

LD SIG Forum: Transitions in the Lives of Learners and Teachers

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Reference Data:

Hurrell, I., Abe, M., Brown, P. S., Bruce, S., Capouilliez, J., Chen, J., Davies, H., Kojima, H., Landicho, P., Opitz, T., Ray, D., Taferner, R. H., Vye, S., Yoshimuta, S. (2014). LD SIG forum: Transitions in the lives of learners and teachers. In N. Sonda & A. Krause (Eds.), *JALT2013 Conference Proceedings*. Tokyo: JALT.



At the 39th annual JALT Conference, the Learner Development SIG forum focused on various kinds of life-stage transitions such as the transition from being teacher-centered to learner-centered educators, the transition of students from being passive to active learners, and the transition of SIG members from working individually to working collaboratively in research, writing, and presentation. After the presentations, the presenters and participants engaged in a reflective discussion in small groups to bring together what they had learned from taking part in the various presentations. To give an accurate flavor of the forum, this paper includes short sections by 14 of the presenters, and is concluded with comments made by the participants in group reflection discussions held at the end of the forum.

この論文では、第39回全国語学教育学会年次国際大会の学習者デベロップメントSIGで行われた「生徒と教師の在り方の変換」と呼ばれるフォーラムのそれぞれの発表をまとめる。この発表は、プレゼンターにより効果が見られたいろいろな経験談を伝えたものである。例えば、プレゼンター本人の教師本位の考え方から生徒本位の考え方への変換、プレゼンターの生徒の授業に対する受け身の姿勢から積極的な姿勢への変換、そして、SIGの活動におけるメンバーの個人的な活動から他の教師や学習者との協力的な活動への変換などである。発表の後、フォーラム参加者は小さなグループに分かれ、これらのさまざまな発表に参加し学んだことを持ち寄り議論した。その議論の中で挙がったテーマについても論じるとともに、実際のフォーラムの内容を正確に伝えるために、14件の発表の要約も含める。

THE LEARNER Development SIG forum at the 2013 JALT National Conference was entitled *Transitions in the Lives of Learners and Teachers*. In the spirit of the theme of the conference, “Learning is a Lifelong Voyage,” 20 presenters in 12 interactive presentations related stories of their learners’ transitions from being dependent to more autonomous learners; the presenters’ own transitions from being teacher-centered educators to more learner-centered educators; and their transitions from working individually to working collaboratively with teachers and learners in LD SIG activities. This paper comprises summaries of eight of those presentations.

Expanding Horizons and Pursuing Ongoing Professional Development Through Collaboration

Brown, P. S.

An ongoing commitment to learning is not only a hallmark of professionalism but also fundamental to personal growth as a lifelong learner and a teacher. I would like to briefly share how I became a member of the Learner Development Special Interest Group (LD SIG) and some of the experiences I have enjoyed over the past 7 years in the hope that others might benefit.

Just before becoming a JALT member in 2006, I was encouraged to join the LD SIG by a keen presenter at Yokohama JALT, Marc Sheffner, as well as by Renata Suzuki, a fellow University of Birmingham Master’s (MA) TEFL/ TESL study group member. Ms. Suzuki knew of my interest in learning strategies, learner development, and autonomy. By chance, a trip to Osaka 6 months later coincided with a joint mini-conference with Osaka JALT, “Authoring Autonomy: Experience, Resistance, and Resolution.” Inspired by both the presenters and the attendees, I applied for a LD SIG grant to attend the JALT2006 international conference, and consequently, as a joint recipient, had a chance to write about it and other experiences (Brown, 2007).

Besides being an opportunity to tell my story, show my appreciation, and share my ideas, the paper was one of my first published articles and, therefore, felt like quite a significant milestone in going from writing MA papers to academic publications. Moreover, I was quite profoundly affected by the collaborative process with the editor, Andy Barfield. His review memorably began with thought-provoking questions prompting me to further understand and explore issues I’d written about. Notably absent was any *red ink* criticism or directions regarding formatting or editing, which were left until the third and final exchange. A couple of years later, when we had a chance to talk about it, Andy confirmed that this had been a conscious

effort on his part, reflecting the culture that had evolved in the LD SIG. The conversation and experience in turn influenced my work as a peer-reviewer, an MA TEFL/TESL tutor, a member of conference vetting teams, and an editor of *Innovating EFL Teaching in Asia* (Muller, Herder, Adamson, & Brown, 2012) and *Exploring EFL Fluency in Asia* (Muller, Adamson, Brown, & Herder, 2014). Over the years, in such roles, I have come to see myself as a facilitator, guide, and doorman rather than a gatekeeper.

Support and collaboration have featured prominently in the SIG's publications, from "Autonomy You Ask" (Barfield & Nix, 2003) and "More Autonomy You Ask" (Skier & Kohyama, 2006)—which contain written reflections on each chapter from invited commentators, who were paired with each contributor—to "Realizing Autonomy: Practice and Reflection in Language Education Contexts" (Irie & Stewart, 2012) and the conference proceedings for "Exploring Learner Development: Practices, Pedagogies, Puzzles, and Research."

As a chapter author in "Realizing Autonomy," I gained valuable insights and could share feedback through a well-thought-out and mutually agreed upon system of peer-to-peer review between chapter authors. Besides encouraging me to explain my context more clearly, reviewers also helped me to be more critically evaluative rather than merely share "success stories." In addition, contributors collaborated to create and vote for the book's title and to decide what to do with the royalties. These were used to support a Japan-based NGO, Shanti Volunteer Association, to develop a picture book for children in Afghanistan. I felt that this shared decision-making not only brought us closer together but also granted us ownership of the project.

Last but not least, as a member at-large for 7 years, I benefited from having a voice on the committee and being able to see how good ideas have been turned into reality, how communities have been nurtured, and how SIG activities have expanded through strong networks, effective communication, dedication,

organization, and teamwork. In making this poster presentation at JALT2013 and writing this piece, I realize that I have in many ways come full circle since my first article. I would like to end this piece by repeating a quote that began my first article, a sentiment that resonates to this day: "The seeds of the future lie in the present" (Adair, 1987, p. 9).

Two-Way Street: An Approach to Peer Observations

Bruce, S.

Many teachers are uncomfortable being observed. However, a number of researchers have noted the benefits of peer observations for teachers' continuing professional development (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Martin & Double, 2006). This summary gives an outline of the Peer Observation System at the World Language Centre (WLC) at Soka University, examining some of its strengths, participant feedback, and planned amendments based on this feedback. The system was initially developed by Richmond Stroupe and Izumi Kanazaka (see Stroupe, Kanazaka, & Vajirasarn, 2006), and I took over responsibility for the system at the start of the 2013 academic year.

The emphasis on a nonjudgmental approach, allowing mutual benefit for both observers and *observees*, was based on Wallace's model for reflective professional development (1991). First, preobservation meetings allow the observees to outline their lesson goals and identify aspects that they would like the observer to pay attention to. After the observation, the observer and observee meet again to review and discuss the observed lesson. Here, the observer is limited to nonjudgmental, reflective questions that will allow the observee to reflect on his or her teaching practice, for example, "How did you feel at that point?" and "Why do you think that happened?" (The observee is free to request more direct feedback if desired.)

Participants in the WLC peer-observation system are also encouraged to work with colleagues who teach the same course and to observe each other's classes, in the hope that they will have more opportunities to identify valuable insights into aspects of their teaching, perhaps beyond the received knowledge of specific methodologies. Wallace (1991) identifies this as *knowing in action*: the myriad judgments and skills displayed by a professional practitioner that may not be based on any *received knowledge* and a key element of the reflective model of professional development. Another feature of the WLC peer-observation system is that observees can choose who, from among full-time and part-time WLC faculty, will observe them and which class will be observed and can also control the format and focus of pre- and postobservation meetings. This is done to encourage a sense of ownership over the observation and reflection process.

The overwhelming majority of participants during the previous semester found the process to be highly beneficial. Both observers and observees noted how their attention had been drawn to aspects of their teaching that they had not considered, and how this had opened their eyes to possible new approaches. For example, one observee commented, "I became more aware of the importance of thinking of goals and objectives first and how students achieve these goals through scaffolding," and an observer felt that "The physicality and movement in [the observee's] class was very different from my standard classroom practice, and it imbued the class time with energy and movement. I will consider asking students to move more."

Based on feedback from participants, necessary changes were also identified. One example is the optional use of a list of classroom and teaching aspects in order to help give appropriate focus to observations. Observation by video was also suggested and is being considered as an alternative approach. A qualitative study of participants' responses to the system, via

a questionnaire and possibly through additional interviews, is also planned for the coming academic year.

In-Service EFL Teachers' Transitions From Being Dependent to Being More Autonomous Teacher-Learners

Kojima, H.

The Central Council for Education (2012) in Japan submitted a report that proposed training equivalent to the master's (MA) degree level and presented the direction that teacher-education reform is taking, based on the notion of lifelong learning for teachers. As a teacher educator at a Japanese university, I have helped many pre- and in-service EFL teachers to promote autonomy as teacher-learners.

In this forum, I introduced two cases of in-service teachers' autonomous development under Collaborative and Reflective Supervision (CRS) between MA students and me, as a teacher educator. The fundamental features of CRS are helping teachers to (a) identify problems and goals in their teaching practice, (b) improve their instruction through reflective teaching cycles, (c) promote the interdependent relationship between learner autonomy and teacher autonomy, and (d) develop their professional competence and autonomy as teacher-learners. The following cases have been selected to show the contrasting needs and working conditions of two teachers: a teacher at a high school and a teacher at an elementary school.

Teacher A, a high school teacher in his 30s, was able to develop his own professional autonomy as well as his students' autonomy in the EFL classroom where he implemented a portfolio program under CRS. Despite it being their first time to use portfolios, the students developed learning strategies and metacognitive abilities that promoted learner autonomy through positive interdependence in a community of learning. CRS

contributed to Teacher A's and his students' growth. However, he needed more support and confidence so that he could develop professional skills to enhance teacher collaboration in his high school education context, where individual teachers might be expected to activate their technical knowledge and pedagogical skills as special subject teachers more independently than in elementary school contexts. Therefore, it is essential for teacher educators to consider the relationships among professionals working within an institutional context.

Teacher B, an elementary school teacher in her 40s, implemented strategy-based instruction and orchestrated strategy-use projects in English Language Activities (ELA) classes. She wanted to develop her 5th and 6th grade pupils' abilities to learn how to learn. Many homeroom teachers with no certificate in teaching English are required to instruct ELA through team-teaching. In this case study, for the first time, I dealt with CRS for ELA and focused on collaborative teacher-learning and professional development in an elementary school context. My major goal as a teacher educator was to support Teacher B in playing her significant role as a core teacher at her school. Through collaboration with the pupils, the homeroom teachers, the assistant language teacher, and many other teachers at her school, Teacher B promoted (a) the improvement of teaching materials and methods, (b) the pupils' autonomy in language learning, (c) her peers' teacher-learner autonomy, and (d) her own professional and autonomous development.

Both of these cases have implications for innovation in EFL education in Japan. Different institutions have different obstacles to overcome through effective collegiality. In order to promote in-service teachers' transitions from being dependent to becoming more autonomous teacher-learners in communities of practice, I plan to develop my collaborative and reflective approach to supporting their educational leadership and management in EFL education in different school contexts.

The Strategy Tree for Language Learners

Davies, H.; Abe, M.; Yoshimuta, S.

The Strategy Tree for Language Learners was developed by the authors as a tool to help foster self-regulation in language learners. The tree is a symbolic representation of language learning strategies and consists of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar as the trunk and the four core skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking as the branches and the leaves. It was originally used for learner-advising in a Japanese university setting to raise awareness of the whole picture of language learning and to facilitate discussions of study plans for individual learners.

However, after more research into learning strategies, this model was expanded to cover three additional dimensions: cognitive, affective, and sociocultural-interactive strategies (Oxford, 2011). Cognitive strategies are represented as water to nourish the tree, affective strategies as the tree's roots, and sociocultural-interactive strategies as the sun rays providing energy to the tree. The Strategy Tree model has been helpful in enhancing learners' metastrategies and nurture their self-regulation.

Though initially developed as a tool for one-to-one counseling with individual learners at university, its use was extended to a private language school (*eikaiwa*) and a classroom context at a Japanese university.

Eikaiwa Setting

Using the tree model was largely a success, in that learners were able to reflect on their learning and set strategy-related goals. Learners understood the importance of the cognitive dimension of their learning, and although some had not considered it before, had little trouble relating the affective dimension to their learning progress. Figure 1 is an example of a strategy tree drawn by one of Davies's students.



Figure 1. An eikaiwa student's strategy tree.

However, drawing the tree highlighted the fact that learners found reflecting on the sociocultural interactive aspect of their learning conceptually difficult. Elsewhere, it has been argued that sociocultural interaction is often viewed as the ultimate accomplishment of language learning (Alexander, 2008). Therefore, further research is needed to discover whether learners in this context recognize the importance of sociocultural interaction and whether they can be encouraged to adopt sociocultural-interactive strategies.

University Classroom Setting

The tree was utilized in groups in Yoshimuta's classrooms at Temple University. After the initial drawing of the trees by

learners, follow-up activities were provided to raise learner consciousness in terms of the diverse dimensions of language learning and the setting of achievable goals for their learning progress. More emphasis was given to the sociocultural aspect of the tree in these activities through the use of cooperative learning in groups. Learners were initially placed in groups according to the area of the tree that they felt they most needed to work on to grow their tree. They then went back to their home groups to share what they had learned. Working on the trees in groups fostered sociocultural processes in the classroom and encouraged students to understand how these processes are a critical aspect of learning.

The metacognitive act of undertaking this activity allowed learners to come to a greater understanding of their learning. As Oxford (2011) stated, recalling Vygotsky's views on self-regulated learning, "Cognition is distributed" (p. 28) by sharing in the community.

Reflections on Learner Autonomy in English Discussion Classes

Opitz, T. A., Hurrell, I., Landicho, P., Capouilliez, J., and Chen, J.

Learner autonomy has become a pedagogical cornerstone in modern approaches to language teaching. In this forum, five instructors from Rikkyo University's English Discussion Course (EDC) program gave mini-presentations on promoting learner development in their classrooms. Opitz and Chen addressed some different aspects of willingness to communicate (WTC). Hurrell and Landicho discussed learner-centered feedback techniques used in their classrooms. Additionally, Capouilliez modelled and discussed a fluency-building technique used in all EDC classrooms.

“Do”-ing English with Paul Nation’s 3-2-1

Capouilliez presented and discussed a classroom technique originally based on Paul Nation’s (1989) “4-3-2 Technique.” All EDC classrooms typically use a streamlined “3-2-1” method. Students are provided with question prompts and paired as listeners and speakers. Speakers are instructed to speak without interruption for 3 minutes while listeners listen attentively and use English reactions. After 3 minutes, partners are changed and the speakers repeat the task in 2 minutes. Finally, the process is repeated again with 1 minute of speaking time. Generally, fluency benefits can be observed within a month as evidenced by the increasing ease with which students are able to complete the task. Furthermore, the combination of automaticity-building repetition and schema-activating content provides students with tools to engage in extended discussions and with confidence that they can use English effectively.

Teacher as Facilitator During Feedback and Assessment

The EDC program’s focus on moving away from teacher-disseminated knowledge about language to teacher as guide or facilitator is evidenced by the variety of learner-centered feedback techniques used in the classroom by individual EDC instructors. One example is Hurrell’s use of self- and peer-reflection feedback (Benson, 2001; De Grez, Valcke, & Roozen, 2012). In these activities, Hurrell has students reflect on their individual and group performance as listeners and speakers after an initial 10-minute discussion by discussing the answers to reflective questions in pairs. Students then set themselves two challenges for the second 16-minute discussion. After the second discussion, the students finally reflect in pairs on how effectively they met their challenges.

Another example is Lanidicho’s feedback method—based on Lantolf and Thorne’s (2006) Dynamic Assessment—that

incorporates Nicol and Macfalane-Dick’s (2006) Good Feedback Principles. After the first student discussion, Landicho provides written comments that the students read and discuss in pairs or groups before they have a second discussion. Landicho’s and Hurrell’s classroom observations have indicated that this technique serves to clarify good performance, facilitate self-regulation, encourage positive self-esteem, and clarify discrepancies between current and desired performance.

Influences on WTC

Opitz and Chen talked about some of the benefits of the EDC curriculum for WTC. All EDC instructors are required to present “function” phrases to their students. The phrases are learned and practiced as holophrastic chunks (Ausubel, 1963) for their discourse purpose. For example, “What do you think?” is presented in the early stages of the course as a way of achieving the function of soliciting another person’s opinion in a discussion. The phrases are never broken down or analyzed in terms of their component parts but are always assessed in the various feedback techniques in terms of frequency of use and pragmatic effectiveness, thereby de-emphasizing formal accuracy (Swain, 1985) and encouraging students to focus on meaningful language in use. In his classrooms, Opitz has observed that through the use of these phrases, student behaviors shift away from a WTC-inhibiting concern about the accuracy of their utterances to a valuing of the function phrases for their meaningful discourse purpose.

In conclusion, it has generally been observed by the authors that the aforementioned classroom techniques encourage a shift from an exam-oriented extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation. The feedback techniques encourage learners to take responsibility for their learning, and the use of repetition and function phrases allows for faster recall, which in turn builds

confidence. This is supported by the high degree of positive feedback from the students at the end of the program.

From Teacher Centered to Learner Centered: Creating English Booths

Ray, D.

In my presentation, I talked about why my teaching style changed and then outlined how that happened. Initially, I was more of a controlling teacher, but noticing the passivity of the students, their dependence on me for their learning, and their lack of interest in the classroom activities, I started thinking about a different way to motivate my students. This led me to explore motivation by considering the psychology of the language learner (Dörnyei, 2005).

I asked my students about the situation in my English class and got replies indicating that they wanted more freedom as they were already in university, so I endeavored to change teaching style towards a more learner-centered one. This was at the beginning of the second semester, and the university festival was coming up. My students seemed to be enthusiastic about this new style of teaching and even more about the university festival. I began thinking of ways of using this situation to encourage my students to learn and practice some English by somehow using the university festival. Finally, I had the idea of having “English booths” at the festival and proposed the idea to my students. In the beginning, this brand new idea seemed a little confusing to them. However, after about half a period of explanation and discussion, they understood, and the majority supported the idea. Next, the students formed groups, and each group decided on one theme for their poster and an interesting activity or presentation related to that theme. The hypothesis was that the students would be independent and active learners in doing the preparation for the project, which would help to

achieve student autonomy in the class. Moreover, they would have the opportunity to use English in a natural environment with the visitors during the festival.

I prepared a list of guidelines for the students to follow, such as not to use Japanese when at the booth and to prepare on a weekly basis. Otherwise, the students were free to make decisions independently. This transformed their classroom behavior and the atmosphere of the classroom, and the students became active learners with their self-selected tasks. The students wanted to create a lot of things to go with their activities or presentations; however, the class time was not enough for that. I allotted 30-45 minutes per class and the rest of the creative work, for example, making posters, doing art work, and so forth, was done outside of class. The groups individually took decisions about who was going to do what and when and how. Except for giving a time frame, I did not interfere in that. Some students got together at a time convenient for them in the cafeteria or in a classroom and did the work. Some students did their part by themselves at home. From inspiration to implementation, we had 8 weeks in total. I also gave them a list of vocabulary and some simple expressions that they could use on their final day at the booth.

In their groups, students prepared different activities, such as games, stories, quizzes, picture-storytelling, and videos with English songs, along with a simple poster for each activity. They made a timetable to allot an equal amount of time to each member of their group. In this way, the responsibility was shared evenly.

During the 2 days of the festival, hundreds of visitors visited the English booths. The visitors consisted mainly of the local people and high school students as well as some native English speakers whom I had invited. As far as I could see, the students used mostly English with the visitors.

By changing my attitude towards teaching and giving autonomy to the students, I witnessed a transition in my classroom towards the betterment of learner motivation. The comments from the visitors were encouraging, and the feedback from the students was positive. I am thinking about making the booths a permanent feature at our university festival. I recommend English booths to my fellow educators, if it is possible in their teaching situations.

The Facilitative Role of Corrective Feedback in L2 Writing and Grammar Development

Taferner, R. H.

This study linked the main features of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) on L2 writing theory and practice to the enhancement of learner autonomy (Benson, 2011). Although there is ample support for the use of WCF to improve comprehension, cohesion, and the mechanical features of learners' writing (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012), there is a paucity of research to support its use for long-term grammar acquisition (Ellis, 1990; Truscott, 1996). In this small, controlled study of 24 Japanese pre-intermediate level EFL students in a university setting, the ability of comprehensive WCF to affect the use of definite and indefinite articles in learners' compositions was demonstrated by the comparison of pretests and immediate and delayed posttests over a period of 15 weeks. Extended delayed posttests at 24 and 39 weeks after WCF treatment showed that accuracy rates for articles were maintained.

Analysis of the textual errors in the students' work indicated that direct comprehensive WCF leads to long-term improvement of article usage. However, WCF may also affect short-term learning of many of the grammatical items corrected as well. These results suggest that pre-intermediate EFL learners can expect improvements in their use of articles after receiving WCF,

but WCF on other grammatical forms is likely not to result in significant rates of improvement longitudinally. On the other hand, Bitchener and Knoch's longitudinal studies (2010a, 2010b) using a variety of corrective feedback techniques on ESL texts resulted in no significant differences in article usage between the treatment and control groups. The differences in experimental conditions (ESL vs. EFL contexts, L1 differences, and the lack of rewriting after corrective feedback was provided) were likely responsible for the differences in the findings in this present study and those in Bitchener and Knoch's research.

Conducting this study with intermediate, upper intermediate, and advanced level participants may reveal different feedback results and thus inform instructors about which items within a grammatical class (for example, articles, grammatical morphemes, prepositions, or pronouns) are more likely to lead to positive results when WCF is provided to learners at a particular proficiency level, as well as when learners are ready to manage a particular linguistic form (Pienemann & Kessler, 2011). Within the constraints of corrective feedback, the specific metalinguistic knowledge needed for the learners to comprehend the use of the particular grammatical item, in the context it is being used, is likely to be of great importance. That is, expertise in conveying the appropriate metalinguistic information about a specific linguistic form, at the right time, needs further inquiry.

By providing learners with empirically derived WCF assistance on grammatical items, teachers and learners can spend their time more productively addressing a variety of other writing issues that could lead to an overall higher rate of successful learning. Once sufficient research has been conducted, instructors and learners can be better informed about a proven approach to guide their grammar acquisition. Learners will then be more likely to engage in autonomous grammar learning with a higher rate of success. In addition, they will feel that their guided independent learning efforts will ultimately lead

to overall improvements in L2 writing and confidence in their language development.

Narrative Learning Transformations After a University Learner Autonomy Seminar

Vye, S.

Language teachers sometimes wonder what has become of their learners after the course has concluded and what transitional developments have occurred in their students' lives. Fortunately, this advisor had the opportunity to interview six university students who were studying abroad and had participated in a volunteer learner-autonomy seminar the previous year. Three of the students were international students currently studying abroad in Japan, and three of the students were Japanese students who had completed an academic year studying abroad in North America. All six students shared retrospective transformational narratives through interviews transcribed by the advisor, verified for clarity with each student, and then rewritten for accuracy if necessary. The prompt question provided was simple: "What have you learned, related to English, after your seminar?" The results of the narratives are significant because they indicate that these learners had internalized some understanding of past experiences about how their sense of identity or L2-self had changed as a result of learning a second language. These students reported making discoveries about themselves regarding language learning from their experience living in another culture, which led them to discover more about their personal identity. Below are highlights of interviews with three students who reported the greatest learning transformations.

The transformation of self for Mary, a Japanese female who studied abroad in Canada, started when her roommate asked her questions about Japanese culture "that were difficult to answer and it made me think . . . about Japan and traditional

things, also religion. She asked me, 'Do you guys have religion?' But it's so hard to say if it's a religion or a custom." This led Mary to ponder her own beliefs about her L1 culture. From this experience, she decided to "tak[e] classes about understanding Japan now. One is about political things and the other is about culture. And I did tea ceremony for the first time! So fun!"

In the case of Iman, her graduate courses are in Japanese and her native language is Malay. In lectures, it is easier for her to write ideas in English for Japanese-language reports rather than in Malay or Japanese, but until I asked her how she had been taking notes in class, she had not realized that she was actually writing them in English instead of her native language, which led her to discover that English is so much a part of her life. This discovery from the question prompt seemed to teach her that English is a huge part of her L1 life and part of her identity as a whole.

Finally, for Suzie, a Japanese female undergraduate, the transformation she experienced was profound and is best expressed in her own words:

After I went to America . . . It is difficult to explain, but my heart is healed! I didn't think that Japanese life was unhealthy mentally before . . . we can show our feelings freely in America. They have a hugging culture and they can show their feelings directly more than Japanese, so it was huge for me to experience American life . . . I thought it is okay to be myself even in Japan. For me it became a lot easier to live in Japan now!

These retrospective transitional narratives have shown me the significant impact that study abroad programs can have on the development of students' L2 selves. With more exploration, a lot more might be learned.

Concluding Reflections on the Forum From the Participants

In the final 30 minutes of the forum, all the presenters and participants gathered in groups of four or five to reflect on the content of the presentations. Once the participants had discussed their impressions regarding the content of the forum, they wrote summaries of their reflections and handed them in to the forum organizer. After the responses from the participants were collated, several common themes emerged.

First, some expressed surprise about how collaborative reflection activities that encourage students to reflect on their learning progress could be implemented and organized effectively in Japanese universities. As expressed in the reflections, there seemed to be a perception that these kinds of activities, which require students to take a critical look at their own and their peer's performance, could be face threatening and intimidating for some students. However, it was refreshing for many to learn that, through the use of activities like the Learning Tree and peer reflection activities presented by the group from Rikkyo University's English Discussion Center, students were able to actively engage with their peers and improve their learning progress, or as one participant put it, "Peer observation is like going to the dentist. It's not always enjoyable, but it feels good afterwards."

Second, some commented that they felt that self-reflection and collaborative learning is "A process not only for learners but also for teachers"; that "if teachers are to develop learner autonomy in their classrooms, there is also a need for teacher autonomy"; and that by collaborating in events, for example the LD forum and the monthly LD SIG get-togethers held around Japan, teachers can help each other to improve the quality of learner-centered teaching in their classrooms.

Third and most poignant, many were impressed by the stories of transformations of students when given autonomy and the

active role that teachers can still play in autonomous learning. Some seemed to have the impression that learner autonomy meant leaving the students to their own devices and a reduced teacher role. However, after listening to the stories in the forum, some commented that "Autonomy doesn't mean that teachers can't make significant differences in our students lives" and that "By listening to our students, teachers can dramatically change their own lives as well as their students' lives for the better."

In conclusion, these reflections displayed that the participants were inspired by the presentations in the forum. However, some also mentioned that there was a great variety in the ways that learner-centered teaching was represented in the various presentations. For example, some contexts used more structured activities for their learner development activities, as opposed to the freer approach used in other contexts. Therefore, there is a need for more research into the various aspects of learner development and how it should be implemented in different educational contexts. This is a subject that the LD SIG plans to develop in future events.

Bio Data

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Philip Shigeo Brown has taught in various contexts in Japan since 2001 and is a lecturer and learning-advisor at Konan Women's University. He is also a tutor on the University of Birmingham's distance MA TEFL/TESL program, mentor for the International Teacher Development Institute (iTDi), and cofounder of MASH Collaboration. Phil is a coeditor of *Innovating EFL Teaching in Asia* (Muller et al., 2012) and *Exploring EFL Fluency in Asia* (Muller et al., 2014). <philza2003@yahoo.com>

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