INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF COOPERATION IN EDUCATION

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June 2006

Dear Colleagues:

IASCE is pleased to bring you the second newsletter of 2006.

In this issue, the IASCE Newsletter, once again, provides us with an eclectic and stimulating collection of abstracts from recent issues of a wide variety of journals. As is so often the case, this collection reminds us that interest in the power of cooperation for learning is ongoing, varied, and strong. I was particularly fascinated by the abstract from Reading Research Quarterly, partly because this is a very prestigious publication and partly because, once again, this study suggests that teacher decision making--in relation to classroom climate, culture, and curriculum--is critical to successful peer interaction. This abstract also suggests the importance of teacher knowledge of, and skill in, scaffolding dialogue. In some ways, the article by Peter Gobel raises similar issues. Peter has chronicled and reflected on his efforts to bring high quality cooperation into his teaching. He reminds us just how important it is to incorporate "basic elements" such as a) the direct teaching of interpersonal and small group learning skills and b) time and strategies for group reflection and planning. He reminds us that every teacher and every student must learn the importance of these processes and must learn how to use them well. He reminds us of the importance of context in both content and culture. Perhaps most importantly, he reminds us that it takes time to be efficient and it takes time to develop effectiveness. Thank you Peter for taking the time to share this story with us.

At the conclusion of our conference in Manchester in 2002, Yael Sharan offered to develop a new feature for our newsletter. Since that time, Yael has collaborated with educators on several continents to bring us reports about the contexts for, and implementation of, cooperative learning. Readers: if you know an exciting story that should be told, please contact Yael. In this issue of our Newsletter, we have expanded the focus of the Forum by publishing a dialogue between educators. This dialogue examines "the right to pass." We would like to include dialogues as a regular feature in our newsletter. Do you think this is a worthwhile project? Would you like to suggest a topic for a future dialogue? Would you like to facilitate or edit a dialogue? Please contact George Jacobs, Yael Sharan, or Lynda Baloche with your comments and ideas and please check our website for further information as we consider the value and feasibility of this idea.

As always, I would like to thank you for your support of IASCE. Please share your newsletter with your colleagues and please consider how you might contribute to the Newsletter.

Cooperatively yours,

Lynda

Lynda Baloche
Co-president IASCE

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Dealing with Learning Style Conflicts in the Cooperative Learning Classroom

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Introduction

I have been using cooperative learning techniques in Japanese EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes for well over fifteen years, with varying degrees of success. Two years ago, I undertook some classroom research to help me solve a number of problems I was having in my classes: the students were doing the work and "cooperating," but they often did the bare minimum. This bare minimum was frequently finished just before class, or by copying another student's paper during the roll call. If students were absent one week (a common occurrence at Japanese universities), the next week they would come totally unprepared for the day's lesson, forcing the teacher and the groups to take extra time to explain the material. This lack of responsibility was reflected in a lack of accountability regarding the teaching of the material to other students. Many of the students took a

very passive attitude toward group work, choosing to simply sit and listen while others spoke.

What had started as an attempt to make the classroom more interactive and get the students to be responsible for their own (as well as others') learning, had turned into a situation where students were split into two camps: "pro-collaboration" and "anti-collaboration," with neither camp being satisfied with the design of the course. By interviewing the students as part of my research, I found out that most of the students were not self-directed, had negative views of their abilities and their English education history, and were anxious about communicating in English.

What the interviews highlighted was a general feeling among the interviewees that collaborative learning was, to some extent useful, and that working with other students was beneficial. This was counter-balanced by students' comments regarding the problems they found when communicating with their peers and the resulting reliance of many students on Japanese as a problem-solving tool (something many of them felt would not be an option were they to engage in problem-solving tasks with a native speaker of English or a non-Japanese speaker).

It seems that in many cases, the students were reluctant to engage in communication strategies that they felt were "high risk." The term "high risk" is used here to describe communication strategies that either put the onus of comprehension on the speaker or that may contribute to more detailed explanations, which in turn may lead to more communication breakdown and possible loss of face.

At the 2004 IASCE conference, I presented the results of my study into this problem, noting that previous research in this area has often failed to take into account the cultural and social factors that may affect interaction during cooperative learning activities. The results of my longitudinal study with 70 students over 28 weeks suggested that although Jigsaw and other cooperative learning activities may work well in a number of settings, the basic design of the activities often fails to recognize that many students have set learning styles which are in direct conflict with the basic precepts of cooperative learning, and that the school or classroom environment itself may interfere with the successful completion of a task. In short, students in the study were reluctant to adopt interactive learning styles and/or depend on peers for help and information. Based on observation and interviews, this reluctance was seen to be due to preferred learning styles and student beliefs of appropriate behavior in the classroom setting (Gobel, 2004, 2005). These findings support the claims of other researchers (e.g., Kimura, Nakata, & Okumura, 2001) regarding Japanese students and their preferred learning styles. What follows is an update on changes I have implemented in the course to solve a number of the problems that were uncovered by the research.

Solutions

I attempted to overcome the obstacles mentioned above in a two-pronged fashion: by emphasizing the importance of teamwork; and by using a more step-by-step approach to the collaborative procedure, with a focus on the importance of each student's role in the process. By doing this, I found that I was able to pay more attention to the group dynamics and the competing norms and values in my classroom.

Emphasis on Collaboration

Until recently, any emphasis on collaboration had been done at the beginning of the semester (during the first month), with maybe a few gentle reminders to students and groups during the semester. I decided to augment this by giving more regular feedback to the students regarding their collaborative efforts. This was done using rating scales completed by each group, and self-reports (included in a progress report) handed in to the teacher and later returned (with positive or encouraging comments attached) at the end of each unit. In addition, we spent class time at the beginning of the semester, and about half way through the course, looking at successful collaborations in the news and in history, discussing why they worked and how they could be used as models for the students to follow. This was done as outside reading, linked to the topics we were covering in class. For example, while covering a unit concerned with how best to use national park land, the students read an article about various small organizations working together to preserve endangered habitats (the Conservation Alliance - http://www.conservationalliance.com). The point here was to highlight the long-term benefits of collaboration – not only from a personal standpoint, but from social and political standpoints as well. The discussion based on these readings helped the students to see that they use collaboration all the time in their daily lives, and that there was no reason that this had to stop once they entered the classroom.

Teambuilding activities and student roles

Another key concept which needed emphasis was the development of collaborative skills. For collaboration to succeed, a set of collaborative skills is needed such as disagreeing politely, checking if others understand, and listening attentively. These collaborative skills are felt to promote L2 (second language) acquisition by enhancing interaction. Japanese university students seldom collaborate in the classroom the way they do in the outside world. As a result, there is much less learner autonomy in the Japanese classroom than is expected of students engaged in cooperative learning. By occasionally reviewing collaborative skill sets, and with the use of self-evaluation sheets, students were frequently reminded of the skills they should be using. This review of collaborative skills was done in tandem with mini-lessons on various communication strategies that would allow them to communicate more fluently and effectively.

Although teamwork and responsibility were stressed at the beginning of the course, more emphasis needed to be placed on the positive aspects of teamwork. Quick games (i.e. Forward Snowball, Numbered Heads Together, or Round Robin) as warm-ups and follow-

ups were used as tools to focus on intergroup relations. I found that the games lightened the mood in class and gave the students a respite from the academic demands I was making on them.

Finally, it became clear to me that student roles in the cooperative groups needed to be chosen with more care, and that the roles themselves needed to be more clearly defined. I had given everyone a procedure to follow, but that procedure was described from the group perspective rather than from the individual perspective. I reassessed the roles I had assigned to the students, paying attention not only to their academic abilities, but their 'informal roles' in the classroom as leaders, followers, facilitators, and so forth. I then reassigned the groups based on these observations (initially assigning the Leader role to a more outgoing student, for example), and assigned each student a role that was clearly written on a 3x5 card (Fig. 1). The students then performed the duties of that role for the entire activity. In subsequent activities (once the students clearly understood how the group work progressed) roles were changed, so that each student, at some time during the course played, had a chance to play every role.

Role: **Leader**

Duties: It is the leader's duty to make sure that

1. **Everyone participates in the discussion**
   So, ( ) what do you think?
   ( ), do you agree?
   What information do you have?
2. **Everyone understands the main points.**
   Let me summarize.
   ( ), do you have any questions?
3. **An agreement or conclusion is reached.**
   So, do we all agree on this?
   Any other ideas?
   Who agrees that ( )?

Fig. 1 Example of student role card.

In general, the roles I assigned in each group were: leader, who initiates discussions and moves the work along; time keeper/task monitor, who monitors the time left and keeps everyone on task; summarizer, who summarizes the main points of the discussion or work that was done; recorder/reporter, who writes up what the group has decided or produced and announces it to the class. At the beginning of each activity, the students would then reaffirm their roles in the task by reading their roles out loud from the card, thus reminding everyone who was responsible for what. This is important because if every group member is going to be a "full-fledged" member of the group, they and their role

need to be recognized by all the other group members. For the extroverts in the group, this was never really a problem, but the shyer students, or those that preferred individual learning, needed some encouragement. By giving each student specific tasks in the group activity, I hoped to reinforce certain collaborative skills and associate them with certain roles. The idea was to create a kind of scaffolding that would give students a chance to become comfortable with the roles and the language necessary to perform those roles. In addition, it was hoped that the role cards would allow students to more easily identify themselves (their roles) in the discussion and/or group work, thus giving them permission to participate in ways that would enable the group to run a reasonable discussion in the time allowed

Reaffirming every student's role in the cooperative activity at the beginning of each class not only clarifies who is doing what, but also refreshes their communication strategies (listed at the bottom of each duty). As Lam and Wong (2000) point out, a combination of teamwork and communication strategy training is necessary for effective use of communication strategies. It is the peer support and cooperation that sustain clarification and genuine interaction. I feel that the individual and group accountability I created with the role cards did exactly that.

Certainly the assigning of roles seemed to increase the efficiency of the discussions and group work that was assigned. There was much less hemming and hawing when it came time to give opinions, and use of time became more efficient (remember, one of the roles I assigned was as time-keeper/task monitor). In addition, since the collaboration strategies were constantly being reviewed, by the end of the semester, I found the students using them in a more natural manner. This is not to say that they were seamlessly cooperating, nor that roles were quickly adopted. One of my jobs during group work was to observe how the students were working as a group, how the roles were being performed, and look for any mismatch that could be easily addressed. Sometimes this amounted to simply having students switch roles (turning a former leader into a time-keeper/task monitor, for example).

Working to broaden the students' learning horizons in this way has been a slow, cyclical process, but it seems to be working. The activities are all little steps in introducing my students, who come to the classroom with very rigid learning styles, to different ways of learning and to a very different learning environment, one that is, to a large degree, constructed by them.

References

Gobel, P. (2004). *That's not the way we do it: The effects of cultural and social factors on cooperative learning*. Paper presented at the 2004 IASCE Conference.

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Kimura, Y., Nakata, Y., & Okumura, T. (2001). Language learning motivation of EFL learners in Japan – A cross-sectional analysis of various learning milieus. *JALT Journal, 23*(1), 47-68.

Lam, W., & Wong, J. (2000). The effects of strategy training on developing discussion skills in an ESL classroom. *ELT Journal, 54*(3), 245-255.

Sarajevo Conference

The IAIE (International Association for Intercultural Education) is planning its next major conference, in cooperation with the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES). The conference will take place from September 3-7, 2007: www.iaie.org.

From the Journals

Johnson, B. (2003). Teacher collaboration: Good for some, not so good for others. *Educational Studies, 29*(4), 337-350.

This paper examines the outcomes of four Australian schools' efforts to promote greater collaboration between teachers in each school. Teachers' responses to questions about the nature and extent of collaboration they experienced at school revealed that teaming arrangements were in place in the four schools studied. Collaborative ways of working helped most teachers feel better about themselves and their work, and provided them with opportunities to learn from each other. However, a minority of teachers were negative about the new teaming arrangements claiming that the changes had led to an increase in their workloads, a loss of professional autonomy, and the emergence of damaging competition between teams for resources, recognition and power. The paper concludes with a call for further micropolitical work that problematises apparently self evident goods like teacher collaboration.

King, P. E. [P.King@tcu.edu], & Behnke, R. R. (2005). Problems associated with evaluating student performance in groups. *College Teaching, 53*(2), 57-61.

Using small groups in student cooperative learning enterprises has become a major trend in American higher education (Cheng and Warren 2000). However, several practical issues

involving the assessment of an individual's performance in groups have sometimes created resistance to the method from both students and parents (Kagan 1995). This article evaluates the case for using cooperative group assignments and the problems associated with evaluating the performances of individuals working in groups. Practical suggestions for minimizing some of the potential problems associated with group grading are offered and some philosophic perspectives on this form of grading are advanced.

Gossett, M. [GOSSET2@aol.com], & Fischer, O. (2005). Bringing together critical thinking and cooperative learning between two schools. *Strategies, 19*(2), 27-30.

** Two physical education teachers describe how they use cooperative learning to promote cross-curricular learning and critical thinking. The lesson explained in the article involved language arts, with students using brainstorming and writing to do a "Create a Game" activity. Students at two schools worked in groups of 4-5. Each group developed a game, including the game's name, purpose, equipment, directions, and rules of play (including safety rules). The game description from the groups at each school were sent to the other school, where students used the description to play the game, videotaped the play, and sent the tape to the students who had created the game. Assessment issues are discussed.

Dellicarpini, M. [dellicarpini@lehman.cuny.edu] (2006, March). Scaffolding and differentiating instruction in mixed ability ESL classes using a Round Robin activity. *Internet TESL Journal*, *12*(3). Retrieved February 13, 2006, from http://iteslj.org/Techniques/DelliCarpini-RoundRobin.html

** One challenge many ESL/EFL teachers at the secondary and adult level face is teaching mixed ability classes. Issues that emerge for educators are successful differentiation of instruction, successful grouping strategies, creating well structured cooperative activities and integrating meaningful content for these older learners who may struggle with first and second language literacy skills. Using a Round Robin technique can help the teacher successfully address the aforementioned challenges and provide a meaningful, interactive activity that helps develop both Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1979), both necessary to the success of English language learners. This article will detail a technique that ESL/EFL teachers can successfully integrate in their mixed ability classes and facilitate the development of necessary skills.

Yang, A., Chan, A., Ho, L. K., & Tam, B. (2005). Does an open forum promote learning among students? A collaborative-learning approach. *Asian EFL Journal, 7*(3), 88-97. Retrieved February 12, 2006, from http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/September_05_ay.php

This paper investigates how students responded to each other in an e-Community learning situation. Forty students, at two levels, were invited to respond to five questions regarding the Legislative Council election 2004 posted on the school forum. Questionnaires and interviews were conducted to see if students enjoyed the discussion

with peers and casual browsers. It has been concluded that students find the forum discussion useful toward their formal curriculum. However, there have been concerns regarding the objectivity of casual browsers. Students need to be on the alert when receiving information through the Internet and other media, and understand that not everything printed or broadcast is official, factual, and accurate.

Mynard, J., & Almarzouqi, I. (2006). Investigating peer tutoring. *EL T Journal, 60*(1), 13-22.

This article gives an overview of a piece of qualitative research conducted at a women's university in the United Arab Emirates. The aim of the study was to evaluate the English language peer tutoring programme in order to highlight benefits and challenges, and to make informed improvements. The study drew particularly on participant perceptions and observations of the programme. It identified various benefits for tutors such as learning through teaching and become more responsible while doing something worthwhile to help others. Benefits for tutees included improved levels of self-confidence and English language aptitude. The study also highlighted several challenges associated with the high dependence and low metacognitive awareness demonstrated by the tutees. In addition, tutors were not always able to offer appropriate assistance. Improvements to the programme could include increasing faculty involvement, improving tutee awareness of the aims of the programme, and providing additional assistance to tutors.

McIntyre, E., Kyle, D. W., & Moore, G. H. (2006). A primary-grade teacher's guidance toward small-group dialogue. *Reading Research Quarterly, 41*(1), 36–66.

The purpose of this study was to describe how one primary teacher of poor and working class rural students promoted small-group dialogue about books and literary concepts. Specifically, we focused on how she guided the students from the beginning of a lesson in ways that later led to dialogue during a videotaped four-day lesson sequence. We analyzed interactions of teacher-student talk during the sequence that involved reading, talking about, and responding to mysteries. Coding involved labeling "indicators" of instructional conversation outlined by Dalton (1997), coding other features of dialogue derived from theory, such as use of encouragement and pace for purposes of increasing thinking, and coding what we called "democratic supports," such as providing opportunities for student decision making. Findings contribute to the field's growing literature on classroom dialogue in primary-grade classrooms in three ways. First, teacher-fronted talk and true dialogue are not mutually exclusive; the former can be used to achieve the other. The teacher highlighted in this study, Gayle, purposefully used heavy teacher-fronted discourse, emphasizing telling, defining, and modeling at the beginnings of her lessons, which appeared to be critical to students' eventual participation. Secondly, additional instructional patterns not often illustrated in the literature or dialogue in the classroom, such as nonevaluative responses, encouragement rather than praise, examples and suggestions, and linguistic and paralinguistic cues such as pacing of talk and hand

gestures, all appeared to assist students' participation. The teacher moved from careful, planned mediated action to spontaneous, genuine responses within the dialogic episodes. Finally, this study confirms other studies which suggest that classroom culture, characterized by a problem-solving environment, student decision making, student choice, collaborative work, and product-driven work, affects students' participation and subsequent construction of meaning during small-group dialogue.

McAfee, A. P. (2006). Enterprise 2.0: The dawn of emergent collaboration. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *47*(*3*), 21-28. [The author's blog is available at http://blog.hbs.edu/faculty/amcafee]

There is a new wave of business communication tools including blogs, wikis and group messaging software — which the author has dubbed, collectively, Enterprise 2.0 — that allow for more spontaneous, knowledge-based collaboration. These new tools, the author contends, may well supplant other communication and knowledge management systems with their superior ability to capture tacit knowledge, best practices and relevant experiences from throughout a company and make them readily available to more users….The resulting organizational communication patterns can lead to highly productive and highly collaborative environments by making both the practices of knowledge work and its outputs more visible. …. First, it is necessary to create a receptive culture in order to prepare the way for new practices. Second, a common platform must be created to allow for a collaboration infrastructure. Third, an informal rollout of the technologies may be preferred to a more formal procedural change. And fourth, managerial support and leadership is crucial. Even when implanted and implemented well, these new technologies will certainly bring with them new challenges….Leaders will have to play a delicate role if they want Enterprise 2.0 technologies to succeed. [the following section was not part of the original abstract] Leaders, the author writes, "have to at first encourage and stimulate use of the new tools, and then refrain from intervening too often or with too heavy a hand." Otherwise, they may "wind up with only a few online newsletters and white-boards, used for prosaic purposes."

Berry, J., & Sahlberg, P. [psahlberg@worldbank.org] (2006). Accountability affects the use of small group learning in school mathematics. *Nordic Studies in Mathematics Education*, *11*(1), 3-29. [Editor's note: Pasi Sahlberg is an IASCE Board member]

This study investigates the perspectives of a sample of teachers on the use of cooperative small groups in the teaching and learning of mathematics. We asked teachers (N = 18) in England and Finland about their experiences and ideas of small group learning in mathematics. The research tool used the ordering by each teacher of eight mathematics tasks into a hierarchy from those tasks that are best for small group working to those tasks that are best for individual working as a frame for in-depth interviews. We conclude that the role of small group learning as seen by most of the teachers is for doing mathematics, introducing social skills and discussion rather than learning mathematical knowledge and skills. Furthermore we report on the barriers to

using small group learning caused by the accountability structures inherent in the educational systems of both countries.

* Abstract from ERIC - http://www.eric.ed.gov.
** Abstract is the introduction to the article
*** Abstract written for this compilation

IASCE 2004 Papers Now Online

Just a reminder that papers and powerpoints from IASCE's very successful 2004 international conference in Singapore are available online at http://www.iasce.net/Conference2004/Conference2004Program.shtml. They provide resources for teaching CL to fellow educationalists and for helping oneself reflect on one's own use of CL.

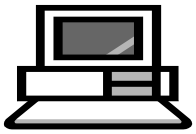
Three of the four keynotes are among the papers available on the IASCE website. Lynda Baloche discusses "Collaborative contexts for creativity and innovation," Kirpal Singh shares his insights on "Asian views on cooperation and collaboration," and Celeste Brody explores teacher education on CL in "Begin with the teacher: Focusing professional development on teacher learning for cooperative learning."

In addition to the keynotes, many other papers offer important rewards to the reader. Just a few examples are:

a. Peter Gobel's "That's not the way we do it: The effects of cultural and social factors on cooperative learning" offers a warts and all depiction of efforts to use Jigsaw in a university in Japan.

b. Ng Keow Eng and Tan Seng Chee's "An exploratory comparison study on scaffolding narrative writing in Chinese with face-to-face and e-discussions" focuses on the use of internet to promote cooperation among students.

c. Edward Nathan and IASCE 2004 conference chair Christine Lee's "Exploration on the use of structured academic controversies in the social studies classroom" explores a means of encouraging students to engage in deeper thinking.



From The Web

1. **Cooperation: We inherited it from our ancestors**
   http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/03/science/03chimp.html

   Research at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany suggests that chimpanzees, like humans, cooperate. As reported in the New York Times of March 3, 2006, by Carl Zimmer, in one set of experiments, a chimpanzee alone in a cage saw food outside of her/his cage, but to obtain the food had to pull on two ropes. When the ropes were too widely separated from each other for one chimpanzee to reach alone, the chimpanzee would open a door and seek out another chimpanzee for help.

   Furthermore, the chimpanzee remembered which of their fellows were better helpers, and tended to choose them when the same situation occurred. Most interesting was that the researchers found chimpanzees who were agreeable to helping even without receiving a direct reward for that help. Similarly, the article also reports another set of studies in which chimpanzees displayed other altruistic behaviors.

   The author concludes by stating that:

   Chimpanzees are the closest living relatives to humans, sharing a common ancestor that lived roughly six million years ago. If their nature is as cooperative as these studies suggest, then scientists say they may have inherited this ability from that common ancestor.

   These studies seem to support optimism as to whether students can successfully collaborate with one another. At the same time, it raises the question of why we humans cannot cooperate with our fellow animals by not putting them in cages, eating them, and wearing their skin and fur.

2. **Players without Coaches**
   http://sports.espn.go.com/nba/news/story?id=2271143

   Cooperative learning gives students some time without immediate supervision by teachers. This article from the ESPN website describes how athletes, even very well-paid professional athletes in the National Basketball Association (North America), can sometimes similarly benefit from time without their coaches.

   Here are a couple quotes from the players about the benefits of sometimes practicing without their coaches:

There are times when the coaches kind of seem like they're always on the players and players just stop responding just because they feel as if they can do nothing right. It kind of messes with your head a bit. So when you hear it from the guys -- that our agenda is to win and we're trying to help each other and be there for each other -- it relaxes you a little bit.

[S]ometimes players can hold back and not say what they really want to say. But once you're amongst the guys, you can get everything out.

Perhaps the same benefits apply when students sometimes practice without their teachers.

IASCE Forum - The Right to Pass

Editor's Note: Previously, the IASCE Forum presented accounts of the development of CL in a wide range of countries. While the Forum will continue to play that role, discussion of issues in CL is also welcome, as we see from the exchange presented here between two English as a Second Language teachers, one from the U.S. and the other from Japan, on whether students in CL groups should have the right to pass. The Japanese teacher is also a doctoral student in an English-medium program in Japan and a member of JASCE (Japan Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education). Final remarks are provided by Forum editor and IASCE Board member Yael Sharan.

US Teacher: To me, when we are doing group activities, my students have the RIGHT to ask questions, get extra help, give their opinions about something, etc. I don't think they have the right to pass. To me, that is something they EARN as opposed to having the right.

Japan Teacher: I disagree. Denying the right to pass absolutely presents the teacher's point of view. Of course, as a teacher, I want my students to ask questions, come to me for help, and express their opinions. I would be disappointed if my students did not respond to my questions. However, my experience as a student tells me that students should have the right to pass. From the outside, passing may imply passivity and laziness. However, we cannot tell why students want to pass on certain questions. Not giving answers or some other kind of response does not necessarily mean that students are not thinking. They may need more time to formulate their ideas. They may be trying to say something, but may be unable to do so, especially students using a second language. The students may want to accumulate more knowledge by listening attentively before speaking. Therefore, it seems to me that you have forgotten the students' point of view. There are students who don't make an effort; however, because we cannot always distinguish them from those who are actually thinking hard about the topic, we mustn't jump to conclusions and impose a rule that students don't have the right to pass.

US Teacher: Students who do not have an answer ready can respond in other ways; they can ask questions, provide affective responses, give impressions, emphasize points, state their understanding of what the question is asking, respond to someone else's response. I'm not saying that students should never be allowed to say "I pass." I'm just saying that there is a great deal of middle ground between answering and passing. Furthermore, it ignores reality to try to ban passing, as despite everything teachers and groupmates do to encourage maximum participation by all, it is often the case that some group members participate only a little or not at all.

Japan Teacher: Referring to my own experience as a student. I'm not a very shy person, nor are many of the other Japanese people in my doctoral cohort. However, when we first started our doctoral studies, we were very quiet.

US Teacher: Quiet in talking to the teacher or in talking to each other? Wouldn't peer discussion at this point be useful? Let's dispel the idea that only those who have learned first have anything useful to say. This leaves out that: (1) all students come to class with knowledge, and (2) dialogue helps to build knowledge. No need to formulate a great answer before speaking. No need to fear the voicing of immature thoughts. Seen historically, everyone's thoughts are immature, because when people look back at today 100 years from now, many of our current ideas will probably seem very outdated.

Japan Teacher: Were my fellow Japanese doctoral students and I not motivated? Of course, we were very motivated learners. Did we have no opinions? Yes, we often did. Were we not thinking? Yes, we were thinking seriously. However, we wanted to understand more about what was taught before being asked to present our opinions. We wanted to have more time to formulate our thoughts before we actually spoke up.

US Teacher: What's wrong with using dialogue as a device for formulating thoughts? Doesn't research, theory, and personal experience suggest that this is one good way to clarify and develop our thinking?

Japan Teacher: We wanted to be sure that what our emergent ideas were not irrelevant.

US Teacher: If they are your ideas, and you're a student in the course, your ideas are automatically relevant.

Japan Teacher: Yes, you are right. But at that time, we did not feel that way. We did not know when was the right time to voice our opinions. We wanted to ask questions, but we were not sure if the questions were right to ask. Of course, you could say that there's no right or wrong question, to which I agree. But, in reality, we hesitated to speak up, checking not only the content of what we wanted to say but also our English.

US Teacher: That's one of the advantages of group activities compared to whole-class discussion – less time pressure and more chance to think out what to say and how to say it. Therefore,

we often add a Write or Think step to CL activities

Japan Teacher: In fact, in our doctoral courses, the English native speakers did most of the talking, including asking most of the questions, even though the Japanese students outnumbered native speakers. This was also despite that fact that we Japanese students knew quite well what the preferred participation style in class was. Maybe from a Western point of view, many of us must have looked very passive. But, I don't consider us to have been passive. We were very busy in our minds. We were learning how to participate in academic discussions. Actually, we learned from observing the way those native speaker students and Japanese students more accustomed to American teaching style behaved. And little by little, we started to ask questions, then to state our own opinions, and finally to challenge the professors and even classmates. By the time our coursework finished, most of the Japanese students were quite eloquent and did not hesitate to ask questions and challenge other students and the professors. Don't you think this is a form of legitimate peripheral participation (http://derrel.net/readings/SituatedLearning.htm)? Students at the university where I teach here in Japan are different from us, but I still think I can apply this idea to them. Superficially passive students are not as passive as they appear.

US Teacher: I agree that often it takes time to familiarize students with CL. That's why it's often best to start with very easy group tasks, just to help students grow accustomed to CL

Japan Teacher: So, I think it is dangerous to jump to the conclusion that passive learners are not learning. This is just a surface view. One of my professors, Dwight Atkinson, introduced the idea of "connected knowing" as opposed to "critical thinking" (for more on this, see http://webhost.bridgew.edu/adirks/ald/papers/constr.htm). I'm not saying that passive learners can achieve fluency in a second language without saying anything at all. What I would like to emphasize is that students need more time to learn how to participate in an English learning community (classroom) where the instructional style includes CL and is very different from the traditional Japanese classrooms in high schools or universities. I think teachers should give students more time to become members of such communities and get more comfortable with the communication style in Western culture. If teachers do not understand this, they too hastily deprive students of opportunities to learn. And it's one of teachers' most important jobs to help students join this community of more outspoken learners. To do this, teachers need to be patient.

In CL, teachers should allow quieter students to observe peers who are more used to working in learning communities; we should not push those seemingly passive students too hard to overtly participate in group work from the beginning. Some students need more time

than others to learn how to interact with peers on learning tasks. Thus, legitimate peripheral participation should be acknowledged.

Yael Sharan: The development of this exchange reflects what may often happen in a classroom: as people voice their ideas and opinions, they elicit more from the others taking part in the discussion, and slowly but surely all relevant issues come to the fore. It is a true picture of what may happen when there's time for a discussion to evolve, without pressure to "perform" or speak right away. Often, reasons for opinions or for behaviors turn out to be quite different from what teachers or students assumed in the first stages of the discussion.

One small point - I think that teachers' patience with shy or retiring or "passive" students grows with experience. At first, teachers are eager to have everyone participate, as the CL books promise. But there are many reasons for the fact that some students don't participate as often or as much as others. Teachers' patience and support go a long way to giving such students a chance to find their own pace and comfort zone. As was said, some just prefer not to talk. When teachers are comfortable with it, so will the students be. And the sensitive teacher will take the trouble to find out why a particular student consistently refrains from participating. If it's only a question of English, then there are gambits and such to help out.

How to Subscribe to the CL List

Want to dialogue with others about your use of CL? Not receiving enough email (hahaha)? Then, you might wish to join the CL List, an internet discussion group about cooperative learning. Well-known CL experts as well as "just folks" belong.

Currently, the CL List isn't a busy group, but when discussions do take place, they are often enlightening. Furthermore, you can receive updates on CL related events.

To subscribe, send an email to CL_List-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. You should very quickly receive an email reply with simple instructions. If that fails, just send an email to george@vegetarian-society.org, and he'll do the necessary. Talk to you soon!

Writing for This Newsletter

There are so many things happening world-wide related to cooperative learning! Help others find out about them by writing articles or short news items for inclusion in this newsletter, and by submitting abstracts of published work for inclusion in the From the Journals section of the newsletter. Short pieces (1000 words or less) are preferred. The newsletter appears three times a year. Please email submissions or questions about them to the editor of the IASCE Newsletter, George Jacobs, at george@vegetarian-society.org. Put "IASCE Newsletter" on the Subject line of the email, please. Thank you for your submissions.

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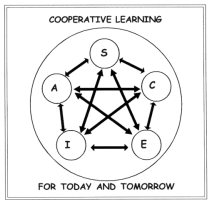

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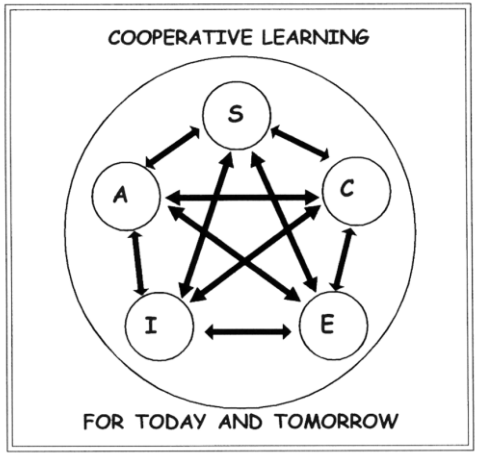

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