



**ISSN 2433-5444**

## **Relay Journal**

<https://kuis.kandagaigo.ac.jp/relayjournal>

### **Fostering Collaborative Autonomy: The Roles of Cooperative and Collaborative Learning**

Gordon Myskow, Keio University, Department of Law and Political Science

Phillip A. Bennett, Kanda University of International Studies, TESOL MA Program

Hisako Yoshimura, Kanda University of International Studies, TESOL MA Program

Kyoko Gruendel, Kanda University of International Studies, TESOL MA Program

Takuto Marutani, Kanda University of International Studies, TESOL MA Program

Kaori Hano, Shiraume Gakuen Seishu Junior and Senior High School

Teresa Li, Kanda University of International Studies, TESOL MA Program

#### **To cite this article**

Myskow, G., Bennett, P. A., Yoshimura, H., Gruendel, K., Marutani, T., Hano, K., & Li, T. (2018). Fostering collaborative autonomy: The roles of cooperative and collaborative learning. *Relay Journal*, 1 (2), 360-381.

#### **To link to this article**

[https://kuis.kandagaigo.ac.jp/relayjournal/issues/sep18/myskow\\_et\\_al/](https://kuis.kandagaigo.ac.jp/relayjournal/issues/sep18/myskow_et_al/)

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Please contact the authors for permission to re-print elsewhere.

# Fostering Collaborative Autonomy: The Roles of Cooperative and Collaborative Learning

Gordon Myskow, Keio University, Department of Law and Political Science

Phillip A. Bennett, Kanda University of International Studies, TESOL MA Program

Hisako Yoshimura, Kanda University of International Studies, TESOL MA Program

Kyoko Gruendel, Kanda University of International Studies, TESOL MA Program

Takuto Marutani, Kanda University of International Studies, TESOL MA Program

Kaori Hano, Shiraume Gakuen Seishu Junior and Senior High School

Teresa Li, Kanda University of International Studies, TESOL MA Program

## Abstract

The distinction between Cooperative and Collaborative Learning approaches is not a clear one. Some use the terms interchangeably while others consider Cooperative Learning to be a type of Collaborative Learning. Still others clearly differentiate between them, characterizing Cooperative Learning as more highly structured in its procedures, involving a great deal of intervention by the teacher to plan and orchestrate group interactions. Collaborative Learning, however, presupposes some degree of learner autonomy – that groups can work effectively toward shared goals and monitor their own progress.

This paper takes the view that the distinction between Cooperative and Collaborative Learning is a useful one and that both approaches can play valuable roles in fostering autonomous interaction, or what Murphey and Jacobs (2000) refer to as “collaborative autonomy”. It argues that while Collaborative Learning formations may be the ultimate *goal* for teachers wishing to develop learner autonomy, Cooperative Learning is a valuable *means* for modeling the skills and abilities to help students get there. The discussion begins with an overview of the two approaches, focusing on their implementation in the Japanese educational context. It then presents seven highly structured Cooperative Learning activities and shows how they can be modified and extended over time to encourage more collaborative autonomy.

*Keywords:* Cooperative Learning; Collaborative Learning; Autonomous Interaction;  
Collaborative Autonomy; Japanese educational context

Proactive interaction with others in the target language is an important part of learner autonomy (Little, 1995). Yet in many EFL classrooms in Japan it can be very challenging for teachers to create opportunities for meaningful interaction among learners (Sakui, 2007; Underwood, 2017). In addition to affective issues such as low motivation and shyness, there

are a variety of classroom management challenges that can arise when teachers have students work in groups (see Dornyei and Murphey, 2003, for an in-depth discussion of group dynamics). The following observations from Sakui's (2007) study of classroom management issues for teachers using group work in Japanese secondary schools, illustrate some of these difficulties:

Based on my observations, the teachers sometimes had difficulty in managing many groups at the same time. For example, if two or three groups were not on task, the teacher needed to move around the classroom and attend to these groups so that they could get back on track. The teacher's attention often seemed to be consumed in managing these problematic groups and was not focused on academic matters... (p. 47).

Such unstructured group-work activities are not just a classroom-management problem for teachers; they can have a detrimental long-term impact on learning. A tendency exists in unstructured groups for some members to dominate while others passively follow the will of their peers. Students who are hesitant to communicate with others may become stuck in familiar patterns of interaction and miss out on opportunities to develop interpersonal abilities. This is perhaps an especially important issue in foreign language settings where few opportunities exist to develop such skills in the target language.

One option for organizing group work activities is Cooperative Learning (see Kagan, 1992). In this approach, student interactions are highly structured by the teacher to ensure maximum participation. Some studies carried out with Japanese EFL learners have highlighted the benefits of this approach, including improved classroom management (Myskow, Underwood & Hattori, 2008), and a greater "willingness to communicate" among learners (Parviz & Meisam, 2013, p. 74). However, since student interaction in cooperative classrooms is highly controlled, there is also the potential for learners to become overly-reliant on the teacher's procedural directives when communicating with their peers. Thus, they may not develop the skills for more spontaneous and autonomous interaction.

Murphey and Jacobs (2000) use the term "critical collaborative autonomy" to highlight the central role peer interaction plays in fostering autonomy. The authors also note, however, that collaborative autonomy is something that needs to be nurtured over time and that "the incremental 'assuming of control' of one's language learning within a community

not only accelerates acquisition but changes group and individual personalities (Murphey & Jacobs 2000, p. 1)”.

Another related approach for carrying out group work is Collaborative Learning. Some have used the terms Cooperative and Collaborative Learning interchangeably (e.g., Romney 1997), while others consider Collaborative Learning a more general term, of which Cooperative Learning is just one kind (e.g., Chung, 1991). For others, however, important distinctions exist between them (e.g., Mathews et al., 1995). According to Mathews et al. (1995), while Cooperative Learning is highly structured, Collaborative Learning tends to presuppose that learners already possess the requisite motivation and communicative skills to work effectively with their peers, and thus the rigid structuring of interaction by the teacher is unnecessary.

In this paper, we take the view that both of these approaches to managing group work are of use to teachers. In particular, we argue that Cooperative Learning can serve as a valuable scaffold or ‘stepping stone’ toward less structured, collaborative formations (see Ikeda, 2014, for a related discussion of scaffolding and Collaborative Learning). The paper begins with an overview of Cooperative and Collaborative Learning. It then looks at seven cooperative activities, showing how they can be modified or extended over time to promote more autonomous interaction in the classroom and beyond.

### **Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative Learning has been defined as “the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning” (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993, p. 6). Of the various incarnations of Cooperative Learning (Aronson et al., 1978; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Kagan, 1992), perhaps the most well-known is Spencer Kagan’s (1992) *Structural Cooperative Learning*. According to Kagan (1992), there are four principles that must be in place for a classroom activity to be considered ‘cooperative’.

The first of these principles is **Positive Interdependence**. This means that a group cannot complete a task without the contributions of *all* its members. It involves, in Jacob’s (2006) words, a “feeling of one-for-all and all-for-one” (p.39). A classic example of a pedagogical task that includes positive interdependence is *Jigsaw information-share*. In this activity, individuals are responsible for reporting different pieces of information to their team members who record it for use as stimulus for further learning (see Aronson, 1978). Since

each team member is reliant on other members' information, the task can be said to include positive interdependence.

The second of Kagan's (1992) Cooperative Learning principles is **Individual Accountability**. This means simply that there is some mechanism in place to ensure that each team member is responsible or 'accountable' for their contributions. Accountability necessitates that individuals make their contributions public in some way. In the *Jigsaw* task, students are accountable to their peers because they have to make their contributions public by reporting their information to their teams. Individual accountability can be strengthened by having team members also report to the class and/or teacher. Students can be asked, for example, to record the contributions of their team members on worksheets, which can then be collected by the teacher and assessed for task compliance. Or, students could be randomly selected to report in front of the class on the information they gathered from their teammates. In general, the more public a team member's contributions are, the more individual accountability the activity has.

The third of Kagan's (1992) principles is **Equal Participation**. This simply means that a team's work must be evenly distributed among its members. A jigsaw task can be said to promote equal participation if all team members are responsible for reporting the same amount of information, or they are all given an equal amount of time to tell their team members about it. The last of Kagan's (1992) principles is **Simultaneous Interaction**. This just means that learners should all be engaged with the task at the same time. Of the four principles, this one is perhaps the least important, especially considering the opportunities that online environments afford nowadays for asynchronous learning. Together, the four principles (Positive Interdependence, Individual Accountability, Equal Participation and Simultaneous Interaction) make up the acronym "PIES", and for Kagan (1992), they constitute the essential components of a Cooperative Learning activity.

If PIES is the set of principles or 'ingredients' of cooperative-learning activities, then the procedures or 'recipes' for implementing them are the **structures**. Kagan (1992) describes a number of 'structures' (i.e., task-procedures), which can be used to achieve a variety of learning outcomes in any number of subject-areas. The aforementioned *Jigsaw* task, for example, is considered a structure. It can be used in a history class to have students teach their teammates about figures of the Russian Revolution, or in a biology class to teach them about different species of plants. According to Kagan (1992), when a structure like *Jigsaw* is combined with particular content it is called an *activity*. In an EFL course, the jigsaw

structure could be combined with instructional content such as *relative-clause grammar patterns*, resulting in a classroom activity that might be referred to as ‘grammar jigsaw’.

### **Collaborative Learning**

A great deal of overlap exists between Cooperative and Collaborative Learning. The aforementioned notions of *Positive Interdependence* and *Individual Accountability*, for example, have been discussed in connection to both Cooperative and Collaborative Learning (see Laal & Laal, 2012; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993). Likewise, Johnson and Johnson’s (1994) concept of *Processing Group Interaction*, which as Jacobs (2006) explains involves “groups spend[ing] time during or after activities discussing how well their group is functioning and how they might improve in their future collaborations” has been associated with both approaches (Laal & Laal, 2012, p. 37). A critical distinction between these approaches, however, lies in the extent of teacher involvement in structuring classroom interaction. Mathews et al. (1995), discussing Cooperative and Collaborative Learning in L1 contexts, neatly sums up this difference:

Cooperative learning tends to be more structured in its approach to small-group instruction, to be more detailed in advice to practitioners, and to advocate more direct training of students to function in groups...[On the other hand,] collaborative learning practitioners are inclined to assume students are responsible participants who already use social skills in undertaking and completing tasks. (p. 40)

The difference between these approaches is illustrated by the aforementioned *Jigsaw* task. Unlike a Cooperative Learning classroom, in a Collaborative one the teacher would provide a great deal of space for students to decide how to execute the task. Students may decide for themselves what topics they are going to read, who will be responsible for what parts etc. They may even conclude that the jigsaw structure does not suit the task and decide it is better to assign each team member different roles instead. One member might, for example, be responsible for researching the topic while another presents the information to the class. All the while, the teacher performs an advisory role, helping teams when necessary but avoiding specific prescriptions about how to carry out the activity.

Another key distinction between these approaches made in Mathews et al. (1995) is an *assumption* in collaborative learning that students already possess the requisite social

skills to perform unstructured tasks. In other words, Collaborative Learning tasks presuppose some degree of learner autonomy. As discussed previously, however, teachers should exercise caution when making assumptions about learners' abilities to effectively work together. As Little (1995) points out, a teacher seeking to promote autonomous learner interaction needs to consider a range of contextual factors such as "the institutional framework within which she is working, and the age, educational background and target language competence of her learners" (p. 179). She must also decide on the specific aspects of learner autonomy she wishes to foster, and thus, she needs to assess learners' existing abilities including "whether and to what extent it is possible for the learners to determine their own learning objectives, select their own learning materials and contribute to the assessment of their learning progress" (Little, 1995, p. 179).

To sum up, while Cooperative Learning is characterized by considerable teacher intervention in designing and orchestrating interactive activities, Collaborative Learning affords more opportunities for learners to decide how to carry out tasks. When making determinations about learners' preparedness for collaborative tasks, teachers need to consider a variety of contextual factors.

### **Cooperative Learning as a Stepping Stone toward Collaborative Learning**

Figure 1 illustrates key differences and similarities between Cooperative and Collaborative Learning as well as other common types of classroom interaction (i.e., teacher-fronted lectures and unstructured group work). The horizontal axis represents the amount of student-student interaction, while the vertical axis shows the amount of teacher intervention. As Figure 1 shows, traditional teacher-fronted lectures are located in **Quadrant A** because they are characterized by much teacher intervention and little student interaction. Unstructured group work is in **Quadrant B** because, although there is typically little teacher intervention in these tasks, there is also no mechanism in place to ensure learners are actually interacting with one another. Cooperative Learning, on the other hand, is located in **Quadrant C** because, while it encourages much student-student interaction, the teacher also plays a vital role in designing and orchestrating classroom interaction. In **Quadrant D** is Collaborative Learning, which suggests it is characterized by much student interaction and little teacher intervention.

The greater amount of teacher intervention in Cooperative than Collaborative Learning has led some to conclude that the former may be better suited for younger learners

such as elementary and secondary school students, while the latter is more appropriate for more mature learners in contexts such as universities or workplaces. This argument has some merit. The maturity level of learners may very well be an important factor in predicting the extent to which students can guide their own learning. However, we would advise against taking this line of reasoning too far and instead allow the particular groups of learners in specific educational contexts to guide teachers' decision making.

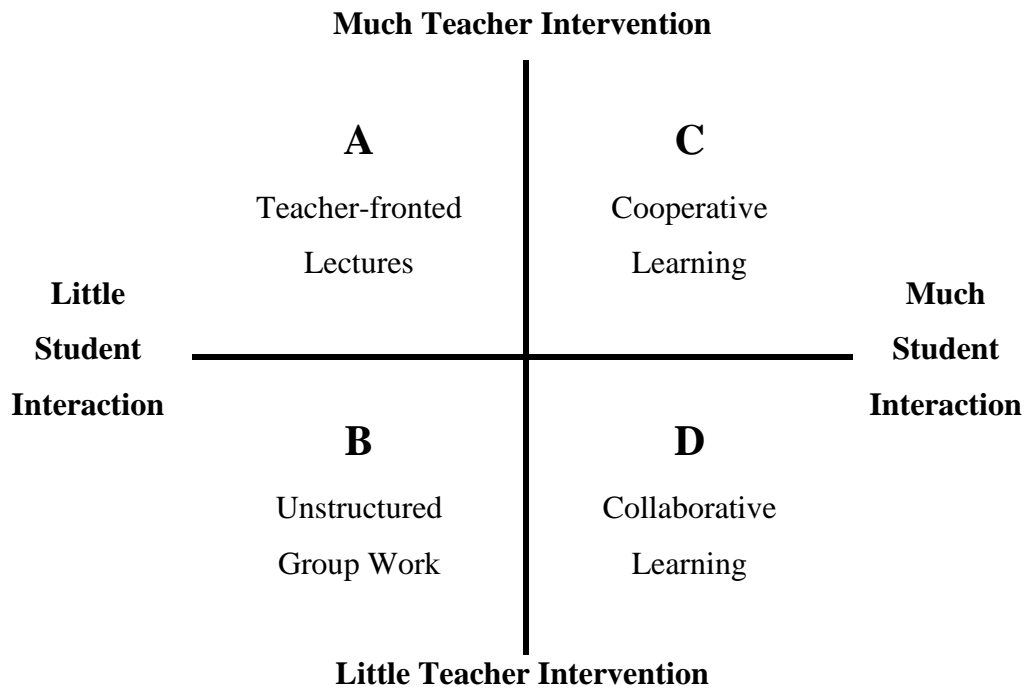


Figure 1: Teacher Intervention and Student Interaction in Different Approaches to Structuring Classroom Interaction

From our experiences across a variety of educational contexts including elementary, secondary school, university, and even adult education, the highly regulated and structured activities of Cooperative Learning can perform a valuable scaffolding function, easing learners toward less-structured collaborative learning tasks. By using Cooperative Learning, teachers can model for students the importance of working toward shared goals, the interdependency of team-based tasks, as well as the need for individual accountability and equal participation.

As Cooperative Learning requires equal participation—or at least makes it difficult for students to opt-out of activities—there is less likelihood that learners will be left behind in their development of the communication skills necessary for more autonomous interaction in



collaborative tasks. Thus, while Collaborative Learning may be the ultimate *goal* for teachers wishing to develop learner autonomy, Cooperative Learning is a valuable *means* for helping students develop the skills and abilities to get there. The challenge for teachers then is to provide adequate structure for interactive tasks while also employing strategies for moving beyond the rigid procedural prescriptions of structural Cooperative Learning.

### **Strategies for Scaffolding Autonomous Interaction**

One obvious way to scaffold learners toward more autonomous interactions is to gradually remove structural elements over time, slowly shifting decision-making responsibilities to learners. But this should not be an unplanned retreat; rather, it should be a systematic withdrawal of support. Dornyei and Murphey (2003) make this point clearly:

When the group matures and is ready to acquire more interpersonal and group skills, the teacher should further decrease his or her active presence in the group—reaching what might seem a *laissez-faire* leadership style—but of course this is a well-prepared withdrawal of the scaffolding, rather than an abandonment of leadership responsibilities (p. 99).

As pointed out previously, the Jigsaw task can be adapted to give students greater autonomy by allowing students to decide group members' roles, the topic of inquiry, and indeed whether the jigsaw structure is the most suitable way to go about carrying out the task.

A second way is to explicitly teach the collaborative skills necessary for collaborative autonomy. Jacobs (2006) lists a number of collaborative skills including “asking for help, giving reasons, speaking at an appropriate level, disagreeing politely, paraphrasing, asking for repetition, listening attentively, making suggestions, encouraging others to participate, checking that others understand, keeping the group on task, asking about feelings, praising others and so on” (p. 36). Johnson et al. (1993) proposes the following six-step procedure for teaching collaborative skills:

- 1) The teacher first helps the students understand why a particular skill is necessary.
- 2) Next the class discusses what the skill involves.
- 3) Students practice the skill in isolation.

- 4) Students utilize the skill in the group activities they do as part of the regular curriculum.
- 5) After some time, students discuss how well they are using the skill.
- 6) Finally, the teacher builds the skill into future activities, helping students to become better versed at using it. (as cited in Jacobs, 2006, p. 37).

A third method is to employ the technique Snyder (in press) calls simply *asking your students*. Teachers can survey teams to gain specific information about how well they are doing and what areas may need to be changed. This technique not only provides valuable information for teachers about students' reactions to group-work activities, but it can also raise learners' awareness of their use of particular collaborative skills. Students could be asked, for example, to what extent they showed they were listening attentively to others or encouraging others to participate.

Another option for raising awareness of the use of collaborative skills is for one learner on each team to act as an observer during cooperative tasks (see Jacobs, 2006, p. 38). The observer records the use of particular collaborative skills and reports his/her findings to the team. A fifth method for scaffolding learner autonomy, recommended by Ikeda (2014), is to "relocate the collaborative learning experience to a place outside of the classroom, such as a self-access center" (p. 22). Ikeda argues that classrooms are typically structured environments, which may inhibit learners' ability to apply their skills and abilities to take part in more authentic collaborative-learning experiences beyond the classroom walls (see Mynard & Stevenson 2017 for a recent discussion of self-access centers in the Japanese educational context).

### **Sample Classroom Activities for Scaffolding Autonomous Interaction**

In this section we present seven highly structured cooperative-learning activities, and explain how they can be adapted and extended over time to scaffold more student-led collaborative experiences to promote greater learner autonomy. The activities presented here were selected by participants in the 2017-18 Integrated-Skills Practicum course in the MA TESOL Program at Kanda University of International Studies. They were chosen because 1) they were thought to be effective activities for achieving a variety of learning objectives, 2) they all necessitate interaction among learners and 3) most of them do not appear to be widely used and thus may not be familiar to readers.

### ***Activity 1: Talking Chips***

Outlined in Kagan (1992), *Talking Chips*, is a cooperative-learning structure for developing communication skills. It is adapted here into an activity for developing the language and discussion skills of adult EFL learners. Like most of the other activities shown in this paper, this activity can be adapted for use across a wide range of teaching contexts with learners of various ages and abilities. Its procedure is as follows:

- 1) Teacher distributes an equal number of chips (flat marbles) to each team member. Students put them in the center of the table.
- 2) Pairs or teams of four students have a conversation/discussion. Each time they use a target structure/function, they take a marble from the center of the table.
- 3) The conversation continues until all chips are taken from the table by the students and they all have an equal number of them.

All of the key principles of Cooperative Learning are clearly present in this activity. First, students receive an equal number of chips that they can only take from the table when they use the target language (equal participation). Second, the use of marbles makes it hard for students to opt out of the activity as there is a physical token of their contribution (individual accountability). Third, no student can complete the activity without the contributions of his/her peers because they can only receive the marbles by interacting with others (positive interdependence).

While this activity may be effective for managing group discussions, it is also highly structured. The teacher intervenes substantially not only by prescribing particular grammatical structures but the number of times each student uses them. Hence, the activity is highly orchestrated by the teacher. Over time, however, as students become accustomed to the activity, the teacher can hand over more responsibility to the learners so they can carry it out themselves.

One way to modify this task to encourage more autonomy is to have students choose which language patterns they want to practice. Learners may decide as a team that there is a particular pattern such as the past-tense or present-perfect that they could all benefit from practicing. Second, students can be encouraged to practice language functions rather than grammatical structures, which may help them develop the collaborative skills necessary for autonomous interaction. For example, learners may pick up chips when they perform functions such as politely disagreeing, paraphrasing, asking for repetition, and listening

attentively. Finally, as students practice these functions over a period of time, the teacher could take away the chips altogether and encourage students to use collaborative skills to interact with one another without the aid of this structuring mechanism (chips).

To sum up, *Talking Chips* is a useful Cooperative Learning activity for organizing group discussions and practicing language patterns. Although it is highly structured, it can be modified over time to promote learner autonomy by giving students more choice, having them practice collaborative skills, and gradually removing structural elements from the activity.

### ***Activity 2: Scrambled Paratence***

Unlike the previous activity, the main purpose of *Scrambled Paratence* (Myskow, Underwood & Waring, in press) is to develop reading rather than speaking skills. The activity's name 'Paratence', an amalgam of the words 'paragraph' and 'sentence', involves reducing longer stretches of text (paragraphs) to simple statements (sentences). Its procedure is as follows:

- 1) Teacher prepares a one-sentence summary of each paragraph in a reading passage. Sentences are cut up into strips.
- 2) Teacher distributes one set of strips to each team of four students. All students on each team should receive the same number of strips.
- 3) One student begins reading the first paragraph aloud.
- 4) After the paragraph is read, students place the strips on the table that they think best summarizes the main point of the paragraph.
- 5) Students must then reach consensus on the best summary statement for the paragraph.
- 6) When consensus is reached, the next student begins reading the next paragraph. The activity is complete when all slips are matched to their paragraphs.

As these steps show, the cooperation of all team members is needed to complete the activity. Each member must read, listen, select a strip and consult with others about which slips match the paragraphs. Therefore, the activity contains Positive Interdependence. As each student must make their contributions 'public' by placing their slips on the table, Individual Accountability is also built into the activity. The requirement in Step 2 that each team member receives an equal number of strips helps to ensure Equal Participation.

As students become accustomed to this highly structured cooperative activity, adaptations can be made over time to promote more autonomous interaction and collaborative learning. For example, some structural elements can be removed from the activity. Rather than having the teacher make the sentence strips, students can be charged with creating their own summary statements and reaching consensus on the best sentences for each paragraph. Second, the teacher can model collaborative skills for students by creating a checklist for them to plan which skills they want to practice and keep an inventory of the ones they use. Figure 2 shows a Collaborative Skills Reflective Worksheet. In the far left column is a list of collaborative skills adapted from Jacobs (2006, p. 36). In the middle is a space for students to check the skills they *want to practice* before starting the activity and in the far-right column students are to check the skills that they actually practiced after they complete the activity. Such a checklist can help to model collaborative skills, promoting reflection before, during, and after the activity.

<i>Before you complete the next activity, check at least three skills that you <b>want to practice</b> during the activity. After you finish the activity check the skills that you <b>did practice</b>.</i>		
	I <b>want</b> to practice	I <b>did</b> practice
1. Asking others for help		
2. Giving reasons for your opinions		
3. Speaking at an appropriate level		
4. Disagreeing politely		
5. Paraphrasing what others say		
6. Asking for repetition		
7. Listening attentively		
8. Making suggestions		
9. Encouraging others to participate		

10. Checking that others understand		
11. Keeping the group on task		
12. Asking about feelings		
13. Praising others (p. 36).		

\*Note: Collaborative skills listed here are from Jacobs (2006, p. 36).

Figure 2: Collaborative Skills Reflective Worksheet\*

### ***Activity 3: Unfolding Events***

Like the previous activity, *Unfolding Events* (introduced in Myskow 2018, p. 62 and elaborated here) is a reading activity. However, unlike the previous activity that focuses on summarizing skills, the purpose of *Unfolding Events* is to develop inferencing and predicting skills.

- 1 ) Teacher selects a short story and divides it into parts.
- 2 ) Teacher writes a question at the end of each part that requires students to make predictions about what will happen in the next part.
- 3 ) Teacher folds up papers so that students can only see one event at a time (one paper for each pair of students).
- 4 ) In pairs, Student A reads the first part aloud as well as the prediction question at the end.
- 5 ) Students reach consensus on the best prediction and Student B writes it in the space provided.
- 6 ) Students unfold the paper to check their predictions, switching roles for the next part.
- 7 ) Students continue until all parts have been completed.

Since students have to discuss their predictions and reach consensus on them, this activity integrates reading with discussion, and, to a lesser extent, writing and listening. We found that the activity works best with short and funny stories that have interesting plot twists. The ‘*Aha!*-moments’ (see Kato & Mynard, 2015, p. 56) that students have as they check their

answers to prediction questions makes for a very enjoyable reading experience (An excellent resource for such stories is *EFL Classroom 2.0*.

<http://eflclassroom.com/books/premium/funnystories.pdf>).

The *Unfolding Events* activity incorporates all of Kagan's (1992) principles of Cooperative Learning. Equal Participation is present because students switch roles after reading each part. The activity also promotes Positive Interdependence as students cannot complete the activity without their partners reading aloud and writing answers to prediction questions. Teachers can ensure Individual Accountability is present by collecting students' papers and checking for compliance.

Beginner students may struggle with discussing their predictions in English. Over time, however, the teacher may gradually introduce a range of collaborative functions such as giving reasons for opinions, making suggestions, and disagreeing politely, for them to practice. The activity can also be modified over time to promote more autonomous interaction by gradually removing some of its structural elements. As students become more accustomed to making predictions about stories, the requirement that they write their answers can be removed. Eventually, students may be tasked simply with choosing their own stories to read and take turns reading different parts, making predictions about what will happen next.

#### ***Activity 4 Singing Strips***

In the *Singing Strips*, activity, songs are used to develop students' ability to listen for specific information. One song that was selected by an author of this paper (Hisako) for use with beginner learners of English (first-year junior high school students in Japan) is 'Hello, Goodbye' by *The Beatles*. This particular song was chosen for this group of learners because of its use of short and simple phrases that are repeated throughout the song. Depending on the interests and abilities of learners, however, virtually any song can be used in this activity. Its steps are as follows:

- 1) Teacher cuts up lyrics of a song into strips and distributes an equal number of strips to each team member.
- 2) Teacher plays the song while students listen and arrange the lyrics in the correct order.
- 3) Teacher shows students the song lyrics and teams check their ordering of the lyrics.

As apparent in steps 1-3, this is a simple yet highly structured cooperative activity. Equal Participation is assured by having students begin the activity with an equal number of strips. As the activity cannot be completed without each member placing his/her strips on the table, it is structured to include Positive Interdependence. Individual Accountability is built into the activity because students are accountable to their team for their contributions.

One way to use this activity to scaffold autonomous interaction is to explicitly teach the language of collaboration. Figure 3 shows a list of collaborative expressions to help learners perform a variety of collaborative functions such as "asking for help" (e.g., *Can you pass it to me?*) and "praising" (e.g., *So far so good!*)" (see Figure 2 for a list of other collaborative skills).

1	はい、どうぞ（ものを渡すとき）	Here you are.
2	それ、取ってもらえる？	Can you pass it to me?
3	これ、どうやって読むの？	How do you read this?
4	もう一度聴きたいのですが	Can I listen to it one more time?
5	よくわかんないけど	I'm not sure.
6	あ、これじゃなかった。	Oops! This is not the one.
7	んー、聴き逃した。	Mm, I missed it.
8	なかなかいい感じにできてるぞ！	We are doing good!/ So far so good.

Figure 3: Singing Strips Activity Expressions for Developing Collaborative Skills

Teams may also be encouraged to monitor their own language use by setting goals for the amount of English they use or the number of times they need to hear the song. Finally, by introducing music in the class, this activity may help to generate interest in other English songs, which could help to "relocate the collaborative learning experience to a place outside of the classroom" (Ikeda, 2014, p. 22). Students could be encouraged to find English songs that they like and share them with their classmates. They could comment on them online and compile a list of the songs for the teacher to use in class at break time or as part of further learning.



### ***Activity 5: Cooperative Brainstorming***

This activity is based on the Cooperative Brainstorming activity from Kagan (1992). Its purpose is to help students generate ideas before starting a writing task. The activity as outlined here was used with students at a Japanese secondary school that emphasizes English proficiency. Its steps (adapted from Myskow, Underwood, & Hattori, 2012) are as follows:

- 1) Teacher prepares a large piece of paper (A3 size) that is divided into four sections. In the middle of the paper is written a general topic (e.g., the environment, technology).
- 2) In teams of four, each student is assigned one section of the paper to individually generate ideas on the topic (students should use different color pens).
- 3) When time is up, students rotate the paper and add to the ideas of other students next to them. The pattern is repeated until all students have had a chance to add to all their teammates' sections.
- 4) Students then use their different colored pens to make connections between all the ideas in the different sections.

As these steps show, the Cooperative Brainstorming Activity is highly structured to ensure each of Kagan's (1994) principles of cooperative learning are present. First, positive interdependence is built into the activity because students need to add to each other's contributions. Thus, the activity cannot be completed without the participation of all team members. Second, individual accountability is realized by having students make their contributions public to their teams. This principle could be strengthened by having students use different colored pens. When the activity is completed, the teacher can collect sheets and by glancing at the distribution of color on them clearly see the extent to which each member contributed during the activity, thereby making teams accountable to the teacher too. Additional accountability can be built into the activity if the teacher chooses to randomly select one member from each team to share their brainstorming sheets with the class. Finally, equal participation is promoted by having students perform the same task under the same timed conditions.

There are a number of ways this highly structured activity can be adapted over time to give teams more autonomy. First, the teacher can systematically remove some of the structural elements. For example, teams might be charged with timing themselves using their own stopwatches. The teacher could also remove the requirement that students add to each

other's sections in turn. Teams can simply be allotted a single block of time and told that they have to add to each of their teammate's contributions. Another way this activity might be scaffolded toward a more collaborative formation is to have learners reflect on their contributions at the end of the activity or set goals for themselves at the beginning. For instance, a student might find upon completing the activity that he/she mainly just proposed new ideas and did not add much to others ideas. At the beginning of the activity next time the student can set a goal to add to at least two team members' ideas.

### ***Activity 6: Pop-up***

*Pop-up* is an interactive reading activity developed by Myskow, Underwood and Waring (2019) to meet all of Nation and Newton's (2009) conditions for reading fluency. The name *Pop-up*, according to the authors, derives from the advertisements on the internet that suddenly 'pop up' on web pages. The activity was initially developed for use in the Japanese university context, but it has been adapted here somewhat to be used with junior or senior secondary school students. The modified steps are as follows:

- 1) In pairs, students divide a reading passage in half and decide who will read each half aloud (students should already have studied the reading passage and are therefore familiar with all of its vocabulary and expressions).
- 2) Before reading aloud, the teacher writes a few comprehension questions for each half of the passage and gives students some time to answer the questions. The questions should not be complicated so that students can focus on reading as fluently as possible rather than solving the questions.
- 3) Student A reads aloud and when he or she reads to a point in the text where an answer is, Student B stops student A by saying "Pop-up", and then asks a comprehension question.
- 4) Student A is not allowed to look at the text when answering the question. If Student A cannot answer correctly, he or she has to start reading from the beginning of the passage.
- 5) Pairs compete against other pairs to finish first.

As these steps show, *Pop-up* is a fluency-based reading-aloud activity in which pairs of students ask and answer questions about a familiar passage while reading it as quickly as possible. The activity is also cooperative. Individual students cannot complete it without

their partners asking and answering questions, and thus positive interdependence is built into it. Equal participation is ensured by requiring students to ask and answer an equal number of questions about sections of the passage that are equal in length. Individual accountability is present in the requirement that students make their participation ‘public’ to their classmates by competing against other pairs to finish first.

Given the strict procedure for this activity and its goal of developing reading fluency rather than conversation, the options for adapting this activity over time to bring about more collaborative interactions are rather limited. However, there are some small modifications that can be made to give students greater autonomy. First, once students are used to the activity and clearly understand its purpose, they could be tasked with writing their own questions. Second, rather than the teacher controlling each step of the activity and having the class move in lockstep through its procedure, more responsibility could be given to teams to carry out the activity. Teams, could, for example, be charged with controlling the time, and even dividing up the passage. Finally, students can be encouraged to use a variety of collaborative skills during the activity such as asking for repetition when asking and answering questions, praising others, and politely disagreeing when a student selects the wrong answer.

### **Activity 7: 4-3-2**

The 4-3-2 activity, outlined in Nation and Newton (2009, pp. 153-154), is perhaps the most well-known of the activities presented here. Like the previous activity (*Pop-up*), its purpose is to develop fluency, but unlike *Pop-up*, the focus of 4-3-2 is on speaking rather than reading. Both activities can be categorized as fluency-based because there is input/output about familiar topics under time constraints with an attention to meaning and, depending on how often the teacher performs the activities, a large amount of input/output (see Nation and Newton, 2009, pp. 153-154, for a discussion of fluency conditions). The activity’s steps are as follows:

- 1) In teams of four, Student A talks to Student B and Student C talks to Student D about a familiar topic for four minutes.
- 2) Partners switch roles and talk about the same topic for the same amount of time.
- 3) Students switch partners and talk about the same topic, but the time is reduced from four to three minutes.
- 4) Partners switch roles and talk about the same topic for the same amount of time.

- 5) Students switch partners and talk about the same topic, but the time is reduced from three to two minutes.
- 6) Partners switch roles and talk about the same topic for the same amount of time.

As 4-3-2 is a fluency activity--and thus its goal is to make language they have learned more automatic or readily available--students should be tasked with talking about familiar topics, such as an interesting experience they had, rather than more challenging topics that would require less familiar language.

This activity is structured to include positive interdependence because it requires the participation of all team members to complete it. Each student needs the attention of others at different stages of the activity to communicate with them. Individual Accountability can be strengthened by requiring students to take notes on what their partners say. Notes can be collected at the end of class or students can be randomly selected to report on the contents of their partners' speeches. As all students are either talking or listening during the activity, it also includes positive interdependence and simultaneous interaction.

Like the previously discussed fluency activity this one has a very specific set of steps designed to meet the conditions for fluency development. Therefore, when using this activity as a means to foster more autonomous interaction, it is not possible to remove any of its procedural elements. Some modifications can be made, however, to help learners develop collaborative skills. For example, after each time a student speaks, the listener can be tasked with following up by performing various collaborative functions such as praising, paraphrasing what others say and asking about feelings (see Figure 2 for a list of these collaborative functions).

### **Conclusion**

This paper took the view that the distinction between Cooperative and Collaborative Learning is a helpful one and that both approaches can play valuable roles in fostering collaborative autonomy. We argued that highly structured Cooperative Learning activities should not be regarded as an instructional goal, but as a *means* for promoting more autonomous and collaborative group formations. Various Cooperative Learning activities were presented to show how they can be modified and expanded to provide more opportunity for autonomous interaction. We emphasized that group interactions should not be

unstructured, but they may be incrementally *de*-structured over time to encourage more spontaneous interaction and greater control among students of their own learning.

### **Notes on the contributors**

**Gordon Myskow** (PhD) is Visiting Assistant Professor at Keio University Department of Law and Political Science and teaches practicum courses in the MA TESOL program at Kanda University of International Studies. He has taught at the secondary school and university levels in Japan for the past 18 years. His research interests are in functional linguistics, CLIL-based instruction and teaching methodology.

**Kyoko Gruendel** is a graduate student in the MA TESOL Program at Kanda University of International Studies in Tokyo. She currently teaches students at her school as well as a vocational school in Japan. She has been teaching English over 10 years. Her interests include motivational/affective learning, autonomous learning, and teacher development.

**Phillip A. Bennett** is a graduate student in the MA TESOL Program at Kanda University of Intl. Studies. He has been working in the English education field at the secondary-school level in Japan since 2004. His interests are advising in language learning and teacher and learner autonomy.

**Takuto Marutani** is a graduate student in the MA TESOL Program at Kanda University of Intl. Studies. He has been working as an English teacher since 2017 at a private high school in Yokohama. His interests are learner autonomy and Content-Based Instruction (CBI).

**Kaori Hano** is a graduate student in MA TESOL Program at Kanda University of International Studies. She has been working at a private junior and senior high school in the west of Tokyo for over ten years. She is interested in communicative teaching and learning of English as Second or Foreign Language in junior and senior high schools in Japan.

**Hisako Yoshimura** is a graduate student in MA TESOL Program at Kanda University of International Studies. She has been working at secondary schools for over ten years. Her interests are Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and Cooperative Learning.

**Teresa Li** is a graduate student in the MA TESOL Program at Kanda University of International Studies. She has been working in the English education field at adult level in Taiwan since 2008. Her interests are Cooperative Learning and the application of learner autonomy to English learners.

### References

- Aronson, E., Blaney, N., Stephan, C., Sikes, J., & Snapp, M. (1978). *The jigsaw classroom*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Chung, J. (1991). Collaborative learning strategies: the design of instructional environments for the emerging new school. *Educational Technology*, 31(12), 15-22.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Murphey, T. (2003). *Group dynamics in the language classroom*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ikeda, M. (2014). Why does collaborative learning scaffold the regulation of out-of-class individual learning? *外国語学部紀要*, 11, 15-24.
- Jacobs, G. (2006). Issues in implementing cooperative learning. In S.G. McCafferty, G. Jacobs, & A.C. Dasilva Iddings (Eds.), *Cooperative learning and teaching in the second language classrooms* (30-54). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, D.W., & Johnson, R. T. (1994). *Leading the Cooperative School*. (2nd Ed.). Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.
- Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R. T., Holubec, E. J. (1993). *Circles of learning: Cooperation in the classroom*. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.
- Kagan, S. (1992). *Cooperative learning*. San Clemente, CA: Kagan Cooperative Learning.
- Kato, S. & Mynard, J. (2015). *Reflective dialogue: Advising in language learning*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Laal, M., & Laal, M. (2012). Collaborative learning: what is it? *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 31, 491 – 495.
- Little, D. (1995). Learning as Dialogue: The dependence of learner autonomy on teacher autonomy. *System*, 23(2), 175-181.
- Mathews, R.S., Cooper, J.L., Davidson, N., & Hawkes, P. (1995). Building bridges between cooperative and collaborative learning. *Change*, 27(4), 34-40.

- McCafferty, S. G., Jacobs, G., & DaSilva Iddings, A. C. (2006). *Cooperative learning and teaching in the second language classrooms*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Murphey, T., & Jacobs, G.M. (2000). Encouraging critical collaborative Autonomy. *JALT Journal*, 22, 220-244.
- Mynard, J, & Stevenson, R. (2017). Promoting learner autonomy and self-directed learning: the evolution of a SALC curriculum. *SiSAL Journal*, 8(2), 169-182.
- Myskow, G. (2018). Changes in attitude: Evaluative language in secondary school and university history textbooks. *Linguistics and Education*, 43, 53-63.
- Myskow, G., Underwood, P., & Hattori, T. (2008). Cooperative learning alternatives for effective group work. *社会情報学研究*, 17, 191-198.
- Myskow, G., Underwood., P., & Hattori, T. (2012). *EFL writing in Japan: Theory, policy and practice*. Media Island: Tokyo.
- Myskow, G., Underwood, P.R., & Waring, R. (2019). The blind spots of reading: Switching on lights in the Japanese university classroom. In P. Wadden & C. Hale (Eds.), *Teaching English at Japanese universities: A new handbook* (pp. 54-63). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Nation, P., & Newton, J. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL listening & speaking*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Parviz, M. & Meisam, Z. (2013). Effective factors in interactions within Japanese EFL classrooms. *A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 86(2), 74-79.
- Romney, J.C. (1997). Collaborative Learning in a translation course. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 54, 48-67.
- Sakui, K. (2007). Classroom management in Japanese EFL classrooms. *JALT Journal*, 29(2), 41-58.
- Snyder, B. (2019). Creating engagement and motivation in the Japanese university language classroom. In P. Wadden & C. Hale (Eds.), *Teaching English at Japanese Universities: A new handbook* (pp. 137-144). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Underwood, P. R. (2017). Challenges and change: Integrating grammar teaching with communicative work in senior high school EFL courses. *SAGE* 7(3).