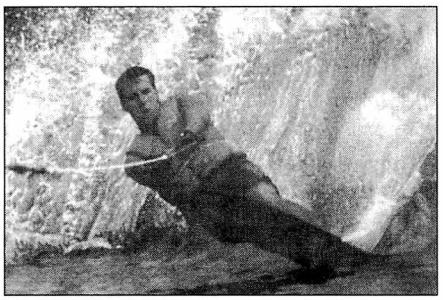
Part 3: Inquiry into instructional practices

Peer teaching for a change: It's in your hands



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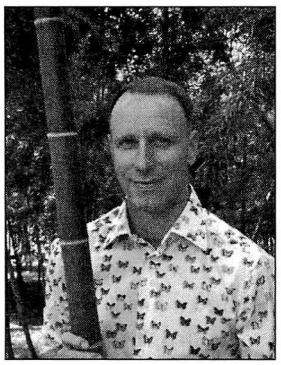

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About Brad

I am from Toronto, Canada, and am currently teaching and learning with my students in the Department of Humanities at Nagoya City University. I enjoy encouraging my students to take risks in their learning and to notice how they can impact each other in positive ways.

カナダ、トロント出身です。現在、名古屋市立大学人文学部にて講師をしています。学生が積極的に学習し、互いに良い影響を与えるよう促しています。

About Robert

I come from Tamworth, the country music capital of Australia. I am presently encouraging my students in the Nanzan English Program at the Seto Campus (NEPAS) to see themselves as active language users, both in and outside of the language classroom.

私はオーストラリアのカントリーミュージックの中心地、タムワースの出身です。現在、南山大学瀬戸キャンパス英語プログラム(NAPAS)において、クラス内外で積極的に外国語を使うことが自然に学生たちの身につくような教育を目指しています。

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would both like to extend a huge thank you and to commend our students herein for their courage, efforts, and imagination.

ABSTRACT

Though teachers are the central figures in any classroom (Stevick, 1980), some students, and even communities of students, may demonstrate the desire and ability to take greater control of their learning. In our case, the students assumed our roles as teachers for part of a semester and took responsibility for planning, conducting, and then reflecting on their lessons. In this paper, we explore our process of setting-up and conducting student peer-teaching and the consequent development of greater autonomy in our students. In particular, we will examine the payback, or key insights, gained from this experience via our own and our student's written reflections in order to ascertain the extent to which students developed greater autonomy.

教師はどの授業でも中心的な存在ではありますが (Stevick, 1980) 、ときには学生がより中心的に学習を進めることを望み、またその能力を示すことがあります。このケースでは、一部の授業で学生が先生役となり授業を計画、進行し、リフレクションを行いました。ここではまずこの peer-teaching の方法と、それによって学生がどのようにより自律性を高めていったかを説明します。特に、どれほど生徒が自律性を高めることができるかを確かめるために、私たちと学生が書いたリフレクションをもとに詳しくこの実験について考察を行います。

> I'm satisfied with today's peer teaching. Of course I got a little nervous, but I enjoyed very much. I think everyone enjoyed too. First I found preparing is very important. I think one reason for today's success in peer teaching was that we spent a long time to prepare and practiced several times. Second, I learned that it is not only teachers but also students who make classes. Another reason for today's success was students' attitude towards our lesson. They listened and watched carefully and worked hard. I think this peer teaching was a great experience for me. (An excerpt taken from a student's reflections on peer-teaching.)

INTRODUCTION

Who learns the most in school, teachers or students? When we consider that teachers are the most active agents in terms of planning, conducting, and assessing lessons, it would appear that they and not students potentially gain the most in educational settings. Often in universities in Japan, teacher-student roles seem to be strongly defined, and students are expected to be merely passive and receptive. However, some students, and even communities of students, may demonstrate the desire and ability to take greater control over their learning both individually and collectively. Learner autonomy pushes students to break out of traditional roles, giving students opportunities to be more active and in control of their learning.

One way of challenging traditional teacher-learner roles, offering more autonomy and enhanced learning opportunities, is to invert this relationship completely by inviting the

students to become the classroom teachers (see Assinder, 1991; Spratt & Leung, 2000). But freshman students becoming the teachers of their English classes -- impossible? Well, no! We did this with freshman English major classes at Nanzan University for one semester that met three times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. We found that students developed not only greater autonomy and confidence, but also a deeper understanding of the process of learning, both of their own and of their peers. Students took the responsibility for planning all aspects of their peer-teaching lesson, taught the classes, then collected, responded to, and handed back student learning log assessments of their lessons. The peer teachers then consolidated their impressions of this experience in a mini-report and noted the most salient points for their future growth and development.

In this paper, we will share our experience of the *handing over* and *taking over* of peer-teaching and consequent development of autonomy by our students via our insights and our students' own written reflections. First, we will situate the background to our experience of peer-teaching in narrative form. Then, we will examine some of the key theoretical principles behind peer-teaching and its relationship to autonomy. Next, we will share our approach to the process of setting-up and conducting peer-teaching lessons. Finally, we will explore the *payback*, or key insights, gained from this experience through our own and the student's perspectives in order to ascertain the extent to which students developed greater autonomy.

BACKGROUND – WHY DO PEER-TEACHING?

We both taught two year-long freshman oral communication courses of 20 English majors each, meeting three times a week for 45 minutes each class. We had complete autonomy to teach our classes as we saw fit, and this left a lot of room for experimentation and negotiation with our learners who were very motivated, and mostly at an intermediate or higher level. In our stories below you will gain a greater understanding of the background behind our decision to use peer-teaching with our classes.

ROBERT'S STORY

Often we underestimate what our students are capable of doing. As a teacher, one of my goals is to challenge my students, to help them explore their potential. I constantly seek ways of doing this, through reflection on my teaching practice, chatting with colleagues, attending workshops, and reading widely.

The idea for asking students to lead classes initially came from my experience as a student in an Australian high school. In my urban selective high school, teachers sought to provide practical learning opportunities such as involving students in crafting the school's vision and in the decision-making process of the school, in organizing outside classroom and school learning experiences (such as music camp), and on a daily level leading classes. This experience deeply shaped my expectations of what I consider to be meaningful learning.

Students in Japan are often characterized as being passive and unwilling to demonstrate leadership. Having taught in Japanese universities for several years, I came to believe that was because of the low expectations placed on them. I began to think that giving my students the opportunity to lead their own classes would be a worthwhile and credible challenge for them, on two levels -- for each student individually, and also for the class as a community.

BRAD'S STORY

In hindsight there were four main significant forces behind my decision to introduce and then utilize peer-teaching in my classes. First, many students directly and indirectly requested the opportunity themselves in their weekly action log reflection journals (Murphey, 1995, 1997; Woo & Murphey, 1999). Student action log comments showed that some students were already tutoring high school students privately -- leading them to feel that they were incidentally learning a lot about not only language but also about how to teach. I began to wonder if maybe I should shift the curriculum to give the students an opportunity to teach in our class.

Secondly, I had peer-taught as a language learner of French and Japanese and found immense value in the practice. Research shows that those who are doing an activity while talking about it may remember up to 90%; in contrast, merely listening offers up to a 30% retention rate (Silverman, 1987). Intuitively I suspected that when my students taught each other in small groups and pair work that they too were more invested and thus learning more. Could it be that my students might derive the same kinds of rewards as language learners from peer-teaching that I had earlier?

Thirdly, I had a successful model of the approach in my colleague, Robert, who had used peer-teaching in his classes the previous year. I grew curious about what he had done and asked him how he had conducted his lessons. When Robert outlined his approach, I became more convinced of the potential for using peer-teaching and the ways that I might introduce it in the second semester.

Finally, I wanted to offer my students more activities that could potentially enhance their own autonomy and the ways they think about learning. Action log comments indicated that many students seemed ready to explore alternative learning paths, accept greater responsibility, make more choices about what and how they learned, and to likewise be open to risking more in class. Peer-teaching, and the various micro-skills that are developed within this approach, could potentially offer a rich reference experience for students to draw upon in their future.

THEORETICAL GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As teachers, one of our aims is to *hand over* as much responsibility as possible to our learners, so they can *take over* control of their learning as individuals and communities (Murphey & Deacon, 2002), which implies developing learner autonomy. Yet it has been noted that autonomy is not easy to define because it means different things to different people and is influenced greatly by context (Benson & Voller, 1997). For our purposes, there are four main elements in our conceptualization of learner autonomy.

Firstly, autonomy involves taking greater responsibility and control over one's learning. As Holec (1981) has said, "autonomy is the ability to take charge of one's learning" (p.3). In order to take greater control of their learning, students must have the ability to become aware of change, which leads us to our next point.

Secondly, autonomy requires conscious reflection on learning and an increasing awareness and acceptance of one's own role in directing the learning process. Students need the time and tools to take advantage of the potential that reflection has to offer. Woo & Murphey (1999) mention, concerning the development of skills in metacognition and autonomy through reflection, that reflection journals are "capable of greatly intensifying the learner's own awareness and control over the learning process" (p.15). Many others have commented on the importance of using learning logs for developing greater student awareness and increasing autonomy (Murphey, 1995, 1997; Gottleib, 1995; Nunan et al., 1999).

Thirdly, we agree that autonomy is not a solo journey; rather it is dependent on relationships spanning peers and other significant contributing figures. Sheerin (1997), who, in discussing independent learning, makes the following comment (but this could also be applied to peer-teaching):

> It is the paradox of independent learning that almost all learners need to be prepared and supported on the path towards greater learning by *teachers*...effective language learning has to involve learning about oneself as a language learner and learning to function as a language learner independently of a teacher (p.63).

Thus, autonomous learning, and by extension our peer-teaching activity, cannot exist in isolation and require the interdependent efforts of those within the community.

Finally, students must be at a point where they are ready, willing, and able to be autonomous, or as Littlewood (1997) says, "autonomy is possible only to the extent that students possess both the *willingness* and the *ability* to act independently" (p.82). When considering any approach in general, and the promotion of greater autonomous learning in particular, teachers must also carefully consider their own role in the classroom. In a fascinating study, Lewin *et al.* (1939) observed three different leadership styles including autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire at a children's summer camp. They noticed that the democratic style lead to greater group harmony and active participation amongst its members. Indeed, students need a structure in order to excel in class and at the same time freedom to negotiate, share their input, and take some initiative in the system to the extent that their needs and desires dictate.

In terms of the relationship between the development of autonomy and peer-teaching, Candy's (1988) words capture nicely our goals for our students as peer-teachers and as autonomous individuals, "developing autonomous students; that is, people who accept more and more responsibility for their own learning, for setting goals and objectives, for finding resources, and for evaluating the outcomes of their learning activities [is our aim]" (p.59). In peer-teaching, we can observe all of these steps and notice that they require acceptance of responsibility by the students for: 1) their learning (and contributing to each others), 2) setting clear learning goals and objectives for their peer-teaching lessons, 3) finding appropriate lesson materials, and 4) evaluating their outcomes through reflecting on their teaching, and responding to their 'students' who wrote feedback after each lesson.

APPROACH

In this section we will provide the steps to peer-teaching including: setting-up, conducting, and lesson follow-up.

ROBERT'S STORY

Jumping into peer-teaching from the beginning of the first semester might be possible with some freshman students. However, it works more smoothly when students, and the class as a whole, are scaffolded into developing a set of facilitating skills or capacities. These could include, but are not limited to: learning skills, reflection skills, presentation skills, leadership skills, autonomous learning skills, and more broadly a sense of class community. In my case, I spent the first semester developing these capacities, which then helped to smooth the transition to peer-teaching in the second semester.

DEVELOPING CAPACITIES

Learning skills -- the understanding of the process of learning -- were developed through individual reflection by daily action logs, written at home after each class. Shared partner reflection and whole-class reflection helped students develop a sensitivity to other students' learning styles and strategies, and the capacity to reflect and discourse about it. Presentation skills were developed through students having opportunities to speak in English in front of their peers, through mini-presentations to small groups of two or three other students, and finally in front of the whole class. Leadership skills and autonomous learning skills were developed through increasingly devolving control of the class and classroom to the students throughout the first semester. By the end of the first semester, students were selecting their weekly study partners (individual, pair, small-group), their weekly learning goals (e.g. accuracy, fluency, pronunciation, learning process, and so on), their presentation topics, in addition to their evaluation media (e.g. poster, essay, audio recording, and so on), criteria (accuracy, fluency, vocabulary, organization of ideas, and so on), and weighting (vocabulary 30%, accuracy 70%, and so on).

THE LEARNING COMMUNITY

As a teacher, I believe that developing a sense of the class as a learning community is essential. From the first day of first semester, class work was organized into pair-work and small group-work. In the second week of the first semester, as a group, we decided class rules, both for the students and also for the teacher. Teacher rules were very practical (hand back homework promptly, treat all students equally, be strict on unruly students, prepare thoroughly for class, have clear class goals, communicate clearly, and so on), but they also had more meaning for the students once it was their turn for peer-teaching. Also, students were welcome to make class announcements about their club and circle activities. We went on a three-day summer camp in July, largely organized by the students, and this proved to be a good preview of peer-teaching as students accepted responsibility for arranging and conducting various activities.

FIRST STEPS IN PEER-TEACHING

The organizing of the peer-teaching began at the beginning of the second semester. Students reacted to the idea very positively from the outset. For homework, I asked students to respond to three issues: questions they had about peer-teaching, classroom activities that they felt they would like to do as peer-teachers, and topics that they were interested in. In the following week, we spent one whole lesson exploring peer-teaching. Students in their groups read each other's homework ideas, tried to answer each other's questions about peer-teaching, and gave peer feedback on activities and topics. For each question, we had a whole-class discussion, led by me but mind-mapped onto the blackboard by students, which then became a source for further group discussion. I felt that this orientation helped prepare students to then peer-teach more effectively in the following weeks.

PEER-TEACHING BEGINS

The peer-teaching was organized so that students would individually, or in pairs, lead one 45-minute class on a topic or theme of their choice. We decided that peer-teachers would be responsible for setting pre-class homework, designing in-class activities, selecting in-class visual and audio media, and reading and responding to post-class student action logs, checking attendance, and basically running the show. In the next class, we decided to set the peer-

teaching groups, schedule, and topics. This allowed the students time to negotiate outside of class who their peer-teaching partner would be, but also meant that the more reflective learners could decide whether they preferred to be an individual peer-teacher. It also gave me the opportunity to approach the students I felt were more gregarious and confident, and ask them to be the first peer-teachers and serve as *near-peer role models* (Murphey, 1998, 2003), so the peer-teaching would get off to a successful start. In the next class, a calendar with peer-teaching dates circled was passed around, and students could write in their names and topics, after first checking that other students had not already chosen their topic. We had decided to start from the middle of the semester, and to run for about 12 to 14 classes, about four to five weeks, ending the week before Christmas.

As the ball started rolling and we actually began peer-teaching, some time was allocated before or at the end of Friday classes for talking with the entire group about what made peer-lead classes successful. This was based upon the reflections from the peer-teachers. It was also a chance for peer-teachers, who had finished giving their lessons, time to give advice to students who had not yet done so, and also a chance for future peer-teachers to ask questions and seek advice. An informal peer-support system also developed, as future peer-teachers sought advice outside class from their friends who had already peer-taught.

BRAD'S STORY

As in Robert's case, I knew that students needed structure and support in order to peer-teach more effectively and at the same time to truly make it their own, they needed to assume as much responsibility over the process and content as they were willing and able to assume.

For homework early in the second semester, I invited students to make a list of questions and concerns they had about peer-teaching. I also encouraged them to brainstorm and make a tentative plan in as much or little detail as they wanted for their lessons. We initially agreed that students could teach either solo or in pairs and that at least a few classes should be used to allow for planning. In the following class, students got together in small groups and discussed their homework ideas. I then responded to questions and concerns that arose in class and gathered their action logs in order to grasp an even fuller picture of their impressions of pre-peer-teaching and how I might better support the group. I observed three main themes: the importance of preparation in general, a heightened perception of the value of peer-teaching, and a focus on the activity process and its many components.

IMPORTANCE OF PREPARATION

Many students commented that in order to be successful, or rather not to do poorly, adequate preparation was necessary. This shows that the students recognized a responsibility beyond their own learning and alluded to their potential to enhance the learning of their peers.

- *I think being well-prepared is an important thing to success my peer teaching, so I will try to talk about it closely with my partner.*
- *If I don't prepare enough before the peer teaching maybe I won't be able to enjoy it and my class too.*

PERCEPTION OF VALUE

The students agreed that peer-teaching would be useful both for themselves and their classmates, and that in many cases the benefits would extend beyond the walls of the classroom.

- *I'm glad to have a lot of time to prepare for peer teaching. I think the more we prepare and consider things, the more solid teaching we can do. Teaching is very difficult but I really think the experience will be a great experience for the future. I'm looking forward to peer teaching!*
- *I'm taking a teaching course, so this peer teaching is very useful. I'm also teaching some students as a tutor in my part-time job. Teaching is very difficult so I have to practice more.*
- *I was paired with Natsuko and this will be an opportunity to know each other and communicate together through this peer teaching.*

THE PROCESS

I also observed that students were already actively considering possible materials, methods, and other aspects for their lessons and were starting to take over the process.

- *What topic should I choose? Hmm...it is a big problem. I think maybe I will choose about my favorite things because it is easy for me to talk about. And I am going to use pictures. If I use pictures my speech will be clearer and it will help my poor English.*
- *If we want to make our class interesting, I think the most important is that the topic is interesting. I hope I can find good topic for us and classmates and I really respect you because you teach at every class!*
- *I think the extent of freedom which teachers give their students is quite difficult. In peer teaching I want my "students" to discuss the topic I've chosen. But if I just said, "please discuss this topic freely," then everyone would be embarrassed or bored. There is something that teachers should decide and allow students to decide. I have to think about this to make my peer teaching successful.*

The student voices above re-affirmed for me the importance of our interdependence, my role in providing support, and the confidence I had that students were ready to accept greater autonomy. After carefully considering the students' questions and concerns in the previous class and their action logs, I formulated and distributed a list of questions and tips (see MAYA! website for Appendix 9A) in the following lesson. Students found the list helpful. We further negotiated that the lessons could be for either half the class (20 minutes) or the full class (45 minutes), and that I would be responsible for making any copies for the lessons (peer teachers would give me their master copies a day in advance). The rest would be up to the students, though I remained available during the next two classes and during outside office hours for consultation. In subsequent lessons, students signed up for their peer-teaching lesson and readied their lesson plans (see Appendix 9B on MAYA! website for a list of student lesson topics). Soon after, the peer-teaching cycle began, and this included: teaching the lesson, handing out action log forms (see MAYA! website for Appendix 9C), collecting and responding to each action log (written by the other students and myself), and writing a reflection on the entire experience that I read and commented on.

OBSERVATIONS: FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE

We observed many rich insights through our dual perspective as 'teachers/supporters' and as 'students' during peer-teaching that allowed us to notice the extent to which our students were developing their own autonomy.

OUR ROLE AS TEACHERS/SUPPORT FIGURES

Supporting the peer-teachers while at the same time allowing them to assume responsibility for choices was critical. As Benson (2001) writes:

> . . . fostering autonomy does not imply that we simply leave learners to their own devices, but that we actively encourage and assist them to take control of their learning in ways that will be effective in terms of goals that they have determined for themselves. (p.75)

We found that spending time with peer teachers before their class was essential. They could run their lesson plans past us. They could practice introducing an activity. They could practice transitions. They could get used to their 'teaching voice.' Also, asking students to make a plan of their blackboard use on a piece of paper sensitized students to the possibilities and opportunities that a blackboard offers. Spending a little time with students after their class, when they submitted their peer-teaching reflection, was also essential. It was fun to re-live the best moments; it was also cathartic to re-live the disasters. In sum, we noticed that in helping our students to develop greater autonomy an interdependent approach is more effective -- one that balanced student initiative with teacher control.

MODELING VERSUS COPYING

We felt that one way to support students would be to put the more able ones first in order to provide near-peer role models. In some cases it seemed that students were following a somewhat formulaic approach to their teaching through not just modeling but copying their peers. This is understandable: it was an effort to reduce uncertainty. In order to overcome the 'cookie cutter' approach, an emphasis was put on originality, and stressing that different topics and lesson goals justified different classroom activities in the whole-class reflection session in Robert's class. Students themselves also began to appreciate novelty (a good lesson for routine-bound teachers!). Brad noticed some students using similar games and other techniques repeatedly and wanted to encourage students to move away from copying and instead experiment more. At the same time he did not want to impose too much control over the product and process of each lesson and instead took a more 'suggestive' approach. The extent to how much suggestion and direct intervention Brad offered, and his own internal struggle therein, was rarely challenged as most students did in fact have unique lessons to share. About midway through the peer-teaching month, Robert's class held a reflection session, and the class was able to chat as a group about what seemed to be working, and why. Robert suggested to the class that rather than coming to him, perhaps they could go to a classmate and run their ideas past them, and then come to Robert only if they felt that they needed to. Shifting the responsibility back on the students worked well for the more social students, but Robert still found the quieter students at his office door during office hours. Nonetheless, the level of class expertise in peer-teaching certainly expanded as the semester went on and it was pleasing to observe this development.

TAKING THE EASY ROAD

Peer-teachers often emphasized sharing experiences through relatively easy conversations or interviews (that albeit developed fluency) at the expense of activities that stretched or challenged students. In other words, students often chose easier activities than more challenging or difficult ones. One reason could have been that students focused more on

community-building activities more than pedagogically-oriented ones. Another reason is that students may have felt that they were not in a position to 'teach' their peers and were just going along with the decision of the majority to peer-teach. Pointing this out in the reflection session brought acknowledging nods from some students, and later peer-teachers did try to introduce interesting information and appropriate vocabulary, but still shied away from drawing attention to necessary grammar. Some peer-teachers did facilitate student reflection upon their learning process in the homework or classroom activities, and this increased when attention was drawn to it in the reflection session.

LET'S BE 'NICE' TO EACH OTHER INSTEAD OF 'GOOD'

Students were generally very fair in giving each peer-teacher their equal attention. This was because students were genuinely interested in the topics. It may have been because they felt they owed each peer-teacher their interest; partly, it may also have been because they knew that they would expect and hope for the same degree of enthusiasm and interest when it became their turn to be the peer-teacher. That is, motivation in those classes was very high, and students really enjoyed giving positive feedback to the peer-teachers. Only once did a peer-teacher not appear for his class (in Robert's case); having a back-up plan or materials prepared for this eventuality would be wise. Often the opposite case occurred -- it was difficult for some peer-teachers to stop at the end of the 45-minute class. After a few times, the class decided to appoint the next peer-teacher as a time-keeper, who reminded the peer-teachers when they had 10 minutes left, so they could wrap up and give the next peer-teachers five minutes to introduce and explain their topic and homework.

PAYBACK

What did we learn as teachers? We were amazed at the diversity of topics the students chose to explore in their peer-teaching. Moreover, it quickly became apparent that some students were clearly more of an expert than we were in many areas. We both found it very rewarding to be a student, and we felt that we had learned many things from observing our students.

What were the characteristics of the more successful peer-lead classes? Interestingly, the same as for regular teacher-lead classes: a clearly structured class, meaning that there was a clear beginning, a sensible flow of activities, and a clear ending, and a clear link between the homework or pre-class activities and in-class activities; an effective use of media, including the blackboard, handouts, and other visual media (posters, film or documentary excerpts); an effective use of time (some peer-teachers spent too long on their introduction, or gave too much time for an activity, or didn't give sufficient time to complete an activity); and lastly, that the peer-teachers spoke clearly, and used appropriate and intelligible English.

Brad noted that rather than asking questions to the class as a whole, directing them to specific students kept the whole class on its toes. Also, regularly using student names was a form of validation for the students. Conversely, a lack of clear lesson goals and outcomes often meant the lessons tended to wander. Robert noted that, during transitions between activities, start and finish cues were essential to help students understand the flow of the lesson. Also, naming activities -- 'role-play,' 'partner interview' -- helped students grasp the structure of the next activity. Students over-explaining rather than modeling was also a problem. More than anything, however, using humor -- through selecting essentially interesting topics, or just taking advantage of the moment -- helped bring the class together and make the lessons more enjoyable. The most important lesson, we as a group seemed to learn, was that just getting up

there in front of the class is a big step in itself and should be recognized. One of our goals as language teachers is to help students find their voice in English, particularly shy students. From this point of view, no one failed as there is no failure, only feedback.

ADAPTING TO OTHER TEACHING ENVIRONMENTS

We were very fortunate in meeting the English majors in this article for three times a week, and in having wide autonomy in how we taught our classes. We have since moved on to different positions teaching non-English majors; nonetheless, we have still been able to successfully organize peer-teaching experiences with a few adjustments. We now take more time for pre-peer teaching preparation. Pairing weaker students with stronger students is also a successful strategy. Rather than whole-class teaching, breaking the class into two or three groups, and having two or three peer-teams simultaneously teach smaller groups -- in different classrooms or just different parts of the same classroom -- makes the experience more approachable.

In many ways, it turns out to be easy to organize peer-teaching for classes that meet only once a week for 90 minutes. The pre-peer-teaching preparation is essentially the same; the main difference is the way time is allocated for peer-teaching. One option is for the teacher to lead for the first half of the period, and then have just one peer-teaching session of 30 to 45 minutes in the second half of the period. In this case, the teacher can take the students through form-focused or awareness-raising activities, and the peer teachers can organize the production and practice activities. This division of teaching responsibilities also works well for teachers who work within the confines of an institutionally-defined curriculum, as they can focus upon organizing what grammar and vocabulary are covered, but students are responsible for the activities to internalize them. Peer-teaching is a flexible approach that can be adapted to most teaching environments, with imagination, flexibility, and good communication with learners.

OBSERVATIONS: FROM OUR STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Student feedback on peer-teaching was overwhelmingly positive and suggested that students could take greater control of their learning; develop an increased awareness of their role as active agents in their own and each other's growth; demonstrate autonomous learning attitudes through reflecting on their learning; and show that they are capable to varying degrees of autonomous learning. The feedback below was taken from a final reflection paper that each peer-teacher wrote in response to three questions as follows: 1) What do you think you did well in peer-teaching? 2) What do you think you can improve through peer-teaching? and 3) How can this experience help you in your future? In general, the main themes that emerged included: an increased perception of value of the role of teachers; an increased perception of value of the role of students, perceived moments and areas of difficulty, perceived moments and areas of success, and future paving peer-teaching as a reference experience down the road.

INCREASED PERCEPTION OF VALUE OF THE TEACHER'S ROLE

Through assuming the teacher's position, students could develop a new level of awareness and fresh insights into the challenges of teachers. Many of their comments showed an increase in empathy and respect towards teachers and overall shift in the way that they looked at teachers.

- *I really thought that teaching is such hard work. So far I hadn't noticed such things. However when we had to decide topics, time, purpose, etc. I thought it was so hard!! I couldn't imagine to be a teacher before but now I come to understand what being a teacher means.*

- *Peer teaching changed my view of other classes. I came to take a class thinking how a professor plans to draw a student's attention. This is a very difficult thing.*
- *Teaching something is hard and difficult work. To make students learn we have to intrigue them. To do so, what can we do? Only an interesting person could be a good teacher, I felt strongly.*
- *I admired you very much because you have to prepare and teach us or other students every day.*

INCREASED PERCEPTION OF VALUE OF THE STUDENT'S ROLE

In addition to a greater appreciation for the role of teachers, peer-teachers also expressed a greater awareness and perception of student responsibility. Experience, as they say, is a great teacher and peer-teaching helped students to notice how they could become more responsible learners through preparing, reacting more regularly, listening attentively, and so on.

- *Through peer teaching I learned the importance of audience (students) because if listeners are good then I think we can explain better and better. I could improve my listener attitude because I thought that listener attitude gives big effection for teaching. So I thought that I want to be a good listener. The peer teaching was good for us!*
- *During teaching I could understand the importance of reactions. Because when I teach my classmates hard, they were too quiet and didn't give any reactions to me. So I felt nervous and sad. I couldn't know that they really understood what I said. I could understand why my teachers emphasize the importance of reactions from the first time. I thought teaching was very difficult.*
- *I understood that the most important thing is that the teachers and the students can react to each other and try to be curious and rather greedy for what they want to know.*
- *When students didn't make responses I was very confused. I found that as a student I always have to make response whenever I understand what teacher says. For teachers, the lack of students' responses damages his teaching or teaching plan, I think.*

PERCEIVED MOMENTS AND AREAS OF DIFFICULTY

Things did not always go according to plan and the students noted various challenges in peer-teaching including: an over-focus on transactional versus interactional teaching styles, ineffective usage of time, difficulties with verbal/non-verbal communication skills, trouble interpreting student feedback, and other challenges.

- *There was not enough time to teach so we could not teach all the things that we planned to teach in the lesson.*
- *I learned that preparing is very important, but also practice is more important than preparing.*
- *I think I talked quite fast. I tend to speak fast when I talk in front of people. I would like to overcome this and next time I would like to calm down and speak clearly and slowly.*
- *I was too concentrated on myself, my speech, and I lacked careful attention to the attendants. That must have confused them.*
- *I think our peer teaching was not peer teaching but just like a presentation.*
- *In class I couldn't judge other student's reactions, whether our class was interesting or boring.*

PERCEIVED MOMENTS AND AREAS OF SUCCESS

Many students' comments alluded to their perception of success including individual and communal success. More than skill development, the most significant comments centered around the positive affective associations connected to peer-teaching.

- *Listen! I did it!! I finished my peer teaching at last!! I was very nervous, but I enjoyed as well. Everyone listened to us seriously and reacted a lot to our speech.*
- *We were nervous before starting our teaching but after I was excited and I got more confidence than before.*
- *Do you know this saying,* sukikoso monono jyouzunare? *This means when you really like what you are trying or studying, you can do hard and will be an expert. I found this was right thought preparing for peer teaching. At first I thought teaching was something very difficult and I was not willing to do. However, I became motivated and I could think of many new ideas. I am sure I can do my best as long as I have interest in what I will do.*
- *I have taken passive classes since elementary school so this class was a good experience for me.*
- *I felt happy and achievement when I read comments from classmates. Some people wrote down really good reactions and others gave us advise.*
- *Through this activity we experienced not only teaching but also other important things such as preparation and feedback. I'm glad we had this opportunity.*
- *I rarely have a chance to speak in front of other people so it was a good chance for me.*

NOTICING FUTURE GLOBAL BENEFITS

Finally, peer teaching helped students to notice value beyond the classroom and connect to their public speaking skills in the future in general and in terms of their professions.

- *I think this experience will help me to do a presentation for a company in the future. I learned a lot of points to improve so I can do a better presentation in the future.*
- *I am sure that this experience will be useful in the future because I want to be an English teacher.*
- *I'm not going to be a teacher but I can take advantage of this experience absolutely! For instance, when I have a presentation or speech, I will be more efficient than before and I know what to prepare or arrange in advance.*
- *This peer teaching will help me for my presentation in my seminar that is starting for next year and also for job-hunting. I was able to notice points that I should improve in the future.*
- *Peer teaching was a good experience for me because I will join an NPO and be a teacher for young kids around the world.*
- *I have a part-time job as a tutor, so I can put this experience to account from now on.*

CONCLUSION

Handing over the opportunity to peer-teach helped our students to break out of their traditional roles and assisted them to become more active and in control of their learning. Through taking over and reflecting on the process, students further increased their awareness and acceptance of their role in directing their own and each other's learning. As noted earlier, students deepened their understanding of the teaching-learning relationship and in particular

developed a greater awareness of their own responsibility as active agents in the learning process. Moreover, peer-teaching led to the development of autonomy within the students' most significant learning community -- their own classroom community. That many students were able to link their peer-teaching experience to notice potential value beyond the classroom for their own sustained growth and development was particularly gratifying.

The journey towards autonomy should not be a solo one, and peer-teaching requires significant teacher and community support and guidance to foster meaningful learning. Inviting your students to peer-teach is an adventure not without its challenges for either party; however, the payback, not the least of which is the opportunity to develop greater autonomy, is certainly worth the risk.

CRITICAL READER RESPONSE 1

PETER VOLLER

When I read Brad and Robert's contribution, it took me back to the late 1980s, when I was teaching at Meiji Gakuin University in Yokohama. I had classes of freshmen (freshpersons?) and sophomores for English conversation classes, and I was very much wedded to a humanistic (Earl Stevick, Gertrude Moskowitz) and communicative (Bill Littlewood and Sandra Savignon) approach. I had co-authored a textbook, *Chatterbox,* based on these approaches, which we used in our freshman classes. But the sophomore classes were more problematic in terms of content. Most had been through the *Chatterbox* experience in their first year, and so I had to rely on my own devices for classroom activities and meaningful communication in the target language in their second year. I had some ideas and activities ready, but not enough for 24-plus weeks of 90-minute classes. So, what to do? Remember, dear readers, that autonomy was still a relatively new, and European, theory, that had not impinged at all on the Japanese EFL scene. We were still worshipping at the altars of humanism, Krashen's input hypothesis, communicative language teaching, and theories of communicative competence. But I was also absolutely sure that my students had huge amounts more to contribute to the EFL learning experience than most of my colleagues would give them credit for, and I was sure that those students who had enjoyed the *Chatterbox* experience would be really happy to be given the chance to become more involved in the learning experience (to take responsibility for their learning, in today's autonomy jargon). So, halfway through the first semester, I proposed to the class that we structure half of our future classes towards them "teaching one another". In the last 14 weeks of the year, each student would have 20-30 minutes to teach the rest of us something, something that really interested them – a hobby, a sport, a pastime – in English. It should be something that was specific, and preferably, *do-able* by us, rather than a *show and tell* presentation. Nearly 20 years later, I still remember some of the things that we were taught. How to do a short aerobic dance workout, how to take apart a clarinet and clean it (and put it back together), how to make delicious *virgin* cocktails, how to … Well, I guess I remember the ones that were particularly fascinating for me, but I am sure other participants in that class will remember others. Did the students learn any English? In those days of lack of accountability, (and unlike Brad and Robert's situation), no externally verifiable answer was required. I am sure we all renewed our knowledge of body parts in our aerobic workout, and I guess that there is at least one person out there in Japan who can name the parts of a clarinet in English and use appropriate vocabulary to explain how to take things apart, and I guess there are quite a few who can explain to you the finer points of mixing and shaking.

So, how have things changed since then in Japan? If you are lucky enough to be in a class taught by Brad or Robert, you will have had an even better experience, because you not only get to participate in the peer teaching, but also benefit from all the good things we have learnt from research into autonomy about the importance of scaffolding and reflection (personal, peer, and group). A far more systematic and deeper learning experience than my students got in those naïve days. Even so, we had fun!

CRITICAL READER RESPONSE 2

MATTHEW APPLE

When I first started reading Brad and Robert's paper and came across the words "handing over" and "taking over," my first reaction was "oh, no—autonomy run amuck." I was immediately afraid that they had confused autonomy with independence, as so many of us have and continue to do. Yet, it became more and more clear to me as I read Brad and Robert's stories about peer teaching that they had had a clear structure in place to help guide their learners. Just as the authors had wondered about themselves, I also found myself wondering whether I had been guilty of low expectations for my students in the past.

Of course, the authors do mention that their learners were highly motivated as well as fairly proficient English language learners. While I agree that as teachers one of our goals should be the encouragement of learner autonomy, I'm still skeptical that peer teaching would work for just any language class, especially considering that many language classes in Japan only meet once or twice per week at most. Having taught few learners that fall into either the motivated or proficient categories, I'm not sure that whole-class peer teaching would work in my classes.

On the other hand, peer collaboration and cooperative learning in small groups—methods I often employ in my teaching—are really nothing more than peer teaching on a micro-scale. Robert noted that he spent time prior to peer teaching to help learners further develop learning skills; in particular, learners spent time bolstering their sense of leadership, presentation, and reflection, as well as coming together as a community. This last point seems the most crucial for me for any teacher who asks his or her learners to start teaching each other. Strong, personal ties between learners within the classroom are absolutely essential for any sort of collaborative efforts to succeed. Students who are shy or uncertain of their own abilities need to feel that they have not just the linguistic support but also the emotional acceptance of peers around them. Without this sense of belonging, peer teaching and collaborative learning can make learners feel as if they were being put on the spot, or being judged, or even being outnumbered, by classmates who see them with critical eyes.

Both Brad and Robert seemed to go well out of their way to ensure a smooth transition from the "autocratic" leadership role of the teacher to a "democratic" role, thus paving the way for increased learner autonomy. Moreover, they planned the transition very carefully, step by step, by providing guidelines, feedback, and time to peer teachers. As with all successful ventures, careful preparation and firm but flexible guiding hands seem key, and, judging from the student reactions, Brad and Robert's venture appears to have been a resounding success. As they say, inviting peer teaching in the classroom poses a challenge—although perhaps the real challenge is asking the teacher, and not the learners, to change roles and expectations.