Study Buddy Teams: First-Year Cooperative Learning Inspired by Hevruta

Natasha Hashimoto
Tokyo Woman's Christian University

Reference Data

Hashimoto, N. (2021). Study buddy teams: First-year cooperative learning inspired by *hevruta*. In P. Clements, R. Derrah, & P. Ferguson (Eds.), *Communities of teachers & learners*. JALT. https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTPCP2020-26

This report examines a learning method that fosters engagement and cooperation between 1st-year university students in an academic writing and English proficiency test preparation course. The class was taught online in the spring semester. The students worked in long-term fixed study buddy teams of three or four both during and outside class time. Student teams regularly met online to practice English, share and reflect on their learning strategy use, and prepare for upcoming class sessions. Furthermore, during the summer break, the teams continued to meet weekly online to speak English and share what they were practicing individually, which they later reported kept them motivated. This report describes how the study buddy teams were utilized and how the students reacted. Student feedback about the course and teamwork throughout the semester was positive, the rate of active participation and attendance was high, indicating that the approach was successful.

本研究では、大学1年生のアカデミックライティングと英語能力テスト対策の授業において、学生同士の協力関係を育む学習方法を検討した。学生たちはstudy buddiesと呼ばれる少人数の長期固定チームで、授業の内外で活動した。春学期の授業はオンラインで行われたが、チームは授業内外で定期的にオンラインで会い、英語の練習、学習ストラテジーの使い方の共有と振り返り、次回の授業の準備などを行った。さらに夏休み中もオンラインで集まり、英語を話したり、個人的に練習していることを共有したりして、モチベーションを維持した。本研究では、チームがどのように活用され、学生がどのように反応したかを紹介する。学期を通してstudy buddiesシステムに関する学生の評価はポジティブなものであった。また学生の各セッションへの参加は積極的であり、授業の出席率も高かったことが、このアプローチの成功を示している。

Learner-centered teaching and group work, sometimes called collaborative or cooperative learning, have long been staples of teachers' work and a focus of educational research (e.g., Kagan, 1994; Millis & Cottell, 1998; Weimer, 2013). Some scholars have argued that learning in pairs and groups effectively helps students learn (Johnson et al., 2000), whereas studying alone can cause students to struggle (Light, 2001). Because humans are biologically conditioned and evolutionarily developed to be group-oriented (De Dreu, 2016), learners' need to belong can be met through regular group work (Lieberman, 2014). This social aspect of human nature is important, especially for 1st-year university students' learning. The transition from high school to university can be a significant stressor (Hicks & Heastie, 2008; Wilson & Gillies, 2005), and many 1st-year students experience difficulty adjusting to their new environments and the demands placed on them (Rodgers & Tennison, 2009). Therefore, it could be beneficial to students to develop a sense of peer community early on, particularly when opportunities to meet classmates diminish due to remote learning. As a result, students might adjust more easily to college life and learn better through peer interactions. The purpose of this paper is to introduce the idea of *hevruta*-inspired teaching so that other teachers might consider using this methodology in their own lessons.

Background

The following section describes the setting and the past events that resulted in the action research discussed in this paper and led to my transformed teaching approach. The section also includes information about developing and implementing the study buddy system, which is a core feature of the teaching method discussed here.

Like many other teachers, I rely a great deal on student pair and group work. In the past, my students typically worked with the same partner(s) for a relatively short time, frequently changing groups in most class meetings. The focus was not on the social aspect of learning because I believed that students had opportunities to connect and

build friendships through extracurricular activities. Judging from the student feedback in questionnaires and the higher-than-average class evaluations collected through officially distributed forms over the years, most students were satisfied with this teaching style.

Although the overall feedback was positive, several years ago, I was struck by an idea expressed in student reflections in which students wrote about their positive and negative learning experiences in a year-long class that met twice a week. Some students mentioned they wished they had formed stronger bonds with their classmates. Although the class met twice a week, unlike most of their other courses, and engaged in pair and group work in every session, that did not seem to be enough for some students to bond. The social aspect of learning was not adequately addressed in the course.

The challenging conditions of the academic year 2020/2021 threatened to make 1st-year students feel even more isolated because they started with remote learning. If students had not built a strong community in the past in a physical classroom setting, switching to online classes could only exacerbate feelings of isolation. Indeed, some reports have suggested that youth increasingly struggled with social isolation, loneliness, and mental health problems due to the pandemic (Hamza et al., 2020; Loades et al., 2020). More than before, students needed to make meaningful connections in the virtual classroom and belong to a supportive community. *Hevruta* seemed to promise that through frequent meetings over time classmates would build positive relationships and support one another in an online learning environment. Allowing students to work in fixed long-term groups promised to offer an opportunity to create strong small communities because students would spend much time in the same group and become familiar.

Hevruta

Hevruta (also known as *havruta* and *chavrusa*) is a type of cooperative learning in dyads and small groups in which learners study together over an extended period, typically focusing on challenging texts (Shargel & Laster, 2016; Wright et al., 2013). Pairs read together, pose and answer questions about the text, and engage in close reading and discussions (Kent, 2010). This learning method has been traditionally used as a core learning technique in Judaic schools (Bergom et al., 2011; Segal, 2003) and, in recent years, secular education (Shargel, 2019). It has been argued that the original intent for introducing this learning approach was to help struggling students (Segal, 2003). In some contexts, senior students were purposely paired with students in lower grades (Tubin et al., 2012). A distinct feature of *hevruta* partnerships is that they are designed to continue for a long time, such as the whole course semester or academic year in which students stay with the same partner(s) (Bergom et al., 2011) to allow learners to develop strong, trusting relationships (Blumenthal, 2012).

In secular post-secondary contexts, *hevruta* has been discussed in only a handful of articles (e.g., Bergom et al., 2011; Wright et al., 2011; Wright et al., 2013). Wright et al. (2013) tailored the *hevruta* method to match teaching contexts in the humanities and social sciences in the United States. They found that the method was beneficial in an upper-level English course because it helped students reflect on their learning and made them more self-directed.

The findings of Wright et al. (2013) inspired me to adapt *hevruta* in my classroom in the hoping of helping students learn from one another, fostering motivation, and providing opportunities for regular reflection on learning. Although traditionally *hevruta* did not contain a written component, some recent implementations of the method have added one (Shargel & Laster, 2016; Shargel & Passe, 2013; Wright et al., 2013). Modifying *hevruta* in my class was necessary because it has not been applied before in foreign language classrooms. Therefore, the discussion of adapting *hevruta* for L2 learning purposes is a contribution of the current paper.

Participants and Data Collection

The current study was conducted during spring semester and summer break, 2020. Nineteen 1st-year English majors enrolled in a compulsory academic writing and English proficiency test preparation course taught online via Google Classroom and Zoom. The participants gave their informed consent for the data to be used in the study, and the institutional requirements were adhered to. The students were expected to study abroad in English-speaking countries for a semester or longer. Their English proficiency test scores can determine where they will study because different programs overseas require different standardized test scores for enrollment.

Data in the study come from several sources. Students responded to three anonymous surveys administered via Google Forms and wrote three reflections in English and Japanese during the spring semester and at the end of the summer break. One of the surveys administered before the teams were formed asked the students about their study habits and past participation in group work. Later, the students completed two surveys in which they evaluated the adequacy and usefulness of various class activities (e.g., think-alouds, examiner-examinee role-plays), assessed the progress they had made, and shared opinions about group work. Reflection papers included students' names and were graded

for submission. The prompts included topics such as learning strategies (e.g., retrieval, interleaving), test-taking strategies (e.g., planning, monitoring), and contributions made/received in teamwork.

The record of weekly class attendance and participation was also used to gauge student engagement. Class attendance was measured through frequency of attendance, for example, a lack of absence and tardiness. Participation was operationalized as students asking and answering questions and making comments orally and via chat in Zoom meetings and posts in Google Classroom, of which I kept detailed records. In addition, I observed student teams (called study buddy teams) in online breakout rooms. Observations conducted from May to July served to check students' engagement with the study materials and discussions with teammates. On several occasions, I took notes on how the students interacted with one another. In the summer, students worked in teams on their own, without direct supervision.

Study Buddy Teams: Formation and Instructions

Although *hevruta* learning typically means working in dyads, it can also be done in small groups (Holzer & Kent, 2011). I put students into groups of 3 instead of pairing them up while still incorporating the method's main features because it was possible for the students to be absent or drop out at any time. To ensure that nobody lost their learning partners, I implemented triads instead of pairs. However, because 19 students enrolled in the course, one team had 4 members.

Furthermore, I thought that using triads instead of dyads would facilitate student engagement with challenging content in English. For the same reason, each team included a student with more advanced English skills. Students were grouped into long-term fixed teams after the first 6 class meetings. During that time, I evaluated the students' English levels (mainly through writing and speaking) and took notes on their behavior in the main and breakout rooms to familiarize myself with them and later group them. Students also wrote self-introductions, following which I created heterogeneous groups so that students could reap the benefits of teammates with diverse backgrounds and knowledge (as per Jacobs et al., 2002; Millis, 2002) and to support less proficient students (Segal, 2003; Tubin et al., 2012). Each group consisted of more and less active students (as observed in the first weeks of the course) and whose English ability, interests, and hometowns were different from their teammates'.

Teams received information about the purpose of forming groups: to support each other, exchange information, build trust, and help oneself learn through regular discussions. I informed the students that research had shown that group work, when done well, benefits learners. I provided information about group work and answered students' questions in English and Japanese.

After the groups were formed, the students spent unobserved time acquainting and reacquainting themselves in breakout rooms in their new teams. Prompts, such as those instructing students to talk about their goals for the course, favorite books and movies, were provided to facilitate the conversation. Students exchanged contact information and agreed on how to communicate online outside of class hours. In the following session, I visited breakout rooms to check how teams worked on assigned tasks. Additionally, it was important to check if any students dominated group talk, which I continued to monitor occasionally throughout the semester. However, I did not notice any instances that required intervention.

A list of expressions for praising, encouraging, and asking for more detailed feedback was shared with students because they were required to provide feedback on their teammates' writing and speaking. The instructions emphasized the importance of regular communication between teammates in class and when doing homework and studying. Furthermore, the instructions stated that the purpose of the teams was not to simply compare answers to exercises done in class and as homework, but also to challenge each other's responses respectfully. For example, students could say, "My answer is different. Where in the passage did you find that...? How did you conclude...?" In this way, they improved their understanding of the topic, task, and learning process. Before the teams engaged in independent discussions, I modeled how to use the phrases, and the class practiced them in breakout rooms. I also taught, modeled, and shared materials (e.g., checklists, past examples of student work) to ensure that all students became familiar with learning and test-taking strategies, which I taught bilingually. The students also used the strategies in whole-class work.

After the groups were created, students worked with study buddies in breakout rooms only during the regular, synchronous online whole-class meetings for the first 2 weeks. Following that, they were invited to participate in asynchronous activities, such as writing opinions in a Google document shared with the whole class, where each team or student wrote their ideas. The students discussed their written responses in a synchronous class meeting several days later. Next, teams met for 30 minutes before the whole-class session and followed instructions to work on listening and reading passages. I provided guiding questions for them to use to analyze the passages. A more detailed description of specific tasks and activities follows.

Activities and Materials Used by Study Buddies

In this section, I introduce a sample of activities that students found particularly enjoyable and beneficial for learning English and fostering friendly relationships. Most activities required them to be online at the same time, either in class or outside the virtual classroom (typically, a fraction of the scheduled class time was used). I also describe the summer study planner that the students could use during the summer break and earn extra points after submitting a filled-out version.

When working in teams and answering post-listening and post-reading questions in class, students had to support their answers by referring to specific sections in the listening and reading passages used to practice for the proficiency test. It was not enough to only answer with "The answer to this question is A." The students had to explain how and why they chose a specific answer and support it with evidence from the text. In that sense, the prompts and guiding questions resembled those in close reading tasks and group activities described in Jacobs et al. (2002) and *hevruta* tradition (Bergom et al., 2011; Kent, 2006). This type of activity appealed to students because they focused strictly on close reading of texts and learned from more proficient peers who shared their thinking process.

In some instances, I prepared additional reading and listening materials and questions for students to answers in groups, and students decided when to work together. I chose the materials from the Internet (for example, YouTube videos about topics related to what was studied in class) and past English proficiency tests. In such cases, I observed only the written outcome, typically written answers and KWL-style reports (in which students took notes about what they already knew about the topic, what they wanted to know, and what they learned from the activity). Students typically received a passage to analyze and discuss 30 minutes before a synchronous session. Sometimes, they received a passage several days ahead of time, which means they could first work on it alone but could still use the first 30 minutes of class time for study buddy consultations before joining the class.

I used speaking prompt cards that contained low-frequency adjectives and questions based on the adjectives in order to enhance students' vocabulary and engage them in meaningful and stimulating conversations. For example, a card could contain words such as "appalling" or "admirable." Questions asked students to describe what they found appalling in certain situations or what/who they considered admirable and why. Students were allowed to skip questions they found too personal or did not feel comfortable discussing. This activity provided vocabulary useful for standardized English tests and allowed students to share personal experiences and opinions in conversations with peers. They found this activity the most enjoyable of all activities done in class.

In addition, students regularly discussed test-taking and metacognitive strategies that they used in order to be accountable for their learning and to learn from their peers. To that end, I created virtual gallery walks based on test-taking strategies (e.g., guessing the word meaning based on context clues) taught in the course, and students shared experiences with different test-taking strategies with teammates. They also evaluated how helpful these strategies were and shared other strategies they had learned in other courses and on their own.

Hevruta also incorporates metacognitive reflection (Kent, 2010). Hence, I expanded the prompts in the gallery walks to include items from metacognitive strategy scales (e.g., Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Students discussed how useful they thought specific metacognitive strategies were for learning. Also, they applied the strategies practically, mainly in listening and reading tasks. This activity aimed to encourage students to explore ways to study, practice the strategies and evaluate them, and learn from peers' experiences with such strategies. The students reported that these activities were valuable and that they had not learned many metacognitive strategies in the past.

Occasionally, students were randomly paired or grouped with students from other teams. The time allotted was usually around 5 to 10 minutes. These random pairs/groups frequently did brief warm-up activities. Sometimes they were instructed to share information about helpful sources, such as interesting videos and websites they had learned about or used in their study buddy teams.

Finally, to support students' studies over the summer break, I created a summer study planner, a booklet to use during the break. The planner was worth an extra 5 points if the students submitted pictures of filled-out pages in the fall. The booklet included pages where the students took notes and recorded their learning activities. The booklet also included inspirational messages, reminders on how to relax, and QR codes to online learning sources (including the class Google Drive), among other things. There was also space provided to write down questions to ask after returning to school in the fall. Most students found that the information in the planner was useful and the planners motivational.

Student Reactions and Evaluations of Study Buddy Teamwork

This section introduces some initial findings based on the data collected from class observations, student reflections, answers to 3 questionnaires administered in the spring

and after the summer break, and class records of attendance and participation. Overall, in the light of recent reports on student attrition, demotivation, and struggles due to social isolation, the results of the current study indicate that study buddy teamwork was a success, although there were also some negative aspects.

I repeatedly observed students' speaking practice for the exam. Typically, one student acted as a test taker, and the other two acted as examiners or an examiner and a timekeeper/note-taker. Students were supportive and encouraged one another to speak in most sessions I observed. For example, in one group, a less proficient student sometimes had difficulty speaking continually for the required amount of time. The timekeeper prompted the examinee to say, "Let me see," when she was unable to produce a longer response. Although this kind of interaction did not happen in all situations like this, overall teammates were patient and supportive of one another. Students not only practiced speaking and listening, but also received encouragement and advice after these exercises were completed.

Another positive aspect of teamwork that students reported was that being given time in groups ahead of whole-class meetings to analyze reading passages helped them deal with texts more easily than when working alone on homework assignments and join whole-class discussions. It should be noted that teams were allowed to use English and Japanese in their study sessions when working on reading passages and preparing for class.

In a questionnaire administered before the teams were formed, most students answered that they did not regularly engage in similar group work in their university courses. In a follow-up questionnaire administered at the end of the spring term, students reported that working in sustained teams for the semester was a novel experience for all of them. Overall, it was a pleasant experience, as 17 out of 19 students were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the teamwork in the course, only one student chose "neutral." In addition, to the open-ended question that asked students to share what they liked about the course, many students answered that they became good friends with their teammates.

Based on their responses to a survey administered at the end of the summer break, students remained very positive about group work after the break. All 19 students evaluated summer teamwork as "good" or "excellent." The most common comments they made referred to maintaining motivation, developing friendships, and enjoying English through summer study. Below are several students' excerpts on how they viewed the study buddy learning work over the summer break:

- I could recognize how other study buddies are preparing for the test and that was a huge motivation for me. (Student 1)
- I didn't want to study, but study buddy meetings motivated me. (Student 2)
- I was able to make good friends, and the practice helped me to take the test without feeling nervous. (Student 3)
- I felt again it's fun to use English. (Student 4)
- If I was alone, I'd be too lazy to study [in the summer]. (Student 5)

All 6 groups reported participating in regular summer meetings. However, the frequency and length of the meetings varied. Two groups met twice a week for 1 hour, 3 groups met every other week for 1 hour, and 1 group met once every other week. The group that met once a week cited work and other obligations as the reasons for fewer meetings. Overall, I consider the summer learning project successful because all groups met regularly and had largely positive experiences.

Class records for the spring term show excellent attendance and participation. By the end of summer break, none of the 19 students had dropped out. There were only a handful of absences during the semester, which in my experience was the best attendance for this particular course. However, as the course was taught online, it was more convenient than in the past when students had to commute, which could have affected attendance. On the other hand, research and news reports have suggested that online classes take a toll on students. Many drop out, struggle with remote learning, and feel isolated and unmotivated, which can particularly negatively affect 1st-year university students (Burke, 2020; "COVID-19 pushes," 2021; Mcalpine, 2021; Shoji, 2020). Therefore, since the students continued attending class, held meetings with teammates, and participated in class actively, it can be suggested that the *hevruta*-inspired method had a positive impact.

Participation, operationalized as the frequency of students asking questions and answering questions in whole-class sessions, was relatively high. Although there were some quieter class meetings when more breakout room activities and teacher talk took place, 8 to 9 students spoke up in class on most days. However, two students rarely spoke in whole-class meetings, although they had occasionally asked and answered questions in Zoom chat.

Although attendance and participation were excellent and students' impressions shared in surveys and reflections were largely positive, a few matters suggest that the approach could be improved. For example, a very motivated, conscientious student commented that sometimes it was difficult to receive timely replies from one of her

partners. In addition, she felt disappointed when her partner(s) would not join student-led online study buddy meetings on time. Even though no students reported any problems with "free-riders," it is evident that some students did not always participate as eagerly as their peers. One student mentioned in her reflection that she wanted more detailed feedback from her peers on her writing. An intervention was not possible at that time because the semester had ended. Administering brief weekly questionnaires about teammates' engagement followed by group work observation could have helped detect less engaged students and allowed me to intervene. Finally, another negative aspect of the summer teamwork mentioned by two students on the same team was that it was not easy to find the time to meet as a group due to schedule conflicts. However, the summer study was unsupervised, and intervention was not feasible.

Conclusion

The application of *hevruta*-inspired teamwork in this action research allowed me and my students not only to survive a challenging semester but try something new and meaningful that enriched our remote classroom experience. The outcomes of the present study are encouraging and support previous research that argues in favor of group work in the classroom (Johnson et al., 2000), in particular when sustained partnerships are implemented (Bergom et al., 2011; Shargel & Laster, 2016; Wright et al., 2011, 2013). The findings also encourage continuing utilization of study buddies, which I intend to do in future courses. At the same time, as noted above, a particularly conscientious student and a less motivated student could be on the same team. When long-term teamwork is implemented, there need to be mechanisms for dealing with uneven participation and team members' different motivation levels. This issue is something I plan to focus on in the future by further learning about and researching group dynamics and the ways long-term fixed teams function.

Although at the time of writing the academic year did not yet finish and final student evaluations were pending, as a teacher, I was satisfied and eager to utilize and improve the study buddy method in future classes. The next step is to finalize this study and further evaluate the learning method by analyzing the data collected in the fall term. The results will further be compared with the proficiency exam scores, participation and attendance records, and questionnaire results from another course that I taught without using the study buddy system.

Bio Data

Natasha Hashimoto is an associate professor at Tokyo Woman's Christian University. She received her bachelor's degree from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and master's in human rights and social justice from Arizona State University. Her doctoral degree in education/applied linguistics is from Temple University. Her teaching and research interests include metacognitive strategies, social-emotional learning, fairness in language assessment, Bourdieusian social theory, and multilingual and transnational identities in ELT. <tue87579@temple.edu>

References

Bergom, I., Wright, M. W., Brown, M. D., & Brooks, M. (2011). Promoting college student development through collaborative learning: A case study of hevruta. *About Campus*, *15*(6), 19-25. https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.20044

Blumenthal, S. M. (2012). *Havruta as modeled pedagogy: Your people shall be my people* (Doctoral dissertation, The George Washington University, United States of America). Retrieved from https://scholarspace.library.gwu.edu/concern/gw_etds/d791sg16q

Burke, L. (2020, October 27). Moving into the long term. *Inside Higher Ed*. https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2020/10/27/long-term-online-learning-pandemic-may-impact-students-well

De Dreu, C. K. W. (2016). Oxytocin conditions human group psychology. In E. Harmon-Jones & M. Inzlicht (Eds.), *Social neuroscience: Biological approaches to social psychology* (pp. 143-163). Routledge.

Hamza, C. A., Ewing, L., Heath, N. L., & Goldstein, A. L. (2020, September 7). When social isolation is nothing new: A longitudinal study psychological distress during COVID-19 among university students with and without preexisting mental health concerns. *Canadian Psychology*. Advance online publication. https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2020-66840-001.pdf

Hicks, T., & Heastie, S. (2008). High school to college transition: A profile of the stressors, physical and psychological health issues that affect the first-year on-campus college student. *Journal of Cultural Diversity, 15,* 143-7. Available from https://digitalcommons.uncfsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=soe_faculty_wp

Holzer, E., & Kent, O. (2011). Havruta: What do we know and what can we hope to learn from studying in havruta? In H. Miller, L. D. Grant, & A. Pomson (Eds.), *International handbook of Jewish education* (pp. 407-418). Springer.

Jacobs, G. M., Power, M. A., & Loh, W. I. (2002). *The teacher's sourcebook for cooperative learning*. Corwin Press.

Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T., & Stanne, M.B. (2000). *Cooperative learning methods: A meta-analysis*. Cooperative Learning Center at the University of Minnesota.

Kagan, S. (1994). *Cooperative learning*. Kagan Publishing.

Kent, O. (2010). A theory of havruta learning. *Journal of Jewish Education, 76*(3), 215- 245. https://doi.org/10.1080/15244113.2010.501499

Lieberman, M. D. (2014). *Social: Why our brains are wired to connect*. Crown.

Light, R. J. (2001). *Making the most of college: Students speak their minds*. Harvard University Press.

Loades, M. E., Chatburn, E., Higson-Sweeney, N., Reynolds, S., Shafran, R. Brigden, A., Linney, C., Niamh MCManus, M., Borwick, C., & Crawley, E. (2020). Rapid systematic review: The impact of social isolation and loneliness on the mental health of children and adolescents in the context of COVID-19. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 59*(11), 1218-1239. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7267797/

Mcalpine, K. J. (2021, February 17). Depression, anxiety, loneliness are peaking in college students. *The Brink*. http://www.bu.edu/articles/2021/depression-anxiety-loneliness-are-peaking-in-college-students/

Millis, B. J. (2002). Enhancing learning and more through cooperative learning. *The Idea Center*, 3-8. Available from https://www.ideaedu.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/IDEA%20Papers/IDEA%20Papers/IDEA_Paper_38.pdf

Millis, B. J., & Cottell, P. G. (1998). *Cooperative learning for higher education faculty*. American Council on Education Oryx Press.

Rodgers L. S, Tennison, L. R. (2009). A preliminary assessment of adjustment disorder among first-year college students. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing, 23*(3), 220-230. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnu.2008.05.007

Segal, A. (2003). *Havruta study: History, benefits, and enhancements*. Academy for tora initiatives and directions.

Shargel, R. (2019). Havruta goes to university: Havruta-style text study in a college education class. *Journal of Jewish Education, 85*(1), 4-26.

https://doi.org/10.1080/15244113.2019.1558385

Shargel, R., & Laster, B. P. (2016). Partner learning (havruta) for close reading comprehension. *English Journal, 105*(3), 63-68. Available from https://www.jstor.org/stable/26359399

Shargel, R., & Passe, J. (2013). Dyadic learning in the middle school social studies class. *Social Studies Review, 50,* 40-50. Available from https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Dyadic-Learning-in-the-Middle-School-Social-Studies-Shargel-Passe/7ee9bfc3464231a437b2e1a0ac1ce5ecd39da962

Shoji, K. (2020, November 7). Japan's students struggle to embrace online learning amid COVID-19. *The Japan Times*. https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/11/07/national/media-national/students-online-coronavirus/

The Japan Times. (2021, February 28). *COVID-19 pushes 1,300 Japanese university students to drop out.* https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/02/28/national/university-students-dropout/

Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. (2012). *Teaching and learning second language listening: Metacognition in action*. Routledge.

Tubin, D., Sanders, C., Cohen, L., & Heaysman, O. (2012). Innovative learning environment inventory case study: Major Chaim yeshiva high school kibbutz Kfar Etzion Israel: Case report. *Ben Gurion University of Negev*.

Weimer, M. (2013). *Learner-centered teaching: Five key changes to practice* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Wilson, G., & Gillies, R. (2005). Stress associated with the transition from high school to university: The effect of social support and self-efficacy. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 15*, 77-92. https://doi.org/10.1375/ajgc.15.1.77

Wright, M., Bergom, I., & Brooks, M. (2011). The role of teaching assistants in student-centered learning: Benefits, costs, and negotiations. *Innovative Higher Education 36*, 331-342. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-011-9197-5

Wright, M. C., Bernstein, J. L., & Williams, R. (2013). The steps of the ladder keep going up: A case study of *hevruta* as reflective pedagogy in two universities. In M. Kaplan, N. Silver, D. Lavaque-Manty, & D. Meizlish (Eds.), *Using reflection and metacognition to improve student learning across disciplines, across the academy* (pp. 104-121). Stylus.

Appendix

Sample Questions and Prompts from the Questionnaires and Reflection Assignments

1. What strategies that you practiced with your study buddies helped you on the [proficiency] test? Please explain.
2. If you could prepare for and then retake the test, what would you do differently?
3. Please write a message for students who will take this course next year. What advice can you give them about working in study buddy teams and preparing for the [proficiency] test?
4. What did you like best about this course?
5. What did you dislike or found challenging about this course?
6. What surprised you the most about this course?

7. Please tell me about your experience with preparing for the [proficiency] test in study buddies teams. How did this experience affect your learning?
8. How satisfied are you with the way test preparations were conducted in this course? (Items 1-5: very satisfied-not satisfied at all)
9. How satisfied are you with the course in general? (Items 1-5: very satisfied-not satisfied at all)
10. How would you rate the support you received from your study buddies this semester? (Items 1-5: very satisfied-not satisfied at all)
11. How frequently did you meet your study buddies this summer?
12. How long did you talk on average during each meeting?
13. How did you meet (on Zoom, Google Meet, LINE, Skype, etc.)?
14. How much time did you spend speaking with one another on average when you met online?
15. Which languages did you use when you communicated? If you used English and Japanese, how did you decide which to use for what purpose?
16. How did the study buddy learning work for you this summer?
17. Please let me know all the good points you can think of regarding study buddy learning this summer.
18. Did you have any problems with study buddy meetings? Please explain.
19. Is there anything you would want to be changed about the study buddy system?
20. I need to decide whether to ask new students to work in study buddy teams next summer or not. Should study buddy teams for the summer break be implemented next year?