Challenging the Conventions of Learner Development Research

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Introduction to *The Learner Development Journal Issue 7*: Challenging the Conventions of Learner Development Research

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Why "Challenging the Conventions"?

Ellen: The shared global story of 2020-23 challenged many assumptions about teaching and learning, as the pandemic forced us to embrace online teaching under emergency remote conditions, study abroad was cancelled, Brexit, the Black Lives Matter protests, and the January 6 assault on the Capitol all acted together to undermine the pristine image of hegemonic English-speaking countries. Meanwhile, AI resources for translation and text creation were developing in ways that would change students' perceived needs and profoundly impact the way we do teaching and learning. Back in 2020, it felt, for me at least, as if the era was challenging us. In ELT, there have been numerous attempts to identify trends such as "the multilingual turn" or "the narrative turn," but it was very hard to say which way things would turn at the time in November 2020 when I first met Aya in a Learner Development SIG forum online. Recently I've been jokingly referring to this as the "Everything-Everywhere-All-At-Once Turn" (after the 2022 movie by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert) to express something of the confusion and complexity of that moment, when we could see "everything" online, but we could not actually go anywhere nor predict when that moment would be over. Now in December 2023, it might seem to be business as usual in many contexts, but it's probably true to say that the experience of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) has affected teaching and learning in profound ways, even if we don't fully realise it yet.

How we met each other and discovered the theme for LDJ7

Ellen: When I heard Aya's presentation about dilemmas and trajectories in adolescents' language learning, at the Learner Development Forum at JALT2020, I was fascinated by the new questions she was asking and her lightning-quick way of making connections between theory and practice. So in the summer of 2021, I approached her to ask if she would be interested in putting forward a proposal for Issue 7 of The Learner Development Journal (LDJ7). Aya asked Ryo Moriya to join us, as Ryo was also curious about emotions, life trajectories, and research methods which attempt to capture both the subtleties of individual experience and the connection to a larger picture. All of us

had written for LDJ at different times, and enjoyed the engagement with writing for a small audience, sharing multiple drafts, and continuing to work on the same piece over an extended time period. We started talking about themes and the idea of "challenging the conventions" emerged.

Previous conventions challenged and room for further exploration

Aya: In my view, one of the most important previous studies in our field that "challenged the conventions" is Firth & Wagner (1997). The authors overturned the hidden assumption that many people might have had as second language teachers/learners, namely the native speaker ideology. I myself, as an L2 English user, felt empowered by their argument that we should reconsider the conception that non-native speakers/second language learners are a "deficit" model. They also touched on the issue of what constitutes success, arguing that we should learn not only from failures but also from successes in language learning and use. What is considered deficit from one theoretical lens can be considered full of resources and potentials from another. Another important example that "challenged the conventions" would be how positive psychology was introduced to general psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), and eventually to psychology of language learners (Mercer & MacIntyre, 2014). Positive psychology has challenged conventional psychology by shifting the focus from what is wrong to what is right in human life. While psychology has generally aimed to study and treat problems, positive psychology seeks ways to understand and enhance the positive aspects of human functioning such as wellbeing and strengths, as well as embrace and harness negativity.

While Firth & Wagner's arguments and positive psychology developed from completely different histories of research, these perspectives have commonality in that they both brought fresh insights into learner development research. For instance, in my ongoing PhD research, I am exploring the potential role of English learning experience in the (trans)formation of career perspectives in women from rural Japan; I try to revisit this seemingly resource-limited context from both critical and hopeful perspectives by taking a transdisciplinary approach (Douglas Fir Group, 2016; see also Edsall et al., 2023, this issue). My suggestion here is not just to look at the *bright* side; we need to look at *both* sides, or *multiple* sides of learners–multiple and complex emotions, identities, and contexts within each individual (see also Ryo's story below). Of course, this kind of holistic approach is not new in itself. However, what both fascinates and challenges me is the dilemmas, ambivalence, and contradictions in individuals' lived experience, and these still seem to leave a lot of room for further exploration.

Looking back, I feel this room for exploration was what brought us LDJ7 editors and contributors together as well. We (Ellen, Aya, and Ryo) started by sharing what it meant to challenge conventions in our respective studies, which naturally made us curious about how practitioners and researchers in other contexts and from more diverse backgrounds might, could, and should be looking at learner development from new angles, and how we could learn from one another. Distanced from our normal lives because of the pandemic, we were somehow given more time and space than ever to rethink what we have done and what we have taken for granted in language education. One positive outcome of the pandemic, if any, was that it allowed us to explore such *room* for exploration and discussion together without being in the same *room* physically.

Historia: From person-in-context to context-in-person?

Ryo: Regarding "challenging the conventions," I am working on sociocultural theory (hereafter SCT) based on Vygotsky's ideas. Specifically, I am interested in praxis (the fusion of theory and practice), combining SCT and advising in language learning, to longitudinally investigate *perezhivanie* (a Russian term that represents the dialectical unity of both "cognition and emotion" and "individual agent and environment") in advising settings that encourage learners to be autonomous/agentive and provide individualized and optimal support (e.g., Moriya, 2022, 2023). One of Vygotsky's ideas that greatly impacted my thinking about my research L2 topics was that learning cannot be achieved only by individuals or certain targeted variables, but, in reality, involves a myriad of mediating interactants (including artifacts and interlocutors).

Vygotsky critically examined the dualism (e.g., subjective or behavioral psychology), common in psychology at the time, and theorized anew about the relationship between childhood development and education (see Vygotsky, 1997). Although he did not directly mention L2 learning, sociocultural theorists have incorporated his ideas into L2 learning/teaching as praxis (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014), and we can identify glimpses of them in many of the LDJ7 articles. For example, the analysis of peer interaction in Kawasaki's paper (Kawasaki, 2023) owes much to Vygotsky's ideas. In this issue, too,the idea of linguistic abilities growing through interaction with a whole group emerges in Takagi, Tanaka and Minami's study of an autonomy-fostering teacher (Takagi et al., 2023). It might not be an exaggeration to say that none of the LDJ7 articles would be written in quite the same way without the influence of Vygotsky, albeit indirectly. Among the SCT-related terms (e.g., sociocultural interaction, mediation, and longitudinal development), one of the well-known concepts in the theory Vygotsky systematized is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD is a concept he created because of his dialectical view of relationships with others beyond the individual. It may sound paradoxical, but the ZPD reflects his idea that it is not enough to look only at the individual in order to face the individual. That is why the futuristic and collective aspect of *what we will be able to do* is crucial in the ZPD.

Vygotsky also incorporated dialectical materialism into his theory and emphasized *historia* (i.e., four different geneses; see Lantolf et al., 2018). In English, story and history are different words, but etymologically, *historia* is the Latin word for both. In fact, past events can be described as stories about something/someone. Like the ZPD, another paradox is at work: to understand the future, we need to face more about the past rather than only the future. Vygotskian sociocultural theorists have long stressed the importance of context since the 1980s, or rather, it has been a fundamental premise of their works (e.g., Frawley & Lantolf, 1985). There is no denying that looking at context-in-person is essential now in exploring learner development. Context-in-person truly represents a person's *historia* (or history-in-person, according to Holland & Lave, 2001). Just as Vygotsky challenged the conventions of his time with dialectical ideas, we hope the works of LDJ7 contributors who have faced learner/teacher *historia* will become cornerstones for the reader's future, which will be your *historia* afterward.

Developing LDJ7

Ellen: During the process of talking with writers and reading their early drafts, it became clear that as learners, teachers, and practitioner researchers, we need conventions as a place to start from, even if we do decide to challenge them. In this context, "conventions" mean both ways of writing, and awareness of what others have done in the past – practices they did and the theories that they had.

As each issue of the LDJ has a two-year gestation period, LDJ7 writers and editors had a unique opportunity to work with an audience with whom they had a social relationship, to track our own and each other's changes, and notice when and how these show up in writing. During the meetings which we had online with contributors, there was an atmosphere of discovery and challenge as authors and editors asked questions and sometimes prodded each other to discover new aspects of the historia represented. As a result, LDJ7 authors took up a variety of inter/transdisciplinary approaches to gain fresh insights into the dynamic nature of learner development. In this issue, our authors focused particularly on the minutiae of relationships, emotions, and events related to learning at the most intimate level.

Such richness of interaction leads to tough decisions for the editors, as we have the task of setting boundaries which inevitably result in losses - of the evanescent insights in a marginal comment or a Zoom discussion, and of brilliant ideas that inadvertently spiralled away from the main theme. Along with setting boundaries, we also had the great pleasure of walking alongside the authors as they developed and explicated their research, as well as situated their stories in relation to their lived experiences of teaching and learning.

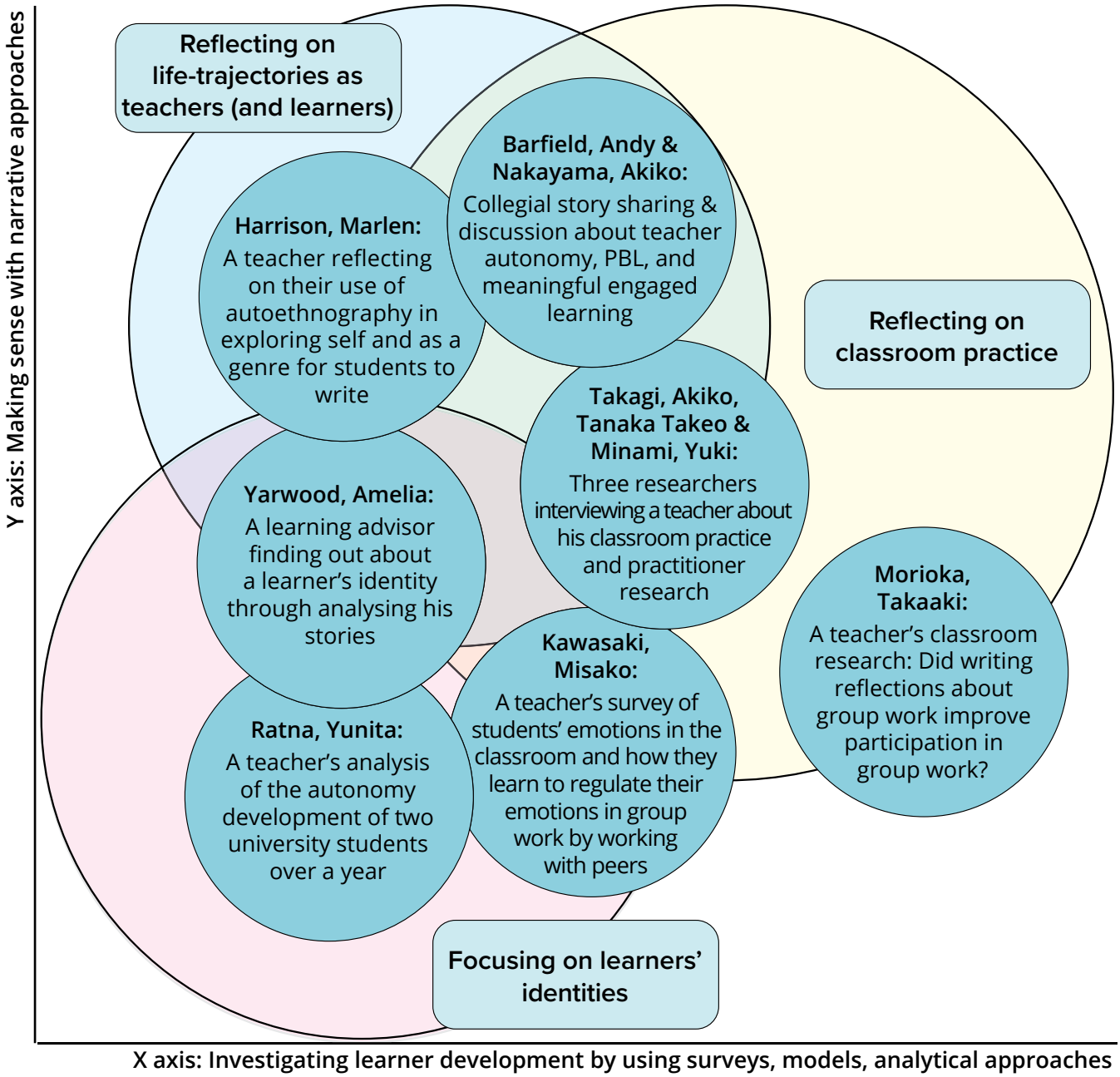
Challenging the Convention of Linear Reading

To provide an overview of this issue, the following map offers a visual representation of some of the themes which connect the articles in LDJ7. The three large circles correspond to the themes of the three groups which the LDJ7 contributors were divided into for the purpose of discussing their nascent research projects, sharing their developing drafts, and offering feedback on each others' work. One group focused on learner's emotions and identities, the second group on classroom practice for developing learner autonomy. The third group were drawn together by an interest in exploring the nature of writing as a practitioner-researcher, in terms of genre. In the map, we have labelled their focus as "reflecting on life-trajectories as teachers and learners" in order to bring out the themes they have in common with the other groups.

For those who prefer a linear outline, we have arranged the articles by starting with the focus on a single learner, broadening out to look at learner's emotions in groups, classrooms and finally teachers' life trajectories. However, we hope you will discover many resonances between the articles. Ideally, we would make this map into a three-dimensional, interactive game in which you, the reader, could move various articles around in accordance with the resonances that you notice.

LDJ7: Challenging the Conventions of Learner Development Research: Thematic Connections

Each colored circle represents one article, with author name(s) and a short summary. The map can be imagined as a three-dimensional, interactive game in which you, the reader, can jump from place to place and also move various articles around in accordance with the resonances that you notice.



More about this mind map: Articles which are closer to the bottom part of the page used more quantitative and analytic approaches. Articles closer to the left hand side of the page used qualitative approaches. The larger circles represent thematic connections between articles.

Figure 1. Thematic connections across LDJ7

Amelia Yarwood, **"Tracing Emotion in the (Re)Construction of an EFL Identity During a Self-Directed Learning Module: A Short Story Approach"**

Amelia Yarwood's exploration of the emotions and learner identity of a single language learner reveals the dramatic shifts the learner experienced while he was studying on a self-directed learning course. The author analyses the stories which he told in interviews some time after the course had ended when he had had time to reflect. Amelia combines three different analytical methods – a short story analysis, using Barkhuizen (2016), together with emotional qualities analysis and identity analysis using narrative re-writing – resulting in a study which challenges the conventions of learner development research in terms of detail, priority given to emotions, and learner-centeredness.

Ratna Yunita, **"Investigating Learner Autonomy Development Through a Complex Dynamic Systems Theory View: An Indonesian Context"**

Ratna Yunita looks at the development of learner autonomy in Indonesia in a longitudinal study focusing on two students. She contextualizes her research by looking at her own story of autonomy and Indonesian educational policy. Her in-depth study then focuses on the dynamic fluctuations of autonomy development experienced by her students during 2020-21. Carrying out retrospective interviews, Ratna identifies four factors which operate as part of a complex, dynamic system, including the learners' affect, behavioural change, restrictions, and external push and support. The compelling interplay between these factors over time provides valuable insights into how students may be supported in becoming more autonomous in different local contexts.

Misako Kawasaki, **"The Influence of Peer Interaction on Emotion Regulation in the English Classroom"**

Misako Kawasaki describes a semester-long study of the emotion regulation which developed between peers in her class. Initially, she surveyed the students about the emotions which they experienced in class. Repeating the survey in the middle and at the end of the semester, Misako provided opportunities for the students to reflect and share reflection on the strategies they used to regulate emotions in negative situations. Peer interaction had a significant effect on their emotion regulation, generally promoting positive emotions. This innovative study suggests that classroom teachers can help students improve emotion regulation by specifically introducing discussion of emotions in the language learning classroom.

Akiko Takagi, Takeo Tanaka, & Yuki Minami, **"The Role of Practitioner Research in Exploring Learner Autonomy for In-Service Teachers: A Retrospective Case Study"**

Akiko Takagi, Takeo Tanaka, and Yuki Minami collaborate with a junior high school teacher, Naoya Miyazaki, to find out more about the development of autonomous learning in the classroom. The three authors wanted to learn more about how Naoya did this through practitioner research over a two-year period. Interviewing him retrospectively about an article that he had written and that included teacher journal reflections on his practices, Akiko, Takeo, and Minami analysed themes from the multiple sources of data to build up a more sophisticated understanding of Naoya's learner autonomy-fostering perspectives in this multi-layered study.

Takaaki Morioka, **"Exploring the Impact of Mandatory Reflection Activities on Students' Perceptions of Group Work"**

Takaaki Morioka reports on the effect of mandatory reflection as a follow-up to group learning activities with first-year students aged 15 to 16 at a technical college in Japan. He carried out a comparative study in which one group participated in cooperative learning activities and wrote regular reflections, while the other group participated in cooperative learning without writing any reflections. All the students were somewhat positive about group learning, but the group which wrote reflections were not as positive about their learning experiences. The study thus leads Takaaki to challenge his assumption that reflection would result in enhanced learner engagement.

Marlen Harrison, **"Why I Utilize Autoethnography to Promote Learner Development: A Reflexive Narrative of English Teacher Development"**

Marlen Harrison argues for the practice of autoethnography as a mode of self-development which can bring insight to both teachers and learners. He describes his own innovative use of autoethnography for self-exploration and his experiments with autoethnography as an assignment for students in university English writing classrooms in Japan, Finland, and the USA. Reflecting on his journey as an autoethnography instructor, Marlen makes original connections between identity, self-awareness, and autonomy, as well as provides practical suggestions for using autoethnography with learners.

Andy Barfield & Akiko Nakayama, **"Collegially Exploring Engaged Meaningful Learning: Stories, Perspectives, Dialogue, and Issues"**

Andy Barfield and Akiko Nakayama's piece challenges conventions in multiple ways, building up a patchwork of parallel stories and reflexive dialogue, ranging over themes which include teacher socialization, learner and teacher autonomy, project-based learning (PBL), and other non-conventional approaches to learning. Akiko and Andy's article, co-written in a process which included regular collaborative meetings on Zoom, captures the flavour of collegial dialogue, and as such it stands to remind us of the special, dialogic nature of LDJ.

Dominic Edsall, with Ellen Head & Aya Hayasaki, **"Towards Complexity in Challenging Learner Autonomy Research Conventions: A Wider View on Learner Development"**

We (Ellen, Aya, and Ryo) asked Dominic to write a piece for LDJ7 which would provide a theoretical underpinning and rationale for our intuitive feeling that both qualitative and quantitative research could have a place side by side in LDJ. In this paper, Dominic focuses on making connections between various different research perspectives, drawing on the work of Bhaskar, a critical realist philosopher, and the Douglas Fir group, to ask directly "What are the conventions of learner autonomy research, and why should they be challenged?" The writing was further enriched by continuous dialogue and questioning by Aya and Ellen with Dominic; however, the authorial voice, knowledge, and overall perspective remain Dominic's.

***Dominique Vola Ambinintsoa,* "Concluding Commentary: Reflect, Write, and Share"**

Dominique Vola Ambinintsoa offers a thoughtful critique of each article, together with a strong endorsement of reflective writing as practitioner research. In this concluding piece, Vola exhorts us to engage in reflective writing and collegial sharing, reminding us how close the process of writing is to reading. If you would like more orientation before jumping into LDJ7, then this commentary might be the best place to start. But you are warmly invited to find your own route.

Acknowledgements

The editors express our heart-felt thanks to each and every contributor for creating and sharing these journeys of discovery together with us. We would also like to say a giant thank you to the reviewers and, above all, to the steering group for their tireless work and attention to detail without which LDJ7 could not be produced at all. Their hard work has resulted in the illusion that the issue came together effortlessly, when in fact much of the work was done behind the scenes by the STG. We also want to offer our sincere thanks to Ivan Lombardi for working on the layout of LDJ7 with amazing speed, insight, and good-humoured replies to our demanding requests. In the beginning stages, Gareth Barnes and Takaaki Morioka joined us and contributed their ideas to the Call for Proposals, helping to shape our thinking and collaboration. It is a great privilege to be part of LDJ and, although all three of us started out intending to "give back" to the LDJ community, it is probably true to say that we have received more than we have given, many times over.

— Ellen Head, Aya Hayasaki, & Ryo Moriya
December 2023

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Tracing Emotion in the (Re)Construction of an EFL Identity During a Self-Directed Learning Module: A Short Story Approach

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This paper explores the stories told by Hiroto, an EFL learner enrolled in a semester-long self-directed language learning (SDLL) module to understand how the emotional qualities found in the stories interact with Hiroto's identity (re)construction. Barkhuizen's (2016b) short story approach was used in conjunction with emotion-based codes to analyse data extracts from interviews, constructed identity statements, and a visual language learning history. The findings reveal that Hiroto experiences a constant flux of emotions throughout his SDLL journey that interact in different ways with micro, meso, and macro-level factors such as an existing desired identity, academic obligations, cultural influences, and TOEIC examinations.

本論文は、1学期にわたる自己主導型言語学習（SDLL）モジュールに在籍するEFL学習者ヒロトの物語を探求し、彼の物語に見られる感情の性質がヒロトのアイデンティティ（再）構築とどのように相互作用するかを理解する。Barkhuizen（2016）のショートストーリーアプローチは、インタビュー、構築されたアイデンティティステートメント、視覚化した言語学習史から抽出したデータを分析するために、感情に基づくコードと組み合わせて使用された。その結果、ヒロトはSDLLの旅路によって、既存の望ましいアイデンティティ、学業上の義務、文化的影響、TOEIC試験などのミクロ、メゾ、マクロレベルの要因とさまざまな形で相互作用する、持続的な感情の流動を経験していることが明らかになった。

Keywords

learner emotions, emotional qualities, EFL learner, identity construction, narrative case study
学習者感情、感情の性質、外国語としての英語学習者、アイデンティティの構築、ナラティブによる事例研究

Introduction

Stories of language learning are at the core of my personal, professional, and research life. It is through stories that learners can make sense of their multiple, dynamic identities, each of which is grounded in different places, spaces, and times. In my role as a Learning Advisor (LA), a language and self-directed learning specialist, I became fascinated by how the emotions in the stories my students shared mediated their actions; either facilitating or hindering their learning, or influencing who they identified as language learners. However, when consulting the literature, I found that little attention had been paid to emotions due to preferences for cognitive approaches (Swain, 2013; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) and an unfamiliarity with how to conduct emotion research (Swain, 2013). Connections between self-directed learning, learner identity, and emotions were even fewer. With this gap in mind, I set out to adopt a "person-centred" approach (Benson, 2019, p. 65) that would shed light on how learning experiences and emotions interact with the way in which self-directed language learning identities are constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed anew through storytelling. Storytelling, it seemed, was the perfect vehicle to understand the sociocultural and psychological experiences of a learner and how they influence, inform, and are integrated into their perception of who they are as a learner.

Using stories as both process and product was a challenge. Just as my participant had to make decisions about language choice, structure, presentation, and the interpretations offered, I also had to make decisions about how I gave meaning to another person's experiences, emotions, and identities. The difficulty was only increased by the uncertainty, bewilderment, and frustration I encountered when attempting to combine the multiple threads of related stories in a way that would resonate with the reader. I have done my best to explore the relational processes that occur in the development of self-directed language learning identities; however, I invite readers to be active participants in the storytelling process - interpret what you read with an awareness of your own language learning experiences, emotions, and sense of self.

Self-Directed Language Learning

Self-directed language learners, those willing to be responsible for their own learning processes, are likely to be engaged, focused, and maintain effective study habits (Thornton, 2010). These benefits are desirable for life-long learning and personal growth. Consistent self-directed language learning (SDLL), while ideal, is not the reality. In reality, SDLL is relational. It is a tapestry of coloured threads that represents any number of interacting variables, including learner's beliefs, values, personalities, lived experiences, and situational factors within their personal, social, and wider socio-political worlds. In an effort to better understand and regulate some of these variables, educating learners in the use of practical and reflective self-directed learning skills has been advocated by leading researchers (Nunan, 1999; Oxford, 1990, 2017). The approach taken to SDLL in my context, a self-access learning centre near Tokyo, seeks to actively address the dynamic nature of language learning. Thus, considerable efforts are made to work with learners to co-construct a narrative that makes explicit the personal, interpersonal, and contextual variables that influence self-directed learning.

Practically, this is achieved by employing Learning Advisors (LAs), foreign language teaching and learning specialists trained in reflective dialogue tools and practices (Kato & Mynard, 2016). Advising sessions are open to all students who wish to explore their learning processes alongside an advisor. The sessions are voluntary, often conducted in the students' target language, and are a unique feature of the self-access centre.

Training in SDLL through modules collectively known as the Effective Learning Module (ELM) is also offered. Delivered as two separate modules, the introductory ELM 1 module covers practical SDLL skills such as goal setting, language learning strategies, resources, and overcoming barriers (e.g., motivation, confidence) and is a prerequisite for enrolment in the more self-directed and reflective ELM 2. Practical and reflective skills are interwoven in each module, albeit to different degrees. For example, practical SDLL skills are introduced and explored across six weekly units in ELM 1 before a personal learning plan is developed, implemented, and reflected upon by the student. LAs provide written feedback each week, but advising sessions are not built into the schedule (although they can, and are requested). In contrast, ELM 2 includes intermittent reflective training activities which are designed to deepen the weekly reflections module takers write based on what they notice about the process of implementing their personal learning plans. Several advising sessions are embedded in the ELM 2 schedule. (For a full explanation of the modules, see Davies & Yarwood, 2023; Imamura & Wongsarnpigoon, 2023.)

SDLL and Language Learner Identity

Characterised as volitional action and the genuine self-endorsement of a learning task (Mynard et al., 2022), autonomy is at the heart of the SDLL modules. Learners enrolled in these modules are thus required to reflect on who they are as language learners and make self-endorsed decisions about the what, where, why, and how of their learning. However, not all learners are willing to take responsibility for their own learning due to preferences for learning styles that are passive and teacher centred (Wong & Nunan, 2011) or uncertainty in adjusting their approaches to make the most of new, autonomous learning environments (Curry et al., 2017; Victori & Lockhart, 1995). For others, the variables outlined earlier (e.g., personal, interpersonal, and situational) may facilitate or hinder self-directed learning. Learners thus operate at, and maneuver between, different stages of autonomous thinking and behaviour (i.e., from other-directed to completely self-directed) for a number of reasons (Kato & Mynard, 2016).

In the experience of many advisors, changes in autonomy and self-directed learning behaviours take time, are supported by the advisor-advisee bond, and may not always be immediately visible (Davis et al., 2019; Edlin & Yarwood, 2019). Anecdotal evidence from experienced advisors, myself included, highlights the complex and lengthy process involved in developing an autonomous, self-directed learner identity. Frequently, the changes in learners' beliefs and affective realities that signal a transformation in autonomy development are not immediately recognisable (Chong & Reinders, 2022). Without understanding the processes, affordances, and obstacles that shape the development of self-directed learner identities over time and, in the context of SDLL experiences, educators may inadvertently underestimate the impact of SDLL teaching and learning pedagogies. Thus I aim to provide an example of how language advisors, classroom teachers, and those developing self-directed learning materials could holistically explore ways in which SDLL experiences influence, inform, and are integrated into individual language learners' identities.

Stories of Who Am I?

Learner identity is grounded in past experiences and exerts considerable influence on current and future goals, values, and concerns (Miyahara, 2014, 2017). The temporal, goal- and value-oriented nature of identity is reaffirmed in Norton's often cited definition of identity as, "the way a person understands [their] relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (Norton, 2013, p. 4). It appears then that there is no better way to understand, maintain, or modify language learning behaviours than to untangle the subjective values interwoven with a learner's understanding of their L2 learning experiences and their ongoing identity work (i.e., renegotiating an identity). As perceptions of experiences, values, goals, and identity are unique to the individual, a "person-centred" approach (Benson, 2019, p. 65) that gives prominence to an individual's experiences in and conceptions of social contexts rather than the social context itself are most appropriate to the task (Benson, 2019; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Ushioda, 2011, 2016).

Narratives, or more specifically, elicited storytelling is one method that can be used to gain access to the subjective experiences inherent in learner identity research (Barkhuizen, 2016b, 2017; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Hiver et al., 2020; McAdams & McLean, 2013), while also creating a space for learners to exercise their agency in defining and renegotiating their identities. In other words, through the process of the self-reflection

that takes place in elicited storytelling situations, learners develop a greater awareness of their individual processes (Kato & Mynard, 2016). Meanwhile, agency is demonstrated when learners construct, evaluate and ultimately share the stories they feel are relevant to their identity as language learners (Barkhuizen 2016b; Prior, 2016, 2019). The constructed nature of elicited stories often encounters questions of representation and trustworthiness. However, in working with narratives, it is important to remember that we do not seek to find "faithful representations of a reality independent of the knower" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 39). Instead, how learners choose to represent themselves is at the core of narratives and narrative inquiry. In utilising narratives, we aim to consider the rich tapestry of what is told, how it is told, and how stories are co-constructed by, and resonate with, the narrator, the audience, and existing social, political, and cultural narratives. Exploring learner identity from a person-centred, narrative approach offers researchers, educators, and the learners themselves an opportunity to look at the tapestry of experience through an iterative lens; each time uncovering the different representations that have been woven together. Each time gaining a different insight into their experience as a whole.

Learners enrolled in formal SDLL modules like the one in this study are familiar with the act of elicited storytelling through embedded reflective activities. Self-reflection occurs internally. Meanwhile, the written and oral reflections in SDLL modules or with LAs are social activities. SDLL modules thus provide a supportive, dialogic space in which learners can share stories about their perceptions of and responses to their far- and recent-past learning experiences in multimodal and collaborative ways. In terms of understanding SDLL-related identity work, subjectivity or how individuals perceive an experience is a foundational concept. The emotional tones learners colour their stories of SDLL with can provide an insight into how they are negotiating their experiences, their relationship with their emerging learner identity, and any obstacles they face in developing a more self-directed identity. I explore this in more detail in the next section where I highlight the connections between subjective experiences in SDLL, emotion, and identity work.

Emotions behind Who am I?

Emotions have traditionally been defined as purely cognitive phenomena (Barcelos, 2015; Pavlenko, 2013). Such definitions disassociate emotions from their dynamic and situated nature and their relationship to power relations, ideologies and cultural norms (Pavlenko, 2013; Prior, 2019; Swain, 2013). Traditional definitions of emotions are also problematic to our understanding of SDLL. To do justice to the complex relationship emotions have with SDLL, holistic approaches that take into account the interplay of a broad range of emotions, cognition and action (Imai, 2010), language use (Prior, 2019; Dewaele, 2021), and beliefs and identities (Barcelos, 2015) are essential. One view of emotions that gives salience to its cognitive and social dimensions comes from the psychologist Nico Frijda. By characterising emotions as a motivation state which, "push the individual to change his relationship with an object, a state of the world, or a state of self, or to maintain an existing relationship despite obstacles or interferences" (Frijda, 2008, p. 16), SDLL, learner identity, and emotions should be explored holistically. In this view of emotions, the priority given to emotional concerns (e.g., the desire to succeed) is dependent on the individual or culture, as well as any potential threats to a particular emotional concern. As a result, there can be a range of potential meanings attached to each concern (Frijda, 1988; Mesquita & Frijda, 2011). To provide a concrete example, a learner who is ambitious

may aspire to convey their familiarity with complex concepts during a conversation. For the learner, maintaining their credibility as an ambitious, intelligent individual is their focal emotional concern. If the learner lacks the appropriate vocabulary to maintain their credibility, then their identity as knowledgeable becomes threatened, generating fear or shame, which may result in avoidance behaviours such as ending the conversation. Concurrently, ending the conversation may also undermine their credibility as ambitious since they are unable to prove their ambition-related hard work. So, desire may win out over fear and shame and propel the learner to look up the necessary vocabulary in order to fulfil their goal. Emotions are thus feelings that evoke reactions and have the potential for action (MacIntyre & Gergerson, 2012). When engaging with SDLL knowledge and abilities, emotions can be considered an "essential resource" (Yamashita, 2015, p. 79). In other words, by identifying the emotions being experienced, the learner can develop an awareness of what is happening to them, why it is happening, and its effect on their perceptions, beliefs, and language learning behaviours. From there, the learner can then make an informed decision about their learning.

The Study

My aim was to take a closer look at the SDLL identity work undertaken by English language learners by providing a case study of an undergraduate enrolled in a SDLL module at a foreign language university in Japan. To focus the study on the negotiation of a self-directed learner identity vis-à-vis the learner's subjective perception of their SDLL experience, I give priority to the learner's identity work and not the specific activities (for readers interested in activity details, see Curry et al., 2017; Davies & Yarwood, 2023; Imamura & Wongsarnpigoon, 2023). To guide my analysis and interpretation, the following research questions were explored:

1. What elicited narratives does a single Japanese undergraduate share of their English learning experience during a semester-long SDLL module?
2. How do the emotional qualities in the learner's elicited narratives function in relation to their SDLL learner identity?

Methodology

Introducing Hiroto

Hiroto (pseudonym) was a first-year student enrolled in the International Communications department. To obtain a longitudinal understanding of identity work during SDLL, I contacted participants who had enrolled in both SDLL modules during the 2021-22 academic year. A total of six students were invited to participate in the study, but only Hiroto expressed an interest in sharing his stories.

Despite joining his mother at a local English community centre to sing English songs from a young age, Hiroto did not begin seriously learning English until the end of junior high school when he found enjoyment in doing well on school-based English exams. His decision to enrol at the university was based on his desire to "*study English with English*." With an ambitious attitude, Hiroto initially enrolled in the SDLL module to "*learn how to study and so something new in university."* His motivation to take the second SDLL module emerged from the realisation that his earlier study plans were "*not realistic,*" so he "*made a decision to make a realistic plan."*

Collecting and analysing stories

As a narrative researcher, I aim to move beyond a description of phenomena to focus on understanding how lived experiences are co-created, understood, performed, and transformed. Narrative inquiry, in contrast to other forms of research, accepts findings in terms of authenticity, resonance, and/or trustworthiness (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). To ensure that Hiroto's voice was clearly represented in a way that ensures authenticity and trustworthiness, I followed a rigorous process that included reiterative readings, extensive note-taking, and active discussions of (re)interpretations. These discussions took place with both a colleague familiar with emotions and learner identity research, and Hiroto. To address the matter of resonance, which seeks to make sure findings are understandable, relatable, and worthwhile, I decided to present the analysis of narratives alongside the interpretation. By demonstrating what different elements in Hiroto's narrative experience signify, the threads of Hiroto's experience, emotions, and SDLL identity work become tightly woven to present a holistic image.

Summarising the procedures

The ethics, data collection, and analysis procedures I followed for this study took place between February and March 2022 (see Figure 1).

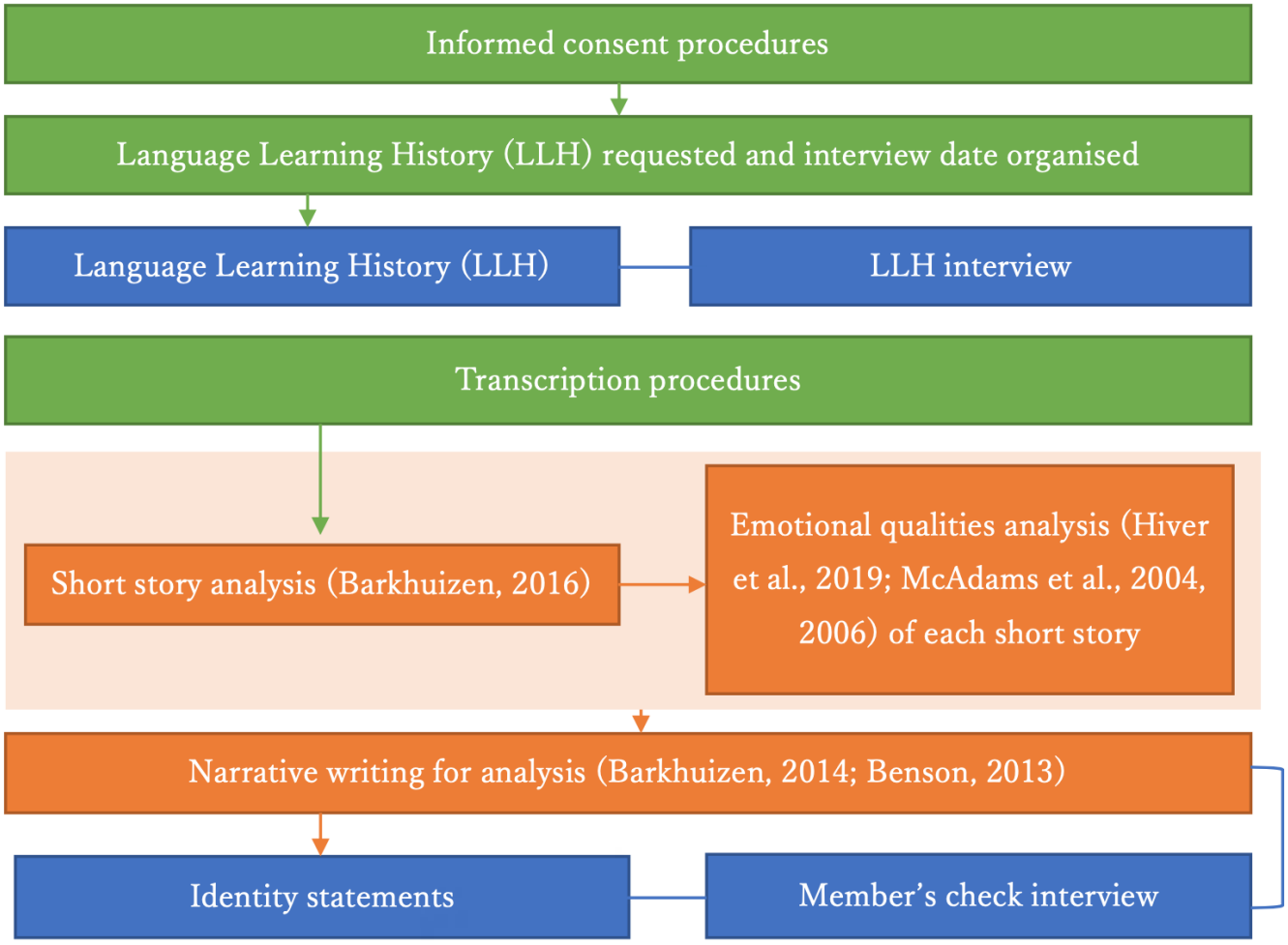

Figure 1. Flow of Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The consent procedures for this project included approval from the university ethics committee and providing Hiroto with both a bilingual, plain language statement and consent form. After Hiroto consented, I emailed him with instructions on how to create a visual language learning history (LLH) (Appendix A) and requested an online interview to explore his LLH experiences in further detail. In the interview, Hiroto was keen to use English and only used Japanese when he could not find the words to express himself as desired. My own Japanese abilities facilitated an environment in which Hiroto could express himself in both languages. The audio data was transcribed verbatim with Japanese utterances first translated by myself before being checked by a bilingual colleague for accuracy. The data was then uploaded to an Excel spreadsheet and analysed sentence by sentence. Three forms of analysis were conducted in iterative rounds to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of Hiroto's experiences: a short story analysis (Barkhuizen, 2016a; 2016b), an analysis of the emotional qualities contained within the narratives (Hiver et al., 2019; McAdams et al., 2004, 2006), and narrative writing for analysis (Bakhuizen, 2014; Benson, 2013).

Short story analysis

When conducting the short story analysis, I examined the larger data set for smaller extracts that took on the form of a fully contained story (Barkhuizen, 2016a; 2016b). These typically included reflective elements (Labov, 1997) and narrated a past experience or imagined future. In doing so, detailed attention could be given to the *content* (i.e., who, where, and when) and *context* (i.e., micro, meso, and macro scales of interaction) of the narratives. To differentiate between the different scales of contexts, I defined micro as interactions that took place within Hiroto. These include interactions between his personal thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and the emotions he experienced. The meso level often occurs in institutional and social spaces. The conversations that take place in advising sessions are examples of interactions at this level. Finally, macro refers to interactions representative of the broader ideological, discursive, and cultural contexts in which Hiroto's learning and identity work take place. A relevant example would be the values and discourse attached to standardised English proficiency examinations in Japan.

Analysis of Emotional Qualities

Once the interview data had been broken into short stories and analysed, the emotional qualities of each narrative were thematically analysed using inductive and deductive coding (Saldaña, 2015) (Appendix B). Inductive coding took place when interpreting the emotions experienced and their genesis, whereas the emotional tone and sequencing was coded based on prior studies from psychology and language learning that dealt with the emotional qualities of narratives (Hiver et al., 2019; McAdams et al., 2004, 2006):

Emotional tone. Used to rate the overall positivity on a 5-point scale with a rating of 1 for a *very unhappy story*, *very negative emotional tone* to a rating of 5 for *very happy story*, *very positive emotional tone*. These codes were used to understand the valency or strength of the emotions experienced in the narratives told.

Sequencing. Used to rate the emotional trajectory on a 4-point scale with a rating of 1 for *No change*, 2 for *Pos→Neg*, 3 for *Pos→Neg* and 4 for *Constant state of flux.* Emotional changes in Hiroto's stories were explored using these codes.

Narrative writing for analysis

The understandings and interpretations developed from the short story and emotional qualities analysis were fundamental to my approach to narrative writing for analysis (Benson, 2013; Consoli, 2021). I used them to help generate a coherent story by reconfiguring the dynamic elements found in the narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995). The story that resulted from this process focused on Hiroto's emotions and how they interacted with events to form distinct identities within the context of his SDLL experiences. A total of two narratives (i.e., identity statements) were composed (Appendix C) by using Hiroto's own words and my interpretations. In line with the co-constructed, collaborative nature of the study, Hiroto was invited to comment on these identity statements prior to the member check interview. During this step in the procedure, Hiroto confirmed the authenticity of the researcher's interpretations, elaborated on his earlier stories, and requested some modifications to the language used.

Hiroto's Stories

In this section, I have chosen to present analysis procedures, my interpretations and conclusions together, with the aim of establishing resonance and trustworthiness. I will focus mainly on presenting a detailed narrative of Hiroto's subjective, lived experiences. As the SDLL module content is secondary to Hiroto's perspective of his learning situation, it will not be explained unless necessary for making sense of his stories.

Investigating the stories shared

My intentions from the start of this study were to understand the elicited narratives shared by Hiroto about his English learning experiences during the SDLL module and how the emotional qualities in the stories shared interact with his SDLL identity. From the LLH interview, 6 self-contained stories emerged. Identified with a number (e.g., S1 for Story 1) and a representative title taken from Hiroto's own words, I have summarised these stories in Table 1 in relation to categories characterised by emotional qualities found in and across Hiroto's stories.

Table 1. *Narratives Produced by Hiroto*

Category	Short story title	Summary
Motivation stories (characterised by excitement)	S2. *I was* エネルギッシュ [energetic]	Proud of his idea to combine TOEIC study with a credit-bearing course, Hiroto started the module in a state of excitement.
	S5. *Talking with English speaker was so fun*	Unlike speaking with his classmates where he felt judged, Hiroto gained a little confidence when speaking to a fluent English speaker.

Category	Short story title	Summary
Conflict stories (characterised by a mixture of positive and negative emotions)	S1. *I had to take ELM*	After hearing the module was easier than regular classes and needing to fulfill credit requirements, Hiroto decided to enrol in the module.
	S3. *Sorry, it tough so I will postpone it*	Getting through assignments from regular classes became a priority for Hiroto during the first five weeks of university. He stopped submitting the work without telling his advisor. Despite feeling guilty and expecting the advisor to be angry at him, he was relieved to receive an empathetic response.
	S5. *My feeling was so like complicated*	In the final week of semester, Hiroto was exhausted. He didn't want to complete the module but after talking to his advisor, he was able to clear his mind and move forward.
Self-awareness stories (characterised by pride, regret, and appreciation)	S6. *ELM makes me realise my weak point*	Hiroto realised through the module that he had overestimated his capabilities.

Motivation stories generally focused on Hiroto's positive perception of his choices and the fun, motivating consequences that derived from his decisions. In both stories, undesirable elements were implied but Hiroto's decision to combine unpleasant, compulsory activities (i.e., TOEIC and classroom activities) with ones that were enjoyable (e.g., conversing with highly proficient speakers), ultimately reduced the potential for intense negative emotions to be experienced. The emotional tone and sequence of these stories were happy and positive and followed a stable positive trajectory.

Conflict stories resulted from Hiroto's duties as a university student and time-management factors. These stories fluctuated between positive and negative emotions, tone, and trajectories to underline the struggle Hiroto faced in trying to accomplish his personal and academic goals, fulfill his responsibilities, and manage his time and energy. Positive emotions such as appreciation and relief were found in Hiroto's interactions with his advisor. Meanwhile, the negative emotions highlighted the apprehension, guilt, and exhaustion that came from trying hard to be a good student. The final category is coincidentally also the final story Hiroto shared.

Reflective in nature, this self-awareness category exemplifies the ways in which emotions are a resource for greater metacognitive awareness (Yamashita, 2015). Hiroto experienced a constant flux of emotions throughout his SDLL journey but in narrating his experiences to his advisor and then to me, he eventually came to evaluate the experiences in a positive light. As Hiroto shared in S6 (*ELM makes me realise my weak point*):

> **Hiroto:** "I'm a bad boy, but I realise my weak point. So I can use my experience for next semester. I can know my capability."

While Hiroto may regret not achieving his goals in the way he had intended at the start of the module, he demonstrated an appreciation of the module and conversations with his advisor as opportunities to become aware of how he was feeling. From there he was

able to use his emotions as indicators of his personal limits. When he had exhausted his capacity for juggling different forms of study, the emotions seen in his conflict stories arose. However, the value Hiroto places on overcoming hardship and gaining a newfound understanding of himself is worthy of the pride he portrays.

Hiroto's SDLL Identity

In this section, I aim to explore in greater detail, the role of emotions in the negotiation of a single SDLL identity using a short story approach. When asked how he felt about the identity statements in the member check interview, Hiroto identified the following SDLL identity statement as being accurate, albeit embarrassing to acknowledge:

SDLLI1. The Overestimator

I do my best to kill two birds with one stone whenever I can. I know I need to get the required test scores and credits but my personal life is busy so I want to make my university life easier. I chose my courses based on how easy I think they will be, or if they can be combined with other goals. Sometimes I overestimate my abilities and do too much though. This makes me feel overwhelmed and stressed out. When this happens, I want to run away from non-compulsory study.

My decision to focus on this identity statement is not to further embarrass Hiroto but because this identity statement resulted from four short stories that were grounded in the Motivation and Conflict categories. Secondly, this identity appears significant to Hiroto's SDLL experience as a contributing factor in his growing self-awareness. Finally, this identity and the stories incorporated within, have implications that are beneficial for those involved in SDLL. For Hiroto, this identity was one he needed to experience in order to grow and develop as a learner. For other language learners it can serve as a reminder that difficulties are part of the journey and they do not need to reprimand themselves as Hiroto did when he read this identity statement, asking, "*What did you do?...Be careful!*" Instead, they can learn from the experience. Of the four short stories, only one from the Motivation category (S2. *I was* エネルギッシュ) *and Conflict category* (S3. *Sorry, it tough so I will postpone it*) will be introduced here.

Hiroto's Short Stories: I was エネルギッシュ *(energetic)*

The title "*I was* エネルギッシュ (energetic)" came from Hiroto's own use of the Japanese phrase (line 5 and line 7) to describe the vigour inherent in his identity at the time. The central focus of this short story is Hiroto's decision to combine the module with TOEIC preparation. Hiroto's desired identity appears to be that of an ambitious International Business and Communication (IBC) student intent on making a good start on his university career.

Extract 1. I was エネルギッシュ (energetic)

Note: *Hiroto (H); Amelia (A)*

Codes: *Excitement (Exc.); Apprehension (Appre.); Determination (Det.); Emotional Tone (ET); Very happy, very positive tone (PT5); Mixed tone (ET3); Emotional sequence (ES); No change - positive tone (ES1(P))*

			Emotion	ET	ES
1	H	Okay. Firstly, I will talk about red block.			
2		So it was a like first... the beginning section.		ET 5	ES1 (P)
3		Like, [Weeks] one, two, four or five.			
4		Then I was, as I wrote, I was excited.	Exc.		
5		It was a beginning of university life.			
6		So I was so エネルギッシュ [energetic], excited.			
7		Then, ah, so I did, I took module each of week,			
8		for my schedule, for my plan.			
9		Then the first week, I was エネルギッシュ [energetic] I did.			
10	A	So everything went well in the first week?			
11	H	Yeah, then I study and I thought studying TOEIC,	Pride		
12		ah no, studying TOEIC with using the module.			
13		It's a match.			
14		It was a match because studying TOEIC then,			
15		studying TOEIC following ELM.			
16		Then I thought I can get the credit also at the same time.			
17	A	So, TOEIC was your big goal.			
18		Why did you decide to focus on TOEIC though?			
19	H	Because, like, I'm a student.		ET 3	
20		I am a IBC [International Business Communication] student	Appre.		
21		then requirement TOEIC score is 630.			
22		Then I really focus on TOEIC score.	Det.		

Following Barkhuizen's (2017) process in short story analysis, I will begin by focusing on the *who* to understand the characters of the story, what actions they take, and their interactions. The narrator, and main character of this story, is Hiroto (*who*, "I", line 4). On a *micro* time scale, Hiroto is at the "*beginning*" stage of his university career (*when*, line 5) which fills him with excitement and energy (line 6). This excitement transforms into pride when he finds a way to achieve his desired TOEIC score while simultaneously earning a credit (lines 14-16). The emotional tone in this section of Hiroto's story is very happy and positive (ET5) as suggested by the repeated use of "*excited*" and "エネルギッシュ [energetic]" in lines 4, 6, and 9. This highly positive tone (ET5) continues as Hiroto's aims come to light when he backtracks to clarify that his priority was not the module, but rather "*studying TOEIC with using the module*" (line 12) in order to "*get the credit also at the same time*" (line 16) and at the *micro* level we get the sense Hiroto was proud of this decision. Although an examination, "TOEIC" becomes a secondary character (*who*) at the *meso* level in Hiroto's narrative since he intermittently engages with TOEIC throughout the semester via his study materials and SDLL goals. Hiroto's main objective was to study TOEIC "*using the module*" (line 12);

ultimately perceiving the module as a space to achieve his goals while gaining some convenient credits "*at the same time*" (*when*, line 16). On a *macro* scale, TOEIC in Japan is a social and corporate monolith often performing the role of gatekeeper to many educational opportunities and careers. High TOEIC scores provide social capital and create a hard-working public image to those who can obtain them.

During the member check, Hiroto confirms the importance of cultivating his own hard-working public image by emphasising his desire to be seen by readers of this research as someone who is "向上心 [ambitious]" and "*always moving forward the future. He don't stop, he don't stay*." The influence of TOEIC pervades all three scales (micro, meso, macro) with institutional decision-makers whose policies and mandates (unidentified but still present at the *meso* level) impose upon Hiroto a significant need to interact with this corporate entity. This interactional relationship with TOEIC is cemented through Hiroto's affiliation with his undergraduate department (*where, "IBC,"* line 20). On the *meso* scale, this affiliation carries with it specific graduation requirements ("*requirement TOEIC score is 630*," line 21). Although all students have four years in which to achieve the required TOEIC score, fear of potential failure appears to instil within Hiroto a sense of apprehension and determination. These emotions are indicated by both his decision to combine TOEIC study with his module work, and his use of the adverb "*really*" (line 22) to portray the necessity of fulfilling the graduation requirements. Regardless of the mixed tone (ET3, lines 19-22), the initial week of the SDLL module had a consistently positive trajectory (ES 1(P)) characterised by enjoyment, pride and determination.

Hiroto's Short Stories: Sorry, it tough so I will postpone it

The Overestimator facet of Hiroto's identity was largely coloured by feelings of apprehension, guilt, and exhaustion. On a positive note, although not visible in **The Overestimator** identity statement, these negative feelings were transformed into relief as a result of the advisor's support. In this extract from the third short story "*Sorry, it tough so I will postpone it,*" Hiroto relates an unanticipated outcome following his decision to not complete his SDLL reflections each week. Although phrased as "*postponing*" (line 9), there was no indication prior to this meeting that Hiroto was planning to catch up on work missed. It was also the advisor, not Hiroto, who requested the meeting. Hiroto sets the scene by detailing the reaction he anticipated a teacher (*who*, line 2) would have towards a student opting out of course work. On a *micro* scale, it is in his own imagination (*when*, "*if I talk,*" line 2) that Hiroto feels apprehensive because he anticipates anger and to "*be scold[ed]*" (line 3) by the advisor (*who*, lines 2, 4, & 6). However, in reality, Hiroto experiences relief when his advisor is empathetic (line 6) and accepts his choice (line 7).

Extract 2. *Sorry, it tough so I will postpone it*
Codes: *Apprehension (Appre.); Exhaustion (Exhau.); Emotional Tone (ET); Happy, positive tone (ET4); Unhappy, negative tone (ET2); Emotional sequence (ES); Constant state of flux (ES4)*

			Emotion	ET	ES
1	H	my thought was when I…	Appre.	ET 2	ES 4
2		if I talk to my teacher “Sorry, it is too tough for me” then			
3		my prediction[of the teacher’s answer] was “Why?!”			
4		And teacher became angry and I would be scold[ed]..			
5		But it was not true.	Relief	ET 4	
6		My advisor sympathize with me.			
7		She said, “maybe I also know your feeling”			
8		because she was a student here before.			
9		“If you are postponing, I accept your decision.”			
10		And like when I talk with her, I [was] impressed.			
11		So this is my positive impression.			
12		Negative impression was like “sorry, sorry advisor…”	Guilt	ET 2	
13		Yeah, it is also the amount of assignment makes me	Exhau.		
14		decreasing my motivation.			

In this short story, the advisor plays an integral role in the maintenance or transformation of Hiroto’s **Overestimator** identity. At a *meso* scale, the advisor has the authority to not only pass or fail students, but to negotiate alternative pathways towards the completion of SDLL module tasks. Depending on the advisor’s educational philosophy, postponing tasks may not have been permitted. Should this have happened, or the advisor scolded Hiroto as he had anticipated, the unhappy and negative tone (ET2, lines 1-4) felt by Hiroto on the *micro* scale is likely to have continued. It is possible that the overestimation of his abilities could have resulted in not just temporarily running away from non-compulsory study but in actual failure. The combination of *who* and *when* becomes significant in this short story in terms of how emotion functions in the (re)construction of English identity. Without the happy and positive experience (ET4, lines 5-11) that derived from the conversation with an empathetic advisor (*who*, line 6) who had been through similar experiences to Hiroto during her own undergraduate career (*who* and *when*, “*she was a student here*,” line 8), Hiroto may have remained overwhelmed and failed to complete the module. However, with encouragement from his advisor, Hiroto did complete his work. Reflecting back on his experience, he communicated that the satisfaction he felt at the end of the SDLL module largely came from his development as a more self-aware individual capable of overcoming his organisational weaknesses.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to understand the narratives constructed by Hiroto about his SDLL experience and how the emotional qualities of those stories relate to his English L2 identity work. Even before he enrolled in the SDLL module, Hiroto had a desired identity. Influenced by the *macro* level factors (TOEIC, duty of students) and *micro* level ambitions (to be perceived as ambitious), the emotions associated with Hiroto’s desired identity acted as a motivation state (Frijda, 2008). Excitement and apprehension operating on respective current and future timescales pushed Hiroto to act in order to maintain his

desired image. It was during this period that stories of motivation were found. However, the act of maintaining this desired identity despite changes at the *meso* level (increased workload) resulted in exhaustion and became a catalyst for Conflict stories to take place. As suggested by Kato and Mynard (2016), learners function at different stages of autonomous thinking and behaviour based on factors such as energy levels and prior knowledge. The unfamiliarity of university life and SDLL approaches, exhaustion, and a desire to maintain his desired self played a role in Hiroto's uncertain approach to adapting his SDLL plans to suit his present-time reality. In informal SDLL situations, structured support such as advising services are rare. In Hiroto's case, the SDLL approach he was undertaking was formalised and included a dedicated advisor who was partially responsible for his growth. At the *meso/micro* level, advising enhanced the SDLL experience (Victori, 2007; Victori & Lockhart, 1995) by giving Hiroto the opportunity to co-construct with the advisor a verbal account of events, confront assumptions, identify his emotions, and understand what they mean for his past, present, and future self. The negative emotions shared during advising functioned as a resource for Hiroto to realise he had overestimated his abilities and to act in a manner that was congruent with his desired self; failing a course by running away from the work would have been incongruent with who Hiroto wanted to be, but working with the advisor to develop a more appropriate plan allowed him to maintain his self-concept.

The mismatch between Hiroto's desired identity and **The Overestimator** identity constructed during the SDLL module could have culminated in the negative valuing of the whole SDLL experience. However, coloured by his ambition, Hiroto understands his relationship with the world at the *micro* level as one of trial and error. As such, it is in his stories of self-awareness that he is able to tell (first to his advisor), retell (to me as the researcher), and further assimilate these narratives of growth into his personal sense of self (Pasupathi et al., 2007). In this way, Hiroto was able to develop his desired self-concept by generating positive emotions towards, and positively evaluating the hardship he endured. This interpretation adds support to the notion that negative stories give way to positive tonality under the right conditions (Hiver et al., 2019; Pasupathi et al., 2007). In Hiroto's case, it was his *micro* level desired identity and *meso* level interactions with the advisor which seemed to generate the conditions necessary for the positive re-evaluation of a negative experience.

Conclusion

In this paper I have used narratives as both process and product to understand Hiroto's SDLL identity and English learning experiences. I employed narrative writing for analysis to weave a rich, multi-coloured tapestry to illustrate how emotions can act as motivation states and a metacognitive resource when interacting with experience and aspects of a learner's identity. Untangling, closely examining, and reweaving narratives was a messy process. As I battled with presenting a coherent, cohesive narrative, I found that story threads dealing with the who, what, and where were criss-crossed in complex patterns of layers of Hiroto's micro, meso, and macro worlds. Each thread that I followed was dyed with the colours of Hiroto's emotions; colours that changed in hue with each re-telling of an experience and interpretation of past-felt emotions. Thus, questions of authenticity, resonance, and trustworthiness arose with each draft I wrote.

Ultimately, the unconventional decision to present my analysis and interpretation side-by-side, was so that those interested in narratives, emotions, and identity, could be inspired, as I was by Barkuizen's own work with narratives.

Working with Hiroto's stories has added support to the possibility that SDLL can, for some, have less to do with language learning and more to do with understanding experience in relation to the self. As an LA, this has significant implications for my practice. Namely, that stories should be embraced as a method of developing practical and reflective skills within, and outside the context of SDLL modules. If we give our students the space to collaboratively construct evolving stories of learning, then we are providing opportunities to raise metacognitive awareness and support autonomy development. This is especially true if we encourage our learners to place their identities as learners at the heart of these stories. The narrative interpretation of Hiroto's experience offers an example of how this opportunity could be structured. More explicitly, learners could be invited to use the LLH to identify highly emotional experiences. In conversation with the teacher, peers, or an advisor, they could then begin to explore the *content* (who, where, and when) and *levels of context* (micro, meso, and macro) in relation to the emotions they experience and who they want to be or identify as at the time.

Review Process

This article was open peer-reviewed by Shu Hua Vivien Kao and Nathan Ducker of the Learner Development Journal Review Network. *(Contributors have the option of open or blind peer review.)*

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Amelia Yarwoodは10年以上日本とオーストラリアで教育者・ラーニングアドバイザーをしている。現在はthe Research Institute for Learner Autonomy Education (RILAE) の外部講師として、未来の学習アドバイザーを指導している。研究分野はカリキュラムディベロップメント、学習者オートノミー、感情、ナラティブのレンズを通したアイデンティティである。

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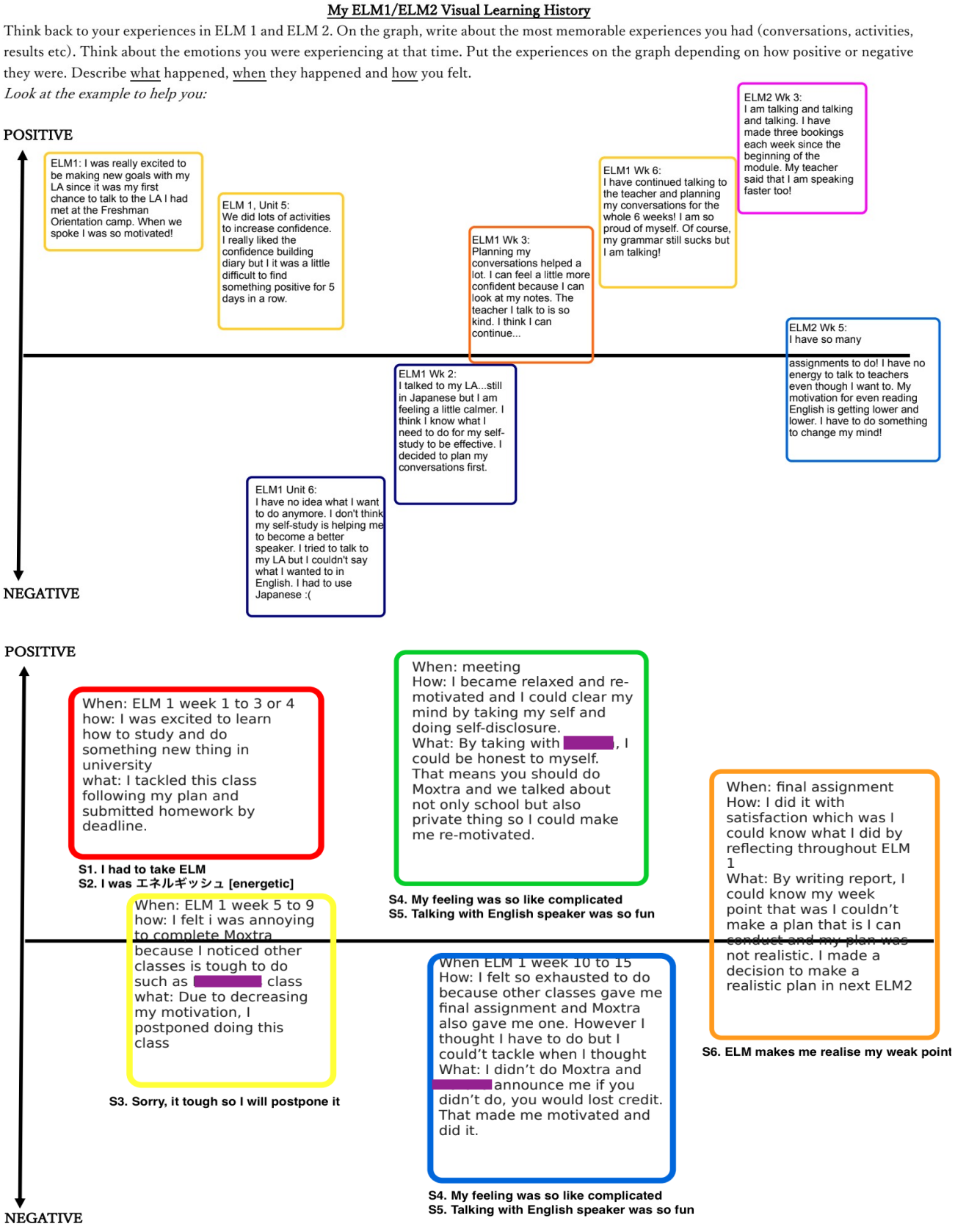
Appendix A

Visual Learning History (Exemplar and Hiroto's submission)



Appendix B

Categories used when coding Hiroto's interview data

Sub-categories	Descriptors
Emotional tone	
1	Very unhappy story, very negative emotional tone
2	Unhappy, negative emotional tone
3	Mixed or neutral emotional tone
4	Happy, positive emotional tone
5	Very happy story, very positive emotional tone
Emotional Trajectory/Sequence	
1	No change in emotional tone
2	Positive to negative transition
3	Negative to positive transition
4	Constant state of flux
Positive Emotions	
Pride	A heightened sense of satisfaction about one's own actions/skills
Excitement	A heightened sense of joy and energy
Mixed Emotions	
Determination	Desire to accomplish something (elements of pressure)
Relief	Moving from tension to a sense of peace
Negative Emotions	
Apprehension	A sense of unease at an event that has not happened yet
Exhaustion	Physical and mental tiredness resulting in an inability to focus or act as desired/usual
Guilt	Responding to an outcome with self-directed blame

Appendix C

Hiroto's self-directed language learning identity statements

SDLL Identity Statements

SDLLI1. The Overestimator

I do my best to kill two birds with one stone whenever I can. I know I need to get the required credits to successfully graduate from university but my personal life is busy so I want to make my university life easier. I chose my courses based on how easy I think they will be, or if they can be combined with other goals. Sometimes I overestimate my abilities and do too much though. This makes me feel overwhelmed and stressed out. When this happens, I want to run away from non-compulsory study.

SDLLI2. The Communicative Learner

Rather than studying by myself or completing worksheets, I prefer to learn about myself through English conversations with fluent English speakers. By talking to others I can organise my thoughts, and make realistic decisions about what I need to do to improve my English abilities. It is through conversations with people I trust and respect that I can feel motivated when I am a *little or very* stressed out.

Investigating Learner Autonomy Development Through a Complex Dynamic Systems Theory Lens: An Indonesian Context

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This research explores the development of learner autonomy in Indonesia. After tracing the author's learning journey as a pro-autonomy teacher, and sketching in some of the recent initiatives regarding autonomy in Indonesian education policy, the study focuses on two university students' autonomy development during 2020-21. I employ Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) to analyse focal autonomy factors among non-English majors, using a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews and triangulated data. The participants were two college students taking an English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) course in their first year at university. The findings show that four key factors—learners' affective state and regulation, behavioural change, restrictions, and external push and support—are connected to the development of learner autonomy. The following necessary conditions for achieving learner autonomy were discovered in this case study: creating opportunities to experience a sense of achievement within and beyond the classroom, as well as the teacher's significant role in introducing autonomy and supporting students' learning progress.

本研究はインドネシアにおける学習者オートノミーの発達を探索的に調査する。著者自身のプロの自律的な教師として学びの軌跡を巡り、インドネシアの教育政策におけるオートノミーに関する近年の取り組みを描いた後に、本研究は2020年から21年における大学生2名のオートノミーの発達に焦点を当てる。半構造化インタビューとトライアンギュレーションされたデータによる質的アプローチを採用し、英語専攻でない学生のオートノミー要因を分析するために複雑系理論（Complex Dynamic Systems Theory、CDST）を用いる。参加者は、1年時にESAP（English for Specific Academic Purposes）コースを受講した大学生2名である。知見としては、学習者の感情状態と調整、行動の変化、制限、外部からの後押しとサポートという4つの主要因が学習者オートノミーの発展に関連していることが得られた。この事例研究で明らかとなった学習者オートノミーを実現するための必要条件は、学生へのオートノミーの導入及び学習が進むのを支援する教師の重大な役割、そして、教室内外で達成感を経験する機会を設けることである。

Keywords

learner autonomy, complex dynamic systems theory, Indonesian context, affective state and regulation, external support

学習者オートノミー、複雑系理論、インドネシアの文脈、感情状態と調整、外部サポート

Introduction: Is learner autonomy a universal goal?

Although learner autonomy has been said to be a central aim of education (Benson, 2001, 2009; Waterhouse, 1990), controversy over that claim still exists. Some question its feasibility and desirability in educational practice (Cuypers, 1992; Hand, 2006; Pennycook, 1997). Concerning Asian situations, the question of whether autonomy, which has been heavily advocated by Western academics and instructors, might not be compatible with all cultures started to be brought up in the 1990s (Aoki & Smith, 1999). Cultural differences between "the West" and other communities are occasionally cited as the cause of adoption initiatives elsewhere running into difficulties (Ertürk, 2016; Palfreyman, 2003). Many claims have been made about autonomous learning in Asian contexts, but specific cultural contexts and their significant impact on the development of autonomy (Halabi, 2018) need to be understood more finely. In what follows, I present my personal journey of encountering learner autonomy, beginning from my bachelor's degree and culminating in my current role as an English instructor at the university level. I will then provide an

overview of the socio-cultural context of learner autonomy in Indonesia, before I focus on the many factors involved in how two learners from my classes become autonomous learners. In this investigation I use a complex dynamic systems theory (CDST) framework as the main research tool, with the intention of challenging conventional notions surrounding the development of learner autonomy.

My Story: The word "autonomy" was not used until university

What is autonomous learning? I was introduced to this term while a student in the English department at an Indonesian university. Since elementary school, I had studied English in and outside the classroom. In Indonesia, it is relatively typical for highly driven students with parental financial support to spend more time studying subjects outside the classroom that are part of the national exam, such as English, Math, and Science. Being forced to spend my weekends studying and having a long commute to the course location was initially exhausting. However, after outperforming my friends on English tests, I continued the program through senior high school. Even in college, when I could not enrol in additional courses outside the classroom, I tried other alternatives to sharpen my English, like joining a debate association.

Later, the development of my autonomy was accelerated by the academic milieu in my UK master's programme. In every aspect of my studies, from lectures to informal gatherings in the cafe or garden, my professors and lecturers were there to support and guide me, and I owe them a great deal in helping me to find my path towards autonomy. I organised my classes, set academic goals for myself, took a course in academic writing, had an article published in a peer-reviewed academic journal, and even went to Japan to present my research at a conference. Because of this, I was able to thrive in the classroom, and I am now committed to becoming a pro-autonomy teacher who can encourage my pupils to become active participants in their education and realise their full potential.

When I was in college, a friend of mine from another department talked about their difficulty in learning and using English. They struggled to understand the lecturer, but speaking English was even harder. Despite understanding the speaker's point, responding was difficult. When teaching English to non-English department students, I realise they may face the same problems. There are many challenges in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for non-English department students in Indonesian universities. One is students' preferences in learning style despite their level of English. It is a contradictory picture, students depend on their teacher to learn English although they tend to prefer autonomous learning to teacher-centred learning (Daflizar & Petraki, 2022). From my perspective as an English teacher, this seems particularly true for first-year university students in Indonesia who frequently rely heavily on teachers for their education.

The Socio-Cultural Background to Autonomy in Indonesia

Even though government policy has required the implementation of autonomous learning since 2013, various constraints such as socio-cultural values, education practices, textbooks, and curriculum (Fidyati, 2017) limit promoting autonomous learning in EFL classrooms in Indonesia. Additional challenges include concentrating on academic outcomes, having huge classes, and adhering to traditional teacher authority. It is difficult for students to talk to the teacher since it is still a very hierarchical society, making autonomy more challenging to achieve. The absence of autonomous learning experiences,

the overemphasis on national exams, and students' inadequate English proficiency are some of the barriers that Indonesian teachers have identified (Lengkanawati, 2017) as making it difficult to build learner autonomy with Indonesian students.

Moreover, autonomy is something that EFL learners may be unused to. It is consequently difficult to explain and achieve learner autonomy with students in Indonesia. This might be why Indonesian educational discourse did not use the term "learner autonomy" or "*otonomi pembelajar*" in Bahasa Indonesia, in their earlier documents. Government publications excluded explicit reference to the idea or replaced it with synonyms. They used terms such as "think and act critically, productively, independently, and collaboratively" (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016, p. 1). In contrast, in a more recent publication (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020, p. 2), the term "autonomous" is explicitly used when introducing the concept of fostering a learning environment characterized by flexibility and innovation. This document focuses on the need to establish a pedagogical atmosphere "according to student needs" that encourages "autonomous and flexible learning," while avoiding restrictions. Although there are tensions due to a lack of resources and know-how for supporting autonomous learning (Hasbullah, 2022), the fact that learner autonomy exists conceptually and that initiatives are being taken to promote learner autonomy in the classroom signals positive progress.

Indeed, the most up-to-date programme, Independent Learning-Independent Campus or Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM), implemented in the last two years by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2022), emphasises that learning autonomy should be encouraged in university students. Students should be free to learn based on their interests and talents (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022). However, despite having a favourable opinion of their abilities regarding autonomous English learning activities both inside and outside the classroom, in a recent large-scale of Indonesian students (Daflizar & Petraki, 2022) respondents generally agreed that the teacher should be in charge of curriculum-related learning that takes place inside the classroom, while students should be in charge of non-curriculum-related learning that occurs outside of the classroom. I have also found that my first-year Indonesian Islamic Banking students favour teacher-centred learning above student-centred learning (Yunita, 2022). It is not surprising then that the ability to work independently of teachers tends to be how Indonesian EFL students conceptualise learner autonomy (Cirocki et al., 2019).

In Indonesia higher education, every university student, including non-English department students, learns English as a Foreign Language (EFL) from a compulsory module as part of the curriculum. The goal of this module is to make the students master both receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills and use them in their academic worlds and future working lives. With a choice of general or specific course modules, teachers can choose the format and content of this module to a great extent. I chose to have an English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) lesson. From my observation of EFL students in ESAP courses, there is a tendency for students who show more autonomous learner traits and habits to achieve better results on their English tests. Additionally, their learning outcomes improved during their first year of learning English. Such observations are supported by Boud (1981) and Phuong & Vo (2019) who claim that autonomous learners make more effective learners and employees. I became increasingly interested in knowing how autonomous my students are, their learning experiences, and whether and how their learning experiences contribute to their learner autonomy development, and this led me to complex dynamic systems theory.

Complex Dynamic Systems Theory: A paradigm which challenges conventional ideas about learner autonomy

After four years of teaching at university, I was drawn to researching learner autonomy as a complex dynamic system to understand better the relationships between the many components involved that I have mentioned above. Complex dynamic systems theory (CDST), introduced into the field of language learning by Larsen-Freeman (1997), has recently been applied to address a dynamic and complex language learning process in which different factors and variables constantly interact (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). When language learning is viewed in combination with psychology, emotions, and communication skills, researchers may gain new understanding of the complexity within one individual. Studies utilising the CDST perspective differ from the typical quantitative and qualitative methods used to study teacher-learner psychology. There are unique CDST research properties: evolving and dynamically rephrasing research questions, a process-oriented approach to understanding events considering one's cognition, emotion, social context, culture, and interaction, focus on individual experiences rather than generalisable patterns of behaviour, different analytical tools, and favouring opaque, longitudinal, and personal data instead of a large sample (Yang, 2021). CDST looks at the decline and disintegration of factors and processes as a whole.

I decided to adopt the operational model of learner autonomy development of Tung and Huang (2022) because it suited my longitudinal analysis of two learners. Tung and Huang (2022) identify four factors which they find to be focal for learner autonomy development and use the CDST perspective to explore the interaction between them. The focal factors are: (a) the learner's affective state and regulation, (b) the learner's behavioural change, (c) the learner's constraints, and (d) external push and support. For my own study, I included classroom and non-classroom learning contexts to form a broader understanding of my students' development of learner autonomy.

Using CDST as my theoretical framework, I intended to find out how these factors would interact in the development of learner autonomy with my students learning English at a university in Indonesia. These were my two research questions:

1. What are the focal factors of learner autonomy development for non-English major students within and beyond the classroom in an Indonesian context?
2. How does the complex interplay of learner autonomy factors contribute to learner autonomy development of non-English major students within and beyond the classroom in the context of Indonesia?

Research Methodology

Participants

The participants were two EFL tertiary students, Hana and Kei (pseudonyms), enrolled in an Islamic Banking ESAP course. They took ESAP courses in the first two semesters of their four-year study, right when the COVID-19 pandemic happened, so they experienced online learning in the first semester and started face-to-face learning in the second. Kei and Hana attended different classes. Hana and I often communicated as she prepared for my suggested English competition. On the other hand, Kei and I did not talk much outside of class, and he mostly kept quiet during class. Despite his passive participation in the teaching and learning process, I became aware of his presence in the class when he performed well on the writing assignment in the second semester.

I purposely selected these two students because they had contrasting test results on their mid-semester and end-of-semester exams (see Table 1). These exams were part of the evaluation described in more detail in the following paragraphs and required students to use English. The two students also had contrasting learning attitudes.

Table 1. *Hana's and Kei's Exam Scores*

Participant	First Semester Mid-term Exam Score	First Semester Final Exam Score	Second Semester Mid-term Exam Score	Second Semester Final Exam Score
Hana	88	98	100	84
Kei	66	60	95	100

Hana represented students who tended to be more active within and beyond the classroom (i.e., answering questions in the class and asking for more information outside the class). In contrast, Kei represented students who tended to be passive within and beyond the classroom (i.e., silent in the class and not contacting the teacher).

In the first year, the Islamic banking students have 12 weekly classes; about one-third of the overall are general courses required by the institute, including English, Arabic, and Bahasa Indonesia. The majority are specific courses such as Islamic Banking Funding Accounting and Islamic Banking Micro Practice. Graduates of the Islamic Banking programme are expected to work in the Islamic banking industry; therefore, the curriculum focuses on preparing the students to be banking practitioners with academic qualifications and expertise in managing Bank Financial Institutions under sharia principles. The main objective of the ESAP course is to make the students master knowledge and steps to communicate both orally and in writing using English for both academic and professional purposes.

For their English classes students were evaluated through several methods: attendance, which included the students' participation in classroom activities (40%), speaking or writing projects (20%), mid-term exam (20%), and final exam (20%). In the first semester, the mid-term exam consisted of multiple-choice questions to assess the students' listening skills and language knowledge, such as vocabulary and grammar (i.e., parts of speech, tenses). The final exam included multiple-choice questions to evaluate the students' language knowledge. The mid-term and final exams in the second semester contained multiple-choice questions to examine the student's reading skills and language knowledge. The first semester's assignment was a speaking project, and in the second semester the students completed a writing project.

Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative methods used in this study involved interviews about the participants' English learning experiences, speaking, and writing products. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews at the end of their ESAP course after the students had finished their assignments (7 & 8 June 2022). An in-depth retrospective interview was chosen to elicit events and ask for specific examples with the aim of understanding nuances in their beliefs and attitude changes over time.

The interview guide (see Appendix) was adapted from Tung and Huang (2022) with some modifications. Modifications included adding more detailed parts about factors

of learner autonomy development. The questions had five sections: introduction about students' English learning experiences, habits, and possible selves; learners' affective state and regulation covering learners' beliefs, emotions, motivation, self-reflection, and self-evaluation; learners' behavioural change covering problem-solving strategies and learning attitudes; learners' constraints covering physical, psychological, and social constraints; and external push and support covering significant others, learning (extracurricular) activities, and learners' environment and interaction.

The interview guide was prepared in the participants' first language, Bahasa Indonesia. After collecting the data, I transcribed and translated the interviews into English, then used NVivo 12 (NVivo, 2018) to code categories. To match the concepts from Tung and Huang (2022), keywords in English were used, such as Hana's extracurricular activities (teaching English in an orphanage) and Kei's friends who supported him. After carefully reading the transcripts, I could identify factors leading to these participants' learner autonomy development and how these factors interacted to develop learner autonomy.

Findings

In this section, I first introduce the four focal factors of learner autonomy development, accompanied by several excerpts for each factor. Second, I present the operational model: how the four focal factors interact to develop learner autonomy concerning three time-points: before the start of the university, during the first semester, and finally in the second semester, together with the detailed descriptions. Next, I report on the three periods, with each focal factor explained in each period.

The Operational Model: How Focal Factors Interact in the Development of Learner Autonomy

Figure 1 shows the four focal factors of learner autonomy development represented by LA1, LA2, LA3, and LA4. The factors are affective state and regulation; behavioural change in the direction of becoming more autonomous; constraints, in the sense of becoming able to overcome constraints; and external push and support, in terms of having effective, autonomy-supporting events and people. The darkness of shading represents how well that factor was helping the student to realize autonomy, with completely black nodes representing fully realised autonomy based on the word counts of autonomy-related words in the recorded interview data. As seen in the learners' affective state and regulation continuum in Figure 1, the darker the filling, the more positive; the lighter, the more negative.

LA1: Learner's Affective State and Regulation

"English can be learnt and is easy to study like someone on YouTube who looks cool." (Hana)

"I believe I can do it." (Kei)

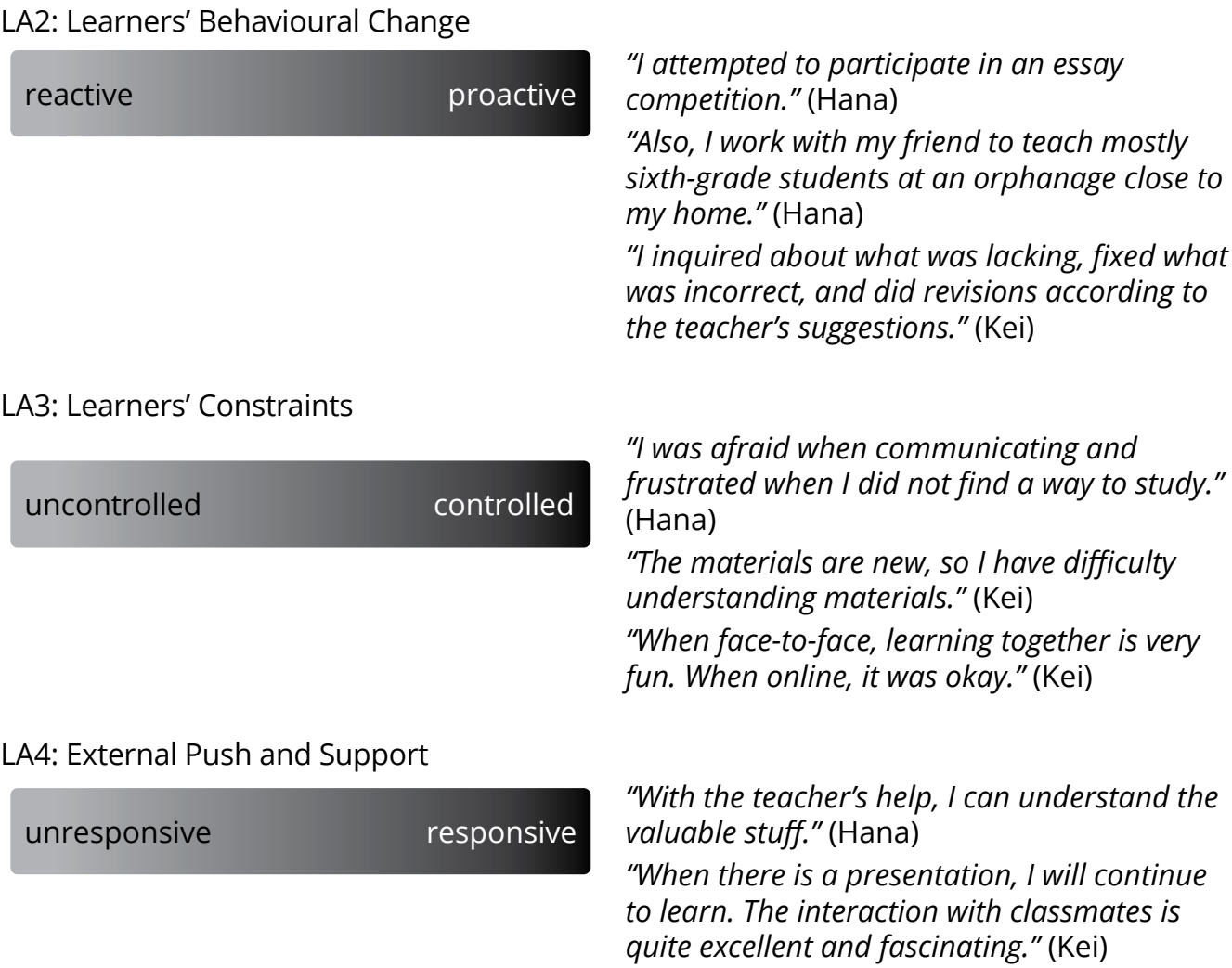


Figure 1. The Four Focal Factors of Learner Autonomy Development

I adopted Tung and Huang's operational model of learner autonomy development (2022) to illustrate the development of learner autonomy in Hana and Kei concerning three time-points. The diagrams in Figure 2 were produced using CorelDRAW (CorelDRAW, 2021) to show how learner autonomy is aided or hindered. The width of the lines connecting the nodes indicates how closely they are connected: the darker the lines, the stronger the connection. The stronger the component's disposition (i.e., positivity or negativity) is within each node, the higher the node's filling is. The status of the component on a continuum is indicated for the filling using a scale of greyness.

Preparing a visual representation using CorelDRAW lets us see the relative variation of the four factors over time. The variations in shading allow us to represent slight shifts which occur gradually along a continuum. The following four phenomena were observed when Hana's and Kei's learning states were perturbed under external stimuli, for instance, learning online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. First, Hana and Kei's affective states, through regulation, became positive or negative. Second, in the spectrum of learner behavioural change, Hana and Kei either became proactive or stayed reactive in their learning in various contexts over time. Third, Hana and Kei either used a positive strategy to lessen the effects of the limitations or adopted a neutral-to-negative strategy and made little effort to lessen the effects. They were heading towards the regulated or uncontrolled ends of the continuum of learners' restrictions based on their methods. Fourth, and most

importantly, all the activities and alterations were connected to the presence of external stimuli and support in the environment and how much Hana and Kei were responsive to them. Hana and Kei interacted with the surroundings and other people, and they were prepared to take on difficulties. Their reactions to the stimulus and support were either positive or negative on a continuum of external push and support.

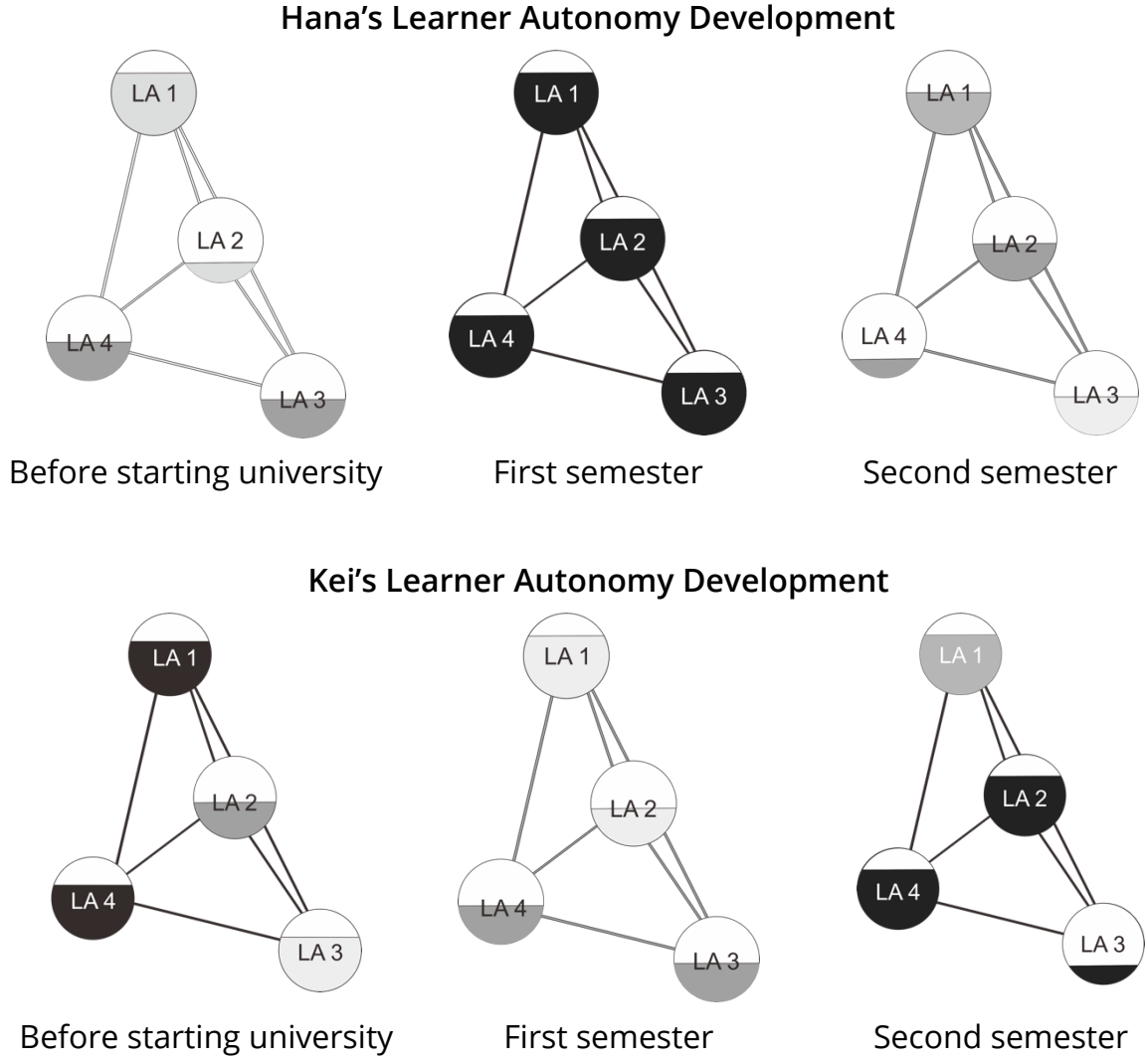
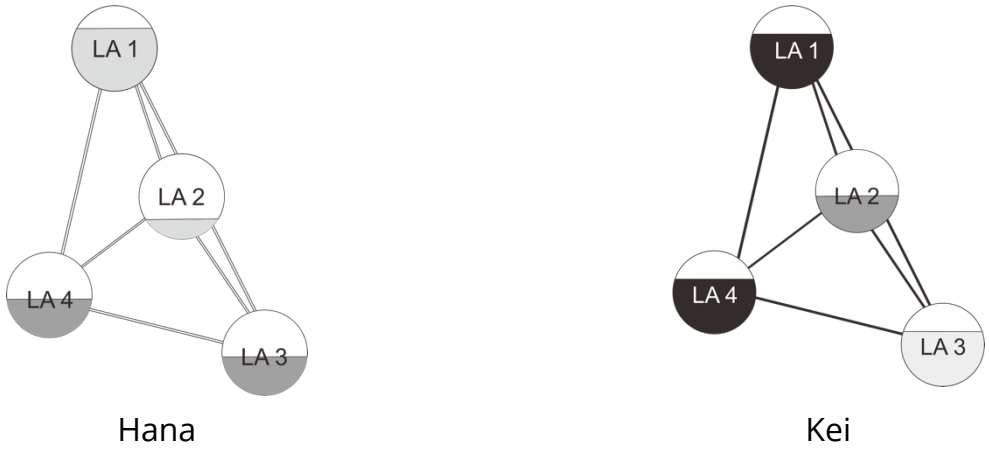


Figure 2. Hana and Kei's Learner Autonomy Development Across Three Time-Points

1. Before Starting University

In this section, I focus on Hana's and Kei's learner autonomy state of development prior to university. According to my intuitive observation, I predicted that Hana would have achieved a higher level of learner autonomy before starting university than Kei had at the time of the June 2022 interview. The interview results showed that Kei was more autonomous than Hana in all three of the four focal factors, especially the first and fourth (Figure 3). The discussion which follows explains the complex interplay of learner autonomy development for Hana and Kei in the four factors: LA1-LA4.



Hana Kei

Figure 3. Hana and Kei's Learner Autonomy Before Starting University

LA1: Hana and Kei's Affective State and Regulation

This focal factor involves four components: the learner's beliefs, emotions, motivation, and self-reflection. Hana's affective state was initially marked by disappointment. Before starting her tertiary education, Hana happened to experience a failure in learning English during her senior high school, in which she got 30 out of 100 on her English test. Hana felt hopeless. She believed that it was because of her teacher because there was no problem learning English when she moved to a new class with a different English teacher. During her hardship in learning English with her former teacher, she overcame this by finding an intelligent friend who liked English to boost her enthusiasm for learning English. Hana's initial feeling of hopelessness was shown to be altered under the influence of another focal factor, external support, which was from her friend and a new, better teacher.

In contrast, the original condition in Kei's system had an entirely positive affective state. Kei showed more positive emotions in senior high school. He recalled his successful English experience when he became the only student in his class who could answer a vocabulary quiz. He was thrilled. This event encouraged him to study harder. The interplay between the four focal factors was dynamic under Kei's original conditions because of the opportunity to experience a sense of accomplishment during his senior high school years.

LA2: Hana and Kei's Behavioural Changes

For Hana and Kei, the main focus was changing or adapting learners' behaviours, which alters their attitudes and facilitates better problem-solving. Supportive people around Hana, such as her teacher and a friend, influenced her to learn English. Her high school teacher, who had given her that low score of 30 out of 100 on a test, was a negative influence because the teacher had first led her to believe that English was challenging. However, she maintained a reactive approach to her learning endeavours, refraining from proactively seeking strategies to enhance her learning efficacy. Kei, who derived pleasure from learning English, engaged in more effective study practices. He harboured a desire to avoid falling behind his peers.

LA3: Hana and Kei's Constraints

This focal point's operational definition is anything that hinders learning. In significant part, Hana and Kei were restricted by their psychological circumstances. Hana's mood

primarily influenced her ability to learn. She reported that her interest in learning varied depending on her feelings:

> **Hana:** When I am in the mood, I become enthusiastic about learning and vice versa.

The interview revealed that her melancholy and overanalyses hindered her learning:

> **Hana:** (My psychological condition hindering learning was) when I am sad and overthinking.

Hana's enthusiasm for learning English waned due to her high school teacher's negative influence; however, with the support of her friend during high school, her enthusiasm was rekindled.

Kei's stage fright, fear of being incorrect, and insecurity made it difficult for him to interact socially and learn English before and during university studies. As a high school and university student, he had never participated in extracurricular activities related to English learning. Both before and after college, Kei felt the need to learn English even though he had previously claimed he did not feel pressured to do so. As a result, in addition to fearing public speaking, he occasionally lacked motivation, making learning English difficult. When asked about the obstacle of learning English in the interview, he said:

> **Kei:** Sometimes I am lazy.

Before embarking on their university journey, Kei and Hana found themselves unable to surmount those limitations.

Their perceptions of their inadequacy and incapability also limited Hana and Kei. Hana mentioned it in the interview five times, less than Kei (seven times). When Hana was asked about her English competency, she said:

> **Hana:** I still have many deficiencies that should be improved.

She mentioned that English communication was challenging. She was not confident in learning and lacked grammar. In addition, her perception of inadequacy can also be interpreted from the interview when she said that her short-term goal was to be more fluent in English and her long-term goal was to improve in English day by day. She also highlighted the areas in which she thought she was inadequate:

> **Hana:** (The biggest challenge for me when learning English is) grammar and pronunciation.

On the other hand, the areas in which Kei thought he was inadequate were vocabulary and materials.

> **Kei:** My ability is 7 out of 10. My ability is still lacking in vocabulary and materials, so I must keep learning independently.

LA4: External Push and Support for Hana and Kei

External push is defined as the motivation that comes from meeting the demands of the course or meeting the expectations of others, and external support is the help received from others, including peers, items, internet resources, and other people who can help (Tung & Huang, 2022, p. 234). The critical element is linked to significant individuals in learners' lives and learning activities. In high school, Kei excelled in class participation and was the best student at responding to the teacher's questions.

> **Kei:** When I was in high school, and the teacher asked us each a question, I was overjoyed that I was the only one who could answer it.

In this instance, the quiz administered by Kei's high school teacher significantly contributed to fostering Kei's autonomy. However, Hana's friend, serving as her external support following her teacher's discouragement, was unable to significantly influence her adoption of effective learning strategies to excel in her studies.

2. *First Semester*

This section allows us to see the complex interplay of learner autonomy development for Hana and Kei during the first semester of their university education, specifically from August to December 2021. The interview data were used to determine the shade, considering Hana's achievement in an essay competition and Kei's challenges comprehending new materials when learning online during the COVID-19 pandemic, both of which I will discuss in more detail later. In Figure 4, you can see that Hana exhibited a greater level of autonomy in comparison to Kei across four focal factors.

Hana Kei

Figure 4. Hana and Kei's Learner Autonomy in the First Semester

LA1: Hana and Kei's Affective State and Regulation

Hana generally displayed more positive emotions and stronger motivation once she entered college. Hana reported that during their first semester of study in higher education, she experienced a sense of achievement when she became the first winner in an essay competition. Although she felt frustrated while preparing for the competition, when she won, she felt relieved and thought all her hard work had paid off. Because of this experience, she believed everything is possible if one always tries and never gives up. When asked what she learnt from her English learning experience, she said:

> **Hana:** Don't give up. You can if you want to try.

On the other hand, Kei was not enjoying his online English class in the first semester. His affective state became negative because of the emotional difficulties brought on by the stimuli of learning online. He was regretful when he felt left behind in learning, even though he had tried hard to study English. He was discouraged because everyone in his class seemed to understand the materials except him. Kei also claimed that he identified his fear of public speaking through self-reflection. Kei's lack of motivation was evident in his first semester exam scores (66 and 60 out of 100). He struggled to comprehend

the course materials and lacked accessible peers for seeking assistance or engaging in academic discourse.

LA2: Hana and Kei's Behavioural Changes

Hana and Kei changed their learning behaviours and attitudes toward solving problems. After being inspired by her friend and encouraged by me to enter an English competition in the first semester, Hana positively altered her attitude to learning English. Hana listened to me, her teacher, about language strategies and consulted with me when she faced difficulties in learning. For example, she asked for her essay and speech feedback via WhatsApp when preparing for a competition. She also revised the draft and confirmed the result to ensure everything was perfect. However, Kei refrained from seeking assistance while grappling with comprehension difficulties, compounded by the absence of in-person interaction due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which hindered his progress in learning English.

LA3: Hana and Kei's Constraints

Overall, Kei mentioned negative mental states in the interview 15 times, for instance:

> **Kei:** I can't. I always can't. I can't yet.
> I thought why I can't. How come I can't when my friends can?
> I worried I couldn't do like (my parents) their expectation.

However, Kei made little effort to lessen the effects of limitations when he took an online class at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. He described his online learning as '*okay*' instead of '*very fun*', in which he portrayed the learning atmosphere of learning English in the classroom in the second semester.

> **Kei:** When face-to-face, learning together is very fun. When online, it was okay.

Hana mentioned the negative mental states in the interview seven times, for instance:

> **Hana:** I was afraid when communicating and frustrated when I did not find a way to study.
> Learning English has been challenging and strange since I was a kid.
> I was so hopeless.

Her limitation was controlled by her friend and me, who were resources Hana tapped.

LA4: External Push and Support for Hana and Kei

As part of my efforts to build learner autonomy, when I am teaching, I always talk to students about setting learning goals, solving their own learning issues, and evaluating the results at the beginning of every semester. I also allow students to collaborate on group projects, push them to participate in English competitions, and provide support when required. Those meetings with me must have been part of the support which helped Hana and Kei become more autonomous.

External stimuli disrupted the four fundamental parts of the system, but the effects of the disruption vanished after external support. In the first semester, Hana appeared to challenge herself to join an English competition while being exposed to the stimuli since she was open to feedback. The four essential elements consequently began to (inter)act, and their interactions became more dynamic after Hana experienced a sense of accomplishment after winning the competition.

Hana responded to external push. Because various alterations in her affective, cognitive, metacognitive, and behavioural domains were seen, Hana had been in an active state from the standpoint of CDST. Hana was driven to improve her English and even dreamed of studying or travelling abroad. She looked at the score in her online Academic Information System to keep track of her development. If Hana received a poor score, she would use learning techniques to raise it, such as reading scholarly papers. Hana explained in the interview.

Hana: When I had unpleasant experiences, I learnt. I'll work harder.

Her grades improved in the first semester, and she received a perfect score on the mid-semester test in the second semester. Because of her previous flawless score, she may not have studied as diligently as she should have, as her final exam score dropped.

In Kei's case, the four major components interacted less when exposed to external stimuli like online learning activities. Kei had been less responsive to external support. Two semesters of English learning at university forced him to receive different knowledge inputs and learning methods. Kei's response to the English class was dynamic. During online learning in the first semester, he mentioned that English learning was just okay. He prepared and learnt before presenting in front of the class. The instructional activities in the first semester facilitated Kei's English learning adequately, albeit not attaining the remarkable standards observed in the second semester.

3. Second Semester

This section focuses on how Hana's and Kei's learner autonomy was aided or hindered during the second semester of their university education, from January to June 2022. Based on the recorded interview, while Hana's lack of cooperative group members limited her ability to learn English, Kei's classmates supported his learner autonomy, as I will explain in this section. Kei outperformed Hana in terms of autonomy, especially when it came to the second and fourth focal factors (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Hana and Kei's Learner Autonomy in the Second Semester

LA1: Hana and Kei's Affective State and Regulation

Hana's self-reflective belief affected her language development inside and outside the classroom. When she got scores, she reflected on herself, evaluated her learning, and succeeded in improving them in the next exam, except for her final score in the second semester, which dropped markedly. Her sense of accomplishment from winning the tournament seemed to help sustain her motivation over time. Hana's belief in English also changed from what was thought difficult to something that could be achieved with effort.

> **Hana:** In my mindset, English was challenging and strange. After I knew the strategies, it changed.

According to Hana, the ideal English learning is learning slowly, depending on the skill level. She also mentioned that because of me, she finally understood how to study. Besides trying to compete in an English contest, Hana followed her friend, whose study programme was English, to teach English to 20 orphaned elementary school students.

Kei held on to the belief to keep learning even when encountering challenges in comprehending the materials. He struggled to understand the materials in the first and second semesters as he was unfamiliar with the materials being studied. Finally, as the following excerpt demonstrates, he recognised his progress in this area at the end of the second semester:

> **Kei:** My knowledge is more open and abundant. The materials are new, so I have difficulty understanding materials. So far, the learning is quite good, but I have not fully understood the materials. There are things I can do and things I cannot.

Kei was utterly convinced that he would be successful in his endeavours. Therefore, even if he encountered dissatisfaction when learning English, he would try to find a solution to the problem and move forward. As an illustration, Kei made an additional effort to recall the materials by rereading the materials that were delivered to him. He started paying closer attention because he did not want to make the same error twice while learning. He studied on his initiative and with greater diligence. In addition, he attempted the arduous task of asking for assistance from other people. Kei mentioned this point in the interview when he was asked to reflect on his interaction with his peers and me:

> **Kei:** I'm still unsure and not confident when communicating with Mrs Ratna. If it's with friends, sometimes I hesitate, and sometimes I don't. I'm not confident (communicating with foreigners), I'm afraid.
>
> I hesitated when I had an assignment if I asked the wrong question and it was not right. I was confident working in groups, especially when I fit the job.

Unfortunately, from high school until his first year of college, Kei had never planned his studies because he was not motivated to learn English and merely wanted to pass the exam. However, he was compelled to alter his approach since he did not want to fall behind his classmates. It was discovered that he generated motivation to overcome his constraints due to the influence of another focal factor—external push and support. I look at external push and support in more detail below under "LA4: External Push and Support for Hana and Kei."

LA2: Hana and Kei's Behavioural Changes

From Hana's self-evaluation at the end of the second semester, the negative learning experience was due to strategy ignorance and other external factors. In contrast, the

reason for the positive learning experience was an inspiring friend and supportive teacher. Believing these reasons, in the second semester, she still asked me for advice if she was having difficulty learning English. However, after Hana ran into a problem—a lack of a supportive companions to learn English— she began independent learning: reading English journals, viewing English instructional videos, reading quotations (a short piece of writing taken from a book and repeated because it is interesting or useful) from YouTube, and watching movies with English subtitles.

Kei changed from isolated independent learning to interdependent learning with peers to address his learning issues. At first, he would engage in self study by gathering resources and references from journals and publications. Still, he began collaborating with others by asking what was missing from his work, fixing any errors, and rewriting it in light of my feedback. The development was evidenced from the interview when I asked his opinion on the second semester of learning English, as revealed in the following excerpt:

> **Kei:** It's more fun because it's face-to-face and easier to understand. Moreover, I could exchange ideas with friends. We could discuss it together.

The interview revealed Kei's uneasiness and a lack of confidence in his ability to communicate with his friends, me, and even a foreigner, which was a massive change for him. The most frequent and typical techniques utilised by Kei were discovered to be gathering resources. When composing an assignment to generate an article, for instance, he stated:

> **Kei:** I explore for information that suits the title and references from experts' articles to arrange them in the essay.

His preferred methods of learning included reading textbooks and watching English-language videos. Although he never made a study plan, he anticipated the materials and reviewed the ones delivered from me to him. He also looked for materials related to English knowledge skills that he had not yet mastered (i.e., part of speech, how to construct a grammatically correct sentence). Over time, he generally displayed positive behavioural change, especially in collaborative learning. In the interview, he mentioned that his interaction motivated him to learn English:

> **Kei:** The interaction with classmates is quite excellent and fascinating.

LA3: Hana and Kei's Constraints

Their perceptions of their inadequacy and incapability continued to limit Hana and Kei in the second semester. Hana mentioned it in the interview five times, and Kei seven times. When Hana was asked about her English competency, she said:

> **Hana:** I still have many deficiencies that should be improved.

She mentioned that English communication was challenging. She was not confident in learning and lacked grammar. In addition, her perception of inadequacy can also be interpreted from the interview when she said that her short-term goal was to be more fluent in English and her long-term goal was to improve in English day by day. Hana also highlighted the areas in which she thought she was inadequate:

> **Hana:** (The biggest challenge for me when learning English is) grammar and pronunciation.

On the other hand, the areas in which Kei thought he was inadequate were mastering vocabulary and understanding class materials.

> **Kei:** My ability is 7 out of 10. My ability is still lacking in vocabulary and materials, so I must keep learning independently.

Fortunately, Kei could overcome his limitations in the second semester when he became comfortable with the classroom activities and interactions.

Hana's motivation eventually lessened her limitations. First, Hana was inspired to imitate her friend who hitherto won a storytelling competition. Even though she lacked confidence in writing and speaking, she entered an essay competition. She admitted it was difficult due to her hectic schedule and numerous tasks, but she grew accustomed to it. Second, a YouTube English language expert inspired her to learn English more effectively. Hana mentioned her habit of learning English:

> **Hana:** I often take one minute to study from YouTube, such as the English class and the quotations.

In the class, she read, while outside the class, she and her friend, an English student, spent their free time teaching English to 20 elementary school students in an orphanage.

Despite her constraints, Hana's beliefs could motivate her to act or improve her learning. She believed it was her responsibility to learn English, so she went online to social platforms like YouTube to access English class channels or to read quotations. Classroom observations also showed her participation in educational activities and on-time assignment submissions. In the second semester, she acknowledged that it was challenging to discover a supportive practice partner for English communication. She anticipated having a study partner and peer mentor that she could call on. The reason was that perhaps the group project focused on writing, which might not give opportunities to speak English. Moreover, the members of her group might not have been cooperative as they often skipped the class (more than two meetings), and their score was lower than Hana's: Their mid-term exam scores (out of 100) were 81 and 63, while Hana achieved 100.

Kei's motivation and belief likewise helped him to manage his limitations. Kei claimed in the interview that he was driven to learn English better than others and to become a better person. This motivation likely resulted from his positive learning experience in high school. Also, Kei believed in himself and acted when he ran into a problem.

> **Kei:** I believe I can do it. I also have to learn more independently, even though there are many ways to get distracted while learning, such as games.

Additionally, he stated in the interview that he wanted to perform well on the test because the grade had a negative impact on his confidence and motivation. He said that as a result of his limitations he was preparing hard for the exam:

> **Kei:** I need confidence and study independently, repeatedly reviewing the material.

The second semester was when Kei finally started to feel more comfortable when interacting in class. Kei grew more open to interacting with his friends as his belief forced him to alter his learning attitude, as doing so helped him gain the strength he needed to face his limitations eventually. At long last, he started behaving differently, and his mood improved. Despite his phobia of public speaking, he became more adventurous when interacting with friends and using language in conversation. Kei's learner autonomy was assisted in specific ways as the value of each of the four parts changed over time, and their interactions grew more dynamic.

LA4: External Push and Support for Hana and Kei

After the COVID-19 pandemic, Kei returned to face-to-face learning in the second semester, and the dynamic interaction of the four focal factors was more present. Regarding the external push, the requirement to interact with his classmates in the learning activities (i.e., making a presentation in a group and sharing the result in front of the class) and group project (i.e., making an essay) forced Kei to be more socially interactive and engage more in classroom discussions. As for external support, unlike Hana, Kei had never taken part in extracurricular activities related to English. Nevertheless, the external support was evidenced in the interview when he said his friends helped him with an assignment and told him the answer. At the same time, I, his teacher, guided and provided him with knowledge and materials. Moreover, the learning activities and interaction within the classroom made him motivated to learn English. He mentioned in the interview:

> **Kei:** When there is a presentation, I will continue to learn. The interaction with classmates is quite good, so it is fascinating.

Thus, with his friends' support, Kei improved his comprehension of learning materials and social interactions. He initially thought that the materials were difficult to understand, but he successfully conquered them more than before. Because it was face-to-face learning, it was easier to understand and more fun; he could exchange ideas and discuss them with his friends. Though he had psychological constraints such as stage fright, he enjoyed interacting with his friends during classroom activities. Finally, his writing project result was impressive and among the best essays, and his score improved in the final exam.

In the second semester, Hana had issues, such as a lack of encouraging people to practise with her, as she resumed her studies in the second semester. She changed her attitude from tapping into resources such as her friend and teacher to believing in herself. Hana's behavioural change was more proactive in the first semester but shifted to a reactive stance after achieving a perfect mid-term exam score in the second semester, though not as reactive as before starting university. The end outcome was an obstruction of Hana's developing learner autonomy.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that four focal factors impacted the development of Hana and Kei's learner autonomy. The results are similar to those of Tung and Huang's (2022), even though the dynamic interaction between the components is distinctive for Hana and Kei. In the first affective regulation Kei experienced a bad affective state and regulations in the first semester due to the COVID-19 pandemic and online study. However, his friends and teacher helped him improve in the second semester when they had face-to-face classes and interaction. Due to her behaviour modification and instructor assistance, Hana's affective state and regulation increased from the first semester until the middle of the second semester. Conversely, it declined at the end of the second semester due to several conditions, including a lack of friends to support her in learning English. Hana's first-year college learner autonomy state of development demonstrated the complexity of non-linear autonomy trajectories. While Hana's autonomy did not seem to be severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Kei's autonomy was influenced by it as a constraint.

As a teacher I realised how important it is for me to assist pupils in comprehending the various factors involved in overcoming their academic difficulties. The model utilised

in this study, similar to the one created by Tassinari (2012), can offer guidance on how to overcome learner limitations. If students believe that the external push or support they receive is insufficient, they can recall times when they got more outside encouragement and made better progress. In this instance, Hana learnt that her friend was essential from her experience. When Kei was in a tight spot, he looked for an appropriate resource.

Their relationship with me as a teacher was significant for both Hana and Kei, as seen by their reflections from the interview. In the first meeting, I encouraged them to be independent learners and explained why. I then gave them comments on their work throughout the meetings. If they had problems studying, I told them to contact me via WhatsApp. Our comfortable relationship may make them listen to me and use my encouragement to take greater responsibility for their learning.

> **Hana:** With the teacher's help, I can understand the valuable stuff.
>
> **Kei:** I inquired about what was lacking, fixed what was incorrect, and did revisions according to the teacher's suggestions.

Examining Hana's and Kei's cases, a foremost requisite of learner autonomy development is offering opportunities for students to feel accomplished in learning English both within and outside the classroom. The data analysis revealed that Hana and Kei experienced a sense of achievement in learning English, which formed positive learners' beliefs sustained over time to facilitate the development of learner autonomy. It has been demonstrated that the learner's affective state, a factor in autonomous learning (Tassinari, 2016), unlocks the interactions of the other three variables, potentially causing behavioural changes, lessening restrictions, and sparking responses to the stimuli. Thanks to their positive beliefs, Hana and Kei were encouraged to solve learning problems independently and seize chances provided by others (behavioral engagement) and by themselves (agentic engagement). This agentic engagement could lead to more autonomy support, which would increase autonomy satisfaction (Reeve, 2022).

> **Hana:** "English can be learnt and is easy to study like someone on YouTube who looks cool."
>
> **Kei:** "I believe that I can do it. I also must learn more independently even though there are many distractions in learning, such as games."

In addition to their beliefs, learners' intrinsic motivation is crucial. Since the beginning of the semester, when I questioned Hana and Kei about their motivation in learning English, they showed awareness of the relevance of English to their banking studies and even their long-term goals.

> **Hana:** I wish to travel overseas if there is a chance in the next five years.

Hana desired to either study or go abroad. As a result, starting in the first semester, Hana kept studying English outside the classroom despite having a busy schedule. She tutored 20 orphan elementary school pupils in the language while competing in English-speaking events. I gave Hana performance feedback, motivated, and reassured her. When she finally succeeded, she was happy and believed her efforts had been worthwhile. Until she achieved the perfect score on the mid-term exam in the second semester, she also constantly watched her test results and worked harder to enhance them. During the second semester, she struggled to find a study partner, which affected her motivation and reduced her grade. In the interview, she spoke about her friend's significant contribution:

> **Hana:** Having a companion to study with and receive feedback from increases my motivation.

Kei's long-term, more abstract aim of improving in five years and his short-term, exam-passing English learning goals gave him the drive to do well in class. In the first semester, he was shocked when he learnt that everyone in his class seemed to understand the materials except him, even though he had tried hard to study. Due to unfamiliar materials, online learning distractions, and the inability to ask questions, several of my students, including Kei, had trouble understanding the lesson. Along with group learning activities that allowed them to support one another and share problem-solving techniques, I also gave them a list of activities they could do independently, including watching educational videos on YouTube or reading a reference book. In the second semester, Kei gained the courage to approach his friends and received a profound sense of encouragement from them. As a result, his grade considerably increased from 60s in the first semester to 90s and a perfect score in the second.

Conclusion

The interplay of students' affective states and regulation, behavioural changes, the constraints they face, and the push as well as support they receive from external sources collectively play a major role in the development of learner autonomy. While this study has offered valuable insights through its in-depth examination of Hana and Kei's experiences, it is important to acknowledge its qualitative nature and limited sample size. This research serves as a foundational exploration, paving the way for future, more comprehensive investigations that can delve deeper into the intricate dynamics of learner autonomy in diverse educational settings.

Having gained a profound understanding of Hana and Kei's learner autonomy trajectories, this study has provided me, as a teacher, with actionable insights to better support my students' autonomy development. I now recognize the importance of creating opportunities for my students to taste success both within and beyond the classroom, fostering peer interactions, and encouraging their active engagement in extracurricular activities. Moreover, the significance of providing social and academic support to mitigate learning constraints and address cognitive and emotional challenges arising from external factors is evident. Grounded in complex dynamic systems theory in Indonesia, this research highlights central factors such as affective regulation, external circumstances, teacher-student relationships, achievement, and intrinsic motivation, offering practical guidance and possible directions for educators to cultivate learner autonomy effectively with their own learners in the local contexts where they work.

Review Process

This article was open peer-reviewed by Tomoko Hashimoto and Colin Rundle of the Learner Development Journal Review Network. *(Contributors have the option of open or blind peer review.)*

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Appendix

Interview Guide

Interview Questions in Bahasa Indonesia	English Translation
English Learning Experiences	
1. Ceritakan secara mendalam (kapan, dimana, bagaimana, kenapa) pengalaman suksesmu dalam belajar bahasa Inggris (contoh: yang paling menyenangkan)?	1. Tell in depth (when, where, how, why) your successful experience in learning English (e.g., the most enjoyable)?
2. Ketika kamu mengingat pengalaman itu, apakah kamu menggunakan suatu strategi dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa Inggris? Bagaimana perasaanmu saat itu? Apa yang kamu pelajari dari pengalaman itu?	2. When you remember that experience, did you use a strategy in the process of learning English? How did you feel then? What did you learn from that experience?
3. Ceritakan secara mendalam (kapan, dimana, bagaimana, kenapa) pengalaman tidak suksesmu dalam belajar bahasa Inggris (contoh: yang paling menantang)?	3. Tell in depth (when, where, how, why) your experience of failure in learning English (e.g., the most challenging)?
4. Ketika kamu mengingat pengalaman itu, apakah kamu menggunakan suatu strategi dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa Inggris? Bagaimana perasaanmu saat itu? Apa yang kamu pelajari dari pengalaman itu?	4. When you remember that experience, did you use a strategy in the process of learning English? How did you feel then? What did you learn from that experience?
5. Menurut kamu faktor apa yang bisa menyebabkan pengalaman baik atau buruk tersebut? Setelah pengalaman tersebut apa yang kamu lakukan?	5. What do you think are the factors that can lead to such a good or bad experience? After that experience, what are you doing?
6. Apakah tantangan terbesarmu ketika mempelajari bahasa Inggris? Pernahkah kamu mengatasi kesulitan? Bagaimana perasaanmu saat itu?	6. What's your biggest challenge in learning English? Have you ever overcome any difficulties? How did you feel then?
7. Apa pengalamanmu dalam belajar sehingga membuat hasil yang negatif?	7. What experience do you have in learning to produce negative results?
8. Apa pengalamanmu dalam belajar sehingga membuat hasil yang positif?	8. What experience do you have in learning to produce positive results?
9. Apa pendapatmu tentang pembelajaran satu tahun ini?	9. What do you think of this one-year study?
10. Apa pendapatmu tentang pembelajaran satu semester ini?	10. What do you think of this one-semester study?

Interview Questions in Bahasa Indonesia	English Translation
Learning Habits	
1. Ceritakan mengenai kebiasaan belajarmu? 2. Apa yang kamu biasanya lakukan di kelas atau di rumah? Apakah kamu suka merencanakan apa yang akan datang?	1. Tell me about your learning habits? 2. What do you usually do in class or at home? Do you like to plan what's coming?
Possible L2 Selves, Ought-To L2 Selves	
1. Bagaimana kamu melihat dirimu sekarang? Diri apa yang kamu inginkan dua tahun lagi? 5 tahun lagi? 10 tahun lagi? 2. Apakah itu merupakan apa yang keluargamu harapkan? Bagaimana perasaanmu ketika mereka mengatakaan ekspektasi/harapan mereka? 3. Apa yang kamu inginkan atau harapkan sebelum lulus? 4. Apa yang kamu inginkan atau harapkan setelah lulus? 5. Apa yang kamu inginkan atau harapkan dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris? 6. Bagaimana kamu melihat dirimu sebagai pelajar bahasa Inggris ketika berkomunikasi dengan teman, guru, atau orang asing? 7. Menurutmu, pelajar bahasa Inggris yang ideal itu seperti apa?	1. How do you see yourself now? What do you want in two years? 5 years? 10 years? 2. Is that what your family expects? How do you feel when they attack their expectations? 3. What do you want or expect before you graduate? 4. What do you want or expect after you graduate? 5. What do you want or expect in learning English? 6. How do you see yourself as an English student when communicating with friends, teachers, or strangers? 7. What do you think the ideal English student is like?
LA1: Learner's Affective State and Regulation	
Learner's Beliefs	
1. Berdasarkan pengalaman belajar yang kamu sampaikan, apa yang kamu percayai waktu itu? Apa yang kamu percayai sekarang? (Contoh: semua usaha akan terbayarkan) Dapatkah kamu menjelaskannya?	1. Based on your learning experience, what did you believe in at that time? What do you believe now? (For example: all efforts will pay off) Can you explain it?
Emotion	
1. Apakah kamu memiliki pengalaman menarik atau tidak terlupakan dalam belajar bahasa Inggris?	1. Do you have an interesting or unforgettable experience in learning English?

Interview Questions in Bahasa Indonesia	English Translation
2. Apa perasaanmu saat belajar bahasa Inggris? Apakah perasaan itu berpengaruh dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris? Bagaimana?	2. What do you feel about learning English? Does that feeling influence learning English? How?
3. Pernahkah kamu merasa frustasi, takut, cemas, atau malu dalam belajar bahasa Inggris? Kapan? Bisakah kamu ceritakan?	3. Have you ever felt frustrated, afraid, anxious, or ashamed in learning English? When? Can you tell me?
4. Pernahkah kamu merasa bahagia, senang, bersemangat, atau bangga dalam belajar bahasa Inggris? Kapan? Bisakah kamu ceritakan?	4. Have you ever felt happy, happy, excited, or proud of learning English? When? Can you tell me?
Motivation	
1. Apa motivasimu dalam belajar bahasa Inggris?	1. What is your motivation in learning English?
2. Apa motivasimu dalam mengerjakan tugas bahasa Inggris?	2. What is your motivation in doing your English assignment?
3. Apakah kamu percaya diri dalam belajar bahasa Inggris?	3. Are you confident in learning English?
4. Bagaimana perasaanmu dalam belajar bahasa Inggris?	4. ow did you feel about learning English?
5. Apakah kamu termotivasi untuk menjadi lebih baik dari yang lain dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris?	5. Are you motivated to be better than others in learning English?
6. Apakah kamu termotivasi untuk mendapatkan nilai bagus dalam tes? Kenapa?	6. Are you motivated to get a good score in the test? Why?
7. Apakah kamu pernah merasa melakukan sesuatu yang berarti dalam belajar bahasa Inggris?	7. Have you ever felt doing something meaningful in learning English?
8. Apakah kamu mempunyai sesuatu keinginan dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris? Apa aitu?	8. Do you have any desire to learn English? What's that?
Self-Reflection (Metacognition and Reflection)	
Problem/Self-awareness	
1. Apa kekuatanmu dalam belajar bahasa Inggris?	1. What are your strengths in learning English?
2. Apa kekuranganmu dalam belajar bahasa Inggris?	2. What are your shortcomings in studying English?
3. Apa tantanganmu dalam belajar bahasa Inggris?	3. What are your challenges in learning English?

Interview Questions in Bahasa Indonesia	English Translation
Self-Evaluation	
1. Bagaimana pendapatmu mengenai pengetahuan/kemampuan bahasa Inggrismu?	1. What do you think about your knowledge of English?
LA2: Learner's Behavioral Change	
Problem-Solving Strategies	
1. Ceritakan bagaimana kamu menyelesaikan masalah ketika belajar bahasa Inggris? 2. Langkah apa yang kamu lakukan untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris? 3. Langkah apa yang kamu lakukan untuk mengatasi kurangnya pengetahuan dan meneruskan percakapan bahasa Inggris? 4. Langkah apa yang kamu lakukan untuk mendapatkan informasi relevan mengenai tugas bahasa Inggris? 5. Langkah apa yang kamu lakukan untuk mereview, mengingat, dan memperoleh informasi mengenai bahasa Inggris? 6. Langkah apa yang kamu lakukan untuk berinteraksi dengan orang lain, menyelesaikan masalah, atau bekerja sama dengan mereka? 7. Apakah kamu merencanakan penyelesaian suatu tugas/projek? Jika iya, bagaimana?	1. Tell me how you solve problems when learning English? 2. What steps have you taken to improve English learning? 3. What steps do you take to overcome your lack of knowledge and continue your English conversation? 4. What steps are you taking to get relevant information about your English assignments? 5. What steps have you taken to review, remember, and acquire information about English? 6. What steps will you take to interact with others, solve problems, or collaborate with them? 7. Are you planning on completing a task/ project? If so, how?
Learning Attitudes	
1. Apa perasaan atau pikiran negatifmu mengenai belajar bahasa Inggris? 2. Apa perasaan atau pikiran positifmu mengenai belajar bahasa Inggris?	1. What are your negative feelings or thoughts about learning English? 2. What are your positive feelings or thoughts about learning English?
LA3: Learner's Contraints	
1. Adakah kondisi (fisik/psikologis/ sosial) yang mencegah kamu dalam mempelajari sesuatu? (contoh: kondisi fisik tidak memungkinkan untuk bermain basket, demam panggung, keluarga tidak mendukung/percaya kemampuanmu)	1. Is there a condition (physical/ psychological/social) that prevents you from learning something? (Examples: physical condition not allowed to play basketball, stage fever, family does not support/believe your abilities)

Interview Questions in Bahasa Indonesia	English Translation
Physical Constraints	
1. Adakah kondisi fisik yang mempengaruhi/ menghambat kamu dalam belajar bahasa Inggris?	1. Do you have any physical conditions that prevent you from learning English?
Psychological Constraints	
1. Adakah kondisi psikologis yang mempengaruhi/menghambat kamu dalam belajar bahasa Inggris? 2. Apakah kamu merasa ada yang menghambat dalam belajar bahasa Inggris? 3. Apakah kamu merasa dipaksa dalam belajar bahasa Inggris?	1. Do you have a psychological condition that prevents you from learning English? 2. Do you feel any obstacles to learning English? 3. Do you feel compelled to learn English?
Social Constraints (Parental Expectations)	
1. Apakah kamu merasa kurang memiliki keterampilan sosial sehingga menghambat dalam belajar bahasa Inggris? Apa itu? 2. Apakah kamu merasa ekspektasi dari keluarga menghambat dalam belajar bahasa?	1. Do you feel that you lack social skills so that it prevents you from learning English? What is it? 2. Do you feel the expectations of the family hinder language learning?
LA4: External Push and Support	
Significant Others	
1. Dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris, adakah orang lain yang mempunyai pengalaman atau pengetahuan lebih yang kamu tahu atau bahkan membantu kamu? 2. Dalam keluargamu, apakah ada yang berperan dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris? Apa perannya? 3. Apa peran temanmu dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris? 4. Apa peran guru/dosen dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris?	1. In learning English, is there anyone else who has more experience or knowledge than you know or even helps you? 2. Is anyone in your family involved in learning English? What's the role? 3. What is your friend's role in learning English? 4. What is the role of the teacher/lecturer in learning English?
Learning (/Extracurricular) Activities	
1. Apakah kamu ikut dalam kegiatan yang berhubungan dengan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris (contoh: ekstra bahasa Inggris, komunitas debat)? Dapatkah kamu bercerita tentang itu?	1. Do you participate in activities related to learning English (e.g., extra English, debate community)? Can you tell me about that?

Interview Questions in Bahasa Indonesia	**English Translation**
Learner's Environment (and Interaction)	
1. Bagaimana atmosfer pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di kelas?	1. How's the English learning atmosphere in the classroom?
2. Bagaimana stimulus pembelajaran (contoh: tugas/aktivitas pembelajaran, penggunaan teknologi) bahasa Inggris di kelas?	2. How is the stimulation of learning (e.g., tasks/learning activities, use of technology) English in the classroom?
3. Bagaimana interaksi dengan teman sekelas dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris?	3. How do you interact with classmates in learning English?

The Influence of Peer Interaction on Emotion Regulation in the English Classroom

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This article reports on a classroom-based case study on emotion regulation (ER) in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. In order to clarify the influence of peer interaction on ER, this study aimed to: (a) identify the types of emotions that the students experience in the EFL classroom, (b) determine the situations in English classes that elicit these emotions, (c) explore ER strategies employed by the students, and (d) examine the influence of peer interaction on ER. The participants were 26 non-English major first-year Japanese university students who attended my English class in the spring semester of 2022. They answered two open-ended questionnaires and the results were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The students experienced a variety of negative and positive emotions and regulated their emotions using different ER strategies in various specific situations in the English classroom. They also apprehended the positive effects of peer interaction on emotion regulation (ER), such as a decrease in negative emotions and an increase in positive emotions. This study highlights the potential benefits of peer interaction in ER, and the findings contribute to ongoing discussions on the role of interaction and the importance of ER for learners in an EFL classroom.

本研究は、外国語としての英語の授業内における感情調節に関する事例研究である。本研究の目的は次の4つである。(a) 生徒が英語の授業において経験する感情の種類を明らかにすること、(b) 英語の授業のどのような状況で、そのような感情が引き起こされるかを明らかにすること、(c) 生徒が用いる感情調整戦略を探ること、(d) 感情調整に及ぼす仲間の相互作用（ピア・インタラクション）の影響を検討することである。本研究の参加者は、2022年春学期に筆者の英語の授業に出席した、英語専攻でない日本人の大学1年生26名である。学生たちは2つの自由記述式質問表に回答し、その結果を量的・質的に分析した。その結果、学生たちは様々なネガティブな感情とポジティブな感情を経験し、授業内の様々な具体的な状況において異なるER戦略を用いて感情を調節していた。また、学生たちは、否定的感情の減少や肯定的感情の増加といった、ピア・インタラクションが感情調節に及ぼす肯定的な効果を認識していた。本研究は、感情調整におけるピア・インタラクションの潜在的利点を明らかにすることによって、外国語教室におけるインタラクションの役割と学習者にとっての感情調整についての研究に貢献するものである。

Keywords

classroom-based case study, learner emotions, emotion regulation, self-emotion regulation, peer interaction
授業内事例研究、学習者の感情、感情調整、自己感情調整、ピア・インタラクション

Introduction

Throughout more than 20 years of teaching experience, I have seen that my students experience a variety of emotions in my English classes. Some students seem to feel negative emotions such as anxiety and shame during speaking activities and try their best to overcome them. Other students develop interest and confidence in English through the enjoyment of working together with their peers in group activities. In addition, through the many group activities in my classes, the students experience a lot of positive emotions and peer interaction also seems to have a positive impact on the students' emotions and emotion regulation (ER). Learners need to regulate their emotions appropriately through interactions with others (self-emotion regulation) in order to enhance their autonomy (Kato & Mynard, 2015). Emotion regulation can be defined as any attempt to modify negative and positive emotions (Gross, 2015) and learners often use various ER strategies in foreign language learning (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020). Prior research has emphasized the necessity for learners to appropriately regulate their emotions through

interaction for enhancing their autonomy (Kato & Mynard, 2015). Kato and Yamashita (2021) point out the importance of interaction with peers in the English classroom because it presents learners with opportunities to reflect on, and become aware of their individual learning experiences, and share them with peers. This implies that peer interaction may also have a positive impact on learners' ER. The English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom is an effective learning space in which learners can be trained to regulate their emotions appropriately through peer interaction.

Although various studies on learners' ER and ER strategy use (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020; Oxford, 2017) and peer interaction in language learning (Donato, 1994; Ohta, 2001; Swain, 2000; van Lier, 2004) have been conducted, there have been few studies on the influence of peer interaction on ER in the EFL classroom. As a teacher, I need to know more about my students' emotions and the influence of peers on their emotions in order to better support them in the classroom. I believe that with appropriate support from teachers, students can better regulate their emotions by themselves and through peer interactions, which may provide an opportunity to develop their autonomy. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of peer interaction on students' ER.

Literature Review

Learner Emotions

Past research on learner emotions and ER has reported that the emotions experienced while learning a foreign language are a major factor in individual differences. Foreign language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986) has positive aspects that promote learning as well as negative aspects that inhibit learning (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Regarding the negative aspects, foreign language anxiety has been shown to negatively affect four language skills (Cheng et al., 1999; Lu & Liu, 2011). Many researchers have proposed approaches to reduce learners' anxiety. These include, for example, building a comfortable learning environment (Matsuda & Gobel, 2004), reducing ambiguity in the classroom (Dewaele & Ip, 2013), developing learning strategies, and enhancing learner confidence by increasing opportunities for output (Lu & Liu, 2015). On the other hand, although anxiety is typically a negative trait, studies have also shown positive aspects in that learners with high anxiety tend to listen more attentively to teacher's instructions (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Oxford, 1999) and that anxiety helps learners maintain their motivation (Lu & Liu, 2011). Other studies have also examined the relationship between foreign language anxiety and other variables, such as motivation, gender, self-efficacy, and self-confidence, and found that anxiety is closely related to them (Dewaele & Ip, 2013; Piniel & Csizér, 2015; Ueki & Takeuchi, 2012).

In addition to studies focused on anxiety, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) identified a positive aspect called "foreign language enjoyment (FLE)." FLE is a positive emotion that has a positive effect on foreign language learning. Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018) argue that anxiety and enjoyment can productively interact with each other though they are independent emotions and that it is more important to increase enjoyment than to diminish anxiety in language learning. It has also been noted that FLE is related to the teacher's personality, teaching skills, and the frequency of the teacher's use of the target language in class (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Dewaele et al., 2019). These findings indicate that both teacher and peers are a major influence on learners' emotions.

Although teachers' support for learners' emotions is of course necessary, I also believe that learners themselves need to regulate their own emotions in order to improve their autonomy. Therefore, it is important to consider what kind of support teachers should provide to learners in order to enable them to regulate their own emotions.

Emotion Regulation

ER is a crucial factor in promoting learner autonomy (Tassinari, 2016). ER refers to controlling the emotions that one experiences, when they occur, and how they are felt or expressed (Gross, 1998) and also to any attempt to modify negative and positive emotions that a person experiences (Gross, 2015). Gross considers ER as a cognitive process and classifies five types of emotion regulation strategies that human beings use in their daily lives: (a) Situation Selection (modifying emotions by approaching or avoiding stimuli or persons that are expected to elicit desirable or undesirable emotions), (b) Situation Modification (changing the situation itself), (c) Attentional Development (changing the direction of attention such as distraction), (d) Cognitive Change (changing the way of perceiving emotions or thoughts), and (e) Response Modulation (controlling emotional reactions). Gross (2015) also claims that ER has both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects, defining "intrinsic emotion regulation" as attempts to regulate one's own emotions and "extrinsic emotion regulation" as an interest in regulating others' emotions, for instance, parent-child interaction. In foreign language learning, previous studies have also shown that learners use a variety of strategies for ER, such as distraction, acceptance, breathing deeply, and seeking social support (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020; Oxford, 2015; Webster & Hadwin, 2015). Bielak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2020) investigated the ER strategies of their Polish students, with the vignette methodology of "Managing Your Emotions for Language Learning (MYE)" developed by Gkonou and Oxford (2016). They found that the students sometimes experienced both positive and negative emotions simultaneously. The ER strategy which students most used was "acceptance" (classified as a "cognitive change"). The next most popular strategy was to get on with the task, "task enactment," classified as "situation modification." The choice of ER strategies was influenced primarily by the specific situation, learning context, and participants' characteristics. One limitation of Bielak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak's study (2020) is that the situations were scenario-based and hypothetical, so it is likely that learner's emotions and ER in actual situations would be different. To investigate their emotions and ER strategies, I devised an intervention which involved talking with students about the emotions they may have experienced in my English class and asking them to write down their emotions twice during the spring semester. I hoped that I would be able to support students better in class by investigating their emotions. By conducting this study, I thought that I might be able to increase my students' awareness of ER in real time in the classroom and even help them learn ER strategies from each other.

Peer Interaction

The importance of interaction was proposed by Vygotsky and his colleagues. They argue that learning takes place firstly through interaction in the learner's "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD; as cited in van Compernolle, 2015). Bruner (1985) suggested that scaffolding occurring through interaction within the ZPD is essential in cognitive development. Although Vygotsky's ideas especially focused on children's educational potential, his ideas have been also applied in the field of L2 development. According to

sociocultural theory, which developed from Vygotsky's ideas, the development of human cognitive functions derives from social interactions and that through participation in social activities, individuals are drawn into the use of these functions (VanPatten et al., 2020). In foreign language education, the positive impact of peer interaction and scaffolding has been demonstrated by some researchers (Ohta, 2001; Swain, 2000). In general, scaffolding refers to support from the educator or more competent peers (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). "Collective scaffolding," however, has also been found to occur between students with similar proficiency levels (Donato, 1994). Furthermore, some studies have shown that collective scaffolding can result in proficiency development even when a learner's peers have a lower level of proficiency (van Lier, 2004).

Peer interaction provides scaffolding not only in learning but also in psychological aspects. Donato (1994) found that peer-mediated exercises help learners manage frustration and risk and interaction might relieve their stress and anxiety. This finding is a good example of peer interaction as a tool for scaffolding ER. It has been noted that language classes providing learners with substantial peer interaction are suitable for helping them develop autonomy (Kato & Mynard, 2015; Kato & Yamashita, 2021; Mynard & Carson, 2012; Shelton-Strong, 2018). As mentioned above, peer interaction provides learners with the opportunity to reflect on, share, and become aware of their learning experiences (Kato & Yamashita., 2021). Learners can have the opportunity to assess themselves through reflection, sharing, and awareness of their experiences (Shelton-Strong, 2018).

Although the influence of peer interaction on aspects other than language learning has been highlighted, there have been few empirical studies of the influence of peer interaction on ER. Examining the influence of peer interaction on ER could contribute to expanding the role of interaction. In addition, by investigating the influence of peer interaction on ER, I hope to expand or deepen our understanding of the significant role that peer interaction can play in language learning to promote autonomy.

Research Questions

For this study, I set the following four research questions:

1. What types of emotions did students experience in English classes during the spring semester?
2. When or in what situations did the students experience those types of emotions?
3. How did the students regulate their emotions?
4. What influence does peer interaction have on emotion regulation?

Methods

Participants

The participants were 26 non-English major first-year Japanese university students (11 male and 15 female students) in a required English class. The class was conducted by me once a week, for a total of 15 lessons. The student's proficiency level in English varies from A1 to B1 on the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Language) scale. This required first-year English class has in-class activities which provide the students with many opportunities to interact with each other. In groups, they engaged in speaking activities, group writing, group presentation, and discussion. In this study, the students were divided into four groups of 4 and two groups of 5 for interactive activities. The groups were changed twice in the spring semester by drawing lots.

Materials

I created and used two bilingual, open-ended questionnaires in Japanese and English as shown in Table 1. The questionnaires consisted of the following six questions that correspond to the research questions (RQ) 1 through 4. (The specific research question is noted in parentheses.)

Table 1. *Questions in Questionnaires 1 and 2*

Questions in Questionnaires 1 and 2
1. What types of emotions have you experienced in this English class? (RQ 1)
2. Is that emotion that you experienced in the situation negative, positive, or both? (RQ 2)
3. When or in which situations in this class did you feel that emotion strongly? (RQ 1)
4. How did you manage or control that emotion (ER)? (RQ 3)
5. How did that emotion that you experienced in the situation change through peer interaction or did peer interaction help or influence ER? (RQ 4)
6. Do you think that peer interaction helped with ER? (RQ 4)

Regarding Question 1, a list of the types of basic and applied emotions in Plutchik's "Wheel of Emotions" (Semeraro et al., 2021) was included on the questionnaire sheet for reference (See Appendix). The students provided descriptive responses from Questions 1 to 5 freely in Japanese. The only difference between Questionnaire 1 and 2 is Question 6. The answer choices for Question 6 of Questionnaire 1 were "Yes" or "No". In Question 6 of Questionnaire 2, a four-point Likert scale was used: "Very helpful," "Helpful," "Not very helpful," "Not at all helpful," without a neutral point in order to prevent students from giving a neutral response.

These open-ended questionnaires were conducted as a part of an in-class activity to help the students reflect on their emotions in English learning. The students were asked to complete a consent form for the use of their responses in these questionnaires after I explained the purpose of this study to them.

Procedures

The participants completed Questionnaire 1 in week 7 and Questionnaire 2 in week 14. I used the following procedure in Table 2. The figures in parentheses indicate the time required for the task.

Table 2. *Questionnaire Procedure*

Procedures
<u>In Lesson 7 of the spring semester</u>
1. I explained the relationship between English learning and emotions, ER, and peer interaction. (5 min)
2. The students completed Questionnaire 1 reflecting on Lesson 1 through Lesson 7. (20 min)
3. I collected Questionnaire 1 and commented on it.
<u>In Lesson 14 of the spring semester</u>
1. I returned Questionnaire 1 to the students and distributed Questionnaire 2.
2. The students completed Questionnaire 2 referring to Questionnaire 1 and reflecting on Lesson 8 through Lesson 14. (15 min)
3. I collected both Questionnaire 1 and 2 in order to analyze them.

As for the emotions, I asked the students to reflect on Lesson 1 through Lesson 7 and write down at least the four or five most memorable emotions, whether these emotions were positive or negative, and the situations in which they experienced them. In Questionnaire 2 administered at the end of semester, I asked the students to reflect on Lesson 8 through Lesson 14 and write down any new emotions and any situations in which they experienced those emotions in Questionnaire 1. I added verbal instruction to the students to refer to the types of basic and applied emotions in Plutchik's "Wheel of Emotions" on the sheets of Questionnaire 1 and 2 and to describe any other emotions that they might have. After collecting Questionnaire 1, I read the students' responses and commented on the questionnaire if there was anything that I wanted to know more about, for example, the details of the influence of peer interaction and changes in negative and positive emotions. In Lesson 14, the students were asked to reflect on Lesson 8 through Lesson 14, to add new emotions to Questionnaire 2, if any, and to respond to my comments in Questionnaire 1.

Analysis

I used a mixed-methods approach in order to analyze the students' responses. I first tabulated and presented as numerical values the data obtained from Questions 1, 2, 3, and 6 of Questionnaire 1 and 2. Next, I categorically analyzed the qualitative data in the students' descriptive responses to Questions 3, 4, and 5 of Questionnaire 1 and 2. In order to do this, I coded the responses and made a thematic analysis, arranging the themes primarily in tables. For Question 4, I referred to Gross's (2015) taxonomy of ER strategies for the major categories, and the detailed classification of ER strategies by Bielak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2020) was used as subcategories. I analyzed their responses and compiled them into tables. The students' comments in Japanese have been translated into English by me.

Results and Discussion

Types of Emotions

According to the responses to Question 1 and 3 in both Questionnaires, the students (N=26) experienced various types of emotions over the 14-week semester as shown in Table 3. The numbers indicate how many students experienced the emotion.

Table 3. *Types of Emotions Experienced by Students*

Types of emotions: 32 types			
Negative emotions: 17 types		**Positive emotions: 15 types**	
Anxiety	15	Joy	17
Apprehension	9	Trust	9
Shame	9	Anticipation	6
Boredom	3	Interest	5
Distraction	3	Aggressiveness	4
Guilt	3	Surprise	4
Disgust	2	Serenity	3
Sadness	2	Delight	2

Types of emotions: 32 types			
Negative emotions: 17 types		**Positive emotions: 15 types**	
Terror	2	Hope	2
Fear	1	Pride	2
Tension	1	Admiration	1
Anger	1	Amazement	1
Annoyance	1	Curiosity	1
Disappointment	1	Love	1
Despair	1	Optimism	1
Envy	1		
Remorse	1		
Total	56		59

As for Research Question 1 corresponding to Questions 1 and 3: "What types of emotion did students experience in English classes during the spring semester?," the students reported experiencing a total of 32 types of emotions, 17 types of negative emotions and 15 types of positive emotions. Overall students recorded slightly more instances of positive than negative emotions. The most common negative emotion experienced by the 16 students was "anxiety," which many researchers have identified as the emotion that is commonly experienced by learners in foreign language learning (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Horwitz, 2001). All the students in my English class perceived anxiety as a negative factor that hinders learning. A certain number of the students experienced the emotions of "apprehension" and "shame," which are also familiar in foreign language learning.

In terms of positive emotions, although Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) mentioned "foreign language enjoyment" as a representative of such emotions, the emotion of joy was the most frequently experienced and no students mentioned "enjoyment." This was probably because "enjoyment" was not listed in the guideline set of positive emotions (see Appendix) and most students responded by referring to Plutchik's emotions even though I verbally explained to the students that they could write any emotion other than those listed. However, some students indicated in their responses to Question 5 of both questionnaires about the influence of peer interaction on ER that they felt "enjoyment" in learning English through interaction with their peers. The following are some examples.

Examples of students' comments

> **Student I:** During the group activity, there were things that I did not know, and when I said I did not know, the group member gave me more information about it than I expected, which surprised me much more. At the same time, I felt enjoyment.
>
> **Student H:** (In group activities) enabled me to have more diverse perspectives and made learning more enjoyable. I like English class more.
>
> **Student R:** It was interesting to hear other groups' opinions, which were different from our own. I enjoyed sharing these ideas with our group members and making use of them next time.

These comments highlight how students experienced "enjoyment" through peer interaction in group activities. The students' responses revealed that, as Imai (2010) also pointed out, they experience a variety of emotions in the classroom including enjoyment.

Specific Situations

Tables 4 and 5 summarize in which situations in the English classes from Lesson 1 through Lesson 14 the students experienced the emotions listed in Table 3. The specific situations in which the students experienced the negative emotions were categorized into 12 situations and are presented in order of number from highest to lowest in Table 4 and the situations in which they experienced the positive ones are shown in Table 5.

Table 4. *Specific Situations and Negative Emotions Experienced by the Students*

Situations	**Negative emotions experienced by the students in the situation** (The horizontal axis lists the negative emotions in alphabetical order)				
When failing, making a mistake, not doing well (19)	Anxiety (2) Guilt (5)	Apprehension (1) Shame (7)	Despair (1) Terror (1)	Disappointment (1)	Distraction (1)
When there was something that they did not understand/ know (12)	Anxiety (3) Shame (2)	Apprehension (2) Remorse (1)	Despair (1)	Guilty (2)	Sad (1)
During group activities (11)	Anxiety (4)	Apprehension (5)	Guilty (2)		
When speaking up, giving a presentation in class (8)	Anxiety (3)	Apprehension (2)	Fear (1)	Shame (1)	Tension (1)
When asked a question by the teacher (8)	Anxiety (4)	Apprehension (1)	Fear (1)	Disgust (1)	Distraction (1)
When given assignments, homework (5)	Anger (1)	Annoyance (1)	Anxiety (2)	Disappointment (1)	
Before class, activities, assignments, and tests (5)	Anxiety (3)	Apprehension (1)	Disgust (1)		
When noticing classmates' high/ low English proficiency (3)	Apprehension (1)	Distraction (1)	Envy (1)		

Situations	**Negative emotions experienced by the students in the situation** (The horizontal axis lists the negative emotions in alphabetical order)	
When noticing the lack of their own English skills (2)	Guilty (1)	Shame (1)
When working alone (2)	Boredom (2)	
When scolded by the teacher (1)	Terror (1)	
For the fact that I am the only sophomore in the freshman class (1)	Shame (1)	

Table 4 shows that the students experienced different types of negative emotions in various situations. The most frequently mentioned situations were those in which they felt that they failed, made mistakes, and did not do well, for instance, when they could not listen to English, when they made a mistake in English, or when their answer was wrong. The next situation that caused the negative emotions most was "when there was something that they do not understand and know, for example, when they could not understand English while listening, when there were English words or expressions that they did not know, or when they did not know what to say in English." In terms of the situation of "during group activity," the students had negative emotions about their interpersonal skills. For example, the students doubted whether they could communicate well, get along with other classmates, or cooperate with other classmates well.

Table 5. *Specific Situations and Positive Emotions Experienced by the Students*

Situations	**Positive emotions experienced by the students in the situation** (The horizontal axis lists the positive emotions in alphabetical order)				
During group activities (38)	Aggressiveness (2) Love (1) Trust (11)	Anticipation (3) Optimism (1)	Delight (1) Pride (1)	Interest (4) Serenity (2)	Joy (11) Surprise (1)
When feeling successful, improvement, doing well (14)	Aggressiveness (1) Pride (1)	Delight (1)	Hope (1)	Joy (9)	Optimism (1)
When learning, gaining new knowledge (7)	Admiration (1) Surprise (1)	Amazement (1)	Curiosity (1)	Interest (2)	Joy (1)

Situations	**Positive emotions experienced by the students in the situation** (The horizontal axis lists the positive emotions in alphabetical order)				
During English class (7)	Aggressiveness (1) Serenity (1)	Anticipation (2)	Curiosity (1)	Joy (1)	Serenity (1)
When praised by teacher (4)	Anticipation (1)	Delight (1)	Joy (2)		
When having friends (2)	Aggressiveness (1)	Joy (1)			
When expecting the improvement (2)	Anticipation (1)	Delight (1)			
When noticing classmates' high English skills (2)	Admiration (1)	Surprise (1)			

Regarding the specific situations when the students experienced positive emotions, the most positive emotions were experienced "during group activities." Example group activities included having dialogue and exchanging ideas with group members, working together, and helping each other. As Table 5 shows, the students experienced most types of positive emotions during group activities. This indicates that group activities, that is peer interactions, have an important role in increasing positive emotions. As for "Aggressiveness," it was translated in Japanese as the meaning of "very motivated to be successful and eager to achieve what they want", so it is likely that students chose this word with the image of "active, proactive, or positive attitude" in mind, rather than "attack" or "threatening attitude." It is also clear from the students' descriptions that they consider "Aggressiveness" to be a positive emotion and that students are using it in that sense. For example, Student D reflected in the "Aggressiveness" section, "*I learned that it is important to express my opinion actively and decided to try harder to be more positive*."

With regard to Research Question 2 ("When or in what situations did the students experience those types of emotions?"), the students experienced various negative and positive emotions in different situations in English classes. While some students felt a variety of positive emotions "during group activities", other students simultaneously reported different emotions in the same situation, for example," I experienced anxiety and distraction when the teacher picked me to answer the question" and "I experienced both fear and shame when speaking up in front of the class." From these comments, the students seem to face multiple emotions in a particular situation rather than a single emotion. Even in similar situations, the emotions experienced by different individuals varied. For example, "when noticing a classmate's high English skills," one student recorded "envy" as a negative emotion (see Table 4) while another student noted "surprise" as a positive emotion (see Table 5). However, it was not possible to determine what caused this difference in emotion, for example, whether it was due to personality, family background, or educational environment. It would be good in future studies to expand on students' answers by doing follow-up interviews.

Students' Emotion Regulation

The students' responses to Question 4, which corresponds to Research Question 3: "How did the students regulate their emotions?", are categorized in Table 6 based on Gross's ER strategy taxonomy (2015) and the classification of ER strategy by Bielak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2020). The students utilized the ER strategy of "cognitive change" followed by "situation modification". This result was identical to the results in Bielak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak's study (2020).

Table 6. *Students' Emotion Regulation Strategies*

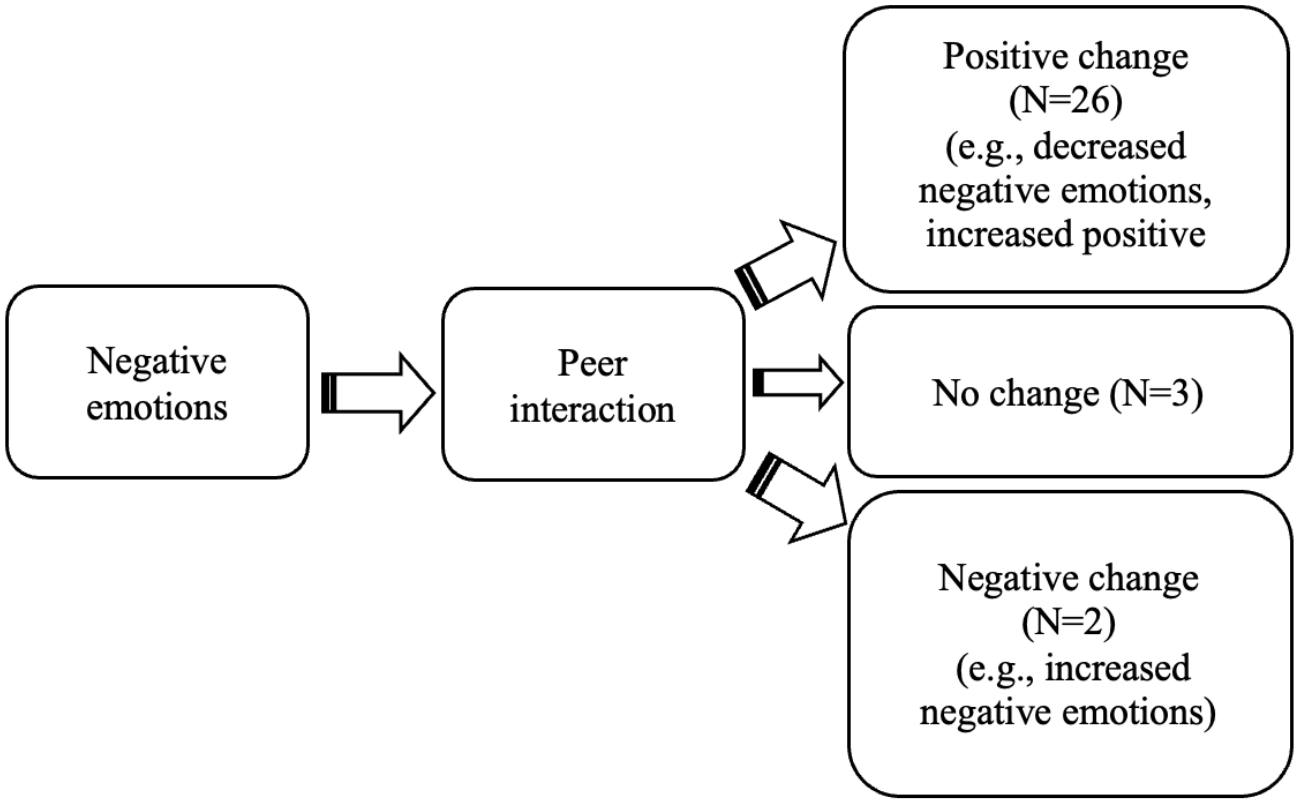
Students' emotion regulation strategies	
Strategy Categories	**Subcategories**
COGNITIVE CHANGE (48)	Intrinsic ER • Acceptance (5) • Reassurance (6) • Effort-oriented decision (17) • Wishful thinking (13) • Self-consequating and goal-orienting (5)
SITUATION MODIFICATION (28)	Intrinsic ER • Task enactment (9) Intrinsic/ Extrinsic ER • Seeking help (8) • Social sharing (11)
RESPONSE MODULATION (3)	Intrinsic ER • Simple meditation (1) • Resting (1) • Doing another thing (1)
GIVING UP (1)	Intrinsic ER
ENDURING THE SITUATION (1)	Intrinsic ER
DOING NOTHING (1)	Intrinsic ER

Note. Numbers in parentheses are the number of people who used the strategy.

Under the strategy of "cognitive change" (Gross, 2015), 17 students made an "effort-oriented decision" (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020, p. 10), such as making more effort and studying harder. Thirteen students chose the means of "wishful thinking," which is "similar to reassurance in projecting a favorable future outcome, but it relied on luck rather than one's abilities" (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020, p. 10), and switched from negative to positive thinking. Six students told themselves that they could do it (reassurance). Five students accepted their emotions as they are. The other five students' ER strategies were related to "self-consequating and goal-orienting" (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020, p. 10) whereby they took what happened as a positive and decided to apply it to their future. The second ER strategy most experienced by the students was "situation modification" (Gross, 2015). Regarding "task enactment" (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020, p. 10) the students who made a mistake and felt shame looked up the word in dictionaries or

apps in order to overcome their negative emotion of shame. Some students searched for information on the internet and took notes when they did not understood something and felt anxious. Eleven students' use of ER strategy was related to "social sharing" (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020, p. 10) such as working and discussing with classmates, or group activities, that is, peer interaction. Eight students sought help or advice from their classmates in order to regulate negative emotions. The results indicate that many students used extrinsic ER strategies. This suggests that peer interaction is involved in ER and also has a positive impact.

Overall, these results show that the students used a variety of ER strategies to regulate their negative emotions in specific situations in this English class. Most students used "cognitive change" and intrinsic ER, for example, "effort-oriented decision," "wishful thinking," and "task enactment." "Social sharing," such as peer interaction in English class, is considered extrinsic ER that Gross (2015) likened to parent-child interaction. I also found that peer interaction such as working with classmates had some positive impact on student ER. This suggests that they genuinely enjoyed engaging in group activities. In particular, the strategy of "seeking help" from peers produced positive emotions for the students who were asked. Thus, negative emotions were positively transformed through peer interaction. "*I began to enjoy doing assignments to teach my friends when I was asked and boredom turned into enjoyment*," was one perspective that students offered (Student E), indicating that ER strategy of seeking help can be connected to the ER of the person to whom help is offered. Student peer interaction in the group activity itself brought about some positive changes to their ER. Therefore, for extrinsic ER to be successful, the relationship with others, that is peer interaction in the classroom, can be considered to play an important role in the classroom.



Note. Numbers in parentheses are the number of people who perceived these changes.

Figure 1. Changes in Negative Emotions through Peer Interaction

Influence of Peer Interaction on ER

As summarized in Table 4, the students generally used a variety of adjustment methods to regulate their negative emotions. With the exception of "seeking help" and "social sharing," the students regulated their emotions by themselves. In this class, where group activities were common, many students used the strategies of "seeking help" and "social sharing." This suggests that peer interaction plays an important role in students' ER. In order to see the influence of peer interaction on ER, the students were asked if they felt any change in their negative and positive emotions through peer interaction (Question 5 in Questionnaire 1 and 2 corresponding to Research Question 4: "How did peer interaction help or influence ER?"). The changes in the emotions that the students felt through peer interaction are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

According to the students' responses to Question 5, three patterns of change were observed in negative emotions through peer interaction: positive changes (e.g., decreased negative emotion, increased positive emotions), negative changes (e.g., increased negative emotions), and no change. As for positive changes, 26 students perceived positive changes about their negative emotions through peer interaction. Examples are:

> **Student E:** As we got to know each other, we began to voice our opinions to each other, which led to more lively discussions, and I felt like I was getting to know the boys in the same group, so my anxiety gradually turned to joy.

> **Student C:** I was able to make friends with others in the same group and enjoyed the sense of cooperation and togetherness, so I have less apprehension.

> **Student K:** Classmates in my group gave me advice on what I didn't understand, so I felt a little more confident.

However, depending on the type of negative emotion, three students did not perceive any change and two students perceived a negative change, for example:

> **Student B:** I lost confidence in my English when I was being taught English by group members.

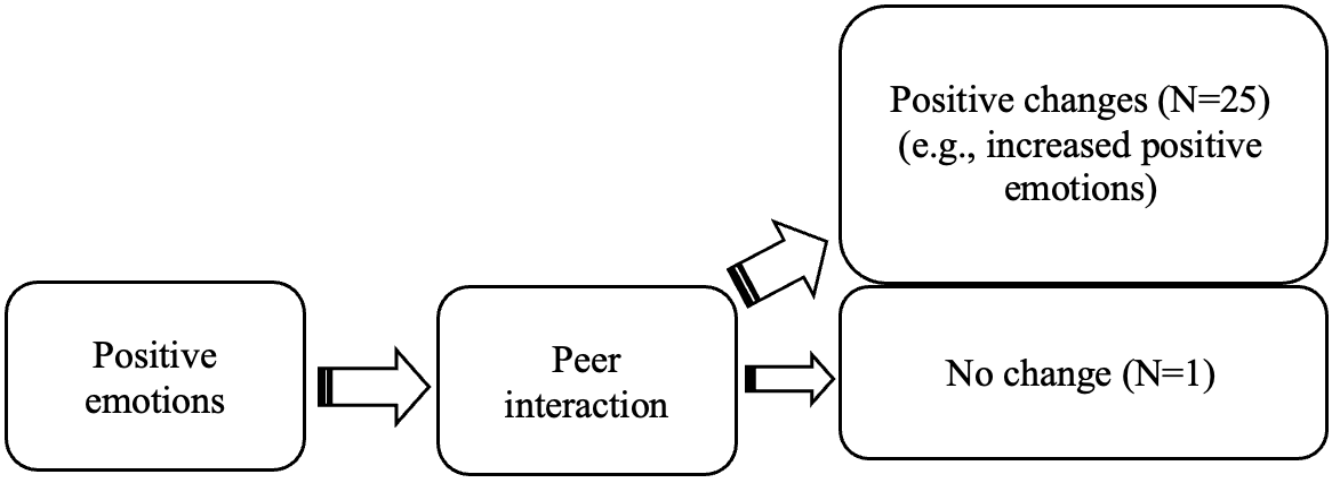
> **Student P:** No one blamed me for forgetting the assignment, but I was concerned that I was disturbing harmony.

In addition to the above, most students noted a decrease in negative emotions such as "tension," "shame," as well as "fear" and an increase in positive emotions such as "ease," "anticipation," and "optimism," Increases in "courage" and raised "aspiration" were also reported. Negative emotional effects, for example, losing confidence, and having concern were reported by some students too, as noted in the comments above.

In response to Question 3 of both Questionnaires (When or in which situations in this class did you feel that emotion strongly?) which was a review of the 14 classes, the students did not point to negative emotions during the group activity (see Table 4), but two students noted that they had negative emotions through peer interaction when reflecting on the influence of peer interaction. From the holistic perspective of 14 classes, the negative emotions that two students experienced through peer interaction may not have been strong enough emotions to impress the students because they did not point them out in Question 3. However, in Question 5, these students stated that they experienced these negative feelings through peer interaction. This means that from the

micro perspective of peer interaction, the emotions that the students experienced varied. This shows that the students' emotions are constantly changing depending on the time and situation. Thus, a more in-depth analysis of students' emotions would require a more micro-level investigation, such as at each class or the level of individual activities. This could be done, for example, through learners' journaling about their emotional lives with learning and using English both inside and outside the classroom.

As for changes in positive emotions through peer interaction, 25 students noted positive changes in some positive emotions and only one student recorded no change in a positive emotion through peer interaction.



Note. Numbers in parentheses are the number of people who perceived these changes.

Figure 2. Changes in Positive Emotions through Peer Interaction

From the students' comments, positive emotions changed more positively (e.g. increased positive emotions) or did not change. As for the positive changes:

> **Student M:** I was able to tell my opinions to my classmates, which changed my expectations to more positivity.
>
> **Student N:** I was happy to see that the atmosphere of the group was improved by people actively speaking up. Although I was not good at expressing my own opinions, I wanted to be helpful to the members by speaking up. Increased expectations.
>
> **Student O:** I felt that I could come up with many more ideas than I could alone and that it was more fun to work together to create them. Increased confidence.
>
> **Student E:** I think that we created a relationship of trust and through sharing opinions that we had not considered, we eventually came to respect each other. Respecting each other also gave us confidence.

As noted in the students' comments, many of them perceived an increase in the same positive emotion. Student M realized that her expectations became more positive during group activities. Some students perceived the occurrence of new emotions such as respect and confidence through peer interaction with respect to the positive emotional change. ER, therefore involves not only the regulation of negative emotions, but also the regulation of positive emotions, in order to make them more effective for language learning.

As for Question 6 (Do you think that peer interaction helped with ER?), nearly all students indicated that peer interaction had a positive impact on their ER (see Table 7).

Table 7. *Students' Perception of Whether Peer Interaction Helped ER*

Whether peer interaction helped ER			
Very helpful	Helpful	Not very helpful	Not at all helpful
9	16	1	0

In addition, the students' responses to Question 5 (How did that emotion that you experienced in the situation change through peer interaction or did peer interaction help or influence ER?) were analyzed using thematic analysis to determine what elements or characteristics of peer interaction positively or negatively affected the students' emotions. Based on the student's descriptive responses, 10 different elements or characteristics of peer interaction emerged as a result of coding based on the words that characterized peer interaction (see Table 8).

Table 8. *Elements of Peer Interaction That Changed the Emotions*

List of elements and characteristics of peer interaction			
1. Attentive listening	2. Collaborative work	3. Dialogue	4. Empathy
5. Feedback	6. Fellowship	7. Good atmosphere	8. Help each other
9. Intimate relation	10. Sharing		

Note. Elements and characteristics of peer interaction are listed in alphabetical order.

In particular, the words "dialogue," which includes discussion and communication, and "collaborative work" were often used in the students' comments. For example:

> **Student G:** We shared unclear things through communication so I felt less anxious.
>
> **Student V:** We teach and help each other and I enjoy collaborative work.
>
> **Student A:** In this class, we had a lot of speaking and reading activities (collaborative work) and group discussions, which helped me gain confidence.
>
> **Student W:** Everyone in the group consoled me that this problem was difficult (Sharing/ Empathy), which made me less fearful.
>
> **Student I:** The group members not only gave me the correct answers but also explained why they were correct (Feedback/ Help each other). That helped me understand better.

As can be seen from these comment examples, the elements of peer interaction also had a positive impact on English learning as well as emotions.

The fact that the students commented that they felt some positive changes in their negative emotions suggests that peer interaction primarily affected "cognitive changes" in the students' ER. The students mentioned that the elements and characteristics of peer interaction, such as dialogue, collaborative work, and empathy, had a positive change in decreasing their negative emotions and increasing their positive emotions. However, this does not mean that their negative emotions had completely disappeared. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) argued that learners have anxiety and enjoyment in learning a foreign language, but that the two exist independently. The presence of different emotions in the same situation and the fact that some students experienced both a decrease in negative emotions along with an increase in positive emotions show that each emotion

exists independently. It is not that students' negative emotions disappeared through peer interaction, but rather that positive emotions became more dominant than negative emotions due to the positive influence of peer interaction. Moreover, most students noted some changes in positive emotions as well as in negative emotions. The positive changes through peer interaction, for example, increasing positive emotions such as "joy" and "confidence," can lead to cognitive changes brought about by peer interaction. This is one of the notable positive influences of peer interaction.

Not all of the students noted only positive influences of peer interaction in their ER. However, from their descriptions in the questionnaires, it is possible to say that peer interaction contributed positively to the students' ER. As 25 out of 26 students said that peer interaction was beneficial for ER, even if peer interaction caused students to have negative emotions, it may have helped them regulate those negative emotions again depending on the quality of peer interaction. As in previous studies (Donato, 1994; Kato & Yamashita, 2021), this research confirms that peer interaction provides a positive influence as a scaffolding for the psychological aspect of learner emotions as well.

It is not possible to accurately identify every change in emotion because students' emotions are fluid and dynamic. This study is just a case study based on my classroom. Types of emotions, situations, ER strategies, and the influence of peer interaction can vary from context to context. The relationship between ER and peer interaction should be further investigated. However, making an effort to notice and respond to fluctuations in learners' emotions can help teachers provide appropriate support for their learners' psychology as well as their English learning. In addition, teachers also need to create a good learning environment in which students can appropriately regulate their emotions through peer interaction. Only in such an environment can students increase their agency and autonomy. In order to provide them with appropriate support and a good learning environment, it is important that teachers seek to understand individual students and their emotions through dialogue.

Conclusion

In this study, I tried to investigate the emotions that the students experience, the specific situations in which they experience those emotions, and the influence of peer interaction on ER in my English class. The students experienced a wide range of negative and positive emotions. In terms of ER, peer interaction as an example of "social sharing," with its function of extrinsic emotion regulation, seemed to bring about mainly some cognitive change. It was observed that there were both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects to learners' emotion regulation, but most importantly, almost all students indicated that interaction with peers was helpful in ER. However, peer interaction does not always work well because it can elicit negative emotions in some students. What difficulties the students have in peer interaction is not clear, and this is perhaps a limitation in this study that can be further explored. It is necessary to investigate how to make peer interaction positive and healthy in order for ER to work well. In addition, the influence of teacher intervention on peer interaction can also be further investigated. In future research, I will use advising as a means to make peer interaction healthier and more comfortable, including teacher intervention, and investigate the influence on ER of peer interaction that incorporates peer advising.

In order to experience positive emotions, one must also know negative emotions. Both negative and positive emotions are necessary for learners. What is important is to

regulate the emotions well. In my opinion, it is my role as a teacher to support students in developing the ability to regulate their emotions well on their own and among their peers, even in the absence of a teacher, and I believe that this will help students develop autonomy.

Review Process

This article was open peer-reviewed by Paul Collet and Shu Hua Vivien Kao of the Learner Development Journal Review Network. *(Contributors have the option of open or blind peer review.)*

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Appendix Plutchik's Types of Emotions

Basic Emotions

喜び (Joy)	恍惚 (Ecstasy)	平穏 (Serenity)	悲しみ (Sadness)
信頼 (Trust)	感嘆 (Admiration)	容認 (Acceptance)	嫌悪 (Disgust)
恐れ (Fear)	恐怖 (Terror)	心配 (Apprehension)	怒り (Anger)
驚き (Surprise)	驚嘆 (Amazement)	動揺 (Distraction)	期待 (Anticipation)
悲しみ (Sadness)	悲痛 (Grief)	憂い (Pensiveness)	嫌悪 (Disgust)
憎悪 (Loathing)	退屈 (Boredom)	信頼 (Trust)	激怒 (Rage)
煩さ (Annoyance)	予期 (Anticipation)	興味 (Interest)	

Dyad Emotions

楽観 (Optimism)	失望 (Disappointment)	希望 (Hope)	不信 (Unbelief)
不安 (Anxiety)	憤慨 (Outrage)	愛 (Love)	自責 (Remorse)
罪悪感 (Guilt)	羨望 (Envy)	歓喜 (Delight)	悲観 (Pessimism)
服従 (Submission)	軽蔑 (Contempt)	好奇心 (Curiosity)	冷笑 (Cynicism)
感傷 (Sentimentality)	畏敬 (Awe)	恥 (Shame)	優位 (Dominance)
積極性 (Aggressiveness)	絶望 (Despair)	誇り (Pride)	

The Role of Practitioner Research in Exploring Learner Autonomy for In-Service Teachers: A Retrospective Case Study

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This retrospective case study investigated the role of practitioner research in nurturing learner autonomy among in-service teachers, with a focus on a junior high school English teacher. In the context of English language education in Japan, where traditional academic research often overshadows practitioner research, this study challenges conventional perceptions and highlights the value of teacher-initiated practitioner research in professional development. Over two years, the teacher engaged in practitioner research, emphasizing self-expression and creativity in his classes. His practice aligns with sociocultural theories of language learning by fostering autonomy through social interaction and student collaboration. The study reveals how creative tasks played a pivotal role in developing learner autonomy. Students embraced autonomy as communicators, learners, and individuals. The study also showcases the significance of teacher autonomy in supporting learner autonomy. The teacher's ability to exercise discretion within curriculum constraints exemplifies the potential for teacher-initiated change. The teacher's two-year period of doing practitioner research and supporting his students' self-expression and creativity journey can serve as a model for teachers aspiring to promote learner autonomy and development.

本事例研究は、中学校の英語教師に焦点を当て、教師が学習者の自律をどのように促すかを、現職教師によって行われた実践研究を一事例として振り返る形で探究した。実践研究が伝統的な学術研究の影に隠れがちな日本の英語教育の文脈において、本研究は従来の認識に疑問を呈し、教師の成長を促す意味での教師主導の実践研究の価値を強調するものである。対象となる英語教師は、2年間にわたり、授業における自己表現と創造性を重視しながら実践研究に取り組んだ。彼の実践は、社会的相互作用と生徒間の協力を通して自律性を育むことにより、言語学習の社会文化理論に沿ったものである。本研究では、授業中と創造的な課題が、学習者の自律性を育む上で極めて重要な役割を果たしており、生徒たちは、コミュニケーター、学習者、そして個人としての自律性を育んでいることが明らかとなった。本研究では、学習者の自律性を支える教師の自律性の重要性も示している。カリキュラムの制約の中で裁量権を行使する教師の能力は、教師主導の変化の可能性を示している。彼の2年間にわたる実践研究と生徒の自己表現と創造性を支援する歩みは、学習者の自律と成長を促す教師のモデルとなるだろう。

Keywords

practitioner research, learner autonomy, teacher autonomy, creativity, professional development
実践研究、学習者の自律、教師の自律、創造性、専門能力開発

Introduction: Challenging Conventions by Doing Practitioner Research

A positivist paradigm emphasizing the objective and quantifiable pursuit of knowledge is predominant in the English language education field in Japan. As a result, practitioner research by school teachers is sometimes perceived by Japanese scholars to be less valuable compared to typical academic quantitative research. This perception stems from the view that such research is not considered scientific and is of poor methodological quality. On the contrary, in this retrospective case study, we explore the empowering role

of practitioner research in enhancing learner and teacher autonomy over time in one teacher's sustained engagement with autonomy-building practice.

Since 2014 we have been involved in a research project focused on promoting practitioner research, collaborating with several school teachers and teacher educators. Our engagement with practitioner research is driven by a shared fascination with its nature, specifically its focus on understanding and improving teachers' practices. This diverges from the objectives of academic research, which is fundamentally oriented towards advancing academic disciplines. Our interest was fueled by a project initiated by the Chubu English Language Education Society, an organization in which we are active members. The purpose of this project is to identify how practitioner research by English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers can be conducted and supported. One of the integral members of this project is Naoya Miyazaki, who is the central focus of this article. We (Akiko Takagi, Takeo Tanaka, and Yuki Minami) decided to collaborate in writing this paper because Naoya's practice stands out in terms of promoting learner autonomy through practitioner research. We believe that depicting his two-year journey will serve as an excellent model for secondary teachers who aspire to foster autonomy in their classrooms.

Two of the authors, Akiko and Takeo, have been research group members from the start of the project in 2014. We have both been involved in pre- and in-service teacher education and have supported practitioner research for the past nine years. However, we have different backgrounds and interests as researchers and educators. While Naoya was carrying out his own research into promoting learner autonomy, we sometimes had an opportunity to discuss his research progress, his views on his class and students, and his beliefs about teaching in face-to-face meetings with the other project members. Yuki, who joined the team three years ago, has been engaged in reflective practice as a teacher-researcher.

Naoya is an English teacher at a public junior high school. After obtaining a master's degree in English education, he taught for 13 years in three public schools, and he has worked as a supervisor on a city board of education in Shizuoka since 2021. He started his practitioner research in 2014. We chose Naoya as the participant for this case study because he has been engaged in practitioner research over an extended period of time. Furthermore, without overloading himself in his work, he has carefully analyzed and reflected on his students' development based on data collected from his daily practice. Naoya has published three articles in *The Chubu English Language Education Society Journal*, one of which, "Student and teacher growth observed during two years of continuous expressive activities" (Miyazaki, 2018), focused on students' growth through creative expressive activities for over two years. Although he did not use the term "autonomy" explicitly in his paper, his study vividly depicts the students' development of learner autonomy with the support of the teacher. After two years of practitioner research with first- and second-year students, Naoya reflected on how he now saw his role as teacher: "I have changed my view about my role. I now care more about bringing the students to a level at which they can express themselves freely and how to scaffold them to do so" (Miyazaki, 2018, p. 187).

Practitioner Research and Purpose of the Study

Practitioner research (PR), is a type of research conducted by teachers with the purpose of helping themselves and other educators better understand their practice and/or improve their teaching. It enables teachers to explore issues related to learner development,

including learner autonomy, in their specific teaching contexts and to examine their professional development. Action research, exploratory practice, reflective practice, and narrative inquiry are well-known forms of PR, as shown in Hanks's (2017) family tree of PR. Despite the meaningfulness of PR, it is poorly valued by some academic researchers not only in Japan but also elsewhere. As Borg (2010) lamented: "The common criticism of teacher research that it is of poor quality, methodologically-speaking, is also often underpinned by conventional scientific notions of research (e.g., large-scale, replicable, quantitative)" (p. 405). Furthermore, some school teachers may find the theories and methodologies associated with established PR frameworks overwhelming because they lack sufficient time and opportunity to engage in PR and apply the knowledge to their teaching practices.

Nunan (1997) argued that PR, even if it is contextualized and focused on specific matters, should meet the standards that apply to other types of empirical research. We do not support this assertion; rather, we believe that teachers should be encouraged to explore puzzles and questions in class without being subjected to academic research criteria, which would simply add another burden in their busy environments. As shown in Hanks (2017), PR can take many forms and contribute to teacher development. We believe teachers should be made aware that PR is feasible in their teaching practice, and its results should be meaningfully shared with their colleagues to facilitate professional development. In fact, in their daily routines as practitioners, teachers regularly observe their classes, check students' assignments, as well as record, and also share, their practices.

Considering PR to be a powerful tool for practitioners to understand and improve their practice, this study qualitatively explored how a junior high school English teacher supported students' autonomous learning and what factors he considered for autonomous learning. By looking at his practice from multiple perspectives, we came to understand how the teacher emphasized the development of learner autonomy for his junior high school students. In our exploration, we analyzed the 2018 article and used a follow-up interview with Naoya to investigate his perceptions of his practice and determine how he promoted learner autonomy. To guide our investigation, we formulated the following two research questions (RQs):

RQ 1. What were the practitioner's perceptions of the roles of the students and the teacher in English language classes?

RQ 2. How did the practitioner promote his students' autonomous learning?

Naoya's Practice

In this section, we provide an overview of Miyazaki's (2018) paper. In his study, he investigated how he and the students in his English class developed as a teacher and as learners, respectively, for a period of over two years, placing emphasis on self-expression activities. The participants comprised four classes (about 32 students per class) of first-year students in their first year of junior high school and second-year students (the same cohort of first-year students). The students' English proficiency ranged from Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels A1 to A2, which is typical for Japanese public junior high school students. Referring to the *Course of Study* (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2008), Naoya defined "self-expression" as "students' expressions of their feelings and thoughts in English without worrying about particular grammatical rules" (Miyazaki, 2018, p. 183).

Naoya divided his practice and the students' growth into the following six phases: (1) the teacher explores class policies and decides to place expression activities at the center of the class; (2) changes are observed in the students in the class; (3) the students start enjoying cooperative activities in English; (4) the students start to care about the audience; (5) the students begin to enjoy their self-expression freely; and (6) the students reflect on what has influenced them and convey their thoughts to their classmates. Phases 1–3 occurred during the first year, whereas Phases 4–6 took place during the second year. Table 1 shows the self-expression activities that Naoya created over these six phases with his students with the textbook content, all of which required creative writing by the students.

Table 1. *Summary of Student Activities*

Timeline	Example student activities
Phase 1 (April–July 2015)	Creating a poem
Phase 2 (August–December 2015)	Writing a composition about "My dream school" with a picture
Phase 3 (January–March 2016)	Writing a composition about "My dream tool" with a picture
Phase 4 (April–July 2016)	Creating original text for a textbook
Phase 5 (October–December 2016)	Writing a continuation of the story "Red Demon and Blue Demon," which the students read in the textbook; the story is set 10 years in the future
Phase 6 (January–March 2017)	Writing a composition about things that shaped or influenced who they had become

In his 2018 paper, Naoya reviewed two years of practice based on the following: (a) the students' English compositions, (b) video and audio recordings during interactive speaking practice and small group activities, (c) student statements that he had recorded, and (d) his teaching journal.

In his teaching Naoya placed expressive activities such as writing and speaking at the center of the syllabus, but, at the beginning of his two-year practitioner research project, he was not completely sure how he would manage his class. He consolidated his teaching policy through the process of reconciling the actual situations of the students with the wishes of the teacher.

Learner Autonomy and Teacher Autonomy

Learner autonomy is popularly defined as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (Holec, 1981, p. 3), but it has since been defined in various other ways. It is now generally accepted that learner autonomy must be viewed from multiple points of view. Naoya's practice is special in that it involved extensive interaction between the teacher and the students, as well as between the students themselves during classroom activities, which enhanced students' creativity. Therefore, in this study, we focused on the affective, cognitive, and sociocultural dimensions of learner autonomy (Benson, 2007) in relation to learner creativity and teacher autonomy.

One of the two sociocultural perspectives proposed by Oxford (2003) involves socially mediated learning, heavily relying on Vygotsky's (Cole et al., 1978) work. According to Vygotsky, learner development progresses from other-regulation to self-regulation through interaction with others, eventually leading to autonomy. Vygotsky introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as a theoretical framework for learning and

development. In the ZPD, learners collaborate with others to bridge the gap between their current abilities and their potential, with the help of guidance. Initially, learners receive support from more knowledgeable individuals, gradually enabling them to perform tasks independently. To bridge the gap between learner autonomy and self-regulation, the tasks that learners can do on their own should align with their self-regulation abilities (Murray, 2014). Applying Vygotsky's work to L2 learning, Lantolf (2000) emphasized the point that, in sociocultural theory, the relationship between people and the world is mediated through language as a tool for thought, rather than the acquisition of cognitive knowledge at an individual level. A key concept in sociocultural theory for language learning is "participation" (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). To become competent language speakers, learners benefit from collaborative interaction with others to negotiate meaning and problem-solve in the ZPD. In this sense, task-based learning is considered to promote learner autonomy, as learners are viewed as language users and social communicators, with teachers serving as facilitators of communication and mediators in students' language development in a cooperative and self-directed learning environment (Vieira, 2017).

Next, we would like to emphasize the significance of creativity in relation to autonomy, as creativity plays a pivotal role in Naoya's practice. Littlewood (1996) proposed that autonomy comprises three types: autonomy as a *communicator*, autonomy as a *learner*, and autonomy as a *person*. Following Littlewood's definition, Tin (2018) regarded the first type as a micro level of autonomy, where learners take charge and make choices regarding the creative use of language in language learning tasks. Tin saw the other two types as macro levels of autonomy, where learners make decisions and choices about their learning. She argued that creativity, defined as the production of new ideas through creative thinking, plays a crucial role in promoting learner autonomy through communication. She further pointed out that creativity empowers learners to take control and transform their language. Drawing on sociocultural theory, Chappell (2016) viewed creativity as a social activity rather than an individual one in a language classroom. He asserted that an essential part of learning is the intervention or mediation of others, namely a teacher or peers, between the learner and the knowledge and skills to be acquired. In conclusion, it is evident that creativity not only enriches learner autonomy but also supports the role of social interaction in nurturing students' development as autonomous learners.

Teacher autonomy is closely interconnected with the development of learner autonomy (Manzano Vázquez, 2018). Benson (2007) referred to teacher autonomy as primarily to the freedom of the teacher to exercise discretion in the implementation of the curriculum. Expanding on this, Dikilitas (2020) further explored the concept of teacher autonomy by surveying 15 language teachers. He identified four major themes: teachers being reflective, developing learner autonomy, being self-directed, and cultivating freedom for themselves and learners. The fourth theme related to the ability of teachers to cultivate freedom in terms of what they can teach beyond the curriculum and their decision to use methods beyond those prescribed by schools. Especially in secondary school settings, teacher autonomy tends to be constrained by English language curriculum guidelines, syllabi, exams within schools, and educational policies and regulations. However, teacher autonomy can be cultivated depending on the interests and internal capacities of individual teachers (Benson, 2010). Dikilitaş (2020) furthermore argues that, in order to overcome contextual constraints, teacher autonomy should be developed in sustainable ways. To this end, PR may help teachers explore answers to their questions in their own classroom contexts.

So, what are typical qualities that pro-learner autonomy teachers exhibit, and how has learner autonomy been typically investigated until now? According to Breen and Mann (1997), teachers who seek to promote learner autonomy in the classroom possess the following characteristics: a clear perception of themselves as learners, a belief and trust in their learners' ability to learn and act autonomously, and a genuine desire to foster learner autonomy in the classroom. To determine how the autonomy of English language learners has been studied, Chong and Reinders (2022) conducted a literature review of 61 empirical studies on learner autonomy (some of them in Japanese EFL settings) with a focus on English language learning. They reported that most of the studies had been conducted in higher education institutions and language schools and were quantitative, often using questionnaires. Notably, few studies have qualitatively explored how language teachers perceive learner autonomy and how they support learners in Japanese secondary classrooms. Therefore, our study was aimed at filling this gap in the literature.

Research Design

We employed a retrospective case study as the research design. A retrospective case study is "a type of longitudinal case study design in which all data, including first-person accounts, are collected after the fact" (Street & Ward, 2010, p. 825). Although we had not directly observed Naoya's practice, by examining his article and interviewing the author, we were able to investigate his longitudinal PR from a new perspective: learner autonomy. Additionally, given the limited length of the paper (eight pages), we aimed to gain a more detailed understanding of his practice as well as of his underlying beliefs and thoughts that were not fully articulated in what he had written. There was a four-year gap between Naoya's publication of PR and our interview with him. However, it was still worth interviewing him based on the article because it marked a turning point in his practice through PR. We were able to delve into his practice by referencing the concrete written evidence that reflected his beliefs and thoughts, and Naoya vividly remembered his practice based on his own writing. We believed that the passage of time would allow him to reflect more objectively on his practice. Moreover, we could gain insights into how he continued his practice after this period, even though it was not the primary focus of our study. We felt that this methodology would be suitable for clarifying how the practitioner nurtured learner autonomy in his English language classes for a prolonged period. The interview, based on his paper (Miyazaki, 2018), provided rich data, which we used to thoroughly explore the participant's experiences and perceptions. This methodology enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of Naoya' practices by metacognitively investigating his practices, without placing an overly large burden on him.

Data Collection and Analysis

We conducted a semi-structured in-depth interview with Naoya via Zoom in July 2022 to explore his perspectives regarding the roles of teachers and students in English classes as well as his perceptions of the development of his students' autonomy through expressive activities. Toward this end, we asked him to reflect on his experiences while completing his study, based on the article (Miyazaki, 2018) that he had written. The interview, which lasted for about 1 hour and 45 minutes, was audio-recorded and transcribed. Naoya mainly talked about his experiences during his study, and to a lesser extent before and after it. The interview questions (see the Appendix for details) included his beliefs about teaching, perceptions and ways of supporting his students' learning and development,

and the role of PR in understanding and improving his practice. In terms of ethics, Naoya fully understood the purpose of this study and was happy to share his thoughts and reflections on his practice based on his published article and beyond. In addition, we had built trust through our project, which aims to support the professional development of busy school teachers.

We used Naoya's article and the interview data in the analysis. For the data analysis, we employed a reflexive thematic analysis (TA) following the six steps prescribed by Braun and Clarke (2022). A reflexive TA fully embraces qualitative research values (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In a reflexive TA, coding is open and organic, and theme generation is regarded as a creative and active process. Codes capture at least one facet, but themes need to capture multiple facets of shared meanings in the data.

Akiko began by examining the data, followed by a discussion of the results among us, which allowed for the data to be assessed from multiple perspectives. As the first step, Akiko familiarized herself with the data and inductively coded Naoya's paper and the interview transcription by using a software package for qualitative data analysis (MAXQDA, 2022). She then transferred the coded data into Excel and collated the codes into potential themes to search for patterns. After reviewing all the themes, Akiko defined and named them, then modified, deleted, or combined the identified themes where necessary. She moved back and forth between the stages of analysis recursively to obtain the final themes. After the analysis was finished, Akiko shared the data with Takeo and Yuki to check the appropriateness of the themes and the process of theme development and to enhance dependability (Koch, 2006). Some themes were revised at this stage. We then discussed our interpretations of the data. We shared our thoughts on the potential of PR for investigating the relationships among autonomy, creativity, and other aspects of learner development. Our intent was to deepen our analysis and interpretation as well as to enhance our own reflections on the issues that would emerge during our discussions through our different positionalities. Using member checking (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), we also asked Naoya to confirm whether our analysis and interpretation were convincing and credible. Finally, we translated the Japanese data into English so as to report the results in the Findings section.

Findings

RQ1: Naoya's Perceptions on the Roles of the Students and the Teacher

We report two overarching themes developed through the analytical process for RQ 1, namely the students as the main actors in the class and the teacher as facilitator.

Students as the Main Actors in the Class

Naoya had been teaching third-year students for several years at schools in Shizuoka, so it was quite refreshing for him to start with first-year students without really knowing how they were doing. He assumed that they would be able to express themselves in English to some extent. However, he realized that first-year students struggled to express themselves in English even if they wanted to do so. Despite their struggles, he believed in their inherent capability to learn and express themselves, and he regarded his students as proactive learners. Naoya said, "I thought that if I let the students try, they would be able to do it, as long as I gave them the support they needed and hints to help them think" (Interview, 17 July 2022).

According to his article, Naoya had a clear vision of his students' learning from the start of his practice. He wanted his students to be able to communicate their thoughts with each other in class. At the same time, he hoped to nurture the students' empathetic attitude so that they would listen to and accept others' stories and thoughts. As his ultimate goal, he wanted each student to find an answer to the reason for their learning English for three years in junior high school. In the following part of the interview, Naoya describes how he viewed the meaning of learning English for his students:

> Unlike in Tokyo or Osaka, there are very few students who go abroad, and most of them spend their entire lives in the local community or come back after leaving. There are many students who work hard on their English but will not use it in the future. I think that's fine, but it would be nice if they had some kind of experience of being exposed to a foreign country or something gained from their foreign language experience. They don't live in an international city, and they don't have many opportunities to actually use foreign languages in their daily lives. However, I hope that in English class, they will be able to think in different ways and have the opportunity to interact with each other. (Interview, 17 July 2022)

To enhance the students' learning, sharing ideas was a necessary element. However, at the beginning, Naoya confessed his worry about the students' situation: "I want to change the situation wherein the students only talk to certain people. How can I make them feel safe and involved?" (Teaching journal, May 1, 2015, in Miyazaki, 2018, p. 183).

Teacher as Facilitator

Regarding the teacher's role, Naoya stated in the interview that he would like to step back with a slightly detached perspective and become involved only when necessary. His ideal as a teacher was to provide support to his students while engaging in learner-centered activities. Accordingly, he regarded his role of supporting the students as essential so that the students would express what they really wanted to say. The students could look up vocabulary and expressions in a dictionary, but some words were too difficult, and the students could not convey their thoughts clearly. Thus, Naoya supported individual students in the following way: "I was most concerned about making sure that the students could really say exactly what they wanted to say and be as honest as possible in what they wanted to say" (Interview, 17 July 2022).

In the interview, Naoya revealed why he put emphasis on self-expression in his practice:

> In my previous school, I emphasized vocabulary and grammar to equip students with the skills needed to pass the high school entrance exams. All the students consistently scored high on so-called formal tests, with very few errors. However, one day when I asked a simple question, "What do you want to do during summer vacation?" no one answered. I was shocked that these highly capable students couldn't respond. That year, I realized that my teaching approach was flawed, so I stopped using the authorized textbook. Instead, I created original teaching materials that covered vocabulary and grammar comprehensively, as used in the textbook. When I used these materials and engaged the students in activities, they underwent a remarkable transformation. They became more capable of expressing themselves freely and began to read texts more attentively. (Interview, 17 July 2022)

This experience convinced him that encouraging students to express themselves as much as possible leads to fluency. He strongly believed that fluency should come first, not accuracy.

RQ2: How Naoya Promoted Learner Autonomy

In this section, we report on how Naoya promoted his students' autonomy in learning. First let us relate the six phases to changes in the students' behaviors and reactions (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Summary of the Six Phases*

Timeline	Naoya's practice and his students' growth
Phase 1 (April–July 2015)	The teacher explores class policies and decides to place expression activities at the center of the class.
Phase 2 (August–December 2015)	Changes are observed in the students in the class.
Phase 3 (January–March 2016)	The students start enjoying cooperative activities in English.
Phase 4 (April–July 2016)	The students start to care about the audience.
Phase 5 (October–December 2016)	The students begin to enjoy their self-expression freely.
Phase 6 (January–March 2017)	The students reflect on what has influenced them and convey their thoughts to their classmates.

Across these six phases five themes were developed: two themes for RQ 1, and three for RQ 2 as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Five Themes Identified*

Students as main actors	Teacher as facilitator
• Involving students in class management • Having students share their work	• Setting scaffolding activities • Supporting individual students • Observing students carefully

For the students as the main actors in the class, the key themes centered on students' participation in managing the class and sharing their work with each other. For the teacher as facilitator, the three underlying themes were scaffolding, individual support, and careful observation of the students. The retrospective analysis that follows explores these five themes in more depth.

Involving Students in Class Management

From the start of the two-year period, Naoya invited students to participate in class management. At the beginning of each school year, he would present his plans for the English class and ask the students for their opinions about the approach that should be implemented in the class. With the second- and third-year students, he wanted to hear from them how the previous year had gone and what they had learned. During his study, at the beginning of every unit, he would instruct the students to take a look at the textbook and see what they were interested in doing. Thereafter, they would decide on activities together. For example, in the following part of the interview, he described how he let the students decide on the activities in Phase 4:

> They looked a little unsatisfied with the activities in the textbook. When I asked the students what they wanted to do, they came up with various ideas. Then, I wrote the unit plan on the blackboard and worked on it with them. **(Interview, 17 July 2022)**

In Phase 1, Naoya let the students think of an alternative activity for part of a unit. However, from Phase 2, he let the students brainstorm ideas on the activities for the whole unit. One

unit, for example, contained the activity of reading information on the website of an American school. Instead of that, the students decided to write about their ideal school, accompany it with a picture, and perform a poster presentation. In the interview, Naoya told us that for the second- and third-year students, he had them decide the criteria for how they would be assessed for every unit. The students were eager to share their ideas with the teacher; in fact, according to Naoya, "Some highly motivated students even brought ideas for activities they would like to do three or four months ahead" (Interview, 17 July 2022).

Having Students Share Their Work

In every expressive activity, the students shared their work with their peers. In Phase 1, Naoya had the students share their poems and comments with each other. The students enjoyed reading and wanted to read to their classmates, so he ended up allocating two hours for sharing. For the later phases, he put the students' work on the wall outside of the class, thus providing opportunities for it to be read by students from other classes. He observed that, while reading works in the hallway, "Some students took notes. Others read work with their classmates and discussed the meanings or even asked the author to clarify some points" (Interview, 17 July 2022).

For some time, the students were worried about understanding the literal meaning of a text. Naoya reflected: "The students were concerned about understanding the meaning of their classmates' work when they translated it into Japanese, so they checked the meaning of unknown words" (Interview, 17 July 2022). However, when the students shared their compositions on "My dream tool" in Phase 3, Naoya encouraged them to pay more attention to the messages the authors wished to convey, and ask their classmates questions or request more information on aspects that they were curious about. It was a memorable transition, and the students started to focus on the meanings of the messages first. In the second year, linguistic errors and accuracy were the last things the students attended to. They would begin by writing what they wanted to say freely, then they would review what they had written to see if it was accurate.

In Phase 4, the students created an original text for a textbook. The students were eager to carefully read as much of their classmates' work as possible, so this took more time than the teacher had expected. At the end of the class, Naoya asked his students which piece of writing was the most impressive. The chosen work was "You are you. You will change. You are you. Just the way you are" (Miyazaki, 2018, p. 185). Naoya recalled during the interview that the student whose work was selected was not good at English and other subjects. However, his work was chosen because of its strong message.

In Phase 6, Naoya found that the students, as readers, had become capable of understanding what the other person was trying to convey. They wrote comments on their classmates' work voluntarily without being instructed to do so by the teacher.

Setting Scaffolding Activities

According to Naoya, the final goal that the students aimed to achieve for each unit was often grandiose, but he did not lower it. He said, "If I had lowered the goal, judging that it is too much work for the students, it would have resulted in a piece of English writing that lacked depth" (Miyazaki, 2018, p. 187). He understood that activities for acquiring and retaining grammatical knowledge should be meaningful for his students. However, he thought that it would have been more effective if he had set other tasks, including improvised oral activities, to help the students develop the ability to express themselves

so they could write English compositions rather than spending most of the class on grammar exercises.

Naoya set several activities for his students to achieve their goals. For example, if the students wanted to create a poster and have a poster session at the end of the unit, he would first have them work in pairs to brainstorm and communicate their ideas to each other in English. Next, he had the students share ideas in English in groups of four. In each unit, he usually assigned five to six activities, such as brainstorming and sharing ideas in pairs or in groups and reading each other's drafts. He stated: "I decided the activities based on the difficulty of the final activity and the present level of the students. My main role as the teacher was to think of activities" (Interview, 17 July 2022).

Supporting Individual Students

In both speaking and writing activities, Naoya spent more time supporting individual students by using a mixture of English and Japanese than giving feedback to the whole class. He often went around the students working in groups and asked individual ones what they were struggling with. He recalled:

> At first, I listened to what the student wanted to say, and then I gave them several options for how they might say it. If they didn't use them, that was fine. At the beginning of the practice, they used them, but later on, they did not. (Interview, 17 July 2022)

He spent a lot of time supporting individual students who were struggling to express themselves.

> The lower the grade level, the more questions I received about how to say something in English. Their questions were often ambiguous. The students didn't really know what they wanted to say, so I had to dig into what they wanted to say through a dialogue. The process of gradually translating it into English took a long time—at first, five to seven minutes per student. (Interview, 17 July 2022)

In the process, Naoya focused less on accuracy and more on appropriateness. In other words, he put more emphasis on conveying what the students intended to mean rather than having them use grammatically correct expressions. While the teacher was supporting a student, the rest of the group members would listen to the dialogue and collaboratively brainstorm to help the student. At first, many students needed the teacher's assistance, but gradually, they began to solve problems among themselves. Naoya commented:

> In the end, the students seemed most convinced when they were thinking together with their peers. They came up with several possible expressions and asked their classmates which one would be best. After discussing it for a couple of minutes, they chose the best expression. (Interview, 17 July 2022)

Observing Students Carefully

During his practice, Naoya would always carefully observe the cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of the students' learning and performance. He utilized the observed information to assess his teaching or alter his lesson goal and plan flexibly. He established a goal and a final self-expression activity at the beginning of each unit. For example, in Phase 5, he set the goal "The students use their English knowledge and enjoy free expression without a right or wrong answer." He then began to incorporate students' opinions into the decision-making process for lesson goals and activities in the second year.

As a rule, Naoya devoted a quarter of the class to textbook activities, while the remaining time was spent on the activities developed to enhance the textbook content. He used the textbook as a resource or dictionary:

> When the students express themselves, the range of expression expands in a good sense, but at the same time, the expression scatters or spreads in various directions. I used the textbooks to narrow down the range of expressions. (Interview, 17 July 2022)

As the first self-expression activity in Phase 1, Naoya introduced a poem. He had experience with a similar activity for third-year students in the past, which had been successful. Although he doubted if the activity would work for the first-year students, he noticed that the students worked hard on creating a poem. Some students anxiously brought him their first poems; he confirmed that they were fine and posted their work on the blackboard or wall. The students then started to work on the second and third poems. The students read their classmates' work enthusiastically, and their facial expressions became brighter. The students' reactions and the warm class atmosphere, based on his observations, made him confident in his practice, so he decided to place expression activities at the center of the class.

Another aspect of the way that Naoya nurtured his learners' self-expression was the emphasis he placed on fluency rather than accuracy. Although he did this from the beginning, he was still concerned about the students developing grammatical skills in the first three phases. As he observed their growth, his awareness gradually changed. In Phase 2, even students who were not good at English tried to express their ideas with the support of a dictionary and their classmates. Although the students previously had a strong sense of memorizing English, their attitudes changed to learning grammar and vocabulary in order to express themselves. In learning grammar, they began to think carefully about the context in which it was used. In addition, he noticed the following:

> More students started to take notes from the blackboard or what I said. The students who only did the assigned activities (even though they had the ability to do them) were enthusiastic about the activity. They seemed to look for expressions that would better fit their feelings. They faced the language without cutting corners. (Teaching journal, December 7, 2015, in Miyazaki, 2018, p. 184)

During this phase, the students worked on the poster of their dream school. They concentrated on this activity and did not have time to work on the textbook. However, after the activity, when the students read the textbook, they understood it easily without spending too much time on it.

In Phase 3, Naoya observed that the students had changed in terms of being readers. They seemed to understand the main ideas of English texts without translating them into Japanese. Their requests for the teacher to explain in Japanese decreased, and they responded more quickly after reading texts.

In Phase 4, when the students had become more aware of the audience, they started to think more deeply about how they could convey their ideas to their classmates. While they were sharing their work, some students would ask their classmates if they understood the meaning of the text. This observation made Naoya rethink his role as a teacher and plan his class more carefully to help the students express their thoughts.

> I used to think that I had to help students develop their grammatical skills, but I now think about how I can help them express what they want to express more faithfully according to their ideas. I now look more deeply at the students and try to envision the lesson in terms of whether they lack the vocabulary or the ability to structure the story. (Miyazaki, 2018, pp. 184–185)

In this phase, some students even worked on their writing of "My dream school" voluntarily, although Naoya did not give them homework. The activity of writing and sharing their work took longer than he expected, so he changed the syllabus.

In Phase 5, the students wrote a continuation of the story in the textbook "Red Demon and Blue Demon," originally from an old Japanese tale (Hamada, 1965), set 10 years in the future. Some students wrote happy stories, while others crafted sad ones. Naoya noticed that the students reflected on themselves in their writing. The following is an example of the work:

> 10 years later, Red Demon couldn't play with friends. He couldn't eat well. Then he received a letter. When he saw it, he was surprised. So it was Blue Demon's letter. The message was "Don't cry. Please play with your friends. It's my last wish." Red Demon was troubled for a long time. But one day he went out his house. He said to children "I'm home!" Children didn't understand. He get smile again. He never cry. He shouted "Thank you!" at blue sky. The he saw blue shadow, maybe. (sic) (Miyazaki, 2018, pp. 185–186)

By the time Phase 6 came around, in Naoya's view, the students, as expressive individuals, had shifted from the stage of just wanting to convey their thoughts and feelings in English to the stage of thinking and devising English statements to convey their thoughts and feelings to the reader.

Discussion

Our interpretations suggest that Naoya views the classroom as a place where social interaction is an essential element for students' learning. In their classes, he and the students frequently interacted with each other to think, share, and co-construct meaning. This view resonates with the sociocultural perspective on language learning, wherein individual cognitive development is achieved as a result of interaction with others (Lantolf, 2000). At first, Naoya provided ample scaffolding to encourage the students to express themselves, but they gradually became more independent with the help of their peers without the need for the teacher's scaffolding. When teachers step back and allow students to use the language to express what they would like to put into words, students can experiment with the language with creative ideas (Rosenberg, 2010). This brings an element of fun into the classroom and cultivates students' ability and interest in expressing themselves creatively.

In Naoya's class, repeated creative writing activities played a key role. Tin (2013) noted that one aspect of a creative task is "the focus is on the constructing unknown meaning or 'meaning new to self'" (p. 395), in comparison with that of a communicative task. In addition, while a communicative task promotes students' communicative desire, a creative task can enhance their creative desire. Because of this creative desire, we assume that the creative expression activities in Naoya's class encouraged students to craft their individual works in earnest, regardless of their different levels of English proficiency. Such creative expression also contributed to promoting their autonomy as communicators at the micro level. For example, in the activity of writing a poem, the students used language creatively and made linguistic choices to express what they wanted to convey in a constrained activity. The students discovered what they could do with the language rather than only learning about the language.

Through the creative expression activities, the students expressed their personal meaning beyond mere language learning, which makes a direct contribution to "autonomy as a person" at the macro level, as mentioned by Littlewood (1996). "Autonomy as a learner," the third

type of autonomy (Littlewood, 1996), was also promoted in Naoya's class. The students were engaged in deciding on the learning goals and activities with the teacher. In other words, they were able to make choices about what and how they wanted to learn. Naoya adapted the authorized textbook audaciously to enhance students' creativity and autonomy. As a result, the students were able to take control of their learning, and their feeling of achievement in each writing activity—because of its creative nature—might have increased their intrinsic motivation.

Naoya wanted his students not only to be able to communicate their ideas but also to develop their empathetic attitude so that they would listen and be open to others. This was achieved by the end of his study. Just setting creative activities does not guarantee students' active engagement with creative thinking and sharing their work comfortably. An empathetic attitude creates a safe environment in the classroom for students to share their thoughts and work, which becomes the basis for supporting each other in the ZPD. The analysis of the data indicated that Naoya was aware of the need to create a safe space for sharing and follow a step-by-step approach to autonomy building from the beginning. Therefore, he consistently encouraged and supported students, valuing their creative thoughts. This reduced their anxiety of contributing new ideas and fear of being negatively judged by others (Henriksen et al., 2020). Vargas and Madrigal (2018) suggest that teachers should consider particular components to enhance both students' creativity and empathetic feelings and establish their connection for students' wellness in the classroom. One component is partnership. In Naoya's case, the students had connected empathetically while collaborating on various activities in pairs and groups and they also engaged in the opportunity to listen to and read classmates' ideas attentively without criticism and judgment. This developed a sense of community. Another component is time and patience. The teacher provided the students extended time in the process of generating and sharing written work. This allowed the students to explore and understand each other's ideas and learn to care for each other. In terms of acquiring English proficiency, the abundant opportunities for both output and input through sharing their ideas and written works and reading their classmates' compositions helped students recognize their potential to become competent English users. This also seemed to enhance students' motivation to engage in the various activities Naoya had established.

With regard to teacher autonomy, the findings indicate that Naoya is an autonomous teacher because he exercised his discretion in the implementation of the curriculum (Benson, 2007). This enabled him to overcome the constraints of the curriculum and the use of the textbook approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Technology. Through his practice, he would constantly observe the students' learning and performance across various aspects and patiently support individual students with a strong trust in their capability of learning autonomously. To provide appropriate scaffolding and alter his lesson plan and class management flexibly, he constantly reflected on and analyzed his practice, using his teaching journal for his PR. He empowered his learners by creating safe learning spaces and developing their capacity for autonomy (Lamb, 2008) by implementing activities that stimulated their creativity.

Reflecting on his two-year practice, Naoya stated in the interview that what had changed most was that the students were learning more on their own, both in and out of class. In addition, the depth of the students' relationships and comfort in being with others changed immensely.

Conclusion

This retrospective case study has explored how a junior high school teacher enhanced learner autonomy over a two-year period of PR. Naoya's practice is exemplary in terms of his skillful way of devising tasks, paying attention to individual students, and stepping back from a teacher-centered classroom. He trusted the potential of his students' ability to express their ideas creatively while collaborating autonomously; therefore, he had a precise focus on meaning and did not compromise. The research methodology that we used enabled us to revisit his practice from a new perspective and analyze it in terms of learner autonomy. We were able to jointly understand the meaning of his practice, the process of his teaching, and learner development from a sociocultural perspective. For busy Japanese secondary school teachers, it is not an easy task to overcome the constraints imposed by English language curriculum guidelines, prescribed syllabi, and examinations, and to exercise autonomy. However, this study has shown that individual teachers can cultivate their autonomy and create an environment that promotes learner autonomy in the classroom. In Naoya's case, creativity played an important role in promoting learners' autonomy as communicators with appropriate scaffolding by the teacher, so creativity can be a key element for secondary school teachers in overcoming diverse constraints. Finally, we would like to emphasize that PR on teachers' own initiative enables them to engage in self-initiated reflection and professional development without too large a burden and can help them promote learner autonomy through trial and error. According to Naoya, maintaining a daily journal is a regular practice that lets him record his subjective observations of his teaching. He added that reflecting on his practice with the aid of journal entries, as a form of PR, allowed him to objectively assess his teaching and gain new insights for students he will instruct in the future. We hope that more school teachers will engage in PR to understand and improve their practice in terms of learner development in the classroom and beyond.

Review Process

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

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Appendix

Example Interview Questions

What is your ideal teacher image?

What was important to you in your practice?

What did you see as your role as a teacher in the practice?

What were your thoughts on learner development during the practice?

What specific support did you provide to facilitate learner development?

What kind of feedback did you give on student expression?

What elements during the practice do you think influenced the students' change?

How do you think practitioner research has helped you support learners?

Exploring the Impact of Mandatory Reflection Activities on Students' Perceptions of Group Work

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In this research, I investigate the efficacy of mandatory reflection activities in raising students' awareness regarding the significance of group work for effective communication. Although simply enhancing language skills is inadequate for communicating with others, incorporating group work in classrooms can facilitate both human relationships and communication skills. One approach to promote engagement in group work is to introduce reflection activities and offer opportunities for students to enhance their group work. However, as students may perceive reflection activities as imposed tasks rather than valuable tasks, to what extent might such mandatory reflection influence students' perceptions of group activities? In this study, I employed a Cooperative Work Awareness Scale questionnaire to compare students in classes with and without reflection activities. The findings indicate that the group with reflection activities had a lower awareness of the importance of group work. Thus, in certain circumstances, incorporating reflection activities may not effectively enhance group work.

この研究では、授業で義務付けられた振り返り活動が、コミュニケーションを図るためのグループ活動の重要性に対する学生の認識を高める効果があるかどうかを調査する。コミュニケーション能力を高めるためには、単に言語スキルを向上させるだけでは不十分であるが、グループワークを取り入れることで、人間関係とコミュニケーション能力の両方を高めることができる。そして、グループワークへの参与を高める方法として振り返り活動がある。しかしながら、義務付けられた振り返り活動は、グループワークの重要性に対する認識にどの程度の影響を与えるのだろうか。なぜなら、学生はリフレクション活動が価値のある活動ではなく、強制された活動ととらえる可能性があるからである。この研究では、協同活動の認識スケールの質問紙を使用して、振り返りの活動があるクラスとないクラスの学生を比較した。調査結果は、振り返りの活動があるグループの方が、グループワークの重要性に対する認識が低いことを示した。したがって、特定の状況では、振り返り活動はグループワークの認識を高める効果がない可能性がある。

Keywords

cooperative learning, group work, reflection activities, English communication skills, learners' enjoyment of learning and using English

協同学習、グループ活動、リフレクション活動、英語コミュニケーションスキル、学習者の英語学習および英語使用の楽しさ

The majority of my students are preparing to pursue careers as engineers. As they enter the workforce, they may encounter situations where they are transferred overseas as expatriates or trainees, or have opportunities to collaborate with non-Japanese colleagues using English. Therefore, it is essential for them to acquire effective English communication skills. To communicate proficiently in English, they need to enhance their language abilities and build strong interpersonal relationships. In this respect, Sekita et al. (2001) highlight the effectiveness of cooperative learning in cultivating positive relationships among students. However, many Japanese English learners, particularly adolescents who feel uneasy expressing their opinions in English within a group, tend to avoid pair or group work (Morioka et al., 2015). While lecture-style classes may alleviate psychological stress by minimizing the need for interpersonal communication, engaging students in pair or group work provides valuable opportunities for developing both English conversation skills and meaningful connections with others. So, what are some practical ways to do this?

One approach to promoting a sense of collaboration is the integration of reflection activities in the classroom. Reflection activities can help learners to become more

self-directed in pair or group work (Boud et al., 1985). As a result, the significance of reflection activities has been increasing in the field of English education in Japan (Okazaki & Kano, 2018; Shimo, 2003; Takagi, 2003). By providing students with opportunities to reflect on their group activities, it is anticipated that their engagement with the tasks will increase because their awareness of the importance of cooperative work will also be enhanced. However, it is crucial to recognize that teachers should use reflection activities with a commitment to respecting student autonomy and exploring how they perceive the value of such activities. If reflection activities are included in the curriculum, students who harbor a dislike for English or struggle with group activities may perceive them as burdensome obligations, diminishing their intrinsic motivation. In fact, while Tsuchimochi (2015) advocates for the effectiveness of reflection sheets with junior college students, she also acknowledges that some students may find the task of writing reflection sheets for every class overly tedious. Therefore, it is necessary to explore in what ways reflection activities can enhance student group activities.

Research Questions

In this study, I wanted to examine the effectiveness of incorporating reflection activities in enhancing students' perception of cooperative learning. Consequently, I formulated the first research question as:

(1) To what extent do reflection activities contribute to improving learners' perceptions of group work?

As I needed to develop further my understanding of Research Question 1, I added two further questions:

(2) What insights can be derived from learners' feedback regarding English learning and group work?

(3) What insights can be derived from learners' feedback regarding reflection activities?

Method

Participants

This study involved first-year students aged 15 to 16 who were enrolled in a technical college in Japan commonly known as *Kosen* (National Institute of Technology, n.d.). Kosen is a national educational institution, with 51 Kosen campuses located throughout Japan. These students aim to be engineers in the future and display a particular interest in mathematics and science as well as their specialized subjects. Typically, students at Kosen select their specialized areas of study during high school, focusing on experimental work and research in science-related fields, which is similar to university-level engineering studies. However, as they specialize, many Kosen students tend to neglect their English studies.

At the Kosen where this research was conducted, English classes were held twice a week for 90 minutes. I taught once a week, and another English teacher taught once a week, from the first year to the third year. In the fourth year, students could take English as an elective subject.

To assess the student's English proficiency at the beginning of the study, I used an online tool called English Grade Easy Measurement (Eigo navi, n.d.). This test, based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), evaluates students' lexical and grammatical competence. The results indicated that 37% of the students were at A1 level or below, 41% of the students were A2 level, 18% B level, and 4%

B2 level. According to a recent Ministry of Education survey (MEXT, 2022), approximately 70% of Japanese junior high school third-year students have not reached the A1 level. This suggests that Kosen students generally possess a relatively higher level of English proficiency.

Class Formats (How do they learn English in the class?)

The English class I taught took place once a week for 90 minutes. The textbook used for instruction was MY WAY English Communication I (Morizumi et al., 2017), one of the approved textbooks designated by the Ministry of Education. During the class, the students had the objective of not only comprehending the content of each unit but also expressing their opinions based on the vocabulary and phrases introduced in the textbook.

Drawing on the suggestions of Higuchi et al. (2019), I incorporated in my lesson plans various communicative activities for students to apply what they learned from the textbook. In the general structure of the lesson described below, the students focused on Lesson 2-2 (Appendix A).

Mins.	Activities
10	**Review of the previous unit:** Students engage in paired reading aloud of the textbook, using the Japanese translation as a reference. For example, Student A reads a Japanese sentence, followed by Student B reading the corresponding English sentence, until they complete all the sentences. Afterward, they switch roles, reading both the Japanese and English sentences. (Appendices B: 1.音読しましょう! (前回の復習))
5	**Activate schema:** The teacher shares a personal story using the same vocabulary and phrases related to the lesson's topic to help the students understand the textbook more easily. For instance, the teacher tells them about his real-life hero, using the new vocabulary. "My real **hero** is my brother. When we were children, my parents worked late, so my brother cooked meals for me. **Even when** he was busy with his homework, he **devoted** himself **to** taking care of me. We never **fought against** each other because he is kind."
5	**Grasp the big picture of the content:** Students listen to the textbook content and answer true or false questions. For example, the teacher states, "Heroes destroy towns and forests when they fight against monsters." Students raise their right hand if they believe it is true or their left hand if they believe it is false.
10	**Learn new vocabulary:** Students practice pronouncing new words with the teacher's guidance. Then, they work in pairs, assisting each other in memorizing the vocabulary. Afterward, students use the new vocabulary to create their sentences by replacing familiar events. For instance, they might construct sentences using the phrase "devote oneself to." Next, several students are asked to share their written sentences in order to check their use of new vocabulary (Appendix B: 2. Vocabulary).
15	**Comprehend the text:** Students listen to the topic and solve related problems or questions (Appendix A: Q&A and Read Again).
15	**Understand the grammar necessary to comprehend the text:** The teacher explains the grammar concepts in Japanese and guides students in solving grammatical problems. Following that, the teacher provides opportunities for students to use the grammar to express themselves. (Appendix A: TRY)

15 **Read aloud:** Students listen to the text once more, practicing reading aloud by repeating after the teacher. They then work in pairs, using the handout (Appendix B: 3. 音読) to further practice their reading-aloud skills. (Practicing reading aloud is essential for becoming proficient in pronunciation, comprehending the meaning in the order of English sentences, and expressing one's opinions about the learned content.)

10 **Exchange opinions:** Students first write their answers to the questions and share them with their partners or groups. Then, they ask questions to encourage deeper thinking and engage in conversation. This activity aims to stimulate discussion and allow students to share their opinions with others (Appendix B: 4. 考えてみよう!).

Reflection Activities

The same teaching method was employed for both Group 1 and Group 2, with the exception that only Group 1 students participated in regular reflection activities (Appendix C) towards the end of each class session. Here Group 1 students were asked to self-assess themselves. The first part of the self-assessment consists of five statements that students were asked to agree with on a 4-point Likert scale (strongly disagree/disagree/agree/strongly agree):

1. I prepared to contribute to the group.
2. I worked on the tasks set.
3. I listened carefully to what my peers said.
4. I participated in discussions.
5. Overall, I was able to participate well in the group activities.

These statements, adapted from Barkley et al. (2005) and translated into Japanese by Yasunaga (2009), aimed at encouraging students to reflect on the quality of their group activities. The second section of the weekly self-assessment form ("What should you do next time to contribute more to the group?") prompted students to consider how they could contribute better to future group activities. In this section, instead of the teacher providing feedback, students also had the opportunity to write comments to each other so that they could foster stronger bonds within their pair or group.

The reflection activity was typically conducted at the end of each class session. However, in cases where time constraints prevented completion, students were instructed to complete the activity as homework.

To avoid bias toward agreement in the students' responses, the teacher explicitly emphasized to the students that their responses to the reflection sheet (Appendix C) had no bearing on their grades. This was in accordance with suggested practice aimed at avoiding bias towards agreement in the students' responses.

The data obtained from the reflection activity during the study was not utilized for analysis. As I was aiming to compare the differences in cooperative learning perceptions between the class that engaged in the reflection activity and the class that did not, I decided that using the reflection activity sheets from only one class would not be suitable for the comparative analysis I was interested in achieving in this study.

Instruments

A questionnaire was administered to the students to judge their awareness of cooperative learning (Appendix D). This instrument, the Cooperative Work Awareness Scale, was developed by Nagahama et al. (2009) to measure changes in student perceptions

of cooperative learning in terms of three factors: cooperative effect, preference for individuality, and mutual benefit concern. The term "cooperative effect" focuses on the effectiveness of working alongside peers. On the other hand, "preference for individuality" seeks to probe students' tendency to avoid cooperation and a preference for working alone, while "mutual benefit concern" addresses various benefits that individuals can derive from cooperative work.

Nagahama et al. (2009) conducted reliability and validity tests on this scale and performed factor analysis using 2 to 18 questions on a sample of 1020 students. The results revealed three factors: cooperative effect (α=.83), preference for individuality (α=.72), and mutual benefit (α=.64). Although the mutual benefit factor showed slightly lower than acceptable reliability, all three factors were relevant for what I was interested in understanding about my students. Hence I decided to use the Cooperative Work Awareness Scale.

This scale is well-suited for identifying differences in perceptions of cooperative learning between two groups: one group was introduced to reflection activities and the other group was not. Additionally, to complement the Likert-scale items in the Cooperative Work Awareness Scale, I included a new section to assess students' English learning preferences. Three open-ended questions were incorporated: "What do you think about learning English?", "How do you feel about working in pairs or groups in English class?", and "How do you feel about the activity of reflecting on pair or group work?" The questions were used to understand the differences in free-text responses between students who like and dislike English.

Procedures

The participants in this study were 84 first-year Kosen students, divided into two groups: Group 1 (42 students: 33 males, and 9 females) who participated in regular reflection activities, and Group 2 (42 students: 33 males, and 9 females) who did not do any such activities regularly. The students were requested to complete the questionnaires (Appendix D) twice during the semester: first from the latter half of April to the first half of May, and then again in January, after completing a semester of classes. By the time the second survey was conducted, both students had multiple experiences of group work, but only students from Group 1 were asked to respond to the question, "How do you feel about the activity of reflecting on pair or group work?"

Differences between the two groups of students

To compare the differences between the two classes, an unpaired two-sample t-test (independent t-test) was employed. The independent t-test is suitable here for comparing the means of two unrelated groups on the dependent variable of use or absence of the reflection activities.

According to Takeuchi and Mizumoto (2014), three conditions must be met to apply the t-test: first, ensuring normality; second, using a non-nominal scale; and third, avoiding sample size bias between the compared groups. They also suggest that the number of samples should not be fewer than 20 to satisfy the normality condition. These three conditions were satisfied.

I also decided to conduct a supplementary factor analysis, and since the results aligned with the same three factors as Nagahama et al. (2009), I used all three factors as they were.

Results and Analysis of Perceptions of Collaborative Learning Awareness

In this section, I will present four tables. I will provide explanations for each table in sequence and conduct the analysis.

Table 1 presents the results of the initial descriptive statistics. In Table 1, n represents the number, M signifies the mean, and SD stands for standard deviation, which is used to measure the extent to which numerical values are dispersed. Smaller standard deviations indicate greater homogeneity within the population, meaning that the groups exhibit similar tendencies. Since all standard deviations are very close to zero, it can be concluded that there is minimal variability and a considerable degree of consistency.

Table 1. *1st Time Results Descriptive Statistics*

	Group	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Cooperative Effect	1	42	3.26	0.516
	2	42	3.36	0.408
Preference for Individuality	1	42	2.5	0.601
	2	42	2.65	0.428
Mutual Benefit Concern	1	42	3.26	0.648
	2	42	3.25	0.637

Table 2 presents the initial results of the initial independent t-test. The result obtained from Levene's test guides the subsequent course of action: if the calculated p-value equals or exceeds 5% (0.05), we may conclude that the variances are equal and proceed to review the "Equal variances assumed" row. Conversely, if the p-value falls below 5% (0.05), the variances differ, prompting a look at the "Equal variances not assumed" row.

Table 2. *1st Time Independent Samples Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	*t*	df	Sig (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
cooperative effect	Equal variances assumed	3.085	.083	-1.016	82	.312	- .305	.099
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.016	77.818	.313	- .305	.099
preference for individuality	Equal variances assumed	2.447	.122	-1.325	82	.189	- .377	.076
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.325	74.086	.189	- .378	.076
mutual benefit concern	Equal variances assumed	.011	.917	0.057	82	.955	- .271	.287
	Equal variances not assumed			0.057	81.974	.955	- .271	.287

The p-values resulting from Levene's test in Table 2 are as follows: 0.083 for the Cooperative Effect (abbreviated as CE), 0.122 for Preference for Individuality (abbreviated as PI), and 0.917 for Mutual Benefit Concern (abbreviated as MBC). The three p-values are all higher than the 0.05 level of significance, so it is necessary to conduct a two-tailed test to determine if the mean is significantly greater or less than 0.05. The values for CE (0.312), PI (0.189), and MBC (0.955) all exceed 0.05, indicating that there is no significant difference.

Table 3 displays the findings from the second set of Descriptive Statistics. The number of students in Group 2 is two less than in Group 1. However, as there was no significant difference in the number of students between these two groups, a t-test was conducted. Regarding the mean of CE, you can see that the mean value between groups is larger than that of PI and MC.

Table 3. *2nd Time Results Descriptive Statistics*

	Group	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Cooperative Effect	1	42	2.97	0.67
	2	40	3.31	0.5
Preference for Individuality	1	42	2.44	0.511
	2	40	2.46	0.508
Mutual Benefit Concern	1	42	3.16	0.711
	2	40	3.29	0.641

Table 4 shows the results of the second independent t-test. Significant difference becomes evident for CE, with a p-value of 0.011. The mean value (M) associated with CE in Table 3 is higher for Group 2 (3.31) compared to Group 1 (2.97), indicating a stronger perception of the cooperative effect within Group 2. On the other hand, no substantial differences are identifiable for PI, given a p-value of 0.873, as well as for MBC, with a p-value of 0.377 (as they are both higher than a 0.05 level of significance).

Table 4. *2nd Time Independent Samples Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	*t*	df	Sig (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
cooperative effect	Equal variances assumed	1.352	0.248	-2.594	80	0.011	-0.601	-0.079
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.613	75.708	0.011	-0.599	-0.081
preference for individuality	Equal variances assumed	.029	0.864	-0.16	80	0.873	-0.242	0.206
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.16	79.842	0.873	-0.242	0.206
mutual benefit concern	Equal variances assumed	.53	0.469	-0.888	80	0.377	-0.431	0.165

	Equal variances not assumed	-0.89	79.773	0.376	-0.43	0.164

We have looked at the quantitative differences between the students in the two classes, and next, I will focus on their written comments about the cooperative work they did.

Student comments about liking/disliking English: Analysis

Below is a summary of the results of the descriptive responses (Appendix D). First, the students were divided into two types by the first question item, "I like English." The first type is "EL," which means the students who like English (3: Agree 4: Strongly agree), and the second type is "EN," which means the students who do not like English (1: Strongly disagree 2: Disagree). Afterward, I sorted the students' comments for each question into those that could be interpreted "positively" and those that could be interpreted "negatively."

Next, I extracted responses that could be summarized into three or more descriptive comments. However, I did not include simple answers that were difficult to analyze, such as "I think it is good," and "I don't like it." I however counted these comments as positive or negative.

In relation to the question "What do you think about learning English?" Table 5 displays the results for the number of comments in response to the first survey, conducted at the beginning of the course, while Table 6 shows the results for the number of comments in response to the second survey conducted later in the academic year.

Table 5. *First Survey: What do you think about learning English?*

Group	EL Positive	EN Positive	EL Negative	EN Negative
1	15	9	4	1
2	15	10	1	5

Table 6. *Second Survey: What do you think about learning English?*

Group	EL Positive	EN Positive	EL Negative	EN Negative
1	18	11	3	1
2	13	14	2	3

Student viewpoints at the start of the course (first survey)

Regarding the students' attitudes toward learning English, the most common response in each of Group 1 and Group 2, EL Positive and EL Negative was "the recognition of the need for English in the future," for example, "*I think it's a good idea to study English because it will be necessary for the future*" and "*I want to study English diligently because I will need it in the future.*" Six students from Group 1, EL Positive, 8 from Group 2, EL Positive, 5 from Group 1 EN Positive, and 5 from Group 2 EN Positive had commented as mentioned above. Additionally, four participants in Group 2 EL Positive expressed "enjoyment in learning English," for example, "*Learning English and different cultures is enjoyable.*" Negative comments regarding English proficiency were fewer for both Group 1 and Group 2 students who liked and disliked English. However, among students who liked English, 4 mentioned that English was difficult. For instance, one student stated, "*English is too challenging, so I prefer not to study it, if possible*," while another student

wrote, "*I dislike English because it is difficult to master.*" Among students who disliked English, 2 respondents mentioned that English was difficult, but no further negative comments were reported.

Student viewpoints towards the end of the course (second survey)

In the second survey on English learning, similar to Table 5 first survey, students in Group 1 EL Positive (seven respondents), Group 1 EN Positive (four respondents), and Group 1 EL Positive (six respondents) provided comments on "the recognition of the need for English in the future." On the other hand, in Group 2 EN Positive, unlike the first survey, the most frequent responses were related to "the enjoyment of learning English" with 6 students, while "the recognition of the need for English in the future" was mentioned by 3 students.

Although there were no responses that could be considered unanimously identical among students in both EL Negative and EN Negative groups 1 and 2, a student wrote, "*I felt that my English didn't improve in this class.*" On the other hand, negative comments from those who disliked English mentioned a preference for a class where the teacher explained without asking students to engage in any group activities.

Student viewpoints about working with others in their English class

Regarding the question "How do you feel about working in pairs or groups in English class?" Table 7 summarizes the responses from the first survey, and Table 8 from the second.

Table 7. *First Survey: How do you feel about working in pairs or groups in English class?*

Group	EL Positive	EN Positive	EL Negative	EN Negative
1	14	12	3	5
2	12	17	2	4

Table 8. *Second Survey: How do you feel about working in pairs or groups in English class?*

Group	EL Positive	EN Positive	EL Negative	EN Negative
1	17	10	10	5
2	14	17	1	6

Working with others at the start of the course (first survey)

In the initial survey on pair or group activities, the most commonly expressed comments in each of the groups, Group 1 EL Positive (10 respondents), Group 2 EL Positive (5 respondents), Group 1 EN Positive (9 respondents), Group 2 EL Positive (5 respondents), Group 2 EN Positive (5 respondents), was "learning from others," for example, "*I can increase my knowledge through learning from others.*" On the other hand, Group 2 EN Positive (3 respondents) also extracted responses of "the joy of learning with others." For example, studying in a group makes learning English fun.

Although there were no responses that were identical in meaning from the students in EL Negative and EN Negative Groups 1 and 2, the students responded as follows. Students in Group 1 EL Negative expressed concerns about their own proficiency, stating that they were not good at English and felt they might inconvenience others during group work. Students in Group 2 EL Negative mentioned their discomfort with group activities and expressed a desire to minimize their involvement. Among Group 1 EN Negative comments indicated a reluctance to adapt to the group dynamic, perceiving it as too bothersome.

Likewise, students in Group 2 EN Negative expressed feeling highly uncomfortable in certain group settings.

Working with others towards the end of the course (second survey)

In the second survey, as with the initial survey in both Group 1 EL Positive (7 students) and Group 2 EN Positive (4 students), "learning from others" was the most common response. On the other hand, in Group 2, EL Positive, the most frequent response was "joy of learning with others" from seven students, followed by "learning from others" from four. In the first survey, the most frequent response was "learning from others" followed by "joy of learning with others," but in the second survey, the order of these responses had reversed.

Among Group 2, EN Positive, the most common response was "learning from others," with four students mentioning it. Additionally, "helping others" (3 students) and "the joy of learning together" (3 students) were also mentioned. Specific examples related to "helping others" included statements such as "*Learning in groups allows us to assist one another*" and "*Group activities are important as they foster mutual learning*."

The number of Group 1 EL Negative increased from 3 to 10 compared to the first survey. The most common negative comment among Group 1, EL Negative, was the "difficulty in working together with others," with 9 out of 10 expressing this concern. For example, "*Working in a group can be difficult because I have to accommodate others*", "*I can't always do things the way I want to in the group*" and the other one commented, "*I don't like it*." However, in Group 2 EL Negative, only one student wrote a comment (no comments from students that were identical in meaning could be extracted from them). Similarly, students in both Groups 1 and 2 EN Negative also frequently mentioned the "difficulty in working together with others." This aligned with the negative comments from Group 1 EL Negative. Examples of comments included statements like "*I don't find group activities necessary*" and "*Group activities consume too much time.*"

Student views about reflection activities

The question posed in Table 9, "How do you feel about the activity of reflecting on pair or group work?" was administered exclusively to Group 1 during the latter part of the academic year. As Group 2 did not engage in reflection activities, they were not surveyed about this.

Table 9. *Group 1 Task: How do you feel about the activity of reflecting on pair or group work?*

Group	EL Positive	EN Positive	EL Negative	EN Negative
1	20	4	2	1

Among EL Positive, the most common positive comment was related to "Finding areas for improvement," with 7 respondents expressing this view. They appreciated being able to assess not only their strengths but also their weaknesses. One student mentioned that the reflection activities led to new discoveries. On the other hand, although the number of positive comments from EN Positive was small, some of them also acknowledged the benefit of identifying areas for improvement. For example, one student mentioned that the reflection activities helped them see what they needed to fix. However, there were negative comments as well, with some students finding the reflection activities tedious or expressing a lack of perceived need for them.

Discussion

With the first research question, "To what extent do reflection activities contribute to improving learners' perceptions of group work?" I aimed to determine the effectiveness of reflection activities in enhancing learners' perceptions of cooperative learning. Surprisingly, the results showed significant differences in the "cooperative effect factor" between the group that did reflection activities and the group that did not. This result indicates that there was a more significant effect on the cooperative factor in Group 2, which did not do any reflection activities, compared to Group 1, which did. Contrary to previous studies (Kaneda, 2022; Kobayashi, 2020) indicating that reflection activities enhance learners' learning outcomes and awareness, the group without these particular reflection activities. Although reflection activities are widely used in English education, it appears that incorporating reflection activities into lessons can sometimes diminish the enthusiasm for cooperative engagement among learners. For example, in the class where I conducted reflection activities, some students appeared to be rushing to complete the reflection sheets during the lesson, possibly because they did not want to do it as homework. Additionally, since some students had not completed the reflection activity as homework, they seemed to be trying to finish it in the last few seconds before submission. This is because, for students who do not enjoy English or hold a sense of difficulty toward it, reflective activities seem to be somewhat coercively conducted in class against their will. This suggests that, according to the specific learning context, reflection activities should be voluntary rather than imposed.

The second research question was, "What insights can be derived from learners' feedback regarding English learning and group work?" In the first survey on English learning, both groups of students frequently mentioned the "need for English in the future." However, in the second survey, Group 2, which did not engage in reflection activities, emphasized both the "need for English in the future," and "enjoyment of learning English." These comments suggest that Group 1 perceived English learning and group work as essential, while Group 2 primarily focused on the pleasure derived from the learning process. According to self-determination theory, "enjoyment of learning English" is considered to be the most favorable among the five factors of motivation: external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, integrated regulation, and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In fact, enjoyment of English can be regarded as a stronger motivator than identified regulation, which is understood as the "need for English in the future." Thus, the increased joy in learning English could have positively influenced the cooperative effect, which goes some way to explaining the results of Research Question 1.

In the initial survey of pair and group activities, both Group 1's EL Positive and EN Positive, as well as Group 2's EL Positive and EN Positive, featured numerous comments related to "learning from others." However, by the second round, Group 2 also showed an increase in comments related to the "joy of learning with others." This suggests that, as mentioned earlier, not implementing reflection activities may lead to an enhancement in students' intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, in the second survey, the number of negative EL Positive comments in Group 1 increased from 3 to 10, with "difficulty in working together with others" as a commonly cited reason. This recalls Shaules et al.'s (2020) observation that while students may have the willingness to learn, some students also face internal resistance when it comes to the psychological demands of learning. In other words, reflection activities might potentially pose a psychological burden for students in the context of group learning in certain circumstances.

Finally, the third research question was, "What insights can be derived from learners' feedback regarding reflection activities?" A larger number of students made positive comments compared to negative comments, indicating they positively recognized the value of reflection activities. Although results showed that students' cooperative awareness tended to increase more without reflection activities in this research, it would be incorrect to claim that reflection activities necessarily harm cooperative learning awareness because, as confirmed in Table 9, the open-ended responses from Group 1, who conducted did reflection activities, showed more positive answers than negative ones. Furthermore, some students found value in implementing reflection activities.

Considering the significant number of positive comments from students, it becomes clear that qualitative aspects should be taken into account when assessing the impact of reflection activities. The reason for this is that, through listening to students' voices and appreciating their diverse viewpoints, it may be possible to understand better which of our learners may benefit from engaging in reflection activities to enhance their awareness of the value of group work, as well as those for whom it may not be effective.

Conclusion

My purpose in doing this research was to investigate the effectiveness of continuous implementation of reflection activities on improving learners' awareness of cooperative learning. Two groups were formed, one with reflection activities and one without. The results indicated significant differences in the "cooperative effect factor" with Group 2 (without reflection activities) showing higher awareness of cooperative learning. To gain further insights, students' comments on English language learning and pair or group work were analyzed. Group 1 tended to emphasize "the recognition of the need for English in the future English," and "learning from others for pair or group learning," while Group 2 focused more on "the enjoyment of learning English for English, and the joy of learning together for pair or group work." This suggests that the intrinsic motivation towards Group 2 English language learning and pair or group work influenced the results of the research question. Additionally, a larger number of students expressed positive comments about the reflection activities compared to negative comments. These findings indicate that the reflection activities did not diminish the sense of group work.

In reflecting on this inquiry research, two ongoing questions have come up for me: Why did incorporating reflection activities not improve students' awareness of cooperative learning? and Why might reflection activities become burdensome for students? One of my teaching goals is to have students believe in their ability to convey their opinions orally to others regarding the content they are learning. Expressing their opinions orally appears to be a challenging goal for them, which might have contributed to them perceiving reflective activities related to work as burdensome. However, in order to enhance students' awareness of cooperative learning, I made an effort to have students provide feedback on their insights and impressions in each other's reflection sheets rather than having the teacher do it so that they would work harder to be able to express their opinions to others. This approach made reflection an activity where students took the initiative and deepened their engagement within pairs or groups. Despite my best efforts to ensure that students could do the reflection activities without feeling burdened or taking too much time, this did not lead them to increase their awareness of group work.

In the future, I would like to organize my classes where students reduce the burden of expressing their opinions orally by writing them down for others to understand. Also, I

must clearly define the goal setting for these students to conduct reflection activities. It would then be worthwhile to examine whether reflection activities, under such circumstances, would effectively contribute to improving students' awareness of cooperative learning.

Review Process

This article was open peer-reviewed by Paul Collet and Nathan Ducker of the Learner Development Journal Review Network. *(Contributors have the option of open or blind peer review.)*

Author Bio

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盛岡貴昭は、香川工業高等専門学校で教鞭を執っている。テンプル大学では、教育学TESOL修士号を取得した。関心のある研究テーマは、学習者の自律性、学習者の成長、協同学習、および動機付けである。現在、日本の学習者が自国の環境で英語力を身に着ける際に、どのように自己調整をおこなっているのかについて特に関心がある。

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Appendix A Problem Exercises

Messages from Yanase Takashi: Lesson 2 Section 2

● やなせさんが考えるヒーローとはどのようなものでしょうか。

Yanase had a question about the typical image of "heroes." When they fight against monsters, they usually destroy towns and forests.

Yanase thought that real heroes helped people in trouble. Real heroes do not always fight. They give food to hungry people even when they themselves are hungry. This thought came from his experience in World War II . He learned that food was truly important in this world.

For Yanase, real heroes devote themselves to others at any time and at any place. He put this message in the series of *Anpanman*.

Q&A
1. Did Yanase have a question about the typical image of "heroes?"
2. Do real heroes always fight?
3. What did Yanase learn from his experience in the war?

2 fight against ～　～と戦う
5 not always～　いつも～とは限らない　I'm not always free on Sundays.
6 even when ～　～のときでさえ
6 they themselves　かれらは自分自身が
8 World War II = World War Two 第二次世界大戦
10 devote oneself to ～　～に身をささげる
11 at any time　どんなときでも

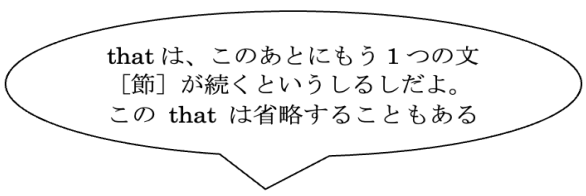
Read Again

与えられた文字から始まる適切な語を(　　)内に入れて、対話をしてみましょう。
A: What do real heroes do in Yanase's idea?
B: Real heroes give (① f　　) to (② h　　) people even when they themselves are hungry.
A: Why do real heroes do so?
B: Because they (③ d　　) themselves to others.

Grammar　　●SVO(O＝that節)
●「～ということを…する」＝[S(主語)＋V(動詞)＋ that ～]

Yanase thought **that** real heroes helped people in trouble.
(S)　(V)　(S')　(V)　(O)

◆　　の部分をthat節と呼びます。(→p.9 句と節)
◆動詞(V)には、think以外にbelieve「～を信じる」、say「～と言う」、realize「～と気づく」、know「～と知っている」なども同じように使えます。
例) I believe **that** he is honest.
She said (**that**) the movie was fun.



TRY
意味がとおるように（　　）内の語を並べかえて、対話をしてみましょう。
1. A: What did your teacher say?
B: (that / she / said) the class was canceled.
2. A: Why did you go to the repair shop?
B: Because (realized / I / that) my watch was slow.
3. A: What do you think of your new classmates?
B: (think / I / are / they) nice.

cancel(ed) ～を中止する　repair 修理realize(d) ～に気づく　slow（時計が）遅れている

Appendix B Class Worksheet

Lesson 2-2 L2-2

Class　　Number　　Name

Partner's name

1. 音読しましょう!（前回の復習）

Yanase Takashi wrote many picture books.	やなせたかしさんは多くの絵本を書きました。
Anpanman is one of them.	『アンパンマン』はそのうちのひとつです。
He made a very interesting hero in the story.	彼はその作品の中で、とても興味深い主人公を作りました。
He named the hero Anpanman.	彼はその主人公をアンパンマンと名付けました。
The hero's head is anpan, or a sweet bean paste bun.	その主人公の顔はあんパン、言い換えると甘いアンパンの形をしているのです。
The story of Anpanman was originally for adults.	『アンパンマン』のお話は、もともとは大人向けでした。
It was not so popular at first.	当初はあまり人気はありませんでした。
However, it became popular among little children later.	しかし、後に小さな子供たちの間で人気が出ました。
Yanase did not change the essence of the story.	やなせさんは物語の本質を変えませんでした。
He believed in children's potential.	彼は子供たちの潜在能力を信じていました。
He has a belief: children understand deep themes and messages.	彼には、子供たちは深いテーマもメッセージも理解するとういう信念がありました。

2. Vocabulary ペアと協力し単語を覚えましょう。単語を言えるようになったら空欄に〇をつけましょう。

英語	日本語	英→日	日→英
fight against〜	〜と戦う		
Destroy	破壊する		
not always〜	いつも〜とは限らない		
even when〜	〜のときでさえ		
they themselves	かれら自身が		
devote oneself to〜	〜に身をささげる		
at any time	どんなときでも		

3. 音読　意味を考えながら、(　　) 語・語句を補って音読しましょう。(　　) には何も書かないように!

Yanase had a question about the typical image of ("h　"). When they fight against monsters, they usually destroy (t　) and forests. Yanase thought that real heroes (h　) people in trouble. Real heroes do not always (f　). They give food to hungry people even when they themselves are (h　). This thought came from his experience in World War II. He learned

that (f) was truly important in this world. For Yanase, real (h) devote themselves to others at any time and at any place. He put this (m) in the series of *Anpanman*.

4. 考えてみよう!
Yanase thought that real heroes helped people in trouble. For example, they give food to hungry people even when they themselves are hungry. For you, what kind of people are real heroes?

Appendix C Weekly Self-Assessment Form (original in Japanese)

自己評価表

月　　日　　曜日

クラス・名前：_____
グループの仲間：_____

グループを改善していくためにグループ活動を評価しましょう!
Ⅰ. 次の質問に番号で答えましょう。

1:そう思わない　　2:あまりそう思わない　　3: まあ、そう思う　　4: そう思う

1. グループに貢献するために準備をおこなった。　　(　　)

2. 課題に取り組んだ。　　(　　)

3. 仲間の発言をよく聞いた。　　(　　)

4. 話し合いに参加した。　　(　　)

5. 全体的に考えて、グループ活動にうまく参加できた。　　(　　)

Ⅱ. グループにより貢献するためには次回はどうすべきですか？

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix C Weekly Self-Assessment Form (English translation)

Self-Assessment

Day, Month_____

Class・Name: _____
Classmate's name: _____

Evaluate your group's activities to improve your group!
I. Answer the following questions with a number.

1: Strongly disagree 2: Disagree 3: Agree 4: Strongly agree

1. I prepared to contribute to the group. ( )

2. I worked on the assignment. ( )

3. I listened carefully to what my peers said. ( )

4. I participated in discussions. ( )

5. Overall, I was able to participate well in the group activities. ( )

II. What should you do next time to contribute more to the group?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix D The Cooperative Work Awareness Scale (original in Japanese)

協同認識尺度

このアンケートは授業改善を目的としており、成績とは全く関係ありません。ご協力お願いします。当てはまる数字に○を付けて回答してください。

クラス:_____　番号:_____
氏名:_____

1. そう思わない　2. あまりそう思わない　3. まあそう思う　4. そう思う

1	英語を学習するのが好きだ	1	2	3	4
2	たくさんの仕事でも、みんなと一緒にやればできる気がする。	1	2	3	4
3	協同することで、優秀な人はより優秀な成績を得ることができる。	1	2	3	4
4	みんなで色々な意見を出し合うことは有益である。	1	2	3	4
5	個性は多様な人間関係の中で磨かれていく。	1	2	3	4
6	グループ活動ならば、他の人の意見を聞くことができるので自分の知識も増える。	1	2	3	4
7	協同はチームメートへの信頼が基本だ。	1	2	3	4
8	一人でやるよりも協同したほうが良い成果を得られる。	1	2	3	4
9	グループのために自分の力(才能や技能)を使うのは楽しい。	1	2	3	4
10	能力が高くない人たちでも団結すれば良い成果を出せる。	1	2	3	4
11	周りに気づかいしながらやるより一人でやるほうが、やりがいがある。	1	2	3	4
12	みんなで一緒に作業すると、自分の思うようにできない。	1	2	3	4
13	失敗したときに連帯責任を問われるくらいなら、一人でやるほうが良い。	1	2	3	4
14	人に指図されて仕事はしたくない。	1	2	3	4
15	みんなで話し合っていると時間がかかる。	1	2	3	4
16	グループでやると必ず手抜きをする人がいる。	1	2	3	4
17	協同は仕事のできない人たちのためにある。	1	2	3	4
18	優秀な人たちがわざわざ協同する必要はない。	1	2	3	4
19	弱いものは群れて助け合うが、強いものにはその必要はない。	1	2	3	4

英語学習についてどう思いますか。

英語の授業でのペアやグループでの作業についてどう感じますか。

振り返り活動についてどう思いますか。

Appendix D The Cooperative Work Awareness Scale (English translation)

The Cooperative Work Awareness Scale

The survey is for class improvement, and it has nothing to do with grades. I appreciate your cooperation. Please circle the number(s) that apply.

Class _____ Number _____

Name _____

1: Strongly disagree 2: Disagree 3: Agree 4: Strongly agree

1	I like learning English.	1	2	3	4
2	I feel I can do a lot of work, but only if I do it with others.	1	2	3	4
3	By working together, smart people can get better grades.	1	2	3	4
4	It is beneficial for everyone to have a variety of opinions.	1	2	3	4
5	Individuality is improved in diverse relationships.	1	2	3	4
6	Group activities allow people to hear other people's opinions and increase their knowledge.	1	2	3	4
7	Cooperation is based on trust in teammates.	1	2	3	4
8	Cooperation produces better results than working alone.	1	2	3	4
9	It is fun to use your strengths such as talents and skills for the good of the group.	1	2	3	4
10	Even people who are not highly skilled can achieve good results if they work together.	1	2	3	4
11	It is more rewarding to work alone than to work with others.	1	2	3	4
12	When we work together, we cannot do things the way we want to do them.	1	2	3	4
13	I would rather work alone than be held jointly and severally liable when making a mistake.	1	2	3	4
14	I don't want to work under the direction of others.	1	2	3	4
15	It takes too much time to discuss things with everyone.	1	2	3	4
16	When we work in groups, there are always people who cut corners.	1	2	3	4
17	Cooperation is for people who can't do the work.	1	2	3	4
18	There is no need for excellent people to cooperate.	1	2	3	4
19	Weak people will flock together to help each other, but there is no need for strong people to do so.	1	2	3	4

What do you think about learning English?

How do you feel about working in pairs or groups in English class?

How do you feel about the activity of reflecting on pair or group work?

Why I Utilize Autoethnography to Promote Learner Development: A Reflexive Narrative of English Teacher Development

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The last two decades of learner development scholarship have seen an expansion in applications of autoethnography, a qualitative research method that "seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience" (Ellis et al., 2010). This article traces the evolution of my understanding of autoethnography, from my first exposure to autoethnography as a reader, through utilization of this genre as a research tool, to a position of advocacy of the value of autoethnographic writing as a practice for both teachers and learners in writing classrooms around the world. Through a series of written vignettes, I utilize narrative inquiry to highlight my openness to cultural exploration in the English language classroom, explore my tendency to utilize lived experience in academic contexts, and illustrate how this manifested in a critical expressivist curriculum for my university English writing classrooms in Japan, Finland, and the United States.

過去20年間の学習者の成長に関する研究において、「文化的経験を理解するために個人の経験を記述し、体系的に分析しようとする」（Ellis et al., 2011）質的研究の一手法であるオートエスノグラフィーの活用が拡がりを見せている。そのため、この教師の成長に関する自省的なオートエスノグラフィーは、ある英語ライティングの指導者が世界中のライティング教室でオートエスノグラフィーに触れ、活用してきた変遷を辿るものである。一連のヴィネットを通して、ナラティブ的探求を活用し、英語教室における文化探訪に対する私の開放性を強調し、アカデミックな文脈で生きた経験を活用する私の傾向を探り、そしてこのことが、日本、フィンランド、アメリカにおける私の大学英語ライティングの授業で、批判的表現主義カリキュラムにどのように顕れたかを説明する。

Keywords

autoethnography, learner development, teacher development, narrative inquiry, research writing
オートエスノグラフィー、学習者の成長、教師の成長、ナラティブ的探究、リサーチライティング

Introduction

> Teachers' professional knowledge is said to be storied. This means that teachers have stories of particular students, classes, and classroom events in their memory and that these stories are thought to form a network. Faced with a new situation, teachers search for similar stories in this network and decide on a course of action based on the stories in their repertoire. If this is the nature of teachers' knowledge, telling stories of their own experience and listening to other teachers' stories should facilitate teacher development. (Aoki, 2012, p. 36)

The last two decades of learner development scholarship have seen an expansion in applications of autoethnography, a qualitative research method that "seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. This approach challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act" (Ellis et al., 2010). The education field, specifically, has seen a shift in the focus of this method from largely professional development purposes for educators (Bayne et al., 2005; Lee et al., 2020; Long, 2008; Spenceley, 2011) to inquiry around learner development. For example, Mynard (2020) recommends autoethnography as a method to investigate student

self-access language learning; Alm & Ohashi (2020) use autoethnography to analyze the interrelationship of their experiences as foreign language learners, educators, and researchers; and Sah's (2019) critical autoethnographic study explores his English language learning and adjustment difficulties in the UK.

Aoki (2012) explains above that a teacher's professional knowledge is said to be storied. In this case, it can be beneficial for instructors to share their own *lived experiences*, defined by Chandler and Munday as "personal knowledge gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people" (Chandler & Munday, 2020, p. 594). As a published writer and English language instructor with two decades of classroom experience, I would like to invite you now into my own lived stories of teacher development for they also double as stories of learner development. I encourage the reader to reflect on their own experiences while reading these stories, and consider how they might inform their teaching practices.

Journeys of Self-Inquiry

I first encountered autoethnography in 2006 when I served as a graduate teaching assistant in an ESL section of College Writing at a North American university. The instructor intended for students to experiment with language and expression via the creation of a collection of poetry. That poetry was then used as the evidence for an end of term, *self-reflexive* autoethnography (the research paper) about the student's cultural identity and experiences. By *reflexive*, McCarthy explains this kind of narrative as a "journey of self-inquiry toward self-realization…looking back at something in order to see oneself emerging. The unfolding narrative connects the researcher to their world" (McCarthy, quoted in Johns, 2019, p. 19).

Having also trained as an expressive arts therapist in my 20s just prior to the beginning of my teaching career in English, I was impressed by the utilization of both creativity and reflexive narrative as valid academic practices in this ESL writing course. And as a proponent of *bibliotherapies* and *scriptotherapies* (Moy, 2017), or reading and writing practices for therapeutic purposes, I felt inspired to achieve similar self-reflexive experiences and outcomes with my own students. For example, I have been routinely drawn to storytelling as a way of exploring challenging or difficult experiences, both as a client in therapy and as a practitioner. For a good 15 years, a pen and writing journal helped me better process and explore the world around me and my place within it; writing became a way to make connections and glimpse possibilities. As such, that end of term paper was the closest I had come to experiencing an intersection of my background as therapist, instructor, and writer, and it had occurred to me that language students could enjoy the same kind of transformational learning epiphanies (Yacek & Gary, 2020) through writing that can typically occur in more introspective, self-analytical contexts such as talk therapy settings. Interestingly, epiphanies, or "remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person's life" (Ellis et al., 2010) are often the subject of many autobiographies and autoethnographies.

Since that time, as I have continued to present the autoethnographic research paper as an option across a range of teaching contexts, I have begun to develop a keener understanding of why this approach to qualitative inquiry resonates so strongly, and with multilingual writers in particular. A focus on one's lived experiences and how those experiences connect in meaningful ways can also allow for experimentation with expression, language, audience, and form. For example, in this self-reflexive

autoethnography of teacher development I will trace the evolution of my own exposure to and utilization of autoethnography in English writing classrooms. In essence, this is my own learner narrative of how I came to adopt this method. As such, this paper will proceed as a series of written vignettes where I highlight my own discursive orientation to creative expression, explore my tendency to utilize lived experience in academic contexts, and illustrate how this manifested in my own process expressivist curricula (Roeder & Gatto, 2014) for my English writing classrooms in Japan, Finland, and the United States.

Japan: The Birth of My Writing Pedagogy

The first time I taught English writing was in Osaka in 2003 to a classroom of two advanced Japanese university students who had just returned from studying abroad. Despite my own Spanish and French foreign language education in the 1980s and 1990s South Florida public school system, I never enjoyed an oral or written proficiency of the kind that these students displayed. At this time in my English teaching career (year two in Japan), I had only a developing knowledge of language acquisition, second language writing, and composition pedagogy theories. When it came to teaching writing, a textbook would have to be my first teacher. But I remember wondering, "So what exactly is the purpose of this Academic English writing course? Am I meant to teach language? Expository writing? Creative writing? Professional writing?"

A popular practice for part-time English teachers at that time in Japan was to set the syllabus on the first day of class together with the students (see Clarke, 1991, on the "negotiated syllabus"). This was partially a practical choice as one could never really guess who might show up as a student or what their proficiency levels might be, and partially because often one never knew what they might be teaching until a week before the term began. About those two students: Naoko had just returned from a year in Ohio and Toshi from a year in Toronto (pseudonyms). They could both read, write, speak, and listen at an advanced level, and both desired to return to their English-speaking contexts in the future. "What would you like to learn?" I inquired.

Together, we agreed to focus on practical documents such as resumes, emails, and application letters for summer educational programs requiring mission statements and personal narratives. The textbook I selected provided writing exercises and activities such as writing movie reviews and personal success stories that would scaffold the eventual practical documents, while I relied heavily on my own writing practices as a student and published journalist to emphasize writing as a process of invention, drafting, feedback, and revision. I enjoyed the teaching, and began to understand the value of personal connection to learning activities.

The following semester, I was assigned "Reading and Writing" courses with two large groups of first-year English majors. My first awakening was to the proficiency differences of these 50 students compared to Naoko and Toshi. I crafted a reading syllabus focused on graded readers of classic popular texts (*Dracula, Frankenstein*, and *The Phantom of the Opera*) along with reading comprehension and reader response activities utilizing newspaper and magazine articles. The corresponding writing portion of this 2-term progression then had students move to developing their own printed class magazine working in teams based on everyday cultural interests (e.g., sports, food, book, and entertainment reviews).

Looking back now, as a journalist and former therapist, I'm not at all surprised that I would lean so heavily into process expressivist and phenomenological approaches, or that

I would select a magazine filled with experience-based reviews as a thematic frame for the course; I can see how my own literacy experiences and preferences directly influenced my ideas about English language learning and pedagogy.

USA: My Introduction to Autoethnography

My introduction to autoethnography happened just a few years later in 2006 when I began my doctoral studies in English Composition and TESOL as I noted above. After that first ESL writing course experience, I understood that autoethnography could legitimize a first-person narrative approach in academic inquiry while still fulfilling the requirements of a traditional research paper genre. After all, autoethnography utilizes aspects of autobiography (writing about oneself and one's history) and ethnography (writing about cultural experience, beliefs, and practices), and the self-reflective process is often just as significant as the final product (Ellis et al., 2010). But as I had only seen it used by international students to examine their language and poetry, I was curious about other applications. I needed to use it myself.

My first experience writing an autoethnography was for an independent study exploring the semiotics and performance of naming and identity; I had been a "perfume critic," or beauty writer, and explored the evolution of this identity via short stories reflective of my cultural experiences growing up around fragrance and then later, professionally as an online journalist (Harrison, 2021, October 3). Next, in my doctoral ESL Teaching seminar, I used autoethnographic storytelling to explore my experiences teaching English in Japan as a self-identified queer man, and the challenges I faced positioning myself and identifying queer-inclusive teaching materials (Harrison, 2022, May 26). In both cases I was writing both autobiography (stories from my life) and ethnography (cultural exploration), and indeed, the processes of self-exploration and self-discovery were just as significant as the finished papers.

I was smitten. It was as if I had found a form of academic research that doubled as personal and therapeutic inquiry. In my other doctoral courses, I was still performing the traditional, hegemonic, author-evacuated, pseudo-objective academic research papers, and the difference between the two approaches in terms of my personal investment and emotional experience was striking. My next challenge was to consider how I might use autoethnography with my own students.

In the fall of 2007, I taught my first US-based "Freshman Composition" college course to a classroom of local English-speaking writers, now having had the benefit of previously teaching in Japan, my ESL assistantship in the USA, and coursework in theory and pedagogy. The result was a phenomenological journey using the five senses as writing prompts where students could experiment with genre, rhetoric, language, and audience. This culminated in a self-reflexive autoethnography that used their coursework as evidence to explore the significance of culture in their lives (see Messekher et al., 2010 to learn more about this humanizing pedagogy). In this paper, students pursued the question "What is I?" by using their written coursework as evidence to support their assertions. Students were pleasantly surprised by the invitation to be present in their college-level writing, and their final course paper at that. Feedback suggested that they were eager to write about their own lived experiences and previous writing; not just write about them, but also make sense of them.

In early 2008, I drafted my dissertation proposal to examine the crossroads of human sexuality and linguistic proficiency, responding to a Japanese acquaintance's claim that

he was "gay in English, but not in Japanese." I had used that summer of 2008 to do some guest lecturing and preliminary interviews with potential participants in Japan. By the end of that summer, I had concluded in a post on my research blog that autoethnography could be an appropriate method for my study:

> During the first two interviews that took place as an attempt at preliminary information gathering, I began to imagine that instead of quantitative research it might be more interesting to focus on the qualitative, that is, to focus on the conversations that ensue with the participants. However, I also noticed that the information being gathered during these conversations, whether or not the intention of my interviews, took the form of stories. As I tried to understand the stories, I thought that perhaps it would be much more useful to counsel the participants in self-reflection than to simply interpret the stories myself. After all, if I am the lone interpreter, what might be missing from the research and analyses? This leads me to a consideration of autoethnographic approaches to collecting data whereby the participants share their own stories and reflect on both the content and process. This approach of situating oneself and one's behavior within a specific cultural context in order to answer a question or address a specific phenomenon now seems appropriate considering my own experiences writing autoethnography, my freshman composition curriculum, and the fact that it might allow me to weave a narrative of my own second language experiences throughout the dissertation. (Harrison, 2008, July 2)

In the above, we can clearly see how my past experiences and identification as a potential member of the research community lead me once again to autoethnography. By autumn I had changed my research methodology to autoethnography. I added:

> I would like to ask my participants to complete their own autoethnographies – to tell their stories and to reflect on the meanings inherent in the stories. Afterall, I find significant my interviewee's own surprise at how "interesting" the questions I've posed have been, and even more significant that they felt as if they were "learning" about themselves through the interview process. **Reflection itself should be a key tool in examining the significance of English experiences in the lives of queer Japanese and may reveal more than the stories themselves.** (Harrison, 2008, July 2; emphasis added in bold)

I now find that final sentence to be quite profound. I began to understand how *reflexivity* (as mentioned earlier; see McCarthy in Johns, 2013), or metacognition, can be a powerful step in autoethnography, especially analytical autoethnography where evidence is not just created but analyzed (Anderson, 2006); such contextualizing and self-analysis creates a sense of investment for writers as well as an opportunity for increased awareness (Aoki & Hamakawa, 2003). I feel fortunate that all 10 of my participants successfully composed English-language autoethnographies, sometimes integrating their native tongue and sometimes writing first in Japanese and then translating to English, that reflected their lived experiences as queer men and women as well as bilingual English and Japanese users.

Moreover, I included in my thesis my own stories of navigating my sexuality in a second language setting into the dissertation, becoming a participating member of the research community rather than a silent outsider. I had observed and mentored autoethnography, taught autoethnography, and written personal autoethnography, but this was my first time participating both as researcher and as a part of a research community.

Finland: Autoethnography and Advanced English Learners

In 2010, I completed my doctoral program and took a position at a language center at a Finnish university. With autoethnography now serving as one of my academic specializations, I was offered an opportunity to lead a workshop for advanced researchers and faculty while concurrently teaching English academic communication courses to international undergraduate and master's students. I had taught English language learners and I had taught research courses, but I had never taught research courses to advanced English language learners. "Could autoethnography help?" I wondered.

I envisioned the majority of my courses as independent research experiences. Depending on the level and course, they were more or less geared to the basics of research writing in English-language academic contexts, and an exploration of related professional and academic communications such as abstracts, conference presentations, and so forth. Following the strong investment that I had witnessed with both my previous students and dissertation participants, I reasoned that my new students – half of whom were Finnish and the other half a diverse array of international students – might also enjoy connecting lived experience to English writing assignments and that such connection would support investment in their language learning. I envisioned my pedagogy as a "bridging approach," connecting students' personal passions and experiences with their professional interests (Harrison et al., 2013). For example, a student who was interested in counseling psychology and photography explored her photography as a way of understanding how she sees herself. Utilizing her own photographs, personal reflections, and peer-reviewed scholarship, Maria (pseudonym) discovered that she had unintentionally developed an art therapy process to support her self-esteem around physical appearance.

What these new student autoethnographers routinely reported was first and foremost a sense of surprise regarding the legitimization of first-person voice in Western academic scholarship, much like my US-based international college writers earlier. For many this was a challenging linguistic and stylistic departure from the kinds of third-person, author-evacuated writing (Knowles & Gilbourne, 2010) they had been previously taught.

Moreover, students reported a level of investment in their projects that transcended anxieties about language use itself. I'd like to further explore this, but perhaps autoethnography also served as a tool to promote a more positive learning mindset. One Finnish autoethnographer, an undergraduate psychology student, explained:

> Because of the bridging approach, investment and agency both grew. It started when I decided my research topic. When personal issue was connected to learning academic English, I started to invest on it … Because [my] study became so close to me in different areas in life, investment was important. I started to be an agent of my own learning instead of a receiver. (Harrison et al., 2013, p. 13)

In the same article, I go on to explain how numerous other writers mentioned their surprise at how their English language acquisition, improvement, confidence, and repertoire increased throughout the project. Moreover, these writers noted their additional surprise that they actually forgot they were studying English because the focus was on the project, not the language. For example, Reetta explains:

> I was pregnant during the course, so I decided to do an autoethnography about identity transformation and pregnancy. This kind of approach was brilliant, because my personal and professional interests were combined. **I got so excited about my**

> **own project that I didn't realize I was studying English.** (Harrison et al., 2013, p. 17, emphasis added in bold)

I think Reeta's conclusion gets to the heart of my assertion in this manuscript: Connecting oneself to one's writing activities, especially in academia, can be an enjoyable way to support language acquisition and practice. Perhaps that was why this approach was so successful with the other international students I had worked with; autoethnography gave them the chance to write reflexively, to make sense of themselves as poets, writers, communicators, and most importantly, as culturally-embedded performers, actors on a stage with an audience (see Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 1956). It seems sense of purpose and engagement with the writing eclipsed anxieties about ability or language use. Additionally, being able to write themselves into their work and acknowledge that yes, their experience matters, also serves as a validation of the various identities being explored.

Conclusion

At this project's inception, I had initially intended to examine some of the theoretical orientations of instructors who use autoethnography in language learning settings to support learner development. However, workshopping this manuscript with experienced colleagues from the Learner Development special interest group and a reconsidering of my own writerly goals have led me to crafting an autoethnographic reflexive narrative of teacher development, a "looking back at something in order to see oneself emerging" (Johns, 2019, p. 19), and as an opportunity to answer Aoki's (2012) call for teachers to share their stories.

I had previously understood that I enjoy and embrace autoethnography due to my own penchant for narrative storytelling and analysis, a preference that was born during my own student experiences in adolescence and reinforced throughout my professional life as a journalist and therapist. I had a hunch that students appreciated autoethnography due to the ability to write in first-person and explore their own lived experiences and expertise. But this paper has presented an opportunity to more deeply explore my journey as an autoethnography instructor and some of the reasons why I have been drawn to the method, as well as deepen my understanding of why advanced language learning students have embraced this method.

Autoethnography as a method legitimizes my ability as a writer to both utilize my personal lived experience and to write in first-person. It capitalizes on my insider knowledge to inform others about the cultures of teaching and learning that I have participated in. Rather than forcing an impossible objectivity, autoethnography allows for an examination of my subjectivities as a member of the global culture of English education. It allows me to not only make sense of cultural experience, but personal experience as well, for one informs the other. This supports a better understanding of how and why I utilize autoethnography to promote learner development in my English writing and research classrooms. And as one who has been learning how to teach, how to connect to students, and how to find my strengths as a writing instructor throughout these last 20 years, this autoethnography has allowed me to share my journey of self-inquiry towards self-realization, connecting my various experiences as writer, therapist, instructor, and researcher.

After many months of conceptualizing, developing, workshopping, and revising this manuscript, I now can see that as a *product* it highlights how instructors inherit discourses

of education while being presented with opportunities to question, challenge, subvert, and personalize their curriculum and pedagogical approaches. And in my case, at least, my personalization is strongly aligned with my literacy history and interests in creative expression, self-analysis, and cultural inquiry.

In a sense, the creation of this manuscript, along with the discursive workshopping that participating in LDJ7 has involved (author-to-author discussion, proofreading, and provision of feedback), has served as an opportunity for exploring the creative *processes* of autoethnographic reflective practice and narrative inquiry in my own teacher development. In the words of my Learner Development colleague Andrew Barfield, perhaps this manuscript is an example of a new kind of "critical inclusive practitioner research." Future scholarship might continue exploring the uses of autoethnography and narrative inquiry as methods for critical professional reflection and development in learner and teacher development contexts. How do we use these methods individually and collaboratively? What professional and critical insights might such self-reflexive writing offer? What can we gain when instructors take to the keyboard to carry out the kinds of activities required of their learners?

Review Process

This article was open peer-reviewed by Dominic Edsall and Stacey Vye of the Learner Development Review Network. (*Contributors have the option of open or blind peer review.*)

Author Bio

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Dr. Marlen Elliot Harrisonは英語・教育研究分野の講師、The AutoEthnographer Literary and Arts Magazineの創設者・編集長である。Marlenのオートエスノグラフィーはは Writing on the Edge、The Qualitative Report、Qualitative Research in Psychologyをはじめとする様々な媒体で掲載されている。ジャーナリストとして国際的な美容のウェブサイトFragranticaの編集を手がけ、数多くの著名な出版誌への寄稿経験があるほか、学術・文化の研究者として、Smithsonian、the Japan Association for Language Teachingや世界各国の大学での経歴を持つ。現在、米国ニューハンプシャー州のSouthern New Hampshire Universityにて芸術修士を取得中。日本、英国、マルタ、祖国フィンランドを経て、現在は夫・犬とフロリダに在住。詳細はこちらから：https://marlenharrison.com

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Collegially Exploring Engaged Meaningful Learning: Stories, Perspectives, Dialogue, and Issues

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In this article we (two university teachers in Japan) collaboratively reflect on our teaching experiences and practitioner research to do with what we have come to call "engaged meaningful learning" approaches such as Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Learning through Discussion (LTD). We use autobiographical stories, our responses to each other's stories, different teacher and learner voices, as well as a reflexive dialogue, to develop personal and local perspectives about what engaged meaningful learning means for ourselves and our learners. Akiko shares her story of becoming socialized as a Japanese teacher and examines why she found that LTD promoted students' engagement and critical understanding, whereas she had mixed experiences with using PBL. This led Akiko to puzzle long and hard over what successful practice means for her. Andy reflects on project work in his own education and past teaching, as well as in a recent curriculum reform process introducing PBL classes in which students research global issues and look at how such issues impact local communities and people that they know. He presents the story of one learner doing a project into ethical consumerism to illuminate the complex interplay between learner creativity, learner criticality, and learners' translingual practices in PBL. In this unconventional patchwork multivocalic reflection we (Akiko and Andy) come to recognise the importance of acknowledging internal and external ideological constraints and of creating new discourses to foster critical awareness and agency in students for engaged meaningful learning.

この論文では、プロジェクト型学習（PBL）やディスカッションを通した学習（LTD）のような、私たち（日本の大学教員2名）が「関与ある学習方法」と呼ぶアプローチに関する自身の教育経験と実践研究を共同で振り返る。私たちは、自伝的な物語、互いの物語への応答、教師と学習者のさまざまな声、そしてリフレクシブな対話を用いて、私たち自身と学習者にとって意味あり関与ある学習とは何かについて、個人的かつローカルな視点を発展させた。中山は、日本語教師として社会化するまでのストーリーを語り、PBLを使った経験が彼女にとっては評価が分かれるものであったのに対し、なぜLTDが学生の関与と批判的理解を促進することがわかったのかを考察する。そして、中山にとっての実践の成功とはなんだったのかという問いを投げかける。バーフィールドは、自身の教育や過去の指導におけるプロジェクトワークの経験とともに、学習者が国際的な問題について調査し、それらの問題がいかに学習者の身の回りの共同体や人びとに影響を与えているのかを考察するPBL授業を導入した最近のカリキュラム改革の過程について振り返る。PBLにおける学習者の創造性、学習者の批評性、学習者のトランスリンガルな実践の間の複雑な相互作用を明らかにするのに役立つ、倫理的消費主義についてのプロジェクトを行った一人の学習者の話を紹介する。この型破りでパッチワークのような多声的な内省の中で、私たち（中山とバーフィールド）は、内面化されたもの、外的なもの双方のイデオロギー的制約を認識することの大切さと、意味あり関与ある学習に取り組む学生らに批判的意識と主体性（agency）を育み、そのための新しい言説を創造する重要性を認識するようになった。

Keywords

teacher narrative, teacher socialization, local context, Project Based Learning (PBL), engaged meaningful learning

教師のナラティブ、教師の社会化、ローカルな文脈、プロジェクト型学習（PBL）、意味あり関与ある学習

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> Representations and especially academic representations came to be criticized because, in and through the context where they appeared, they laid claims to truth. In the wake of this critique, representations were recognized to be context-dependent, always embodying interests, politics, and power. Yet much of the postmodern, feminist, and constructivist literature continued to employ genres characteristic of modernism. That is the critiques, lacking self-reflexivity, merely wrote new truths.
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> … These attempts used a variety of means to break the voice of the dominant narrative to the point that the different voices intersect, overlap, resist, and contrast one another. It is a form of writing that resists language, all the while making use of it. (Roth, 2005, p. 13)

I. Introduction

HIROSHIMA & TOKYO March-August 2023 – We each work in different parts of Japan, Akiko in Hiroshima, Andy in Tokyo, and have different areas of work and disciplinary interests. Akiko's background is History and Japanese Language Education, and she used to teach international undergraduate and exchange students. Andy's disciplinary areas are Applied Linguistics and English Language Education and he teaches mostly Japanese undergraduate students. Despite these differences, we share interests to do with learner development, which we discovered by chance a few years ago when we were in the same response community for Issue 5 of the *Learner Development Journal* (LDJ). With its theme of challenging the conventions in researching and writing about learner development, Issue 7 of the LDJ offered an interesting opportunity for us to collaborate further. In the beginning we had no fixed idea about what we might explore and write about together. Over time, through our collegial dialogues and discussions every few months or so, our focus shifted towards how we and our learners understand and engage with Project-Based Learning (PBL) and other non-conventional approaches to learning, and what questions come up for us about this. We also became interested in writing our account in a non-conventional way by co-authoring a personalised, reflective, and interactive exploration of our practitioner concerns with engaged meaningful learning.

The two of us believe that practitioner research is highly personal, subjective, and that it is driven by teachers' own puzzles and interests within their practices with their learners (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hanks, 2017; Jarvis, 1999; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). Our practitioner inquiries often spring from our inner conversations with ourselves, as well as from our spontaneous interactions with learners, colleagues, and close others with whom we talk and reflect about our work. We find that our practices are deeply embedded in our own biographical trajectories (past, present, and future), as well as in the very local contexts of our lives and work, including the institutional discourses, affordances, and constraints that impact our daily work. These fundamentally important contours of practitioner research figure strongly as we delve into our experiences of being socialised as teachers, working with PBL in our own local ways, and reflecting on what meaningful engaged learning signifies for us and our students in our particular contexts.

It is however difficult to reconcile writing from these personal and local positions with the distancing, objectifying, de-voiced writing that much conventional academic writing and publishing mandates. Although there is no commonly agreed way to write reflexive practitioner research accounts, we try to write here in a context-dependent, personally

voiced fashion. Rather than starting with an extensive literature review and adopting a conventional universalizing stance, we each begin with an opening autobiographical story about significant experiences to do with PBL that we have had in the past. We then share reflections about each other's stories before focusing on particular puzzles that we each have around PBL and other non-conventional approaches to learning in our different contexts. Looking at how some of our learners have responded to these approaches, we consider what we have gained from contemplating our learners' activity and work. We do this in a dialogue, before raising, in the final part, questions for further consideration and inquiry.

This way of writing includes multiple voices, stories, and student artefacts. We have tried to do this in such a way that these intersect and overlap, and also resist and contrast, with one another, as Roth proposes in the opening quotation to this article. What follows, then, is not a conventional piece of academic writing: It is more a patchwork multivocalic reflection that narratively—and in places contradictorily—explores engaged meaningful learning from several different perspectives. We begin with our two autobiographical stories side by side. As they are parallel, please read them in any order that you choose. We then briefly respond to each other's stories, before continuing our narratives sequentially, with Akiko looking for alternatives to a prescriptivist approach to language education, and Andy navigating new PBL discourses in a collaborative curriculum reform process.

II. Starting Autobiographical Stories

Akiko: Setback in Becoming a Conventional Japanese Language Teacher

HIROSHIMA June 12th, 2022 – "I would like to share an old story from my early days as a new Japanese language teacher, which eventually led me to graduate school as a kind of escape. Back then, I cherished the moments of laughter with my students in the classroom, despite the daily struggles of class preparation. Narrative is the way I can convey my voice and context in all its complexity.

My socialization as a Japanese language teacher started in Korea in the 90s. I met basic language teacher knowledge and skills for the first time and learnt them over there. It was exactly like the "Practice makes perfect" experience. I learnt the differences between grammar syllabus and situational syllabus, and basic Japanese verb conjugation from the teacher's guide attached with the textbook.

At the same time in Korea, I was also learning Korean without any formal classes. I learnt Korean through reading grammar books and talking with Koreans in my daily life. I tried to understand announcements on the bus,

Andy: Recovering the Themes of Project-Based Learning

TOKYO June 6th, 2022 – Apart from one spectacularly hazy memory of a project on Roman roads in primary school, I don't recall project-based learning (PBL) in my own school years. Now, in conversation with Akiko, recollecting bygone experiences of school and university learning helps me puzzle over what PBL means in my present work.

An art teacher in secondary school encouraging us to express ourselves freely, and who was never anything less than accepting and enthusiastic about our ideas and artistic work. An inspiring German teacher who would discuss and laugh with us in class and always invited us to use our basic German to express our ideas as best we could. Newspaper articles, current affairs magazines, radio recordings, films, and later a wide range of German literary works, all helping us make connections with new worlds, both contemporary and historical. Such moments of educational freedom, empathy, and connection seem almost subliminal and enduring

advertisements in the newspaper or the shop windows. I listened carefully to what my students said and copied them. I can give you the moment I understood "뭐라고? (mweo-ra-go) What did you say?" as an example.

It was in May or June a couple of months after I came to Korea. Two junior female students were sitting on a big stone near my office building. It was early afternoon, so I asked them "Have you had lunch?" in Japanese, which is a very common "How are you?" in Korean. Then two girls looked at each other with confused expressions and said, "뭐라고? (mweo-ra-go)." At that moment, I understood that it meant "What did she say?" Wow, I can't tell you how excited I was.

I had so many experiences picking up words and phrases in my daily life. I also studied very hard at home with grammar books. The more phrases and vocabulary I could study, the more my world in Korea expanded. I enjoyed studying a foreign language for the first time in my life.

But I could not integrate those very exciting experiences in my classroom.

After I came back to Japan, I was lucky enough to teach at two different institutions. One was following a strict grammar and sentence-pattern syllabus from beginner to intermediate. Another one was using a situational functional syllabus and was more open-minded for experimental teaching. In the former one, I was shocked about the volume of knowledge other teachers had. They seemed to know everything written in the textbook; the vocabularies, elements of grammar, and the order of submissions. They used their knowledge and their sense of "native speakers" to check students' written homework. At first, the grammar-centered textbook was very new to me and I realized my lack of knowledge, both about the textbook and the grammar. Even though I prepared a lot for the class, students sometimes got confused or I could not answer students' questions. What I could do was

influences on me as I look back.

As an undergraduate, no "project-like" learning experiences spring to mind, either. Yet, a few years later, in postgraduate teacher training, a drama teacher using drama projects in a workshop approach to teacher education had a lasting impact on me: It was a new and much deeper way of learning than I had ever experienced before, and it made profound sense.

Soon afterwards I tried extra-curricular drama workshop projects in Yugoslavia at Novi Sad and Belgrade universities where I taught in the early part of my teaching career. At Belgrade University, over several months, the drama workshop had 30 to 40 first- through fourth-year students of English Language and Literature and met once a week for 2-3 hours. The students created together through improvisation, discussion, and reflection two plays, each about an hour long. The workshops featured minimal frames for improvised work, with students discussing their improvisations and feeding ideas back into the scaffolded development of each play week by week. Never scripted, the evolving plays were constantly re-negotiated, then performed in public, and shared with a wider audience (initially inspired by Dorothy Heathcote's educational drama work (Farmer, n.d.), later Boal's (2004) Theatre of the Oppressed).

Some years later I worked with students at the University of Tsukuba on what I came to call "drama-mentary." An early conversation with Akiko led me to start searching for more concrete connections: Where were those photocopies of student work from that class? Finding a long untouched folder of notes and student writing, I started recollecting more sharply how this advanced class had involved students from different faculties in exploring contemporary issues in society. For one project we had decided to take the theme of raising public awareness of HIV/AIDS. Using "drama across the curriculum" methods, I then guided the students to do improvisations

blindly follow what was written in textbooks so that class went a little bit smoothly.

After teaching there for a few years, I became familiar with their strict prescriptivism and I could gradually afford to include sentences that seemed relevant to students' lives and composed sentences on topics that I was interested in talking about in my handouts.

In the latter one, I had a chance to teach intermediate exchange students with another full-time teacher. The course consisted of a situational syllabus, and, for different lessons, I made handouts reorganizing the text book and had students practice sentence patterns and dialogues. Sometimes I and another full-time teacher invited Japanese students who were interested in exchange with international students and organized some events which were related with themes in the textbook like introducing Japanese New Year's games or doing some sports together. We planned those events in the hope that exchange students could get off the "English island," in the university where Japanese was the mainstream. Exchange students came from all over the world, and they were lively and frank. I felt like they were my younger friends.

When I look back on myself, I was learning and teaching in a conventional way, at the same time, looking for a chance to give students an opportunity to use Japanese in an authentic situation like I had in Korea. Moreover, I learnt the joy of chit-chatting and even making jokes with my students with their limited vocabulary and phrases. When I had a laugh and a good time with my students, I felt teaching Japanese was rewarding, and finally I could admit to myself that I am a language teacher.

Slowly I began to accept offers for other classes, and just as I was gaining a little confidence in my ability to teach through trial and error, I hit a wall. Some students did not understand, no matter how well I explained the grammar and vocabulary in the textbook.

around particular situations to do with HIV/AIDS, before they reflected through discussion and writing about what they had experienced. Next, in pairs and small groups, the students created their own drama-mentaries. These were public awareness dramas in which they acted out different situations (drama), in addition to freeze-framing or interrupting scenes at certain points to present information, contradictory perspectives, and commentary about HIV/AIDS (commentary) to let the (imagined) audience step back and reflect.

One particular set of notes stood out as I delved through the folder. These handwritten reflections picked up on the fieldwork interviews the student had done at two nursery schools in her local area about school policies for accepting an HIV positive child: "I was really surprised these two had different point of view towards accepting of HIV positive child. One thinks it is the privacy right. The other says it is the responsibility to tell to everybody that there is HIV positive child." She further reflected: "But it was really good chance to deepen my knowledge. I talked a lot with my friends of other classes and especially with my boyfriend. I will be a doctor someday and when I become doctor I would be the one who tell about the disease." I am struck by how talking with others outside of the class was meaningful for this student, as well as how creativity and criticality dovetailed for the students in what they did.

Reflecting on these past project learning experiences, I grasp more clearly key leitmotivs of dialogue, creative commitment, and a quest for critical engagement and connection with a wider audience outside of the class. Working with others, solo activity, and later sharing also come into view, together with self-directed individual and group action.

In a recent blog post about project-based learning, a writer (Aida, 2017) refers to a key dimension of such learning as "この「夢中になった経験」" / "kono「muchū ni natta keiken」"/ "this 'engaging/engrossing experience'."

And also, some university students, perhaps tired from their part-time jobs, gave me a cold look as I explained how to write an academic report using the academic Japanese textbooks that had just been published. "Oh, come on teacher, we are fed up with your meaningless instructions. It is no use learning those posh phrases." I felt as if they said that to me.

I started to question myself. "Is a prescriptive approach to language education truly beneficial for learners?" There were many ways to blame them: They were unmotivated, they didn't have enough experience reading and writing in their own country or studying foreign languages, they came to Japan to earn money. I didn't want to accuse them using those phrases, but I could not find an alternative way of teaching. I started to feel my students were the enemy to be defeated. Fortunately, only one or two classes gave me that feeling, but that was enough to break my joy and confidence for teaching.

As if bad things happen to bad people/悪い時に悪いことは起こるもので/waruitokini waruikotoha okorumonode/, right around that time, things were going wrong with the international and Japanese student events which I organized in a situational syllabus course as well. Even though those were small events, it required a decent amount of coordination with a full-time teacher who was in charge of the courses or Japanese students who saw the call for event participants. Despite our efforts, it seemed like my students didn't use Japanese as much as we expected or their relationship with Japanese students was just on the site. Compared to the amount of preparation and coordination, the fruit I got was quite small. I was running around behind the scenes and felt I did not get much of a chance to see what the students were doing, how they were feeling, or what they were talking about. The students were the guests. What broke my heart was the time of cleaning. After the events, a few girl students from Asian countries helped me clean, but other students left the site without saying thank

The complete involvement of learners in what they do in project-based learning is often highlighted, as are individual creativity and personal engagement, in the way that PBL gets discoursed. These elements certainly feature in the past experiences of PBL that have come back into focus for me. Yet, something is absent in that picture, and the missing link for me is the theme of developing a critical relationship to the world, exploring that critical understanding with others, and, in some way, raising others' awareness of the issue at hand. Trying to develop criticality was undoubtedly salient in the drama project work in Yugoslavia and, later, at the University of Tsukuba with drama-mentary projects. It is also a key concern in my current teaching and has been an important part of curriculum reform discussions with colleagues in the past few years, as well as with teachers at other universities interested in PBL. The critical dimension is a significant interest in my current PBL work—a puzzle and a challenge that I keep coming back to.

My students continually teach me that neither "the local" nor "the global" has any fixed senses. Their perspectives, positions, and understandings are constantly shifting as they develop a project. For one student the local may start with doing visual research in their neighbourhood, observing and taking photos, for example, of recycling points. For another, the local may have a stronger transnational sense and involve talking to people they know online and discussing what a particular issue such as overconsumption means for those individuals where they live, whether they are in Japan, South Africa, Thailand, or the USA. For another student it may mean first finding out basic information about gender (in)equality at a global level or in other local contexts, and then considering which people close to them they might discuss their lived experiences of gender inequality with.

Just how the mediation of the personal, the local, and the global might be realised in practice is something that I continue to be

you. Eventually I withdrew from these events because I felt like a servant. I decided to get a PhD which seemed necessary to get a full-time job and I wanted to pursue the mystery of why my different selves emerged when I spoke different languages. Starting a PhD was empowering for me, and at the same time I used my PhD studies as an excuse to reduce my teaching load and stop making my teaching practice the center of my life.

puzzled by. In what ways do students make connections between global issues and their own lives and local communities? Why? How do they go about developing their critical awareness? And do they see doing their projects as a creative process or not? Why?

III. Responding to Each Other's Autobiographical Stories

TOKYO October 2022/March 2023 – Hi Akiko, That initial period of prescriptive thinking and action as a teacher reminded me of how like you I looked for basic secure pedagogic routines when I started as a teacher (and still do when I take on new types of courses)—and of the endless hours of lesson-planning that I would do in my early years of teaching. I can remember too the sense of authority that teachers' textbooks conveyed, and how linearly certain teaching needed to be before any ostensible learning was thought to take place.

Perhaps for early-career Akiko, fixed methods (and textbooks and teacher manuals) let you teach in an explicit and predictable way, so you inevitably reached a point where you needed to find out how you wanted to teach *in your own way.* You started experimenting and focusing on your learners and using language in different spontaneous ways. And then you hit a wall. An image of four walls comes into my mind, without any ceiling or roof. It could literally be an exercise yard (!) that you return to and are trapped in. The image makes me notice that prescriptivism is so difficult to question and see beyond. At the same time, opting for more open(-minded) learner-centred pedagogies brought with it its own risks and challenges for you.

You mention that in some classes you felt like you wanted to blame your students and reproach them, although you didn't want to. As teachers we don't often *write* about how we relate emotionally to our learners and to

HIROSHIMA July/October 2022 – Hi Andy, Reading your short opening story, which gives a picture of what you have been pursuing as a teacher, I was struck by the joy of learning that young Andy felt. It was one of the roots and the compass of your teaching.

And I thought it was so awesome that that experience led you to pursue creative learning, using collaboration with others, drama acting, and improvisational dialogue, rather than focusing on "knowledge" that can be measured by tests. I was amazed because I can imagine how difficult running a classroom without the tests and the teacher's authority is, and it requires teachers to carefully listen to their students' voices and learn from them also.

What you wrote made me reflect on my own experiences. Did I have a learning experience like Andy's in any classroom? I grew up in a Japanese educational environment dominated by scores, pecking orders, and entrance exams. And what was my goal in teaching? After World War II, Japanese language education resumed focus on language skills, not learner development, as a reflection of the use of the Japanese language as a symbol of national unity during the prewar colonialist era. I feel that we are now faced with the challenge of overcoming the ghosts of a belief that covers the teaching of Japanese: Language is just a skill, and there is a right way to use the skill.

ourselves as teachers, although we may well *talk* about this with workplace colleagues or close others. For me those feelings of frustration come up for different various reasons when I am teaching. My learners are "present but not engaged" (for whatever reasons) in what I want them to focus on (or *they* want *me* to focus on!), or I don't see clearly where each of them is, or even: They are not being the learners I want (or imagine) them to be.

That sense of "not seeing" the learners and not connecting with them came through for me very strongly when you described coordinating the different events and being rushed off your feet in serving the students and making sure things ran successfully. And then your priorities moved from teaching to your PhD studies. What happened next?

Best

Andy

One more thing: only native speakers know the right way to use it. And create a new goal of teaching and learning language.

In reflecting on my history as a teacher, I reaffirm that I, too, have been attracted by the collaboration and creativity of my students.

You have given me homework trying to fit student creative learning into the history of Japanese language education. I hope I can submit my summer homework, like my son drawing pictures for the new semester.

Sincerely,

Akiko

IV. Continuing Our Stories

Akiko: Looking for alternatives

HIROSHIMA March - August 2023 – In my opening story I wrote about the first decade of my life as a language teacher. As a Japanese language teacher, my socialized environment was filled with traditional teacher-centered prescriptivism, but when I referred to my own language learning experiences as my standpoint for teaching, I realized I wanted to pursue an alternative way of teaching. So I organized some events where international students and Japanese students participated together. They gave me a sense of excitement along with the feeling of "I am doing a new thing," but I was not sure that was what I wanted to do. After completing my PhD, I realized that I had been longing to have a teaching practice where I could encourage my students to have a positive Japanese speaking self, like my Korean speaking self. To continue my story, I would like to share two of my practices in the following decade.

After completing my PhD, I was fortunate enough to be offered a full-time teaching position at a local university in the Kyushu area. Initially, I was assigned to a class of undergraduate international students. The class was for non-native Japanese students who had chosen it as an alternative to English or as a second foreign language. Most of the international undergraduates had studied Japanese for one or two years at a Japanese language school and had obtained JLPT N1, but their Japanese language skills were not precise enough to be considered effective when writing academic reports or participating actively in university classes. On the other hand, they had spent a lot of time studying standard Japanese at a Japanese language school, and I did not want to impose more

"correct" Japanese on them because they were already highly proficient Japanese users to make their lives on their own.

Learning through Discussion

There were three classes, and it was my job to coordinate with the other teachers. As was decided before I came, the first semester would focus on reading comprehension and the second semester on presentations, leaving it up to each teacher in charge to decide on which materials to use. From the second year, I decided to use for the first semester a collaborative learning method I had learned at a workshop held in a nearby university. The method was called LTD (Learning through Discussion). I chose reading materials from several anthologies published on the subject of 大学活用法/ How to Make the Most of University (e.g., Iwanami Shoten Editorial Department, 2000). I had in mind the students who had given me those cold looks before I joined the PhD course, and, in particular, a student from China who dropped out because he could not find a purpose or goal in university life. I wanted them to spend their four years of college in the most meaningful way possible, because if they did not find their own purpose, the time would go by aimlessly.

In the original LTD textbook (Yasunaga, 2006), students were supposed to read one whole paper whatever the length, before the class and follow designated steps, like "definition of terms and concepts" or "integration of material with other knowledge." In the classroom, students should break into small groups to discuss the reading materials following the same steps they had done as preparation. I was attracted to LTD because through those steps the teacher could make sure students had read the materials before the class. Also, using one of those steps, each student needed to articulate how the reading materials related to them personally. In short, by using LTD, students are supposed to read deeply and personally engage with the texts, key ideas in the texts, and the challenging questions that they raised.

As I hoped that reading about college life would give students a chance to reflect on their own lives, I specifically arranged LTD with the hope that reading would give students a chance to reflect on their own lives. I decided that students would read only two essays per semester, and I also created a simple worksheet and assigned it as homework.

There was one class that still remains in my memory: it was a small class of about 10 students, all Chinese, Taiwanese, and Korean. They were not "model" students at all. They took Japanese courses as the easiest choice. Some of them told me, "No more studying language!" At least, they were very frank and honest to tell me that without hesitation. For this class, I chose to read an essay that argued that university students should spend time making the best choices for their future, so that students should not take on part-time jobs or club activities. The argument was clear; the author recommended dedicating yourself to your studies and finding a specialty, thus, "*Don't optimize now, optimize in the future. If you can find your favorite speciality while you are in university, you will have a better life in the future*." However, agreeing with this perspective in the Japanese context was somewhat difficult. Many Japanese university students had a limited understanding of society prior to entering university. As a result, taking on a part-time job was often viewed as a way to "learn about society" rather than just a means of earning money. Similarly, I believed that participating in club activities could be an effective means to make friends and have a more active university life. This was especially true for international students who needed part-time jobs in order to finance their studies and enhance their understanding of Japanese culture. If things went well, they might make lifelong Japanese friends.

As the week progressed, their discussion grew more heated. How quiet and yet passionate their discussion was over the single word "最適化/ saitekika/ optimization." I was impressed that they could be so serious in class and respond to their classmates in such a non-superficial way. I was almost moved as I watched the discussion and felt that although it was a "Japanese" class, learning was involved in their lives. In other words, they engaged meaningfully in their learning; then, their engagement lead them to critical understanding of the word "最適化/ saitekika/ optimization," rather than simply memorizing the dictionary meaning of the word. I felt I witnessed them giving their own meaning to the word, trying to express it to classmates, and negotiating the meaning with each other. I heard their voices echo in Japanese.

To this day, this remains one of my most unforgettable teaching experiences. Even after my Japanese course ended, these students visited my office from time to time and fondly reported on their recent activities when we met on campus.

Try PBL again

However, the number of full-time international undergraduate students entering the university began to decline, and instead, a large number of exchange students, staying for at least one semester/6 months, enrolled in Japanese language classes. (Undergraduates here means students who graduate from the university over a four-year period, whereas exchange students refers to students who come to Japan from partner institutions to study for six months or one year.) I then began to feel that this method using LTD was not suitable for the many exchange students who were majoring in Japanese in their home countries, because they were more the type of student who cared about test scores. They preferred to avoid classroom discussions where there were no definitive answers. Before I could explore other options, there was a curriculum reform and I stopped teaching this course. I suspect that this curriculum reform, ostensibly designed to introduce active learning into general education, was in fact intended to reduce the number of foreign language courses which hired many part-time instructors and put pressure on the budget. As a full-time Japanese faculty member, it was necessary to create an attractive program to attract international students to choose this university in order to protect the employment of the teachers.

Due to the curriculum reform around 2013, I and another teacher were required to make a class for short-term international students and Japanese students' project work. Although we did not know much about how to conduct project work, we were aware that the short-term exchange international students had a hard time finding opportunities to use Japanese in their lives. Also, the Japanese students had never spoken with international students before, even though they were interested in foreign countries. I wanted to give international exchange students chances to interact with local people in Japanese since they had spent at least a couple of years studying Japanese in their home university. I also wanted to puncture the small comfortable cocoons that local Japanese students lived in.

The area where the university was located, like other regional cities in Japan, was suffering from an exodus of young people and the hollowing out of its industries. The local government was hoping that foreign students would bring an international perspective to the area, and provide some ideas about bringing international tourists to the area. My colleague and I worked together to organize the projects for the students. I was in charge of this project work for several years, and we organized groups with half

international students and half undergraduates as much as possible because we expected that would create continuous interaction in the groups.

In the first year, there were 4 groups and, two or three years later, 5 or 6 groups due to more students enrolling in the course. We set the goal of the project as making brochures to attract domestic and international tourists to the local area where the university was located. For each project, students visited sites related to their chosen theme. In the first year, they chose themes and explored bike-friendly locations, including the best restaurants and spots with beautiful autumn leaves. One year later, students were more ambitious and tried to go farther looking for interesting places such as hot spring areas and power spots (places where people believe you can feel a spiritual or healing energy and come away refreshed and rejuvenated). We didn't set any limits or frame what they had to do other than making a brochure. Since we could not get any funds for these projects, they had to use their own money to visit the sites in a group. We printed out the brochures they made and distributed them at the international student center office or municipal international exchange associations.

In reviewing past materials, I noticed that the quality of the brochures varied from year to year and group to group. I can still feel their passion and energy from some brochures even now, but I could not help but think at the time that some were just copies of municipal pamphlets or websites. The differences probably came from the themes, leadership, and/or ideas. Some groups chose interesting themes, and the cooperation in the group worked very well, while others were, even though they tried very hard, suffering. When I had the chance, I was curious and asked them "How is it going?" Some of them confessed to me, with sad, tired faces, that they didn't have any idea what to write or they could not find anything interesting.

This is my experience with PBL, if you can call it that. I know every teaching is always "trial and error," but something didn't sit right with me. I still can't find the reason why I couldn't be satisfied with my PBL compared to the reading-discussion class which I had. Why did it seem like it didn't work for me? Was it because I did not have a chance to observe students' conversations and discussions? Or was it because I could not see how much students developed by doing projects? Perhaps I had passed too much responsibility to students? PBL is like a black box. You can read many reports which write about how wonderful PBL is, but there must be many hidden tips and structures. One reason I can identify is that I didn't try to make a dialogue with students. Rather, I was focused on trying to respond to the local needs of the university. I didn't conceive carefully who they were, what they needed, and what I wanted them to be. Maybe I also felt some external pressure to create a good program to make the university more attractive, so more international exchange students would choose the university for their studies. That distracted me from thinking about the students in front of me. I needed to think about who is the most important person for me as the teacher.

Artefact 1. Student Brochures

Andy: New Discourses & Learner Story about PBL

New PBL discourses

TOKYO July/August 2023 – Like you, learning from my students and trying to follow their development has long been important for me, and, at a time of curriculum reform, that provides some kind of counter-balance to dominant institutional discourses of teacher-centred, exam-oriented, non-interactive classes. In the past, as my opening story about doing drama workshops and drama-mentary highlights, I did projects with students *by my own choice*, and that was strongly connected to the creative potential that PBL involved for me. The development of critical awareness was also a significant theme in that earlier work, following through for me now, years later, around the driving question of how students make connections between global issues, local communities they belong to or identify with, and their own lives.

Three years ago in 2020, with a forthcoming curriculum reform on the not-too distant horizon, I was part of a working group of several colleagues responsible for conceptualising and introducing PBL, for the 2023 academic year, into the English curriculum that my colleagues and I teach in and co-coordinate.

As a general observation, I find it tempting to think of a pedagogic change as a "new" approach, so it is humbling to keep in mind that PBL was originally proposed by Kilpatrick (1918) and others for new progressive education in the early twentieth century in the United States. Kilpatrick put "project" in these terms, "If ...we think of a project as a pro-ject, something pro-jected, the reason for adopting the term may better appear" (Kilpatrick, 1918, p. 4). He argued that projects involve "wholehearted purposeful activity in a social situation" to solve a problem through "purposing, planning, executing, and judging" (Kilpatrick, 1918, pp. 17-18). Soon after the Second World War, project work figured in contemporary school education in Japan and was explicitly promoted within official guidelines. At other times it slipped out of official view (Nomura, 2017). Nomura points out that PBL was incorporated in the "New Education" period (1946-1957) as 自由研究/ Independent Research, "where each individual student was expected to find his or her own problems and inquire them proactively" (Nomura, 2017 p. 632).

The reform process that I took part in also had a major impact on my thinking about what PBL means. In this continuing story, I will include quotes from members of the working group (see the box opposite) and from guideline documents to bring out the multivocalic evolution of this new institutional discourse about PBL. Where I represent the working group's collective thinking, I use a "we" voice. When members of the group share their own perspectives, they are individually named (with their agreement). To give my own views about different PBL principles and practices that I identify strongly with, I switch to "I" in certain places.

Although the working group had no initial template for deciding what new PBL courses

Collegial reflections on creating new PBL courses

Mike: ... We (the Working Group) initially hit on the idea of projects in a kind of brainstorm of possibilities for making the new course different from the existing courses based on cycles of (individual) research and presentation/writing, as we felt students would appreciate and benefit from a different kind of process/engagement with content in the third section of the curriculum. I recall we weren't really very sure ourselves for a while what "projects" meant or what they would include, but the idea opened up space to imagine things in a new way, and within that space we were able to consider and further brainstorm the kinds of 'principles' and practices we wanted to base PBL on (both new approaches and ones taken from emerging practice in existing courses) ...

(M. Nix, personal communication, August 12, 2023)

> **Peter:** ... For myself, my concern with the old English curriculum for Kokki (International Business and Law) students was that they were doing almost all of their research online, and it was very difficult to get them away from the mindset that "issues" exist "out there" in society and not in their own lives. ...
>
> (P. Thornton, personal communication, August 5, 2023)

would involve, we were clear that any new content-based learning course needed to have a distinct profile from other required English courses that students would take in the new curriculum. This point is taken up by my colleagues Mike Nix and Peter Thornton in their recollections of how the reform process evolved. Over time, the overall aim became more distinctly articulated as students carrying out projects, individually, in pairs, or small groups, into global issues and problems that interest them, and how the issues impact local communities and people they know; then planning and doing (different kinds of) research into those issues or problems, before "creating some kind of product at the end of each project cycle to report on their research to others" (Chuo University Faculty of Law 3.4 Working Group, 2021, p. 1); see also Appendix A for the generic PBL course description that we later created). We imagined that these products might include different real-world genres such as blog posts, campaign proposals, opinion pieces, and project narratives, or multimodal products, for example, webpages, videos, visual narratives, as many of these genres were already part of existing Research & Writing (R&W) courses.

Discussing these principles with full-time and part-time colleagues in January 2022 helped us frame the idea of local research more explicitly. We had originally called this "fieldwork," but we found that some teachers (both full-and part-time) almost exclusively associated PBL fieldwork with students contacting and visiting NGOs to do interviews. *Would we be providing a list of appropriate NGOs and organisations for students to contact? What kind of protocols would be appropriate for students in arranging formal interviews*? *Would teachers need to check and keep track of students' email correspondence with different organisations?* We realised that, if fieldwork became predominantly concerned with students seeking out expert opinions from staff working in civil society and other types of organisations, this would encourage students (and teachers) to see issues as "out there" and disassociated from their own lives. So, we came to put much greater explicit emphasis on students talking with those around them in their own lives, local communities, and networks.

One other important part of this story concerns re-thinking the prevailing view of academic literacy within the wider English curriculum. For a good many years, this had been expressed as becoming "able to engage with content and to use English to learn about social, political, legal and global issues" (Chuo University Faculty of Law Taught-in-English Program, 2012). That was now changing through the collaborative dialogic curriculum reform process among full-timers and around 25 part-time teachers: Academic literacy was becoming more focused on students' participation in society through being engaged with the world around them, talking with people as well as gathering information, and making a critical analysis. I found this both exciting and intriguing. PBL was pushing us all to break further away from conventional understandings of academic literacy. Within the new PBL framework, this was now being constructed as "active informed citizenship literacy," closely echoing a critical language pedagogy position as "teaching for social justice, in ways that support the development of active, engaged citizens ..." (Crookes, 2013, p. 8):

> … the kind of citizenship literacy that you need to:
>
> - be an active informed member of society
> - be engaged with the world around you
> - talk with people, gather information, and analyse it critically
> - share it in many different ways just as people do in the real world, rather than the literacy you need to do conventional academic studies … (Chuo University Faculty of Law 3.4 Working Group, 2022, p. 5).

To reach towards this, students (and teachers) would need to seek out new ways to link what they learnt in their projects to their lives and participation in society, or, as my colleague Peter Thornton put it, to gain some "sense of *'projecting'* new ideas into the world, of thinking about what is possible, and hopefully feeling more invested and confident about participating in society" (P. Thornton, personal communication, August 5, 2023).

As I look back at the reform process, I notice how this made me, as well as other teachers, consider more specifically how to guide students to mediate personal, local, and global connections and "understand the issues in their own lives in terms of wider conditions and factors in society" (Chuo University Faculty of Law 3.4 Working Group, 2022, p. 3). We had no set pathways to follow here. We would each experiment with putting this into action. Other aspects such as student translingualism and creativity in project work (particularly in making final products) were also coming to have greater salience for me than in the previous R&W classes. This is highlighted in the following story of Fumi, as she carried out a local-global project within the broad parameters of the unfolding reform.

One learner's experiences with PBL

TOKYO March-July 2022 – I had known Fumi (pseudonym) since the beginning of the pandemic when she joined my second-year seminar that year. In the spring semester of the 2022 academic year, I talked with Fumi outside of class as she carried out a one-off individual project in May and June 2022. I wanted to step back from partially experimenting with PBL elements in my transitional R&W class, and see how a relatively experienced near-peer learner (similar in age, experience, and other ways; Murphey, 1996) would organise a whole project. Talking with Fumi in weekly/fortnightly Zoom discussions over 8 weeks or so would, I hope, let me see things differently than would otherwise be possible within the busyness of the R&W class itself. The box on the right gives a brief summary of how I tried to shadow Fumi as she organised her project. On the left I continue the narrative by presenting Fumi's experiences with PBL.

Fumi was interested in looking at ethical consumerism in her own life. She began by looking at her everyday consumption habits and consumer products that she couldn't help buying, like loose-leaf paper for making notes, and fast-fashion clothes. Although she tried to recycle her used clothes, she often ended up throwing them away. Fumi next had conversation-discussions with other people she knew to develop her understanding. Active on social media, Fumi

Following Fumi as she organised her individual project

Andy: In the first discussion I asked Fumi about her experiences of project work and about her ideas for her project. It turned out that Fumi had no direct experience of doing any project-like work in her earlier school education, so the main connection that she made about doing a project was to half-day and whole-day "internships" that she had been recently doing in her third year while job-hunting. These group-work sessions involved several undergraduates from different

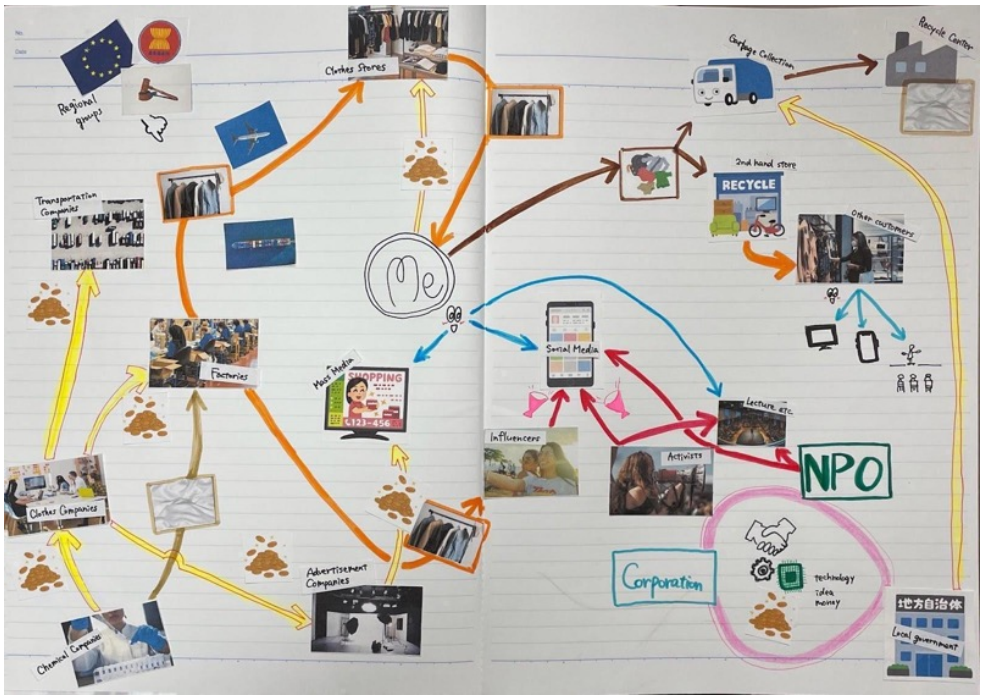
talked in English with several Instagram friends in different localities around the world (in South Africa, Thailand, and the USA) about their views on consumerism, before looking at YouTube videos and TEDTalks to learn about minimalism. She quickly gathered multiple perspectives and started thinking about the end-product that she would make from her project. Her first idea was to make a video commercial to encourage people to consume less. The audience, she imagined, would be Japanese. She would share stories from her project to raise their awareness of overconsumption. This took her to finding out about consumer advertising, and thinking about how she would design the video.

The key question that Fumi became focused on was: *What can I do to be a more sustainable consumer?* She next found out about environmental impacts and widespread labour rights violations in fast-fashion global supply chains. In a "bad-things-happen-to-bad-people" moment, Fumi had a crisis of confidence: She felt that she was doing bad as a consumer and blamed herself. After this crisis she started to understand her own consumer footprint in new ways. First, she mindmapped her growing understanding of the web of local and global factors around her personal consumption (as shown in Artefact 2).

universities working together on a set task under a time limit, such as creating a new product, or coming up with a new business plan.

For this pilot project, I explained that she should aim to understand the issue that she chose in her own everyday life and also develop a more global interconnected view. Making clear that Fumi could withdraw from the project at any point, I talked through further information about the research and asked if she had any questions. Fumi then signed an informed consent sheet. In the following discussions I invited her to share what she had done for her project since our previous meeting, then followed up with further questions to understand different points in more depth. As it was my intention to follow Fumi as she developed her project, I held back on making specific suggestions to her. Towards the end of each session, Fumi would outline her next steps and actions.

The story of her project that is shown to the left is reconstructed from her online project notes, notes that I kept, and video-recordings of the Zoom discussions that we had.



Artefact 2. Fumi Mapping her Understanding

Mapping let Fumi look beyond her own individual consumption and locate herself locally in a chain of interlocking actors that reproduce the wasteful consumerism that she was also part of. Second, she looked for ways to make a critical appraisal of certain brand sneaker companies. She checked their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reports in Japanese, and also found a citizen network, Citizens' Network to Build a Sustainable Society through Responsible Consumption (SSRC) / 消費から持続可能な社会をつくる市民ネットワーク (n. d.), which surveys and evaluates companies in terms of sustainability so that it can issue ethical report cards. In this stage of her project, Fumi developed a simplified set of evaluation criteria (environment, work environment, inclusiveness, and contribution to local communities) for three leading sneaker companies (see Artefact 3).

Artefact 3. *Fumi's Evaluation of 3 Brand Clothing and Sportswear Companies*

1=Poor 2=Average 3=Good 4=Excellent

	Company A	Company B	Company C
Environment	2.5	3	4
Work environment	1	1	1
Inclusiveness (LGBTQ+challenged+gender equality+no ageism)	2	3	3.5
Contribution to local communities	1.5	2	2

Evaluating specific brand companies enabled Fumi to re-work in a more critical way her understanding of how she might become a more ethical consumer.

The final part of Fumi's project involved the design and production of a short video (3 min, 23 s). She first wrote the script in Japanese, then translated it into English, and edited it over three further drafts in English. To protect identities, Fumi digitised her voice and the voices of other people whose views she includes from talking with close others at the start of her project.

Artefact 4. Fumi's Digitized Video

The slides in the final published video present strong visual images with concise summary points in Japanese, while the digitised voice-over in English elaborates each slide (Chuo University Faculty of Law PBL Resources, 2023).

Looking back over her whole project, Fumi saw PBL in these terms:

> PBL definitely expanded my interests and broadened my horizons. For this reason, it was difficult to focus on and I easily jumped on different topics. In that sense, I needed a guide. However, it was fascinating to explore an issue while looking for a way to improve my PBL. Since I was free to decide what I research, how to research, as well as how I end this project, I could deepen my understanding about the issue from a variety of perspectives and how I can cultivate a better understanding of the world. (Fumi's project notes, 4 July 2022)

While Fumi drew satisfaction from freely deciding the focus for her project, she found the open choice challenging and felt she needed some guidance to carry out her project successfully.

Understand PBL again

TOKYO August 2023 – Fumi's experiences helped me understand PBL from new perspectives. Her sense of the local was strongly influenced by her use of social media: Talking with close others did not necessarily mean those in her immediate community and networks in Tokyo. For this project Fumi drew on an internationally dispersed set of close others for her local research. Second, Fumi's project was initially driven by her personal interest in sustainable consumerism rather than by a "central driving question" which different accounts of PBL (e.g., Blumenfeld et al., 1991; Condliffe, 2016; Mikouchi et al., 2018; Thomas, 2000) tend to propose as a defining criterion that should guide projects from the start. In Fumi's case, the issue of sustainable consumerism had strong personal interest and value, but was also challenging (features emphasised by Blumenfeld et al., 1991, pp. 375-378). She struggled to find a specific focus in the initial weeks of her project. Once she did, Fumi could begin to formulate a guiding question, which helped her imagine her project through to the video that she planned to produce at the end. Another salient moment in Fumi's PBL experiences was the crisis of awareness that she had as she located her own everyday consumption in relation to inequalities in the global flows of consumerism that she is part of. Mapping the network of consumerism actors let her position herself in a new personal-local-global way to the issue that she was researching. This re-positioning seemed to act as a reflexive prelude to Fumi developing a more critical view. In turn, her critical awareness grew as she worked translingually in Japanese and English on creating and finalising her bilingual video.

From this I understood that creativity and criticality were running in parallel in Fumi's project. Their interaction was closely related to her translanguaging practices in producing a bilingual product for a near-peer audience of young adults. Following Fumi as she developed her project also let me appreciate the need for flexible scaffolding with PBL in two particular ways. First, I now explicitly guide students in the first weeks of a project to plan their projects in a global-local frame and imagine how they might make personalised connections through (a) conversation-discussions with close others and (b) choice over their project products (see Appendix B for an example of such framing). Second, I have come to use a minimal set of guidelines for students to narratively journal the development

of their projects week by week (see Appendix C). My intention here is to open up spaces for students to document their projects in their own self-directed ways. Both of these practices were strongly influenced by the pilot project with Fumi.

V. A Dialogue: Akiko and Andy August 2023

Akiko: After reading Fumi's PBL, I realized that your PBL is very similar to the image I have of a bachelor's thesis (卒論/sotsuron). It is new to me and great that you can do individual PBL instead of group activity, which can open up more spaces for individual choice and agency. But one thing I am curious about is how much and what kind of feedback you gave to Fumi. Did you find it difficult to understand her English? How did you deal with that? How long did it take to give feedback? I think these constraints and workloads determine the quality of teaching. It seems like Fumi is very positive about her PBL. How about other students? Did your students enjoy the PBL?

Andy: I prefer to start with students working on individual projects, often in pairs. Later the students work in different collaborative formations, although I don't go for large groups. Working individually with Fumi on that pilot project was an ongoing conversation-discussion with her as I wanted to understand her decision-making and actions, and how she was making sense of doing a local-global project, so our interactions were more exploratory than evaluative. We talked, I kept notes, but I didn't provide any written feedback. The project was definitely challenging for Fumi, but it was driven by her interests, and she was able to engage with what it means to become a sustainable consumer. She could also connect the personal, the local, and the global in her understanding. So, if students can do that in their projects, documenting their work in reflections and mindmaps, and bring those three perspectives meaningfully together, then create and share final products with others, I think they can enjoy this kind of PBL a great deal, but it takes time and their development gathers over time.

I want to add that very few of my students have done project work in their previous education. They may sometimes mention projects they did in elementary school such as finding out about local food production or environmental issues. A handful of students in each class may have done individual or group-based inquiries or projects in high school, but they are still the exception.

Akiko: I see. I think it is great that the students can exercise their agency, not just as homework for class without teachers. And I like the way you find student creativity in the process of learning. That is a very important theme for you which I don't have.

Andy: In your story the contrasting experiences that you highlight and reflect on really caught my interest. The way you learnt Korean for yourself was completely at odds with the prescriptive teaching methods that you encountered early on in your career. At the same time, I was struck by how those constraints eventually propelled you towards exploring more learner-centred creative pedagogies, including LTD and PBL, and to puzzling over why you still feel that PBL didn't work for you. Looking back, was there anything positive you gained from PBL?

Akiko: On this point, I felt that the PBL I wrote about here was a kind of failure because I couldn't feel my students' sense of accomplishment. I want to make clear for their honor that the students who did PBL in my class worked very hard, but something

was missing. Of course, not all groups did. Maybe I didn't appreciate my students' creativity enough compared to you. Or maybe I failed to guide them to see the world differently, to be critical.

Andy: You say you couldn't feel their sense of achievement. Did the students keep learning diaries or reflections about what they were doing in their projects, so you could follow their activity?

Akiko: No, I didn't. I could not find their feedback on the projects from my old files, but most of them were positive as far as I remember. Maybe it was not their sense of achievement but mine. In this dialogue with you for this article, I have noticed the reason why I could not be satisfied with PBL. I wanted to see my students find something new and meaningful in the world, thus I wanted them to see the world differently through their activity. Finding something new means creative and critical maybe for me.

Andy: I'm constantly pondering how the two processes of creativity and criticality interact and work together for learners, and what I can do as a teacher to bring them into interaction. Take your experiences with "Learning through Discussion": LTD created new possibilities for you about teaching and learning. It became a significant point of reference for you. That's what the drama workshops in Yugoslavia and the class at the University of Tsukuba let me see too. They almost prototypically embody meaningful student engagement, creativity, and criticality for me: Important landmarks, not always visible, yet pointing the way at different times: Am I close to this or moving away from it? How might I/we get closer to that? What might I/we do differently? Why?

Akiko: I had been wondering what criticality is. It's intriguing that you've highlighted the interplay between criticality and creativity. In your PBL experiences and my LTD practice, we both appreciated learners' engagement to learning and that led them to create their own views of the world. As teachers we could perceive their creativity and criticality as they did this, in your case especially the connection between global and local. If the native speakerism and prescriptivism are still pervasive in language learning teaching, as I think is still the case, we need to think about how to nurture teachers who have an ability to find and appreciate the learner's creativity and criticality.

Andy: Yes, guiding students to develop their critical awareness about their views of the world is an ongoing challenge for me. In the PBL frame I'm working with, interrelating the local, the global, and the personal is central. As I must also do, my students have to break through the cocoons of habituated thinking and assumptions about the world that have become normalised for them. I notice that students might articulate the local in a binary contrast to "the global" as if the global is some disconnected other, outside of their personal lived experience (Appadurai, 1996) in which a process of othering (powell & Menendian, 2016) is common. Students might, for example, scale up the local to seeing this in terms of "Japan" in relation to other societies in the world, so that they take a generalised nation-state perspective on connections between the local and the global ("Japan is …/We are … but X country is …/They are …"). At other times they might frame the local in terms of a problem that stereotypical groups or minorities within Japanese society have, i.e., the problem becomes essentialised as a property of

the group or minority, and disconnected from particular unequal conditions, systems, or structures within society that underlie and reproduce the issue in people's lives, by, for example, assuming that poverty in Japan is limited to the homeless and/or immigrant workers and refugees, whereas "real" poverty can be found only in "Africa" or is not an issue for "us" in Japanese society. I find that "we/they" categorical views of the world run through these global-local entanglements, making it difficult for students to connect issues to their personal lives and wider conditions and factors in society. I'm still trying to understand how to help students get beyond those normalised binaries, so to speak.

Akiko: I would also like to emphasize the importance of the teacher's criticality in being aware of the constraints under which our practices are carried out. Without an awareness of these constraints, it's all too easy to fall into the misconception that our practices are occurring in a vacuum, not in the real world with economic, political, and cultural constraints. I realize now, recognizing and understanding these constraints is an important aspect of criticality, isn't it? As before I mentioned, the absence of this critical perspective can inadvertently lead teachers to unwittingly reproduce and prolong oppressive conventional discourses and practices. I am sure that I've likely fallen into this trap multiple times in the past.

Andy: Yes me too, and I still do. Although native speakerism didn't come up for me so much in my thinking about PBL, Fumi's story helped me notice translanguaging from new perspectives. It's interesting that in our collaboration you and I have nearly always discussed in English, and we've written this article in English too. Beyond these overtly English-centric practices, we have used translation software to work with Japanese and English—you for writing and also reading our article at different points, and me for reading some blog posts and articles in Japanese about PBL. Did we address language and power questions in our collaboration?

Akiko: You encouraged me to write in Japanese a couple of times, but I didn't choose to. Probably because each language has particular readers… And no one can escape the issue of language and power, and it's not fun to think about. But you can see the power and ideology that each language has in our stories. In my example, I suddenly had a university teaching position with no training as a language teacher, or in your case, all the students had the ability to do PBL in English before they entered the university. And behind these episodes, there was native speakerism or language imperialism, and also many non-native teachers who are not working under the same conditions.

Andy: Yes and no … We could have examined more explicitly our use of Japanese and English, and our experiences of power around this. We did at times, but it was not a constant theme for us. Questioning that more might push me to explore further how my learners can translanguage in different ways for their own purposes. What we are thinking through together here makes me reflect about the complexity of co-constructing and creating alternative norms and discourses, not just in a curriculum and among the teachers who enact that curriculum, but with each class, and with the individual students in each class, too. Questioning our internal and external ideological constraints is part of becoming a critically minded teacher. It is a never-ending struggle. But it is not everything. Creating alternative norms and discourses is important too.

Akiko: I think so too. It is necessary to create new discourses for them and for us …

Andy: On this I'd like to come back again to the theme of criticality in PBL. When we were talking online about PBL, you mentioned that you were struck by the emphasis on critical, informed citizenship in the new discourse around PBL. The frame was not just about learners or students in the classroom, but explicitly connected to their participation in society. That caught for you the sense of agency that learners might develop through PBL, and/or the potential for learners to exercise their agency in PBL, and to understand themselves and what's happening in society in new ways. From this perspective the curriculum reform was as much about enabling/empowering PBL practices and principles as putting forward a political aim for such education. Bringing this back to our collaboration, I find that, through our stories and dialogues, we have been pointing towards a critical view of education that aims to empower and help students become conscious and critical of multiple inequalities in society around them or in their lives. That political emphasis is important for both of us.

Akiko: Through your words, I can have a glimpse of your educational ideals. I hadn't directly addressed controversial issues in my classroom before, but that also reflects my stance on education, which is a matter of politics. I might need to ponder this aspect a bit more.

You may not want to go back to this point, but I still can't shake the suspicion that PBL and LTD are appropriate for people who already have competency. You have told me that there are great practices that have been adapted for beginning students, and I have seen examples of very old critical applied linguistics practices such as literacy workshops. But I wonder how it can be done.

Andy: It's a great question that you are raising about content, skills, and language proficiency. I guess part of my response is that it can be addressed in different ways—I see it as trying to imagine/imagining ways, appropriate for the learners that I work with, where I can involve them more in what they are doing, around topics and issues they are interested in, and where they/we work collaboratively in the classroom, make decisions about their learning, and bring in their "content" to what they are focusing on in a class, take ownership of it, so to speak, as well as reflect on their progress, and plan their next steps. To some extent I am more focused on content and learners using language rather than explicitly teaching language. For me "it" starts from there, whatever proficiency level(s) the students have.

Another part of my response is that a significant point of reference is the work of Leni Dam, who is probably the most-recognized and widely published classroom practitioner of learner autonomy. Much of her work is concerned with Danish learners of English at beginner level, where they work from the start on different kinds of projects. Dam's work is very strong on the teacher's role in structuring and scaffolding learner activity, and on the learner's role in being pushed into action and taking ever greater responsibility for their learning (Dam, 1995, 2018). I'm not claiming that you or I need to slavishly follow Leni's Dam approach. What stands out for me is that her work involves practice-driven theorisation about a particular approach to meaningful engaged learning (i.e., learner autonomy), so it frankly provokes the reader to reflect on their own practices in unexpected ways.

Akiko: Wow, that sounds interesting. But one thing that caught my eye or ear in what you said is Dam's emphasis on the teacher's role in structuring learner activity. For a long time PBL was like a black box to me. There must be some trick or format, or I don't know how to say it, but you can't leave everything to the students, is that what Dam said?

Andy: Absolutely. For Leni Dam the teacher's role is crucial. It changes as the teacher progressively lets go, and learners take greater hold of their learning in becoming more autonomous. She is very clear about this.

Akiko: In LTD there are strict steps on what students should do. Although this made me suspicious about restricting the students' freedom when I first heard it, the steps made the format and gave direction to the students. The format also conveys the purpose of this discussion to the students. Now I'm going back to the beginning of our dialogue. Creativity. Appreciating learners' creativity is very important for teachers who want to do PBL. If you think your student project is very ordinary, you can't appreciate their effort. You have to find value in the learner's products, which is still a challenge for me, and I feel like it takes skill, like appreciating an art form. So that quality of teacher is very important for the successful PBL.

Andy: I guess what we are saying is that the ongoing dialogues and quality of appreciation is important in our interactions with learners as they engage in discussions, undertake projects, and create products. Even if it's about something very ordinary, it is all part of trying to follow learners and support them in what they do, and raise different options for them about what they can do further. Seeing examples of other students' work can be a great support here as it may let them imagine how they can apply their own creativity.

But what do we mean by learner creativity? Within the specific approach to PBL that I have been exploring here learner creativity involves re-working different artifacts of a project (e.g., notes from conversation-discussions with close others, images from local research, journaling, notes from web resources, mapping, notes from in-class discussions), and re-constructing them in new ways to create an original product for a particular audience in society (based on Janks, 2010). Fumi, for example, does this with her digitized video. She creates her own personalised and critical understanding of sustainable consumerism.

In our stories another really important consideration is the audience that students have in

Another view of the creativity-criticality nexus

Ellen: These stages are really interesting. It seems different from the usual meaning of creativity, as these stages involve patience, the ability to take an overview, the ability to work methodically. I have had a question in the back of my mind as to whether academic creativity is different from artistic creativity and I think the answer is to some extent yes. When you were writing about creativity and criticality I thought that criticality creates a kind of limiting condition which keeps academic creativity under control. Artistic creativity has more options, to control itself using tradition, or not to control itself.

(Ellen Head, editor, 6th September 2023, personal communication)

mind for the products that they create. For Fumi this was other young Japanese people, like her.

Akiko: … producing something to present to others?

Andy: … yes, creating and producing for an outside world, a non-classroom world, right? As students focus on the end-product, that's when criticality starts to come into play … and interacts with creativity much more. That has been a key part in all the projects that we have been exploring: some kind of public display and sharing of work within the class, as well as to an audience beyond the class itself, and something that most practical accounts and theorisations of PBL strongly recommend (Alan & Stoller, 2005; Anderson, 2021; Güven, & Valais, 2014; Mikouchi et al., 2018; Sheppard & Stoller, 1995; Stoller & Chandel Myers, 2020). Oddly enough, the outside world is more often than not an imaginary audience, isn't it? In your projects the audience was specific and definite—the International Student Center Office and Municipal International Exchange Association. How did the students see this?

Akiko: The students in my projects? I'm thinking about a group who tried to do that famous hot spring brochure. For them the audience would be an abstract tourist. They wanted to make it very, very professional, like a brochure that some professionals make. So that's the one reason they had a hard time, but the teams who didn't have so much abstract audience in mind — for example, they imagined other international students coming to the university next year as their audience — they enjoyed their projects more, I think. Yeah, they were more …

Andy: … focused on people close to them, an audience who was familiar to them?

Akiko: Yes, that's one possibility. … Through writing this article we want to convey what we learnt from our practices and learners. At this point I think I have said everything I wanted to say.

Andy: Let's move on.

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VI. Our Concluding Thoughts & Questions

In this article we have attempted to write in experimental narrative-dialogic ways that are close to how practitioner-researchers talk, question, and reflect about their work with learners, colleagues, and others in their local contexts. We have also made connections to work in the wider field as we have theorised from practice and drawn on key works that have impacted our thinking and evolving understandings. To do this, we have been on a long collaborative journey over the last 18 months. At times we found it difficult to continue, but then we would talk again and start seeing our stories, practices, and puzzles in new ways. What is important, it seems to us now, is that, on purpose, we did not set out to find common ground. We wanted to talk about our different practices, but we did not force ourselves to focus on a common theme from the beginning. Rather, we each shared our interests, practices, and puzzles, then our stories and reflections.

As we did this, over time, we realised that we were in many ways talking about the same phenomenon, "engaged meaningful learning," and what that means for us and the students that we work with. Engaged meaningful learning emerged from our collaboration and directed us to a fundamental rethinking of what matters to each of us with our students. As we look back together, we now see that our collaboration has led us towards three new

discourses about (a) what engaged meaningful learning means for us and our students, (b) how we may understand our practices through talking and writing collaboratively, and (c) how we can write about our learners, local contexts, and practices in new ways, and why. And at this point we think we have now said everything that we wanted to say, so we turn again to you, the reader: What do you make of this? What intersections, overlaps, resistances, and contrasts do you find with different themes and issues that we have covered in this article? Which ones are engaging and meaningful for you? Why?

Review Process

This paper was open peer-reviewed by Katherine Thornton and the Learner Development Journal 7 editors. *(Contributors have the option of open or blind peer review.)*

Author Bios

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アンディ・バーフィールド(博士)。東京の中央大学法学部で教鞭を執っており、学生たちが自己指導型の研究プロジェクトを通じて社会、政治、法律、グローバルな問題に取り組む英語カリキュラムの調整をサポートしてる。彼の現在の研究関心は、社会における多言語の問題、批判的リテラシー、プロジェクトベースの学習（PBL）など。

Akiko Nakayama PhD is an associate professor in the Teaching Japanese as a Second Language program at Hiroshima University, Japan. She is currently interested in learners' stories, L2 learner identities, and teacher development.

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Appendix A

PBL Course Description

In this course you will carry out projects, individually, in pairs or small groups, into global issues and problems that interest you, and how they impact local communities and people you know. Problems might include investigating fairtrade products in local businesses, exploring local government support for minorities, looking at people's attitudes and concerns about artificial intelligence in daily life, finding out how local organisations are putting into action Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and so on. You will do a minimum of 3 projects in one year (at least two in the spring semester and one in the fall), with journaling a key continuous process in each project.

Your research will include gathering information and making notes from both material (e.g., books, library, documents, audio-visual materials) and online sources (e.g., web searches, databases, other e-sources, including online videos and podcasts) in order to develop your understanding. You will also talk with "close others" (other students, family members, people in local communities, or local networks that you belong to). At the end of each project, you will create a product (e.g., an academic essay, blog posts, an opinion piece, visual report, or webpage) that can reach an audience beyond your class (e.g., with other classes, in public spaces, and/or in web-based products) so that you can share results from your project with other people.

この科目では、個々の学生が関心を持ったグローバルな諸問題に関してプロジェクトを遂行し、それらが身近なコミュニティや周囲の人々にどのような影響を与えるかについて、ペアやグループワークを通して探究します。プロジェクトの例として、地域に根差したビジネスとフェア・トレード製品をテーマに調査したり、地方自治体とマイノリティ支援策、日々の生活におけるA I活用の課題、地方自治体が主導する持続可能な目標の実践例など、他にも様々なテーマが考えられます。1年間のコースでは、3つ以上のプロジェクトを遂行し（春学期2つ秋学期1つ、以上）、調査の過程や結果などを逐次記録することが求められます。

調査では、資料（書籍、図書館、文書、視聴覚資料）やオンライン（検索、データベース、ビデオやポッドキャストなどのその他電子資料）を活用した情報収集とノートテイキングを行います。加えて、「身近な他者」（学生友達、家族、近隣住民、や所属する地域ネットワーク）へのインタビューも行うことになります。プロジェクトの終盤では、調査結果を成果物（学術論文、ブログ、意見書、ヴィジュアルレポートや、ウェブページ）にまとめ、教室の外の人々（他クラスの学生や、公共の場、ウェブなど）に向けて調査結果を広く発信します。

Appendix B

Two Example Global-Local Frames for Initial Project Planning (Outline – Problem – My question – Project goals)

Presented and discussed with students at the start of Project 3 in the 2023 academic year. Students are guided to develop a similar overall frame for their own projects.

Example Guideline Frame 1 for a project on "Making Connections Between Local Groups or Communities in Japan & Other Countries on the Right to Education for Foreign Children"

Human rights -> **The right to education -> foreign children in local communities**

The problem —> Education of Children with Diverse Backgrounds **(n.d.):** "An estimate of over 700 foreign children in Hamamatsu are not going to school." Hamamatsu aims for a "zero out-of-school rate (or a 100% enrolment rate) of foreign children and promotion of the enrolment of children of foreign residents …" (Hamamatsu Voluntary Local Review Report, 2019, p. 13)

My question: How can the right to education for foreign children be locally protected and promoted?

Project goals

1. **Find out more about the situation in Hamamatsu**, and research the policies and actions that are being taken to support foreign children's right to education there. *What? Which actors are involved? What is working? Why? What are the problems? Why?*
2. **Find out about the approach taken in a local community in another society**, for example support for refugee children in Australia. Local community view => Adelaide: Women's group supporting refugee children (ABC, 2023 April 9)
3. **Conversation-discussions:** Share my research with people in my local community/ network, and find out what they think about the right of foreign children to education, and what their ideas and views are.

Project product: Advocacy Letter? Campaign Proposal? Opinion Piece? Video?

Example Guideline Frame 2 for a project on "Making Connections Between Local Groups or Communities in Japan & Other Countries on Local Food Production"

Biodiversity / Food Supply and Waste -> **Sustainable living -> Local organic food production**

My question: Who and what makes local organic food production possible? What is working? What are the problems? Why?

Project goals

1. **Find out about the cultivation and consumption of organic vegetables and food in my local community:** *Who? What? Where? When and how did this start? What is working? What are the problems? Why?*
2. **Search for information about growing organic food in a local community outside Japan** => Example: Making cities organic food gardens (Deutsche Welle, 2018 February

16): *How does this work? Which actors are involved? What is working? Why? What are the problems? Why?*

3. **Conversation-discussions:** Share my research with people in my local community/ network, and find out what people in my local community think about organic food, and whether this matters to them or not.

Project product: Campaign Proposal? Magazine article? Video?

Appendix C

Minimalist Frame for a Project Narrative

Presented and discussed with students at the start of Project 3 in the 2023 academic year: Students are required to create individually their Project Narratives for a 6-7 week project in a Google Doc within a Shared Drive for the PBL class.

Build Your Project Narrative Week by Week

1. In this document week by week be sure to:
   - **write the narrative of your project**
   - **add JPEGs of your notes**
   - **build your reference list.**
2. Document your work by putting the date each time you add to your Project Narrative, for example:
   - **2023/09/26 Project Narrative**
   - **2023/10/01 Project Notes**
   - **2023/10/01 References**
3. **Write in English**, and use Japanese or other languages when it helps you to express your thinking and ideas, then continue writing in English.
4. Write **at least 180 words** each week, but please feel free to write more, & put **the word total** at the end of your project narrative each week, e.g., (**Total: XXX words**)
5. **Add the sources of information to References week by week** to build your Reference list.
6. **Include the following details for each one:** Author, Date, Title, Organisation/ Publisher, URL etc.

References

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Towards Complexity in Challenging Learner Autonomy Research Conventions: A Wider View on Learner Development

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Learner autonomy is a complex concept that can be viewed from the perspective of human agency and identity within a continually changing, multilingual ecology. In this article, I address three of the conventions of learner autonomy that have solidified in the research literature highlighting how these conventions are challenged by the research in Learner Development Journal 7. I also address some of the challenges created by the trend towards complex dynamics systems theory in learner autonomy research. Adopting a complexity perspective (Cameron & Larsen-Freeman, 2007) with critical realism (Bhaskar, 2016) as a meta-theoretical framework, I argue that practitioner research should continue to deepen our understanding of learner autonomy and change by flexibly combining perspectives together.

学習者オートノミー（自律学習）は、絶えず変化する多言語エコロジーの中で、人間の主体性とアイデンティティの観点から考えることができる複雑な概念である。本論文では、学習者オートノミー（自律学習）に関する3つの定説を取り上げ、これらの定説がLDJの本号の研究によってどのような挑戦を受けているのかを明らかにする。また、学習者オートノミー（自律学習）の研究において、複雑動的システム理論への流れが生み出すいくつかの課題についても言及する。複雑性の視点（Cameron & Larsen-Freeman, 2007）と批判的実在論（Bhaskar, 2016）をメタ理論的枠組みとして採用することで、実践者研究が、相反する視点を柔軟に組み合わせながら自律学習と変化に関する理解を深めていくべきだと主張する。

Keywords

learner autonomy, agency, complexity, practitioner research, critical realism
学習者オートノミー（自律学習）、主体性、複雑性、実践研究、批判的実在論

While the main author of this paper is Dominic Edsall, the writing was collaboratively developed by continuous dialogue and questioning by Aya Hayasaki and Ellen Head with Dominic. The authorial voice, knowledge, and overall perspective remain Dominic's.

Introduction

Conventions have a good side – we know where we are – and a negative side as they tend to lead to inertia and resistance to change. To challenge conventions you need to know what those conventions are. Building consensus on what the conventions should be, has been a fundamental issue in learner autonomy research (LA) for the last 40 years (Edsall, 2020) because there has been little agreement on what conventions are held to be true within the wider language teaching field (Block, 2021; Douglas Fir Group, 2016). I define "convention" here as a norm or rule that provides reason for action or evaluative judgement (Mamor, 1996; Rescorla, 2008). Conventions are both normative and arbitrary (Mamor, 1996; Ravenscroft, 2015), so the validity of learner autonomy (hereafter, LA)

conventions depends on their impact within the LA field. Something – for example, a belief in communication gap activities as the best way to follow a grammar presentation - may be a convention even if you and I as teachers do not slavishly follow such a norm. The problem occurs when conventions solidify into prescriptive rules which limit new understanding. In this article, I am going to identify three of the conventions of learner autonomy that have solidified in the literature before reviewing how LDJ7 challenges these conventions. Adopting a critical realist (CR) perspective on LA and ideas from positioning theory (PT), I then argue that to go beyond these conventions we must flexibly combine perspectives together. In some cases, seemingly opposed perspectives can be combined to overcome the limitations of those conventions. Throughout this article, I will ask questions that challenge the reader to think about their own teaching practices. Challenging a convention should be a creative rather than destructive process.

This article does not fit the mould of typical practitioner-driven research as found in the Learner Development Journal (LDJ). The positioning of this article within the LDJ is itself a challenge to the conventions of LDJ, which has a focus on practitioner research (e.g., Ashwell et al., 2021; Jarvis, 1999; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). You, the reader, may have experience of practitioner research from teacher training or continuing professional development (Hanks, 2017; Menter et al., 2011). Menter et al. (2011) define 'practitioner research' as follows:

> Practitioner research in education is systematic enquiry in an educational setting carried out by someone working in that setting, the outcomes of which are shared with other practitioners. (Menter et al., 2011, p. 3)

Practitioner research can provide a valuable contribution to both practitioner understanding and academic understanding of teaching and learning (Hanks, 2017; Menter et al., 2011). The aim of this article is to address some of the LA conventions found at the nexus of theoretical and practitioner research, and upon which much LA practitioner research is based.

A core element to practitioner research is "systematic enquiry" (Menter et al., 2011). I argue that CR helps support systematic enquiry within LA practitioner research by allowing the combination of different theoretical research paradigms. I was invited to write this article by the LDJ editors to give a theoretical overview that would tie together the other articles in a meaningful way. It has developed through discussion with the editors and steering group over several drafts. I hope this article provides a creative challenge to the view that the philosophy of science that provides the basis for CR has no place in qualitative enquiry (Bhaskar, 2013). In the spirit of challenging the conventions, questions are interspersed with the sections of the article inviting the reader to reflect and apply the ideas to their experience.

Reflection Questions 1

When you think about your experience of language learning and language teaching up to now, do you have a sense of "conventions" in the sense of "accepted truths" regarding learner autonomy? What conventions appear to you to be helpful, and what conventions might need changing or challenging?

My Position as Author

I have been a teacher for nearly 20 years, but I first qualified as a science teacher specialising in chemistry before re-training in TESOL. Having studied chemistry, I learned about complexity theory through the mathematics of chemical reactions. Discovering that adoption of a

complexity theory perspective is becoming a convention in second language acquisition (SLA) and learner autonomy (LA) was not a surprise, but the misguided enthusiasm of some language teachers and SLA academics (e.g., Larsen-Freeman, 2018) was a shock. As a chemistry student learning statistical mechanics, quantum chemistry, and various combinations thereof, I could console myself that at least complexity in chemistry was usually a closed system with known variables. In SLA, a complexity theory perspective encompasses a wide open system of known and unknown variables, such as thoughts or future outcomes, which may remain completely inaccessible and difficult to analyse mathematically. When the inherent and unknown errors in a system may be orders of magnitude bigger than any number of Likert scales can cope with, how do you begin to model and run a mathematical simulation of learner autonomy? I came to this fundamental quandary in the course of my PhD research into teachers, learners, and views of LA in Japan. Only after I discovered critical realism (CR) as a meta-framework for understanding epistemology during my doctoral studies did complexity become less intimidating. My qualitative study of 35 students and 52 teachers at 12 different universities across Japan, exploring their views of LA and developing an ecological model of LA and identity, is inherently complex. It has demanded of me a fundamental re-examination of my own understanding of what knowledge is and how it is created. And CR helped me get a much better handle on this complexity.

Critical Realism as a Framework for Understanding Learner Autonomy

Critical realism (CR) is a meta-framework for bringing together different theories and frameworks. One of its implications is that there are limits to what we as teachers and researchers can know about LA (Edsall, 2020). CR is based on the philosophy of science and social science through the work of Archer (1995) and Bhaskar (2013, 2016).[1] Its perspective on reality as having layers helps explain the limits of empirical evidence in a complex world: one layer of all real possibilities, one layer of actualized possibilities drawn from the real, and one layer of empirical evidence drawn from the actual (see Figure 1).

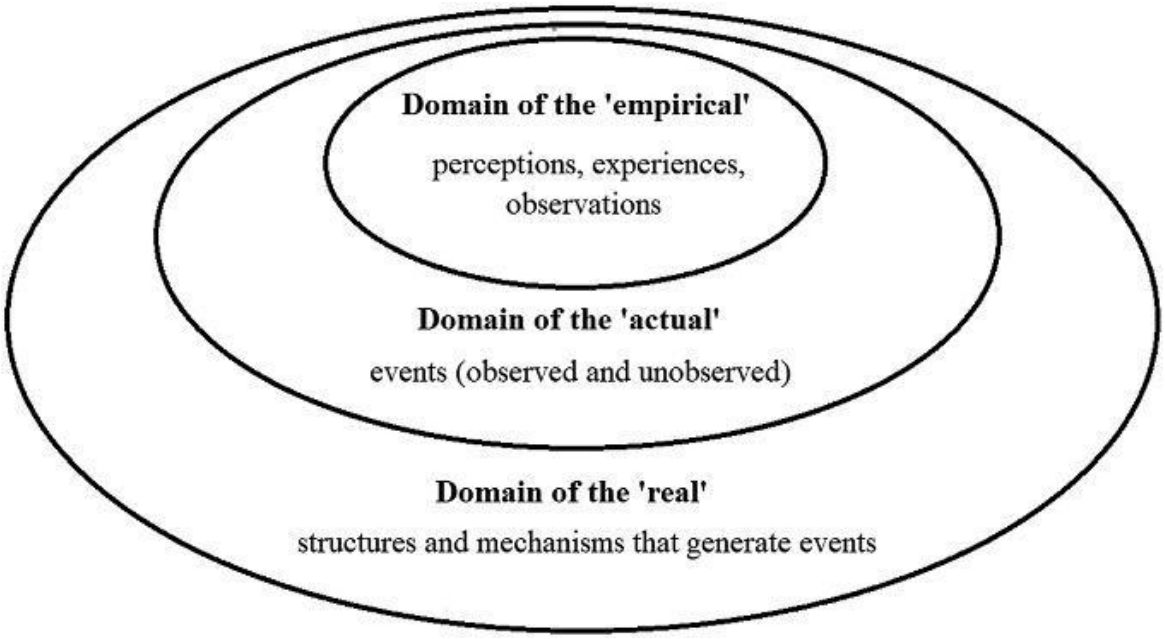

Figure 1. Bhaskar's CR layered reality (Hoddy, 2019 based on Bhaskar, 2008)

1 The Roy Bhaskar Centre website has a number of useful resources that are free to access here.

Bhaskar's map helps explain research complexity in a way that satisfies the need for a simplified map of complexity perspectives (Pallotti, 2021), without being too reductionist. This map could also inform our readings of LDJ7. The complex lived experiences documented in each article, are drawn from an open number of possibilities in the real layer passing through the actual layer to the empirical layer. One way to think about this is that the real layer is all the possibilities that could happen while you're asleep, the actual layer is everything that does happen while you're asleep, and the empirical layer is everything that did happen and that you learn about the next day, although some of what happened may always remain hidden from your awareness. This explanation is somewhat of a simplification, but the empirical is always a subset of the actual, which is always a subset of the real. You may never empirically find out everything that happened, i.e., the actual, and the full scale of the real layer will always be obscured. Figure 1 thus shows a simplified representation of critical realism's layered reality that could form the basis of such a map and help explain the sensitivities of complex dynamic systems.

Complexity's sensitivity to initial conditions is rooted in the differences between each layer: Over time different real possibilities become actual at different points but either of these may not happen or may not be empirically observed: past layers of reality provide the initial conditions for future layers of reality, but the connections between different factors across layers may not be observed, so the completeness of our understanding starts to break down. This goes to the fundamental reason for doing practitioner research - deeper, richer understandings can be developed other than by pure academic research alone. I argue that any examination of LA must adopt an open-ended approach: Looking at a student, we do not know the initial conditions of their LA and we cannot confirm the totality of LA after an arbitrary amount of time. Recognizing the complexity of learner autonomy development, we can only hope for a richer understanding (Edsall, 2020) and not a complete representative understanding. Research efforts that hanker after narrowly defined "best practices" are doomed.

Even the choice of time frame that helps decide when a set of "initial conditions" are observed is arbitrary and problematic within social research (Bhaskar, 2016). This raises the question of whether LA is even researchable (Edsall, 2020). Given that some practitioner-researchers have found students faking autonomy in an attempt to manipulate teachers or the system (Rivers, 2015) and that some teachers recognise "fauxtonomy," an inherent contradiction between their pedagogic beliefs and practices (Mullen et al., 2016; Rivers, 2002, 2015), it might be difficult to differentiate between what is and what is not LA. If we want to regard LA as a researchable construct, then the important philosophy of science (and social science) question is whether LA conventions can provide a "falsifiable" definition (Popper, 1963) of LA, because that would at least provide some explanatory power over empirical observations. At the same time, it is beneficial as a teacher, learner, or researcher to maintain a constructive creativity about the LA of individuals with different identities, perspectives and social positions.

Reflection Questions 2

As a teacher, do you ever come across situations in which it is difficult to be sure whether the students are genuinely autonomous? As a teacher, what would a constructive creative reaction be when students are apparently passive during a class?

Positioning and Identity as Aspects of Autonomy

Identity work is an ongoing process seen through sociolinguistic interactions, and it is vital to LA. Block's (2021) combination of CR and positioning theory (PT; Block, 2021; Harré & Langenhove, 1991; Langehove & Harré, 1994) provides an approach to analysing identity within the context of sociolinguistic interactions. Block's (2021) adaptation of PT is based on both the philosophy of science as well as philosophy more generally, bringing in socioeconomic factors, ideas about the distribution of power, as well as the cognitive and neurological perspectives in a transdisciplinary framework. This critical realist map of complexity that is not too reductionist (Pallotti, 2021) brings together the perspectives of TESOL, with its background of cognitively oriented SLA studies, and the more socially oriented field of education. As teachers, we need some heuristic system with sufficient explanatory power to inform our decisions: We need a rule of thumb - an experience- or preference-based decision model in complexity theory terminology (An, 2012). One way of understanding these rules of thumb for language teaching has been proposed by the Douglas Fir Group (2016) based on Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1979, 2009) ecological model of human development as shown in Figure 2.

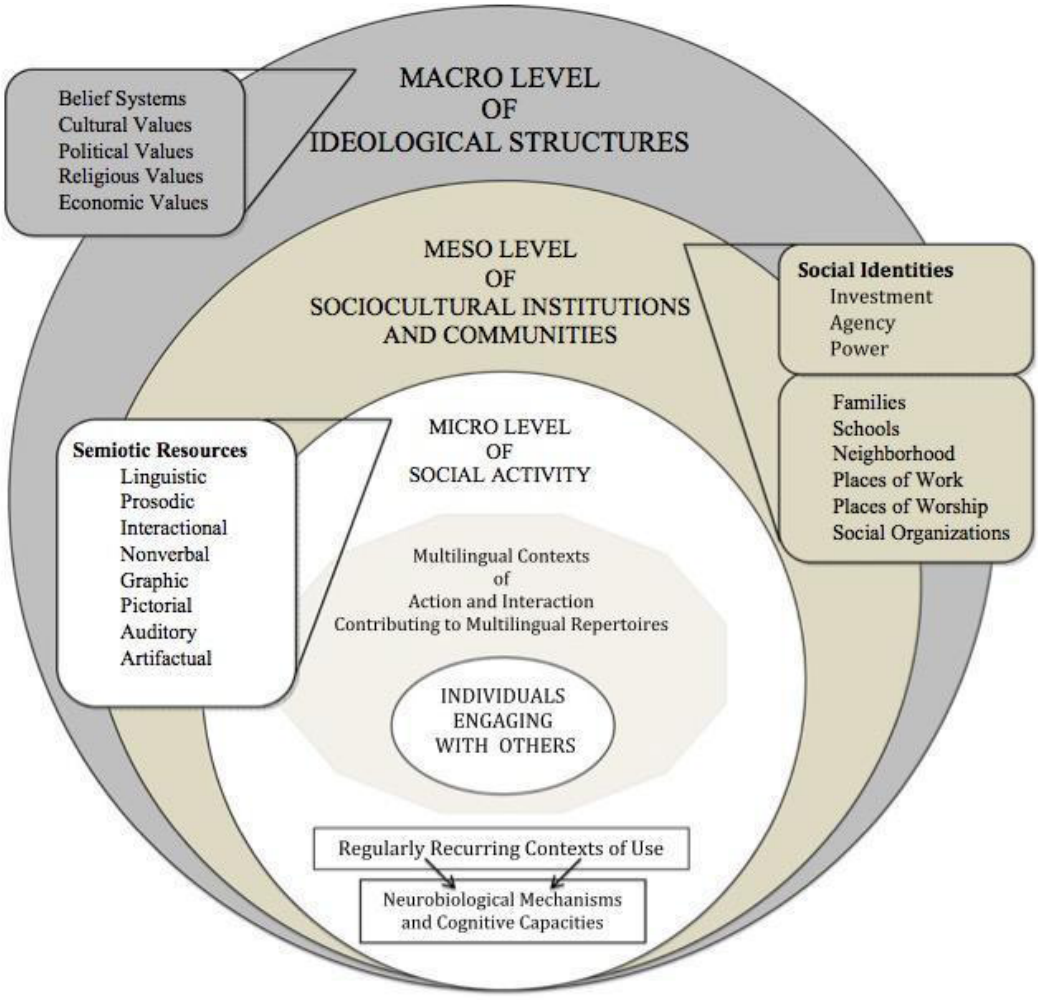

Figure 2. Douglas Fir Group's (2016) Transdisciplinary framework for SLA in a multilingual world

In this framework, conventions from opposing cognitive and social perspectives on SLA are arranged within different spheres extending out from the learner, representing the different spaces that influence language acquisition (Douglas Fir Group, 2016). Contextualising this framework around teaching and teacher identity, De Costa and Norton (2017) note that this allows teachers to navigate dominant ideologies, institutional constraints, and classroom challenges as they construct and reconstruct their professional identities.

Taking a look at this framework, we can already see that it has explanatory power to bring together all the studies in LDJ7 and give us a fresh sense of various alignments and resonances between them. For example, it connects with Takagi et al. (2023, this issue), who show that teacher autonomy is important in order to foster autonomous learning communities within the classroom. De Costa and Norton (2017) make the argument that teacher identity work creates a unique, personal experience across the macro-meso-micro levels for each teacher. This means the rule of thumb will actually be different for each teacher. There might be some superficial consensus between teachers working in the same or similar institutions, but actually each teacher will create their own unique rules of thumb through their own identity work.

Reflection Questions 3

What kind of "rules of thumb" are you aware of in your own learning and teaching? Do you have different "rules of thumb" in different contexts?

In my teaching context, the Douglas Fir Group framework provides a helpful way to understand why students make choices that I might consider irrational as the teacher. In my doctoral studies, it helps explain the dispositions that teachers adopt towards learner autonomy and the related goals of their institutions, exploring how the social field of the classroom is affected by the individuals within, the institutional power structures above, and wider global influences. No model exists in isolation. An important precursor to the Douglas Fir Group model, Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 2009) ecology of human development offered a map of the impact of global realities, institutional power structures, classroom social realities, and cognitive resources. Since the publication of the Douglas Fir Group model, Block (2021) has worked with its implications for social identity. These have been indispensable in my own research into teachers' views of learner autonomy in Japan.

Finally, the scalability, rigour, and philosophical depth of both CR and PT appeal to my identity as a science teacher who has converted to TESOL, even if there are some methodological problems that need to be ironed out (Head, 2022). I want my scientific understanding of the world to be reconcilable with my understanding of teaching. Identifying what the conventions are within LA research might offer new insights into how to bridge the research-practice divide. This might then be the first step back from the concrete minutiae to the bigger abstract picture for me as an author, and indeed as an observer, researcher, interpreter, and so on. Having explored how positioning and identity might be viewed from a broader perspective as connected to learner autonomy, in the next part of the article I will discuss three conventions of learner development research which I feel need to be challenged.

Reflection Questions 4

Looking back at the diagram of the Douglas Fir Group model, which area of the model do you feel is the most approachable and interesting? Why?

Convention 1: Defining Learner Autonomy

It's over 40 years since Holec (1981, p. 3) provided his influential definition of learner autonomy. It has since gained recognition within the language teaching community as the conventional definition of learner autonomy, namely "the capacity to take charge of one's own learning." (Benson, 2011; Jiménez Raya et al., 2017; Palfreyman, 2021). Many interpretations of this definition adopt a cognitive perspective (Little, 1991), making a psychological judgement of the learner by linking the capacity for responsibility only to observable behaviours (Edsall, 2020). While Holec's was not the first definition of learner autonomy, as evidenced by the much earlier work of Dewey (1938/1998), Piaget (1959), and Dearden (1975), it became widely adopted and gained convention status through inclusion in the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project (Holec, 1981; Jiménez Raya & Vieira, 2021). Palfreyman (2021) argues that Holec's conceptualisation of LA was not intended to be so narrow, but as this definition has become convention over the 40 years since its publication, the knowledge claims within Holec's work became codified symbols in a research literature mainly concerned with practical applications (Leydesdorff et al., 2016; Palfreyman, 2021). As Palfreyman (2021) also argues, Holec's intentions have since been reinterpreted or even misunderstood. Discourse within the professional TESOL community split around the conceptualisation of learner autonomy as a cognitive capacity (Benson, 2011; Benson, 2013; Little, 1991) - an allegedly quantifiable neurological limit on students' abilities that is somehow separate from agency, a social capacity. This separation of autonomy and agency into the cognitive and the social in the TESOL community (Benson, 2013) matched a split in the wider educational field between cognitive and social understandings (Block, 2021; Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Moore, 2004, 2013); between positivist (quantitative) and interpretivist (qualitative) knowledge claims (Moore & Müller, 2002). The conventions of research and academic publication have also tended to favour a singular focus on quantitative (positivist) or qualitative (interpretivist) research methods, with mixed methods hampered by limited time and more limited research funding compared with other methods (Wisdom & Fetters, 2015) and a bias of particular universities or research communities to one or the other and a feeling that mixing the two is not a correct way to do research. This bifurcation between ways of understanding the world, research methods, funding, and communities was something that the Douglas Fir Group (2016) were hoping to overcome by encapsulating a much wider array of theories and research lenses.

In the intervening period since 2016, there has been a proliferation of work drawing on the idea of complex dynamic systems that is both academic and practitioner based. Mercer (2019) reinterprets autonomy as a cognitive need for learners to feel "an active sense of being able to influence their learning experiences" (p. 651), but makes the argument that relatedness and agency must be involved if students are to engage with language learning. Reeve (2022) links autonomy and agency through self-determination theory (Reeve et al., 2004), categorising autonomy as the motivational need for ownership of learning, and agency as motivation. However, Reeve (2022) does not resolve the gap between the idea of autonomy as a cognitive capacity and agency as motivation leading to agentive engagement. While there are the beginnings of a shift towards interconnected frameworks, such as the Douglas Fir Group framework, autonomy remains separated from agency in much of the literature, creating one of the first conventions of learner

autonomy: Autonomy is a cognitive competence, while agency is a separate socio-affective capacity for action.

Rarely has conventional separation of autonomy and agency been challenged in the literature (Chong & Reinders, 2022; Edsall, 2020; Little, 2020; Palfreyman, 2021) until recently when researchers have started to attempt to study specific contexts that are supportive of learner autonomy, such as university self-access centres (e.g., Reeve, 2022). Much of this work has grown out of the recent development of self-access learning culture, stimulated within the Japanese context by educators like Cotterall and Murray at Akita International University, Murray later at Okayama University, and Mynard at Kanda University of International Studies. Learning advisors have access to do one-to-one research in a very natural way and develop insights into longitudinal patterns of development as part of their job. For example, Mynard (2020) adopts sociocultural concepts on agency, dialogue, and interaction to explain how advising can support the development of the metacognitive skills and self-determination necessary for autonomous learning. In examining learner engagement through self-determination theory, Mercer (2019) argues that learners have genuine learner agency within the classroom. There is an implicit acceptance of agency and the social within recent literature while still retaining a focus on the individual psychology of learning. This contrasts with early attempts to explain the effects of socialisation on learner autonomy, such as Benson (1991), that maintained that socialisation was a primarily oppressive force restricting individual metacognitive skills, such as critical reflection. Examples of the interplay between socialisation and critical reflection can be seen in Morioka (2023, this issue) and Barfield and Nakayama (2023, this issue), both highlighting positive and negative outcomes, raising questions about the role of reflection.

Reflection Questions 5

How different is the social field of the classroom in which you teach, from the other social fields in which your students participate? How do you negotiate or navigate the different understandings about the respective roles of teachers and students, if their understandings are different from yours?

Convention 2: Democratising Learner Autonomy

The second convention that I would like to challenge is that learner autonomy is always the most rational choice because it is in the best interests of the student in a democratic society (Dearden, 1975; Jiménez Raya et al., 2017); therefore, a failure to be autonomous during a language class must be a learner's failure to make a rational choice. Overt expression of learning engagement is considered essential in some frameworks for learner autonomy, such as Jiménez Raya et. al. (2017). This creates and maintains a deficit model of learner autonomy - if a learner is not autonomous, then it is the learner's cognitive deficit that is to blame. Problematic individual differences in a learner's psychology are criticised for a lack of observed autonomy rather than other social factors, which are dismissed as due to unregulated affective or emotional factors (Jiménez Raya et al., 2017). This contrasts with Reeve's (2022) work that accepts that learner engagement is not directly linked with cognitive capacity. In Reeve's model, students may become disengaged due to social or environmental factors. Unfortunately, many scholars until now have adopted a stance resembling rational choice theory (Archer, 2000), which assumes that human behaviour is a series of rational choices. The assumption that autonomy is always an outwardly rational choice can be found in much of the learner autonomy literature (Benson, 2011; Benson &

Voller, 2014; Dam, 1995; Little, 1991; Littlewood, 1996; Murray, 2021; Reinders, 2021). This idea ignores the fact that classrooms do not always provide much freedom and autonomy might not be perceived as being in that individual's best interests at a specific time or place (Archer, 2013; Mullen et al., 2016; Rivers, 2002, 2015), especially if the classroom is not seen as democratic by the students (Head, 2006a, 2006b) or if the teacher does not value the students' identities (Norton, 2014). Under such a frame of mind, the rationality of autonomy choices is judged by the teacher rather than the learner making those choices, which raises further questions about the empirical reliability of such judgements (Edsall, 2020). Non-participation, for example, is often seen as the most logical choice by students (Norton, 2014), even though it may appear to be irrational to the teacher.

Like most authors and teachers, I would argue that learner autonomy is beneficial to students, but I equally believe that it is wrong to assume that students' choices around autonomy are insulated from the rest of their lived experiences. Little (2020) points out that Holec's definition of learner autonomy was developed in the context of organisational choices in adult education. More social definitions of learner autonomy, such as Dam's (1995), where a rational choice is also a socially responsible choice within the secondary classroom, reflect the wider context in which education aims to develop teenagers into responsible adults. Of course, all modern education systems aim to develop responsible adults, but the difference is in how the term, "responsible adults" is defined and who creates/enforces that definition. For example, Japan's 1998-2003 policy failure that was *yutori kyouiku*, relaxed education (Sakurai, 2016), could be seen as an example of where a new definition of "responsible adult" failed due to insufficient support.

For me as a teacher, finding a rational cause-and-effect relationship can be a relief because it makes teaching simpler, but very few people are always rational. The role of affect or emotions on learner autonomy is comparatively under-described in the literature (Aoki, 1999; Swain, 2011). Chong and Reinders (2022) found only a few references in autonomy-related literature to affect within specific self-regulatory learning frameworks. This focus on learner self-regulation can be seen in the second convention that displaying learner autonomy in the classroom is always the most rational choice for students. Such an assumption allows researchers to ignore the messy reality of emotions, akin to Krashen's (1985) "affective filter" hypothesis of much older SLA literature (Swain, 2011; VanPatten & Williams, 2014). Approaching emotions and affect from the individual differences' perspective, much of the research that looks at the effects of affect on autonomy is concerned with supposed irrational choices that block or hinder autonomous study, which conveniently - but misleadingly - bundles together factors that are difficult to tease apart.

Reflection Questions 6

As a teacher, do you think that the learners' emotions are important? How do positive and negative emotions function in motivating your students in your classroom?

Convention 3: Insulating Learner Autonomy

The third convention in the learner autonomy literature that I will challenge is based on the first and second conventions, and it is that learner autonomy does not vary over time or between contexts. This convention is being increasingly challenged as researchers examine learner autonomy from a complexity perspective (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2012; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Paiva & Braga, 2008). Many works in the literature

clearly delineate this insulation of autonomy by arbitrating that "autonomy" is separate from "learner autonomy," which in turn is separate from "language learner autonomy" (Benson, 2011); and that LA can be separated from politics and everything else beyond the classroom walls (Benson, 2014). An alternative view proposes that learner autonomy is a Western concept bundled up within linguistic imperialism (Humphreys, 2014; Humphreys & Wyatt, 2013). Some researchers have put forward the view that learner autonomy can be studied in isolation from time and life events (Bei et al., 2019; Dixon, 2011; Macaskill & Taylor, 2010; Murase, 2015; Yen & Liu, 2009). Many of these delineations are the result of the underlying research epistemologies - the specific researcher's theory of knowledge, where more positivist epistemologies require more isolation of learner autonomy conceptually (Edsall, 2020), resulting in differing degrees of insulation of learner autonomy from other factors. This can be seen in Jiménez Raya, Lamb and Vieira's (2017) positioning of learner autonomy on a spectrum of definitions, requiring the separation of agency and autonomy as per the first learner autonomy convention. This creates conceptual insulation between agency and autonomy.

Adopting a complexity perspective on learner autonomy (Paiva & Braga, 2008), we can see critically that much of this conceptual insulation is for practical expediency, enabling a specific research method at the cost of banal results (Edsall, 2020). We can also see that some of this insulation is the result of structure within the wider fields of education and applied linguistics, and the different subfields of language teaching (Block, 2021; Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Edsall, 2020), which much of the learner autonomy literature ignores (see Figure 3 in the following section). Where the literature does not ignore such structures (Benson, 2000, 2008; Lamb, 2008; Little, 1995; Nakata, 2011), it is usually in relation to teacher autonomy, but the obvious link with learner autonomy via agency is often ignored. One danger of considering autonomy in isolation from other factors is that the presentation of autonomy in pre-service and in-service teaching programmes can produce a double-bind for teachers in which they "have" to incorporate certain kinds of methodology due to a government policy, imposed from the top, supposedly in favour of learner autonomy, but without the resources or a complete understanding of how to do so. As mentioned earlier, the implementation of Japanese *yutori kyouiku* [relaxed education] was just one example of an attempt to introduce autonomy which had limited success for such reasons (Head, 2006b). To overcome such structural constraints on observable autonomy, adoption of a complex dynamic systems perspective highlights the interconnectedness of various factors, while allowing practitioners to focus on a small area available to them for research (Dörnyei, 2014; Larsen-Freeman et al., 2012; Paiva & Braga, 2008).

Reflection Questions 7

What links have you established between learner autonomy and the agency of your students? What kind of observable behaviour makes you feel that your students are agentive or autonomous?

The Complex Effects of Change and Affect

Above I have described how many learner autonomy studies have come to be insulated from time or contexts. The insulation of autonomy from research on emotions is equally problematic. Emotions do influence our choices (Swain, 2011) and, as an important factor in our choices, emotions are an inseparable facet of our humanity and the empirical science that we do (Bhaskar, 2016). Emotions also form an important aspect of learner

identity development (Hiver et al., 2021; Miyahara, 2015). This is quite perplexing when studying learner autonomy because it creates a complex nexus of different factors that we can only hope to understand partially (Borges, 2022; Edsall, 2020). Barfield and Nakayama (2023), for example, discuss their own struggles as teachers to understand student approaches to Project-Based Learning and the different factors they encounter. Morioka (2023, this issue) finds that reflective activities with teenage students may actually discourage engagement with group work in some circumstances. Kawasaki (2023, this issue) grapples with this notion directly by looking at how peer interaction influences emotional regulation. All three articles challenge much current research which fails to account for the complexities of affect.

What we can state is that many important choices occur at points of change and that we all react differently to change (Williams, 1999). At each point of change, our reaction is going to be based on whether we individually see the event as positive or negative, which involves an evaluation that is based on both rational and irrational responses to that change. In my doctoral work, I adopted Williams' (1999) template for human responses to change; the model was intended to identify successful strategies for recovering from change induced crisis - a practical purpose that bridges both cognitive and social perspectives. How each individual responds to the same change may be different or the same, and an outside observer may not see any response or even notice that there has been a change (see Figure 3).

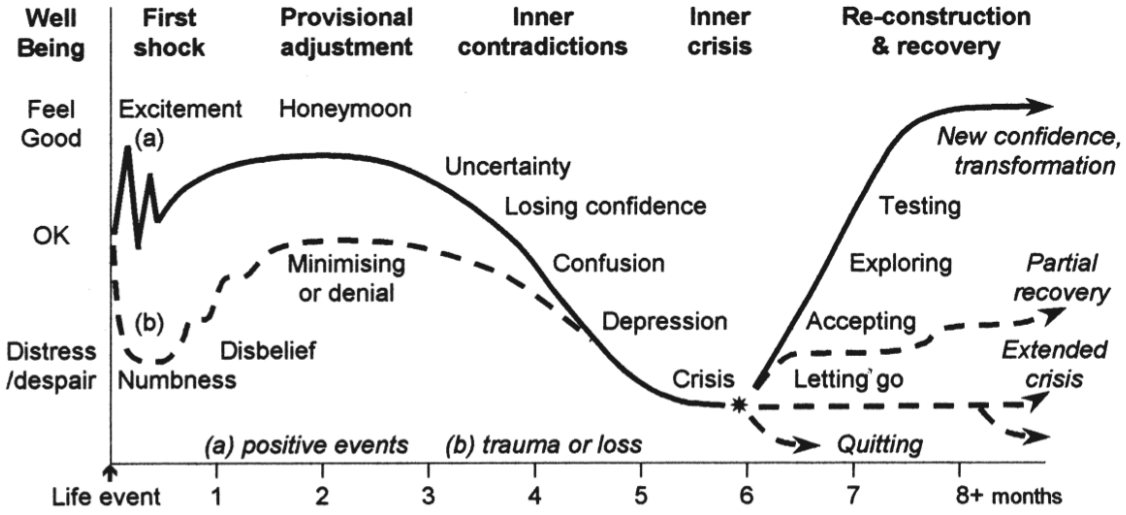

Figure 3. William's (1999, p. 611) template for human responses to change

In Williams' (1999) model, a crisis point is where dramatic change and responses are most likely to be empirically observable to an outside researcher. Unexpected success in a major speaking test or an embarrassing mistake can bring about change through responses to that event. However, we can envision similar but less dramatic points of change that influence the learner and create both diversity of choice and diversity of change with learner autonomy and learners. In this connection, Barfield and Nakayama (2023) highlight their own struggles and diverse crisis points as teachers trying to manage both students and curriculum change. Yunita (2023, this issue) adopts a complexity perspective by focusing on the two learner's behavioural changes given their affective state and regulation within individual constraints and the external context. This external context is depicted in terms

of events which push learners towards autonomy and people and things[2] which support autonomy, but remains an open complex system, of which some aspects are accepted as being unknown.

Adapting William's model to include points of change as well as crisis, we can trace how a learner's journey passes through points of change, where those points of change emerge from events at different levels of the Douglas Fir Group framework. Through use of a learner narrative approach (Barkhuizen, 2016, 2017a, 2017b), Yarwood (2023, this issue) traces Hiroto's emotions through three different levels from the micro level representing individual thoughts, emotions, and beliefs; to the macro level representing institutional and social spaces; and to the meso level representing the ideological and cultural contexts. This narrative approach allows Yarwood (2023) to trace salient variables across these different levels to illustrate how emotions impact motivation and provide metacognitive resources. We can see that this challenges the second convention that learner autonomy is always a rational choice because learner autonomy could also be the irrational choice: In Yarwood's (2023) study, Hiroto re-evaluated negative experiences of self-directed learning at an emotional level through positive interactions with an empathic advisor and increased self-awareness. This demonstrates that autonomy is involved in the constant process of learner re-construction of identity (Darvin & Norton, 2015; De Costa & Norton, 2017; Huang & Benson, 2013; Murray et al., 2011). Yarwood's research also demonstrates that we can get a better picture of learner autonomy by examining the different complex layers in which we do identity work as learners and teachers and tracing our unique trajectories through these spaces. This idea of complexities will be further discussed in the following section, but I would first like you to pause and think about your own teacher identity.

Reflection Question 8

How has your autonomy as a teacher and learner been involved in the (re-)construction of your own teacher identity?

A Critical Stance on Complex Perspectives in Language Learning and Autonomy

At this point, we need to look more closely at what we mean by adopting a complex dynamic systems theory perspective. It is self-evident that language learning and by extension learner autonomy are complex and should be viewed from a complex dynamics system perspective (Atkinson et al., 2016; De Bot et al., 2007; Hiver et al., 2022; Larsen-Freeman et al., 2012; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Ushioda, 2021). The real danger in adopting a complex dynamics system *perspective* is that we might get carried away with the word "perspective" encouraging us to make unsupported assumptions and misuse CDST terminology. There is also the temptation to give up on other social methods even where it might be possible or useful not to do so (Pallotti, 2021). To avoid this danger, I propose to adopt a critical realist *stance*: I use the word *approach* here to denote a scientific methodology or set of procedures that are agreed within the literature. In a complex dynamics system *approach*, such as meteorology, most of the underlying connections between factors are reasonably well known allowing an approximation of the errors involved in trillions of calculations using billions of data snapshots taken every minute across and through the earth's atmosphere (Huba et al., 2014). As language teachers we cannot possibly hope to replicate

2 I use 'things' here to encompass the vast array of supports for learner development (e.g., Barfield, 2014).

that level of explanatory power and weather forecasts are not even that accurate or precise, yet the words "complexity" and "complex dynamic systems," and the abstruse terminology used in the field (Sampson & Pinner, 2021; Ushioda, 2021), convey a greater sense of legitimacy to truth claims than the word "*perspective*" alone can really support. Critical realism allows us to work with the incomplete nature of such perspectives (Edsall, 2020, 2022).

While many recognise that as language teachers we must adopt a *perspective* rather than an *approach* (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008), there are many examples in the literature where researchers have unwittingly made insufficiently supported claims to truth and empirical evidence, with Hiver et al. (2022), for example, finding 63 research papers in a scoping review of 20 years of CDST research. There is a danger in research that confuses *perspective* with *approach* basking in undeserved scientific legitimacy and misleading future researchers - scientism (Lerner, 2020) without the actual scientific evidence to support such rhetoric. A claim to have found an attractor state, for example (Whiteside, 2013), is a statement that carries with it a specific mathematical meaning that can be supported only by a complex dynamics systems *approach* and not a mere *perspective*. That is not to say that language teachers must abandon the ideas of complexity. We need to be mindful that the very nature of complexity that is the source of such a perspective's explanatory power, namely the concepts of complete interconnectedness between data snapshots (the relational principle), emergent behaviour, and sensitivity to initial conditions (the adaptive principle, highlighting the importance of time) (Hiver et al., 2022; Lerner, 2020), can also obscure our understanding and place hard limits on the truthfulness of any insight it provides (Alemi et al., 2011; An, 2012; Edsall, 2020, 2022). We also need to be mindful that imprecise adoption of complexity perspectives may provide the frustrated positivist with a pragmatic excuse not to engage with a more holistic approach that encompasses qualitative as well as quantitative research. For example, in a recent scoping literature review, Hiver et al. (2022) highlight a number of studies whose methodologies were incompatible with explaining the dynamics of change that were claimed to be the focus of study.

Reflection Questions 9

With those caveats in mind, are you interested in adopting a complex dynamic systems perspective to better understand learner autonomy? Which of the approaches, if any, which you have read about in LDJ7 attract you as a means of developing your own understanding of autonomy?

Identity, Autonomy, and Ecological Perspectives

Language is both a linguistic system and a social practice, where identity is negotiated in a complex context of unequal social relations (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 2013, 2016, 2021). Norton (2013, p. 4) defines identity as "the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the X's understands possibilities for the future." As teacher-researchers, we should be concerned with the social structure of our classrooms as they give us specific time-dependent snapshots of different communities of practice (Brouwer et al., 2012; Burgess, 2010; Lave & Wenger, 1991, 1998; Leander & Sheehy, 2004,; Lemke, 2009). From a complexity perspective, we should be thinking about *when*, the *amount of time*, and the *zeitgeist*[3] as possible temporal factors (An, 2012; Castellani & Hafferty, 2009; Lemke,

3 The prevailing ideas, attitudes, and beliefs within a social field may impact the strength of connections between when, the amount of time, the speed at which events happen, and other factors, and may also impact empirical observability.

2009; O'Sullivan, 2004). A learner's negotiations of their own identity will inform their understanding of learning and their conception of the future possibilities of learning later, which matches well with Bourdieu's (1977) concept of *habitus* - another possible lens in the CR toolkit that we can use. The concept, *habitus* can be defined as a transposable system of dispositions towards agency that enable individuals to negotiate different situations based on past experience (Block, 2021). Traces of this idea can be seen in how Nakayama (Barfield & Nakayama, 2023) wants to make her students "break through the cocoons of habituated thinking and assumptions" (p. 19). Nakayama (Barfield & Nakayama, 2023) gives an example of how this "breaking through the cocoon by students" came about by intercultural contact, while in Barfield's case, it happened when his seminar student adopted a critical perspective on her own consumption habits and the practices of different fast fashion actors. Adopting a Critical Realism stance (Bhaskar, 2016), we can see that such knowledge production transforms our social identities as the diversity of unique experiences gives rise to a diversity of social, political, and cultural identities (Bhaskar, 2008, 2016). As both a part and a result of such negotiations, the results of any agency exercised in the pursuit of autonomy will constantly re-inform the learner's understanding of agency and autonomy and the future possibilities thereof within and beyond the classroom setting. This can be seen in all of Harrison (2023, this issue), Kawasaki (2023), and Takagi et al. (2023) where learning about both EFL and LA happens in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1998, 2002; Tassinari, 2017; Wenger, 1998, 2000) fostered by the teacher.

Adopting a complexity perspective can bridge the gap between social and cognitive perspectives and the gap between the concepts of societal, institutional and personal autonomy (Benson, 2019; Block, 2021). So, negotiations of identity within a classroom will have an impact on the amount of learner autonomy observed or unobserved: Learner autonomy plays a role in the identity negotiations within a classroom because of the inherently complex, social nature of such a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1998; Wenger, 1998, 2000) and vice versa: Identity as social struggle (Darvin & Norton, 2015) will feedback to learner autonomy. Thus, Kawasaki (2023) found that a classroom learning community can increase the likelihood that students will express their identity openly enabling more successful language learning. Similarly, Takagi et al. (2023) also discovered that when a teacher had the autonomy to create such a learning community, the students' learning and creativity flourished.

Practitioner research often has a profound impact on identity. We can see this process at work in many of the articles in LDJ7, for example in Harrison's paper, which uses the genre of autoethnography to explore the interpretation of public and private identities (Harrison, 2023). Practitioner research often involves classroom interventions aimed at creating occasions when learners can exercise agency and develop autonomy. Kawasaki's experiments with peer support (Kawasaki, 2023) and Morioka's trials with group reflection (Morioka, 2023) offer relevant examples here.

No matter a learner's cognitive capacity for taking responsibility (Holec, 1981), we cannot see learner autonomy unless there are spaces within the other spheres that are supportive of learner autonomy and agency. Ahearn (2001, p. 112) defined agency as the "socioculturally mediated capacity to act," and so our observations of learner autonomy via agency must be socioculturally mediated in some way.

The Critical Realist Challenge to Conventional Understandings of Learner Autonomy

In this article I have set out to frame what some of the conventions of learner autonomy are and how these three presented conventions are challenged from a complex systems perspective. The first convention that autonomy and agency are separate, unconnected concepts continues to be challenged by a growing body of literature that examines autonomy within wider social contexts that are supportive of autonomous learning. The work of the Douglas Fir Group (2016) brings together social and cognitive perspectives on language learning, further questioning the methodological separation of autonomy and agency. Adopting a complexity perspective (Cameron & Larsen-Freeman, 2007) with critical realism (Bhaskar, 2016) as a meta-theoretical framework, I argue that learner autonomy and agency are intrinsically linked.

Challenging a convention should be a creative rather than destructive process as the authors in this issue have shown. Yarwood (2023) and Yunita (2023) demonstrate the importance of understanding learners' histories, and the role of affect in how their trajectories through learning change. Harrison (2023) demonstrates the importance of understanding ourselves deeply and holistically as teachers as a way to support learner development. Kawasaki (2023), Morioka (2023), and Barfield and Nakayama (2023) explore aspects of learner autonomy as a social rather than purely cognitive capacity, and how learner autonomy must be viewed as connected to the wider context rather than in isolation. Takagi et al. (2023) focus on a situation in which a teacher has the autonomy within their institution to foster a creative and supportive learning community.

I hope that this article has shown that the deep understanding that practitioner research can provide is strengthened by adopting a CR stance within a complex dynamic systems theory perspective. Combining social and cognitive perspectives creates possibilities for teacher-researchers to better understand both themselves and their students from the perspective of human agency and identity within a multilingual ecology. My article has focused on the meso and micro levels of the Douglas Fir Group (2016) framework (see Figure 2). On the way it has created a number of questions for myself and other teachers, and also hopefully for you, the reader. Adopting a critical realist stance in a complex dynamic system perspective will allow further exploration of these important questions.

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Concluding Commentary: Reflect, Write, and Share

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It is a privilege for me to write this commentary for Learner Development Journal Issue 7 (LDJ7), Challenging the Conventions in Learner Development Research. Since I started researching on learner autonomy a few years ago, I have realized the importance of "unconventional" ways of learning. By "unconventional," I mean opportunities to explore what and how learners would like to learn according to their goals and interests. For me, that is what is referred to as "taking charge of one's own learning," the common definition of learner autonomy. Similarly, I think it is also important that teachers and researchers are allowed to be unconventional in their teaching and research respectively and exercise their teacher autonomy and research autonomy.

The main theme that I found in common in the articles is reflection, defined as "the intentional examination of experiences, thoughts and actions in order to learn about oneself and inform change or personal growth" (Mynard, 2023, pp. 23-24). All the articles discuss and/or involve the use and importance of reflection to a certain extent. Edsall's paper, by giving a theoretical overview, invites us (teachers) to reflect on conventions about learner autonomy before suggesting the adoption of a complexity perspective and Critical Realism (Edsall et al., 2023). While some authors focus on learners' reflection using narratives, interviews, and questionnaires, others share their reflection on teaching practices and journeys by means of interviews, autoethnography, autobiographical stories, and written dialogue. Based on these themes and the findings from each article, I will divide this commentary into two main parts: reflection on learning and reflection on teaching. I will conclude by giving some suggestions for learner development and teacher development based on what I have learned from the work in LDJ7.

Reflection on learning

Reflection is said to be a necessary part of the language learning process (Mynard et al., 2023) and is indispensable for the development of learner autonomy (Little et al., 2017), as it enhances metacognitive awareness and learner involvement (Cotterall, 2017). According to Reinders (2023), "Reflection is the heart and soul of language learning" (p. xiii).

From my observations as a learning advisor and my research on learner autonomy, the results of the use of reflection have been quite positive. For instance, I found that reflecting on their learning raises students' awareness of their capacity and responsibility to take charge of their learning (Ambinintsoa, 2020), and some students even initiated reflection in other courses at the university and beyond the classroom, as they valued the benefits of reflection they gained in my class (Ambinintsoa, 2023). Although some students may find reflection not easy or enjoyable, they still view it as useful (Ambinintsoa & MacDonald, 2023). Having those positive findings in mind, reading Morioka's article was rather an eye-opener for me, as he shows that reflection activities may not always be as effective as is often

thought. If students consider reflection as a mere requirement rather than an opportunity to evaluate themselves or aspects of their learning, reflection can be seen as a tedious task and is not as valuable as it should be (Morioka, 2023). As Morioka's students are not majoring in English, like most of the participants in my research above were, I understand that reflecting in English can be challenging for them. In his conclusion, Morioka highlights two important points. The first is about the necessity to give students (especially the ones with low proficiency) time to write their opinions before having them discuss in groups. The second is about students' completing the reflection sheet as a mere requirement. If students know that they will need to discuss their reflections with their peers, they may answer the questions in a more personal way. Furthermore, discussing their reflections may be more motivating for them, as that gives them the opportunity to share their ideas, feelings, and experiences; for that to be done smoothly, it will be necessary to provide them with useful vocabulary helping them to reflect deeper (Ambinintsoa & MacDonald, 2023). Additionally, reflecting with other people can generate new themes for reflection, as demonstrated in both Barfield and Nakayama's and Yarwood's articles.

Yarwood uses "narrative as both process and product" (Yarwood, 2023, p. 12). This enabled her student, Hiroto, to retell his story related to his self-directed language learning (SDLL) experience including his flux of emotions. From that story retelling, the student gained a metacognitive self-awareness, which according to Yarwood, helped him grow as a learner. As a learning advisor in the institution where Yarwood's research took place, I am very familiar with SDLL and the issues students commonly have when taking it, such as "postponing" the assignment due to lack of time management and being "overestimators." I have witnessed the excitement of freshman students at the beginning of the SDLL module, then being overwhelmed due to assignments and part-time jobs three or four weeks later, and finally dropping out. It is reassuring to see that the student in Yarwood's research was able to complete the SDLL module despite his "overestimator" identity and to finish it with satisfaction, which he connected to the development of his self-awareness. Also, it was clear from the research that his advising session with his learning advisor played an important part in his becoming more positive. That validates how learning advisors can play the role of listeners and motivators by using empathy (Kato & Mynard, 2015). This sheds light on how powerful advising, which is still less conventional in language learning, can be in transforming students' experience at a fundamental level. Using a narrative as a product, Yarwood conveys to the readers a message advocating that (re)telling one's own story can be a powerful tool enabling self-reflection and discovery of one's identity, which is in line with what Harrison demonstrates in his paper on autoethnography (described in the next section).

Like Yarwood, Kawasaki's research is similarly related to emotions. In her article, she investigates the impact of peer interaction on students' emotion regulation (ER). Her findings show that peer interaction can positively influence ER in a way that students' positive emotions increased thanks to the dialogue and collaboration emanating from the peer interaction. I especially appreciate her emphasis that "it is not that students' negative emotions disappeared through peer interaction, but rather that positive emotions became more dominant than negative emotions due to the positive influence of peer interaction" (Kawasaki, 2023, p. 74). Her insights seem to be in agreement with what is often stated in literature related to positive psychology (e.g., Gregersen, 2019; Oxford, 2014; Seligman, 2011): negative emotions are part of an individual (whether they are a language learner or

not); the aim is not to eradicate such emotions but to face them using one's strengths and to be more aware of the positives. The positive effects of peer interaction on ER shown in Kawasaki's research also connects with recent research findings about motivation and reflection with peers, which show that students gain reassurance, self-confidence, motivation, and more knowledge about learning strategies (e.g., Ambinintsoa & MacDonald, 2023; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Mercer et al., 2018).

Peer interaction resulting in motivation due to the opportunity to exchange ideas and help one another, is also mentioned in Yunita's paper. It is alluded to twice by her student, Kei, who struggled when his classes were online, and then really appreciated when they were back face to face. Kei felt that interaction with his classmates was important for him though he was not confident enough in his ability to communicate with them. He needed what Yunita refers to as "external support," which is one of the key factors related to the development of learner autonomy. Like Kei, Yunita's other student, Hana, also attributes her positive learning experience to external support: an inspiring friend and a supportive teacher, which further backs the concept that learner autonomy is fostered through and involves working with others (Dam et al., 1990; Little et al., 2017; Palfreyman, 2018). What I found interesting in Yunita's paper is the Indonesian context and the place of learner autonomy in it. From a country where learner autonomy is still an unfamiliar concept for language teachers, I am happy to know that positive progress has been made regarding autonomy: The word "autonomy" exists at the university and the word "autonomous" is mentioned in the Ministry of Education's publications (Yunita, 2023, p. 34). Though the implementation of autonomous learning may not be done yet, using those terms can already be considered as a significant step.

Reflection on teaching

I find it fascinating and refreshing when teachers conduct research about themselves and other teachers, as shown in three of the articles in this issue. Barfield and Nakayama's "patchwork multivocalic reflection" (Barfield & Nakayama, 2023, p. 130) demonstrates how research can be done and written in an unconventional way. First, the subjects of their research include themselves, that is, their learning and teaching experiences, as well as setbacks and inspirations that resulted in the desire for both to find ways to engage their students in their learning in a meaningful way. They begin with their autobiographical stories placed in parallel to each other. The two authors then respond to each other's stories in a form of letters, thereby opening their communication to the readers, before continuing their stories with more details about their respective practitioner research. They end the article with a dialogue in which they give feedback to each other's continued stories and ask questions about each other's experiences, prompting both to deeply reflect on those experiences and to come to the conclusion that learners' creativity and criticality are crucial aspects to develop in learners to facilitate engaged meaningful learning. Throughout the paper, the two authors talk about their students' experiences, which is powerful in itself. Nevertheless, what I consider as the most intriguing aspect of the article is the way the paper is written. By including several different forms of communication in their writing, the authors display the creative process of sharing stories and engaging in dialogue before our eyes.

Like Barfield and Nakayama, Harrison also discusses his own teacher development. Using autoethnography, he reflects on his own encounter with autoethnography as a research method, his experience using it for himself, and his experience using it in his

classes. He emphasises the power of telling one's own story, and he especially focuses on writing as a process. In doing so, he is practising what he preaches, which is very inspiring for me. Harrison explains that the process of writing triggers self-understanding, self-exploration, and self-discovery in relation to the context where a person is. His statement, "a pen and writing journal helped me better process and explore the world around me and my place within it; writing became a way to make connections and glimpse possibilities" (Harrison, 2023, p. 119) struck me, although I have been aware of the importance of journal writing through my own experience with it, through a number of research studies that I have conducted myself (e.g., Ambinintsoa & MacDonald, 2023), through my role as a learning advisor, and through the reiteration in the field of learner autonomy that written reflection is vital in the development of autonomy. That statement reminds me of what Little et al. (2017) say about writing:

> Writing things down [...] is a necessary precondition for the reflection that lies at the heart of autonomous learning. [...] Writing also allows individual learners to express their autonomy in and through the TL, and it is the means by which the learning community is made visible, the learning process is documented, and relatedness - the collaborative interdependence of all members of the class - is given its due. (p. 27)

Though the focuses are different in the two statements, both describe how revealing writing about oneself can be. In addition to self-exploration and self-discovery, writing one's own story is also a way to use the target language in a meaningful way. As exemplified by one of Harrison's student's statements: "I got so excited about my own project that I didn't realize I was studying English" (Harrison, 2023, pp. 123–124).

The student's statement above is closely related to what Takagi et al. wrote in their article about one of their research findings on a teacher's (Naoya) practitioner research: "The students discovered what they could do with the language rather than only learning about the language" (Takagi et al., 2023, p. 90). As teachers, isn't it our goal to help students see how relevant the target language can be in their lives, especially in EFL settings? How many of our students do not see any point in learning a foreign language, but still do it only because of some external pressure or some superficial future goals? Naoya's students surpassed that superficiality and found meaning in their language learning thanks to his commitment to promoting creativity to develop learner autonomy. Naoya did not reject the imposed textbook in his school. Rather, what he did was to not only adapt it but also involve his students in decision-making regarding class activities based on the units in the textbook. He made his students aware of the curriculum requirements, and gave them choice, as well as opportunities to work together, which are all aspects of what Little et al. (2017) refer to as "handing over control to the learners" (p. 76). I am glad that Takagi et al. decided to conduct research about Naoya and his practitioner research, as Naoya's class is an excellent example of an autonomous classroom; and the article demonstrates how practitioner research is such an appropriate way to promote learner autonomy, and how learner autonomy and teacher autonomy (e.g., Naoya's adaptation of and negotiation about the textbook) are interconnected. Also, it is important to point out that Naoya's practitioner research was conducted in a junior high school, where the pressure on teachers to conform to traditional practices can be considerable.

Conclusions and recommendations

The work in this journal issue has enabled me to learn more about learner autonomy. Before reading Edsall et al.'s paper, I did not even think that there are conventions of learner autonomy that can be challenged. Digging deeper into different theories and trying to adapt and combining them are complicated, and the complexity of such fusion and adaptation, can be difficult to digest (at least for me). However, the reflection questions after each section were really helpful, as they allowed me to relate those discussed theories to my own teaching and learning experiences (Edsall et al., 2023). The other seven articles taught me about research methods on how to investigate the development of learner autonomy and to analyze emotions and identity among other things. They have also reinforced my belief in the effectiveness of reflection, reflective dialogue, autoethnography, and practitioner research on learner and teacher development. Based on the new knowledge and the reinforcement that I gained, I will conclude this commentary with suggestions about engaging in meaningful learning, telling one's own story, and promoting practitioner research.

Helping students find meaning in language learning should be our aim as teachers, and for that, they need to be able to take charge of their learning. As Williams et al. (2021) say, "[to] achieve success, learners need to feel that they are in control of their learning. They need to feel they are capable of learning the language and able to manage their language learning. [...] they need to see value in it" (p. 137). One way to give students control of their learning is by involving them in making decisions with regard to activities to do in class as demonstrated in Takagi, Tanaka, and Minami (2023). It may not be easy the first time, but they will gradually become accustomed to it with the teacher's support. As the authors demonstrate, support for and trust in the students are crucial. Another way to help students find meaning in language learning is to give them opportunities to tell and/or write their own stories, including language learning histories (LLHs), which is also recommended by Yarwood. As explained earlier, writing one's own stories can be really powerful, as it enables self-discovery. Writing LLHs can raise language students' awareness of strategies they have been using, their strengths, efforts, improvements, and successes in their language learning (Ambinintsoa et al., 2022), which they might not notice otherwise. Seeing all those positive aspects enable them to recognize their capabilities and see that their efforts have paid off, and that is likely to motivate them. Teachers can also write their own autoethnography or autobiographical stories. The benefits from writing LLHs described above can also be gained from such stories, and that has been demonstrated in different articles in this issue. Reading such stories can inspire and motivate other teachers.

My final suggestion is related to research for teachers. Takagi, Tanaka, and Minami show how practitioner research is an appropriate method to promote learner autonomy in a classroom setting. As stated by Benson (2011), the best way for teachers to research autonomy is through their in-class practice. Teachers know not only their learners but also the context including the curricula, and required materials (or absence of materials). They can use that knowledge to explore ways to help their learners find the meaning of their language learning and to exercise their teacher autonomy. Then, they can share the results of their research with other teachers, which can trigger reflective dialogue and collaborations.

Last but not least, as I am concluding this commentary, this issue has helped me realize the power of writing again. Had I only read the articles in LDJ7, I would not have

come up with all the ideas I have stated here. For instance, by writing, I was able to instantly think of the suggestions I made above as well as the one I had for the case where reflective activities might not be beneficial in certain contexts, which is addressed in Morioka's article. It might be obvious, but writing does help a great deal. Therefore, what I would like to suggest to teachers, as I close this commentary, is to write whenever you have opportunities. Reflect, write, and share when possible, and the Learner Development Journal is a good place for that.

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