Is Learner Autonomy Manipulable?
The Interactive Impact on Teacher-Allocated Partners[1]

Nobuyoshi Asaoka

Abstract

For the past 20 years, the field of language learning has been shifted towards language learners themselves (Reiders, 2000). Life-long learning, in particular, has gained more attention, as has learner autonomy. Yet, there is a paradox: one of the teacher's main tasks as a facilitator for language students is to help them to become more independent; however, introductory level learners of Japanese generally cannot extend themselves beyond greetings and 'small talk' such as how to spend one's weekend. Moreover, left to themselves, students typically sit in the same seat from the very beginning of a course and work with the same pair-partner throughout the semester.

This study, therefore, looks at how the teacher can manipulate learner autonomy in order to promote more effective language behavior by focusing, in particular, on the effect of seating arrangements on class dynamics. The experiment over two semesters involved assigning students a seat as they came to class so that each of them almost always had a different partner. Students' small talk was video-recorded several times and at several different stages. The results show that with scaffolding assistance by an instructor at the beginning stages, students became more independent, initiating conversations in L2. A questionnaire also revealed that students found teacher-allocated partnering conducive to language learning and helped them learn Japanese more actively.

Key terms: autonomy, pair work, scaffolding, group dynamics

1. Introduction

In the field of foreign language education over the past twenty years, there has been a shift from the traditional teacher-led instruction towards the language learners themselves (Reiders, 2000). However, most of the literature has focused on the theoretical aspect of learner autonomy, often along with self-directed language learning (SDLL) and self-instruction, while research on the relationship between learner autonomy and actual learner behaviors has been scarce (Jones, 1998; Hasegawa, 2004).

One of the main reasons for this scarcity is that autonomy itself is not an absolute concept (Nunan, 1996). The definition of the term has not been clear-cut due to its complex nature (Hasegawa, 2004). One of the earliest and most frequently cited definitions of the term is found in Holec's (1981, p. 3) report to the Council of Europe, where the term is described as the ability to take charge of one's own learning. He extends the point to say that this ability is not innate but must be acquired by 'natural' means or (as most often happens) through a systematic and deliberate training. Holec elaborates that "to take charge of one's learning" means to have and to hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning:

- determining the objectives
- defining the contents and progressions
- selecting methods and techniques for use
- monitoring the procedure of acquisition (rhythm, time, place, etc)
- evaluating what has been acquired

This study, therefore, first examines the issues of autonomy's definition, and then explores the possibility of fostering autonomy. Nunan (1996) claims that autonomy can be fostered through a systematic incorporation of strategy training into the learning process. On the other hand, Benson (2001) claims that although autonomy is the natural state of learning, it is often suppressed by institutionalized education. Thomson (1996) also argues that we are born self-directed learners, taking over the

---

[1] This paper was presented at the 1st Teaching Japan Conference at Depaul University.

learning of our mother tongue(s); however, as learning becomes more complex and challenging, we succumb to a preference for teacher-led direction and learning materials. As an instructor of Japanese as a foreign language myself, I have seen all of my students somewhere on a continuum between total independence and teacher-dependence. Here lies a paradox: it may be ideal to foster autonomy among beginning level learners, but the number of effective methods tends to be rather limited. If we have a strong tendency to prefer teacher-led direction as learning gets more difficult under institutionalized education, fostering learner autonomy especially at the very beginning level should, therefore, be explored.

As part of the move away from teacher-centredness, the use of pair and group work is widespread in education (Storch, 2002), including language learning. In particular, pair-work in the classroom, where two learners work together interactively on a certain task assigned by the instructor, has been much utilized because this type of pedagogical activity increases the amount of language output (Long & Porter, 1985) as well as input (McGroarty, 1993), which is believed to facilitate fluency and accuracy through additional "trial and error" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Vygotsky (1978) also argues that cognitive development essentially occurs from the very beginning of life and children, therefore, need to interact with a more able member of society. This theory is applicable to all learning with children and adults in formal and informal instructional settings (Storch, 2002). Dyadic interactions in the classroom setting generally consist of four distinct patterns with (1) expert/novice, (2) collaborative, (3) dominant/passive, and (4) dominant/dominant (Storch, 2002). With so-called 'scaffolding', successful pair work takes place where learners' strengths are collaboratively joined (Ohta, 1995). Scaffolding in language learning refers to the provision of sufficient linguistic support, such as resources, templates, and guidance: for example, parents provide their child with some structure to learn the mother tongue. But, in peer interaction in foreign language learning, the nature of the function appears to be different. Ohta (1995) reports that even if one interlocutor of the pair is linguistically better than the other, both interlocutors can benefit from the interaction.

Because pair work is of such importance in the language classroom, yet requires careful management by the teacher in order to provide the gradual yet appropriate 'scaffolding' to facilitate learning, this study investigates the impact of teacher-led seating arrangements, i.e., making learners sit in assigned places as they come to class so that they usually have a different partner. This pedagogical practice was motivated by my assumption that beginning level learners, who can speak on a narrow range of topics at limited length, would be motivated to talk on the same topics with a different partner, leading to improvement in their fluency and accuracy. This practice also allows each learner to get to know each other more quickly, potentially leading to better group dynamics.

Krashen (1982) speaks of the importance of a so-called affective filter, influencing the intake of language input. But, simply assigning learners to work in groups or pairs does not necessarily produce conditions conducive to language learning (Donate, 1988). For example, having the same partner throughout the whole semester may result in pairs talking in English (L1) during certain activities, as either their L2 proficiency level is outweighed by their desire to talk in more detail or the task is unclear or too difficult for them. This study, therefore, also examines how the teacher should implement the allocation of partners in the classroom and what kind(s) of scaffolding s/he should provide to each student, as well as touching on the boundary issue between activities prior to and during the lesson proper: that is to say, while the teacher encourages students to communicate in L2, some of them may not like to 'legitimately' speak 'before' class because it seems unnatural or they may lack confidence unless under the teacher's instruction.

The study finally analyzes through video-taped language behavior and via questionnaires at the end of each semester, the extent to which fostering autonomy among learners of beginning level Japanese is possible or not. As I shall show, the results indicate that the majority of the students felt this partner allocation method allowed them to speak more L2 due to a better class atmosphere in that most of them did not feel uncomfortable talking with a different partner each time. Some of the recorded video tapes also indicated that they were willing to extend their pleasantries and use the L2 under more 'authentic' (or 'informal') circumstances. From this evidence, I conclude that among even beginning level Japanese learners, a degree of autonomy in foreign language learning can be fostered under certain conditions.

2. Definitions of Learning Autonomy

The term, autonomy, is originally defined by Schwartz (1973) as the ability to assume responsibility for one's own affairs. As noted above, Holec (1979) transfers the term in language learning as the ability to take charge of one's own learning. Little (1990, p. 7), however, argues that autonomy is not 'a single' easily describable behavior. Autonomy is also considered to be not necessarily observable, but rather unobservable (Hasegawa, 2004) due to the theoretical assumption that autonomy is an ability rather than a behavior (Holec, 1979). Benson (2001) claims that autonomy is a multidimensional capacity as the form differs from person to person and even for the same person in different contexts or at different times. This complex nature of autonomy has led many researchers to employ descriptive research designs with retrospective self-reports rather than experimental designs with observable data. However, Benson (2001) maintains that in order to research autonomy, it must be describable in terms of observable behaviors. He also adds that programs or innovations designed to foster autonomy are likely to be more effective if they are based on a clear understanding of the behavioral changes they aim to foster. At the entry level of Japanese, learners start generally with memorization of basic greetings and self-introduction. If pleasantry-exchange is observable before class on an autonomous basis without teacher-led instruction, this kind of behavior can be interpreted as evidence of learner autonomy, as I will explain in more detail below.

Learner autonomy is often introduced along with self-directed language learning (SDLL) or self-instruction; however, it is important here to distinguish these terms in order to better understand how each is involved in autonomy. According to Dickson (1987), self-instruction is a neutral term for situations where learners are working without direct control of a teacher. Self-instruction generally refers to situations in which learners are working without the direct control of the instructor, whereas SDLL refers to an attitude towards learning in which learners accept responsibilities, but do not carry out courses of action independently in connection with them. While traditional teacher-led instruction aims to cater to needs of all learners in one classroom, self-directed learners, who may follow any one of the possible self-instructional modes, have better chances of success in language learning because self-instruction allows the learner to focus on her/his linguistic needs. However, Nunan (1996) claims that the degree and the extent of autonomy it is feasible or desirable for learners to embrace depends on a range of factors, such as personality, the goals of language learning, the philosophy of the institution providing the instruction, and the cultural context where the learning takes place. His claim indicates how autonomy is subject to many variables and can be difficult to foster in the classroom setting. On the other hand, Little (1995, p. 175) argues that while learning strategies and learner training can play an important supporting role in the development of learner autonomy, the "decisive factor" will always be the nature of the pedagogical dialogue.

My aim was, therefore, to look at how contexts affect the production of small talk. Pleasantry-exchange can occur between interlocutors interpersonally anywhere at any time. This type of interaction or ice-breaker, is often used, for example, to set new class members at ease, to get them to memorize each others' names, and learn more about each other (Dörnyei & Malderez, 1997). The ice-breaker may then lead to extended talk. However, such pair work is often controlled by the teacher in that the task as well as the beginning and the ending of the activity are imposed by the teacher. However, if learners exchange pleasantries and extend their L2 talk before class eventually, with a gradual shift through scaffolding, there is a possibility that learner autonomy is being fostered.

3. Methodology

The subjects for this study were 28 students enrolled in Fall Semester 2009 and 21 students[2] enrolled in the following Spring Semester 2010 of Beginning Japanese at Grinnell College.[3] The classes met five days a week, 50 minutes a day for 15 weeks each. The required textbooks were "An Integrated Course in Elementary Japanese, *Genki 1*" (Banno, Ohno, Sakane, & Shinagawa, 1999) and "An Integrated Course in Elementary Japanese *Genki 1* Workbook" (Bannno, Ohno, Sakane, & Shinagawa, 2000). The first semester covered up to chapter 6 while the second semester covered from chapter 7 to chapter 12

[2] Seven dropped out after the end of the previous semester.

[3] Grinnell College is a private college with an enrollment of about 1,500, located in Iowa.

(the end of the textbook, "*Genki 1*"). The students were divided into two classes consisting of 16 and 12 students respectively in Fall Semester 2009 while in Spring Semester 2010 there were 15. Both classes were taught by two instructors, the main one (the researcher of this study), who taught on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and the visiting instructor, who taught on Tuesday and Thursday.

The purpose of this seating allocation method was explained to the whole class at the very beginning of the course: namely that this practice aimed to allow each student to get to know each other better as well as provide them with the opportunity to exchange small-pleasantries, which may lead to improvement in L2 fluency. The study employed video-recording several times and at several different stages as well as a questionnaire administered at the end of each semester. Use of observation and eliciting students' own assessments was intended to increase the validity of the study.

The experiment proceeded as follows. Throughout the two semesters, the instructor typically arrived 10 minutes before the start of class and while setting up the teaching materials, prompted students to speak L2 as they arrived to class. On a typical day, at least half of the subjects arrived at least 5 minutes before class. During the early part of the first semester the instructor played a more active role, for instance, welcoming each student with a greeting in Japanese and if necessary prompting each of them, by demonstration, to also greet her/his classmate(s),[4] as well as ensuring that each of them sat in an allocated seat from the corner (the first person sat at the corner and the second person sat in the next seat, and so on) as s/he came in. Later in the semester the instructor prompted each student to talk about her/his daily routine and weekend. By the middle of the semester the instructor reduced this type of 'scaffolding' and encouraged pairs to initiate small pleasantry-exchanges themselves and extend this to brief conversations.

Some pairs were videotaped several times during the period of the experiment in order to analyze how students responded. The intention of the video-recording was to observe learners' behavior to see whether learner autonomy was being fostered rather than to analyze the utterances in the framework as such and was made through the whole 50-minute-long class so that the subjects were not aware that the focus was an out-of-class activity, but only that the researcher was conducting some kind of research.[5]

One pair, a male American student and a female Chinese student, was videotaped, for instance, on the 2nd of November 2009 when the class was in the middle of chapter 4 of *Genki 1* at which point only 20 basic verbs had been introduced so far. Although both subjects had very limited previous linguistic knowledge of Japanese before taking the course and their linguistic proficiency was average among the class, they perhaps had slightly higher levels of communicative competence as they were able to keep their dialogue going without the instructor's scaffolding.

As for the questionnaire, in the first survey conducted at the end of Fall Semester 2009, the following three questions were asked, followed by the opportunity to make free comments:

1. Do you think that the practice with different partners has helped you improve your spoken Japanese?

2. Do you feel that there were better class dynamics (atmosphere) due to the practice with different partners?

3. During the semester have you felt uncomfortable exchanging small pleasantries in Japanese with a different partner before class?

4. Please feel free to make any further comments on the practice

---

[4] There are two different kinds of greetings, formal and informal, in Japanese. The interlocutor is supposed to say, for example, "*ohayoogozaimasu*" to the instructor, but "*ohayoo*" to the classmates.

[5] To preserve the 'naturalness' of the conversation, the pairs were not closely miked. However, most of their dialogue could still be picked up: see transcript in appendix below.

There were four quality scales from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' for the first two questions and another four frequency scales from 'always or almost always' to 'rarely' for the third question. The first question was intended to elicit students' impression of how the practice made an impact on their spoken Japanese while the second question aimed to elicit students' impression of how the opportunity to speak with almost everyone in class by the end of each semester made an impact on the learner's willingness to converse. The third question sought to elicit students' impression of how the practice made an impact on their affective filter.

A similar survey was also administered at the end of Spring Semester 2010. The main difference from the first one was to ask the subjects to compare the actual effect they thought the practice had on their foreign language learning with hypothetical situation of going without the practice.[6]

4. Results and Discussion

The recording chosen for analysis of a small pleasantry-exchange (later into a small conversation)[7] lasted over 4 minutes until just before the start of the class. The pair started speaking about how they spent their weekend. They then extended the topic to their daily routine, such as what time they got up and what they ate for breakfast. Most of the time their interactions were restricted to Initiation/Response/Follow-up including several mistakes, and their dialogue often lacked appropriate discourse markers, such as topic shift, '*tokorode* (by the way)'. However, at the same time, using the variety of learned vocabulary and grammar they had acquired in class, the interactions allowed the two interlocutors to share their strengths as they explicitly helped each other through prompting, error correction, clarification requests, and comprehension checks. In this respect, the recorded conversation between the pair was quite typical of others in the class, but was perhaps more successful at maintaining the interaction for an extended period.

From the recording transcript (see appendices), it can be seen how both subjects prompted each other with questions such as Ying, a female student, who asks *Nanjikan benkyoo shimashita ka* (How long did you study?) on line 1 and Bradley,[8] a male student, who asks *Shuumatsu wa nani wo shimashita ka* (What did you do last weekend?) on line 4. There was also an instance of peer correction after line 17 when Ying said *Ano:: nanji ni minashita* (Well, what time did you see?) after talking about what time Bradley woke up. From the contextual cues (i.e., Ying perhaps wanted to say '*nemahita* (sleep)' instead of '*mimashita* (watch)') Bradley quickly realized Ying had not asked precisely what she had meant and therefore, on line 18, he responded *Nanji ni? Gozen jyuniji ni nemashita* (What time? I went to bed at twelve thirty). Several attempts to clarify meaning were also evident in the dialogue. On line 22, in order to check if what he heard was correct, Bradley repeated the time that Ying said she went to bed the previous night. Various additional strategies were used to keep the conversation flowing. For instance, Ying temporarily switched to English on line 34 as she apparently could not find a word for doughnut, and Bradley helped her by suggesting the word and also made a comprehension check by asking "The brown thing?". Also, on line 46, Ying asked Bradley if he had eaten breakfast today and he responded in the negative. However, she did not seem to understand when he said that he does not eat breakfast and instead kept asking the same question. On line 51, Bradley, therefore, decided to make up a sentence and said *Watashi wa beguru to beekon to hattshu buraunzu wo tabemasu* (I eat a bagel, bacon, and hash browns). His intention to keep their conversation going was evident.

Even at an elementary level, these communication strategies helped maximize the students' speaking time. Throughout

---

[6] 1. Please think otherwise, i.e., suppose you sit always the same spot and get the same partner, do you think that the practice with different partners has helped you improve your spoken Japanese?
2. Please think otherwise again, do you feel that there were better class dynamics (atmosphere), for example, your classmates are easier to talk to you in Japanese, due to the practice with different partners?
3. During the semester have you felt uncomfortable exchanging small pleasantries in Japanese with different partner before class?
4. Please feel free to make any further comments on the practice and also the method that the instructor makes you choose one among your classmates to ask the prepared question.

[7] For technical reasons, the recording did not include the very beginning of the conversation.

[8] Both names are pseudonyms.

their interaction, both subjects made a couple of grammatical errors, such as particle, tense, and lexical mistakes; however, by helping each other they successfully maintained their conversation for over four minutes. Around this stage of the course, most of the subjects could already carry on a conversation for at least one or two minutes. Considering the expected length of conversation for their proficiency level (namely 2 minutes in their final exam), the recorded pair was willing and autonomous enough to extend their talk until the class formally began.

Students' own responses to the activity were generally positive. From the questionnaire, on the first question regarding linguistic improvement, results in both semesters show the majority of the subjects felt this pedagogical practice helped them improve their spoken Japanese as most of the subjects either strongly agreed (16 subjects) or somewhat agreed (12 subjects). As for the third question regarding how at ease they felt with a different partner, the majority of the subjects rarely felt uncomfortable with the practice. Considering the nature of the beginning level of foreign language class where students typically learn self-introduction and survival skills, the pedagogical practice perhaps accelerated the development of good class (or group) dynamics, as supported by the following comment:

> "*I also think changing partners is good because some people have more experience with Japanese or it comes more naturally to them, and so practicing with different levels helps the class learn more overall.*"

> "*It worked well. Every day was different because you were sitting next to someone else. It helped me to get to know people in the class and feel comfortable speaking.*"

However, there were a few negative comments. One student in the second survey commented: *"I think having the same partner may help more because one can be more comfortable…"* Since most of the subjects in the first semester either strongly or somewhat agreed to the efficacy of the practice, the change in this person's perception may perhaps have been because, as the level of linguistic proficiency goes up, the learner might prefer the same partner in order to know them better. Hasegawa (2010) conducted research among students who had studied Japanese at a Midwest research university over the period of a year[9] and concluded that classroom relationship development is an inseparable aspect of peer interaction because learners constantly draw on their history as a resource throughout pair work. Consequently, although it may make sense to have multiple conversational partners at beginner level in order to repeat (but with slightly different responses from a different partner) and consolidate newly learned forms and vocabulary, at higher levels it may be more effective to engage with fewer conversational partners in order to get to know them better and develop deeper conversations as one's proficiency goes up. However, the timing of any switch between the two types of pair-work remains an issue.

Whilst, as already noted, comments were generally positive, two other students also had some reservations which highlighted the social context of language use: "*I think it is inevitable that some won't connect each other as well, but it is a good exercise.*" and "*While it is uncomfortable socially, the practice gave me the confidence to discuss with classmates other subjects.*" Vygotsky (1978) suggests that active social interaction with a more able member of society lead to cognitive development. Whilst the classroom is a 'safe' arena for language practice, discovering that some members may be somewhat difficult to talk to and then managing to socialize with them is arguably a necessary part of students' language learning experience in a sociolinguistic sense and a means by which to develop the skills required for ultimate goal of autonomy.

However, this initiation of a small pleasantry-exchange by beginning level learners was not possible without 'scaffolding' by the instructor and other students. So called 'initiators' among the students (i.e., more proficient and extrovert students), favorably influenced other groups and kept a conversation going. This is supported by one student's comment: *"... changing partners is good because some people have more experience with Japanese or it comes more naturally to them, and so practicing with different levels helps the class learn more overall."* Communication breakdown was also prevented with

---

[9] The institution offers a semester-long beginning Japanese course, consisting of 8 classes per week, which is equivalent to a one-year course at most of the other institutions in the US.

intervention from the instructor: for example, when he noticed a long silence among some pairs, he approached and asked a simple question to reignite the conversation. Such pair work cannot entirely escape from the teacher's control, where at the very least the tasks as well as the beginning and the ending points of peer interaction are determined by the instructor. However, instead of learners taking a passive role, training them to take responsibility, i.e., initiating a talk and successfully ending it totally in their control, where they are gradually enabled to freely converse with each other, may gradually foster learner autonomy.

Benson (2001) claims that the validity of the concept of autonomy depends in part on the fact that it is grounded in observable behaviors. In this research, the generalization of capacities before and during the lesson in which the pair can perform autonomously was observed. This pedagogical practice ran parallel to the creation of better class (group) dynamics where each learner was prompted to use the L2. Interaction within a group creates a substantial source of motivation, and thus a great proportion of the complex of L2 motivation. If learners feel positive in their classes, it will have a considerably favorable effect on their learning effort (Dörnyei, 1994). As one student commented: *"This (class) has been one of my most memorable classes because of knowing and working with so many different people."*

5. Conclusion

The success of a pedagogical activity largely depends on its implementation and maintenance. During the gradual shift from teacher-led instruction to more learner-led instruction, this pedagogical practice based on allocated partners satisfied the needs for beginning level learners with limited lexical and grammatical competence to practice using these limited resources with different people in a relatively natural setting. As language learners' cognitive resources are limited (Levelt, 1978; McLaughlin, 1987), beginning level learners tend to focus disproportionately on certain areas, such as accuracy or fluency. Thus, practicing with newly learned vocabulary and grammar to make them automatized is necessary for them so that they can allocate more of their cognitive resources to new linguistic information.

Various contingencies, such as the personality traits of the participants, the social context, and the topic or the register of conversation, are involved to make an active conversation take place between a pair, but the study shows that overall, the conversations did not necessarily falter or break down, nor did they lapse entirely into L1 (English), despite requiring the students to use L2 before the class had formally begun.

As learners move up to a higher level, they have access to resources for self-instruction, such as so-called 'language tables' where they can freely converse with other students of Japanese or native Japanese speakers. However, the pedagogical practice in this study points to how teachers can connect the gap between teacher-led and such free autonomous learning and, therefore, offers a practical method to foster greater autonomy among beginning level learners. Autonomy may be a challenge for beginners who lack linguistic knowledge, but in order for language instructors to facilitate learners to become independent learners in future, learner autonomy should be engendered and fostered from the beginning.

References

Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and Researching Autonomy in Language Learning*. Harlow: Longman/Pearson Education.

Dickson, L. (1987). *Self-Instruction in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Donato, R. (1988). Beyond group: A psycholinguistic rationale for collective activity in second-language learning, Unpublished Ph. D Dissertation, University of Delware, Newark.

Dörnyei, Z. (1994). Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classroom, *Modern Language Journal*, *78*, 273-284.

Dörnyei, Z. & Malderez, A. (1997). Group Dynamics and Foreign Language Teaching, *System*, *25*, (*1*), 65-81.

Hasegawa, A. (2004). A preliminary study on metacognitive strategy development and out-of-class autonomous language learning, Unpublished MA thesis, Purdue University.

Hasegawa, A. (2010). Learner Construction of Task-in-process: A Conversation Analytic Study of Semiscripted Pair Work Interaction, Unpublished Ph. D Dissertation, University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Holec, H. (1979). Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning, Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press (first published in 1979, Strasbourg: Council of Europe).

Jones, F. R. (1996). Self-instruction and success: A learner-profile study. *Applied   Linguistics*, *19*, (*3*), 378-406.

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Levelt, W. J. M. (1978). Skill theory and language teaching. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *1*, 53-70.

Little, D. (1990). Autonomy in language learning, In I. Gathercole (ed.), *Autonomy in Language Learning Acquisition*, 7-15. London: CILT.

Little, D. (1995). Learning as dialogue: the dependence of learner autonomy on teacher autonomy. *System*, *23*, (*2*), 175-181.

McGroarty, M. (1993). Cooperative learning and second language acquisition, *Cooperative Learning*, ed. D. D. Holt, 19-46 Center for Applied Linguistic and ERIC Clearing house on Languages and Linguistics, Washington, DC.

McLaughlin, B. (1987). *Theories of Second Language Learning*. London: Edward Arnold.

Nunan, D. (1996). Towards autonomous learning: some theoretical, empirical and practical issues, *Taking control: Autonomy in language learning*, 13-26.

Ohta, A. S. (1995). Applying sociocultural theory to an analysis of learner discourse: Learner-learner collaborative interaction in the zone of learner discourse, *Applied Linguistics*, *6*, 93-121.

Reiders, H. (2000). 'Do it yourself? A learners' perspective on learner autonomy and self-access language learning' Groningen: Unpublished MA thesis, University of Geroningen.

Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2nd edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schwartz, B. (1973). *L' Education demain*. Paris: Aubier Montaigne.

Thompson, C. K. (1996). Self-assessment in self-directed learning: issues of learner diversity. In R. Pemberton, E. S. L. Li, W. W. F. Or & H. D. Pierson (eds), *Talking control*: *autonomy in language learning*, 77-92. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Storch, N. (2002). Patterns of Interaction in ESL Pair Work, *Language Learning*, *52* (*1*), 119-158.

Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Results

First survey result:

	strongly agree	somewhat agree	slightly disagree	strongly disagree
Q1	16	12	0	0
Q2	24	4	0	0
	always or almost always	often	sometimes	rarely
Q3	1	1	9	17

Second survey result:

	strongly agree	somewhat agree	slightly disagree	strongly disagree
Q1	12	8	1	0
Q2	14	7	0	0
	always or almost always	often	sometimes	rarely
Q3	1	0	7	13

Appendix B: Students' Comments on Questionnaire 1

"I also think changing partners is good because some people have more experience with Japanese or it comes more naturally to them, and so practicing with different levels helps the class learn more overall."

"I learned a lot from this class. It was challenging but fun and I cannot wait to continue."

"It is fun and exciting to learn a whole new language. It is difficult but worth it and [I] hope to pursue and continue learning Japanese."

"It worked well. Everyday [Every day] was different because you were sitting next to someone else. It helped me to get to know people in the class and feel comfortable speaking."

"It was a very fun and challenging course."

"I think it is inevitable that some students won't connect to each other as well, but it is a good exercise."

"The practice is fine as it is."

"Knowing I would probably be called on at least once in a class to speak Japanese probably made me learn each lesson a little more intently."

"Some members in the class were really condescending and unpleasant to work with when you made a mistake. There is not really any way to change that, though, so overall I'd say I liked it."

Appendix C: Students' Comments on Questionnaire 2

"I think it is great! This has been one of my most memorable classes because of knowing and working with so many different people."

"Very nice!"

"The method is OK. The material like video for cultural study is a little old. I hope it could reflect a more real Japan."

"I think having [the] same partner may help more because one can be more comfortable when talking to the same partner."

"I think it is a great method to make a friendly and comfortable classroom dynamics."

"While it is uncomfortable socially, the practice gave me the confidence to discuss with classmates other subjects."

Appendix D: Transcript

(0:00-4:01)

Ying (female student) & Bradley (male student)

(0:00)

1Y: 何時間勉強しましたか。

Nanjikan benkyoo shimashita ka. (Romanized transcript)

How long did you study? (English translation)

2B: えっーと、二時間に勉強しました。

Etto:: nijikan ni benkyoo shimashita.

Well, (I) studied for two hours.

3Y: 二時間。

Nijikan.

Two hours

4B: インさん、週末は何をしましたか。

Ying-san, shuumatsu wa nani wo shimashita ka.

Ying-san, what did you do (last) weekend?

5Y: あのー、日本語の、あー、（inaudible）日本語とバイオロジーを勉強しました。

Ano:: nihongo no: ano:: (inaudible) nihongo to baiologi wo benkyoo shimashita.

Well, Japanese, well, (inaudible) (I) studied Japanese and biology.

(0:30)

6B: はい、そうですか。えっと、どこで勉強しましたか。

Hai so desu ka. Etto:: doko de benkyoo shimashita ka.

Is that so. Let me see, where did you study?

7Y: あのー、家で勉強しました。でも、時々、（inaudible）。

Ano:: uchi de benkyoo shimashita. Demo tokidoki (inaudible).

Well, (I) studied at home, but sometimes, (inaudible).

8B: そうですか。（coughs）うーん、何時間に勉強しました？

So desu ka. (coughs) u::n nanjikan ni benkyoo shimashita ka.

Is that so. Well, how long did you study?

9Y: 五時間に勉強しました。

Gojikan ni benkyoo shimashita.

(I) studied for five hours.

10B: （coughs）

(1:00)

11Y: 何時に起きました？今日。

Nanji ni okimashita? Kyoo.

What time did you wake up? Today.

12B: 今日？

Kyoo?

Today?

13Y: 今日は何時に起きました？

Kyoo wa nanji ni okimashita.

What time did you wake up today?

14B: あー、今日は、うーん、七時半に起きました。

A:: kyoo wa u::n shichiji han ni okimashita.

Well, today, (I) woke up at seven thirty.

15Y: そうですか。あのー、何時に、何時に、映画を見ました。あのー、何時に

So desu ka.ano:: nanji ni nanji ni eiga wo mimashita. Ano:: nanji ni.

Is that so. Well, what time, what time, did you see a movie? Well, what time?

(1:30)

16B: 見ました？

Mimashita?

Saw (a movie)?

17Y: あのー、何時に見ました。

Ano:: nanji ni mimashita.

Well, what time did you see?

18B: 何時に？午前十二時半に寝ました。

Nanji ni? Gozen jyuuniji han ni nemashita.

Well, (I) went to bed at twelve thirty.

19Y: 大変ですね。

Taihen desu ne.

That is tough.

20B: イングさんは？

Ying-san wa?

What about you, Ying-san?

21Y: あのー、午前二時半。

Ano:: gozen niji han.

Well, two thirty AM.

22B: 二時半？

Niji han?

Two thirty?

23Y: はい。

Hai.

Yes.

24B: あー、うーん。

A:: u::n.

Well…

(2:00)

25B: うーん、宿題ですか？

U::n, shukudai desu ka.

Well, is that homework?

26Y: はい。

Hai.

Yes.

27B: 宿題ですか。

Shukudai desu ka.

Is that homework?

28Y: あー、はい。（inaudible）

a:: hai (inaudible).

Well, yeah.

29B: 朝ご飯を食べましたか。
Asagohan wo tabemashita ka.
Did you have breakfast?

30Y: はい、朝ご飯を食べました。
Hai, asagohan wo tabemashita.
Yes, I ate breakfast.

31B: 何を食べましたか。
Nani wo tabemashita ka.
What did you eat?

(2:30)

32Y: あの、コーヒー、あのー、（inaudible）
Ano:: kohi ano:: (inaudible)
Well, coffee, well… (inaudible)

33B: うん？
Un?
Well…

34Y: デザート。It seems to
Dezaato.
Dessert. It seems to

35B: うーん、ドーナツ？
U::n doonatsu?
Well, doughnut?

36Y: （showing incomprehension）

37B: ドーナツ？
Doughnut?

38Y: Yeah. Yeah.

39B: The brown thing.

40Y: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

41B: The doughnut.

42Y: Yeah. ドーナツを食べました。
Doonatsu wo tabemashita.
Yeah. (I) ate a doughnut.

43B: 美味しいですか。
Oishiidesu ka.
Is it delicious?

44Y: まあまあ。
Maama.
So-so.

45B: うーん。
Well…

(3:00)

46Y: あの、（inaudible）朝ご飯を食べました？
Ano:: (inaudible) Asagohan wo tabemashita ka.
Well, (inaudible) Did you have breakfast?

47B: はい、私は毎朝食べません。

Hai watashi wa maiasa babemasen.

Well, I don't eat every morning.

48Y: 名前は何ですか。

Namae wa nan desu ka.

What is your name?

49B: ブラットリーです。

Bradori desu.

(I am) Bradley.

50Y: ブラットリーさんは朝ご飯を食べました。

Bradori-san wa asagohan wo tabemashita.

Did you have breakfast, Bradley-san?

51B: はい、朝ご飯を食べますと、私はベーグルとベーコンとハッシュブラウン
ズを食べます。

Hai, asagohan wo tabemashita to [sic] watashi wa beguru to beekon to hattshu buraunzu wo tabemasu.

Yes. I eat breakfast. And [sic] I eat a bagel, bacon, and hash browns.

(3:30)

52Y: 美味しいですか。

Oishiidesu ka.

(Are they) delicious?

53B: はい、美味しいです。そして、お茶を飲みます。

Hai oishiidesu. Soshite ocha wo nomimasu.

Yes, (they) are delicious. And (I) drink tea.

54Y: お茶？

Ocha?

Tea?

55B: お茶。

Ocha.

Tea.

56Y: （inaudible）そうですか。私はお茶を飲みません。

(inaudible) So desu ka. Watashi wa ocha wo nomimasen.

(inaudible) Is that so. I don't drink tea.

57B: (inaudible)

　　　(inaudible)

(4:00)