
Feature Article

The Proof of the Pudding: Active Learning and Self-Regulated Learning Skills in University Classrooms

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Recent mandates from the Ministry of Education in Japan call for more active learning (AL) in universities to boost learning outcomes. Each university is required to develop and adhere to individual definitions of AL. However, many universities, such as the subject institution, have adopted the Ministry's definition which does not include explicit mention of fostering self-regulated learning (SRL) skills regardless of an overall educational objective to foster the life-long learner. We argue for university definitions of AL to include explicit statements of SRL skills development. We also explore student preferences of AL after students have experienced AL and SRL skills training. Our results suggest student preferences towards AL slightly change after experiencing courses using AL which differed from previous reports. We also discuss the potential benefits of SRL skills training in the university EFL classroom.

近年、大学教育の質保証という文脈の中で、アクティブラーニングの促進が強く叫ばれている。これまでも、アクティブラーニング型授業に関する実践報告がなされているが、その多くが、大学が独自に作成したアクティブラーニングの定義や、文部科学省中央教育審議会答申「新たな未来を築くための大学教育の質的転換に向けて」の用語集に示されている定義を採用しており、学習の要となる学生の学習に対する自己調整能力の育成が含まれていない。本稿では、学生の自己調整能力の育成を含めたアクティブラーニングを定義し、教育の質保証において自己調整能力が必要不可欠であることを議論する。また、近年の全国的な調査において、我が国の大学生はアクティブラーニング型授業を好まないという結果が示されているが、本稿では、学習に対する自己調整能力の育成を含めたアクティブラーニングを経験することで、授業の選好に対する傾向が変化したことが示された。

Learning Preferences and Out-of-Class Study Time

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT, 2012b) instructs universities to improve classroom methodology by implementing more active learning (AL). AL is activities used in the classroom that engage the student in the learning process. Bonwell and Eison (1991) define AL as activities (e.g., group discussion, role plays, etc.) that involve students in “doing things and thinking about what they are doing” (p. 5). MEXT (2012c) defines AL as follows:

In distinction to the one-sided lecture by the teacher, AL is a term for teaching and learning methods which incorporate active participation in the learning process by the learners. Learning in an active manner, learners cultivate general knowledge while developing cognitive, ethical, and social skills through deepening their understanding of culture, increased knowledge, and learning experience. AL includes discovery learning, problem-based learning, experiential learning, and fieldwork. Classroom methodology includes group discussions, debates, and group work. (translation by authors)

Implementing more AL is MEXT’s attempt to shift classroom instructional approaches from teacher-directed to learner-centered. Meanwhile, Benesse (2012) reported students preferring more teacher-directed learning approaches, suggesting a mismatch in teaching approaches and learning preferences. This

mismatch potentially inhibits learning (Peacock, 2001).

Benesse's (2012) survey on 4,911 Japanese university students compared results with a previous (Benesse, 2008) survey on learning environments. The aim of the more recent survey was to examine these environments in relation to MEXT's (2012a) document requesting universities to swiftly improve learning environments and be accountable for learning outcomes by increasing AL inside the classroom, increasing study time outside the classroom, systemizing curricula, and making productive use of syllabi. While Benesse (2012) reported 70% of their respondents understood the university as a place for independent study, these respondents also reported having a drastic decrease in out-of-class study time upon matriculation. More than forty-eight percent of the respondents reported having the hardest time in English courses, followed by math courses (37.7%). Generally, respondents preferred classes that were lecture-centered and did not require much effort other than attendance.

Eison and Bonwell (1988) noted that American university students resisted learner-centered approaches because these approaches are far from the "familiar passive listening role to which they have become accustomed" (p. 4). Could it be that Japanese students do not prefer AL because it is something they have not experienced? We set out to investigate student learning preferences after students have completed a course that included AL.

Additionally, we felt a need for a better definition of AL not only for this study but also to help university instructors implement AL successfully for better language learning outcomes. In his summary of the Benesse's (2012) survey results, Higuchi (2012) argued for more instruction on *how to learn* in secondary school classrooms. He pointed out that high school students who studied more than three hours a day in preparation for university entrance exams study less than two hours per week in university. In the tertiary context, Nakata (2006) found that Japanese university students who possessed a higher levels of learning skills were more likely to study autonomously after completing EFL courses.

To gain mastery in a foreign language, out-of-class study time must be increased because university curricula such as the institution in this study have no

room for additional courses. We agree with Lai, Gardner, and Law (2013), who said teachers should be responsible for equipping learners with the learning skills necessary to study effectively outside of class. Tsuda and Nakata (2013) note that Japanese EFL students who are more capable of taking the responsibility of their own autonomous learning possess self-regulated learning (SRL) skills.

Fostering the Autonomous Learner

Accumulating the necessary hours of instruction to acquire and be able to apply subject knowledge in a university curriculum makes it essential to develop the autonomous learner. While learner autonomy is a capacity learners possess to take responsibility of their own learning (Benson, 2011), SRL skills are what learners use to “direct their own learning” (p. 78). “Learners who are more self-regulated in learning a foreign language ‘skillfully’ are able to utilize that skill to become more responsible and autonomous learners” (Nakata, 2014, p. 347). The autonomous learner utilizes SRL skills to become an agent in their own learning by effectively (a) identifying what has been taught or needs to be learned, (b) developing individual learning objectives, (c) selecting and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and (d) monitoring their own learning (Dickinson, 1987). For students to take responsibility for their learning, these skills become necessary because they allow students “to increase their ability to become better active learners” (Bransford, 2000, p. 13).

Odlin (1989) reported that it took native speakers of English at least 1,200 hours of instruction to master Japanese as a foreign language. The instruction time it takes a Japanese L1 user to learn English as a foreign language is arguably similar with some arguing for more than 2,000 hours (Hiromori, 2015). Unfortunately, by the time Japanese EFL students graduate from college, the amount of classroom instruction they have received amounts to a mere 800 plus hours (MEXT, 2015).

If better learning outcomes (e.g., understanding and application of the subject matter or proficiency in the target language) are to be expected, instructors’ conceptualization of educational policies, such as in defining and practicing AL, becomes critical in that their understanding must match original objectives.

AL includes activities such as ice breakers, think-pair-share, Q&A activities, roundtables, peer survey, and jigsaw teamwork (University of Minnesota, 2013), which have been in our classroom, where we adopt a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, and in many teaching EFL activity books. However, as with AL, CLT does not consider the development of SRL skills for learners to take responsibility for their own learning (Heip, 2007). Educational research institutes (e.g., Benesse, 2014; CIER, 2016; NIER, 2015), EFL academic conferences (e.g., JACET, 2010; JASELE, 2014), and government authorized textbook authors (e.g., Takeuchi, 2011) in Japan have proposed more emphasis be placed on training learners to become autonomous learners. However, this idea has yet to spread through the Japanese EFL context (Jimbo, 2012) and it adds time and effort to the students' workload.

In secondary and tertiary EFL contexts, Nakata (2014) wrote that SRL skills training becomes a concrete method for instructors to know how to scaffold students' learning to foster the development of the autonomous learner. As mentioned above, this process consists of learning how to plan, monitor, and reflect (Cohen, 2012; Goda, 2014) one's own learning. The development of these skills to manage autonomous learning is what Wenden (1998) calls learner training. In her review of the literature in second language instruction from the early 1900s, she suggested three approaches of implementing learner training into the second language curriculum: (a) separating learner training and language instruction (e.g., workshops in a self-access center), (b) incorporating learner training into pedagogical tasks (e.g., teaching and using self-assessment), and (c) incorporating learner training into the syllabus (e.g., explicitly adding SRL skills training in course objectives). These three approaches are successfully being implemented today in the Japanese EFL university context to foster the development of SRL skills, for instance, (a) in self-access center learner advising programs (Kato & Mynard, 2015), (b) in a speaking course implementing self-assessment activities (Pinner, 2016), and (c) in an EFL course with the aim of increasing SRL skills (Fukuda, Sakata, & Pope, 2015).

SRL skills should be explicitly taught to deepen understanding and the ability to learn autonomously (Bransford, 2000; Nakata, 2015; Usuki, 2007).

EFL courses in the Japanese university context are clear examples of the necessity for SRL skills. Most Japanese university students take once-a-week 90-minute English courses for two years. Unfortunately, in-house surveys and personal communications with students reveal that after students complete their courses, they discontinue their studies. Data analysis from a previous study suggested that this may be due to the lack of SRL skills (Fukuda, Sakata, & Takeuchi, 2011). Therefore, simply adding more activities may not necessarily improve learning or learning outcomes. Thus, in this study, we propose a better definition of AL which explicitly includes the development of SRL skills.

Active Learning and Learner Training

“All genuine learning is active, not passive” (Adler, 1982, cited in Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. 3). What did Adler mean by genuine? The term AL can be problematic. For some instructors, it may be a self-evident concept because one could argue that “it is impossible to learn anything passively” (University of Minnesota, 2013, para. 1).

MEXT’s (2012c) definition (see above) without explicit mention of the development of SRL skills potentially causes problems because many instructors at the university level do not perceive themselves as being well-versed in educational theory. Thus, they may not understand the underlying concepts of discovery learning, problem-based learning, and experiential learning which may include SRL skills training. While MEXT is allowing all institutions to define AL themselves, most institutions simply use MEXT’s wording. For instance, the institution in the current study defines AL as:

The active learning promoted at [subject institution] is a classroom where the teacher does not just pass on information one-sidedly but adds problem-based exercises, Q&As, reflections, group work, discussions, and presentations, in which teachers encourage students to think on their own and where teaching and learning are interactive. (University Website, 2011, translation by authors)

Classroom instruction based on current definitions of AL may seem more

active on the surface. However, experiencing a more active classroom does not necessarily mean students will gain the skills needed to continue studying outside of class or after courses are completed.

To define AL in a more practical sense, Bonwell and Eison (1991) introduced the AL Continuum in the U.S. tertiary context, and Kawai Juku (2010) introduced the AL Hierarchy in the Japanese tertiary context. The AL Continuum is a conceptual framework that moves from simple tasks to complex tasks. In the AL Continuum, simple tasks are relatively short and unstructured while complex tasks are longer, carefully planned, and structured. The AL Hierarchy was developed after an examination of university education quality. Kawai Juku defined AL by level of task type with no mention of developing SRL skills. Their hierarchy of tasks includes higher-order AL tasks (e.g., problem-based learning) and lower-order activities (e.g., presentations). This framework may assist instructors who are not well-versed in educational theory to include more activities in their classroom which may engage their students in the learning process.

In our attempt to define AL that includes the development of SRL skills, we borrow from Wenden's (1998) work in learner training. She wrote that training students to self-regulate their own learning "changes the learner's roles by making them learn to take an active role" (p. 21). She also emphasizes that students need to be provided with an environment to acquire these skills.

Integrating Bonwell and Eison's AL Continuum, Kawai Juku's AL Hierarchy, and Wenden's learner training for this study, we operationally define AL at the university level as a methodology which focuses on student engagement in the learning process including the explicit teaching SRL skills training. In our proposed Active Learning Continuum (Figure 1), the left side can be viewed as a more traditional or non-autonomy classroom and the right side the more autonomous or guided-autonomy classroom. The teacher would be doing simpler activities (e.g., pair work, presentations, etc.) on the left and higher order tasks (e.g., problem-based learning, fieldwork, etc.) as the instructional methods move towards the right. Also, moving from left to right, instructors would be implementing more learner training techniques for SRL skills. At the far-right

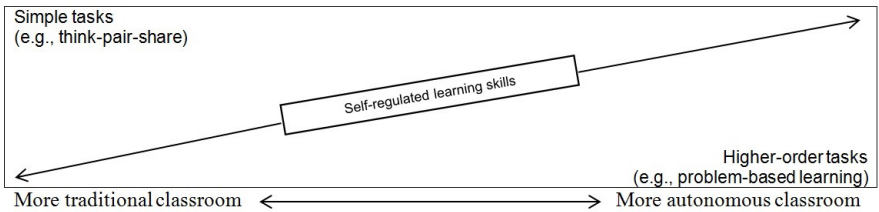


Figure 1. Proposed active learning continuum.

end of the continuum the teacher gives full responsibility of learning to the students; a course would incorporate learner-centered activities and aim for the students to develop their SRL skills for autonomous learning of the course content.

This operational definition of AL was used to compare two required EFL courses which were each at the far ends of the continuum (non-autonomy and guided-autonomy) for our examination of student preferences towards instruction, as well as the effectiveness of the development of SRL skills training. Our two research questions were (1) Do student preferences towards AL change after experiencing a course with AL? and (2) Are there any benefits for students who experience AL that includes SRL skills training?

Methods

We explored student preferences of instruction before and after completing courses in different applications (non-autonomy and guided-autonomy) of AL based on our proposed Active Learning Continuum. We also set out to identify any changes within participants who experienced an AL classroom that includes SRL skills training. This study adopted a cross-sectional pre/post-course survey design with the classroom duration being 15 weeks.

Participants

The target population was Japanese university undergraduates from a faculty of arts and sciences which consisted of about 180 students per grade level. All students were required to enroll in an EFL program for all first- and second-year students. A sample of 93 students was enrolled in the first author's English course. All participants studied English for at least six years prior to matriculation.

The EFL program consisted of three courses titled Basic English (first year, first semester), Thematic English (first year, second semester), and Communicative English (second year, first semester). The Basic and Thematic courses focused on reading and listening skills using commercial textbooks and taught by a Japanese teacher of English. In the Communicative English course, the focus was on speaking and writing skills, and the course was taught by a native speaker of English. At the time of data collection, the objective of the EFL Program was to develop the autonomous learner. The approach to learner training in each course was decided individually by the instructor. Thus, all first-year students would receive one of Wenden's (1998) three approaches to learner training. In the previous year, there were no explicit objectives for each course in the EFL Program. Thus, second year students in this study did not experience any learner training before and during this study. An in-house survey found that both first- and second-year participants' out-of-class study time was less than 30 minutes and TOEIC-IP test scores had an average score of 404 points.

Our exploratory investigation was conducted in two EFL courses: (a) non-autonomy course and (b) guided-autonomy course. The non-autonomy course has been taught with the CLT approach since 2008, and the guided-autonomy course which aimed to enhance SRL skills in a student-centered environment has been implemented since 2011.

Non-autonomy course. Two required English courses titled Communicative English consisted of 20 and 21 second-year students ($n = 41$) and was taught by the first author. The syllabus was based on the course presented previously in Fukuda and Yoshida (2013) using a CLT approach. The course objective was for each student to deliver three individual presentations on familiar topics (e.g., hometowns or favorite sports). The course was broken down into three modules (five weeks each) in which students prepared for three-, five-, and eight-minute presentations respectively. In each module, students spent three weeks on communicative activities on familiar topics, and then prepared for individual presentations the following week. In the fifth week, participants delivered a presentation in small groups of four to six students. There was no explicit teaching of SRL skills, however, the course was based on a learner-

centered approach consisting of many AL activities (e.g., presentations, pair and group work, problem-based learning, etc.). No students experienced the guided-autonomy course described below or other courses with the focus on SRL skills training. Thus, these participants were thought to have experienced courses only based on the far-left end of our proposed AL Continuum.

Guided-autonomy course. The course consisted of 52 first-year students and was titled Basic English. The syllabus was based on the guided-autonomy syllabus presented in Fukuda, Sakata, and Takeuchi (2011). The goal of the course was to raise awareness of and practice SRL skills to develop autonomous learners. This course was divided into three modules (five weeks each) in which students learned about SRL skills in the first module. In the second module, participants chose what to learn, set goals, and created learning plans in the class. Outside of class, students studied based on their plans and monitored progress with peer and teacher feedback coming in the following week's class. In the third module, students conducted self-evaluations of their learning, redesigned their learning plans, and continued their autonomous learning in the same way as they experienced in the second module. Each week during the course, students were also participating in AL activities such as pair work and group discussions. This was a learner training course to develop students' SRL skills. The participants experienced a course in SRL skills training along with AL activities which was based on the far-right end of our proposed AL Continuum.

Data Collection Process and Instruments

A pre-course survey was administered in the third week of class and a post-course survey in the final fifteenth week. The pre-course survey consisted of the same 10 items used by Benesse (2012) asking students to choose their preference of instruction (Appendix A). Benesse's (2012) survey used a semantic differential approach in which participants assessed items on a set of bipolar pairs choosing which instructional method they preferred (e.g., *I prefer courses that are easy for me to obtain credit even if I am not interested in the content.* or *I prefer courses that I am interested in even if it is hard to obtain credit.*).

The post-course survey consisted of the same 10 items from the pre-course

survey with additional items measuring non-autonomy and guided-autonomy courses content (Appendix A). We added two questionnaires (29 items) to confirm (a) the non-autonomy course was taught using a CLT approach and included AL with no SRL skills training and (b) the guided-autonomy course included both AL and SRL skills training. We added Fenton's (2006) modified version of Savignon and Wang's (2003, cited in Fenton, 2006) survey on CLT instruction to assess whether the courses were conducted with a CLT approach. The original Savignon and Wang survey consisted of 72 items on a 7-point Likert scale measuring learner perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of classroom practices. Fenton modified the survey into a 5-point Likert scale with 11 items (e.g., *English teaching in my class is grammar focused*).

SRL skills training was assessed using a survey developed by Fujita and Iwata (2001) on a 5-point Likert scale. Fujita (2010) administered the survey to Japanese university students and identified four factors valid in exploring SRL skills in the Japanese university context: self-monitoring strategies, self-planning strategies, behavior regulation strategies, and metacognitive strategies (Appendix A). Participants assessed their SRL skills on a 5-point Likert scale.

Each participant responded to the pre-course (10 items) and post-course (39 items) surveys. Responses were calculated to produce a CLT approach and SRL skills training score. We hypothesized that if the guided-autonomy course met its objectives of SRL skills training, the SRL skills scores for the participants would be higher than the participants in the non-autonomy course who did not receive SRL skills training. We also expected both courses to receive high CLT scores because both used AL. The second and third authors administered both surveys after explaining the study in the participants' native language and giving them the option of not responding to the survey. The authors also made it clear that participation did not influence course grades. Students were given 15 minutes to respond to each survey. All data was input and analyzed using SPSS version 21J.

Results and Discussion

Do Student Preferences Towards AL Change After Experiencing a Course With AL?

Pre-course survey results were nearly identical to those in Benesse’s (2012) report in which a little over half of the respondents did not prefer learner-centered instruction, or AL (CLT = 54.17%, guided-autonomy = 53.16%; Benesse = 54.8%). An independent sample Mann-Whitney *U* was administered to our nonparametric categorical data and no significant differences were found between our two groups before the intervention with exception to Q7 ($z = -2.20, p > 0.05$) about current learning styles (Figure 2 and Table 1). A within-group analysis for Q7 in the pre- and post-course surveys found no significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in response pattern.

Descriptive results of the pre- and post-course survey of instructional preferences show that for both groups responses slightly shifted towards a preference for student-centered instruction on some items but not all in both groups (Appendix B). From a look at the descriptive statistics alone, the reader may think that experiencing AL in any form would not change students’ preferences of instruction much. Nevertheless, our inferential statistical analysis showed a slightly different picture.

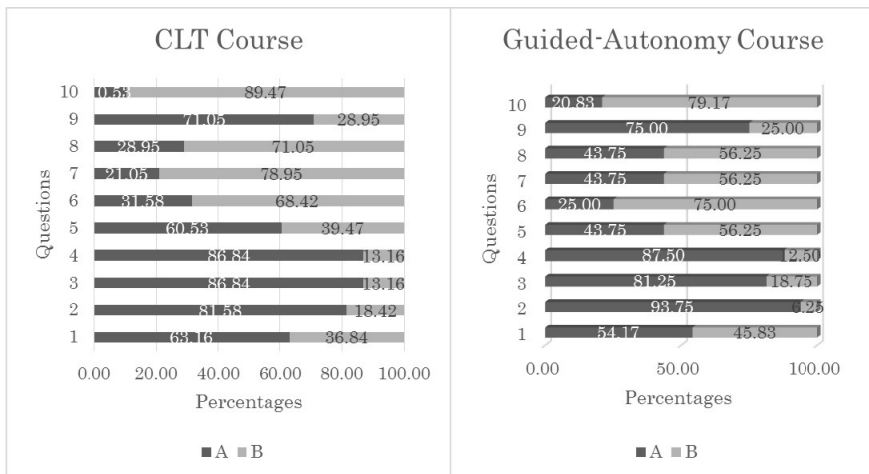


Figure 2. Pre-survey results of instruction preferences.

Table 1
Pre- and Post-Course Survey Results of Instructional Preferences

	Pre between-group comparisons	Post between-group comparisons	Within-group pre-post comparisons (guided-autonomy)	Within-group pre-post comparisons (non-autonomy)
	Mann-Whitney U	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon	Wilcoxon
	Z	Z	Z	Z
Q1	-0.834	-0.565	-1.414	-0.477
Q2	-1.738	-0.024	-0.632	-1.732
Q3	-0.694	-0.553	-0.302	-0.775
Q4	-0.090	-1.622	-0.832	0.000
Q5	-1.537	-0.040	0.000	-1.000
Q6	-0.627	-0.334	-0.277	-0.943
Q7	-2.198*	-0.584	0.832	-0.728
Q8	-1.402	-2.348*	-2.236*	-1.460
Q9	-0.408	-0.254	-0.500	-0.728
Q10	-1.278	-1.951*	-1.387	-1.508

Notes. Pre-course survey sample guided-autonomy ($n = 38$) and non-autonomy ($n = 48$); Post-course survey sample guided-autonomy ($n = 41$) and non-autonomy ($n = 46$)

* $p < 0.05$

The results of a Shapiro-Wilk test of normality revealed a normal distribution in our post-course survey data for both courses. Thus, we proceeded by administering parametric two-tailed independent samples t -tests. Results confirmed that each course was conducted according to their respective aims (Table 2). The average score for the CLT items in the non-autonomy course ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.34$) group was significantly higher ($t(84.64) = 4.28$, $p > 0.05$) compared to the guided-autonomy course ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 0.40$), and results from the SRL items in the guided-autonomy course ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.51$) were significantly higher ($t(84.97) = -2.38$, $p > 0.05$) than in the CLT group

($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.44$). These results confirmed that classes were taught using different approaches of AL. From module two of the guided-autonomy course, responsibility for learning was given to the students, which may be the reason the CLT scores were significantly different. There was not much English teaching per se from the sixth week.

From the 10-item Benesse items in the post-course survey, significant differences were found in Q8 ($z = -2.35$, $p > 0.05$) and Q10 ($z = -1.95$, $p > 0.05$) (Table 2). For Q8, participants provided responses on how they would choose courses and how much they should depend on their instructor. In the non-autonomy course, 28.95% of participants felt they should decide their goals before taking courses in the pre-course survey and responded similarly (29.27%) in the post-course survey. In the guided-autonomy course, 43.75% felt they should decide their goals before taking courses in the pre-course survey. However, this percentage rose to 54.35% in the post-course survey.

Post-course survey results of Q10 showed explicit SRL skills training in class had positive influences outside the realm of the language classroom. SRL skills training activities covered areas of effective methods of studying (e.g., studying in the morning when the mind is clear) which also seemed to connect to our participants' daily life. For instance, the fourth author's personal communications

Table 2
Results of Independent Samples *t*-test

	Group	n	M	SD	F	t	df
CLT score	Non-autonomy	41	3.22	0.34	1.71	4.28*	84.64
	Guided-autonomy	46	2.88	0.40			
SRL score	Non-autonomy	41	3.33	0.44	0.40	-2.38*	84.97
	Guided-autonomy	46	3.58	0.50			

Notes. CLT = Communicative language teaching; SRL = Self-regulated learning
* $p < 0.05$

with participants in the guided-autonomy course revealed that planning out-of-class study time helped one student wake up earlier because of his plan to study before heading to school. This change in behavior arguably led to a better life style as an independent university student.

Non-parametric Wilcoxon tests results revealed similar results for within-group comparisons of pre- and post-course survey responses. For the guided-autonomy course, analysis revealed no significant changes in preferences with exception to Q8 ($z = -2.24, p > 0.05$, Table 1). The number of participants who felt it was better to decide what courses to choose after deciding a future goal rose from 43.75% to 54.35%. This significant increase for Q8 may be due to the explicit training of SRL skills training, such as goal-setting and monitoring in the course, has potential to motivate students for autonomous learning. Our test for the within-group comparison for the non-autonomy course found no significant differences ($p < 0.05$) on all 10 items (Table 2).

Are There Any Benefits for Students Who Experience AL that Includes SRL Skills Training?

The results above illustrate a slight but insignificant change in preference of instructional methods in university courses after experiencing SRL training. Within the guided-autonomy course, the percentage for Q2 tripled. In the pre-course survey, only 6.25% of the students said they preferred the more challenging choice of tests and reports, and in the post-course survey 21.74% of the participants preferred the more challenging choice. The participants in the guided-autonomy course were taught how to learn effectively. For instance, topics taken up in the course were using tests for learning and long-term retention, effective time-management, and pitfalls of procrastination and cramming. Learning about these in the course may have given participants more confidence in their ability to obtain credit and exert more effort into their learning (fourth author's personal communications with students), and thus perhaps a change in preference for some participants to prefer more learner-centered instruction.

Similarly, Q4 asked participants their preferences of teacher-directed or learner-directed instruction. In the pre-course survey, 12.50% of the guided-

autonomy course participants preferred lectures to learner-directed approaches. However, the post-course survey percentage rose to 26.09%. Though results were insignificant ($p < 0.05$), this increase shows that more participants may have preferred AL with SRL skills training after experiencing it. Though further research is necessary, finding this increase only in the guided-autonomy course slightly suggests the potential that SRL skills training may have on helping students better understand the benefits of learner-centered instruction.

From our analysis above, we see the potential of implementing change in approaches from teacher-directed to learner-directed instruction to improve learning outcomes. Concerning the roles of teachers in developing their students' SRL skills, Cohen (1998, cited in Chamot, 2004) introduced the following: (a) diagnostician (e.g., helping learners identify their beliefs and strategies), (b) language learner (e.g., teachers sharing their language learning experiences), (c) learner trainer (e.g., training students to use strategies), (d) coordinator (e.g., supervising and monitoring students' learning), and (e) coach (e.g., providing on-going support). Most instructors at any level, however, are not trained to take on these roles, and some instructors may expect students automatically to know their role of learning autonomously or they expect students to adapt and "function as autonomous learners from the outset of their time at university" (Railton & Watson, 2005, p. 183).

For university instructors in EFL and other fields who feel unable to implement SRL skills training, Lai, Gardner, and Law (2013) have developed a program titled OWL (Orientation, Workshops, and Learner Autonomy Facilitation Resources). This program familiarizes language teachers with the benefits of developing student's learning skills and enhancing students' autonomous learning. Unfortunately, most instructors may not have the time to take part in such programs. Lai, Gardner, and Law also introduce a 12-week course structure for their Taiwanese EFL students in which instruction for eight weeks is in small groups where half the class meets the teacher for one hour while the other half learns the content autonomously by doing a teacher-directed task. The remaining four weeks are set aside for diagnostics of needs, guidance of autonomous learning, and for developing and accessing an autonomous learning

plan. Though Lai, Gardner, and Law's course structure is similar to the guided-autonomy course in this study, some may argue of its feasibility in the Japanese context.

It may be feasible for instructors to start with an activity in each of the three stages of learner training proposed by Cohen (2012): (a) goal-setting, (b) monitoring, and (c) self-reflection. For instance, instructors can allow a few minutes for students to plan their studies for the following week after introducing new material or posing new questions. These activities provide opportunities to reflect on autonomous learning and set learning goals. Also, instructors can allot several minutes to discuss new questions students' may have in the first few minutes of class or have the students discuss approaches to out-of-class study among themselves to raise awareness (Wenden, 1998). In an EFL class, these discussions may lead to new ideas for learning (e.g., a new book, app, or website) which will help students in planning and implementing out-of-class study. These activities, however, require the instructor to plan, and use extra time in their course. In the beginning, students may need more time, but as they get used to learner training activities, the time allotted for these activities can be lowered.

Instructors may also feel that they have an insufficient amount of time in class or that class time should not be used for learner training in which we suggest flipping the SRL skills training component of a course. The basic idea of flipping the classroom is "to make use of technology so that we do less 'teaching' in the class and focus more on group work and task based learning in the lesson" (Stannard, 2015, para 2). Though everything should be done for the first time in class with teacher support and ample opportunity to practice, instructors can, for instance, create their own worksheets to upload, web applications, or video lectures in which students can learn about and develop their SRL skills or use material that is already available online (e.g., The English Language Planner 2015 Website at <http://www.kandagaigo.com/elp/index.html> or English Learning 4U Website at <https://flipboard.com/@hiroshisaka45cf/english-learning-4u-d19j5l5jy>)

Conclusion

We have argued that research conclusions on students' beliefs and attitudes should be derived only after students have experienced what is being asked on a survey. Our data shed light on a situation in which student preferences towards instructional method changed after actual experience of instructional method. Our data revealed slightly different results from reports previously stating that university students did not prefer learner-centered instruction. Certainly, those papers were simply reporting on the status-quo.

However, university educators not well-versed in teaching methodology may wonder why national educational policies are pushing for more AL while their students do not prefer it, and thus sticking to their old routines of teacher-directed instruction. As mentioned in the outset, surely a mismatch of teaching and learning styles inhibits learning. Regardless, it may be hard for students to prefer something they have not experienced. The reader may be reminded of the proverb: The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Our preliminary analysis suggests that participants were not confident in studying at the more independent university level. That feeling may have influenced their decision to choose the more familiar instructional method or prefer courses they viewed as easier to obtain credit perhaps due to a lack of confidence to succeed in learning.

We also argued for university definitions of AL to include a component of SRL skills training to meet national and institutional objectives of bettering educational outcomes and creating life-long learners. In doing so, institutions need to equip their students with the SRL skills necessary to continue their studies in the subject matter during the course to increase out-of-class study time, as well as after courses are completed as effective autonomous learners. Only then can we benefit from AL and MEXT's ultimate aim of deeper learning and application of subject matter.

Readers should be cautious in interpreting our results of this exploratory study, because of its small sample size and data only from EFL courses which may have skewed our data. We also compared survey responses from three different courses in which participants were in their first and second years of university. Thus, furthering this research through repeated studies in various courses and

using the same age or grade level is necessary. Measuring results from a course in different applications of our proposed Active Learning Continuum is also necessary. For instance, qualitative data from interviews, classroom observations, or learner diaries will enable deeper interpretation of learning preferences in relation to survey responses.

In sum, our study provided some insight into the potential of AL in the Japanese university EFL classroom. With implementation of AL that explicitly includes the development of SRL skills training, universities will be able to provide the scaffolding necessary for the jump students take into the autonomous tertiary context from their teacher-directed secondary learning experience. Implementation of SRL skills training may also provide students with the necessary skills to continue learning after a course. Instead of simply making classrooms more active on the surface, incorporating SRL skills training into courses may allow more students to achieve academically (e.g., raising English language proficiency) at the university level.

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Appendix A

Pre- and Post-Course Survey Items of Instructional Preferences

	Teacher Directed Instruction	Learner Directed Instruction
Q1	I prefer courses that are easy for me to obtain credit even if I am not interested in the content.	I prefer courses that I am interested in even if it is hard to obtain credit.
Q2	I prefer courses that put more weight on attendance and class participation in the final grade.	I prefer courses that put more weight on final exams and reports in the final grade.
Q3	I prefer courses that put more focus on the learning the basics than application of the material learned.	I prefer courses that put more focus on the application of material learned than learning the basics.
Q4	I prefer to learn in lecture style course where the teacher teaches me knowledge and skills.	I prefer to learn in learner-centered courses where the student does research and presents on the material to be learned.
Q5	University students should gain knowledge and skills from a broad range of fields in their studies.	University students should gain deep knowledge and skills from a particular field in their studies.
Q6	It is better to have a more systematic curriculum instead of one with many elective courses.	It is better to have more elective courses even if learning would not be systematic.
Q7	University students should receive all the necessary information from the teacher.	University students should develop their own way of learning and learn what is necessary autonomously.
Q8	University students should take courses after deciding what they want to do in the future.	University students should decide what they want to do in the future in the courses they take.
Q9	University instructors should interact with students outside of class as well.	University instructors do not have to interact with students much outside of class.
Q10	University instructors should instruct and support students in their daily life outside of academics.	University students should be given full responsibility of their daily life outside of academics.

Notes. Items adopted from Benesse (2012), assessed using a semantic differential approach, and translated by authors.

Post-Course Survey Items Assessing CLT Instruction

- Q1 English teaching in this class is grammar–focused. (reversed)
- Q2 My English teacher in this class often asks us to do sentence drilling and repeat sentences after him. (reversed)
- Q3 The language used in this classroom by my teacher is mostly Japanese. (reversed)
- Q4 English teaching in this class is mainly explaining and practicing grammar rules. (reversed)
- Q5 I seldom need to open my mouth in this classroom. (reversed)
- Q6 English teaching in this class is communication–based.
- Q7 My teacher often designs activities to have us interact in English with peers.
- Q8 Our focus in this class is communication, but the teacher would explain grammar when necessary.
- Q9 The English teacher in this class allows us trial–and–error attempts to communicate in English.
- Q10 My English teacher often creates an atmosphere for us to use English.
- Q11 My English teacher often corrects my errors in class. (reversed)

Notes: Items adopted from Fenton (2006), assessed items on a 5-point Lickert scale and reworded to match university EFL context by authors.

Post-Course Survey Items Assessing SRL Skills

- Q1 Even if I am not good at English, I will try to get good grades in the English course. (Behavioral)
- Q2 Even if it is really difficult to understand, I try to make sense of what my teacher is saying. (Behavioral)
- Q3 I try to listen carefully to the teacher during the class, so I do not have to worry too much later about missing anything. (Behavioral)
- Q4 Even if the learning content is hard, I try my best because it is important for me to learn it. (Behavioral)
- Q5 When I study for exams, I try to memorize as much content as possible. (Behavioral)
- Q6 I think about how much I will study that day before I start. (Planning)
- Q7 I decide how much time to study before I start. (Planning)
- Q8 Before studying for exams, I make a study plan. (Planning)
- Q9 I make sure my study style matches me while I study. (Monitoring)
- Q10 I think about how much I can actually study before I study. (Monitoring)
- Q11 If there is a part I do not understand in my studies, I try out other learning styles. (Monitoring)
- Q12 I think about what I am supposed to do for each task before I start. (Monitoring)
- Q13 I apply everything I previously learned to the task at hand. (Monitoring)
- Q14 I search for the things I understand and those I don't understand while studying. (Cognitive)
- Q15 Before starting a difficult task, I make sure I understand the basics necessary to complete the task. (Cognitive)
- Q16 To remember content, I copy what I wrote in my notes originally. (Cognitive)
- Q17 When I study for exams, I summarize the content of the class and textbook. (Cognitive)
- Q18 When I study by reading books, I summarize the main points of each chapter. (Cognitive)

Notes: Items adopted from Fujita (2010), assessed on a 5-point Lickert scale and translated by authors.

Appendix B

Percentages of Pre- and Post-Course Survey Results on Instruction Preferences

	Pre-course survey Non-autonomy (<i>n</i> = 48)		Post-course survey Non-autonomy (<i>n</i> = 46)		Pre-course survey Guided-autonomy (<i>n</i> = 38)		Post-course survey Guided-autonomy (<i>n</i> = 41)	
	TDI	LDI	TDI	LDI	TDI	LDI	TDI	LDI
Q1	63.16	36.84	57.00	43.90	54.17	45.83	50.00	50.00
Q2	81.58	18.42	78.05	21.95	93.75	6.25	78.26	21.74
Q3	86.84	13.16	82.93	14.63	81.25	18.75	80.44	19.57
Q4	86.84	13.16	87.81	12.20	87.50	12.50	73.91	26.08
Q5	60.53	39.47	57.00	43.90	43.75	56.25	56.52	43.48
Q6	31.58	68.42	29.27	70.73	25.00	75.00	32.61	67.39
Q7	21.05	78.95	26.83	73.17	43.75	56.25	32.61	67.39
Q8	28.95	71.05	29.27	70.73	43.75	56.25	54.35	45.65
Q9	71.05	28.95	80.49	19.51	75.00	25.00	78.26	21.74
Q10	10.53	89.47	9.76	90.24	20.83	79.17	26.09	73.91

Notes: TDI = teacher directed instruction; LDI = learner directed instruction