

## Developing Self-directed Learning and Teaching

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This study investigates how university students develop self-directed learning through collaboration of a task-based activity and how a teacher implements self-directed lessons and instruction within a learner-centered approach. By comparing highly motivated students and less motivated students in two different classes in terms of learners' autonomy, this paper focuses on the process of a task-based activity, "Foreigners Interview on Korean Culture" created and developed by a teacher. The students' involvement and teacher's roles in two different class contexts were observed by the researcher over six weeks. The data were collected through self-assessment, course evaluation, teacher interviews, student interviews, classroom observations and student writings. The study found significant group differences in the degree of the learners' involvement through the collaborative group task, but no differences in the students' self-perceived improvement of confidence in language learning. The result showed that the collaborative group task helped the students and the teacher raise their awareness, change their attitudes, and gradually transfer their roles through substantial involvement, participation and experiences in their learning and teaching contexts.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Among the various language learning methods, learner-centered approaches have been widely accepted in the ESL and EFL contexts. In the framework, learners are taken as the central reference point for decision-making, and this can be realized interactively via a process of consultation and negotiation between teacher and learners (Nunan, 1997). Therefore, learners are the ones who claim their needs and interests, which influence the process of course design. Learners, in the learner-centered framework, also need to be responsible for their effective learning. They are expected to be motivated for their autonomous learning, and the development of autonomy implies better language learning in learner-centered approaches. Ushioda (1996) defines autonomous language learners as

motivated learners. Since the implementation of autonomy is indispensable in learning, learners are always encouraged to develop their enthusiasm, commitments and persistence as key determinants of student motivation (Dornyei, 2001). In the tedious process of mastering a foreign language, however, learners are not always autonomous and motivated. If we agree with this argument, the issue of teaching and learning should come up with an implementation for learner autonomy. Following the claim of Benson (2001) that autonomous learning is more effective than non-autonomous learning, teachers and researchers have mulled over the ways by casting the following question: How can we help our students become more autonomous in their learning context if they are not always motivated to learn?

This study focuses on the importance of group dynamics of learning context in order to foster self-directed learning. This study is not for investigating the effectiveness of a learner-centered class in a college EFL context, but for examining the full process of developing self-directed learners and teachers through a collaborative group task in two different contexts: the students in a Highly Motivated Class (HMC) and a Less Motivated Class (LMC). In this study, I will put more emphasis on the class features and dynamics in their respective contexts than on individual students by following Dornyei and Murphey's (2003) "group dynamics" in that the class can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of learning (p. 4). In a good group, the language classroom can be an inspiring environment that the time spent there is a constant source of success and satisfaction for teachers and learners alike. In contrast, when something goes wrong with the class, the language course can be a nightmare for even the most motivated learners. Benson and Lor (1999) also suggest that learning should not be viewed independently of context, but rather as a functional force in a given learning context. To examine the full process of self-directed learning and teaching, I will observe a collaborative group task, "Foreigners Interview on Korean Culture" in two different classes. This task involves students working in small groups, choosing a topic of interest, and designing a questionnaire to investigate the topic. The students then conduct, analyze and interpret the interview, and finally present the findings to the class. In carrying out the task, the students will experience ample opportunities for meaningful language use and develop self-directed learning in a realistic context. More specifically, this study aims to investigate whether these experiences will motivate students to facilitate autonomous learning. The following research questions will be examined through this paper:

1. Are there any differences between the students in a Highly Motivated Class (HMC) and a Less Motivated Class (LMC) when conducting a collaborative group task? How did the students in the HMC and the LMC develop self-directed learning in their learning contexts?

2. How does a teacher implement self-directed language learning and teaching in different classes? How does the teacher direct her teaching according to the different contexts?
3. What are the students' and the teacher's reactions to the collaborative group task?

There are many studies on the effectiveness and benefits of a learner-centered approach. Little research, however, has been done on the process of developing self-directed learners and roles of teachers to direct student autonomous learning in a collaborative group task in the EFL context. In the following section, I will first investigate the theoretical background of learner and teacher autonomy. The process of their development will be followed by a case study based on my observations in different learning contexts. Some pedagogical implications will be suggested on the basis of these findings.

## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 1. Learner Development and Teacher Development

In a learner-centered approach, the justifications are placed on the idea that the quality of learning will be better if learners are actively involved in shaping both the content goals and the methodological form of their study program (Tudor, 1996). To make themselves into active learners, students need to be responsible and self-directed in their learning. Self-directed learners are successful learners who make autonomy a “desirable goal of language education” (Benson, 2001, p. 2). Learner-centeredness and autonomy share a focus on the learner as the key agent in the learning process. Thus, many researchers in the field of learner-centered practice and communicative language teaching have incorporated the idea of autonomy into their work (Benson, 2001; Breen & Mann, 1997; Dickinson, 1987; Nunan, 1997; Tudor, 1996). A majority of scholars concur that one essential element of autonomy is that learners accept responsibility for their own learning. Among the various definitions of autonomy, the term, “self-direction” or “self-directed learning” is quite often used in connection with autonomy. According to Dickinson (1987), “autonomy” is a capacity, whereas “self-directed learning” is a way in which learning is carried out. Sheerin (1997) connects autonomy to “learner development,” which is “cognitive and affective development involving increasing awareness of oneself as a learner and an increasing willingness and ability to manage one’s own learning” (p. 59). Tudor (1996) also defines “learner development,” or “self-direction” as that learners study under their own direction in language learning with teachers’ help.

The definition of learner autonomy adopted in this article follows Shreerin (1997) and Tudor (1996) in terms of learner development (training) being concerned with enhancing

the quality of a learner's involvement in their language study. This relates to a learner's active and informed roles in language study in a self-directed manner. In the course of their involvement in their personal development, learners are likely to encounter situations in which they will need to acquire new skills that are integral to the learning process. As Tudor (1996) argues, learner development should be achieved via a process of consultation and negotiation between teacher and learners. It means that implementing self-directed learning is related to teacher development. With learner autonomy, teachers raise a growing awareness of the importance of their role in the process of helping learners take greater control over their learning needs. The role of the teacher within autonomous learning clearly falls on teaching interpretation. Developing learner autonomy involves a lot more of the teachers' role than most teachers realize. Teachers' roles come with the idea of "how language teaching can be made more responsive to the needs of language learners" (Tudor, 1996, p. x). In order to respond to learners effectively, teachers have to learn to be open to learners' ideas and suggestions, as well as support and encourage their students. The various designations for the roles within the framework imply similar responsibilities: resource person (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989), facilitator (Wenden, 1991); and helper, counselor, and adviser (Dickinson, 1987). In many cases, however, teachers are unprepared for a learner-centered approach. Therefore, like learners, they will need to revise their understanding of teaching and learning. They have to develop themselves like learners to improve their teaching skills. In order to help learners foster autonomy, teachers must also recognize and develop their own autonomy (Benson, 2001). Benson also argues that the learner and teacher should be co-responsible for the students' learning process. In the same vein, according to McGrath (2000), teacher autonomy involves ideas of professional freedom and self-directed professional development.

Kohonen (1992) points out that the most important pedagogical innovations come from the teacher and his/her pedagogical thinking and personal qualities. Teachers are the ones who make initial differences in second/foreign language classrooms. In a sense, I agree with Kohonen's argument. In the learner-centered class, teachers are the initiators who make an actual difference in a student's language learning experience. In the learner-centered class, teachers help students in selecting, evaluating, and creating good materials according to each student's needs as well as how teachers adapt syllabi for different students or classrooms. In addition to a number of studies on learner development and teacher development in ESL (Benson, 1997; Nunan, 1997), Maria Oh (2005) supported the view that fostering students' autonomy approaches needs to be practiced with the help of teachers through individual investigation of the learners' learning. Hoyeol Ryu (2000) discussed the need of learner autonomy in Korean educational contexts and suggested the possibility of fostering autonomy by teaching learner strategies and building positive teacher-student relationships.

## 2. Task-based Collaborative Language Learning

The use of a task in second language acquisition serves to facilitate meaningful communication and interaction for language learning through collaboration and negotiation of meaning. In task-based learning, a task “is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form” (Nunan, 2004, p. 4). In his definition, a task both focus on meaning-based communication and language learning as learners experience and process in their learning. In carrying out a task, learners use their available language resources and produce a realistic outcome. Many researchers of learner-centered approaches have demonstrated the effectiveness of collaborative learning and teaching (Bruffee, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Nunan, 1997; Kohonen, 1992). According to Bruffee (1999), the essence of learner-centeredness can be captured in terms of cooperative and collaborative learning. In collaborative work, learners work together in small groups to accomplish tasks. Johnson and Johnson (1989) also concur with Bruffee’s argument that since all group members aim toward a common goal, learners are motivated to work together for their mutual benefit. Such an action creates positive interdependence among learners, and they perceive that they can reach their goals best when others in the same learning group also do well.

According to Kohonen (1992), collaborative learning groups provide an effective context for the development of new understanding. In a small group, members are responsible for learning, completing tasks together, and helping each other. Even though their ideas or skills may not be complete or perfect, learners are still encouraged to explain them to one another, as each member is an active participant and an important resources person for the rest of the group. A variety of task-based collaborative activities implemented in ESL/EFL classes also have illustrated clear benefits for learner-centered language learning with teachers’ assistance. In Prabhu’s study (1987), task-based instruction was very beneficial through task-based interaction in primary and secondary schools in southern India. Guiboke Seong (2006) found that a collaborative task-based ESL writing class is effective in improving students’ communicative skills in the classroom at an American university. Kyung-Hee Ko (1998) reported that a collaborative listening task created a more enjoyable and supportive learning environment for university students, producing better overall performance, when compared to individual tasks. Sung-Yeon Kim (2005) also presented that peer-assisted learning in a student-centered learning environment was useful and beneficial in terms of achieving collaborative learning while students were engaged in two different content-based classes. There are more studies that have examined

the effects of task-based collaborative learning, but most are limited to the process of learner and teacher development in a collaborative group task. This study observes learners carrying out a task by developing themselves as autonomous learners and a self-directed teacher who will help students accomplish their task.

### III. METHOD

#### 1. Context of the Study

The current study was conducted with freshmen at a women's university in Seoul. They were enrolled in a General English course during a spring semester. In addition to 3 hours a week for sixteen weeks, all freshmen took a three-week course (45 hours) to fulfill the curriculum requirements of the university to improve their English with native English teachers. The total learning class hours for General English course are 90 hours during a semester. The three-week course included a task-based club activity class with a learner-centered approach. The ultimate goal of the task-based club activity was to conduct on "Foreigners Interview on Korean culture" and to promote English communication skills and improve each student's ability and confidence in the oral and written English necessary to participate actively in real conversations. The aim of the three-week course was to create an 'English-rich' environment by promoting the use of English inside and outside the classroom. In response to the challenges of the program, the researcher investigated two different classes taught by the same teacher in which the students conducted a collaborative group task.

This research is concerned with the three-week program for two different classes over six weeks. The two classes chosen for this research were beginner level classes of English proficiency: the students of a Highly Motivated Class (HMC) and a Less Motivated Class (LMC). The demarcation of highly motivated/less motivated classes is not only based on the students' self-assessment on self-directed learning in a questionnaire, but also on students' involvement in carrying out the collaborative group task to shape learning actions in their group from the teacher's and the researcher's observations and judgment. The teacher taught the LMC right after she had taught the HMC for three weeks, and the students from both classes were distinctively compared in terms of their involvement, attitude, and participation in carrying out the collaborative group task. This study does not focus on individual development, but rather on group dynamics which have significant impacts on the effectiveness of individual learning in conducting a collaborative group task (Dornyei & Murphey, 2003).

## 2. Participants

### 1) The Students

The students of this study participated in two different classes. The HMC consisted of 15 freshmen majoring in the following areas: Administrative and Business (7), French (1), Philosophy (3), Archeology (1), and History (3). There were 14 students who majored in languages in the LMC: English (2), Japanese (5), German (5), Chinese (3), and Korean (3). The students in the HMC were highly motivated to learn English and showed a strong learning goal orientation toward the task in the class. The motivated group dynamics encouraged each student to keep up his/her hard working. In contrast, the students of the LMC were less motivated to engage in their participation and some students skipped classes during the three-week session. Some were less responsible for their homework and displayed unwillingness to undertake their task. The group unwillingness on their task demotivated even the most motivated students who are the English language majors. They took level placement test on the basis of both an oral interview with a native teacher and an English written exam before the program started. About 1,100 freshmen who took General English course were interviewed and divided into three levels (beginner, low-intermediate and high-intermediate). The students of two classes belonged to the beginner level. Their language proficiency is at the beginning-level of English speaking and writing. Beginners have a basic knowledge of the English language, which includes knowing the foundations of grammar and sentence structure. Regardless of students' grammatical knowledge, they do not speak English confidently with full sentences. The students speak broken English with a couple of words. Many of them are afraid of speaking to foreigners because of their poor English pronunciation and sentence structures.

### 2) The Teacher

The teacher is a trilingual teacher with multicultural experiences in Canada, France, Japan, Indonesia, Korea, and Singapore. She is fluent in Chinese, English and Korean. She was raised in four countries of culturally rich context as a result of her parents' jobs. She holds a TESL certificate and TESL Master's degree. She has been teaching English for 3 years in Canada in the ESL context. Based not only on her experience in the Master's degree program, but also on her personal learning/teaching experiences, she believes that a teacher should meet students' needs and strengthen their identities by influencing and motivating students. With her beliefs, the teacher practiced the learner-centered approach with the researcher who planned to implement a learner-centered language teaching approach. It was the first time for the said teacher to teach Korean EFL students in South

Korea. At the beginning of her teaching, she was given detailed explanations about the objectives and goals of a collaborative task-based club activity within a learner-centered curriculum. Directing a learner-centered curriculum, the researcher wanted to assist her to get hold of the students' needs and interests at the university. Therefore the researcher worked together with her to adjust the EFL environment by giving tips on how students' learning attitudes and expectations could be improved while she designed her syllabus for the club activity.

### 3. Data Collection

The data were collected through many different methods. First, the researcher distributed the five-point Likert questionnaire to the students for their self-assessment and feedback on the task-based club activity. The questionnaire was composed of fifteen items. The first part of the questionnaire asked the students to evaluate their autonomous learning: (1) I attended more than 60 % of the whole classes; (2) I came to class prepared and ready to participate on a daily basis; (3) I participated in class activities to the best of my ability;(4) If I needed clarification or help, I approached the teacher; and (5) I actively worked outside of class to improve my English skills. The second part of the questionnaire elicited the students' perception of the class and teacher's teaching approach: class objectives, clear instruction, attitude, well-prepared lessons, time efficiency, well-paced class, interesting materials, freedom of expression, feedback, and response to questions. The questionnaire was conducted at the end of the three-week session in both classes.

For a closer observation of the students' engagement and participation in the classes, the researcher used qualitative methods to observe the full process of the collaborative group task, "Foreigners Interview on Korean Culture." The researcher observed two classes in a non-participant observation mode with permission from the students and the teacher. The researcher took notes on the class procedure for six weeks in the different classes and video-recorded the students' presentations. In addition, the researcher had opportunities to talk with the teacher during the research period to keep abreast of what occurred in and outside class. In order to investigate the responses from the students in the two different classes, the researcher also interviewed individual students: five students in the HMC and four students in the LMC at the end of the program. A stimulated recall technique was used to prompt the teacher and students to recall their self-directed learning and teaching. Data from their written essays on the Foreigners Interview were also collected. The individual writing assignment was for the students to reflect on their learning experience during the program.



#### 4. Data Analysis

The data collected for the study were analyzed in both quantitative and qualitative manners. Descriptive statistics were used to assess the students' self-directedness in their learning, while in-depth interviews and observations were used to see the full process of their self-directed development. First, self-assessment and course evaluation scores were compared. The course evaluations on the students' self-assessment and class teaching were analyzed using SPSS 12.0 to examine the students' views of the courses. Self-assessment analysis helped to reveal the learners' awareness of their own learning and provided information on a sense of their participation and self-direction in their learning process. The main statistical test used in the analysis of the data was the t-test, which allowed the researcher to see variability between the two classes. The participants' responses in the interview and reflection essay were coded and categorized. For the analysis of qualitative data, the researcher interviewed the teacher and the students in Korean after observing the class in the course of the program. Korean data were translated and quoted into English, and another Korean speaking instructor verified the translations. The students' written reports and the teacher's written reflection on the feedback for the club activity were submitted at the end of the program and quoted to show their reflection on their learning. The data from the written reflection reports were coded in a way to identify significant units: key phrases, important ideas and concept of self-directedness. Once the units were identified, they were placed with similar units and put under similar categories. Some examples of initial coding categories were 'language learning,' 'confidence,' 'good (great, special) experience,' 'interesting,' and 'help.' After coding the data, the researcher discussed the analysis with the teacher who gave positive feedback on the categories. The researcher revised and modified a priori coding categories from the discussion, observed other data from the observation notes, and teacher interview. The researcher's observation notes were also used to capture students' self-directed learning. Therefore, the data were triangulated by using five different data-gathering sources: self-assessment and course evaluation, writing assignments, teacher interviews, student interviews, class observation, and teacher's writing on the club activity feedback.

#### 5. Procedure of Task: Foreigners Interview on Korean Culture

This section illustrates the procedure of the collaborative club activity. The task of the club activity is to interview foreigners on Korean culture (e.g., what do foreigners think of the Korean public transportation system/education system? How would foreigners describe Korean food?). Students were expected to use the language learned in other English classes. Each member of the group was expected to actively engage in the process, as well as the

presentation of the report. In addition, the students were asked to write a reflection essay based on their interview at the end of the class. The objectives of the club activity, “Foreigners’ Interview on Korean Culture,” were mainly to have students use English to accomplish all tasks with the focus on fluency in the language rather than accuracy:

- Students will learn to apply what they learned in the language classrooms in a natural setting.
- Students will gain confidence in using English in uncontrolled settings.
- Students will gain confidence in presenting in English.
- Students will learn to work collaboratively to reach a common goal.

### 1) Week One

In the first session, the students were introduced to the procedure, “Foreigners Interview on Korean Culture” project. They were shown a sample questionnaire and a report the teacher had prepared for the students’ to have deeper understanding of the project in the syllabus. The goals of the club activity were to make students create a list of questions. Offering example group project, such as Korean food, Korean school system, Korean clothing, etc. the teacher asked the students to decide on a common theme in a group. The students were expected to choose a theme that they would like to explore with foreigners. In the second class, the students moved into a computer lab to search for information on their themes. Based on the selected theme, each small group was asked to create specific questions for their interviews, which would be held in the following week. The teacher circulated each group to assist students while they created their interview questionnaires. Each group of 3-4 students brainstormed on ideas and asked for clearer explanations on the task from the teacher. The teacher wrapped up the classes by asking students to complete each questionnaire and turn in their first draft by e-mail. She informed the students that she would make corrections on each groups’ questionnaire before the scheduled interview for the following week.

### 2) Week Two

The objective of the second session was for the students to interview foreigners who were available on the university campus. The foreigners interviewed were an American, a French, a German, an Indonesian, and a Japanese. The interviewees had worked or studied or lived close to the university. The students arranged the interview times with the five foreigners by contacting them in advance. In the first class of the second session, the teacher gave tips on how to interview and listen to the foreigners. The interviewees were invited to the classroom or meeting room. With permission, the students videotaped the

interview with the foreign interviewees. All students in each group interviewed one person at a time with a video camera, while taking notes. In the second class of the second week, the students organized, sorted out information from the interview, and listened to the recordings again to prepare a report for class in the following week. They helped each other to figure out the interview by asking questions in the group. The teacher emphasized a short presentation for the following week.

### 3) Week Three

The objectives of the third session were for the students to present reports on their group interview to the whole class and reflected and discussed on their interviewing experience. In the first class of the third week, the teacher helped each group prepare an oral presentation and gave tips and feedback on the ways of presentation and group evaluation after each presentation. In the second class, each group of 3 to 4 students had a short Powerpoint presentation (10 minutes), where they reported their findings from the interview to the rest of the class. After each team's presentation, the rest of the students in the class evaluated these presentations, and the teacher asked questions to see if they had paid attention. At the end of the class, the teacher asked the students to turn in their individual essays by the following day.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Differences between the Two Classes in Conducting the Activity

As for the students' self-assessment on their learning attitude, the means of the attitude were much higher for the HMC (4.29) context than the LMC (3.56) context. As shown in Table 1, the difference between means for the evaluation on the students' self-assessment was significant ( $p=.004$ ). The result showed that students in the HMC were generally more active and motivated learners than students in the LMC.

**TABLE 1**  
**Mean Scores on the Students' Self-assessment**

Class	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
HMC	15	4.29	.426	3.19	25	.004
LMC	12	3.56	.742			

(Two students in the LMC were absent for the evaluation day)

Table 2 shows the response of each item on students’ learning attitude. As can be seen from the mean scores for both contexts, the mean for the HMC was higher than that for the LMC. The significant differences were noted for preparation (4.5/3.3), asking questions (4.3/3.2), and outside practice (3.3/2.9).

**TABLE 2**  
**Mean Score on the Each Item on Students’ Self-assessment**

Class	N	Attendance	Preparation	Participation	Asking questions	Outside Practice	Mean
HMC	15	4.9	4.5	4.4	4.3	3.3	4.3
LMC	12	4.5	3.3	4.0	3.2	2.9	3.6

As shown in Table 3, the means of the students’ evaluation on class and teacher’s teaching were slightly higher for the HMC context. The difference between means for the evaluation on the teaching approach was non-significant ( $p > .05$ ), showing that the students in the different classes were highly satisfied with the club activity and the teacher’s teaching method.

**TABLE 3**  
**Mean Scores on the Class and Teaching Approach**

Class	N	Mean	SD	t	d.f	Sig.
HMC	15	4.78	.333	2.16	25	.05
LMC	12	4.15	.961			

The independent t-test showed that there were no statistically significant differences in both classes’ perceptions on the teachers’ teaching. Regardless of student self-assessment, the two classes were satisfied with the club activity and the teaching approach. While the purpose of the quantitative approach was to investigate the objective effects in the classroom contexts on the students’ attitudes, the qualitative component provided more in-depth insight into how the students perceived each classroom context. There were significant differences between two classes in their learning attitudes and classroom participation.

The students in the HMC were very energetic and active when working together on their task, even though the task seemed difficult for them at the beginning. A couple of students were very enthusiastic in learning which caused classroom to be full of energy. They asked many questions to get a clearer idea about the procedure of the task, and they requested help from the teacher even outside classroom to develop the questionnaire. Undertaking the task, the students in the HMC became more self-directed. They were willing to cooperate with other students in their group when interviewing foreigners and sorting out information. For the final presentation, the students got together to rehearse their presentations. They even asked the teacher to bring a computer to the classroom for their

Powerpoint presentations. The teacher had to do extra work to prepare for these highly motivated students. The students were very confident in presenting their reports, and class discussion and each presentation were lively, even though there were some computer glitches during the presentations.

In contrast, the students in the LMC were shy and not excited to do the assigned classroom activities. Some students did not even bring the course book, and other students did not do their homework. They showed indifference toward the task and unwillingness to do the task. They were not ready to learn. Consequently, the teacher was frustrated with constantly having to force them to do their task. In week one, the students in the LMC were regrouped by the teacher because the students were reluctant to exhibit any interest in their themes. For the interview of the second week, students were late and some were absent for the scheduled interview. The students in the LMC were not ready for the final presentation. Therefore, the teacher gave them extra hours to write their report in the classroom. Since they did not know how to do that the teacher helped them by showing a video presentation of the HMC. The students were asked to work together, but they did not listen to given instructions. One group divided the interview information into three parts, prepared each portion, and put them together into a report. They seemed to be just responsible for their learning when the teacher controlled their learning process.

## 2. Different Implementations for the Two Classes

The teacher planned to teach the same club activity to the LMC with little modification of the syllabus. Her teaching practice, however, showed a large discrepancy between the HMC and the LMC. The extent of implementation and management of the task were dependent on available teaching recourses, student involvement, motivation, and collaboration from the students in different contexts. Perceiving the differences of the two contexts, the teacher assisted the students in their learning according to the degree of student autonomy with the development of self-directed teaching.

The teacher was satisfied with the highly motivated students, but she was not quite ready for their active learning. The students in the HMC were more motivated and enthusiastic than the teacher who recently started teaching in the EFL context. At the beginning, the teacher's explanation about the task procedure was not clear. The students kept asking questions about the procedure. With the teacher's clearer explanation, they were coordinated in their group work. The groups were organized according to their interests, and the closeness of friendship. Even though the activity was initiated by the teacher, it seemed to invariably produce an improvement in the students' willingness and intention to learn. The students interacted in groups of 3 to 4 people to share information and created 8 to 12 questions for their interview. They also asked for help from the teacher by e-mailing

her outside class. The students were excited to interview foreigners and prepared pictures to help each foreigner's understanding of the interview topics. However, the interview was not well prepared. During the interview, they took turns to videotape using two digital cameras for 5 groups. In addition, the interview room was too small for them. The teacher felt sorry that the students were not provided with enough technology and a more spacious room. For the final presentation, the students wanted to use a projector and asked for technological help. The teacher strove to prepare everything that the students needed inside and outside of the class. The teacher, however, had difficulties dealing with the computer glitches that occurred during the presentation.

After three weeks with the students in the HMC, she wanted to apply the same teaching method to the LMC. But the students in the LMC were passive in their language learning. She realized that she could not follow the same steps and teaching strategies for the students in the LMC. Unlike the HMC, the LMC students worried about the task at the beginning of the project by talking to each other in Korean. The teacher noticed their worries and encouraged them by saying, "Don't worry I'll help you out whenever you need help." She, therefore, decided to make several changes in her teaching approach for the different context. In week one, after the theme for each group was decided, , the students were perplexed with the next step of creating questionnaires. The teacher gave more time to the students in the LMC to do the task in class, because they did not turn in their homework or interview questionnaire on the due date. She kept asking the students to send these documents by e-mail. With the teachers' advice on how to prepare the interview, the students made questionnaires and searched the internet to find information and prepare pictures to help the interviewees. For the interview of week two, the students were not ready to interview the foreigners. Some of the students were also late for the interview. The presentations were conducted with less enthusiasm than in the HMC. The LMC students were uninterested in the process and felt they were simply fulfilling requirements to pass the course. The teacher worked hard to prepare the group task and arrange the interview schedule and technology for the students telling them what to do for their next class and giving feedback on their work.

### 3. Learners' Reactions and Attitudes

The students' attitudes and reactions to the task, "Foreigners Interview on Korean Culture," differed in the two class contexts. The reactions of the students indicated an uneven range of tendencies in collaborative group work, confidence, and cultural awareness. Some excerpts from the students' interviews and writing assignments which contain some grammatical mistakes are provided below. Interviewees' names were changed for the purpose of privacy.

### 1) Raising Awareness through Collaborative Group Work

The students gained practical experience in developing self-directed learning through a collaborative group task. In the following extracts, they described their feelings on the collaborative group task needed to make the questionnaires:

It took long time to create the questionnaire, so we had meeting after class for several times and the teacher gave us feedback on the questionnaire by e-mail. Her correction was really helpful to make our English in a natural way (Hyoung in the HMC).

I learned from my friends when we prepared the presentation. We created sentences together to report the interview. And we learned how to make English sentences and how to use powerpoint. One of us majors in English, she helped us a lot. She became my favorite friend (Jungim in the LMC).

... [I]t was really helpful to make a real sentence to use for the task. I personally don't like to do homework of making example sentences with 5 new words every day. But, the making real asking sentences in the group for the interview were really useful for my English (Youngin in the LMC).

The students relied on each other and on themselves and showed responsibility for the achievement of the task. Through group work, they were more motivated and began to take charge of their learning experience.

Simply doing group work helped foster responsible attitudes in several ways in the following excerpts.

We first thought the questions in Korean and translated our questions into English. Even though it was difficult to make real questions, but it was useful for real English. I studied even grammar to make perfect sentences ( Hyun in the LMC).

With the questionnaire, the interview went to well. We were worried about if we could do the interview, but the questionnaire helped us interview them without any problems and the interviewee was so kind, so we don't have enough time to finish up sorting out the information and they made an appointment to meet again to finish the project over the weekend (Youngin in the LMC).

Doing the group work, Hyun and Youngin learned and increased the quality of their interaction. They got help from each other for their presentations and group writing. When

they needed more help to create their interview questions, they asked questions from the teacher. The teacher made herself available to the students and assisted them during the task. With the help from the teacher, the students were able to build up their self-directed learning through collaborative work. The process corroborated Kohonen's study (1992): As learners gain learning experiences in the process of working on given tasks in collaborative classroom activities, they accumulate the learning effect in the development of their cognitive and affective characteristics. This helps them make use of their learning potential more fully.

## 2) Increasing Relationships and Confidence

Through their participation and collaboration, the students became close friends during the program:

I've never interviewed foreigners in English, and my English is clumsy to talk to foreigners. I didn't know how I have to do for the task. I was very nervous because it was my first time to talk with a foreigner. But, I did it and it was not that difficult with the questionnaire we made. Anyway, the interview was a good experience, I will remember this day (Min in the HMC).

After this interview, we are talking about the photos on the hallway wall in front of the teachers' room. This interview was hard but interesting. We could not finish the task, so we got together to finish up the questionnaire the following day. By doing so, we spent more time and became good friends during the program (Mijoo in the HMC).

While conducting the tasks, Min enhanced confidence when she approached and talked to foreigners, and consequently overcame her fear and shyness. By increasing self-confidence and relationships, the students were capable of managing their learning needs, and they could rely on themselves, and not only on the teacher. Some reflected on their learning:

I was so nervous when I heard that I had to interview with foreigner. Because, I was not good at English and I had no idea how to talk with foreigner. However, he was so kind to us. So I gained a lot of confidence (Yunhee in the LMC).

Interviewing a foreigner was not more difficult than I thought. I was afraid to interview a foreigner at the beginning because I had never talked to foreigners until I take this class. I was glad to see myself "I interviewed a foreigner" (Min in the HMC)



In the interview with the researcher, Yunhee in the LMC said, “I was so shy that I couldn’t even contact with foreigners’ eyes, but I’m now able to talk to them by contacting their eyes. The interviewee was so nice to answer with my clumsy English.”

### 3) Being Aware of Different Englishes and Different Opinions on Korean Culture

Some students talked about the experiences on what they learned from the interviewees. After the interview, each group got together to sort out the respective information. They asked about English words which they did not understand because of the English pronunciation with an Indonesian accent and the fastness of an American’s speech.

I had hard time to understand the Indonesian English at the beginning of the interview, but I got used to her English at the end of the interview. I also realized that my English with Korean accent would sound weird to her (Jung in the HMC).

I was nervous on interview. So I didn’t well speak and my pronunciation was very strange. Also I was hard to listen to PZ because PZ speaked quickly. I was not satisfied because I didn’t well explain interview contents. [...] However this interview was very fresh and special experience (Jungim in the LMC).

The students were aware of various Englishes with different accents from different countries. They could also hear their own English with a Korean accent. They started to be aware of the real Englishes from different countries. That, however, turned out to be an initiator to reflect on their learning. The students also learned about different opinions on Korean culture from the foreigners:

I’m glad to meet Ki (an Indonesian woman). Because I have never been opportunity to meet Indonesian and I felt proud of Korean food once more, but I found difference Ki from me. She told me about Korean cook very easy, but I never think that because ferment food (Kimchi, Cheong-guk-jang) is not easy and other sauce is same. But I learn to foreigner’s think about Korean food and I have a great experience (Hyoung in the HMC).

Before interviewing him, I expected he would give somewhat negative answers about Korean school culture because Americans regard freedom as very important. Contrarily, however, he gave me quite positive replies. I was surprised to hear their different opinions on the Korean culture. Interviewing PZ was very interesting (Namhee in the HMC).

I had fun during this interview. I'm very happy to know Na, and some traditions of Germany. I want many people to experience interviews like this and understand the culture different countries (Youngin in LMC)

Even though the students learned many things from this project, they were not satisfied with some of the learning procedure. Although the students were motivated to learn and worked hard, they also expressed a sense of frustration over their lack of language progress and the opportunities to use and learn English outside class. A student complained about the clumsy procedure of the activity: "We had a digital camera, so we took turns to videotape the interview and the classroom room was too small to interview five groups."

#### 4. Teacher's Reactions and Roles

The teacher's reactions to the collaborative group task were derived from the interview with the researcher and the feedback of her reflection on the teaching. During her teaching practice, she became aware of the differences of the two class contexts, changed her teaching approach, and then transferred her roles according to the students' responses and needs.

##### 1) Becoming Aware of Different Students' Responses and Needs

The teacher was very impressed by the enthusiasm of the HMC and their industriousness was more than she expected. She, however, confessed the difficulties when she realized different responses of the LMC students.

The students of the HMC showed their worries a lot about the task by asking lots of questions. So, I could help them because I know their needs. They even gave me extra work for their preparation. However, I was so glad to see their autonomy in their learning. They became more self-directive learners with my little help. Unlike the HMC, the students of the LMC were so passive and not interested in the task. They didn't show any responses, they don't even ask any questions about the task. I was frustrated with the students' less-motivated attitude to the task. They were just waiting for my response and instruction without their working in a group. They said nothing and did nothing (Interview after two classes).

With no responses from students, she acknowledged the difficulty of managing those who were less-motivated during group work. She pointed out that one of the most difficult

things to deal with the students in the LMC was to make them get together for the task. They were more concerned with completing the task and seemed to only have extrinsic motivation to get a passing grade by doing their homework reluctantly. In addition, the teacher mentioned that the use of collaborative learning did not guarantee success without students' taking responsibility for their own learning.

## 2) Changing Teaching Approach According to Students' Responses

The teacher tried different ways to implement an autonomy-supporting teaching practice according to the students' response and involvement. She mentioned that the LMC students do not know how to do their work. They need to be trained to work together in a group. When dealing with inexperienced and less motivated students, she said, "I have to be patient, and it is often necessary to give more time and extra encouragement to do their own work."

She paid more attention to the students in the LMC. They needed more help from the teacher, so she made most of the decisions about their learning. The teacher gave the LMC more time to practice their presentation because they had not prepared for their report. They complained about not having enough time to preparation. Accordingly, the teacher decided to give more time to the students in the LMC. They needed more time to be effective learners and to be self-directed learners. As Nunan (1997) points out, the adoption of a learner-centered orientation implies differentiated curricula for different learners. In a sense, since passive students are inexperienced learners, it is often necessary for the teacher to begin by making most of the decisions. It is inappropriate to ask inexperienced students to ask the things that the advanced learners can do. The teacher needed to encourage the students to keep doing their work, providing proper instruction according to their interest, involvement, and motivation. Although she was ambitious and even eager to start helping her students developing autonomy and awareness of the language learning process, she was still ignorant of what exactly this meant in the role of the teacher.

## 3) Transferring Teacher Roles

By helping and encouraging her students to make them self-directed learners, the teacher was able to change her teaching and thus transferred her roles as a teacher according to different responses from different classes. At the beginning, the teacher was not ready to change the syllabus and teaching approach according to the students' needs in the LMC, but she realized that she had to adjust her teaching approach for their participation, involvement, and motivation.

When I saw the passive students, honestly, I was mad at them, but as a teacher, I pushed them to do their homework by helping and consulting their learning inside and outside of the class. In a way, I understand that they have many things to do for their freshmen life. I mulled over how to motivate them to study and help their learning. To be a successful teacher, I should know all of my students' interests and their motives. I also learned that we as teachers should leave room for some flexibility to negotiate the syllabus according to the dynamics and interests of the particular class. Teachers need to be willing to negotiate a syllabus as needed with the particular group of students. Be ready for altering what was planned (Feedback on the class from the teacher).

She practiced many different roles in the LMC as a helper, expert, consultant, and advisor. By practicing her teaching in the different classes, the teacher developed her teaching by changing her attitude and transferring her roles for each class. Implementing the collaborative group task, she made a more effective class for the students' language learning. By reflecting the attitude and motivation of the students after each class, the teacher figured out the appropriate ways to help the students' direct autonomous learning.

## **V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

I have examined how the students in the HMC and the LMC developed self-directed language learning through a collaborative group task while a teacher developed self-directed teaching by adjusting her teaching approaches to the different classes. With respect to the students' involvement in group work, the study found significant group differences in the degree of collaborative learning, but no differences in students' self-perceived improvement of confidence in learning. While the students in the LMC reported self-awareness of doing the activity as the key feature of their learning, those in the HMC perceived collaboration as the most distinctive feature. The findings of the study indicate that the students in the HMC can be more effective than the students in the LMC in terms of collaborative learning. The qualitative analyses of the students' responses and reactions to the interviews, however, resulted in an interesting comparison of the students' perception of each classroom environment. The collaborative group task made the different classes advance the process one step further when the students took charge of their learning. Group task appeared to be good at training the learners to use the target language for practical purpose. In fact, group work forced them to take responsibility for what they did in each group, giving them invaluable experience in learning during the project. The whole process was intertwined with the value of collaboration and the subtle self-directed

development--not only as a motivational moment on a personal level, but as means for taking responsibility in their group learning. Developing self-directed learning was influenced by the participation and dynamics of each group. More specifically, the students' experience in doing the task was found to be effective in enhancing learners' confidence.

This study also found that developing self-directed learning is achievable in the contexts of language learning and teaching with the collaboration of teacher and students. The findings about the significant contextual difference in terms of the students' reactions, involvement, and motivation should be interpreted within the classroom context. Relationships that encourage learners to initiate self-directed learning must be vigorously cultivated, because inexperienced learners are likely not to know how to engage in the learning process. Perceiving the needs, the teacher adjusted herself to her students' needs by assisting them to develop self-directed learning. In a given context, the teacher made "context-sensitive" instruments of study in order to elicit the beliefs relevant to learning. Initially, the students in the LMC were less autonomous learners. However, they gradually developed their learning aptitude with the teacher's assistance. In a sense, the teacher was the prime agent. The students in the LMC were enabled to become aware of their learning slowly with more help from teachers as shown in their writing. They need more time to take their responsibilities to become full-fledged language learners.

Although these findings have useful pedagogical implications, the study has some limitations. First, the research is too short to examine each individual's self-directed learning inside and outside of the classroom. Maria Oh (2005) points out that research of autonomy development needs to be applied for a longer period of time. For a follow-up study, more individualized and contextualized action research is needed in order to reflect the diverse aspects of individual learners over longer period. Despite the limitations noted, the findings of the study have some beneficial implications for college-level English courses. First, in terms of collaborative group tasks, accomplishing a task can influence students' meaningful language use. Second, to promote learners' self-directed language learning, the teacher must maintain a lively attention and active participation among students. From the findings of this study, I came to the conclusion that the best approach to learner development would be one that allows students to explore their own learning. It should also be said that a learner-centered approach does not necessarily guarantee 'effective teaching and learning' unless both teacher and students are trained and have substantial experience in their learning and teaching contexts.

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