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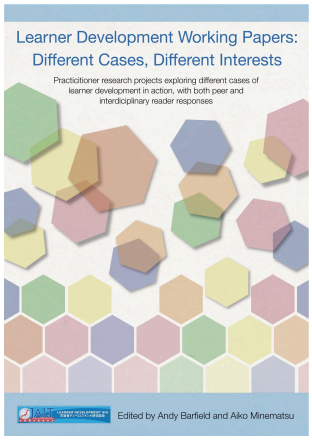

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Connections with facilitating learner autonomy, language proficiency, and the teacher/researcher's daily grind

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Chapter Seven

Connections with Facilitating Learner Autonomy, Language Proficiency, and the Teacher/Researcher's Daily Grind

Stacey Vye, Saitama University, Fumiko Murase, Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology, and Adriana Edwards Wurzinger, Saitama University

Abstract

This narrative chapter explores previous research related to autonomy and language proficiency as a backdrop for observing the progress of 20 students at a public university in Japan who volunteered to learn English together over a 23-week period. A good part of the chapter focuses on how language study designed autonomously by the learners contributes to their greater language proficiency as measured by pre- and post-IELTS test in each of the four-skills areas of the test. Factors considered include the duration of time they spend studying English, as well as the different stages provided for the learners to develop their autonomous English proficiency skills. The chapter also includes student review of their studies after the post-test, and the author's reflections on her experiences working with the students in this study. It concludes with a personal reflection on the institutional challenges that the author faced in creating and running this course, and on the author's wider emotional journey in conducting this project in a trying daily grind as teacher-researcher.

要旨

本章は自律学習と言語能力についての先行研究に基づき、２３週間の英語学習グループに自主参加した２０名の国立大学在籍の学生について考察したナラティブである。IELTS を用いた事前・事後測定により、四技能における各学生の言語能力が自身の立てた学習計画により推移した度合を分析し、特に学習者が英語学習に費やした時間と自律学習の過程において学習者に提供された発達段階に着目した。さらに事後テスト後の学習者自身の振り返りと本研究における筆者自身の役割について省察し、最後に本研究を実施するにあたり直面した課題とその過程における教師・研究者としての筆者自身の成長過程をも省察する。

Key words

learner autonomy, language proficiency, out-of-class learning, reflection, IELTS
自律学習、言語能力、教室外の学び、省察、IELTS

Chapter Seven

Connections with Facilitating Learner Autonomy, Language Proficiency, and the Teacher/Researcher's Daily Grind

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Part One

Introduction

Numerous learner autonomy publications focus on issues related to autonomy theory and autonomous learning practices, yet autonomy studies that measure changes in learners' language proficiency are few and far between. In my own work as a teacher who facilitates learner autonomy, like many other similarly engaged educators, I have not written much about measuring my learners' English improvement, but I have often questioned the tension between helping my students improve their language proficiency and attempting to facilitate the development of their learner autonomy. I have particularly noticed this tension when I observe my students' weekly spoken and written reflections. At such times I realize that an important part of my teaching is to help reduce the frustration and helplessness that students report they experience, while encouraging their empowerment as learners. Fostering learners' self-esteem about their language learning seems just as important as teaching the English language itself.

Likewise, in the last few years, I have come to question more closely different dimensions of my role as a teacher. For example, the institution where I teach increasingly insists that students should demonstrate an improvement in their English language skills on different international norm-referenced English tests for job placement and study abroad purposes. Consequently, to get a better understanding of language improvement in an autonomous learning project, I asked 20 Japanese and international university students from various faculties to individually and collaboratively design language study plans and take pre- and post-tests of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS, 2013) to track their language development. The students were voluntarily attending a Language Center at my university, and within the pre- and post-test period they met once a week for 23 weeks in small study groups with 4 to 7 learners in one session. I discovered at the outset of the study that these learners were already engaged in their English learning and were generally proficient in

English, with their overall IELTS scores ranging from 4.5 to 7.5. To facilitate the further development of their learner autonomy and language proficiency, I saw my main role as observing, providing language support when asked, and fostering learner confidence so they might discover more from within to carry on their language learning with self-assurance, and thereby make more informed choices about their language goals along with the support of their peers. In particular, I felt that reducing the sense of learner frustration and isolation that some reported prior to, and at the start of, the study would increase their confidence in language learning in a collaborative setting during the 23 weeks.

In a group-based learning situation, I feel it is advantageous for learners to share their rich ideas for studying together rather than navigating solely on their own or merely receiving study advice from their instructor. Following a suggestion from another teacher about encouraging a sense of community and awareness of shared challenges and successes in their language learning at the beginning of the sessions, in the first session of the small-study groups, each of the participants chose and then discussed Language Learning History (LLH) prompt questions. These were based on LLH questions used in some taught-in-English courses at a different university in Japan where I had previously taught part time. This extensive list included questions about past, present, and future goals for their language learning that the students could choose from and discuss with others as they wished. My notes from the five small-group LLH discussions in the first week of the study showed that each student mentioned frustrations about struggling to learn English. Sharing their past experiences in the small-group sessions gave them a sense that they were not alone. They were able to establish a further sense of trust while getting to know one another better, which helped them to work collaboratively on developing their language proficiency in the four-skills areas that they wished to improve. In each of the subsequent sessions, I rarely suggested strategies for language learning unless asked; rather, the learners came up with plenty of strategies and willingly shared them with each other, including:

- 'cool' listening links on the Internet and from resources in our language center
- meeting up with friends and hanging out in English
- studying about Japanese culture to prepare for the onslaught of questions people from other countries often asked of them
- doing extensive reading, particularly with some kind of reading aloud or shadowing component.

After the post-test at the end of 23 weeks, I cautiously noted some areas of improvement in the students' language proficiency.

In this chapter, I focus on what English studying the students did, both on their own, and with others; where they did their English learning; and, what learning resources they chose to enhance their studies. In particular, I explore the following questions:

- Does language study designed autonomously by the learners contribute to greater language proficiency as measured by the IELTS test?
- If so, in what ways does self-reported language study outside the contact hours in the project on desired learning skill(s) (listening, reading, writing, and/or speaking) contribute to greater language proficiency as measured by the IELTS level bands in the four-skill sections of the test?
- What specific actions did the learners take to develop their English proficiency outside the contact hours in the project?

To investigate these questions, I will look at prior research on autonomy and language proficiency, the written reflections that the learners kept about the language studies they did by themselves and with friends outside the university setting, and the reflections that I wrote during the study. I will also respond to the reader responses from Fumiko Murase and Adrianna Edwards Wurzinger.

Prior research: A little discrepancy between autonomy and language proficiency

For the past 30 years learner autonomy researchers have clearly defined autonomy theory, and healthy signs of research about autonomy-in-practice have solidly emerged. Autonomy is seen as a capacity, rather than a method, and when a learner takes control of her or his learning, the learning process increases as the control of the teacher shifts to the learner and the learner engages more with their own language learning and use (Holec, 1981, p. 3; Little, 1991, pp. 4-5). This development encourages learners to conceptualize more clearly their learning goals and to develop stronger identities as language learners and users, but what has research shown about the improvement of learners' English language proficiency as they become more autonomous? According to Benson (2011, p. 4), in the previous 10 years, research on learner autonomy showed a rise in interest and renewed debate about firstly, a change in how autonomy increasingly relates to language theory with a growing importance of socially and/or contextually situated approaches, and secondly, a growing tendency for autonomy to blend or blur with similar fields of study in language education such as motivation, individual differences in learning styles, and learner strategies. Yet, reading about language development and learner autonomy at the start of this project, I found few autonomy studies that report measuring language proficiency, despite the fact that many learners want to improve their proficiency for their own personal and professional reasons. Naturally curious, I noticed that in the 10-volume Authentik *Learner Autonomy* series that I won in a raffle at an Independent Learning Association conference in Japan and that was presented to me by Henri Holec himself (cited exponentially as "Holec, 1981, p. 3" as readers may know), out of 59 chapters in total, merely four chapters mentioned test assessment of language gains for learner autonomy.

To get a better understanding of language proficiency gains related to learner autonomy, I focused on the differences and similarities of those four accounts to inform my own study with the learners in the language center at Saitama University. First, I read Ushioda's (1996) thoughts on assessment where she emphasizes that teachers can support their learners' development of a stronger self-perception of language competence by the teachers defining learner goals and emphasizing the value of assessment of individual students, "rather than in terms of how well or how badly students perform relative to one another" (Ushioda, 1996, p. 24). This concept seemed relevant to the learners in my study although the learners (rather than me) set their own language goals. In addition, I identified with the idea that test scores need to be explained individually by the instructor to protect the learner's privacy and to avoid classroom competition (Ushioda, 1996). I was able to discuss privately each student's pre- and post-test IELTS score in individual consultations. I also provided bilingual explanations of the public version of the IELTS bands for their reference (IELTS, 2013).

I next looked at Gardner's (2002) research, which provides loose guidelines for large Self-Access Centers (SACs). It was important for me to keep in mind here the particular language center's context rather than simply adapting the evaluation methods of another center with different learning goals and environments. In regards to language assessment, Gardner argues that language gains are more

difficult to measure in centers because the learners work independently. In a center context, the duration and intensity of learning are flexible, whereas tests are difficult to schedule, and the effects may be long term, so true language gains may not appear until years later (Gardner, 2002, p. 64). The learners in my study collaborated in groups and pairs with less individualized work, but I agreed with Gardner (2002) that language gains are complex and problematic to measure in the short 23-week duration that I provided for the study. I wish I could have developed a longer longitudinal project, but the students' schedules didn't allow for that. I also found that tests are not easy to schedule outside the classroom, particularly in this study. It was challenging for me to confirm a single IELTS test date that worked for all of the students' schedules and, because a current passport is required as proof of identity for each IELTS test candidate, I spent considerable time helping those who did not have passports to acquire them or renew theirs in some cases. In the end, we were fortunate that the IELTS test coordinators in Japan very kindly guided us through the application process.

Thirdly, in a more current needs analysis study of a SAC by Gardner (2007, pp. 27-29), the author suggests with some reservation that language gains in pre- and post-assessment tests of English reflected the areas that the learners placed a high priority on for their learning goals. On an encouraging note for the post-test of the grammar assessment, all 314 students improved their scores, for the most part by large margins (Gardner, 2007, p. 27). I hoped the students in my study would make a significant improvement in language proficiency in their desired areas of learning as well. As things turned out, they had many significant learning experiences, not all of which were related to test score increases, but which might nevertheless have enhanced their overall improvement of English in the long run.

The last account that I looked at was a longitudinal narrative study by Murray and Kojima (2007), where the learner could make language proficiency gains without attending a taught class or a SAC through engaging in pre-communicative activities like shadowing and self-talk. The authors claim that language proficiency gains are obtainable without support of a teacher. These findings were important because in my research I was looking at individual language practices, and it would have been useful if more studies measuring language proficiency gains of this kind in relation to autonomous learning had been available from the outset.

The volunteer English language learners in the Saitama study

Each learner in this project voluntarily signed a bilingual consent form, which I also signed agreeing to protect the privacy of each learner. The 20 university students were comprised of 11 females and nine males. Sixteen of the 20 were Japanese and the remaining four were international students. Ideally, a larger group of participants would have been preferable, yet it was not financially feasible to achieve this with the study. Interestingly, 19 of the learners had some connection with studying formally in another country in English. Seven Japanese participants had previously studied abroad; eight were preparing to study abroad for two semesters as English exchange students, and the four foreign nationals were currently studying abroad in Japan and taking some English courses. These students met with me for 90 minutes once a week for 23 weeks from November 2011 to July 2012, which was sandwiched between their pre- and post-IELTS tests.

In terms of overall quantitative results, eight learners improved their overall IELTS scores, two by +1 and six by + 0.5. Eleven learners' scores stayed the same, and one learner's score decreased by -0.5. (She confessed she had stopped studying English outside of the seminar sessions to study German.) The learners designed their study plans individually and shared ideas collaboratively in their sessions about how they would learn English that best suited their needs. In my facilitator role, I refrained from advising as much as I could unless I was asked to. Conversely, when the students were not sure of what language skill they would like to improve, I provided questions to help the students identify their goals more clearly and to pinpoint what skill or skills they would like to improve. They then self-reported how they had developed their language learning by themselves in form of a survey, including approximately how many hours per week they had engaged in each type of activity (see Appendix 1). Further information about the students' language development and study plans, as well as about my role as advisor, follow after Fumiko Murase's reader response and my reply to her.

Peer reader response from Fumiko Murase, Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology

I was very pleased when I was asked to contribute to Stacey's chapter as I had been following her research updates with great interest since I attended her presentation at the Advising for Language Learner Autonomy conference in November 2011, where she gave an overview of this research project in its very initial stages. Her research raises a very important issue, which seems to be so often dismissed: whether or not autonomous language learning is effective in helping learners improve their language proficiency over the short term.

This issue is significant for different reasons. First of all, the primary goal for language learners should be, of course, to improve their language proficiency—and we, teachers, are there to help the learners achieve that ultimate goal. Therefore, while we believe that promoting learner autonomy is an important educational goal, it is equally important for us to make sure that the learners' engagement in autonomous learning surely leads to greater language proficiency. In addition, we are expected to show such improvement in a rather short-term period of time. It is becoming increasingly important for university students to demonstrate good results in international English tests such as TOEIC, TOEFL, or IELTS, for their future careers during their four years at university. Thus, Stacey's attempt to show the short-term effects of autonomous learning on the IELTS score would surely give great insight to those working in a similar teaching context. Finally, for research purposes, it is crucial to present language gains as a result of autonomous learning when reporting the effectiveness of the practices of autonomous learning. However, as Stacey rightly points out, there has been very little research reporting language gains in learner autonomy research.

Stacey reviews four studies dealing with the issue of language gains in autonomous learning (Gardner 2002, 2007; Murray & Kojima, 2007; Ushioda, 1996). By carefully comparing the context of these studies with that of her own, she justifies her approach to the project and examines what could be applied to it while at the same time she shows her awareness of its limitations. For example, although she values Ushioda's (1996) notion of teachers' support in autonomous learning as to how much teachers should be involved in the learning process, she finds it best for the learners to set their own goals in the context of her project. In

terms of the limitation, while she is aware that, as Gardner (2002) argues, it is difficult and problematic to measure language gains in the rather short-term period of 23 weeks, she finds an effective way of investigating language gains from Gardner's (2007) study where the resulted language gains reflected the areas on which the learners placed a high priority. The study gives the justification for Stacey's approach to looking at language gains in each learner's desired area rather than simply looking at the overall gains in all four language skills. This also seems to resonate with the concept of learners taking control of their own learning: learners set their own learning goals, engage in their learning towards their goals, and the language gains will be assessed in their own desired area. Finally, Murray and Kojima's (2007) study shows that individual out-of-class learning, similar to the context of Stacey's project, could contribute to language proficiency gains.

The following are some issues that I would like to know about in more detail. Firstly, I would like to know how the 23-week project has proceeded at each stage - especially at the beginning and final stages. As the first planning stage is crucial in autonomous learning, I would like to know how the students have gone through that stage. How did the learners decide their target skills? How did they make their study plans to achieve their own study goals? Did the teacher help them when designing their study, or did students work on their own or with other students, without help from the teacher? I am also curious to know what happened after the post-test as this was the point at which the students learned whether or not their self-designed studies worked for improving their proficiency in their desired learning skills, and at which they could have had a chance to revise their plans for further study, if necessary. Reflecting on their learning and flexibly revising their study plans are important skills for autonomous learners to nurture continuously. Another issue that struck me as being of interest is how the students' feelings of frustration, helplessness, or isolation that they self-reported at the beginning have (or have not) changed as the sessions proceeded. Also of interest here is how Stacey supported them in dealing with those psychological issues throughout the sessions as she clearly recognizes that giving such support is an important part of her work as a teacher. In the meantime, I am looking forward to reading the next part of Stacey's chapter and learning from her students' experiences and also from Stacey's experiences as a teacher.

Part Two

Responding to Fumiko Murase's questions and concerns

I deeply appreciate the response from Fumiko and the questions that she asks about the project at different stages. As part of the wider responding process, it was very helpful to discuss this project with Fumiko at conferences and over meals because these discussions informed my research design for future studies related to autonomy and language proficiency. If we had been able to discuss my initial plan before the launching of this project, I would have liked to track the learners' progress towards greater language proficiency longitudinally over a greater length of time than two semesters, as Fumiko suggests. Nevertheless, the reality for me is the courses in my context are held for a single semester for the duration of about four and a half months. The students taking my preparation for

studying abroad courses need to get a higher test score of English in a very short period of time, so I felt short-term proficiency gains should be addressed in this study.

Fumiko had several queries about the particulars of the study that I would like to respond to. I was surprised that the learners for the most part already knew what their rough learner goals were before we started meeting for the weekly sessions. They expressed what they wanted to achieve while I helped them sign up for their pre-IELTS test. Eighteen students wanted to work on listening, speaking and reading skills, while 15, including the eight students who were set to study abroad after the post-IELTS test, wanted to practice all of the four skills including reading and writing. To create their study plans, I provided them with a four-skills log with 30 entries for starters that they could work on at their own pace. This simply asked for short written responses (around 15 to 25 words) about what was the practice they focused on such as reading aloud, shadowing, or singing karaoke, for example. Additionally, they were asked how long they worked on each practice, what they noticed while they engaged in the practice, how they felt, plus what a simple and achievable new learning goal would be.

Regrettably, although I asked them to merely write a few sentences of reflections listed above for each practice, seventeen out of the 20 confessed they were too busy to do so with their coursework and other engagements. They reported that they would rather speak about the practices during the sessions and prefer me to make notes of their spoken reflections in the sessions. Since I needed additional data besides my teacher notes, we reached a compromise: The students agreed to give self-reported reflections about what their study plans were, and how many hours they approximately spent on these practices that were loosely based on the four skills corresponding to the IELTS test in a more general exit survey. Subsequently, having the students speak about their study plans and answer the questions I posted in the four-skills logs gave me less precise data. However, it did allow more room for the learners to speak in detail in open dialogues where they worked with each other to make new study plan ideas to develop learner autonomy collaboratively with each other. My role was to merely give suggestions from time to time, and I took detailed notes as I observed and listened.

So, my post-study consultations were really a hodgepodge approach to contacting each student depending on their changing situations. For eight of the Japanese students, at the time the post-IELTS test results were known, they were living in foreign countries, so for those students, we corresponded individually by email, while the students living in Japan either corresponded via email or dropped by my office. Additionally, I sent all of the students my previous publications on this research that were available online and I also kept hard copies in my office of other printed publications that the students could pick up and read. As one can imagine, the level of engagement varied greatly from student to student. However, they all reported that the learning of ideas and advice from other students helped build their confidence enough that they felt they could succeed in improving their proficiency in the areas they wanted to learn. Although they had chances to revise their plans for further study with me, seven of them took up the offer and met with me occasionally in our Center to discuss their new learning goals. Others graduated and are now working.

Lastly, Fumiko asked about how the students' self-reported feelings of frustration and helplessness at the beginning of the study may have changed as the sessions continued. These reported feelings came up with each of the learners to varying extents at the start of the project, which was not part of the study, and yet the theme of frustration of learning a language cropped up in the data, particularly at the onset of the study and needed to be addressed. To deal with these psychological issues, I asked a lot of

questions to pinpoint where the anxiety was occurring in the learning experience. In some cases I would then speak to the individual learner, but more often I would address the issue to the students in the same 'sub' study group and ask what they thought might help alleviate the situation as their peers could support each other. For confidence building, I mentioned what areas they were successfully making progress in their language learning by noting the subtle improvements in their proficiency. In addition, I often pointed out how they were not alone having these feelings as others shared similar frustrations. Gradually, their sense of confidence improved, particularly from the Spring Semester after the 12th session or so, as they became more open with each other. Nonetheless, there was no time to measure the subtle changes in confidence of each learner as mentioned previously. Because I recognized that giving such support to learners is as an important part of my role as a teacher/facilitator, I certainly made room for this practice.

How the students developed their learning on their own

From now, I will compare the amount of time these learners spent on their study plans quantitatively to see if their IELTS test scores improved in each of the four skill areas. Without factoring in other methods of study at university, I will also share the depth of the learner's reflections with selected excerpts from the learners from their exit survey to illustrate the more qualitative and human face to language learning. This survey was a negotiated alternative to using more detailed written reflections in the four-skills log described in the previous section. Each learner was asked to choose their own pseudo name; two learners preferred to use their own names (see Appendix 1).

Listening

In the listening section of the IELTS test, 18 learners reported doing listening activities on their own for personal enjoyment (see Appendix 1). Ten achieved a + 0.5 increase in their listening scores, four remained the same, and four were lower by -0.5 and one by -1.0. A common factor in the learners' listening practices over nine months was that if they did out-of-class learning on average for 7.5 hours or more per week. Except for one student who self-reportedly kept falling asleep while doing listening activities on her own, the students' scores remained the same or improved, which points to the benefits of extensive listening for enjoyment. 'Tap', a Japanese male student, noticed from his previous experiences that language is not merely learning a stockpile of words and structures, but that language also requires learning communicative fluency:

> **Tap:** *Found the necessity for strictness of language learning. Since I have been in Germany for one year, I could catch up with others talking, however I didn't understand completely what one said if one spoke very quickly. I often guessed what the one meant and that is right in case of the topic was familiar to me. Nevertheless, one person started using words I do not know, then I suddenly I lost in the conversation and cannot say anything suitable. From this experience, I learnt that I have to keep vocabulary study. Study is not stock but flow.*

'Tap' encouraged other classmates about the importance of vocabulary work. Outside of his university studies, he preferred to communicate with friends, sing and listen to music, think in English, listen to English DVDs with English captions, with Japanese subtitles, and YouTube videos clips for 25 hours a

week. His listening score and his IELTS overall score remained the same at 6.0, but he volunteered for an NGO in Indonesia and traveled to various countries, which were life-enriching events through English. I admired his ability to incorporate English in his life because that was one of his goals, and it was not measurable on a proficiency test. In another case, 'Dokkinchan' a female Japanese learner, realized that her English listening could be efficiently planned and developed on her own by listening to her inner voice. By doing so, she recognized that her English 'thinking time' increased:

> **Dokkinchan:** *Sometimes, I thought what I would talk about in this seminar. During this seminar, the time I thought in English increased.*

In a 90-minute session during the first semester, her study group decided to plan what they wanted to speak about in advance, which helped her notice the value of planning her learning. She chose to sing and listen to music, listen to English DVDs with English captions and with Japanese subtitles, think in English, communicate with friends, learn from others, and learn by going to English-speaking parties. 'Dokkinchan's' listening score remained the same at 5.0; however, her speaking score improved by +0.5 to 5.5.

Reading

For the reading section, 18 learners reported reading on their own for pleasure (see Appendix 1). Three managed a +1.0 increase in their scores, five an increase of +0.5, four remained the same, four scores were lower by -0.5, and one by -1.0. During the nine-month duration of the study, extensive reading was a key factor; however, recommended hours per week for increased proficiency cannot be determined due to the variation in reading time, the test scores, and the significant required reading time for their university courses. The learners' reflections offer some interesting insights about the proficiency gains. 'Ann' chose to use multiple modalities. By reading textbooks, she could also build listening and speaking fluency:

> **Ann:** *I wanted to speak or listen to English more. So, I used a textbook of shadowing activity.*

'Ann's' reading score for the post-test improved by +0.5 to 6.0 after reading for an average of one hour a week, while her listening score decreased to -0.5 to 5.0, suggesting that more time was needed for greater language exposure. She and the other three students in her study group session asked me what other groups meeting at other times in the study were doing. Shadowing with graded readers was one of the activities I explained that other students were interested in, and she then became interested in shadowing. In contrast, 'Rahimi,' a Malaysian male learner had engaged with the English language since early childhood, so he continued his reading in English for pleasure and already had been actively practicing what he enjoyed:

> **Rahimi:** *Reading in English is done almost every day with or without the IELTS classes.*

By reading from the Internet for an average of 12 hours a week, his reading score remained the same at 8.0. However, his overall IELTS score improved by +0.5 due to his noticeable proficiency gain in speaking of +1.0 for an overall IELTS score of +7.5.

Writing

There were 15 learners who chose to develop English writing proficiency on their own (see Appendix 1). One learner received an increase of +1.5, three made gains of +1.0, five of +0.5, three remained the same, and three scored lower by -0.5, -1.0, and -1.5 respectively. A mutual feature was if the writing duration was an average of 6.5 hours per week or more, then their IELTS writing test scores improved. It was also encouraging that of the 15 learners, nine of them improved their scores and three remained the same. 'Snylo', a female Malaysian learner, found that reflective writing and keeping a journal online enabled her to share her thoughts and personal reflections with a wider international audience, while increasing her writing score of IELTS was incidental:

> **Snylo:** *I keep using English by surfing internet with English contents and also write things in English like in personal journal. I write in an online journal sometimes.*

'Snylo's preferred method of keeping a personal journal was from texting on Facebook (including with the other learners in this study!) and Twitter, while writing to keypals also through email. Her IELTS writing score improved by +0.5 and her overall IELTS score increased from 7.5 to 8.0 despite falling asleep briefly during the listening section, which she strongly wants this readership to know. Then there is 'Bob,' a Japanese male learner whose IELTS writing score improved by +1.5 by keeping an English vocabulary book for 12 hours per week in the nine months of the study. Two of his peer-study session learners suggested to him using a vocabulary book in preparation for studying abroad.

Speaking

The greatest proficiency gains were made in the speaking section, which was the highest priority learning goal for 18 learners who practiced speaking on their own and with friends and acquaintances (see Appendix 1). I am cautious to identify developing speaking on one's own as a factor in its own right because speaking was the desired focus during our seminars. I can safely claim that if the 18 respondents practiced speaking for approximately 8.5 hours to 10 hours per week including the seminar class for nine months, then their speaking score improved (sometimes greatly) or in two cases at least stayed the same. Three learners earned an increase of +1.5, two of +1.0, five of +0.5, while six remained the same, and two learners scored lower by -0.5. 'Nao', a female Japanese student who was rather terrified to speak with me, was in the same study session as 'Dokkinchan,' where the learners decided to think with their inner voice to plan what they were going to discuss in their 90-minute sessions. To remedy her fear of speaking, Nao practiced speaking with other students and claimed this did not help out much with pronunciation, but the practice worked for developing her confidence and being understood, and it also helped to increase her range of vocabulary:

> **Nao:** *First of all, I came not to be afraid of speaking English with Japanese and specific persons such as Stacey. However, I still pronounce Japanese accent and my pronunciation did not reach at the level of making native-speaker understand. That's just because I spoke English with only Japanese or some Asian students. Second, simply increased my vocabulary.*

Nao practiced these activities to improve her speaking skills: communicating with friends, thinking in English, thinking and thinking aloud in English for 3.5 hours a week, with the result that her speaking

score changed by +1.0. In contrast, 'Mary' made it a point to be very active in the English community at school and went on many social excursions, parties, and group events:

> **Mary:** *Went to Try Me parties every month! I went to Asakusa, Nagatoro, Chichibu and BBQ with exchange students.*

The Chichibu overnight excursion she mentioned was a dear memory for me as I stumbled upon a beautiful commemorative video of the event on Facebook from a notification in my email inbox. A group of international and Japanese Center students made this wonderful and well-organized cultural exchange outing full of activities and cooking together showing such joy in English. Seeing this community of practice is why I still want to be a teacher. This discovery led my colleagues and me to document the growth of an out-of-class learning community through autonomous socialization (Hughes, Krug, & Vye, 2011). These students continue to keep in close contact via Facebook. 'Mary' chose social speaking practices for about eight hours a week by communicating with friends and professors, singing in English, and going to English parties, and her IELTS speaking score improved by +0.5.

Overall results

Two salient themes came from the findings. Firstly, if the learners put a high priority on listening, writing, or speaking proficiency gains as a goal, their IELTS scores would improve provided that they spent approximately at least 6.5 or more hours per week outside the university classes and getting ideas from their peers in the Center about learning of their choice for 23 weeks. Reading proficiency gains could not be verified for independent study because the hours varied and extensive reading for coursework was not factored in. Secondly, the richness of the realization of language development and the process of learning are conveyed in the learners' written reflections rather than the test score numbers themselves.

Interdisciplinary reader response from Adriana Edwards Wurzinger, Saitama University

It is with immense pleasure that I accepted the invitation to comment on this inspirational chapter, founded on Stacey's long years of research and teaching. Since 2008, our daily interaction as colleagues at Saitama University has been feeding my curiosity, and painting a very exciting landscape with the deep colours and tones that only the soul of a true teacher could discover, and convey. My apologies to the readers if I make use of this space to express my respect and sincere thanks to Stacey for sharing this journey.

In this chapter, Stacey discusses several issues that I believe would get any social scientist inspired to get up and set the coffee machine ready. The obvious struggle for this responder is, clearly, to make a meaningful and productive final choice when it comes to presenting truly engaging questions that would further this discussion.

My first question is inspired by the analysis of the quality of language learning outcomes, in relation to the effective development of a higher sense of autonomy among the learners that participated in this study (Benson & Voller, 1997/2013). Stacey was indeed very wise in her decision to include qualitative data to support her findings, and I am certain that this study would be far less valuable if its only strength was founded on standardized language tests results. I believe that, by now, it is clear to anyone involved in education and training that motivation and autonomy are intrinsically connected, and the more autonomous the learner, the higher the possibility that s/he will move beyond the confined borders of the curriculum (van Lier, 2007).

As the qualitative evaluation of the research outcome considers the information obtained from learning histories and individual assessment interviews that form the scaffolding of this project, I would like to know if the students reported or hinted at having achieved a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms and potential of their individual motivation. In other words, I would like to know if it is possible to identify any traits that confirm or deny *if the participants have been able to discover, understand, and make use of the specific learning principles and strategies they developed, to promote and/or reinforce motivation in other areas of their social interaction.*

A second question, which I believe could open the door to a different dimension of this already rich study, is concerned with the value of the emotional journeys that all participants involved—coordinators and students alike—have undoubtedly experienced. In this case, I would like to focus on the coordinator's journey.

As the complex sense of our individual identity develops, we normally become increasingly aware of the power that the 'world' we are immersed in has over our idea of the self. The mental process required to create the distinction between the self and the others is also strongly interlinked to our capacity to understand (and manipulate) reality, social relations, expectations, and—the monsters among them all: consequences and long-term projections of our individual identity (Ekman et al., 2005). For us as learners, expectations play an outstandingly powerful role in the definition and perception of the self. We play, learn, internalize, crave, exchange information, define goals, and strive to achieve them or give them up: All these processes are part of a much deeper and significant path we follow in order to become who we are. That path, however, is a minefield of emotions.

Stacey designed her study with the learners' needs in mind, and the flexibility of her approach allowed her to effectively and gradually drop out of the formally established role of the teacher, and become a figure of reference, guidance, and support beyond the academic structure of the courses. I cannot help but wonder if it would be possible for Stacey to include in the final part of her chapter a short analysis of her own emotional journey, from the moment of conception of this research idea, to this very moment of reflection and writing. As a teacher, immersed in a reality of obligations and formalities, and who has successfully designed, developed, and brought to fruition a research project that promotes an alternative approach to understanding foreign language acquisition among our university students, Stacey's experiences could contribute significantly towards the strengthening of a much needed element in our daily grind: the reawakening of empathy (Ekman et al., 2005) towards the teacher-learner relationship.

If we are to comprehend and value this learning experience in its entirety, the emotional journey of the coordinator should be analyzed as much as that of the participants. Then, it will truly be Love's Labour's Won.

Part Three

Responding to Adriana Edwards Wurzinger's queries

I do not know if my response will do justice to the rich queries Adriana asks that are not often included in research chapters. Learners are not merely specimens in a laboratory and neither is the teacher, yet research for the most part does not reveal the palpable realities and human aspects of a study. The participants' strategy for having a greater understanding of their intrinsic motivation was simply having a dedicated place to talk about their language learning histories, their current goals, and future goals. From this perspective, the key learning trait was to trust themselves and take control of their autonomous language learning with their peers and by themselves. Having a space where peers and a teacher listened to their concerns and goals instilled a greater amount of confidence, particularly for the eight students who were going to study abroad. Each of the 20 students had different reasons for wanting to improve their English proficiency, but the single trend which emerged from what they had in common was they were not involved in English for the sake of learning the language itself. Their motivation to learn English was a combination of different pursuits such as travel, living abroad, research field, international pop culture, communicating with international friends, host families, and loved-ones, and, in one case, religion. This personal need for language proficiency and not for the sake of learning the language itself reminds me of Benson's (2011) and Benson and Reinders' (2011) comments about the importance that out-of class language learning plays in learners' overall language development (see also Appendix 1).

Illustrative responses to Adriana's first query can be found in the formal post-exit interviews of three of the participants. What these three individuals got most out of their seminar sessions was that they made long-lasting friendships in another language that went beyond language itself:

> **Mary:** *I got many friends through the seminar and well Snylo, we are so close, Dokkinchan we knew each other, but got close too. Ah, I went to England and met Nao with Minori. I had lunch and dinner with them I we went to a pub near Manchester and to Nao's flat and hung out.*
>
> **Synlo:** *The seminar helped me retain English from disappearing. I got to know more people, where I probably couldn't get to know them if it weren't for this Seminar. Masa, Mike and I spoke about interesting topics.*
>
> **Suzie:** *I went to America to study abroad and so during the winter break I went to the Grand Canyon and Los Vegas with Dokkinchan. I knew her before the seminar, but we first started taking in the seminar and became really good friends and traveled together, because yeah, the both of us aimed at*

> *studying abroad, so we had a lot in common. After I went tot America I met lots of people. It is difficult to explain, but my heart is healed! I didn't think that Japanese life was unhealthy mentally before, actually my [Seminar] friends said Japanese life is unhealthy, Um, how can I say…. 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 and so actually I saw a lot of people who are opened, So I thought augh, I thought it is okay to be myself even in Japan. For me it became a lot easier to live in Japan now!*

I can also attest that 13 of participants remain close friends in a language other than their L1. If I have facilitated in helping students have meaningful friendships in another language, the details do not concern me so much, because having good friends is precious. Next, I will share my emotional journey as a teacher.

I gained many profound insights from Adriana's metaphor for sharing real teaching and researching experiences as a much needed element in reawakening empathy towards the teacher-learner relationship. I am reminded as a teacher/researcher of the complexity or the real daily grind through Aoki's (2002), Aoki and Hamakawa's (2003), and Aoki and Kobayashi's (2009) pivotal narrative research on teacher autonomy. That daily struggle is often overlooked in general or less reflective language learning and education research, whereby important aspects of the entire research experience are ignored.

My emotional journey from the inception of the research notion before the required writing of the grant application and the writing up until now does certainly feel like a snakes and ladders game. After experiencing grant proposal rejections, I released my anxiety about failure and wrote for pure enjoyment. I simply noticed a limited focus on language proficiency in the field of learner autonomy in language education. From then on, the grant writing ceased to be a chore, which might be of interest to readers.

Once I received the grant, my emotional journey took a plummet temporarily. Our administrative staff was not processing the required paperwork for the grant money to be disbursed. Had I known, I would have filed the necessary papers myself. The mounting costs of doing the research were being covered by my credit card, and sometimes for periods of up to five months I was not reimbursed. Emotionally, I was furious because I wondered whether I could continue to foot the research bill in this way. Without altercations occurring, I started questioning whether my gender and/or race—basically my identity—was the cause of this meddling. Or was it simply a matter of incompetence? As a result, undoing the financial mess took time away from analyzing the data. Luckily, my director intervened and I learned to file reimbursement forms myself. On top of this, a dear friend of mine and family also needed my attention, yet I was gladly there for them every chance I could.

My solace during these trying times was the seminar sessions themselves and meeting with these fine students. Creating a space to interact with each other, sharing ideas for learner strategies, learning about various subjects of their choice, yet in another language, was like observing a musical symphony. My daily grind also involved convincing the administration that their prior lack of action was not conducive for our university students. Furthermore, I helped to create clear channels of support with

our current colleagues for grant applications, which has greatly aided my colleagues and myself in the years since.

Adriana raised the possibility of this study contributing to the *reawakening of empathy* towards the teacher-learner relationship. If it does, then I will be more than delighted. If my cathartic reflections assist anyone in convincing administrations to create more space for university students to maintain autonomy and greater support for teachers to facilitate collaborative learning communities, then it is an emotional battle well won. Dear Reader, just know that you are not alone in your frustration at the glitches with the bureaucracy. Undertake your own advocacy for the teacher-learner relationship, too. The process is challenging, but great change for supporting learning can occur and the emotional scaring of the research being ignored by some part of the bureaucracy fades in time if you keep a healthy attitude. That is the true test of a soul of a teacher: Observing the monsters, navigating the daily grind, remembering your identity, facilitating learning, and never forgetting to learn from the process yourself.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described prior research about learner autonomy and its relationship with language proficiency, as well as reported on my own inquiry into this issue, based on 20 university students' spoken and written reflections about their language practice on their own, with others, and the reflections that I wrote during the study. I also received two highly valuable and profound reader responses from Fumiko Murase and Adriana Edwards Wurzinger, and I tried to reply to each of them in turn. Owing to this collaborative process, this paper gave, I hope, a fuller account of the true research process involving the learners' out-of-class learning and social bonding, the emotional journey of the teacher/researcher, and the daily grind. Regarding the success of the participants, I guardedly compared any areas of improvement in their language proficiency of the pre- and post-IELTS tests with spoken and written reflections of the learners' language study they developed and my own reflections. Nonetheless, it is safe to report that if a learner studies autonomously for reasons other than simply learning English for 6.5 or more hours per week, then language proficiency gains can be made. This research had many limitations, notably the short time period of nine months and the research documenting the number of hours needed for increased language proficiency, so I am looking forward to exploring these limitations and coming to additional findings in future papers.

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Appendix 1: Two Queries about Independent Study Developed Outside the University

1. During the nine months of the Independent/IELTS classes, how did your language learning studies develop by yourself? Please explain to what extent your English learning developed on your own (or did not).
2. About how much time (hours per week) did you spend learning or using outside classes or the ERC at Saitama University? [Learners could choose from an extensive list of activities]

	Listening: Primarily listening study on one's own					
Name	**Response to Question 1**	**Response to Question 2**	**Hours per week**	**IELTS Pre-test**	**IELTS Post-test**	**Score Change**
Afiqah		Sing & listen to music, youtube video clips	16	7.5	8	+.5
Bob	I didn't do anything by myself [with friends]	Communicate with friends & professors, English parties, listen to English DVDs with English captions & with Japanese subtitles, listen to music	12	5	5.5	+.5
WZ	**I also listen a lot and get some information of the other major or culture.**	Communicate with friends, professors, use English in the lab, sing & listen to music, think and dream in English, listen to youtube clips, video games, English DVD/video with translations other than your native language	11	5	5.5	+.5
Mike	I bought CNN magazine and listened appendix CD. It improves or keep my listening ability.	Communicate with friends, use English in the lab, sing & listen to music, think and think aloud in English, listen to English DVDs with English captions & with Japanese subtitles	11	4.5	5	+.5
Take noko	I took many English classes	English Speaking Society, communicate with friends & professors, listen to music, youtube video clips, English DVDs with English captions & with Japanese subtitles, an English party	9	5	5.5	+.5
Brown		Communicate with friends & professors, listen to music	8	4.5	5	+.5
Nao		Communicate with friends, listen to English DVDs with English captions, think and think aloud in English	6	5	5.5	+.5
Aki	I feel that using English easily. **I learned some words by other members. I could understand new stories in English.**	Communicate with friends, professors, sing & listen to English, listen to English DVDs with English captions, take a course outside the university	5.5	5	5.5	+.5
Masa	I studied by using podcast programs of English language. It is suitable for me because I do not have enough time study English. Podcast enables me to listen to English while taking trains or buses.	Listen to pod casts & English DVDs with English captions	2	4.5	5	+.5
Tap	Found the necessity for strictness of language learning. Since I have been in Germany for one year, I could catch up with others talking, however I didn't understand completely what one said if one spoke very quickly. I often guessed what the one meant and that is right in case of the topic was familiar to me. Nevertheless, one person started using words I do not know, then I suddenly I lost in the conversation and cannot say anything suitable. From this	Communicate with friends, sing & listen to music, think in English, English DVDs with English captions & with Japanese subtitles, youtube videos clips	25	6.5	6.5	.0

	experience, I learnt that I have to keep vocabulary study. Study is not stock but flow.					
Joey		Communicate with friends, listen to English DVDs with English captions & with Japanese subtitles at the movie theater, listen to music, youtube video clips	7.5	7	7	.0
Mary	I studied for TOEIC as well. I used a reference book to study for it, but I could not get better score than I expected. Also, I watched some DVDs with English subtitles. It helped me to improve my vocabulary and listening skills.	Communicate with friends, professors, sing & listen to English, English parties, listen to English DVDs with English captions & with Japanese subtitles at the movie theater	5	5.5	5.5	.0
Dokkin chan	Sometimes, I thought what I would talk about in this seminar. During this seminar, the time I thought in English increased. I had dinner with Thai people twice. I learned English from Thai people.	Sing & listen to music, English DVDs with English captions & with Japanese subtitles, think in English, communicate with friends, learn from others, English parties	18	5	5	.0
Snylo	I feel asleep during beginning of the 2nd IELTS Test, so I know my score would be better if I stayed awake. I want people to know that.	Sing & listen to music, youtube videos, think and think a loud in English, dream in English, communicate with friends, learn from others	24	9	8.5	-.5
Rahimi		Sing & listen to music, youtube videos & video games, think in English, learn from others	4	8	7.5	-.5
Sei	Watching DVDs "Friends." It improved a little bit because I didn't watch a lot.	Communicate with friends, listen to English DVDs with English captions & with Japanese subtitles	2	6	5.5	-.5
Ann	I wanted to speak or listen to English more. So, I used a text book of shadowing activity.	Communicate with friends, professors, think in English, listen to music, youtube clips, speak on the phone	7	5.5	5	-.5
Suzie	**Ted developed one of my classmate's listening comprehension in English.**	Communicate with friends & professors, English parties, take course outside the university, listen to English DVDs with English captions & subtitles	4	6	5	-1
Reading: Primarily reading study on one's own						
Snylo	I keep using English by surfing internet with English contents and also write things in English like in personal journal.	Read from the Internet & books	24	8	9	+1
Nao		Read books, newspapers, the Internet & graded readers	14	5	6	+1
Aki	I feel that using English easily.	Take an English class outside the university, read from the Internet, graded readers & books	4	5.5	6.5	+1
Afiqah		Read from the Internet	6	6.5	7	+.5
ITA	I couldn't do much effort for it.	Read text on facebook	6	5	5.5	+.5
Ann	I wanted to speak or listen to English more. So, I used a text book of shadowing activity.	Read books	1	5.5	6	+.5
Mary	I studied for TOEIC as well. I used a reference book to study for it, but I could not get better score than I expected. Also, I watched some DVDs with English subtitles. It helped me to improve my vocabulary and listening skills.	Read TOIEC reference books & DVDs	2.5	5.5	6	+.5
Sei		Read books & newspapers	2.5	5.5	6	+.5
Rahimi	Reading in English is done almost every day with or without the IELTS classes.	Read from the Internet	12	8	8	.0
Brown		Read books & newspapers	8	5.5	5.5	.0

Take noko	I took many English classes	Read from the Internet & graded readers	8	5.5	5.5	.0
Mike		Read from the Internet, graded readers & books	7.5	5	5	.0
Suzie		Read books	8	6	5.5	-.5
Joey	I tried to read a penguin book in each two weeks so that I could keep my reading on a daily basis. But I didn't do other activities outside class, which limited the development of other English skills.	Read from the Internet, graded readers & books	7.5	8.5	8	-.5
Tap		Read books, The Internet & newspapers	7	7	6.5	-.5
Susie	In my Reading class during last autumn, I had read several penguin readers' books.	Reading graded readers	5	7	6.5	-.5
WZ	Read papers in English for my research.	Read from the Internet, graded readers & books	2	7	6	-1
Dokkin chan	I studied for IELTS using a textbook by myself, and it improve my writing and reading skills. I also read some books in my own time, and it improve my vocabulary.	Read from the Internet, newspapers & books	2	6	5	-1
	Writing: Primarily writing study on one's own					
Bob		Keep a vocabulary book	12	4	5.5	+1.5
Dokkin chan	I studied for IELTS using a textbook by myself, and it improve my writing and reading skills. I also read some books in my own time, and it improve my vocabulary.	Write academic papers, text on facebook & cell phone, keep a vocabulary book	6	5	6	+1
Suzie		Text on a cell phone, keep a vocabulary book	1.5	3.5	4.5	+1
Nao		Text on facebook, keep a vocabulary book	1	4	5	+1
Snylo	I keep using English by surfing internet with English contents and also write things in English like in personal journal. I write in an online journal sometimes.	Personal journal, text on facebook & twitter, write to a keypal	12	6	6.5	+.5
Rahimi		Write academic papers, text on facebook	7	6	6.5	+.5
Aki	I feel that using English easily.	Take an English class outside the university, text on facebook, mixi, twitter & to a keypal	3	5	5.5	+.5
Sei		Text on facebook, write to a keypal,	4.5	4.5	5	+.5
Brown		Text on facebook	2	4.5	5	+.5
Afiqah		Text on facebook & twitter	5	5.5	5.5	.0
WZ		Write academic papers, text on a cell phone, facebook, mixi & twitter	2	5	5	.0
Masa		Write academic papers, text on a cell phone, keep a vocabulary book	6	4	4	.0
Ann		Write academic papers, text on (7 hours in Japanese! I didn't amend! Sorry), facebook, twitter & to a key pal	3	5.5	5	-.5
ITA	I couldn't do much effort for it.	Text on facebook	6	5	4	-1
Mike		Text on a cell phone, facebook & twitter	1	5	3.5	-1.5
	Speaking: Primarily speaking study on one's own					
WZ	In the independent ELTS classes, I speak a lot. I can speak English much better the before.	Communicate with friends, professors, use English in the lab, sing & listen to music, think and dream in English, help someone in English	11.5	5	6.5	+1.5
Take noko	I took many English classes. **did not**	English Speaking Society, communicate with friends & professors, went to an English	6	4.5	6	+1.5

		party				
Sei	**My seminar classmates are very hard working and seem to like studying English. They encouraged me to study English harder.**	Communicate with friends & professors	6	5	6.5	+1.5
Rahimi	More confident in speaking since I had more speaking time every week than without the class. More confident in speaking since I had more speaking time every week than without the class.	Communicate with friends, think in English, help others, sing to music	9	6	7	+1
Nao	First of all, I came not to be afraid of speaking English with Japanese and specific persons such as Stacey. However, I still pronounce Japanese accent and my pronunciation did not reach at the level of making native-speaker understand. That's just because I spoke English with only Japanese or some Asian students. Second, simply increased my vocabulary**. We just had learned from each other. I could know new words and expressions from other friends because we might tend to use some particular words and expression and the tendencies are different from each other.**	Communicate with friends, think in English, think and think aloud in English	3.5	4	5	+1
Snylo	**mainly we had conversations only in english, compared to first time we met, we are now able to understand more what the other person is talking and the conversation runs more smoothly. We conversed a lot, and some differences were seen from the English language i learnt until now in my home country and the one used by native speaker.**	Communicate with friends, think out loud in English, helped others, speak on the phone, sing to music	24	6.5	7	+.5
Mary	Went to Try Me parties every month! I went to Asakusa, Nagatoro, Chichibu and BBQ with exchange students. **We encouraged each other to study English. Also, I sometimes learned some words and expressions from classmates.**	Communicate with friends, professors, sing to English, English parties	8	5.5	6	+.5
Dokkin chan	Sometimes, I thought what I would talk about in this seminar. During this seminar, the time I thought in English increased. I had dinner with Thai people twice. I learned English from Thai people. **My seminar classmates had passion to improve their English ability, so they encouraged me! Almost all people have been to other countries, and some of them had studied in America before. They taught a lot of things about America in this seminar, and it was important information for me. Also, there were people who planed to go to other countries. I made best friends with some of them, and they always cheered me up. I was motivated by them. In this seminar, my speaking ability maybe improved. I hope so!**	Communicate with friends, professors, think in English, help others, speak on the phone, use English at the part-time job, sing to English, English parties	6	5	5.5	+.5
Suzie	Shadowing using CNN magazines. I could remember vocabularies and notice getting better my pronunciation. **I became ambitious for studying English by talking about how to study English with my friends.**	Communicate with friends & professors, English parties, take an English class outside the university	3.5	4.5	5	+.5
Brown	When I started to study in IELTS seminar, I was just very very bad English speaker. But I tried to speak and communicate with people in English as much as possible. none	Communicate with friends & professors	3	4	4.5	+.5
Joey	**I talked so much about various things with my classmates, so that helped me keep my speaking level, and develop it a little more.**	Communicate with friends	1	6.5	6.5	.0
Tap	Found the necessity for strictness of language learning. Since I have been in Germany for one year, I could catch up	Communicate with friends, use English in the lab, sing to music,	14	6	6	.0

	with others talking, however I didn't understand completely what one said if one spoke very quickly. I often guessed what the one meant and that is right in case of the topic was familiar to me. Nevertheless, one person started using words I do not know, then I suddenly I lost in the conversation and cannot say anything suitable. From this experience, I learnt that I have to keep vocabulary study. Study is not stock but flow. **Communication skills. I often don't know what to say or talk to the other persons in English. I can say something in Japanese anytime, even when I need to talk to a stranger. However through this seminar, I have overcome this problem with my seminar classmates coming from not only economics major but various majors, gender and countries.** **Way of English study. I could learn many ways of English study that I didn't know and try, for example trying to memorise all the sentences involving important grammer and say them.**	think in English				
Bob	I didn't do anything by myself [with friends] **I tried to speak more with my classmates.**	Communicate with friends & professors, English parties,	12	5.5	5.5	.0
Mike	I became to think I want to speak English more before. I decided to travel to Singapore this summer for a week because of many friends going abroad. **Their motivation encourages to me.**	Communicate with friends, think out loud, help others, speak on the phone, use English in the lab	8	5	5	.0
Ann	I wanted to speak or listen to English more. So, I used a text book of shadowing activity. **Nothing special.**	Communicate with friends, professors, think in English, speak on the phone	4	5.5	5.5	.0
Joey		Communicate with friends	1	6	6	.0
Afiqah	I feel more confident speaking in English. **I feel more confident speaking in English with my classmates.**	Communicate with the professor and lab classmates	6	6	5.5	-.5
Aki	I feel that using English easily.	Communicate with friends, professors, sing with English, take an English class outside the university	3.5	5.5	5	-.5

*Note: If the 'response to question' field is blank, then no comment was made about that language skill.