	3	4
Trunk	Low			High
Grammar	1	2	3	4
Vocabulary	1	2	3	4
Pronunciation	1	2	3	4
Roots	Low/Small			High/Large
Confidence	1	2	3	4
Interest	1	2	3	4
Motivation	1	2	3	4
Activeness	1	2	3	4
The Sun				
What would you like to be able to do in English? Write 3-5 things.				
Water & Fertilizer				
What strategies and methods have you used to study English? Write as many as you can.				

How to Draw Your Tree

Leaves

Draw your canopy with four areas to represent the four skills. Fill each area with leaves based on how high or low you rated your ability for that skill. If your skill level is high, draw many big leaves. Conversely, if your skill level is low, fill your canopy with less leaves.

Trunk

Vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation support the four skills of English. The trunk is made up of these three. Make your trunk fatter when the skill level is high and thinner when the

skill level is low.

Roots

The roots of the tree are made up of affective factors. If your confidence, interest, motivation, or activeness (initiative) is high, draw a root that is long and fat. If one of these factors is low, draw a root that is short and thin.

The Sun

The sun is a source of energy, and here its rays represents your goals. Draw the sun's rays and write your goals on them.

Water & Fertilizer

Water and fertilizer provide the tree with nutrients so it can grow big and strong. Similarly, your learning strategies and resources play an important role in improving your English abilities.

Draw enough water/fertilizer to represent your different learning strategies and resources.

Appendix B

Reflection Worksheet

1. Look at each other's Language Learning Trees. Everyone's tree has similarities and differences. Talk about A and B in your group for a total of 5 minutes.
 - A. What are two ways that your trees are the same?
 - B. What are two ways that your trees are different?
2. Next, introduce your tree. Talk about A-D in your group for a total of 10 minutes.
 - A. Which part of your tree is the biggest? Why?
 - B. Which part of your tree is the smallest? Why?
 - C. Which goal from your sun do you feel the most strongly about? Why?
 - D. Which practice from your water and fertilizer do you think is the most useful? Why?
 - * This is a goal a feel strongly about.
 - * This is a practice from my water/fertilizer that is very useful for me.
3. Talk about your goal with classmates. Work together to think of ways to achieve this goal. You have 10 minutes.
 - * Looking at my tree, I hope I can improve _____ by the end of this school year.I can do this by: _____

Appendix C

Reflection Assessment Survey

Directions: Read the question and circle the most appropriate answer from the four choices: *strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree.*

1A. After making this tree and talking about it, I have ideas about how I can be a better English learner.

strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree

1B. Explain in detail.

2A. Making the language tree and/or talking about it helped me learn something.

a. About myself *strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree*

b. About my classmates *strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree*

c. About language learning *strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree*

d. About English *strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree*

2B. Explain in detail.

3. Making this tree and talking about it with classmates was useful.

strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree

4. I would recommend these activities for future students.

strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree

Exploring Italian High School Students' Metaphors of Language Learning

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This paper reports the results of a survey I carried out on the beliefs and attitudes held by Italian upper-secondary school students about foreign language learning. The survey was prompted by my experience in teacher training courses, where teachers often wondered what factors were responsible for unsatisfactory learning outcomes, even in contexts where teaching strategies and materials seemed to be grounded on sound methodological choices. This led me to consider aspects of learning which lie “below the surface” of students’ behaviour, and in particular the role that their beliefs and attitudes play in explaining how a curriculum is perceived, interpreted, and implemented in a school context. In this paper I will first illustrate the cognitive nature of beliefs, their corresponding affective component (i.e., attitudes), and their influence on the learning process. I will then introduce the use of metaphors as a useful tool for probing learners’ beliefs and attitudes, and outline how the research was designed to explore students’ conceptualisations of both the knowledge of foreign languages and the process of language learning. Results show that students tend to describe language knowledge in terms of motivation, intercultural communicative competence, affective implications, mastery of a system, equivalence of L1 and L2 learning, and similarity with other skills. Language learning is mainly seen in terms of a very demanding task, which is perceived either as a productive experience or as a (nearly) impossible undertaking, but also as “learning from scratch” and as a game and pleasant experience. I conclude by considering ways in which these insights can be used by teachers to address their students’ “hidden agenda” and highlighting the role that an increased awareness of beliefs and attitudes can play in the language classroom.

本稿はイタリア人高校生を対象に実施した外国語学習に関するビリーフと態度に関するアンケート調査結果である。本調査は教員養成課程を担当する筆者自身の経験に端を発しているが、確固たる方法論に基づく教授法や教材を用いた学習環境に於いてさえ、望ましくない学習成果を生み出す要因について教員たちは日々考えを巡らせている。そして筆者自身、生徒の行動の「水面下にある」学習に関する側面、特にカリキュラムに対する生徒と教員の認識や解釈とその実施におけるビリーフと態度が及ぼす影響について考えるに至った。そこで本稿ではまず、認知的要素に関わるビリーフ、そしてその対である情意(態度)とそれらの学習プロセスへの影響を解説する。次にビリーフと態度の両方を明らかにする効果的なツールである比喩の使用に関して詳説し、外国語の知識と言語学習過程に対する生徒の概念を説明することを目的とした本調査のリサーチデザインを概観する。本調査の結果、生徒たちはモチベーション、異文化間コミュニケーション能力、情意的側面、システムの熟知、第1言語と第2言語の同等性、そしてスポーツなど他のスキルとの類似性の観点から言語学習について述べる傾向が見られた。また、生徒たちは言語学習を非常に苦勞するものであると主に捉えているため、言語学習に対する認識が、実り多い学習経験または(ほぼ)不可能なものどちらかであることが明らかになった。一方で言語学習を「ゼロからの学習」、またゲームや楽しい経験として認識されていることも示された。最後に、本研究で得られた知見から「生徒の隠れたアジェンダ」を明らかにする方法を考察し、語学教室でのビリーフや態度の認識の高まりがもたらす影響も明らかにする。

Keywords

beliefs, attitudes, metaphors, motivation, language learning process

キーワード

ビリーフ、態度、比喩、モチベーション、言語学習過程

This paper reports on the first stage of a survey carried out in Italian upper-secondary schools on the beliefs and attitudes held by students about foreign language learning in a school context. I was prompted to arrange the survey by the frequent dissatisfaction shown by teachers in training courses, when they often complained that students’ responses to their strategies and materials were not what they expected. At the same time, teachers were unable to identify factors which would explain the “gap” between their expectations and the actual learning outcomes. To address this issue, I turned my attention to aspects of the “hidden curriculum” which are rarely investigated, such as students’ beliefs and their influ-

ence on the learning process. The issue is particularly relevant for Italian secondary school language teachers, who in the past few years have had to face several (often confusing) syllabus changes, on the one hand, and an increasing emphasis on the “products” of learning, in terms of external exams and certifications, on the other. At such a time, I thought that going beyond questions of methodology, and probing what lies behind students’ reactions to teachers’ demands, would throw some light on the actual learning processes taking place in the classroom. In search of possible instruments to use in the survey, I found metaphors a particularly productive and dynamic tool. In this paper, after briefly recalling why beliefs and attitudes are so important in (language) learning, I will describe the research design of my project, report on some of the most significant results so far, and use the knowledge thus gained to make some concluding remarks on the role that an increased awareness by both students and teachers of beliefs and attitudes can play in the language classroom.

Beliefs and Attitudes and Their Role in Language Learning

Beliefs and attitudes towards language learning, or what teachers and students think and feel when engaged in the task of teaching/learning a foreign language (L2), are an important part of what has been called the “hidden,” “covert,” or “implicit” curriculum (Margolis, 2001), i.e., factors like learning preferences, aptitudes, beliefs, attitudes, and motivations. Such factors heavily impact the way that the “overt” or “explicit” curriculum, made up of syllabuses, activities, materials, and assessment procedures, is perceived, interpreted, and implemented by all the parties concerned. This view of the curriculum is best appreciated through the “iceberg metaphor” (see Figure 1).

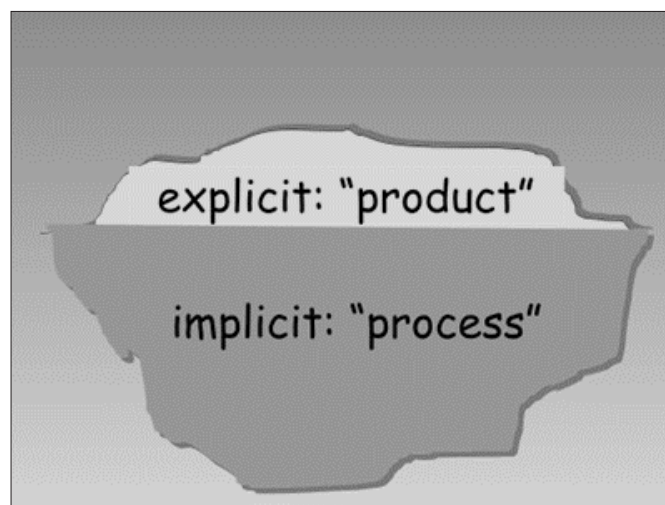


Figure 1. The Importance of the “Hidden” Curriculum.

In contrast to visible and explicit performance, the underlying, invisible competence is heavily influenced by what the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001) calls *existential competence* (“*savoir être*”)—the individual differences that affect how knowledge (“*savoir*”) is acquired and skills (“*savoir faire*”) are developed.

Teachers and students hold quite definite beliefs and attitudes about *what* they teach/learn (the subject matter, in our case *language, communication, and culture*), *how* language is best taught/learned (the *process* of teaching/learning), and *who* is involved in this task (their own selves as teachers and learners, including the *roles* they play in the process). These dimensions are interrelated (see Figure 2) and have a strong influence on the choices and decisions

that people make and, ultimately, on their behaviour in the language teaching/learning task (Mariani, 1999; Barcelos, 2000; Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Gabillon, 2005; Huang, 2006; Mercer, 2008).

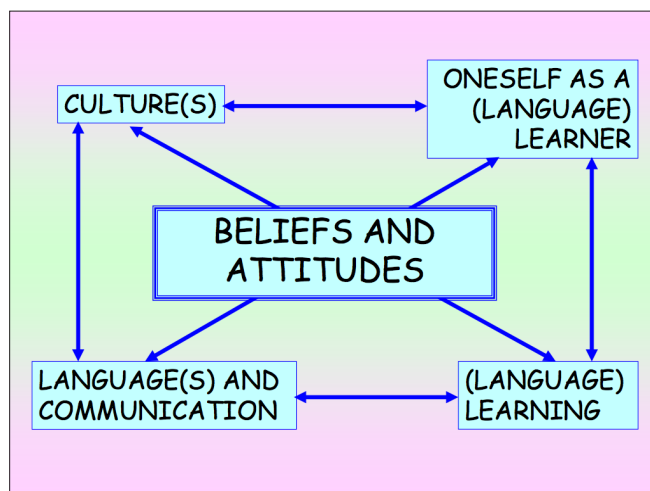


Figure 2. Areas of Beliefs and Attitudes and Their Integration.

For example, if a student thinks that language is essentially made up of words, that learning a language implies memorizing words, and that s/he has a poor memory, all this will inevitably shape her/his view of the learning task and probably impact on the way s/he will react to the teaching activities, especially if her/his teacher holds a different view of the same factors. As a matter of fact, teachers' and students' *conflicting* beliefs and attitudes have proven to affect how aims, objectives, activities, and assessment procedures are interpreted, accepted, or refused in the classroom (Horwitz, 1988; Cotterall, 1995; Nunan, 1995; Peacock, 1998; Wan, Low, & Li, 2011).

To explain the impact of such factors on the learning process, it is crucial to clarify the nature of *beliefs* and their relations to *attitudes*. With teachers in mind, Richards (1994, p. 5) referred to beliefs as “the informational attitudes, values, theories and assumptions about teaching and learning which teachers build up over time and bring with them to the classroom”—but this definition could reasonably be extended to students. Victori and Lockhart (1995, p. 224) identified beliefs as “general assumptions that students hold about themselves as learners, about factors influencing language learning, and about the nature of language learning and teaching.” Thus, to use other metaphors, beliefs could be seen as a filter through which experience is given meaning and value, or to a pair of glasses through which people interpret the world *around* them and *inside* them (Arnold, 1999).

Beliefs can best be seen as a *cognitive* construct, i.e., what a person knows (or *believes* s/he knows), and have also been variously referred to as mini-theories, learning cultures, suppositions, implicit theories, and self-made representational systems (Holec, 1996; Doly, 1997; Barcelos, 2000; Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005). However, the impact of beliefs cannot be fully appreciated without considering how such cognitive structures are accompanied by an *affective* dimension, which is largely responsible for their role in learning. Wenden (1991, p. 52) clarified the relationship between beliefs and attitudes in this way:

Attitudes have been referred to as “learned motivations”, “valued beliefs”, “evaluations”, “what one believes is acceptable” or “responses oriented towards approaching or avoiding”. Implied in these various definitions, are three characteristics of attitudes: 1. attitudes always have an object; 2. they are evaluative; 3. they predispose to certain actions.

The *cognitive*, *affective*, and *evaluative* components are thus strictly linked to the *behavioural* component: beliefs influence attitudes and these, in turn, affect decisions and behaviour.

The Use of Metaphors to Explore Beliefs and Attitudes

The use of metaphors in exploring aspects of (language) learning and teaching is well documented in the literature (e.g., Elliott, 1984; Munby, 1986; Thornbury, 1991; Scott, 1994; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2002; Berendt, 2008; Gibbs, 2011; Farjami, 2012). Metaphors are not just an alternative to answering questions, providing definitions or taking part in an interview. Prompting a student to complete a definition (e.g., *Learning a language is/ means ...*) is fundamentally different from asking her/him to write a metaphor (e.g., *Learning a language is like ...*), for several different reasons. Firstly, definitions are by their very nature analytical and thus tend to appeal more to systematic, convergent learners, while metaphors allow for more creative insights and more global perceptions, and thus tend to appeal more to intuitive, synthetic, divergent learners. Secondly, metaphors prompt learners to focus more on similarities and analogies than on oppositions and differences. And finally, metaphors lend themselves well to further elicitation and elaboration. Ortony (1993) summarizes the main characteristics of metaphors as *vividness*, *compactness*, and *expressibility*.

However, creating and using metaphors can also have a strong influence on the way one conceives and deals with reality—by giving structure to experience:

New metaphors have the power to create a new reality. This can begin to happen when we start to comprehend our experience in terms of a metaphor, and it becomes a deeper reality when we begin to act in terms of it. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 145)

For example, referring to teacher *training* by using alternatives such as teacher *education*, teacher *learning*, or teacher *development* points to very different ways of conceptualizing this activity. Thus, “A metaphor can easily be seen as a bridge, etymologically ‘carrying over’ from one side to another. It links and comprises the known and the unknown, the tangible and the less tangible, the familiar and the new” (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p. 149), “a bridge enabling passage from one world to another” (Shiff, 1979, p. 106), “windows” for examining the cognitions and feelings of learners (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005).

Aims and Research Questions

The literature on beliefs and attitudes outlined above, and the use that metaphors have been put to in previous research, helped me to specify in more detail both the kinds of information that I would be investigating and the tools that I would be using in the process. It seemed clear to me that the crucial aspects of language learning at a time of change in secondary schools and with teachers facing increasingly diversified groups of students could be described both in terms of how students make sense of language as the object of learning and in terms of how they approach the process of learning itself. This led me to formulate my two research questions:

1. How do students conceptualize the *knowledge* of a foreign language, i.e., what do they mean by “knowing a foreign language”?
2. How do students conceptualize the *process of learning* a foreign language, i.e., what do they mean by “learning a foreign language” in a school context?

Participants

The participants were 612 students studying foreign languages (English, French, German, and Spanish) as part of their school curriculum in seven academically oriented upper-secondary schools located in small or medium-sized towns in Northern Italy. The survey was carried out across all the five school grades (students' age range 14–19), with language levels starting from a post-elementary level—or Level A2 of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001)—for English, and from a beginner level for all the other languages in Grade 1, and reaching an upper intermediate level—or Level B2/C1 of the *Framework*—for English at Grade 5.

Method

Students were invited to complete two metaphors in writing, in their mother tongue (Italian), by referring to their overall experience of foreign language learning at school:

- “To know” a foreign language is like ...
- Learning a foreign language is like ...

Teachers introduced the scope of the survey and how it would be carried out. Students were not given any examples of the actual metaphors they were invited to produce, but in order to make them familiar with the task, teachers elicited a few metaphors on other topics, e.g., *Winning a football match is like ...* or *Getting back to school in September is like ...*, briefly commenting on the value of metaphors as a way of exploring and sharing our thoughts and feelings about an experience.

The collected metaphors were analysed by the author with the purpose of identifying thematic categories which would help to map out the students' meanings into recurring structures that gradually emerged from the data itself (Cameron & Low, 1999). In some studies such structures are described in terms of concrete images. For example, Ellis (2002) reports and elaborates on five conceptual metaphors for learning: learning as a journey, as a puzzle, as work, as suffering, and as struggle; while Bas and Gezegin (2015) report and elaborate on 10 groups of metaphors for English learning process: task, journey, period of life, progress, competition, enjoyable activity, torture, unending process, engraving process, and nurturing process. In my survey, however, an effort was made to directly link the recurring structures (as emerging from all the students' metaphors) to some basic L2 pedagogical frameworks, i.e.,

- for Research Question 1: motivation; intercultural communicative competence; personal cognitive and affective implications; mastery of a system; equivalence of L2 knowledge and L1 knowledge; equivalence of knowing an L2 and any other school subject; and similarities with other skills or competences;
- for Research Question 2: a very demanding, even dangerous, but productive experience; a very demanding but (nearly) impossible undertaking; a game, a pleasant experience; similarities with other skills and competences; integration of some sort of “language mechanism” within one's mind; and equivalence of learning an L2 and other school subjects.

The main problem experienced in the analysis of the metaphors was the fact that in several students' responses the two questions seemed to overlap, i.e., they tended to equate language and language learning. This important issue is reflected in the cross-references between the two questions shown in the *Results* below.

Responses were then used to elaborate on the implications that students' conceptualizations may have on their approach to language learning and on their response to language teaching (see the *Discussion* below). The second phase of this research, which for different reasons was delayed and is therefore still in its early stages, will invite teachers to feed back these findings to their students and to use them for individual and group reflection and discussion. A few early samples of teachers' reactions are provided in *Teachers' Feedback* below.

Results

The major descriptive categories of beliefs identified in this survey are presented in Tables 1 and 2. They are illustrated with representative samples of the students' metaphors and are accompanied by comments on the major entailments for the emerging conceptions of language and language learning. (Notice that the English translations are just approximate versions of the original Italian metaphors and often do not do justice to the highly imaginative language, sometimes heavily loaded with idiomatic expressions and cultural references, used by the students.)

Table 1. Conceptualizations of the Knowledge of a Foreign Language

<i>Descriptive category</i>	<i>Representative samples of metaphors</i>
1. Motivation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. making an effort to pass my exams 2. doing something useful, because you can use a foreign language ... not like, for instance, maths, which is of no use to me in my free time 3. having a key which can open many doors 4. having a six-speed gearbox on my moped 5. arriving at a new school and already knowing the names of your classmates 6. making a long-term investment 7. belonging to a group of people who communicate through the same language 8. being able to become "a foreigner" and being considered as such 9. changing my nationality, therefore I should know a language perfectly 10. becoming another person, almost changing your personality and way of being; being two people at the same time interpreting roles, becoming a little actor for a moment; changing one's voice and way of thinking (I think like a German, a Frenchman, an Englishman)

The knowledge of a foreign language is seen in terms of the *purposes* which it might serve or the *benefits* it might provide, both at the present time and in the future, and which in turn fuels students with the *will* and *skill* to learn. This corresponds roughly to various kinds of *instrumental motivation*. This broad concept of *instrumental motivation* can also be seen in terms

of its *extrinsic* value. However, different degrees of extrinsic motives can be perceived along the extrinsic vs intrinsic continuum: while the most external forms of *regulation* (e.g., punishments and rewards from teachers or parents) are not mentioned, various forms of *interiorization*, *identification* and *integration* clearly are, from passing exams (1) to securing a better future (7), with a general perception of acquiring a powerful tool (3-4) and useful starting opportunities (5).

Within the broad concept of *integrative motivation*, the desire to become part of the culture(s) mediated by the target language(s) (7) can be linked to subtle questions of individual identity, and can imply a change in one's image and perception of one's individual and social self (8). This can imply an unrealistic expectation of the level of competence to be reached to achieve such ambitious results (9). Knowing a language sometimes seems to imply a deeper change in one's personality, almost leading to a "split personality" (10); at other times, the change is perceived as a more "superficial" playing of a role (11).

2. Intercultural communicative competence

12. a passport, a key to be able to interact with other people
13. opening my mind to new realities, being able to compare them
14. having more elements of certainty, i.e. managing to express myself and communicate with people of different languages and cultures
15. adjusting to other people's ways of communicating, respecting their culture, thus indirectly favouring cultural mediation

Students seem to be well aware of the implications of learning a foreign language in terms of acquiring a complex competence, which has both communicative and intercultural connotations. This awareness also implies the realization of the close links between languages and cultures (12-13). This competence can be seen both as relevant in private domains (14) and as a more "public" commitment to contribute to intercultural mediation (15).

3. Personal cognitive and affective implications

16. learning to live in a different way than one usually lives; having a second life to live
17. air: it is something absolutely necessary to life
18. being a butterfly which flies to different places
19. thinking through a different system
20. having a master-key in a hotel, being able to go into any room with no effort at all, adjusting to the type of room I'm going to find
21. proving to myself that nothing is impossible and one can learn everything
22. being able to walk without anybody's help; widening my personal knowledge so as to be more autonomous in the world
having a degree of freedom which you can't reach in any other way

Still within the issue of identity, the emphasis in this case is more on the effects that knowing a foreign language *in itself* can have on one's overall personality, without or beyond the desire to integrate into a target community and/or to acquire a tool for personal and intercultural communication. What is stressed is the potential of language to offer opportunities for change, not just in terms of acquiring alternative ways of thinking (19), but also as a way

of experiencing new dimensions of one's personality, like being born again (16).

The implications of learning a foreign language can reach out into the realm of *self-esteem*. This is supported by the perception of developing a new flexible competence (*self-efficacy*) (20–21), the perception of increasing personal autonomy and independence (22) as well as a more general sense of freedom from constraints (23).

4. Mastery of a system

- 24. knowing many words of a language and knowing how to correctly pronounce them all!
- 25. mastering lexis and structures so that you don't give a strong impression of being a foreigner
- 26. being a computer with many data in it

Some students stress the mastery of the language system as the key feature of knowing a foreign language (cf. No. 6 in Table 2 below). This can apply to pronunciation, lexis, and grammar (24–25), and can be extended to the metaphor of knowing a language as data-processing by a computer (26). Even in this case, though, “perfect” mastery is seen as necessary in order to conceal one's own identity as a foreigner and thus be taken as a “native speaker” (25), much in the same way as in (9) above.

5. Equivalence of L2 and L1 knowledge

- 27. being able to express myself as in Italian
- 28. studying Italian but in another language with other verb forms
- 29. speaking two kinds of Italian because it means speaking it really well
- 30. speaking it as well as my mother tongue
- 31. knowing it as if I were a mother-tongue speaker

Some students are very explicit in equating the knowledge of a foreign language with the knowledge of their mother tongue (Italian). Especially in the early grades, their reference seems to be “ideal native speakers”: little or no consideration is given to different levels of competence and to the idea of progress in learning. This can lead to unrealistic expectations, both in terms of learning outcomes and in terms of the amounts of time and effort required.

6. Equivalence of knowing an L2 and knowing any other school subject

- 32. “doing” the other school subjects
- 33. studying all the other subjects, but speaking in a different way and enjoying myself more
- 34. knowing another school subject, but often a more important one
- 35. going to school: it may not be enjoyable, but makes life better

Also in the early grades, some students seem to perceive language as a “disciplinary subject,” i.e., they do not exhibit any special relationship with language as opposed to any other form of content to be learnt in the curriculum (cf. No. 7 in Table 2 below). This is sometimes associated with a perception of studying a subject which is somehow “different” from the other ones, either because of its “importance” (34) or because it implies more enjoyable activities (33).

7. Similarities with other skills or competences

- 36. knowing how to play a musical instrument
- 37. being able to fly
- 38. cycling with your eyes closed, driving a vehicle, skiing, swimming

Some students compare knowing a foreign language to mastering other skills or sports (cf. No. 5 in Table 2 below).

A widespread belief among students views language learning both in terms of the effort required and in terms of the highly satisfying nature of the task. Interestingly, the emphasis is not so much on how a language is learnt but on how deeply involved one can become in learning it, i.e., on the (positive) affective implications of the task.

What strikes most in these metaphors is the perception of the highly demanding nature of the learning task (40-42). However, the perception of the *value of the task*, together with the *expectancy of success*, seem to provide the relevant personal motivation. This perception is often accompanied by the awareness of the obstacles involved and the need to be patient and persistent. Also, setting a clear target seems to provide the necessary energy (43-44). The learning task itself is conceptualized as a route which calls for flexibility, the ability to learn to manage situations and be resilient in the face of difficulties (45-46); a route which implies a step-by-step approach and a firm foundation at the start (47-48).

Table 2. Conceptualizations of Learning a Foreign Language

<i>Descriptive category</i>	<i>Representative samples of metaphors</i>
1. A very demanding, even dangerous, but productive experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40. climbing the Everest would be easier 41. landing on the moon 42. walking on a long and winding path, which will soon give way to a wonderful place 43. engage in a long-distance race: I will be tired out, I will be thirsty but in the end I will reach the finish line and thus my target 44. crossing a river: I will find some obstacles but when I get to the other bank I will be satisfied 45. seafaring: you need to manage the situations in which you find yourself 46. surfing – at the start you slip on the board but after some hard work you can surf the wave 47. reaching the top of a mountain. You proceed step by step 48. building a house, being careful to lay sound foundations; having built a house little by little, laying every single brick in the right way

2. A very demanding but (nearly) impossible undertaking

- 49. knowing everything about football, all the players' faces ... it's impossible
- 50. walking on the water ... impossible
- 51. learning to play chess with your eyes closed
- 52. being under a terrible hail storm with 2 sq cm hail stones which won't allow you to see
- 53. running barefoot on stones
- 54. playing chess without the chessboard
- 55. go on a military campaign with very little probability of winning
- 56. having to learn something which has nothing to do with me

Another widespread belief emphasizes the feeling of failure associated with engaging in language learning, i.e., the (negative) affective implications of the task. What is stressed is the actual impossibility of language learning (49-51), with strong emotional implications (52-53). This may imply the perception of lacking the necessary tools (54), a low expectancy of success (55), and can even lead to a feeling of unrelatedness, as if no connection could be established between learning and one's self (56)—a state which is very close to demotivation.

3. A game, a pleasant experience

- 57. listening to a song; playing an instrument, it's amusing and you do it with extreme pleasure
- 58. playing football – absolutely necessary
- 59. being on a merry-go-round because after learning something I feel satisfied
- 60. going on a trip, because it's enjoyable, amusing, and at the same time interesting
- 61. studying the rules of a similar game, which has different rules
- 62. playing with a puzzle, where every word corresponds to a piece and the possible combinations are endless; solving a riddle
- 63. picking a rose. You have to be careful with thorns, but this is no problem compared with its beauty and scent

This category is the one which most closely approaches the construct of *intrinsic* motivation—or engaging in learning for its own right, for the pleasure it gives, with no particular other purpose (either instrumental or integrative) involved. This is associated with a feeling of self-assurance as a result of the activity (59) and an intrinsic interest in it (60). Learning a language is also often compared to solving a puzzle or a riddle. In this case the focus seems to be more on the cognitive challenge, in which language is seen as a series of elements which can be combined in endless ways (61-62).

Notice that these first three categories of metaphors closely resemble those found in the already mentioned studies by Ellis (2002) and Bas and Gezegin (2015).

4. Learning a language as starting from scratch

- 64. a child starting primary school, in the sense that when I was in the first grade I learned Italian, now it is as I started again in another country
- 65. learning to speak my language again ... but, compared with when we were children, it's much more difficult
- 66. going back to being a small child who has to learn everything to express herself and make herself understood
- 67. when as a child I learned to walk – step by step, with no hurry; growing up a second time

In this case students express the perception that learning a language implies a completely new task, where previous experiences have little or no relevance. There are several important implications in this view of L2 learning. First, there is no distinction between L1 and L2 learning, the only difference being the fact that the latter involves a higher degree of difficulty (65); in other words, natural acquisition of the L1 seems to be perceived as very similar to later (school) learning of the L2. Second, no importance seems to be given to contextual or other factors that may influence learning as a (young) adult. And finally, the L2 learner is seen as a small child who must once again go through all the stages of “growing up” without relying on any previously acquired knowledge or skills (66–67).

5. Similarities with other skills or competences (cf. No. 7 in Table 1 above)

- 68. learning to play football (I hate football)
- 69. swimming – it's tiring but stimulating
- 70. learning to play a musical instrument
- 71. singing, not everybody can do it ...
- 72. learning to cycle. At the start it may seem difficult, but once you've grasped how it works, it turns out to be much easier than you thought
- 73. knowing how to bake a cake, after learning the procedure and having all the ingredients; cooking: the recipe is not enough
- 74. driving your car, knowing its reactions
- 75. learning a mathematical formula by heart, but using your reasoning ability; doing a maths exercise, if you know the formulae
- 76. growing a plant

Students seem to be aware of the complexity of language learning as a competence, which implies the acquisition of *knowledge* as well as the development of *skills*, as in complex skills such as sports (68–69), playing music or singing (70–71), and driving a car (74). Some students seem to be aware of the *process* involved in learning, like understanding “how it works” (72), learning the “procedure” (73), and knowing the “formulae” (75). On the one hand, you need all the ingredients; on the other, you need a “recipe”, which in itself is not enough (73). Also, learning is seen as active mental processing (“reasoning ability”) rather than simple memorization (75). Notice that (71), by mentioning the fact that not everybody can be successful, refers to the question of inborn *aptitude*, while (74) highlights the importance of being aware of one's own strengths and weaknesses.

6. Development and integration of some sort of “language mechanism” within one’s mind

77. being a dictionary
 78. being a good linguist
 79. doing a sort of a revision of Italian, because if you don’t have a sound foundation of Italian grammar you can’t hope to know the foreign one
 80. putting a small translating machine into my head

This category has to do with the formal aspects of the language system: vocabulary (77), grammar (79), and translation (80), thus stressing the value of knowing the system and comparing oneself to a training “linguist” (78) (cf. No. 4 in Table 1 above).

7. Equivalence of learning an L2 and learning any other school subject

81. studying all the other subjects, only speaking in a different way and enjoying myself more
 82. studying any other subject, perhaps this is more useful than others
 83. studying any other subject but committing oneself more because you have to concentrate in order to understand the differences between our language and the foreign language

Some students do not seem to be particularly aware of the originality of language learning, although they sometimes seem to find it more enjoyable (81) and more useful (82) than other school subjects. They also realize the complexity and commitment demanded by a contrastive (L1 vs L2) view of learning (83) (cf. No. 6 in Table 1 above).

Discussion

I used the results of this survey to elaborate on the implications that students’ conceptualizations of “knowing a foreign language” and “learning a foreign language” can have on their approach to learning and on their response to teaching. These implications can be summarised as follows.

1. Motivational Constructs.

The meanings that students attach to both the *outcome* of language learning and the *process* of learning itself are clearly linked to motivational issues: *instrumental vs integrative* (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985, 2010), *intrinsic vs extrinsic* (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002):

- *instrumental motivation* appears mostly as internal, rather than external, regulation, i.e., not related to rewards or punishments, but more as the perception of the opportunities that knowing a language can offer, especially in the long term;
- *integrative motivation* seems to be quite strong too, with students often wishing to become part of the target language community and even to identify with its speakers, or, more often, with a global community of speakers of a *lingua franca* (Dörnyei, 2010; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010). This hints at subtle questions of individual and collective identity, since the knowledge of a foreign language often seems to imply personality changes or at least the commitment to “play a role” in intercultural communication. Sometimes this is associated with unrealistic images of the level of competence required to play such a role, i.e., an idealized native speaker level;

- *intrinsic motivation* is revealed by students seeing language learning as an enjoyable game, an interesting puzzle, and a generally pleasant experience.

These strong *cognitive* and *affective implications* underlie other important motivational constructs: the perception of developing a new competence enhances *self-efficacy* and *self-esteem* (Bandura, 1997; Guthrie et al., 1999), and increases a sense of *autonomy* and *independence*, often expressed through a feeling of *freedom from constraints*, which is particularly meaningful and relevant for adolescents and young adults.

2. Challenging Nature of the Learning Task.

Despite showing positive attitudes, students do not underestimate the highly demanding nature of the task involved in language learning. They seem to be well aware of a special, even exceptional, enterprise, which demands an equally extraordinary expenditure of time and effort and a high degree of persistence. Combining the perceived *value* of the task and a high *expectancy of success* provides students with the necessary level of commitment and resilience in the face of difficulties (Pekrun, 1993; Cole, 2002; Schunk, 2003; Brophy, 2004).

However, this is clearly not so for everybody. The challenges inherent in language learning are not always associated with positive feelings of self-efficacy and high expectations. In fact, several students seem to stress not just the difficulty of the task, but even the impossibility of carrying it out. Unclear objectives, associated with low feelings of self-efficacy and expectancy of success, produce correspondingly low levels of motivation to learn.

All in all, the strong emphasis on *personal constructs* underlying the beliefs of these students confirms the importance of the *existential competence* (or “*savoir-être*”), which, as we have already mentioned, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001) recognizes as a fundamental language user/learner's competence affecting communicative competence alongside with knowledge and skills. This also sounds as a reminder to teachers of the impact that *social* and *emotional* learning has on competence development (Payton, Weissberg, Durlak et al., 2008).

3. Language as Communication vs Language as a System.

Most students expressed a view of language as a tool for communication and a bridge to intercultural understanding (Byram, 1997; Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). Some were also aware of the potential of their developing intercultural communicative competence not only for personal purposes but also as a tool for intercultural mediation. In contrast, some students stressed the view of language as a system of sounds, lexis and grammar and a view of language learning as mastery of such a system. These two contrasting conceptions of language have emerged in other studies (e.g., Kolb, 2007).

4. Relationship Between L1 and L2.

Especially in the early grades, some students tended to equate the knowledge of the L2 with the knowledge of their mother tongue. Their reference seems to be the native speaker, with little or no consideration for possibly different levels of proficiency in different languages or in different skills within the same language, or for the relevant amounts of time and effort required. At the same time, many students (and not just in the early grades) seem to believe that learning a language implies starting from a “zero” level and taking once again the same cognitive and affective route they covered to learn their L1. In other words, there seems to be

no clear perception of the difference between “natural” L1 acquisition and L2 “school” learning, with no role assigned to the contribution that prior knowledge and previous experiences of language learning (including their L1) can make to the development of L2 proficiency. This can pose significant problems to teachers wishing to make students capitalize on the knowledge gained in their previous language learning experiences, at a time when research is proving that acquiring more than two language systems leads to the development of new skills like learning to learn, thus facilitating further language learning (Herdina & Jessner, 2002). Research has also shown that linguistic awareness is both a feature and a powerful aid in multilinguals (Jessner, 2006), so that tertiary language learning (e.g., German after English) can greatly benefit the cause of plurilingualism (Hufeisen & Neuner, 2004).

5. Analogies With Other Learning Experiences.

Different kinds of complex skills were mentioned as a metaphor of language learning (e.g., sports, playing music, driving a car, cooking). Especially interesting is the awareness that language competence does not imply only knowledge (of a system), but also the ability to “orchestrate” that knowledge in terms of communicative skills. Students also stress the importance of mastering the procedure, the “formulae”, the “rules”: in other words, they seem to be aware that complex skills cannot be acquired by lower-level reasoning (e.g., mechanical repetition, rote memorization) but demand higher cognitive operations (i.e., active mental processing). In contrast with this view, which stresses the specificity of language learning, some students, particularly in the early grades, expressed a sort of “generic” view, i.e., a conception of language learning as the study of any other school subject. This view was sometimes tempered by a recognition that learning a language can be different because it can be more useful and/or more enjoyable, as well as requiring more commitment and concentration.

Teachers’ Feedback

As already mentioned, the results of the survey will also be used to draw “profiles” of the beliefs and attitudes held by particular classes. Teachers will then discuss the implications of such class profiles as the first step in feeding the data back to their students to stimulate reflection and discussion in class. Further elaboration of the metaphors by the students will include reasons for choosing a particular metaphor, their intent in using it, and comparing the different meanings that the same metaphor carries for individual students. Also, I will invite teachers to compare the data emerging from the metaphors both with their own knowledge of the classes (often derived from classroom observation), and with the further elaboration and clarification of the metaphors by the students themselves, thus improving data validation through a process of triangulation (Burns, 1999; Murphey & Falout, 2010). Teachers have already suggested possible ways to feed back the data to their classes, e.g.,

- handing out a synthesis or posting it on the school’s web site or blog platform;
- leading a whole-class discussion;
- asking groups of students to discuss the data and report and compare their findings in a plenary session;
- leading group interviews or focus groups on specific issues as emerged from the data;
- discussing the teaching/learning implications: this can take the form of ideas and suggestions leading to possible changes in objectives, methodologies, tasks, activities, materials, and assessment procedures.

Some teachers' early comments on the results of feedback to the students are reported as examples of the kind of data that will hopefully emerge from the second stage of this survey:

1. "Since my students are studying different languages, and are therefore exposed to different teaching methods, I would be interested in checking whether their beliefs change according to each language. This does not emerge from their general metaphors."
2. "I think that I need to stress the metacognitive component in my teaching, to make students aware, for example, of how the knowledge of an L2 can be helpful in learning an L3."
3. "The data from my class clearly point to a rather confused idea of what it means to learn a language at a certain level of competence. Students need to have clear, shared objectives right from the start."
4. "A student in my class argued that discussing what students think about learning methods is somehow irrelevant because there is just "one" method ..."
5. "One of my students found the discussion about ways of learning a foreign language a bit useless, since she thinks that at high school all this should be considered as a prerequisite for students coming from middle schools."
6. "I have a feeling that there is a sort of a gap between my beliefs and my students." A considerable number of students said that they start "from scratch" when they first engage in learning a foreign language. I always try to build their skills taking into account what they already know and can do, but that doesn't seem to be perceived by students."

Limitations of the Present Study and Implications for Further Research

The sample of students involved in this survey attend academically-oriented high schools, where foreign languages represent a valued and consistent part of the curriculum, and where language learning plays a major role and has therefore high status. This may in part explain the emerging generally positive beliefs and attitudes, which cannot be expected and indeed were not found in other parts of this research project (which were targeted at vocational schools). More generally, this can point to the need to link students' data with the specific features of each context, taking into account, e.g., different school environments or different languages studied as part of the curriculum.

Other useful projects could involve gathering data from the *same* students at different times of their "learning career," to evaluate the development of beliefs and attitudes over time, or focusing more specifically on single skills/communicative activities like reading or writing, or on particular aspects of competence (e.g., grammar, lexis). It would also be useful to explore correlations between beliefs/attitudes and other factors like age, gender, school grades, and levels of proficiency.

As metaphors are rich, vivid images of the underlying beliefs and attitudes, their ambiguity is at the same time their value and their limitation. As a result, they often need to be disambiguated by asking students to elaborate on what they really meant when using a certain metaphor, thus providing "narrative" clues to the students' intent and scope. This process would best be developed in close sequence, with teachers asking for and providing feedback within a reasonable time sequence. This may require considerable time and energy resources (teachers' busy time schedules and the frequent teacher turnover typical of Italian schools have resulted in serious constraints in the actual implementation of the present survey).

Another interesting development of this survey would be to ask *teachers* to provide *their own* metaphors, which would add a further dimension to the variables involved. A prelim-

inary study of such teachers–students comparisons (Mariani, 2013) has yielded intriguing results and would provide a more balanced view of the “classroom culture” where different, and sometimes conflicting, beliefs and attitudes coexist and where dynamic relationships are continually evolving.

As a general concluding remark, probing the “hidden curriculum” means providing a space (both physical and psychological) for people to share their perceptions, become aware of the real forces that are at work in classroom learning, and perhaps start mediating and negotiating—a way to work towards students’ and teachers’ awareness and autonomy.

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Review Process

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Integrating Metacognitive Knowledge for Planning in Self-Directed Language Learning

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This paper focuses on planning by self-directed learners. The process of self-directed learning such as planning is called metacognitive activities in which judgment and decision-making in the process are supported by metacognitive knowledge. In this study I specifically focus on metacognitive knowledge and investigate how learners developed and integrated it for planning through classroom instruction, with an assumption that if learners apply multiple types of metacognitive knowledge, they can make more effective learning plans. Qualitatively analyzing the class reflections and learning plans written by two university students who took a course titled Self-Directed Learning, I found that development and integration of metacognitive knowledge can be promoted by intervention in class. However, the two students sometimes failed to integrate and act on their metacognitive knowledge, while at other times they successfully did this without teacher intervention.

本研究では、自律学習者のプランニングに焦点を当てる。プランニングなどの自律学習のプロセスはメタ認知的活動と呼ばれ、そこでの判断や意思決定を支えるのはメタ認知的知識である。本研究では、特にそのメタ認知的知識に着目し、学習者がよりよい学習計画を立てるには多様なメタ認知的知識を組み合わせて活用する方がよいとの仮定に基づき、クラスでの指導を通して、学習者がどのようにメタ認知的知識を発達・統合させていったかを調査した。調査対象は、大学1年生対象の必修授業「Self-Directed Learning (自律学習)」の履修学生2名が作成した授業リフレクションと学習計画である。それらを質的に分析した結果、授業での介入によるメタ認知的知識の発達や統合は確認されたものの、重要であるはずのメタ認知的知識が適用されなかったり、介入とは無関係にメタ認知的知識が向上し活用された場合もあった。

Keywords

self-directed learning, planning, metacognition, metacognitive knowledge, learner development

キーワード

自律学習、プランニング、メタ認知、メタ認知的知識、学習者の成長

As a language learning advisor and English instructor, I have seen many language learners struggling to find effective learning strategies or failing to make learning plans that truly fit their own goals and needs. Some learners make a start to learning but are always unsure if they are on the right track. Other learners select strategies without knowing what effects they can expect from those strategies. I began the current study assuming that such learners could become more effective self-directed learners if they knew more about themselves and could connect various aspects of that knowledge in planning their language learning. I have been interested in metacognition for a long time as a teacher and learning advisor and as a researcher. In my practices as a teacher, I have wanted to help my students learn better even out of class by raising their metacognitive awareness about their own learning. As a learning advisor, I encourage learners to reflect, listen to their stories, and make suggestions by synthesizing their descriptions of their learning activities with the knowledge I have about them as learners, applying, as best I can, a metacognitive perspective on second language learning. As a researcher, I have explored questions such as how metacognition helps learners manage learning, how we can enhance learners' metacognition, and how metacognition works in the minds of successful learners. In this study, I try to bring these perspectives together by looking in particular at how learners use metacognitive-knowledge in planning for their self-directed learning.

Metacognition involves visualization of one's cognition and is thought to be necessary for self-directed learning. Metacognition consists of two dimensions, *metacognitive knowledge* and *metacognitive activities*, where metacognitive knowledge is defined as forming the basis for metacognitive activity. Although there are a number of research studies on both metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive activities as well as metacognition for self-regulation, only a few have explored the relationship between metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive activities in any depth. In particular, little attention has been paid to how multiple types of metacognitive knowledge are connected and integrated in learners' minds and how learners apply these to planning, which is a fundamental part of metacognitive activities. This study, therefore, focuses on this dimension and explores how individual learners applied and connected their metacognitive knowledge as they put together and developed their learning plans. The learners in this study were given explicit instruction in language learning strategies, so I not only consider in what ways the learners' plans changed over time, but I also explore how effective such language learning strategy instruction was in helping learners to visualize the development of their learning.

The paper presents a case study examining outcomes written by students in the Self-Directed Learning course at a Japanese private university. The course aims at fostering life-long self-directed English learners and lasts one semester, with students meeting once a week for 90 minutes. As the instructor of the course, I regularly gave lectures and presented activities in class to raise students' metacognitive knowledge and encourage them to integrate their awareness into their practices as learners. Specifically, I wanted to see whether the students were able to connect their metacognitive knowledge to their planning and goal-setting practices in ways that better fit their needs as a result of the instruction provided. In order to look closely at these issues, I qualitatively analyze the class reflections and learning plans written by two students.

Literature Review

Metacognitive Knowledge and Metacognitive Activities

It is widely recognized that metacognition plays an important role in self-directed learning. Metacognition consists of two dimensions: metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive activities. Metacognitive knowledge includes the self-concepts that learners have about themselves, their learning strategies and learning tasks, while metacognitive activities refer to metacognitive learning process consisting of planning, monitoring and evaluation phases. Metacognitive knowledge is generally described as a prerequisite for metacognitive activities, in which learners plan, monitor and evaluate their learning based on their metacognitive knowledge (e.g., Anderson, 2012; Flavell, 1979; Pitrich, 2002).

Although metacognitive activities are variously described as metacognitive experiences (Flavell, 1979), metacognitive strategies (Wenden, 1998), and metacognitive skills (Veenman, 2006), I have chosen to use the phrase "metacognitive activities" as introduced by Sannomiyaya (2008), considering it the most useful descriptor, inclusive of experiences, strategies, and skills.

Types and Features of Metacognitive Knowledge

The best-known categorization of metacognitive knowledge is *person*, *task*, and *strategy* proposed by Flavell (1989). Several researchers have elaborated this concept by presenting various aspects that these three types comprise. "Person," for instance, includes knowledge about universal human traits, knowledge of the self, where self-knowledge includes individual fea-

tures such as one's age, preferences, strengths and weaknesses, breadth and depth of one's knowledge, as well as the cognitive and affective dimensions of significant others and communities surrounding the self. "Task knowledge" includes knowledge of task purpose, task demands, familiarity or unfamiliarity, well or poorly organized and so forth (Flavell, 1989; Pintrich, 2002; Wenden, 1998). Since most of the research studies on metacognitive activities were conducted in contexts of in-class activities or at formal education, task usually refers to assignments given by a teacher and learning strategies discussed there generally mean how students learn or complete the given assignments effectively and efficiently (Zimmerman, 2002). In self-directed learning settings, however, learners need to choose their own tasks independently. They determine their needs, set goals, and consider how to attain their goals, redefining those tasks as fulfilling the aims of and for self-directed learners. In other words, task in self-directed learning is interchangeable with a goal in self-directed learning (Anderson, 2012), and it can be conceived of as a big picture framework or smaller short-term step. Task, as a concept, also includes decisions learners may make when they need to work on deliberate learning practices necessary to achieving their goal (Wenden, 1998). "Strategy" includes general strategies for learning and thinking as well as concrete detailed step-by-step strategies (Pintrich, 2002). Although Oxford (2011) claimed that those three strategies would provide insufficient information, and presented six types instead, including person, group or culture, task, whole-process, strategy, and conditional knowledge (pp. 19-21), all of these could be included in the three types of metacognitive knowledge as described by Flavell above.

None of these aspects of metacognitive knowledge, however, is absolute. Rather they are self-concepts that learners conceive through their own perceptions. Therefore, understandings of their metacognitive knowledge might be correct or incorrect (Flavell, 1979; Pintrich, 2002; Veenman et.al, 2006) as Anderson (2012) argued that self-assessment could be superficial or hyper-critical in contrast to healthy, appropriate self-assessment. In addition, learners may experience varying degrees of stability in metacognitive knowledge; some types of metacognitive knowledge may be retained as a stable, core element in the learner's sense of self, interchangeable with belief, according to Wenden (1998), while others are more prone to fluctuate as dynamic or peripheral elements (Mercer, 2012).

Integration of Metacognitive Knowledge

As seen above, metacognitive knowledge has a variety of aspects, and it is generally agreed that self-directed learners must connect multiple pieces of their metacognitive knowledge and apply the combined view to create effective learning plans appropriate to their own situations (Flavell, 1979). For example, let us imagine a university student who wants to study abroad as an undergraduate in order to realize their dream of working in international business after graduation. In order for them to actually start their learning, they need to know what skills are required for their goals (task knowledge), their current weak points (person knowledge), and what learning strategies might be effective and available for their learning (strategy knowledge). In addition, they also need to know when and where they should use the learning strategies (conditional components of strategy knowledge) and what affective strategy is effective for them to sustain motivation (affective dimension of person knowledge). As such, if learners can connect multiple aspects of metacognitive knowledge, it could lead to more effective self-directed learning. Although the integration of metacognitive knowledge is thought to play an important role in self-directed learning, much of the research regarding relations between metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive activities focuses on adopting a single piece of metacognitive knowledge to modify a learning strategy as seen in the cyclical process defined as *self-oriented feedback loop* by Zimmerman in 1990.

Some researchers call this view meta-metacognition, as it is an overview of metacognition from one level higher, and state that for students to acquire this point of view entails the support of experts such as advisors or instructors (e.g., Sannomiya, 2008). In the course I am teaching, I have attempted to address these concerns by helping learners develop advanced metacognitive skills through explicit intervention in the context of classroom instruction. Although I have sometimes feel that learners' self-assessment routines are superficial, or that their understanding of their own metacognitive knowledge may be inaccurate in some ways, I believe it is essential that learners be encouraged to integrate the knowledge they have with their planning efforts in order to maximize the effectiveness of their learning plans.

Thus, my research is based on the following two assumptions: integration of multiple pieces of metacognitive knowledge leads to better planning, and integration of metacognitive knowledge can be promoted by explicit educational intervention. Therefore, the research questions of this study are as follows:

1. Was integration of metacognitive knowledge promoted by explicit intervention in the context of this study?
2. If yes, did it lead to better planning?

Method

I conducted this research in a required English course for first-year students titled Self-Directed Learning at a private university in Japan. The course aimed at helping students become more independent English learners by guiding the development of better self-directed learning skills. It was held for one semester from April to July in 2016 with a 90-minute class per week through 14 weeks. I was the instructor of the course and taught two groups of students, one consisting of 24 students (10 male, 14 female) and the other 23 (9 male, 14 female), through the semester, applying the same syllabus and instructions to the two groups.

The students were provided with many opportunities in class to raise their metacognitive knowledge on various aspects of themselves and their English learning. In-class activities included lecture-style input, demonstrations and experiences of learning strategies and resources, worksheets for self-assessments and reflections, and pair or group sharing and discussions. After each class, they were assigned to write a class reflection for submission on an online learning management system, Moodle, with a deadline of two days after each class. The reason for setting the deadlines at this interval was to have them review their learning in class while they still remembered it and give them enough time for deep reflections. It was also explained that a class reflection should not be only a summary or simple review of the class but they should connect what they learned in class to their own personal learning preferences and experiences outside of class.

In addition, activities to enhance integration of the students' metacognitive knowledge were explicitly presented three times during the semester. The first intervention was in Class 6, after the students had explored strategies for learning vocabulary and the four language skills in Class 2 to Class 6. It consisted of a worksheet aiming at leading the students to review their own awareness in the past classes, consider an order of priority, and make a learning plan for the next week (see Appendix A), which was followed by a group sharing and discussion in class. The second intervention was attempted in Class 8, when the students were assigned to design a one-month learning plan after contemplating their goals in Class 7. They were given a worksheet (see Appendix B) to integrate their awareness raised in the past classes including metacognitive knowledge about themselves as an English learner (Class 1), English learning strategies (Class 2 to 6) and their goals (Class 7), after which they shared what

they had written in groups. The third intervention was given in Class 13, when they designed a learning plan for the two-month summer holiday, having considered time management in Class 10 and motivational strategies in Class 11. The worksheet provided to the students in Class 13 included goal-setting (Class 7), learning strategies (Class 2 to 6), self-motivational strategies (Class 11) and time management (Class 10) (see Appendix C), and was followed by a group discussion in the same way as in Class 6 and 8. Table 1 gives an overview of the topics and interventions in the course.

Table 1. Overview of the Course

Class	Topic	Class Reflections (CR) and Learning Plans (LP)	Explicit Intervention for Integration
1	“My English Learning History”	CR1	
2	Learning Strategies: Vocabulary	CR2	
3	Learning Strategies: Reading	CR3	
4	Learning Strategies: Listening	CR4	
5	Learning Strategies: Speaking	CR5	
6	Learning Strategies: Writing	CR6	✓
	Integrating Learning Strategies	LP1 (for 1 week)	
7	Goal setting	CR7	
8	Designing Learning Plan 2	LP2 (for 1 month)	✓
9	Sharing Learning Plan 2	n/a	
10	Time Management	CR10	
11	Sustaining Motivation	CR11	
12	Sharing Results of Learning Plan 2	n/a	
13	Designing Learning Plan 3	LP3 (for 2-month holiday)	✓
14	Sharing Learning Plan 3	n/a	

I provided the worksheets but did not collect them so that the students could review them when they wrote their class reflections and complete learning plans after class. However, they submitted their class reflections and learning plans on Moodle, which automatically made it possible for each student to save their submissions in one place and review them easily at any later time. In other words, the learning management system functioned as a portfolio for individual students through the semester, which could promote integration of their metacognitive knowledge as well (Reynolds & Patton, 2014; Yang, 2003). In contrast to the formatted worksheets used during class activities, I set neither rules nor forms for online class reflections and learning plans so that the students could present them as they liked.

In-class activities and out-of-class assignments were all conducted in English because the course was a part of the English curriculum at the university and instruction was supposed to be provided through the medium of English. Since the first language of all the students was Japanese, it is possible that using their second language placed an extra load on their thoughts and expressions.

Analysis

I chose one student from each group as a research subject based on the following criteria: (a) they attended all the class meetings, (b) they submitted all the course work, and (c) they wrote the largest number of words in total in their class reflections and learning plans. Because I did not provide any direction for either word limit or minimum word requirement, they could be among the layer of the students who worked through the course more seriously in the groups.

I submitted three learning plans (LP1, 2 and 3) and nine reflections (CR1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 11) written by the respective two students to qualitative analysis, which I conducted in two cycles. In the first cycle, I focused on identifying metacognitive knowledge in their writings, and in the second cycle, I looked at how they had integrated metacognitive knowledge into their learning plans and reflections.

In the following sections I analyze and discuss the learning plans and reflections of two students who participated in the course: Mari, a female student, from group 1, and Dai, a male student, from group 2. Both Mari and Dai are pseudonyms.

Results

Case 1: Mari

In the process of preparing her first learning plan (LP1), Mari wrote in her first reflection (CR1) that she did not “know clearly the way of studying English.” She therefore decided to try a variety of learning resources and strategies during CR2 through CR6. These included vocabulary learning with a textbook and dictionary, reading graded readers, reading news articles, listening to songs, watching news on TV, watching YouTube, shadowing practice with TED talks, self-talk for speaking practice, message exchange on LINE, and keeping a diary in English. In LP1 following these explorations, she made a weekly plan including: (a) listening to English songs, (b) using a smartphone application for vocabulary learning, and (c) reading and listening to online news articles. For the strategies she selected in LP1, she explained that she chose songs as a resource because she liked listening to music, and news articles because it was less time-consuming than reading books, which she had tried, but could not keep up on account of her tight schedule. In other words, Mari connected her metacognitive knowledge about her preferences and life style (person knowledge) to the resources and strategies (strategy knowledge) she selected in LP1.

In LP2 in Class 8, two weeks after making LP1, Mari attempted to apply the strategies for goal-setting covered in Class 7, in which the students considered the big goals in their lives and learned how to break them down into smaller goals. Mari described her big goal as “to communicate with a lot of people around the world more fluently”, and continued, “I like travel abroad and I want to communicate with them more comfortably” in CR7, which is similar to the description seen in CR1. Reflecting on her English learning experience, she wrote in CR1:

Today, I remembered my language history for the first time...I found I have been to a lot of countries, because my parents love to travel around the world. And I realize this experiences made me feel “I want to be the fluent speaker of English!”

To achieve her goal, Mari analyzed her current skills and explained that she would improve her speaking skill by increasing vocabulary and practicing listening and pronunciation. In LP2, therefore, she selected: (a) listening to English songs during her bath time; (b) using a smartphone application for vocabulary learning in her spare moments; (c) listening to on-

line news articles; and, (d) using English on LINE to practice daily phrases. These practice activities were quite similar to those listed in LP1, but she confirmed that they also matched her goals. One point to note here is that she connected learning strategies with the idea of utilizing spare moments in her schedule as clearly mentioned in (a) and (b). In other words, while Mari attempted to integrate several pieces of her metacognitive knowledge in her planning in accordance with the topics and contents presented in class, she also connected person and strategy aspects of her metacognitive knowledge on her own and applied the combination to her planning. This concept formed the foundation for a more stable metacognitive self-knowledge and was used as the basis for her later planning efforts.

LP3 in Class 13 was created after exploring time management in Class 10 and motivation in Class 11. Mari included six learning resources in this plan, which was much more than the previous plans. However, this may be related to the fact that the plan was for a two-month summer holiday, a longer period of time than covered in her previous learning plans. The resources selected here included applications and websites for vocabulary, speaking, listening and reading practice, all of which could be done in a short time, for as she put it, "I may feel very hot and tired every day [because of club activities]. So I must study English in my spare time, as well as my usual school days." Since there is no mention of either her goals or motivation dealt with in Class 11, it is difficult to infer if she seriously considered them in spite of having applied the concept of goal setting in LP2 and having written about the motivational strategies she wanted to use in CR11.

Case 2: Dai

Dai made a weekly plan selecting two learning strategies in LP1, after the first explicit instruction for integration. One was watching news, presentations and movies, which he had selected in CR4, and the other was intensive reading, which he had selected in CR3. In addition, he observed, "I could notice which self-directed learning was appropriate for me ... I could find my weakness points through learning." However, he had already claimed, "I want to improve my grammar skills and increase my vocabulary," in CR1. Looking back on his CR1 more closely, he explained that he was not confident about using English even though he was educated at an international school and wrote "mistakes will lose a person's confidence such as grammatically mistakes and spelling mistakes. Therefore, I would like to remember more vocabulary, and improve my grammar skills." Taking his reflections into account, it could be said that his awareness of his weak points, and his belief in the importance of correct grammar and vocabulary use, do not provide evidence of new metacognitive knowledge raised by the course instruction. Instead, they show a confirmation of his original beliefs about his language learning goals and practices, though perhaps articulated in a more metacognitive way as a result of the course activities. The point to note here is the reasons Dai chose the learning strategies mentioned above. He explained that he would read scripts when watching videos to make sure his comprehension was correct in CR4, and would do intensive reading for learning new vocabulary and writing styles in CR3. In other words, he connected these pieces of new metacognitive knowledge about learning strategies to the beliefs he held since the beginning of the course.

LP2 was made in Class 8, one week after he went through goal setting in Class 7. In CR7, Dai set a goal of obtaining a high score in TOEFL®iBT and claimed, "it needs an enormous amount of vocabulary and a lot of practice in reading, listening, speaking and writing to do." In LP2, therefore, he selected learning strategies and resources for each language skill, particularly the ones that he had tried before such as listening speeches with scripts (CR4), intensive reading (CR3), and vocabulary applications (CR2) with addition of writing practice

by imitating model essays or articles. We can see here that he integrated his metacognitive knowledge about his goal (task knowledge) from CR7, learning strategies (strategy knowledge) from CR2, 3 and 4 and himself (person knowledge) from CR1 or earlier.

The contents of LP2 were maintained into LP3 as well. Since his goal was unchanged, he decided that he should continue the same learning strategies during the summer holiday too. However, contradictorily, he confessed in LP3 that he had not actually been able to carry out his LP2 in the past month. He said, “I think I could not control myself well and the time management was bad. However, I don’t want to quit this plan.” What is interesting here is that although he stressed the importance of self-control and time management in his reflections, he did not apply strategies that would help him strengthen these practices, even though those topics were dealt with in Class 10 and 11, in between LP2 and LP3. This means that his integration occurred in his choice of goal-setting and language learning strategies but not with strategies to control his motivation and time management even though all of them were covered in class in similar ways. Also, it would be worth noting that in the latter part of LP3, he added, “I need to achieve this goal by some useful grammar and vocabulary books because I need to improve these skills especially.” One interpretation of this is that his core metacognitive knowledge, or belief, seen in CR1 remained constant until the end of the course.

Discussion

I would like to return here to the research questions introduced at the beginning of the chapter:

1. Was integration of metacognitive knowledge promoted by explicit intervention in the context of this study?
2. If yes, did it lead to better planning?

The answer is both yes and no. Although integration of some types of metacognitive knowledge was observed in both cases, there were also several types of metacognitive knowledge that were not applied to the learning plans.

Mari connected her metacognitive knowledge of her learning preferences as explored in her first Class Reflection (CR1) through CR6 in her first Learning Plan (LP1), in those listed in CR1 through CR7 in LP2, and from those listed in CR1 through CR6 and CR10 in LP3. This linking suggests that we may consider the intervention to have promoted these integrations. However, as also noted, CR7 was not used in LP3 even though the concept was once applied in LP2. Although it is possible that learners do not utilize a certain metacognitive knowledge intentionally if they consider it is unnecessary or irrelevant, CR7 focused on goal setting, one of the most important factors in planning. In other words, in spite of the fact that goal setting constitutes a fundamental kind of metacognitive knowledge, and should logically be integrated in learning plans, integration was not induced for LP3 in spite of the intervention.

Dai connected his metacognitive knowledge observations from CR1 through CR6 in LP1, and from CR1 through CR7 in his LP2 and LP3. This linking could also be considered evidence of the intervention as having promoted the integrations. However, CR10 and CR11 observations were not applied to the LP3, which he composed following those classes. His “confession,” reported in LP3, that he could not sustain his previous plans because of his poor time management and motivational strategies, which had been covered in Class 10 and 11, suggests that he recognized them as important elements in achieving his goals. Therefore, he should have integrated these concepts into his LP3 for better planning.

Another issue recognized in both cases was that some integration took place even with-

out intervention. In Case 1, Mari had begun the practice of integrating time management and skill-based learning strategies, before the concept of time management was explicitly covered in the course itself. In Dai's case, the integration of his metacognitive knowledge about himself with language use with skill-based learning strategies started before any explicit intervention for integration was presented in class. The learners' metacognitive knowledge in both cases was stable enough to be sustained throughout the semester, and was consistently connected to newly developed metacognitive knowledge even without external intervention.

To bring things together, the analysis of the two cases suggests that integration of metacognitive knowledge can be promoted by explicit intervention. However, it does not mean that intervention can always induce integration, and sometimes fails even when the integration is considered important for the learner's development. At the same time, some integration may occur even without intervention; particularly when the metacognitive knowledge is a part of a stable belief-system for the learner.

Conclusion

I began the study assuming that the integration of multiple kinds of metacognitive knowledge is important for self-directed language learners to make more effective learning plans. To test this hypothesis, I examined the results of interventions designed to promote the integration of metacognitive knowledge by two students, Mari and Dai, enrolled in the Self-Directed Learning course. The results showed that although integration was promoted by the intervention, it did not occur in all cases. The learner reflections also showed that even though the integration of all aspects of metacognitive knowledge is not always necessary for better planning, there is room for improvement in future practices to enhance greater integration of metacognitive knowledge with goal setting and strategy adoption. Learning advisors or instructors must also consider the possibility that integration will sometimes not take place even when it is crucial to improve learning outcomes.

In order to encourage greater integration of metacognitive knowledge into students' learning plans, I am now evaluating several possible revisions to the course. These include:

1. Increasing the frequency of interventions;
2. Making integration practices more explicit on worksheets;
3. Developing new models in the design of learner portfolios;
4. Changing the order of the topics of instruction; and,
5. Including one-to-one short advisory sessions with individual students.

Although the challenges in developing advanced metacognitive skills, or meta-metacognitive awareness, especially through classroom instruction, must be acknowledged, I believe that it is still a goal worth pursuing so that I can support the development of skillful self-directed learning, not only in advisory sessions with individual learners but also through instruction for larger groups of students.

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Review Process

This paper was double-blind reviewed by members of the Review Network. (*Contributors have the option of open or blind review.*)

Author Bio

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Appendix A
Worksheet in Class 6
Review of Class 1 to 6

CL#	Topic	Reflection (Resources & strategies that worked for you)	Priority
2	Vocabulary		
3	Reading		
4	Listening		
5	Speaking		
6	Writing		



Integrate the ideas above and make a plan for this week

Appendix B**Worksheet in Class 8****SDL I Class 8 Designing Learning Plan 1****A My English Tree (Needs analysis)****B My big goal and small goals (related to English skills and learning)**

Big goal

--

Small goals

--

C My schedule

Weekly

Date	What to do

Appendix C

Worksheet in Class 13

SDL I Class 13 Designing Learning Plan 2

My Goal(s)

My English Tree (Needs analysis)

----- my current skill ----- my goal by the end of summer

Learning Resources & Strategies

Target skill(s) (e.g. listening, vocabulary)	Resources / Strategies	when, where, how long, how often	Goals (What to achieve by the end of summer)

My Self-Motivational Strategies (how to maintain motivation)

--

Daily

	Mon.	Tue.	Wed	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							
13:00							
14:00							
15:00							
16:00							
17:00							
18:00							
19:00							
20:00							
21:00							
22:00							
23:00							
24:00							
Total SDL time	min	min	min	min	min	min	min

Collaboratively Visualizing Possible Others

Yoshifumi Fukada, Meisei University

Tetsuya Fukuda, International Christian University

Joseph Falout, Nihon University

Tim Murphey, Kanda University of International Studies

In this collaborative, self-reflective research, we asked our students periodically over the course of one semester how they thought they could be helping each other learn English as a foreign language better, and what we teachers could do too for their learning. We think we ended up teaching better by seeing how we could collaborate better with our students, and in the process becoming better collaborators and learners ourselves. For the present study, we explain the socio-dynamic changes seeded by sharing each others' voices—students to each other, students to us teachers, and us teachers to each other. Data for this study were collected in our English communication oriented classes throughout one semester. First, surveys elicited students' responses to class activities and also their ways of participating in class. Then the students' responses were periodically looped back to them to reflect upon what they and their classmates were saying, and to add further data. Also, each of us four teachers kept a journal to reflect upon our own teaching and the students' classroom behaviors. These reflections were shared among the four of us, and sometimes parts were also shared with the students. Additionally, we shared voices in classroom discussions (for students and teachers) and research team discussions (for us teachers), which led us to co-construct affinity spaces for mutual learning and development. The findings are presented here in narrative form, with processes of the respective teacher-researcher's and their students' mutual transformation through the lessons and research described in detail.

内省を用いた協働の研究において、学生にある学期に渡って定期的に、どのようにすれば英語を外国語としてよりよく学ぶのを助け合えると思うか、また、教師の側も学生の学習を助けるには何をすればよいかを問うた。どのようにして学生と協働すればよいかを省察することにより、また我々自身がよりよい協働者そして学習者になる過程において、我々の教育も最終的に改善されたと考える。当研究に関しては、お互いの声を共有する（学生同士、学生から我々教師へ、我々教師同士）ことによって播種された、社会動学的変化を説明する。当研究のデータは、我々が担当した英語のコミュニケーションを重視したクラスで、一つの学期に渡って収集したものである。まず調査紙によって、授業の活動に対する学生の反応、およびどのように授業に参加しているかが明らかになった。次に学生の反応は定期的に学生自身に還元され、自分やクラスメートがどう答えたのかを省察し、さらにデータを収集した。また我々4名の教師もそれぞれが、自分自身の教育や学生の教室での行動を振り返るために、定期的な記述記録を保存した。これらの省察は我々4名の間で共有され、その一部は時に応じて学生とも共有された。それに加えて教室での議論の内容（学生と教師に向けて）や、研究グループでの議論（私たち教師に向けて）も共有し、我々が相互に学習や成長をするための親和空間を共同で構成することへとつながった。本稿では得られた知見を、それぞれの教師および研究者とその学生が相互に、詳細に記述される授業と研究を通して変容する過程を通して物語り形式で提示していく。

Keywords

ideal classmates, possible selves, affinity space, critical participatory looping, near peer role modelling

キーワード

理想的クラスメート像、可能性のある自己、親和空間、批判的参加循環、近似的ピア理想モデル

Yusuke and Aya were asked an interesting question by their teacher: "Please describe a group of classmates that you could learn English well with. What would you all do to help each other learn better and more enjoyably?" Aya said she wanted her classmates to speak more in English so she could learn more. Yusuke said he thought people should not laugh at other's mistakes. All the students' comments were collected and given back to the class in a handout. Both Aya and Yusuke saw their comments and were glad that others were reading them. But they were actually more moved by another classmate's comments a few weeks later when she was talking

about reading the whole class's comments. She said: "I could know what is an ideal person. Now I will try to be an ideal person. And I'll try to enjoy studying English, talk with my classmates in English more. I think that my motivation becomes high because of this survey." – (A recreated scenario of student interaction with a real student quote at the end.)

There are a variety of ways imagination can positively motivate language learners, which is particularly important for those who are struggling with the challenges inherent to language learning. Images of a possible self using the language well in the future can contribute to improving motivation (Murray, 2013). Focusing too much on the self, however, can actually foster a deterioration of positive psychological benefits (Robinson & Tamir, 2011). Placing at least some of the imaginative focus instead on others can bring a healthy, adaptive perspective in imagining, and therefore we have proposed imagining Ideal Classmates as one way of doing this (Murphey, Falout, Fukuda, & Fukuda, 2014). For the present study, we investigate the potential effects these imaginings might have on classroom interpersonal dynamics through exploratory action research (see Smith, 2015).

We will attempt to relate the shifting interrelationships and developing abilities of our students and us, the teacher-researchers, in visualizing how we all collaborate to learn and teach a second language (L2) together. We will also present some of the shifting perspectives between focus on self and others that are important to forming visualizations appropriate for inducing positive transformations in L2 learning.

With these goals in mind, we set the following research questions (RQs):

- RQ1: How do our students transform their class participation or engagement through their visualizations of Ideal Classmates?
- RQ2: How can we as teacher-researchers transform our ways of teaching our English classes in better ways through hearing and reflecting our students' voices in the present study?

Literature Review

Humans are cognitively adept (although not necessarily accurate) at predicting what might happen and how they might feel in the future to prepare themselves for avoiding adverse possibilities and attaining preferable possibilities (Gilbert & Wilson, 2007). Imagining a positive possible self that one would like to become can strongly influence the activation, continuation, and preservation of behaviors and strategies that lead to becoming that person (Markus & Nurius, 1986). This theory of motivated behavior, called possible selves theory, has inspired an influential theory in applied linguistics. It is called *the L2 motivational self system*, which posits that imagining a future self whose language abilities are superior to those of one's present self, can spur greater interest and commitment in the present toward achieving such goals (Dörnyei, 2009).

Qualitative and quantitative evidence from English classrooms in Japan (Fukada, Fukuda, Falout, & Murphey, 2011; Munezane, 2015; Nitta & Baba, 2015; Sampson 2012, 2016) and other countries (Chan, 2014; Mackay, 2014; Magid, 2014) has shown that envisioning positive future L2 selves can indeed engage individual student's positive psychological factors and self-reported efforts to learn a language. Much about these pedagogical treatments focused primarily on the self only, rather than directing some focus toward others as possible role models for the self.

Possible selves theory, however, emphasizes the primacy of social comparisons of self to others, because of the social influence that others have upon internalized values and self-be-

liefs. Also, images of one's positive and negative role models act as a means of creating and changing possible selves images (Markus & Nurius, 1986). It is important to focus on the self in pedagogical applications of possible selves theory, but not without forgetting to include relevant and necessary focus on others as models of ideal or possible selves. Results from one study (Lockwood & Kunda, 1999) caution that an over-focus on academic ideal selves can hinder the motivational development of learners because it prevents them from visualizing even better possible selves, as could be imagined if role models—the focus on others—were included in the visualization treatments. Focusing on negative role models informs people about what to avoid, and focusing on positive role models helps people to set their targets higher and work toward them (Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002). In sum, possible selves are drawn from the examples of others (Markus & Nurius, 1986), or what some researchers refer to as near peer role models (Murphey & Arao, 2001; Ogawa, 2012; Singh, 2010).

With the Ideal Classmates activities, we believe we are encouraging the self-regulatory powers of retrospection, propection, and theory of mind. In asking our students to imagine how others can help them to learn English effectively and enjoyably, we believe students are drawing upon their own experiences with past classmates (retrospection); imaging what might work for them in learning (propection); and then reacting to others in the classroom from a heightened sensitivity and realizing that what they are wanting from others, they themselves may not be doing and thus should be doing, a process we call reciprocal idealizing (Murphey et al., 2014). As we concluded after using Ideal Classmates activities and research in our classrooms (Murphey et al., 2014):

Findings suggest that pedagogical applications of possible selves theory would do well to include active participation of imaginings within a lived experience, proximal peers and environments, past and present self guides, and possible others. (p. 242)

In the present study, we explore how students as well as teachers can develop themselves as better language learners and teachers by visualizing possible others together.

Methodology

Research participants

There are two sets of research participants for the present study: students who are taking our English courses and we ourselves, their teachers.

The student participants were undergraduate students from private universities in the Kanto region of Japan, taking English communication courses taught by two of us authors, Yoshi and Tetsuya. Yoshi focused on one class ($n = 6$), while Tetsuya focused on four classes in two universities ($n = 173$). The students' subject majors and English levels were varied. The stated objectives and contents of the English courses were also different, but the common point was that the students were encouraged to communicate in English through various tasks or activities (e.g., conversations, games, speeches, discussions, and presentations).

The other participants in this study were the teacher-researchers, not only Yoshi and Tetsuya themselves, but the whole research team, which includes two others, Tim and Joe. For several years the four of us have been collaborating as a research team, conducting studies into our classrooms together, yet also conducting our classes and studies separately, to support both our collaborative and individual pedagogical and research endeavors (see Murphey, Falout, Fukada, & Fukuda, 2015). Although we conducted this Ideal Classmates study in all of our respective classes, due to limited space only Yoshi's and Tetsuya's cases will be presented in this paper.

Research techniques

We utilized three types of research techniques: (a) surveys, (b) Critical Participatory Looping (CPL; Murphey & Falout, 2010), and (c) teaching journals.

In the beginning of the semester we used surveys to ask two open-ended questions: first, the Ideal Classmates prompt (Q19), “Please describe a group of classmates that you could learn English well with. What would you all do to help each other learn better and more enjoyably?” and second, the Ideal Teacher prompt (Q20), “Please describe how you think your teachers can best help you develop your English skills or English learning skills. What exactly would they do to support you and help you learn effectively and enjoyably?”

In the middle of the semester, we asked a My Classmates prompt to encourage continuing visualizations of potential Ideal Classmates behaviors both quantitatively (Qs 1–6) (1 = Not at all; 6 = Yes, very much) and qualitatively (Q7):

- (Q1) My classmates are helping me to learn English.
- (Q2) I am helping my classmates to learn English.
- (Q3) My classmates are helping me to enjoy English.
- (Q4) I am helping my classmates to enjoy English.
- (Q5) I am learning English better by myself than with my classmates.
- (Q6) I am enjoying English better by myself than with my classmates.
- (Q7) In what new ways are your classmates helping you to learn and enjoy English in the last few weeks?

Lastly, at the end of the semester, Tetsuya used an extra prompt to promote his students’ further reflection of their classmates’ interpersonal behaviors during the semester: (Q22) When did you think your classmates were good classmates?

Critical Participatory Looping (CPL) is a process that involves collecting open-ended responses or quantitative data from the students, compiling it all together, and showing the responses in full, and anonymously, to the whole class. Sometimes these responses are also shown across different classrooms. For the present Ideal Classmates study, we mostly looped back students’ responses by printing them out and distributing them on paper. There are additional ways of looping. For example, in Joe’s classes, weeks after the paper copies were distributed, students’ compiled responses were projected onto a large classroom screen, and students took pictures of their looped ideas with smartphones. Tim, on the other hand, selected certain responses from students to include in classroom newsletters.

For the present study, each teacher-researcher wrote in his own respective teaching journal about the use of Ideal Classmates in his classes and how the students were responding to each other. We shared our reflections in a private online forum open only to our research team. We occasionally read each other’s reflections and wrote comments right into each other’s journals.

The social spaces in which we engaged ourselves in the present study can be perceived as affinity spaces (Gee, 2004), a kind of social space for situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Situated learning is a type of learning through engagement in social practice or interaction with others of different backgrounds but who share common goals. *Affinity space* can be understood as “a place or set of places where people can affiliate with others based primarily on shared activities, interests, and goals, not shared race, class, culture, ethnicity, or gender” (p. 73). While the four of us have somewhat different national, cultural, and historical back-

grounds, our bonding as well as friendships were strengthened through the engagement of this collaborative study.

Presenting findings in a narrative form

We arrived at our findings, which we present here in a narrative form, by our collaborative reflection upon data triangulation: students' comments collected in different types of surveys, the writings of our journals, and students' comments or voices collected in the classroom. The narrative approach has been widely adopted in the field of TESOL (Barkhuizen, 2011; Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014) because it enables vivid descriptions of "language teaching and learning as lived experiences" (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014, p. 12). In the following section of the paper, we share two narratives based on Yoshi's and Tetsuya's classroom experiences as teacher-researchers, both of which were constructed by focusing on different class activities and students' responses—and both use first person singular perspectives, i.e., "I."

Findings

Recreated Narrative of Yoshi's Class

The goal of my [Yoshi's] English class was "to become able to complete different types of tasks in the medium of their target language (TL), English," and each of the lessons was structured as follows:

- 1. Warm-up (15 min.):**
 - Short English speech / conversation
- 2. Main activity (65 min.):**
 - Performing speeches for invitation of Tokyo Olympics / Discussion / Presentation
- 3. Reflection sheet (10 min.)**

After the 15-minute English warm-up for each class, the main activities included: performing English speeches as invitations to the Tokyo Olympic games; group discussions on a variety of topics (e.g., developing a special lunch menu for male students at a university; redesigning a lounge adjacent to the university's library; developing a travel plan for a group of international students studying in Japan); and group presentations of travel plans that students developed.

My 2016 English class was quite small, with 12 students in the first lesson and in the following lesson, there were only 6 students (Yoshi's journal, first and second lessons, April 11 and 18, 2016). I was a little bit disappointed but I realized later on that the small class size facilitated my ability to observe each of the students' performances, and I could also attend in more detail to their voices shared during activities in the classroom as well as from their reflection sheets and the surveys.

I used survey prompts to conduct one activity for Ideal Classmates (Q19. *Please describe a group of classmates that you could learn English well with. What would you all do to help each other learn better and more enjoyably?*) and another for Ideal Teacher (Q20. *Please describe how you think your teachers can best help you develop your English skills or English learning skills. What exactly would they do to support you and help you learn effectively and enjoyably?*). Below are descriptions from my journal:

I asked my students to respond to the Ideal Classmates and Ideal Teacher prompts on large drawing papers and to share their responses with the whole class. This means that in addition to conducting classroom activities and imagination-based interventions, I was able to collect the data and loop it back to the students at the same time. I decided to try the activity during the lesson, because prior to it only 2 students out of the 6 answered the survey in their free time at home [I confirmed before conducting the activity their willingness of answering the survey questions. They mentioned that they did not answer the online survey just because they rarely check e-mails, including my e-mail notification for the online survey.] From their responses, the students shared images of their Ideal Classmates as follows (names are pseudonyms and all students' quotes are translated except where noted.):

- Actively speak English (Naoki)
 - Actively speak English, without being afraid of making mistakes (Hideki)
 - Actively speak to promote mutual communication (Ken)
 - Attend to other students' talk / communicate in English (Kanao)
 - Have clear goals (Kenji)
 - Have about the same level of English skills (Yuta)
- (Yoshi's journal, third lesson, April 25, 2016)

Their Ideal Classmates were found to be active students with compassion and clear goals. These all corresponded to characteristics included in the 16 descriptors of Ideal Classmates derived from the responses of 449 students taking our English communication courses previously (Murphey et al., 2014), such as: (3) *Show passion and enthusiasm in learning English: get excited and don't give up*, and (10) *Interact with classmates who have similar English abilities, and can be near peer role models*.

Their Ideal Teacher images, on the other hand, were as follows:

- Talk in English (Kanao)
 - Speak English confidently (Ken)
 - Keep the ball rolling in conversations with students (Naoki)
 - Provide Students with many opportunities for English communication in class, and speak in English here and there (Hideki)
 - Present ways to learn English (Yuki)
 - Suggest ways to use English skills for strengthening motivation to learn (Kenji)
- (Yoshi's journal, third lesson, April 25, 2016)

Hearing the students' Ideal Teacher images shared in the classroom, I found that they expect English teachers to speak actively and with confidence, and promote students' conversations, and suggest to them how to improve and to utilize their TL skills.

Inconsistent with their Ideal Classmates images, students were quiet and passive in 30-second short English speeches offered as warm-up in the beginning of the semester, although they were relatively active in the following main activity (Yoshi's journal, first lesson, April 11, 2016; Yoshi's journal second lesson, April 18, 2016). However, reading their comments written in the reflection sheets, I realized that being quiet and passive does not necessarily mean that

the students had no English-learning motivation:

... I felt that small talk [Q&A following a short English speech] is really important. I would like to ask more questions in English spontaneously. (Kanako, April 18, 2016)

I tried continuing the conversation [during Q&A following a short English speech] by actively asking questions in English. (Yuta, April 18, 2016)

Both Kanako and Yuta showed their willingness of asking more questions during the Q&A following the other students' speeches, although their attempts were not taken up by the other students. The other students themselves commented about this in their reflection sheets, giving reasons why they became so passive during the Q&A.

... I sometimes forget how I should ask questions [during Q&A after the other students made a short speech] ... (Kenji, April 18, 2016)

I become nervous during the speech, feeling strange that Japanese students were communicating in English. (Naoki, April 18, 2016)

While Kenji did not know how he could ask questions in English to the other students about their speeches, for Naoki, his nervousness came from speaking English in front of other Japanese students and it prevented him from making his speech self-assertively. My research teammate, Tetsuya, posted a comment later in my journal after reading the above and other students' comments:

I understand all the comments made by Yoshi's students. They feel awkward in having English conversations among Japanese students only, and also they find it difficult to express themselves in speaking English. Those feelings are shared with a lot of speakers of English as a second language, including me! [May 7, 2016]

Reading my students' and Tetsuya's comments, I decided to adjust my ways of teaching, starting with the warm-up activity itself, to promote their class engagement. First, referring to the students' Ideal Teacher images, suggestions such as "talk in English (Kanako)," "speak English confidently (Ken)," and "keep the ball rolling in conversations with students (Naoki)" were elicited from my students. Thereafter, I started joining in the short speech activities, making my own short speeches in English in front of them (Yoshi's journal, third lesson, April 25, 2016). I had hoped they could see that their feedback had affected me. I also tried creating an atmosphere where the students could speak English in comfort by sitting in a circle during the activity. Actually, this was advice from another research teammate, Joe, who wrote in my journal: "... last year I had a class of 7 students in a big room, and every week they pushed away desks and made a circle of chairs" (Joe's comment, April 24, 2016). I felt that it would help make their participation in activities more interactive and help create an atmosphere where they could speak openly in comfort.

Although I made these adjustments, the classroom atmosphere during the warm-up did not change much. One of the students, Kanako, who is outgoing and frank, and Kenji, who is introverted but reflective, wrote the following comment in their reflection sheets after the lesson.

You are all gloomy and taciturn. We should communicate more! ... (Kanako, April 25, 2016)

As I was actively speaking, I hesitated to make my next utterance because other students were quiet. (Kenji, April 25, 2016)

Kanako also made a similar type of comment during the warm-up activity within the classroom in the next lesson (Lesson 4).

Why is everyone in a dismal mood? (Yoshi's journal, fourth lesson, May 9, 2016)

As some students commented in the reflection sheets and also during the lesson, overall my students were still quiet in third and fourth lessons. However, I started to see some change in their thinking by reading their comments in reflection sheets collected during the lessons. I found that while they were quiet, they analyzed in detail their own English performance on a meta-cognitive level:

We do a short speech today, but probably I can't eye contact. I try to eye contact next speech. [sic, original English] (Naoki, April 25, 2016)

Although I tried speaking actively, the lack of English vocabulary and ability of paraphrasing words made it difficult to continue my conversation, and then I gradually became passive, creating an awkward atmosphere. (Kenji, April 25, 2016)

It is important to speak clearly and briskly while making eye contact. I might make mistakes in pronouncing some words, but I felt that I needed to speak while looking at the audience. I would like to expand my vocabulary and to relearn English grammar to be able to transmit my message to the audience clearly, even if it were done in only a simple manner. (Hideki, May 9, 2016)

The students seemed to realize through the analysis of their own performance what prevented them from performing well or what kinds of skills they need to acquire to perform in better ways in the warm-up activity.

Seeing a glimmer of hope in the students' comments in reflection sheets, I made further adjustments in the fifth lesson (May 16, 2016). To make the warm-up activity more interactive and to create a more relaxing atmosphere, I changed the activity to a short, 5-minute English conversation. Students now conversed three times, each time in different pairs, and each time I also joined in one of the groups (Yoshi's journal, fifth lesson, May 16, 2016). Additionally, I played music (relaxing but not too slow) to promote their casual conversations. I also encouraged them, asking them all to stand up so that they could more easily make gestures and body movements during the conversations.

After these adjustments, I started recognizing the students' positive reactions in the lesson.

... At every rotation, all pairs were able to continue their conversations for five minutes, actively asking questions to each other. I could also readily see everyone smiling during the conversations. (Yoshi's journal, fifth lesson, May 16, 2016)

The students' positive reactions also started being reflected in their reflection sheets in fifth and the following lessons.

I think that I was able to speak English actively and take the lead in English conversations ... (Kenji, May 16, 2016)

I was able to ask questions to my conversation partners to continue our conversation ... (Yuta, May 30, 2016)

While I wasn't able to speak well during small talk, I gradually became able to talk longer in the three conversations!! ... I will do my best next time, too!! (Kanako, May 30, 2016)

Shortly thereafter, I was able to recognize positive comments in the second My Classmates survey conducted in the following week (Lesson 13, July 11, 2016).

My classmates' attitudes show they are listening to my talks. (Yuta, second My Classmates survey, July 11, 2016)

Although the students' English proficiency levels are varied, I felt that everyone was eager to talk. Because of that, I was able to enjoy the small talk [short English conversations] in every lesson. When my classmates wanted to say something but couldn't express it well, I learned how I should respond to them. (Kanao, second My Classmates survey, July 11)

These comments imply that not some but all of the students were eager to speak English (while they still have some difficulty in expressing their thoughts in the TL). Kanao, who used to make negative comments in reflection sheets and within the classroom in the beginning of the semester, wrote this positive comment regarding the warm-up activity. The attitudes or behaviors described in the above comments were now more consistent with their Ideal Classmates images than when shared before with the whole class at the beginning of the semester.

Summarizing in Yoshi's affinity space

RQ1: How do our students transform their class participation or engagement through their visualizations of Ideal Classmates?

RQ2: How can we as teacher-researchers transform our ways of teaching our English classes in better ways through hearing and reflecting our students' voices in the present study?

Conducting this case study in focusing on my English course, I came to certain realizations regarding the research questions. About RQ1, I found that, through visualization of Ideal Classmates, the transformation of students' class performance and engagement could occur at two stages: First, at the psychological level, and second, at the physical or performance level. It seemed to take some time for their psychological transformation to be reflected in their actual class performance. Regarding RQ2, I was able to acquire new perspectives as a language teacher, which helped me to realize two things: First, there is a risk of judging how much TL-learning motivation students have by making an assumption based only on their performance or apparent attitudes during class activities. My students often remained passive and silent throughout what I thought would be easy warm-up activities. However, I noticed by attending to their inner voices shared in reflection sheets and surveys, as well as what they said during the lessons, that they were struggling to participate actively. Second, I realized that their images of Ideal Classmates could more likely become manifested in the students themselves when their teacher adjusts or scaffolds toward what they are imagining. This can effectively promote increases in the frequency and quality of class engagements and create better learning atmospheres within the classrooms. Through my own adjustments and scaffolding afforded to me, the teacher, by simply asking students what they would like to see more of in themselves and in their teacher, the students became able to act more like each other's Ideal Classmates, and I myself was able to grow as a teacher, possibly more oriented towards the students' Ideal Teacher images.

Recreated Narrative of Tetsuya's Classes

I [Tetsuya] would like to start my section with my first comment in the research journal. I felt excited about this project, in which I expected to see interactions among students and also I could collaborate with my students.

This is the very first entry of Tetsuya's journal, and I would like to begin my journal with a comment I found in a book this morning. This book chapter (Toohey & Waterstone, 2004) is about collaborative research among researchers from different places. They say, "Teacher and researcher collaboration, for example, have been seen as promoting more complete and nuanced descriptions of classroom events and the perspectives of both teachers and classroom outsiders are available for analysis." (Toohey & Waterstone, 2004, p. 292) As members of a research group ourselves, we believe we can bring different events and perspectives from different settings. I feel lucky to be in this group and learn from my research friends. — (Tetsuya's journal, first lesson, March 31, 2016)

2016 Spring Semester		June 15, 2016	
My Classmates Survey Simple Report			
<p>Below are the mean scores from University A and University B. Students chose one number from 1 to 6 to indicate how much they agree with the statements. 1 (Not at all), 2 (Not really), 3 (Not very much), 4 (Yes, a little), 5 (Yes, pretty much), 6 (Yes, very much)</p>			
Statement	Univ. A	Univ. B	
1 My classmates are helping me to learn English.	4.92	4.09	
2 I am helping my classmates to learn English.	4.03	3.47	
3 My classmates are helping me to enjoy English.	4.47	4.02	
4 I am helping my classmates to enjoy English.	3.86	3.55	
5 I am learning English better by myself than with my classmates.	3.27	3.13	
6 I am enjoying English better by myself than with my classmates.	2.83	2.62	
<p>What do you think of the results? How can we help each other more and how can we enjoy learning English together more?</p>			

Figure 1. My Classmates Survey Handout.

Soon after I made this comment in my journal, another researcher in the current research team, Tim, contributed a different quote in my journal, which was also about the importance of collaboration in learning. I was very excited about finding another quote, but more excited that my voice was heard by another person, and that I was learning from him. This entry was a powerful motivator for me to start our current research and also to encourage my students to help each other as we do.

After giving Ideal Classmates and Ideal Teacher prompts (Qs 19 & 20) in the beginning of the semester, in June, (the eighth lesson of one English communication course offered at University A), I conducted the My Classmates prompts (Qs1-7), in which we asked students

how much they were helping each other. After downloading the data and calculating the mean scores quickly, I made a handout (Figure. 1). In my research journal I wrote:

Today, I downloaded the data file of the My Classmates survey [Qs1–7] from both universities [where I teach my English communication courses], and made a simple handout. Tomorrow, I will have a short discussion at one university about the data. I believe it [the My Classmates Survey Handout] is also CPL [Critical Participatory Looping]. — (Tetsuya’s journal, eighth lesson, June 15, 2016)

CPL should not be confined to the qualitative data, i.e., reactions to open-ended questions or freely written life stories, such as language learning histories. Even after collecting data through Likert-scale question items, we can quickly make a simple table or a graph, and return the data to students and ask them to think about it. In addition, we can also ask them to write their reactions to the handout. In my own classes, students generally enjoyed finding their own results. It might be because the classes I mentioned here are in the faculty of science and engineering, and the students tend to be accustomed to finding evidence in figures in tables and graphs. The students also seemed to be interested in differences between universities. They understood that different universities have different cultures, and group dynamics are involved in every class at every university. The tables in the handout seemed to be helpful for their understanding of how diverse students, classes, and universities can be. In my journal I wrote comments about this class activity as follows.

At [University A], we had a short group discussion about the data. Students seemed to enjoy the discussions especially about the differences between [University A] and [University B]. For example, about Statement 1, “My classmates are helping me to learn English,” the average response among [University B] students was 4.92, while the average among [University A] students was 4.09. It means [University B] students think they are supported by their classmates significantly more than [University A] students. It makes sense to me, because students have much more opportunity to have group work at [University B]. In the discussion, one [University A] student said that they should have help each other more. I hope this discussion session was a good chance for [University A] students to think about their learning style. — (Tetsuya’s journal, eighth lesson, June 16, 2016)

Then at the end of the semester, I asked my students an open-ended question within the My Classmates survey, Q22: When did you think your classmates were good classmates? In contrast to the Ideal Classmates prompt at the beginning of the semester, in which we attempted to elicit students’ images of Ideal Classmates, Q22 asked students to describe what they actually did for each other. 74.17% ($n = 89$) of the students responded, and of those students, a few made neutral comments (e.g., I have no idea) or negative comments (e.g., I didn’t think so), but 95.51% ($n = 85$) made positive comments with real examples. I coded these comments according to the 16 descriptors of Ideal Classmates that the research team had derived from our action research with other students previously (Murphey et al., 2014).

The 16 descriptors show the images of Ideal Classmates that our past students had, and the comments analyzed for the present research were what my current students reported doing during the semester. Quite naturally, after coding the comments of Q22 in terms of the 16 descriptors, not all 16 were matched by my current students. In contrast, as many as 43.82% ($n = 39$) of the comments were categorized into descriptor # 12 (Help each other in class to learn: teach vocabulary, explain how to say something in English, etc.). For example, one student commented, “When I don’t understand the question, my classmate helped me hard [sic]. I think my classmates were good classmates.” Another descriptor that many students’ com-

ments matched was # 6 (Actively talk to lots of partners in English in class), into which 12.36% ($n = 11$) of the students' comments were categorized.

After collecting, analyzing, and returning the data of my students back to them, I also found changes inside of myself as a teacher-researcher. Even before conducting this study, I had believed that engaging in group work and visualizing ideal selves, as a learner and as a classmate, could generally enhance students' motivation to study English. At the same time, it was true that I thought there would be a significant number of students who might be reluctant to participate in these Ideal Classmates activities and also in follow-up discussions. In fact, one teacher-researcher outside of our research team had told me she was considering this idea for her classes. She said that although she really wanted to incorporate Ideal Classmates into her lessons, she also worried about the possibility that some of her students might think that writing about images of their Ideal Classmates and talking about common ideas among classmates were a "waste of time." It turned out, however, that almost all my students took the question seriously. They also seemed to be enjoying themselves while discussing the common ideas about helping each other and the differences among universities. Through these experiences, I found myself much more firmly believing that my students would benefit greatly from answering questions and discussing the reactions, and thus feeling much more comfortable that these activities could fit into my tight schedule.

Summarizing in Tetsuya's affinity space

RQ1: How do our students transform their class participation or engagement through their visualizations of Ideal Classmates?

RQ2: How can we as teacher-researchers transform our ways of teaching our English classes in better ways through hearing and reflecting our students' voices in the present study?

To sum up, in terms of RQ1, during the semester my students had strengthened their sense of belonging to their class. One phenomenon that became apparent is that when I randomly assigned pairs at the beginning of class each week, I detected more and more greetings and smiles among them, although it is quite difficult to judge whether the change in the students' attitude or behaviors is solely attributable to our Ideal Classmates procedures. In terms of RQ2, I felt increasingly comfortable in giving them greater amounts of pair tasks. The Ideal Classmates activities may have affected how students perceived their classmates and themselves, leading to more active learning. I also found this action research changing me in how I gave tasks in class, which in turn seemed to have led to more enjoyable group work.

Limitations

Collaboratively visualizing learner and teacher development in affinity spaces seldom happens by accident and often does not happen even with great care. The authors do not see Ideal Classmates procedures as a Pollyanna practice (something that will solve all our problems), but modestly as a procedure that invites students and teachers to question and question again at appropriately spaced intervals their identities, their agency, and their impact on each other. Simply visualizing something once does not mean that it automatically changes one's thoughts and behaviors instantly or permanently. However, each reflection and visualization can contribute to shaping the synaptic structures in our brains, link by link. And with more revisits to these imaginings, the links become stronger.

We see these reflections and visualizations as openings of educational minds and the shaping of affinity spaces in our classes and out of them. Our data here are not intended to irre-

futably present these procedures as pure panacea to the problems of student silence (King, 2013). Rather, we have attempted to present qualitative data, which seems to be supporting these emerging critical reflections of re-shaping identities, collaborations, classroom atmospheres, student agency, and the general socialization of our classes. We cannot isolate and identify the Ideal Classmates procedures as a primary cause of the changes that students made toward behaving in more helpful and active ways in engaging each other in learning English. We think that our students changed in better ways through the influence of multiple factors: not only our Ideal Classmates activities, but also their socializing with other students as well as us, their teachers, English activities we offered, their getting used to the classroom environments, and perhaps even more influences that we do not recognize. It would be invalid to attribute our students' change solely to the Ideal Classmates activities. However, we believe from our own subjective reflections that these procedures at least partly helped our students and ourselves become more socially-sensitive toward each other, especially because we related to and cared about mutually learning in our affinity spaces.

Discussion and Conclusion

To summarize Yoshi's and Tetsuya's narratives of their uses with Ideal Classmates procedures, they both strove to engage their students in community building through challenges, acceptance, and collaborations. They challenged their students with what they saw as acceptable tasks, and yet they were flexible enough to allow the students to adjust the conditions to enhance their own learning and create English-learning affinity spaces among themselves and their teachers. The teachers' acceptance of their students as key developing practitioners (Allwright & Hanks, 2009) in the present study could send a message that "this is your space and your learning," such that students can invest themselves in the challenge of improving their English. Both teachers were open to negotiating the aspects of their classrooms in order to help students learn. We have come to understand that when people work well together on building common understandings of each other, they mutually affirm each other and form affinity spaces of shared activities, interests, and goals. In the cases presented in this study, these affinity spaces helped both students and teachers to bond together through shared English activities, interests in English, and goals of learning effectively together.

In the present study, regular feedback received from our students and looped back to them not only critically informed us teacher-researchers about what our next steps might be, it created affinity spaces for both the students and us to develop classroom relationships and skills. The affinity spaces co-constructed among students as well as between students and teachers were expanded across our research team via sharing classroom narratives written in our teaching journals. Hearing our students' voices embedded in each of our narratives helped us visualize and discuss how we could develop our relationships with our students, and how we could further improve our ways of teaching. We realized through the present study that both students and teachers cannot visualize their ideal or better selves and then realize these visualizations in a vacuum. But when each of us mutually participates actively in our ecological systems, each of us can visualize and grow further in our relations with one another. In these processes we think we are expanding our reciprocal idealizing (Murphey et al., 2014) into reciprocal development. By looping our ideas among ourselves and our students, and by looping these narratives beyond to other teachers (i.e., you, the readers of this paper), we are looping these explanations forward to an even wider ecology (Falout, Murphey, Fukuda, & Fukuda, 2016).

To conclude, when teachers ask students to imagine helpful classmates, valuable images of helpful classmates can appear in students' minds. With further focus upon these images,

students then begin to identify with what they have seen as something that is possible for themselves as instead something possible for others—thus becoming their own Ideal Classmates. Also, reflecting on and discussing what students visualize as Ideal Classmates could also positively influence teachers' own visualizations and behaviors to reach for better ways to teach as Ideal Teachers. Teacher-researchers observing themselves within their own respective classes can learn well enough, but by expanding their perspectives by collaboration in research groups, they can go more deeply with their observations and reflections so that they can see the wider picture. By sharing our visualizations of how we—students, teachers, and readers of this paper—can help each other toward mutually identified common goals, and by observing our own impact upon each other, we all can collaborate to imagine and achieve more.

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Review Process

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Parallel Journeys: Creating and Conceptualising Learning in Language Counselling

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In this paper, we explore how learning is conceptualised and created in language counselling sessions in the ALMS (Autonomous Learning Modules) programme at Helsinki University Language Centre. In ALMS courses, learners reflect in order to plan, develop, and evaluate study programmes which fulfill their foreign-language degree requirement. This reflection partly happens in counselling sessions, with the learners conceptualising learning and themselves as language learners, in discussion with their counsellor. One of the aims of this discussion is to afford the emergence of new learning and new learning selves. The counsellor's experience is a parallel process: We create and recreate our counsellor selves through each counselling encounter. Moreover, in exploring this phenomenon, we conceptualise our counsellor selves through practitioner-research and engage in the reflective practice we ask of our learners. In our inquiry, we use free-writing after counselling sessions as a *method of inquiry* (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), both to create and analyse data. The article consists of two practitioner research accounts in which we critically examine the free-writing through our theoretical understandings. These accounts are framed by an introduction, responses to each other's research, and a coda. In this project, we wanted to experiment with new forms of academic writing. For us, writing from our experience, moving between free writing and academic text construction was a way of braiding the personal and the academic, making affective interpretations of our counselling encounters, and reconstructing ourselves textually. We believe this interactive process of reflective writing and critical discussion has the potential to afford learning and self-discovery for both counsellors and students.

本稿では、ヘルシンキ大学ランゲージセンターの自律的学習モジュール (ALMS) プログラムのカウンセリングセッションにおいて、学習がどのように概念化され、創造されるのかを考察した。ALMSコースでは、学習者が、自らが履修する言語プログラムを、計画、構成、そして評価するために省察を行う。この省察の一部はカウンセリングセッションの中で行われ、学習者は、自身の学習および学習者としてのあり方を、カウンセラーとのやり取りを通して概念化する。本稿の目的の一つは、新たな学習方法と、今までにない学習者像の提起である。カウンセラー自身の経験も学習者のそれと平行しており、毎回のカウンセリングを通じて、自身のカウンセラー像を追求していく。さらにこの現象を深く追求する中で、われわれはカウンセラーとしてのあり方を実践研究の中で概念化し、カウンセリングセッションで学習者に課しているものと同じような省察を、自らも行うようにした。本研究はmethod of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005)として、カウンセリングセッションの後に行われる自由記述を用いて、データを収集し分析した。本稿は、参加者二人の実践研究から構成されており、集められた自由記述は私たちの理論的解釈に基づいて分析された。これら二つの実践研究は導入、研究参加者相互によるフィードバック、そしてまとめからなっている。本研究において、我々は新たな形の学術文書様式を試みた。我々にとって、カウンセリングでの経験を記録し、自由記述と学術文書を行き来することは、個人的な経験を学術理論に組み込む一つの方法であり、カウンセリングで直面したことを効果的に解釈し、文字を通してカウンセラーとしての自分自身を再構築する方法ともなった。このような双方向的な省察と建設的ディスカッションの機会は、カウンセラーと学習者の双方に学習と自己の再発見を促す可能性を与えるものと思われる。

Keywords

language counselling/advising, practitioner research, reflective/ experiential writing, professional development, learner/counsellor reflective practice

キーワード

言語カウンセリング/アドバイジング、実践研究、省察的/経験的ライティング、専門的能力の開発、学習者/カウンセラーのリフレクティブ・プラクティス

Language counselling, as we practice it in the ALMS (Autonomous Language Learning Modules) programme at the University of Helsinki, involves a student and their counsellor meeting to discuss language learning. It is a form of language advising, drawing on humanistic counselling and language teaching (Carson & Mynard, 2012, p. 5) to promote

and support learning and learner autonomy. However, as ALMS counselling has emerged in our unique context so, too, each counselling meeting differs as individual students and their counsellors plan and reflect on learning.

In this paper, we—Leena Karlsson and Fergal Bradley, ALMS counsellors—explore our own counselling in relation to our students' learning processes during a semester-long ALMS course in spring 2016. We use a cycle of free writing after our counselling sessions, and considered commentary on the resulting texts, to reflect on the role of counselling in our students' learning journeys on their ALMS courses. We also explore our counsellor selves and how they grow and develop during the project. In this sense, our paper describes parallel journeys of students and counsellors in ALMS.

What is the ALMS Programme?

ALMS (Autonomous Language Learning Modules) is an English course, one of several options for students at the University of Helsinki to fulfill the required foreign-language studies component of their degrees. The students are primarily Finnish, and Finnish-speaking, undergraduate students working towards degrees in one of the university's 12 faculties. The course's underlying philosophy is learner autonomy, in that, after two awareness-raising sessions, students design, carry out and reflect upon their own programme of study in order to complete the course (for more information see Karlsson, Kjisik, & Nordlund, 1997, 2007). Students may attend a variety of support groups to practice and develop their language skills and knowledge, and many also create groups of their own. However, many also choose to do part of their work independently. The starting level for the course is nominally B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. In practice, however, students are often above or sometimes below this level. We ask ALMS students to consider the stated course objectives as a factor when planning a course that is personally relevant for them.

ALMS has few formal requirements, the primary ones being that students keep a learning diary and come to three counselling sessions. In the diary—or log, blog, or portfolio, the exact format is not important—students record their work and reflect on it, in writing. Reflection on language learning and language use occupies much of the awareness-raising sessions at the beginning of the course. These two compulsory sessions are the only official group meetings of an ALMS course. Comprising roughly 20 students, the groups are often faculty-specific, but this does not mean the students will necessarily work together or even meet again. The aim of these sessions is to start the reflection process and to support the students in developing a learning plan for the course. Students engage in and with various reflection models, methods and tools, such as completing the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990), writing language learner histories, and free writing about and discussing previous language encounters. They also learn about the practicalities and possibilities of ALMS: sharing ideas, asking questions, reading blogs and logs donated by former students, signing up for and creating support groups, and writing their own plans for the course. The reflection and planning—looking backwards and forwards—continues in the learning diary and the counselling sessions.

The Role of Counselling

ALMS students come to three counselling sessions throughout their course—at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. These counselling sessions are the primary contact students have with the responsible teacher on the course (their ALMS counsellor), who also leads the awareness-raising sessions at the beginning. Taking place at different stages, the counselling

sessions play different roles in a student's course. In the first session, students look back at their learning histories and plan their course based on this, echoing Kramsch's (2004), "remembering how and imagining what if." In the second counselling session, students discuss the course in progress: their learning and the reflection on it in their diary. Finally, the third counselling session involves looking back and evaluating their learning, and looking forward to their future as language learners and users.

In ALMS, we view counselling as a holistic process, which involves the whole person: their studies, their personal, and their professional lives, and their pasts, presents, and futures. Counselling is also dialogic, in that students and counsellors discuss the course plan together and the counsellor tries not to dictate or tell the student what to do on their ALMS course. Ideally, it is the learner in the leading role—taking charge of their own learning (Holec, 1981, p.3)—with the counsellor advising, empathising or challenging as needed, but above all listening and responding. Counselling is also an autobiographical and experiential process. Students tell stories about themselves and their language experiences, sharing them with the counsellor, who may share their own stories and experiences in return. This sharing involves the building of a relationship between student and counsellor, involving empathy, respect, and genuineness (Mozzon-McPherson, 2012, p. 48).

This Project: Reflective Writing and Practitioner Research

Since it began in the mid-1990s, ALMS has always been inquiry oriented, with a tradition of practitioner research (see, for example, Karlsson, Kjisik, & Nordlund, 1997; Karlsson, 2008; Karlsson & Kjisik, 2011; Kidd & von Boehm, 2012). Recently, we have used methods such as peer group mentoring (PGM) (Heikkinen, Jokinen, & Tynjälä, 2012) as a support network and a means of professional development. The PGM meetings involve counsellors sharing stories, free writing, and reading literature from the field of language advising. This work has prompted further practitioner research, such as a recent project, inspired by Dörnyei and Kubanyiova's (2014) work on vision and motivation, where nine counsellors wrote to each other about their visions of future counselling selves (Bradley & Karlsson et al., 2016). This paper arises, then, from a culture of reflective writing and an attitude of inquiry (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). We wish to take up Laurel Richardson's (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) idea of writing as a method of inquiry but, as educators first, we also want our inquiry to be non-invasive and integrated into the counselling pedagogy (see the principles of Exploratory Practice, Allwright, 2003; Allwright & Hanks, 2009).

Through our PGM meetings, we became interested in how we, as counsellors, experience our students' reflective processes and the creation of new learning and new learning selves, as this happens in the counselling sessions. We also see a parallel between our learners' personal reflection process in ALMS and our own: through the counselling encounters and our practitioner research, we discover and create our counsellor selves, by doing the reflective practice we ask of our learners in ALMS. So for this project, we ask the question of how learning is conceptualised and created in counselling. Not expecting a single, simple answer, we work for understanding of our own counselling and our students' learning.

To explore the question, our first stage was free writing—pen on paper in a notebook—after our counselling sessions throughout one semester. This free writing then formed the basis for critical commentaries—typed on the computer—in which we examined and discussed our free writing through our theoretical understandings, interests and concerns. The process formed a cycle of immediate reflection and considered response on our counselling, which influenced one another, as we moved from first counselling to second and third during the semester. The writing, and then reading of ourselves, developed into a shared crit-

ical discussion of our practice as counsellors and our experiences and understandings of the students' learning in their ALMS courses.

Our concern in this project was with writing as an expression of autonomy. We use reflective and free writing with our students as a way of helping them to recognize and appreciate experiential lifewide learning (see Barnett, 2010), and so it seemed an appropriate method for us to explore our counselling practice and identity. In their diaries, the students write and are shaped by their writing, as are we in our inquiry effort. Writing, at its best, acts as a "glue" between different sites and experiences of learning. Similarly, counselling sessions encourage students to draw together their ideas, thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to language learning, and this is a way to stimulate new learning and help new learning selves emerge. Thus, reflective writing and counselling can both be seen as critical nodes or hotspots in the ecology or complex system of ALMS for both students and counsellors. They can both consolidate past learning and stimulate new learning.

Through writing here in our counsellor voices, we express our autonomy, and this expression emerges from engaging with theory. The theoretical perspectives that shape our thinking, that is, learner/teacher autonomy as a rich ecology (linking elements from complexity theory and learning ecologies, narrative autobiographical knowing, experiential learning, learning histories, and storied identities) have influenced the methodological choice for this research. Caring for the students' wellbeing and quality of life and, very importantly, their ownership of learning meant looking for a way of researching that would be pedagogically motivated. Thus, turning our gaze upon ourselves, an auto-ethnographical take on the counselling dialogue, felt like an ethical and pedagogically sustainable solution.

In a thought-provoking article, Arthur Bochner (2012) tells the story of why and how he (together with Carolyn Ellis) came to see narrative and autoethnographic storytelling as alternatives to standard academic writing practices in social sciences. He writes about what happened when they decided to think of themselves as *writers*, as storytellers, and turned an ethnographic eye on themselves and their own lived experiences, a process ours shares features with. In Bochner's text, which is both an academic article and a first-person story, we see an instance of autoethnographic storytelling which suggests how we can write about human experience, "not as reporters but as writers." This is also what we have tried to do in this paper.

The Structure of the Paper

The paper now splits into distinct but connected texts. The first is Leena's methodology section, "*Feeling My Way*" through Writing from Experience. In this section, Leena focuses on writing as a method and as data in this project (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005). This is followed by a response from Fergal. The third section is Fergal's results section, *Meeting of Minds and a Counsellor's Reaction*. Here, Fergal discusses what he learned through the project and the implications for his counsellor identity. Leena then responds to this. Finally, the Coda, or concluding section, draws together the various strands of the process, reflecting on writing as a means of professional development. Figure 1 demonstrates the structure visually.

We choose this structure to allow the reader into our different but related experiences and understandings and to allow our individual counsellor/researcher voices to express distinct but connected sense-making processes in this project.

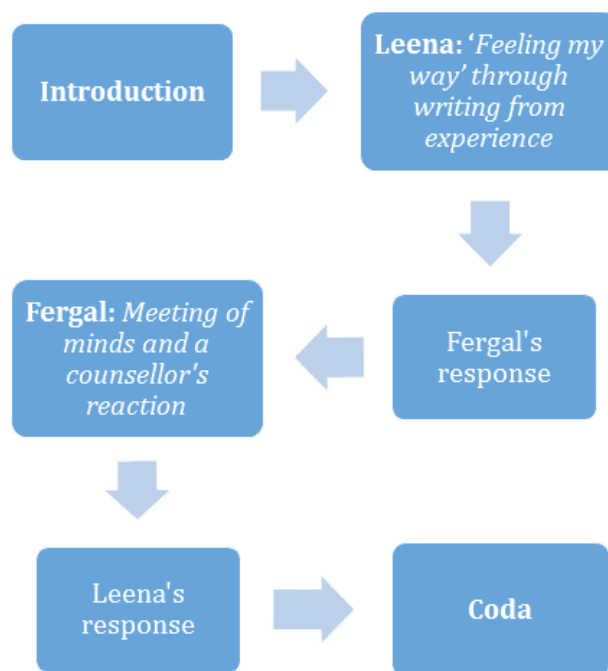


Figure 1. The Structure of the Paper.

Leena: “Feeling my way” through Writing from Experience

I am a language counsellor and have been living and working on the landscape of ALMS stories for 20 years. Language counselling means interacting with feeling, flesh-and-blood human beings, experiencing complexity and ambiguity, looking for, and often not finding, the words to express the experience I am going through and to interpret the one the student is telling about. My own and the students’ embodied and emotional reactions to the encounter can be challenging to make sense of in the fleeting moment of counselling interaction. Finding sensitive interpretative tools in a retrospective research effort can be even more challenging.

I believe that language counselling, like teaching, should be reflective and become “an exploratory sort of research” (Vieira, 1997, p. 60). This kind of an educational inquiry should be on-going, context-sensitive and self-reflexive; in my experience, it is also a process that shapes my counsellor self as much as I shape my professional landscape through research. I am a practitioner who believes in pedagogy for autonomy and, as a researcher on the landscape, in always being aware of my own autobiography and its influence on my inquiry. In my research I have been using methods that, on the one hand, serve the purpose of getting close to lived and felt experience and, on the other hand, respect and serve the research participants. Autobiographical narratives, I find, are one powerful way of representing lived and context-shaped educational experiences. During my thesis writing process (Karlsson, 2008), I came to see writing as a method of inquiry. For me, it was a way of finding out about myself as a researcher and my research topic, a way of thinking and learning, of knowing, of discovery and analysis, and also a way of telling. Writing as inquiry (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005)

1. I borrow Sarah Ahmed’s metaphorical concept of “feel our way”—inspired by Benesch’s (2012) work—to describe my writing process and the emotional echoes from previous research and practice.

means using writing as both a method of data collection and data analysis, as inseparable from research. Thought happens in the very writing: the writer thinks, writes and creates.

I am also a facilitator of student writing and a writer of academic and professional texts. Writing as a process, experience and phenomenon puzzles and fascinates me. As a writer myself, I have experienced different ways and textual forms of writing, individual and collaborative, in academic contexts and elsewhere. I learnt about writing conventions and practices at school and university, worried about my lack of skill, experienced writer's blocks and felt uncertain about what to write and how to communicate my thoughts to an audience. These experiences have shaped my thinking and influenced the way I see the role of writing in educational and personal lives, that is, what writing can be and do, for myself and my students.

In recent years, I have been involved in experimenting collaboratively with personal kinds of scholarly writing that uses the writers' autobiographies as a basis (Barfield & Delgado, 2014; Bradley & Karlsson et al., 2016). Both writing projects have been first-hand experiences in relational writing and also meant engaging in professional development from the inside through pedagogical conversations, explorations, and collective authoring. Jiménez Raya and Vieira (2015) also suggest that we should see inquiry and writing *from* experience as professional development.

These projects raised my interest in further experiments in how one can/should/might write about educational experience in an academic text. I became convinced that searching for collaborative answers for these questions are ways of unlearning and relearning writing so as to bring it closer to the self and both the intellectual and emotional aspects of lived experience. The discussions with the other writers and the dialogic, multivoiced writing also became tools for developing a "scholarship of counselling" (see Vieira 2010; 2013), that is, inquiry into, narrating about, and disseminating our practice.

In my work, there is a need and duty for counsellor reflexivity, which in turn can become an ethical way of building a bridge between research and practice: being and becoming a reflexive practitioner. When students become participants in a research effort, a researcher's reflexivity should permeate every step in and aspect of the research process. For me, researcher reflexivity is the capacity to acknowledge how my own experiences and contexts, possibly fluid and changing, inform the process and outcomes of the inquiry (Etherington, 2004, pp. 31-32).

This means being aware of how my own experiences, thoughts, feelings, motivations, educational, social and personal history, my whole autobiography, inform me all the way through the pedagogical and research process, including the final text produced. Over the years, I have unlearned certain ways of thinking and stopped seeing genres of writing promoted in schools and academia as the only legitimate ones. When using autobiographical narratives to capture the experiences on the ALMS landscape, I have written what could be called "braided" (Casanave, 2003) or "interwoven" (Choi, 2016) stories of personal and academic lives. However, during this project, I was determined to learn new writing and interpretative practices (Luce-Kapler, 2004) through writing and for my own writing in the future. In particular, I needed to work with raising the level of affective interpretation (Luce-Kapler, 2004) of what writing is and does in order to counsel and facilitate *from* my experience.

For this end, I hoped to gather such data in the (free) writing, which I would not otherwise be gathering: St. Pierre (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 970) calls this data "dream data", "sensual data", "emotional data", "response data", and "memory data". For me, her question "how can one textualize everything one thinks and senses in the course of a study" ties in with a concern for how to write about experience, how to find the language for emotional

reactions, how to understand and communicate what emotions *do* in learning (Benesch, 2012), and how to construct knowledge yet touch upon unspoken or hidden emotional reactions.

From a previous writing project (Karlsson, 2016), I knew that combining formal and creative uses of language can provide spaces for transformative learning when “less cognitively-driven, more spontaneous and bodily-felt approaches” (Hunt, 2013, p. 15) to learning and writing are used. Free writing was a choice that I knew would open me up to the bodily nature of writing (Hunt, 2013). How did I then write my way through this project? How did “thinking feelingly” (Hunt, 2013, p. 15) happen? Was emotional data created in the writing?

Emotions mattered and indeed guided me in and through this writing effort and every effort in our hybrid writing project: free writing after counselling, writing commentaries after “rereading myself” and engaging in writing this final text shaped me and gave a potentially novel insight into writing the next text. Here is an extract from my free writing after the 3rd counselling sessions:

... also what was happening, sporadically, was the awareness of our bodies, connections between them and our stories, our moment of being in the world together. My bitten nails and Minttu's, Ida's tears and her tense body, slowly relaxing. Maria's blushing face, her anxiety worse than before and how my own shock reaction slowly melted both of us into laughter and good feelings. Yes, I've felt old, feeble, almost smelly with some of these fresh and beautiful nimble bodies. And this takes me back to auto/biography [reference to a central concept by Liz Stanley I used in my thesis]: how complex the interrelations between partners in counselling are, the bodies and the physical space matter here. Fergal wrote about the meeting of minds [reference to Fergals' commentary text I had read]; I became really aware of the meeting of bodies, too. Bodies that shake, sweat and refuse to carry us to a classroom or a counselling office: anxiety is a bodily experience (handwritten text, free writing 9.5.2016)

This then is an extract from a commentary text to the free writing, an example of re-reading myself and of how “thinking feelingly” continues and is woven in with the reading happening at the same time:

Fergal's “meeting of minds” is a wonderful metaphor for many counselling encounters that succeeded and a valuable goal for the work we do! In these final counsellings, I became very aware of my body and the students', the “meeting of bodies”, and the connection between our bodies and our stories at the one moment of being together in the counselling room. Anxiety that I know so well from many troubled students is a bodily experience. Embodiment (e.g., Horsdal, 2014, Hunt, 2013), the biological bodies and how bodily processes underlie learning encounters, seems an avenue to be explored. Horsdal writes about bodies, minds and stories in interaction in autobiographical narratives. Perhaps also considering writing as a bodily action, as a body experience, as an activity and object, in the methodology chapter? My own writing has been happening using two techniques: 1) free writing after counselling meetings by hand (and also keeping a diary as in filling in notebook after notebook with everything that happens in life), and 2) writing commentaries with the computer. How have these techniques affected the meanings produced? Cixous (1993) writes about “writing as a method of embodied and emotional knowing”, which this project has made a tangible thing (commentary mid-May 2016).

It was clear that writing across the texts acted as self-support and as a way of venting feelings, but also as a way of getting back into being an academic writer, yet bringing some “feeling held” experiences into the final text being born. All writing seems to be “permeable” (Luce-Kapler, 2004, p. 19) and thus we import elements from other discourses we engage

in during the time of writing; my discussions with Fergal are a case in point. Writing was non-linear and complex, it was episodic and fragmentary but it became a “glue” between sites of learning, an ecology. Embodied and emotional learning from all my interactions with the writing environment happened.

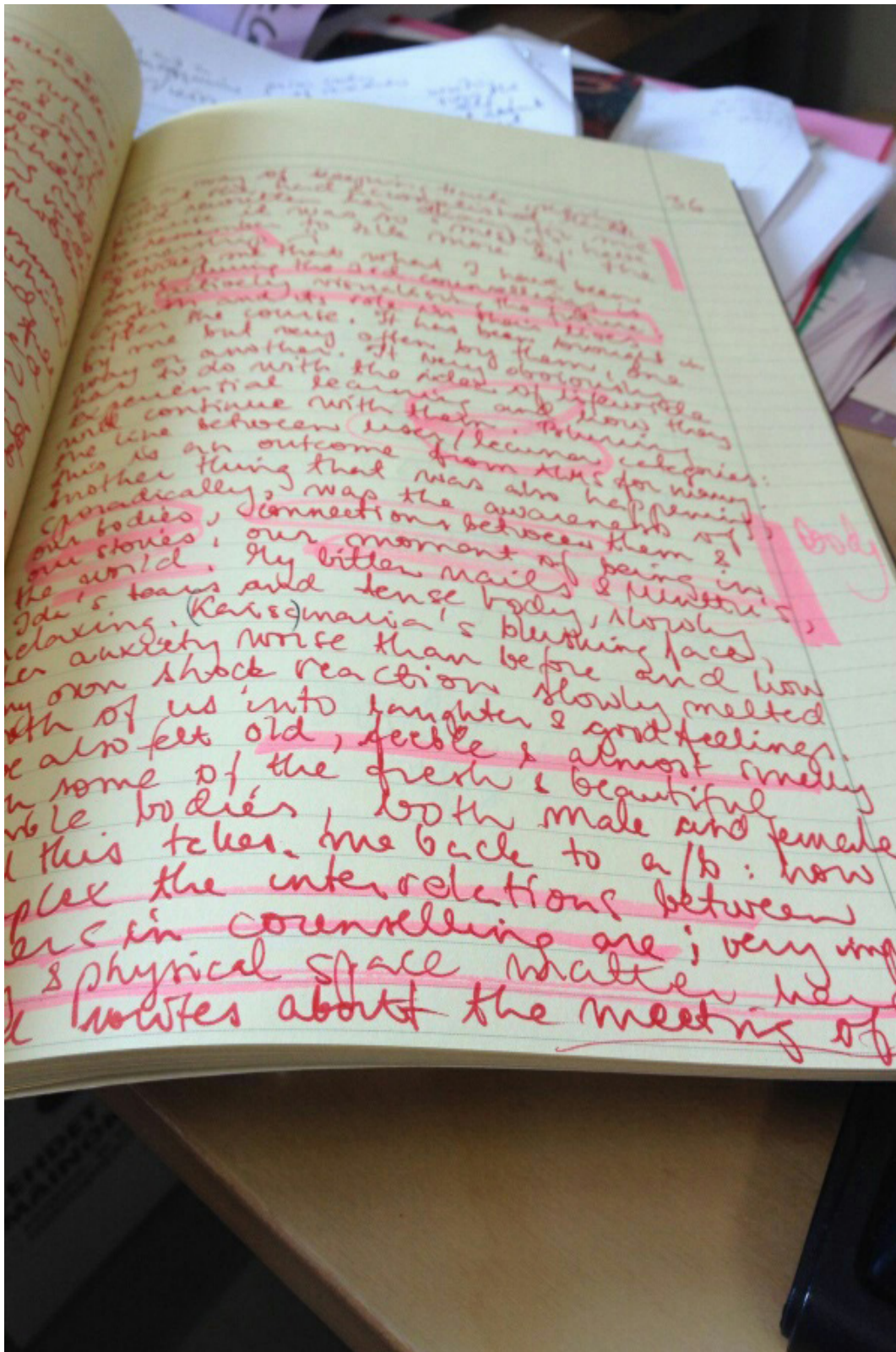


Figure 2. Leena's Free Writing Journal.

Fergal's Response to Leena's Text

Leena writes about writing as a *glue* between sites of learning, connecting ideas, thoughts and emotions, and holding them together. It is indeed a *sticky object* (Ahmed, 2004). Counselling, too, for me, is a sticky object for a student on their ALMS course: it plays a symbolic role in their learning journey and is associated with a variety of emotions. For counsellors, it is a point of contact with students and a window into their learning, but it also represents a node in a complex learning ecology, a potential site for an offshoot of new learning. I think, too, it is a chance to perform and, thus, reshape our counsellor identity. Leena writes about writing from experience, and counselling is *the* experience as an ALMS counsellor. This is perhaps why it is so *sticky*: it connects us to our students, our fellow counsellors and our reading, and it is the experience when we fully are who we are, that is, language counsellors. So writing about counselling, in the different modes we have taken here, feels important: a way of making sense, of learning about our students and ourselves.

In this response to Leena's text, I focus on how it resonates with my own experience of the project, which follows in the next section. Firstly, I am struck by the different directions our texts and our sense making processes take.

As Leena mentions, in my text, I focus on *meetings of minds*, but Leena's text brings up other meetings or meetings on other levels, which I had not written about or even read into my experiences. In my text, I chose to write about patterns of encounters which jumped out at me from my free writing and then, through another reading, about my actions and ways of being, in relation to those patterns. But left out are other actions, encounters, patterns, and ways of being. We are telling stories, spinning yarns, from our experiences, but also in our analyses. "It is through... storytelling... that humans narrate ways of knowing and being" (Lewis, 2011, p. 505).

These different departures show an ecological reality too: our projects evolving in parallel ways to different points, just like each ALMS student's course branches out from the opening sessions. This suggests that inquiry is never just simply a research question, followed by data collection, analysis and writing up the results, just as a language course is always more than setting aims and evaluating outcomes. Leena's text brings in her reading, her previous research, her own writing experiences, and the emotions and bodily experiences that interact in this project.

My second response to Leena's text is an understanding of how the writing feeds back into counselling. We began this process by writing after our counselling but, by the end, the free writing was also before counselling: the free writing and the commentary writing informed later counselling sessions. This complicates and enriches both the counselling and the free writing, as pedagogical and research experiences. We are writing from experience, but perhaps also experiencing from writing. As we draw academic writing closer to the self, we also draw ourselves closer to the writing, and our counselling practice is changed too. During the project, Leena has spoken of being "in" the counselling more because of the free writing and the commentaries. This, too, is what we ask of our students during their ALMS courses: to reflect on and be more aware of language, how it is being used, and what they are learning.

Fergal: Meetings of Minds and a Counsellor's Reaction

Three Types of Encounter

Unlike Leena, my history as ALMS counsellor is short—about four years. As well as counselling, I also teach, but I do not see those roles as separate; rather, they are different spaces to work with students developing their English skills. There is slippage between the roles of counsellor and teacher, which brings up interesting questions about my practice and its effect

on student learning. This project, for me, was a chance to explore my counsellor self, but also counselling itself as a specific learning encounter.

In my free writing, I quickly noticed several patterns emerging from my counselling. I was writing about three types of encounter in relation to learning being conceptualised and created. My initial texts concerned the first counselling sessions, where students were talking about their plans and goals for the course. The first type of encounter was one where students knew what they wanted to do and learn on the course. They were able to present a clear picture of where they were going on the course, and I use this visual metaphor deliberately: it was on my mind following a previous project on visions of future counselling selves (Bradley & Karlsson et al., 2016), inspired by Dörnyei and Kubanyiova's (2014) work. So visual metaphors were on my mind, and indeed they appear frequently in the free writing texts. The students too used visual imagery to describe their course plans. For example, I have quoted one student in my free writing as saying, "I have a picture of how the course is going to go."

The second type of encounter was one where students were less definite about their ALMS courses. This is not to say they had bad learning plans or didn't know what they wanted to do. Rather, in the counselling sessions, there was more dialogue about the direction of their course and their plans were being co-constructed through discussion with me. We were working on a picture of their learning together. Fleshing out a sketch or focusing a camera lens were images I used in my free writing.

The third group of encounters were with students who didn't or couldn't or wouldn't paint a picture of their ALMS course in counselling. I left the counselling sessions without an idea of what they wanted to learn or what they were going to do on the course. There didn't seem to be a vision, or if there was, they weren't revealing it to me.

There were variations on these types too: when students "pictures" didn't match up to what they had written about in their learner histories or needs analyses, or students whose pictures I was suspicious of or didn't quite believe. Why were they planning to do all of this reading work, when they were telling me that speaking was what they needed? Or were they actually going to do all of the things they had put in their plans? And would those things help them to learn?

In the second and third counselling sessions, the discussions gradually moved from planning learning to reporting and reflecting on work done and what was learned. Here again the same three types of encounter remained. There were students who knew what they'd learned—or when they weren't learning!—from different activities, and students who used the counselling as a discussion space to make meaning out of the hours they had already put in. The third type also remained, at least in the second counselling sessions, after which I wrote about the lack of a shared vision of learning with some students in my free writing.

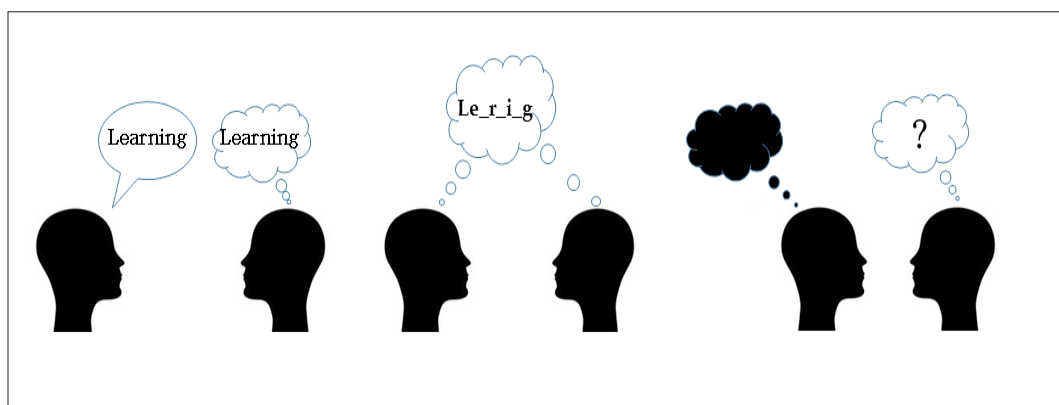


Figure 3. Three Types of Encounter With Students During Counselling.

By the third and final counselling sessions, there did seem to be a meeting of minds with all of my students. However, I do not imply that the course was a complete success for all students. Some students do drop out of courses and, in my four years of ALMS counselling, I have had final counselling sessions that ended without a vision of learning shared by both counsellor and student. The changes in encounter from one session to the next do seem to suggest that counselling works differently for students at different times of their ALMS course. The counselling encounter is not stable from one meeting to the next, but rather it changes in accordance with a student's learning journey. Through reflection, the student with a clear plan at the start of the course may find their ideas of what they want to learn change during the course. Likewise, those who are not sure at the beginning may learn more about themselves as learners and users of English as the course progresses. Students bring these reflections to counselling to tell them or open them up further.

These types of encounter seem to suggest that students use the counselling sessions in different ways and for different purposes on their ALMS courses. For some, the counselling session is a checkpoint or a milestone on their course and, through preparing to report on their learning plans or their work in counselling, they come to understandings and make meaning for themselves. For others, the counselling session is a potential learning experience. They can discuss plans, share thoughts and get ideas for their learning. The third type of encounter seemed to suggest that some students do not know what the counselling is for or how to use it and often, in this project, it seemed also to be associated with students who had blocks or constraints to their learning. One student recognized her problem was not with speaking, but with listening in English. For another, a trip abroad and contact with an international group made her think differently about her English—she stopped holding herself up to native speaker standards. For another, already a proficient user of English, the reflection work in ALMS made him think differently about other languages he was learning and using.

My Role in the Encounters: Affordance or Constraint? I-poems and Negative Knowledge

So, how was I responding to different students approaching counselling in different ways? Was I supporting or hindering them, being an affordance or a constraint to their learning? In making sense of this free writing project, I was inspired by the Listening Guide (Gilligan et al., 2003; Gilligan, 2015)—a qualitative approach to analysing data in psychology—to re-read my free writing texts. In this method, the first listening—listening for the plot—corresponded well with what I had done with Leena. I had made notes on what was happening, what were the key themes—in my case, the three types of encounter related to individual students' ALMS courses.

The Listening Guide's second listening involves creating I-poems: identifying instances of the first person singular, the I, and presenting them along with accompanying verbs and perhaps other words or phrases. Koelsch (2015, p. 98) describes the goal of I-poems as being "to forefront the participant's sense of herself within the story" and argues that they allow for an emotional reading of the participant's, in this case my, lived experience. I-poems also seemed to fit well with Richardson's (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) idea of creative analytical practices, which inspired this entire free writing project.

The following are some extracts from my I-poem, created from the collection of free writing texts (see Appendix A for the complete I-poem). I have chosen these because they brought to my attention or into focus certain themes related to my counsellor words and actions in the encounters.

*I need to shut up
My butting in*

*I think I just spouted
I felt I went on a bit
My lecturing
I came out with*

I-poem extracts: My talk as redundant or even constraining

I see a frustration throughout my writing with my own talk in counselling, especially in relation to traditional teacher talk. This regularly felt redundant or even sometimes a constraint on the counselling, not contributing to a student-generated but shared picture of learning. After one encounter of the third type, where there was no shared picture of learning emerging, I wrote about the problem of trying to create a picture of learning for the student. This echoes Dornyei and Kubanyiova's (2014, p. 36) comment that "the teacher can listen and prompt, but the L2 vision must ultimately become the student's own." The prompting comes through clearly in the I-poem, but with a sense of reluctance or of being used as a last resort. In the free writing, I seem to be justifying my explicitly teacher behaviour.

*I found myself discussing.... describing
I felt like I needed to question*

*I felt I had to talk a lot
I made suggestions
I felt I had to emphasise*

I-poem extracts: Having to talk / "teaching" as last resort

In one extract from the free writing, I wrote, "today, I had three counselling sessions, and I had to be different in each one." The I-poem also sheds light on different ways of being that were more positive, where my words and actions seem to afford learning.

I laid off a bit

I try to encourage

*I think I asked good questions and allowed responses
I was legitimizing
I tried to open up
I was legitimizing*

*My letting her speak
I recognize her need to talk about this*

I-poem extracts: Allowing, recognizing, validating learning

Bondi and Fewell's (2003) work with therapeutic counsellors—as distinct from language counsellors—positions their knowledge as a “negative” or “inverted” knowledge, as opposed to that of say doctors or lawyers who deliver expertise or specialist knowledge to a “patient” or “client.” This resonates with my I-poem in that, in order to positively contribute to the students' learning, I seem to have to drop my “expert” language teacher knowledge as much as I use it. I was listening, giving space and support, responding as a language user and learner and indeed a person, as much as a language teacher. The teacher or expert role did not disappear, but waxed and waned in a dynamic relationship to other more lay, more human roles.

The question “what did you learn from doing this work?” was often difficult for students to answer, as they seemed to think I expected a technical answer—50 new words, how to use the present perfect, how to write an academic paper. In fact, their learning was often about feelings, attitudes, awareness, identity in relation to language learning and language use. The students who feel more comfortable speaking English now with strangers, who realize how much English they use in their day to day life and studies and are now aware of the potential there for learning, who see themselves applying to study abroad or writing their master's thesis in English.

In a recent paper, Kubanyiova (2016) called for language education research to shift in focus from learner characteristics to learner sense-making. This project forced me to look away from decontextualized characteristics of counsellor behaviour and instead led me into a process of making sense of my own counselling.

Leena's Response to Fergal's Text (and a Bit about My Own):

Making Sense of Free Writing

In a previous writing project (Karlsson, 2016) I had experienced how a writing ecology can be created in which the very writing acts as a glue between different sites of learning when creative and reflective ways of writing are used. In our current project I wanted to see if free writing, done retrospectively immediately after counselling meetings, could help me to look deeper into, even capture, my self-experience, the emotional elements that I knew were there but which, without documentation, mostly remained hidden or got forgotten. I also wanted to explore what emotions can do in counselling and how affective interpretations can be found, how I can write about them and communicate them in an academic text.

I take as my starting point a sentence in Fergal's text, a text which, with its wonderful I-poems, resonated strongly with me: “Today, I had three different counselling sessions and I had to be different in each one.” Initially, Fergal's words made me think about the pedagogical sensitivity a counsellor needs; a sensitivity that resembles clinical sensitivity (Lindqvist, 2009), a prerequisite for a therapist's work. A counsellor too is meeting a unique human being, engaging in a unique encounter, listening attentively and with empathy, but potentially feeling an Otherness yet striving to make sense of it, searching for respectful and encouraging words, and giving space for the student's story about her learning. We were both concerned for the extent and depth of our pedagogical sensitivity and the worry was expressed in our free writing.

Like Fergal I found a way of making sense of my free writing through counselling literature, in a related and very powerful idea of the writer as the first reader of her own text, reading and re-reading her Self. Wright and Bolton (2012, p. 26) inspired me into thinking about free writing as re+coding (*re*=again and *cord*=heart). They describe the exploratory and expressive process of first writing (recording as in “getting closer to the heart”), then re-reading to the Self (which becomes a way of *listening* to oneself and can only happen after the writing), and finally a deep emotional reading of one's Self and a potential sharing with a confidential other. Unexpectedly, the way we had planned our project and writing turned out

to be in harmony with the idea of reflective writing as a personal questioning process (Wright & Bolton, 2012) and an integral part of professional development (Bolton, 2010) and that we both felt the positive effects.

As a result of my self-exploratory process I became acutely aware of why we have to be, cannot perhaps even avoid being, “different in each counselling session.” This is because of the unique bodily processes involved in the encounters, the bodies that sweat or shake, the eyes that cry or mouths that laugh. In my third counselling sessions, as documented in the free writing, emotional and bodily reactions strongly guided the counselling dialogue. I now claim that this heightened awareness came at least partly from the experience of my ongoing writing, listening to and re-reading my Self and created, using Hunt’s words, “an increased sense of inner space for thinking, a willingness to relax cognitive control and be open to a kind of learning that comes through bodily-felt and emotional experience rather than just through conscious reason” (Hunt, 2013, p. 15).

During this project it became very tangible to me what Horsdal (2014) means by suggesting that bodies, minds and stories are in interaction. In counselling, which I have written about as a storytelling event (Karlsson, 2013), listening to a student’s story is just as much an embodied, emotional experience as is reading a story, say, when an entry in a diary or a learning history is brought into counselling. Writing stories is no less corporeal and emotionally charged and puts the writer in contact with her body in its environment. Ahmed (2004) writes about *sticky objects*, that is, objects, ideas or words to which emotions adhere. Emotions tend to shift and move but they also stick to a variety of objects and words in language learning and teaching situations, and, without doubt, to learning diaries and ALMS counselling itself and the very idea of what counts as learning. When normalizing happens with a learning tool, when “even students’ reflective thought becomes an oppression” (Tochon, 2015, p. x) it can become a sticky object. Our concern should thus remain to ensure that for students, writing as inquiry or learning should mean open-ended “transgressive explorations” (Kramsch, 2009, p. 205), not narrow practices bound to models, rules, rigid instructions or an overpowering concern for accuracy. The writing should ultimately be their own, just like the visions of learning Fergal referred to in his text. We should respect our students’ right to own their daydreaming and timetravelling (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014), using their own narrative capabilities and forming their personal visions for learning, blurred or sharp, in flux or fixed, or none at all.

Coda

In this project, we wanted to experiment and explore new forms of (academic) writing. We wanted to use writing as method and to give it a true prominence in representing lived experience. From what became an ecology of free writing, writing our commentaries, having critical reflective discussions and writing this final text, a mixture of stories emerged in which we try to make sense of our counselling lives and, in the end, attempt to give an account in which we “persuade others to see our perspective” (Choi, 2016, p. 116). We wrote the texts, this final research text included, in the first person; we made ourselves the objects of our inquiry; we depicted experience in episodic and fragmentary forms across time; we did not generalize across cases but tried to give concrete details of individual encounters; we presented the texts as stories with characters and storylines; we brought to light the emotional experiences in the counselling. We wrote “not as reporters but as writers” (Bochner, 2012).

We now hope that our research story manages to convey to the reader the experiential context of our counselling stories and to touch lightly upon some immediate experiences in our counselling rooms. We hope that the reader can “hear” some of the emotional and em-

bodied echoes of the encounters. We hope to have written in such a way that the concreteness of feelings and actions between the participants can be imagined. We hope the story we have written resonates with our readers and even creates vicarious experiences in them (Conle, 2000). For us, writing from our experience, moving from free/reflective and creative writing to academic text construction and back was a way of braiding the personal and the academic, a way of making affective interpretations of our counselling encounters and a way of textual self-reconstruction.

Based on our experience, we will wholeheartedly, but with a pedagogical sensitivity, recommend free/reflective writing to our students. Moreover, we will suggest that they consider taking self-exploratory and expressive writing further through engaging in reading and re-reading themselves in their texts and through writing and experimenting with different genres. The process of inquiry into learning, a parallel to the one described here we think, could have them walk the bridge from experience to reflection in the texts written, listened to and read; encountering, analyzing, and interpreting emotions, memories, learning, even sticky issues. They could move between sites of experiential lifewide learning in writing a learning diary or journal, in recording and reflecting on their learning. Such a self-created ecology of writing has the potential of becoming a way of thinking, of self-discovery, a method for emergent learning and an emotional and creative yet analytical process for students in the same way as it was for us as counsellors.

Review Process

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Appendix A

I-poem Created from Fergal's Free Writing

1st Counselling

Me thinking metacognitively

I'm counselling

I had

*I think
I forced him to confront
I'm not sure*

*I had
I ran over
I found myself discussing / describing
I also found
I need to be*

*I had
I find it hard
I'll go through
I don't know
I need to shut up, recognize, encourage
I found myself
My butting in
I was reminded
I got personal
I can still feel it
Am I changed?
I've given myself*

*I had
I felt like I needed to question
My questioning
I didn't have to confront
I laid off a bit
I still seem focused on
I had to be*

*I found it difficult
I don't know
I ran into
I try to encourage*

2nd counselling

*I had
I think
I could see
I saw*

*I said
My discussion
I'd like to read more on*

*(I was) negotiating myself
I was kinda chatty
I think I asked good questions and allowed responses
(I was) legitimizing
I tried to open up
I think I just spouted
(I was) legitimizing
I felt I went on a bit
My lecturing
I think
My letting her speak*

*I had
I had to be different*

*I felt I had to
I made suggestions
I felt I had to emphasise
I came out with
I always worry when
I think
I had to get personal
I would do ALMS
I was able to*

I gave some suggestions

I was amazed

3rd counselling

*I had
I think
I've asked if I can quote her*

*I had
I get the feeling
I finished*

I will be writing again

I had

I've chatted

I feel

I feel

I was in a hurry

I was impatient

I recognize her need to talk about this

Do You See What I See? Some Thoughts on Visualizing Learner Development

Alice Chik, Macquarie University

I have lived in Sydney for almost three years now, and one thing I am still not used to is the (dis)connection between festivals and weather. It is now October, and it is getting hotter and hotter by the day, but shopping malls and companies are starting to sell Christmas decorations and promote gift ideas. In some shops, Christmas songs are already chiming merrily through the PA system with Bing Crosby singing, *Do You See What I See?* (At least he wasn't singing *White Christmas*). This song reminded me of JALT2015 in Shizuoka City during the last week of November, 2015. I stayed two extra days in Tokyo, and as one can imagine, Christmas was in the air and the tune of *Do You See What I See?* was played everywhere.

Then, someone corrected me, the song is not called "*Do You See What I See?*," it is called "*Do You Hear What I Hear?*." I grew up thinking the song was called that because the lyrics include the line "*Do You See What I See?*," and because I never paid attention to the second verse of the song. And I also thought this song is only about Christmas celebrations, until I read the Wikipedia entry to the song. The music was written by Gloria Shayne Baker, and the lyrics by Noël Regney. The song was not just another commercialized Christmas song, it was a plea for peace during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. In one song, I was wrong about two things: the title and the origin of the song. I only got Bing Crosby right. This disturbing thought put me in a reflective mood. We all want to *see* what we want to see, as language teachers and researchers, but do we necessarily *see* our learners the ways they want to be seen? But how do we explore different ways for learners and their development to be seen?

Visualizing Learner Development: My (Visual) Take

When the Learner Development SIG invited me to give a presentation at JALT2015, the conference theme was "Focus on the Learner." I thought about it and the work I have done, and came up with "Visualizing Language Learning." The first thought about visualizing learner development, for me, is the actual visual representation of learner development. I grew up with an education system in Hong Kong that emphasized classroom-based teaching and learning. However, when I started teaching in schools, the students were developing their interests in English by learning outside school and in their own social worlds. My particular research interest is in what happens beyond the language classroom, and how learner development evolves over time and space. Visualizing language learning then involved learners producing artefacts to *show* various kinds or stages of learner development or reflections on the learning process. This assumption comes from my involvement in using narrative inquiry as a research methodology (Barkhuizen, et al., 2014), which considers narrative as "the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 1). It is not only the meaning-making aspect that appeals to me, the idea that telling stories as a "universal human activity" (Riessman, 1993, p. 3) means that this is a way for all language learners to make their learning processes explicit. Story telling is also a way for learners to

both better understand and construct their learning worlds (Bruner, 1991, 2004). To capture this concept of building knowledge, Barkhuizen (2013, p. 4) coined the term, “narrative knowledging” for “making sense of an experience through narrating, analyzing narratives, reporting narrative research, and consuming research findings.”

When exploring the visualization of learner development, my research approach leans toward a literal interpretation of the word “visualize,” and uses a visual narrative approach. Visual narratives come in different forms: language portrait silhouette (Chik, 2014, 2018), photo-elicitation (Besser & Chik, 2014), and multimodal language learning histories (Chik & Breidbach, 2011, 2014). There are three main approaches to using these visual narratives for data collection. First, the visual narratives are treated as artefacts and objects of investigation (Melo-Pfeifer, 2015). Secondly, visual narratives are used as prompts for language learning interviewing and/or writing (Coffey, 2015; Besser & Chik, 2014; Giroir, 2014). And finally, a hybrid of the above two approaches (Chik, 2014, 2018; Kalaja et al., 2008; Menezes, 2008).

My particular research interest with visualizing learner development is through using free form drawing (Chik, 2018; Prasad, 2014) or the coloring and labeling of language portrait silhouettes (Busch, 2012; Chik, Markose, & Alperstein, 2018; Coffey, 2015). In most of my studies, I am interested in the ways learners develop their language identities, and the resources they utilize. Through the process of drawing or coloring, a learner systematically selects and highlights emotions, practices, and peoples that are important to them. However, I did find that events are usually not being depicted. Another discovery is how frequently learners portrayed themselves as being alone, both physically and metaphorically. In my recent collection of about 175 language portrait silhouettes completed by primary school students and pre-service teachers, fewer than 15 silhouettes included more than one human figure. These silhouettes were collected in classroom contexts, and this raises a question about what and how learners actually see themselves and think about the learning process: Do most learners really think and feel that they are learning on their own? And if I use another research instrument, would the learners have framed their learner development differently?

Visualizing Learner Development: The Collective Wisdom

I have discussed one approach to visualizing learner development, and the collection of articles in this special issue has opened my understanding of “visualizing.” To start a discussion: in a classroom setting, who are involved in visualizing learner development? Are we looking at the teacher visualizing a group of students? An internal gazing by individuals? From one student to another? How about from one teacher to another?

Trying to graduate from coloring, I am very excited by the work done by Porter and Hilton. The idea of using a metaphor, and in this case a vibrant growing tree, as a model for learners to organize their reflection is a perfect way for learners to envision future growth. This tree metaphor is a particularly apt choice to remind us all that language learning does not happen over night (or in three months as claimed by many commercialized courses and providers). And if language learning can be conceived as growth, it requires some loving tender care. When learners see others’ representation, there are inspirations to think about what other nutrients do my tree needs? This reflective exercise also enables teachers to reflect upon how learners view their learning as an ecology, and start a reflective dialogue with colleagues.

A continuous dialogue with colleagues is an important way for teachers to pause, rethink, reflect, and re-energize. But Karlsson and Bradley brought out a new dimension of emotions. Many teachers experience a class and teaching not only professionally, but also emotionally. Teachers are frequently the first people who notice the ups and downs among learners, but teachers’ own emotions are frequently censured in formal contexts. In their study, Karlsson

and Bradley use free writing to capture their own emotional reaction in their language consultation. And the understanding of emotions can lead to explicit insights on a creative approach to language learning and teaching.

The externalization and display of an internal construct can possibly jog students to rethink their own learning and development. McCarthy's exercise of having students display their conceptualization of the meanings of learner autonomy presented a sad truth. In the current relationship between language proficiency (especially for English learners) and socio-economic advancement, learners are connecting levels of proficiency with all types of reflective practices. Learner autonomy, as a construct, should be directed toward helping a learner to take charge, make decisions, and possibly chart a growing path. I learn Italian on my own and in my spare time, and make hopelessly slow progress. I still feel that I am an autonomous learner, because I made choices on what and how to learn, and am satisfied when I can sort of understand some news headlines or recognize some words in a video. But I am not under any pressure because acquiring some proficiency in Italian is only for my own pleasure, and I do not receive any economic benefits. But the Japanese students in McCarthy's study do not have the luxury of learning English as a recreational activity. Their visual representation of their interpretations of learner autonomy reflects the inequalities in the education system.

The idea of keeping up with the Joneses does not necessarily have to be a negative experience. Fukada and colleagues show that visualizing possible helping others could be empowering. By focusing on attributes for positive psychology and learning, learners then visualize their own possible attainment to develop such attributes. And this could work really well with Mariani's use of metaphors to get students to move beyond the learning; and focus on the learning process. Looking at the different categories of metaphors used by students, it is not difficult to see that students connect their learning experience beyond the classroom. They think about how English learning skills can be transferred (or imported) from other types of learning, or other forms of language learning. This connects to Abe's work on developing students' metacognitive knowledge to make learner development explicit.

Concluding Remarks

After reading through the studies in this volume, several questions came into my mind: When learners are put into one classroom, they tend to be categorized as one group. The "English for Business" students, or the "Year 2" students, so on and so forth. Learner development tends to be institutionally measured in grades and achievement, and unfortunately, failure as well. The individual learner disappears into the crowd, and vanishes. However, each study in this volume asks one question: How can learner development be reconceptualized, especially by involving learners in this visualization process? The different researchers adopted different research methodology that best fitted their teaching and researching contexts. However, one observation from this collection of work is that the visualization of learner development is not limited to what happened in the classroom. Regardless of the research focus and methodology, the visualization of learner development revealed more about the learners as people, and how language learning is connected to other aspects of their social worlds. Development in language learning is connected to the development of the person, and it does not exist as just one isolated event within the classroom.

Coming back to my earlier mistaken musical memory of "Do You See What I See?," the collection of papers in this inaugural issue of *The Learner Development Journal* helps make learner development explicit. Sometimes, it is important for the teacher to see that development or the learning process explicitly because it is the students who are singing, *do you see what I see* (my triumphs and my struggles in learning a language). Sometime it is the teachers singing

the tune because they can see what the students are going through and will be likely to go through in their language learning journeys, and the teachers are finding ways to help students externalize the mental processes at work. And sometimes it is also an excited shout from one teacher to another when something amazing happened in the classroom. So maybe it is Christmas after all, and visualizing learner development is the best gift in a language classroom, for both the teacher and the learners.

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