Metacognitive Peer Advice: Learners as Advisors

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Ask a language learner how he or she can best improve in English and the answer will most likely include 'speak to the teacher more', but even if the teacher did nothing but speak to students individually for the entire period, it may sometimes amount to less than 90 seconds of time each week per student.

The issue of peer tutoring is an attempt to help learners assist their peers while practicing English, and has been addressed frequently in recent literature, specifically as arrangements in teaching various English content. However, the following research differs primarily in that it focuses on learners tutoring peers in metacognitive strategies.

This paper will explore the issue of peers helping each other to improve their weak points in English. Such an approach would strive to help learners use their peers as a resource for learning, instead of depending on the teacher as the only source for improving their English.

The following paper will describe the peer tutoring project implemented in this study, and will explore the extent to which learners believe in their own capacity to advise their peers in metacognitive strategies. The methods used to collect data from the participating learners were: (1) pre-project surveys (2) end-of-project surveys, and (3) end-of-project interviews with each student.

The final surveys used in evaluating the project asked whether the students voluntarily followed or attempted to follow their peers' advice outside of class, without teacher encouragement. The conclusions drawn from the surveys in evaluating this peer advice project were that:

(1) learners can be trained to acquire advice that they perceive as useful from fellow classmates, and
(2) learners have the capability to implement that advice without teacher supervision.

In suggesting that the above goals are achievable, this paper explores the idea that learners can be made aware of their own empowerment in learning how to learn.

CONTENTS

1. Background
1.1 Context

Language learners in Japan are accustomed to being taught in a traditional grammar-focused style with the teacher as conveyer of knowledge and the student expected to passively receive it and prepare to display such knowledge at a later time. The idea of teaching learners to help themselves is changing the way we think about teachers, and the proposal that learners themselves can be instructors in some aspects is gaining support in many quarters and meeting resistance in others.

In fact, student-student interaction and its influence on learning in the classroom has until recently not received adequate attention in research:

"D.W. Johnson faults much of this research as being 'adult centrism,' which implies that real learning occurs only between teachers and students and that student-student interaction represents off-task behavior, discourages achievement, and leads to classroom disruptions. On the contrary, Johnson argues, student-student interaction may actually be more important for educational success than teacher-student interaction. In fact, he claims, constructive student-student interactions influence students' educational aspirations and achievement, develop social competencies, and encourage taking on the perspectives of others" (D.W. Johnson quoted in Johnson, K. 1995: 111-112).

1.2 Pedagogical Situation

The students participating in this research were all Japanese freshmen and sophomore EFL students at a four-year university in Nagoya, Japan. Five different classes of 25 to 30 students each were studied, totaling 128 students. Ages ranged from eighteen to twenty years old, and English proficiency varied, although all of the university students passed the required entrance exams. Previous English educational background for Japanese high school graduates typically includes six years of formal, grammar-based English classes, which are often taught by Japanese, with little emphasis on conversational practice. Such classes have traditionally consisted of analyzing
English sentences in terms of SVO structure and direct translation into Japanese.   The EFL courses at the university are taught primarily by native English speakers and are required courses for Global Business majors.

The traditional role of teacher in many countries still embodies the position of advisor. The teacher has typically been considered the bearer of linguistic knowledge and the student is seen as a yet empty vessel waiting to be taught the target language by the teacher. Of course, this view assumes that the learner brings no experience to the classroom and certainly no beliefs about how to learn a language. After speaking with language learners, however, it doesn't take long to realize that the student of a second language already has firm beliefs about language acquisition (Mutch 1995:14) and in many cases, can often advise other learners in a similar situation on how best to tackle at least some aspects of the target

language.

Compare the learner's experience described above with that of a native English speaker. The assets of experience and native speech that an L1 language learner can offer in teaching the language is obvious. But the advice that a native speaker can impart to second-language learners on acquiring the language may in many cases be based on intuition or second-language acquisition research, rather than on personal experience. Native speakers and L2 speakers simply do not learn a language in the same way.

In giving advice to fellow students, the learner has the advantage of empathy with his or her classmates, and a greater likelihood of sharing the same frustrations, anxieties, and goals as a fellow student of English. Thus, what a learner lacks in fluency and expertise, he or she can make up for in relevant, first-hand experience as an English student.

It is with the above consideration in mind that we will attempt to outline what advantages and disadvantages may be entailed in an attempt to organize learners as advisors on how to learn a language, with specific reference to students attempts to improve their weak points in the language.   T h i s paper will explore the extent to which learners believe in their own capacity to instruct their peers in metacognitive strategies.

Of course, the attitudes and beliefs of the learners would strongly affect the implementation of this concept, as learners of a second language hold their own preconceived expectations and this will facilitate or hamper efforts at altering teacher and student roles.

The preconceptions that students have regarding their role as learners largely determines the extent to which they will be able to participate in the classroom. (Johnson, K.1995:145).

In the case of Japanese students, they are trained for most of their scholastic life to be passive and refrain from asking for help:

"We had suspected that non-conscious learner assumptions of this sort were
involved to some degree in the classroom performance of some ESL learners, particularly those from China, Japan, and Korea. Recent informal discussions with advanced learners from these countries have confirmed that they had been extremely reluctant, during most of their English language training, to say anything unless they were sure that they knew exactly the right words and phrases. That such an approach to the learning and use of a second language may result from training procedures in their native countries, or may preserve powerful cultural constraints on how individuals should present themselves in public, are important points to recognize, and constitute an influence on some learners' performance over which we may have very little control" (Tarone & Yule1989: 54).

While some cultural influences on students may make enhancing the roles of learners difficult, we can at least try to give them speaking opportunities by a small group approach. This paper will attempt to outline the advantages and disadvantages inherent in such a venture. To help answer the above concerns, we must first narrow our focus considerably as well as review what we know so far about the relevant issues.

The Focus

This paper will explore the idea that peers can suggest metacognitive strategies in workshops which learners can use out of class with the goal of improving their weak points in English.

Students are asked to write on paper, in order of strength, their own two strongest and two weakest areas of English skills from the skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. They then write questions they would like to ask an advisor regarding improvement in the weak areas.

In the next step, students who chose speaking as a strong point would answer questions in small groups on speaking from the students who feel that is their weak point. This continues with strong listening students advising weak ones, strong reading students advising weak ones, and strong writing students advising those who believe themselves to be weak in writing, until all students have been both advisors and advisees in two each of the four areas.

The intended results of this activity are to help increase student speaking opportunities, but also to help create a less intimidating atmosphere than the traditional 'teacher knows all and dispenses knowledge to the students' approach.

Creative use of peer work can help make students more aware that their fellow learners are an excellent resource for advice, practice, and support (McGuire1994 :28), and can help increase language proficiency (Chesterfield & Chesterfield 1985 :199).

1.3 Review of Previous Literature

The issue of peer tutoring has been a core concern for practitioners and researchers of various fields, including cooperative learning (Slavin 1996:55, Brumfit and Johnson 1979 : 172, Coelho 1994 :24), peers teaching large groups (Rogers 1983: 58), and small groupwork (Doughty and Pica 1986: 305).

Varonis and Gass have gone so far as to claim that learner-learner interaction may benefit students more than interaction with native speakers, because the former tended to feature more exchanges for negotiating meaning (quoted in Chaudron 1988: 107).

 Work by researchers has also shown that second language students can be trained to regularly speak with their peers in English (Chesterfield, Chesterfield, Hayes-Latimer, and Chavez 1983), and that this can directly increase their English proficiency (August 1987, Chesterfield, Chesterfield, Hayes-Latimer, & Chavez 1983).

Flanigan likens peers advising each other to being fellow travelers or survivors, due to each learner having valuable advice and experience to share (Flanigan 1991:152), and Webb says peer collaboration's effectiveness in small groups stems from verbal interaction used in the groups (Webb 1985: 33). She makes an important distinction in analyzing peer help by discerning those who gave help from those who

received it. She further defines the different kinds of help learners can give each other as:

(1) *explanations,* in which the methods of arriving at a solution are demonstrated, this type of help was found to contribute to a student's learning, rather than:

(2) *terminal help,* which is considered more as a response, a simple answer to the particular problem being asked about, rather than demonstrating how to solve similar problems in the future.

The peer assistance investigated in this paper is closer to the explanation-type assistance mentioned in Webb's study. Learners are asked to help explain to other
learners strategies that they can use to help strengthen their weak skills in English.

The field of cooperative learning is too vast for a thorough review in this paper, but it relates quite closely in certain areas with peer interaction, and a preliminary understanding of some of the principles behind it will help facilitate our study, since a great deal of the research on peer tutoring is generated from this field.

The concept of cooperative learning derives from the philosophy that educating learners should be centered on and directed by the student. In essence, that learners can be teachers as well, and the role of instructors should be that of facilitator or guide, instead of the sole source of initiative and knowledge. With this as the fundamental principle behind cooperative learning, some teachers are hesitant to organize learners into groups because they themselves had not been educated in that manner. (Coelho 1992: 129-130). This is not to mention the resistance of some second language students unfamiliar with such non-traditional structures.

A fundamental characteristic of cooperative learning which differs from our study however, is that student groups be heterogeneous:

"Cooperative learning techniques based on peer-tutoring methods require the class to function as an aggregate of groups who rehearse teacher-taught materials, act as both teacher and learners, and focus on tasks that emphasize the acquisition of information and/or specific skills" (Johnson, K.1995: 114). We will not pursue the above point further, because the students in this study are all Japanese speakers.

Another goal quite relevant to peer tutoring is that of encouraging learner metacognitive awareness, because the attitudes and reactions of learners are of immense value to researchers, (Gottlieb 1995:13) as well as using students' awareness to determine the effectiveness of a strategy (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, & Russo 1985: 25). O'Malley et al place so much importance on this awareness that they assert that "students without metacognitive approaches are essentially learners without direction and ability to review their progress, accomplishments, and future learning directions" (:24).

Tarone & Yule (1989 :140), investigated practical results of student perceptions regarding their English ability, and in that aspect resembles our study, but their research went on to explore confidence-related factors. Specifically, they investigated students confidence level and the relationship with their performance on tests. This study, however, is aimed more toward gauging the receptivity of students toward using peer advice.

The most relevant research to our purposes in this paper are found in studies on metacognitive advice training, which examined students evaluating learner strategies and found that after learners were made aware of a certain strategy, they voluntarily used it autonomously (Wenden 1987: 588). Another study of an activity in which students examined peer beliefs showed that training learners to discuss metalinguistic knowledge is a practical concept (Wenden 1986b: 6) and that peers can benefit from sharing such ideas (Goh: 368). Related work also explored how students use metacognitive strategies in their management of learning (Holec quoted in Wenden 1987).

It is not the intent of this paper, however, to discuss in great detail the various inter-connected areas of the above concerns. While the areas of introspection, retrospection, peerwork, groupwork, and learner strategies are without doubt, relevant to
the overall issue of peer advice, we will attempt to focus solely on the most pertinent literature on research for our purposes.

The focus of our peerwork concern is restricted to a metacognitive framework. Whereas cooperative learning concentrates on learners teaching others specific tasks, the peerwork project in this paper dealt exclusively with trying to have learners teach metacognitive strategies for improving their weak points, then investigating the individuals perceptions regarding the usefulness of the advice, including in which of the four skills students believe their peers can help them most, and an end-of-project survey to monitor whether the participants claimed to have changed their learning behavior by attempting to implement the advice voluntarily on their own. For students who had tried the advice, we would also survey whether they thought the advice helped them. This would help evaluate the approach and the workshop advice.

2. Specifying Focus
2.1 Definition of Terms

Learning strategies must be distinguished here from *learning styles*. The latter is derived from general psychology and relates to the ways people adapt to problem-solving. "An individual's learning style is viewed as relatively fixed and not readily changed.", although it has been argued that learners can be helped to shape their learning approach for a particular learning task, which is the basis behind the concept of 'learner training' (Holec, Little & Singleton quoted in Ellis 1994 : 499).

Learning strategies are distinguished from learning styles specifically in that the former are behaviors used by learners to improve their learning, while the latter are the various approaches taken in solving a problem or learning a new subject (Oxford & Anderson quoted in Oxford & Green 1996, : 20).

To pursue the issue of effective metacognitive strategies, we must first distinguish it from among the many similar-sounding terms used in the literature.

Learner strategies can be divided into the following:

(1) *metacognitive strategies* "involve planning and thinking about learning, such as planning one's learning, monitoring one's own speech or writing, and evaluating how well one has done.

(2) *cognitive strategies* involve conscious ways of tackling learning, such as note-taking, using dictionaries and other resources, and elaboration (relating new information to old).

(3) *social strategies* mean learning by interacting with others, such as working with fellow-students or asking the teacher's help" (O'Malley & Chamot quoted in Cook 1991: 80-81).

It is useful at this point to distinguish between strategies which are cognitive and those which are metacognitive:

"Cognitive strategies are seen as mental processes directly concerned with the processing of information in order to learn, that is for obtaining, storage, retrieval or use of information.

However, there is another set of strategies operating at a different level to these, which involve learners stepping outside their learning, as it were, and looking at it from outside. Such strategies include an awareness of what one is doing and the strategies one is employing, as well as a knowledge about the actual process of learning. They also include an ability to manage and regulate consciously the use of appropriate learning strategies for different situations. They involve an awareness of one's own mental processes and an ability to reflect on how one learns, in other words, knowing about one's knowing" (Williams & Burden 1997:148).

This paper's concern is specifically within the metacognitive framework, notably that of the learner thinking about and evaluating learning. However, in classifying certain strategies, researchers have at times had difficulty in distinguishing metacognitive and cognitive, due to easily overlapping categorization of strategies:

"The distinction between metacognitive and cognitive strategies has been described as difficult to circumscribe with precise boundaries (Brown et al.). What is metacognitive to one analyst is sometimes cognitive to another. ...

Although the approach is not without problems, the classification scheme based on a division of learning strategies into three categories: metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective strategies- is useful in describing the strategies derived from both retrospective and think-aloud interviews." (O'Malley & Chamot 1990: 144).

Another term which is found frequently in the literature is that of metalinguistic knowledge, McDonell describes the distinction between this knowledge and metacognitive strategies as follows:

"During the processing stage for cooperative learning, I have often observed that children ask more questions and make comments about language as they become more proficient with language. It would appear that metalinguistic awareness is a by-product of language development. Directly linked to this metalinguistic knowledge is the development of metacognitive strategies. These are strategies that involve thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring of learning while it is taking place, and self-evaluation after the learning experience" (McDonell 1992: 62).

A sub-category of metacognitive strategies which further specifies this study's focus is the self-evaluation of the learner's learning. Metacognition relates to a learner's self-knowledge of cognitive strategies at a more conscious level, including self testing and evaluating (Blagg et al. quoted in Quicke 1994: 248).

Wenden describes one dimension of metacognition as what learners know about their own learning, whether perceived or factual (Wenden 1986a: 186), and their evaluation of their own progress (Wenden 1987: 575, Oxford & Crookall 1989: 404, Chamot & O'Malley 1987: 241).

We need now to differentiate between a learner's metacognitive knowledge of strategies and the use of such strategies:

"When a learner admits that he has a real problem speaking because he keeps making mistakes, this is different from the statement that whenever he speaks, he always listens for his mistakes. The first is an example of metacognitive knowledge about the person variable (he has a problem speaking; he keeps making mistakes) and the second about the strategy variable (he always listens for his mistakes when he speaks)" (Wenden 1987: 586).

A strategy is defined as "mental or behavioural activity related to some specific stage in the overall process of language acquisition or language use" (Ellis 1994: 529).

Strategies can be divided into three types: *production, communication,* and *learning.* The first two strategies are related to language use primarily, and it is the third listed strategy that is most relevant to this study. The goal of *learning* strategies is to foster linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the language, and can be divided further into *language learning* or *skill learning* strategies (Ellis 1994: 530).

"The former, as defined by Tarone, are concerned with the learners' attempts to master new linguistic and sociolinguistic information about the target language. The latter are concerned with the learners' attempts to become skilled listeners, speakers, readers, or writers (Tarone quoted in Ellis 1994: 530). So we confine our focus to *skill learning* strategies, those which learners can be taught to use in improving their weak points of speaking, listening, reading, or writing.

2.2 Definition of Objective

This study aims to evaluate the approach of metacognitive peer advice through the perceptions of the learners. Such an approach would help make students aware of their fellow classmates as resources for practice and assistance in speaking English.　　Utilizing peer work arrangements in class, even in a short-term project, can help provide students with quantitative and qualitative speaking opportunities.

(1) The increased quantity is derived from, as mentioned earlier, the fact that students in groups are receiving simultaneous practice for the 40-minute project length per day, as opposed to the lockstep approach where one student speaks at a time while the others listen, or do not listen, which may more often be the case.

(2) The qualitative aspect of the approach refers to the small group setting and the emphasis on message-oriented speaking practice, where learners have less need to worry about grammatical correctness of their speech and are more likely to experiment with the language in front of four or five peers than they are in front of 30 to 50 peers and a teacher. This format contrasts considerably with the lockstep, teacher-directed practice which often is or resembles a drill structure. (Long 1977: 286-7)

In formulating the approach for this study, it was considered helpful to answer some preliminary questions of the group structure to be used. These factors to consider were based on eight recommended questions from research on the effects of group work on learning (Long 1977: 288):

1. How many students will work in each group?

Ranging from groups of three to twelve students per group, depending on how many students are weak in the skill for that week's project theme; listening, etc.

2. How many groups of students will be in each class?

This would also vary from among the five classes in which the study is implemented. Classes with three strong listening advisors and 21 weak listening students will be assigned into three groups each, fronted by one listening advisor and seven advisees in each group. If the number of advisors is larger than advisees, as is the case for the writing workshop, with for example; 18 advisors and six advisees, there would be six different groups, each conducted by an advisee to ask questions of a panel of three advisors each. The more important factor behind the groups is not the number or ratio, but the fact that each student in turn gets the chance to ask and answer questions and to be both an advisor and advisee during the four-phase project of workshops in speaking, listening, writing, and reading (see Appendix 9 for more details).

3. Which students will work together?

The relationship will be randomly based on which area each student decided was his or her weak point. This allows students who previously had never spoken together to interact.

4. How will the groups be formed?

The instructor collects the surveys from the students, in which they identified their perceived strong and weak points. Then the teacher evenly and randomly divides up the students, arranging one or two advisors with a larger group of advisees, or vice versa, depending on the number of available advisors. The groups are each assigned a separate classroom, to reduce noise and to alleviate anxiety of many students overhearing a learner's speaking.

5. Is there any advantage in imposing a particular arrangement on the groups?

Once the groups go to their assigned classrooms, the advisors are free to arrange the classroom in any way. Although many had been noticed to form circles or triad formations, they were not instructed to do so in any way.

6. What kind of work will the students do in groups?

The work in the project is restricted to metacognitive strategy training, in which the advisees can ask any question regarding improvement of weak points, and the advisors give advice without any pre-planned sentences.

7. What relationship will group work share with the rest of the teaching and learning in our classes?

It aims to augment the two weakest of each student's basic four skills and in doing so, introduce to the student a new resource (their peers) to turn to, in addition to the teacher, for achieving one's own improvement.

8. How will the roles of teacher and students change specifically?

The students in the advisor role are treated by the instructor and advisees as experienced tutors with valid, valuable opinions to share on learning. The students in the advisee role change from being passive teacher-dominated learners to being socially equal with their advisor-peers.

The traditional role of teacher is modified into that of scheduling the themes of the project, assigning groups to classrooms, and attending to difficulties or questions about the general operation of the workshops. The teacher is not to offer advice on improving weak points, nor is he or she to correct student errors while they are in their groups. The instructor is more of an operations manager than a language consultant during this four-week project.

If students could be successfully shown that they are competent practice partners for each other and that they can supplement the teacher's role, even a native English speaking teacher, then they have the potential of rapidly increasing their confidence in acquiring English. If they could be trained to ask their peers for advice and to try out metacognitive learning strategies without teacher assistance, they are closer to achieving progress than if they are dependent solely upon the teacher to teach them how to learn.

It is not unusual for English instructors at Japanese universities to be assigned several hundred students per week, with 25 to 30 students per class, making it logistically difficult for students to get all of the practice they need or want with their teacher, even if they tried to speak to the instructor before or after class.

This is not so much a problem among ESL students studying abroad in an English-speaking country, because (1) the students have a better chance of meeting and interacting with an English speaker, if not a teacher, then a shopkeeper or English-speaking friend, and (2) the ESL students typically come from different backgrounds and have different languages, so English is the language, for example, that a

Bangladeshi and a Spaniard can use for classroom interaction.

However, in the case of EFL students in Japan, English is not necessary for classroom communication among students, because they all share the same native language. Even among Japanese university teachers who instruct English classes, the students may have little interaction with the teacher in English (Takahashi 1996: 2).

In fact, many Japanese and other Asian students can find it humiliating to attempt to speak a language unless they already speak it well. This is largely cultural, but also may stem from unease students feel about re-enforcing language which they are not sure is grammatically correct because it has not been uttered by a native speaker.

This is precisely how the areas of metacognition, peer advice, and learner autonomy tie in together. For learners to be trained to think about learning, they must simultaneously be trained to think and act on their own initiative, out of class, without homework requiring them to work on improving their weak points in English.

Consequently, if they are to become autonomous as far as trying out strategies which may work for them, they need to first become accustomed to thinking and talking about the learning of English in English. And if they are to think about learning and not depend solely on the teacher, they must try out their ideas with other classmates, who, in a homogeneous society like Japan, share the same mother tongue, the same language experiences, the same anxieties and frustrations, and the same general goals. Thus, it is the aim of this paper to investigate whether, and to what extent, peers are able to advise each other on metacognitive learning strategies, and whether that advice can lead to autonomous action on the part of the advisee, through his or her own motivation.

Our focus integrates the areas of learner autonomy training with metacognitive peer advice within groups. In other words, the project groups learners into roles of advisors and advisees in the initial stage, where they receive advice from their respective advisors in speaking, listening, writing, and reading. The second stage involves learner reflection, and our final surveys seek to evaluate the project and find out whether the students voluntarily followed or attempted to follow their peers' advice outside of class, without teacher encouragement. If so, this would appear to suggest that (1) learners can acquire advice that they perceive as useful from fellow classmates, and (2) learners have the capability to implement that advice without teacher supervision. If we can suggest that the second statement is possible, it would suggest that learners can be made aware of their own empowerment in learning how to learn.

It would also tell us that, depending on personality, strategy, and learner preconceptions, other learners can be effective sources of metacognitive insight for language learners. Presenting students with the opportunity to hear alternate learning strategies, specifically from fellow learners who share empathy and common experiences and frustrations with them can have overall positive affects on the language learner, and the student can attempt to use strategies autonomously that he or she believes relevant. Many

practitioners have been working on ways to teach and train students how to become 'the good language learner', teaching the strategies in the classroom, but it is the aim of this paper to suggest that if given an opportunity to be advised by more successful learners, students are capable of striving to try these strategies on their own, outside of class, without having to be spoon-fed the strategies by a teacher. The relevance of the student's vantage point on learning is a vital part of researching the L2 classroom (Van Lier 1988: 87).

3. Basis for Investigation

The relevance of investigating peer advice on metalanguage is pertinent to several possible objectives. Heightened mutual interaction among students, reduced teacher talk, increasing opportunities for the learner to practice English (Long and Porter 1985: 208) are possible and worthwhile benefits that could result from such an investigation.

A critical factor in learner autonomy is the degree to which learners perceive that their success in learning is proportionate to their efforts. This is known as *internal locus of control* (Slavin 1990: 63), and is a vital factor in determining the success of learners as well as the project which aims to teach learners how to learn. A related motivation theory is *attribution theory*, which predicts that those students who believe their success is determined by unchangeable features or by their environment are motivated less and thus achieve less than more autonomous students who feel their efforts contribute heavily to their success or failure (Weiner quoted in Slavin 1990: 63}. This is relevant to our study because we are attempting to detect whether most students realize their potential to control and improve their own learning capacity.

Earlier, the field of cooperative learning was mentioned as having some valuable insight to add to the basis of our investigation. While this paper may draw from some cooperative learning research, and the theory underpinning it, the models used in cooperative learning are not adapted in this study . The investigation integrates as a basis, the theories of metacognitive strategy training and of learner autonomy. It also draws on cooperative learning as relevant to the advantages of groupwork, but the similarities end there. This study does not nor is able to utilize heterogeneous groups of students, which is a fundamental feature of cooperative learning. This study also cannot delve into the other mentioned fields further than it relates to the investigation.

Practitioners in the field of cooperative learning have divided it into three areas of tasks: (1) *classroom environment and social tasks* (2) *process tasks* such as peer tutoring and goal setting, and (3) *progress monitoring and evaluative tasks* (Bassano & Christison quoted in Nunan 1992: 4).

It is the latter two areas which concern our study: peer tutoring and progress monitoring. The peer tutoring occurs in the early phases of the project, while progress monitoring forms part of the evaluation

of the project by the students and self-assessment of the learners' own progress.

The above are used as guidelines of reference for the project, but even ardent supporters of groupwork warn that merely forming groups does not constitute enough motivation to enable learner empowerment (Slavin quoted in Nunan 1992: 5). The content of group and peer work must also be helpful to the learner's learning.

The pattern of steering learners more toward taking responsibility for their own learning incorporates not only work with peers, but strategies in promoting student autonomy (Carroll 1994: 20).

The relationship between intrinsic motivation and self-directed learning seeks to encourage learners "to see themselves as increasingly competent and self-determined and to assume more and more responsibility for their own learning" (Kohonen 1992: 17-18).

Kohonen goes on to illustrate the five necessary factors for cooperative learning projects to be successful:

1. "positive interdependence, a sense of working together for a common goal and caring about each other's learning;

2. individual accountability, whereby every team member feels in charge of their own and their teammates' learning and makes an active contribution to the group Thus there is no 'hitchhiking' or 'freeloading' for anyone in a team- everyone pulls their weight;

3. abundant verbal, face-to-face interaction, where learners explain, argue, elaborate and link current material with what they have learned previously;

4. sufficient social skills, involving an explicit teaching of appropriate leadership, communication, trust and conflict resolution skills so that the team can function effectively;

5. team reflection, whereby the teams periodically assess what they have learned, how well they are working together and how they might do better as a learning team"(:17-18).

"Learners are encouraged to explain ideas or skills to one another, each member being an active participant and an important resource person for the whole team. Such discussions can be beneficial to all: faster learners will consolidate their own understanding of issues at hand when explaining them to slower learners, thus engaging in cognitive elaboration that enhances their own understanding. Similarly, slower learners will benefit from peer tutoring by their teammates who are wrestling with the same question."(Kohonen 1992: 35).

By looking at the second factor listed above, it is easy to see how peer tutoring ties in to learner autonomy training, because individual accountability, if implemented correctly, helps to train a learner to be more self-directed.

This study shares the common goals of positive interdependence, individual accountability, and abundant face-to-face interaction with cooperative learning without necessarily adapting the other factors or the structure of it.

Another important difference is that the procedures in Kohonen's study are intended to be a day-to-day fundamental premise of the activities conducted in the classroom. By contrast, this study utilized the form and some of the cooperative learning features in order to foster metacognitive thinking among the students and then to later monitor the presence or lack of self-motivated autonomy on the part of the student, by noting whether the project's content and approach had an effect on the learner's out-of-class study habits.

The basis for this approach comes from researcher suggestions that students be introduced to language learning concepts and evaluate the use of, for example, listening strategies with each other. "However, students would be expected to apply or use the skills on their own in situations where they deemed it appropriate to do so" (Wenden 1986c: 317-318). Our study also differs from the above in that the teacher does not introduce nor demonstrate how to apply the strategies. Students are free but not obliged to practice implementing the skill on their own, outside of class.

Wenden says that the greater the teacher involvement, the less likely it is to encourage learner autonomy, because language training then becomes an activity directed by the teacher. She suggests that durability of behavior is one of the ways in which such an approach can be evaluated. This means that learners would be monitored at a later date to check whether they were voluntarily using the strategy. This investigation relied on asking the students if they tried the strategy and if so, whether it made any difference. This type of strategy training is called informed training, in which students are taught the notion of strategy and are encouraged to consider the effectiveness of different strategies (Wenden 1986c: 317-8).

A fundamental element of recent education is that learners are taught how to learn on their own. The goal is to assist the learner to gradually be in charge of his or her own learning (Kohonen 1992: 36). This is especially vital for foreign language learners, and two differing research philosophies have emerged from this issue:

In the first, research is targeted towards fostering learner autonomy, and in the second, the direction is focused on the attributes of the good language learner, with an emphasis on learner strategies and teaching students how to learn. (Legutke & Thomas 1991: 270).

Also tying into our specific issue is the notion of training learners. The theoretical basis behind this goal is that the strategies of successful language learners can be identified and taught to other learners, though Williams & Burden point out that the questions of how to best enhance these strategies, how to cater for differences in individuals' personalities, and whether these strategies are universally appropriate for all language learners are yet to be adequately addressed (1997: 160).

Research which has been shown to be helpful towards our project's goal includes work done by Martin, who has specified four aspects considered essential of students learning by teaching:

(1) He points out that in the language classroom "...talking about organizational and teaching matters represents a considerable and important achievement in so far as it is situationally appropriate and takes place in the target language" (Martin quoted in Legutke & Thomas 1991: 278-9).

(2) He especially emphasizes that because of the learners' relationship as peers, they are closer to each other in background psychologically and can provide mutual empathy. "Given guidance, they could not only substitute for but in fact perform better than the teacher. For the teacher often fails to pick up what is difficult for learners. Littlejohn makes a similar point when he says that learners role-playing teachers can make a very positive contribution to the learning climate because of their ability to empathize. At the same time they are much more finely tuned to notice possible disruptions or lack of attention by their fellow learners quite simply because they see what is happening from a different perspective than the teacher. Disruptions can be defused at a much earlier stage than is often the case with the teacher.

(3) Martin presents convincing data that learning through teaching not only enhances the learning climate, stimulates readiness of learners to be involved but also has a major impact on the development of their linguistic and socio-linguistic competence. Learning through teaching seems to stimulate language acquisition because it provides the opportunity for learners of being able to negotiate input and meaning through speech modification and conversational adjustments. Martin's findings are compatible with Long & Porter's study of group work and interlanguage talk and Long's analysis of the role of conversational adjustments for the promotion of comprehensibility (Long, and Long & Porter, quoted in Legutke & Thomas).

(4) We also agree with Martin's insistence on the mutually supportive nature of content-related and metacommunicative knowledge. The ability to explore the target culture and its language under classroom conditions is greatly enhanced by procedural routines (e.g. 'project routines') which the learner has developed through gradually taking over the task of teaching his peers" (Martin quoted in Legutke & Thomas 1991: 278-279).

Martin's work involved redistributing activities in the classroom, allowing learners to assume the role of teaching. His findings indicated that learners can quickly develop teaching skills with creative methods of their own (Legutke & Thomas 1991: 277).

This stands in stark contrast to reports from traditional language classrooms where the reticence of students is a major concern and obstacle. Researchers attempting to tackle this problem report five reasons believed to be the source of students' lack of participation in such situations:

(1) the students' low English ability;

(2) fear of making mistakes and incurring ridicule by their classmates;

(3) the teachers' intolerance of silence, which leads to a very short wait time for students　to　think about the question and come up with an answer;

(4) the unequal speaking opportunities afforded to each student by the teacher;

(5) the overly difficult language used by the teachers. (Tsui 1996: 155)

These perceptions tend to agree with those found by researchers at one school, that speaking in the language classroom was listed most frequently as the cause of anxiety for foreign language students (Horowitz et al. quoted in Tsui 1996: 156).

In a more locally related report, Asian students were considered to be generally more reticent and reluctant to volunteer an answer in front of the class than Western learners. An extreme example of such reticence revealed that in one classroom, the teacher asked the same question eight times without ever getting a response from the students (Tsui 1996: 145).

We can consider the possibility that our approach may help foster the concept of students thinking about learning, which they are certainly capable of doing (Wenden 1986a: 188). Legutke & Thomas endorse peer teaching as extremely productive and even necessary, especially in project work involving the use of metacommunicative knowledge and teaching by learners (1991: 276).

Long and Porter (1985: 207) point out five pedagogical arguments for using groupwork in ESL classes, including the potential increase in the quality and quantity of student speaking opportunities, enhanced motivation, and a more positive atmosphere:

1. "Group work increases language practice opportunities. They despair that 'lockstep' (teacher-fronted) instruction sets the same pace and content for everyone. The pattern of teacher-question, student-answer interaction drastically limits the amount of speaking time each student receives.

2. Group work improves the quality of student talk. Instead of answering display questions, in which both the student and the teacher already know the answer, group work allows for a natural conversational setting. Students working together are not limited to producing isolated sentences, but can involve themselves in cohesive and coherent dialog, and thus develop discourse competence.

3. Group work helps individualize instruction by allowing students to work on some of their linguistic needs which other classmates may not need to deal with. This can be accomplished simultaneously, reducing the likelihood of boring those for whom the content is appropriate.

4. Group work promotes a positive affective climate. In the traditional lockstep classroom, shy or linguistically insecure students are put under tremendous pressure in the public arena. Stress is heightened by the fact that they are expected to respond quickly and accurately. On the other hand, small group practice provides a fairly intimate environment. It allows students to experiment with their language skill. With tension reduced, the students will be more comfortable about making false starts and mistakes.

5. Taking into account the advantages espoused in the other four arguments, group work motivates learners".

(Long & Porter quoted in Famularo 1996: 11-12).

When students are allowed to confer with peers over their answers before presenting them to the whole class, they are more likely to speak. It is thought that group discussions allow students opportunities to try out their thoughts "in a low-risk, high-gain situation", and they have their fellow classmates' support behind their ideas (Tsui 1996: 162-3).

This is not to say that groupwork is the solution to all problems in teaching a second language, other variables such as the task to be completed by the groups, the motivation of the students to assist each other or to cooperate at all, are factors which have a direct impact on the success of groupwork. "Simply telling students to get in a group and carry out familiar classroom tasks designed to improve basic skills is not sufficient to ensure learning gains" (Cohen 1994: 16).

Use of metacognitive strategies also reflects the habits of the good language learner (Oxford 1989: 236), and many ESL students are already aware of their own strengths and weaknesses (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, & Russo quoted in Tsang & Wong 1994: 25) and are eager to learn the habits of successful language learners (Matsumoto 1996: 146). Although researchers report that not all learners judge their ability correctly, many are generally accurate on such accounts (McNamara & Deane 1995: 17).

The work of Legutke & Thomas has successfully tied in the areas of peer work and metacognition. However, they warn against constantly restricting the use of such procedures:

"As with any other tool we have mentioned so far, such activities cannot be reduced to operations only rendering metacognitive and meta-linguistic insights or training respective skills and strategies. They simultaneously pertain to matters of content, of the individual and the group" (Legutke & Thomas 1991: 282).

Thus the above goal could help reduce teacher talk, and increase students' mutual interaction. Add to this the impracticality of allotting sufficient speaking time with the teacher to talk to each student, as well as the possibility that learners might have valuable experience as learners of a second language compared to a native speaker who, by definition has learned the language in a vastly different set of circumstances, and it would seem to be a worthy goal.

And if a teacher did give a student advice on how to improve weak points in English, would that advice not be based on intuition rather than on first-hand experience as a learner of English? If the teacher is a native speaker, that in itself is an advantage in teaching the language, but it automatically excludes them from having the same language learning experience that the L2 learner is currently undergoing.

In what ways can fellow second language learners help each other foster, if not fluency, at least confidence in English skills? It is the premise of this paper that answering the above question is not an

unfavorable objective.

So in attempting to allow students more speaking time, it is necessary to know if the learners would deem it effective to speak with each other more and to share valid experiences as fellow language learners. Their advice to each other might differ sharply from advice a teacher might give, yet could still be perfectly valid, due to the divergent ways in which L2 and L1 learners acquire a language.

Just as critical as exploring the attitudes which might tend to facilitate or hamper such an approach is the question of whether learners would attempt to follow the advice. Obviously, if the answer is no, such an approach should be reconsidered altogether.

The primary instrument for collecting data in this study was based on self-report from the participants of the project because it has proven valuable in shedding light on how learners learn and the factors that influence that learning. Written questionnaires to measure the perceptions of learners (Gardner quoted in Ellis 1994: 674), and oral interviews to follow up the progress and perceptions of the participants at the end of the project (Wenden quoted in Ellis 1994: 674).

4. The Investigation

4.1　Description of Investigation

Students were asked to choose two areas as their strong points and two areas as their weak points each from the four categories of listening, speaking, writing, and reading. For the two areas selected as weak points, learners were then asked to write a minimum of three questions each regarding advice they would like to ask of an advisor on language learning on how they could improve their weak points. For the two strong areas, students were asked to write two sentences each, speculating on why they believe they are relatively strong in that area. The rationale for this was to help potential future advisors to begin thinking about their language learning and what learning strategies they use.

Classes were then re-grouped according to roles of teacher or learner in relation to speaking. As a result, a student who chose speaking as his or her strong point would be appointed group leader and those choosing speaking as their weak point would ask questions in a separate classroom with the 'speaking' advisor presiding. The number of groups depended on the number of students choosing that area as their strong point. In regard to the skill of speaking, those choosing it as a weak point outnumbered those believing themselves to be strong, so the speaking workshop groups typically featured only one speaking advisor and six to twelve advisees. The next week would proceed in the same manner as students assumed the roles of either listening advisor or listening advisee.

Due to the relatively lower number of students choosing speaking and listening as their strong points, advisee to advisor ratio was generally high. Reading and writing were the project themes respectively for the third and fourth weeks, and due to more students choosing writing as a strong point, the number of

advisors to advisees was considerably higher, with an average of two to three advisors per advisee. It was vital that each student be either an advisor or advisee for each project theme, depending on his or her original self-categorization of weak and strong points, and this inadvertently contributed to occasional irregularities in group numbers so that a speaking group did not have as many speaking advisors as would have been desirable. Despite this occasional tendency, the strong point/weak point workshops proceeded smoothly.

The ideal situation would have been to have advisors grouped with no more than four or five advisees at a time, but the grouping depended entirely on the learners' evaluations of their ability in the four areas. To compel a student to advise in an area that he or she did not believe was a strength would be counter-productive for the project, embarrassing and humiliating for the advisor, and unhelpful to the advisees. Therefore, the logistical problems that occasionally occurred were inevitable but tolerable because it made our long-term goal possible, which was to avoid teacher interference where possible, and to let the learners work among themselves in trying to improve their weak points.

For the implementation of this project, it was decided to designate each group to a separate classroom for use. This was intended to cut down on the noise from many students speaking at the same time and also to help prevent project failure which can occur if group members do not have sufficient room to comfortably carry out the project goals (Cohen 1994: 76). It also helped to re-enforce to the learners that they were no longer under the direct supervision of a traditional teacher, but of a peer teacher.

According to cooperative learning research, if groups are allowed to choose their own leaders (advisors), they may simply re-enforce the status of dominant speakers, and weak learners will not have adequate opportunities to speak (Cohen: 97), so it was decided that the roles of advisor would be rotated according to the strong point chosen by each learner. Thus, the strong speaking students would lead the group of weak speaking students the first week, the second week strong listening students would host the group of weak listening students and the same pattern would continue the third week with reading and the fourth week with the theme of writing.

In other words, student A might be an advisee during week 1 and week 2, because the project themes for those weeks were speaking and listening respectively. However, for week 3, student A will be the advisor in his or her strong point, which happens to be writing, and his or her former advisors from week 1 and week 2 are now in the role of advisee, asking student A relevant questions on how to improve their weak point- writing. Therefore, every learner has an opportunity to play the role of both advisor and advisee during the four-week project, rotating depending on the weak points and strong point preferences that they indicated on the initial survey.

There were four workshops (one for each skill) in each of the five classes, lasting approximately 40 minutes each. Immediately after the workshops, learners were asked to answer the post-project questionnaires (see Appendix). In the interest of avoiding confusion in describing the activity stages in the

project which was coordinated with five different 28-member classes on four different weekday scheduled classes, the following chart is included with a schedule and dates of the activities engaged in by each of the classes:

<div align="center">Timetable of Project Stages:</div>

-PHASE 1	-PHASE 2	-PHASE 3	-PHASE 4
SPEAKING	**LISTENING**	**READING**	**WRITING**
MON: May 19	MON: May 12	MON: June 2	MON: May 26
TUE: May 13	TUE: May 20	TUE: June 3	TUE: May 27
THUR: May 22	THUR: May 15	THUR: June 5	THUR: May 29
FRI 1: April 25	FRI 1: May 16	FRI 1: May 23	FRI 1: May 30
FRI 2: May 9	FRI 2: May 16	FRI 2: May 30	FRI 2: May 23

Principal difficulties that were found to arise were those resulting from absences, which disrupted the preparation for the project planned in the subsequent week, such as preparing questions.

The purpose in providing examples below is not to represent any statistical ranking of the questions, but to generally exemplify what students want to ask regarding how to improve their weak points in English. While the eventual goal would be to represent questions from all four skills, that of speaking was chosen to be featured below because it is considered a key problem area for many Japanese students (Lucas 1984) and was cited as a weak point by the majority of each of the five classes in our study. It was also selected by students as the skill in which peer advice can be most effective.

Rather than represent each question verbatim, we will present question categories with examples of the answers given by different advisors. No attempt will be made here to represent   the questions statistically or proportionately, this data is included merely to help clarify what is meant in this study by peer advice, but also to demonstrate the variety and sophistication which learners are able to display in metacognitive advice in English. It was found that the open-ended questions could be categorized easily as follows:

PEER QUESTION CATEGORIES AND RESPECTIVE ADVICE LIST
COMPILED QUESTIONS REGARDING HOW TO:

(Answers in small case.)

1. SPEAK ENGLISH MORE

learn vocabulary by heart

2. SAY WHAT I WANT(THINK)

use simple words

use gestures, it's a good way to communicate

when speak to foreigner, prepare vocabulary and use dictionary

learn many English words

3. SPEAK TO TEACHERS/FOREIGNERS

don't be shy, you have to make a chance

speak with gesture, you can communicate with foreigners

when you speak with foreigners, ask where they are from

4. SPEAK FLUENTLY

just speak to foreign people

I think you should communicate with foreign teachers. don't be shy, anybody is beginner at first

that's the only way is to speak to foreigner, make a chance to speak to foreigner in English by yourself

use English all the time

you should talk with the teacher in our school

always practice English and think with English words

you should try to speak English fluently

you should like speaking English and try to speak with foreigners as much as possible

practice reading English books

you should go abroad

5. KNOW WHICH WORDS TO USE

ask foreigners and use dictionary

have time for using dictionary

6. NOT PANIC WHEN I SPEAK

before you speak to a foreigner, you try to relax, then try to talk to him.

everyone makes mistakes so don't worry

you have to think you are #1 girl

speak to foreigners many times

don't be afraid, the important thing is that you want to speak

7. REDUCE GRAMMAR MISTAKES

even if you make grammar mistakes, you can communicate

listen to English tapes many times

8. PRONOUNCE CORRECTLY

watch a movie you like many times and practice their words as they are speaking

when you don't know pronunciation, use gesture

listen to English tapes many times

9. SPEAK QUICKLY

speak with native speakers many many times

practice speaking many times

10. NOT BE SHY

don't be shy

don't be afraid of mistakes

11. SPEAK WHEN I FORGET WORDS

speak with foreigners many times

in my experience, when I cannot express my message, I try to use broken English   and gestures

speak English with gestures

12. IMPROVE SPEAKING

learn many whole sentences by heart

study English

go abroad

memorize many words

always speak English, not Japanese, if you have a chance

memorize whole sentences and practice speaking often

listen to English radio programs and repeat the sentences

The above questions can be further grouped into the following themes:

(1) **Fluency:** How to say what they want to say, improve their speaking, improve fluency, and speak more

quickly.

(2) **Frequency:** How to speak to native speakers and practice English more.

(3) **Vocabulary:** How to know which words to use and to speak when they forget words.

(4) **Anxiety:** How to avoid being nervous or shy when speaking.

(5) **Accuracy:** How to reduce mistakes in grammar and pronunciation.

The advisor's role in this project was based loosely on an adaptation of the role of *gatekeeper*, as discussed by Kramsch:

"Whenever discussions must be conducted according to culturally appropriate rules of turn-taking or certain forms of topic management, one student per group is assigned the role of gatekeeper. This student makes sure everyone has a say, helps other elaborate their turns, keeps track of time, and performs similar tasks" (Kramsch 1987: 26).

Appointed strong point advisors were thus assigned the task of giving each advisee a chance to ask his or her three questions and to make sure his or her group finished asking and answering the questions in the allotted amount of time.

To help provide accountability among the participants, they were asked to take notes during the group discussions. At the end of each project day, each student was required to hand in the paper containing his or her questions and all of the answers they received from the advisors. In the case of the advisors, they were required to log questions they were asked by advisees and their answers. The papers were collected by the teacher and unfinished papers were returned to the students, who were required to finish them completely before leaving.

This coincides with a major concern of cooperative learning, which is *individual accountability*, to safeguard against passive students refraining from participation (Cohen 1994: 66).

A problem sometimes occurring in groupwork which is to be avoided is the *free rider effect*, where some members of the group do all or most of the work and participation while the other students go along without actually participating. This result is seen to be more likely to occur when groups are given only a single task, such as a collective worksheet or one product from the whole group, (Slavin 1990: 19).

Accountability of the group is also an important issue in peer work:

"For example, in a group asked to complete a single project or solve a single problem, some students may actively participate while others watch. Worse, students felt to have little to contribute to the group or who are lower in status or less aggressive may be discouraged from participating. A group trying to complete a common project or solve a common problem may not want to stop and explain what is going on to a groupmate who doesn't understand, or may feel it is useless or counterproductive to try to involve certain groupmates" (Slavin 1990: 42).

The implementation of the project differed in at least one principle way from the work of Slavin and

others. While individual accountability was a major concern of the researcher, and the project included the above described procedures to help ensure individual accountability. Group accountability, which is a basic tenet of cooperative learning was less of a priority for this study and was made difficult since the groups changed each week and advisors and advisees rotated roles, so the only enforcement of group accountability was through random monitoring by the teacher.

Advisees were requested to note what questions they asked and what advice they received pertaining to that question. Advisors were requested to note which question they considered to be the best among those advisees asked them, and to also remember what their respective advice was for that question. This information was collected on the post-project surveys administered immediately after the project for that day.

To save precious class time and avoid students grouping with their friends, the teacher assigned group members to a particular advisor, and any student who had specified the project theme (listening, speaking, etc.) scheduled for that week as a strong point was assigned by the teacher to advise a group of weak point advisees. While the advisees were instructed to ask all of their pre-planned questions of the advisors and note their answers, the advisors were not able to pre-formulate their specific advice and answered the advisee in the group during class.

The participants were not informed that the research project's objective was to gauge peer acceptance and perceptions of the advice because it was feared by the researcher that (1) it might taint advisor's advice or (2) that the answers from the surveys administered later to gauge students' reaction to the project might be compromised. The researcher wanted to avoid the possibility that the students may be inclined to respond favorably to the project on surveys in hopes of attaining a good class grade.

Also, participants were never at any time prompted or encouraged by the teacher or researcher to try the advice or pursue it outside of class. This is an important point, because effective evaluation of the project depended in part on end-of-term assessments of whether the participants voluntarily attempted to use advice given by peers in this project.

4.2 Methods of Collecting Research Data

The questions pursued in the research were the following:

(1) Can university students in Japan be taught to conduct metacognitive workshops in improving each other's weak point in English in a way perceived as effective by the learners? If so, in which skill could peers help each other most?

(2) What would be the advantages and disadvantages of such a project ?

(3) Would students in the project voluntarily try the advice? Why or why not?

(4) For those who tried the advice, did they perceive any improvement in English ability?

The methods used in collecting the research data were:

(1) preliminary surveys- to solicit self-evaluations from the learners regarding their weak and strong points,

(2) post-project surveys- to gauge the perceived effectiveness, advantages, and disadvantages of the project from the viewpoint of the learners,

and finally, **(3) individual interviews-** to follow up and clarify the results of the post-project surveys.

4.3 The surveys

Because we wanted to discover learner attitudes toward the project, it was decided that questionnaires would be the most reliable method. According to Cohen and Hosenfeld, researchers wanting to investigate second-language learners 'mental states' are advised to have learners provide data by two different kinds of methods. The first is via think-aloud activities, in which learners verbalize their feelings, without attempting to analyze them (Matsumoto 1993: 34) as they are in the process of, for example, writing or reading material in the second language, and (2) self-observation, which involves more analysis, and is usually conducted after the learning has taken place. Self-observation may be elicited by means of questionnaires, diaries, and interviews"(Cohen & Hosenfeld quoted in Tarone & Yule 1989: 134).

For the purposes of the investigation, think-aloud activities were considered to pose too much interference with the actual project of students interacting with each other, rather than the researcher or instructor.

Self-observation, specifically questionnaires and post-project interviews were selected as one of the most reliable research instruments available for our design. For the purpose of collecting data, surveys were devised asking the questions given below of all learners which participated in the groupwork projects.

The retrospective questionnaires were administered immediately after the project finished for that day, in hopes of capturing as much as possible the information still stored in short term memory by the learners (Matsumoto 1993: 34).

Because the projects were divided each week into the four areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, a questionnaire featuring the same questions was administered each time. This was done in order to detect possible degrees of perceived effectiveness among the four areas by the same students.

For example, if our project was particularly helpful to learners in the speaking workshop but not the writing workshop, it would be possible to discern this from the respective questionnaires. Thus, each student was given an opportunity to assess the project on four separate occasions with respect to each of the four groups. This also reduces the interference of mere personality conflicts, one-time absence, or other concerns peripheral to the goal of investigating the efficacy of peer advice.

The expectation of such a scheme is that if there are major problems or flaws in the planning of the project, a pattern will emerge from the surveys alerting us to potentially necessary changes in future implementation. By the same measure, it was anticipated that any merits to the project would also emerge as a pattern, being reiterated by the students in several of the areas surveyed.

Survey questions were printed in English, with Japanese translations on the blackboard (for lower

level learners), and students were requested to write their answers in Japanese. This was due to the lack of clarity found in pilot surveying, in which the learners' answers in some cases did not indicate an easily understandable preference for or against the project, and in other cases revealed by disjointed responses that the participants did not understand the questions in English. It was felt that having the responses written in Japanese would more closely reflect the students' impressions and could more easily be interpreted into useful data, especially since some of the data would be examined well after university vacation began, at which time the students would not be available to clarify their answers.

4.4 Interviews

All of the survey respondents were interviewed once at the end of the term in semi-structured interview format. The primary basis for this was to clarify any ambiguous or conflicting information found by the researcher in order to truly reflect the respondent's honest opinions. This was implemented to help safeguard against possible misunderstandings even in their native language (Gradman & Hanania 1991: 40).

While the previously mentioned survey questions were conducted in Japanese and English, the interviews were conducted solely in English. While it may seem to be risking more ambiguity in the data, this was a pedagogically inclined decision on the part of the researcher because survey feedback was beginning to indicate that students were eager to speak with the teacher in English for a change rather than with their fellow classmates, which they had been doing in accordance with the project for the past several weeks.

Each student was individually asked the following questions:
===

1. What are your weak points?

This was a review of the same question asked on questionnaires, but designed to help focus the learner's mind on the projects which had been conducted one month earlier. It was also used as a point of reference for the researcher in asking the subsequent questions (i.e. if the student did not understand the meaning of 'weak point', the interviewer could say listening, or speaking to help the interviewee understand the meaning of the questions).

2. What advice did the _____ advisor give you?

This question was also designed to review in the learner's mind the project events, and to evaluate how effectively students could remember the advice.

3. Did you try that advice?　　　Why or Why not?

This question was intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the advice in influencing student autonomous behavior. Since they were not specifically encouraged by the teacher to try the advice (it was never mentioned outside of the project activities by the teacher), the above answer would indicate whether

a student may be motivated by his or her own initiative to attempt to implement the advice for no other motivation than intrinsic, the desire to improve one's weak point in the language.

4. If yes for number 3., what happened? Was there any change?

This question was devised to measure any perceived effectiveness of the actual advice received by the advisee.

5. In which area can a student help a fellow student most? Because our goal here is to find the ways in which peer advice is most effective, we wanted to find out if students agree on the area where they believe peers can help them.

===

It was found in piloting the interview questions, that students couldn't quickly answer them in real time since this is a common problem encountered with Japanese students, who are often trained to be reticent and unquestioning. It was also sensed that the presence of the tape recorder which was necessary to record the data, was causing an even longer hesitance on the part of the interviewees. To help ameliorate this problem, students were promised that neither the interview content nor performance would effect their class grade in any way, and that other teachers or students at the university would never hear their taped interviews.

Also, students were allowed to read the questions ahead of time and prepare a rough answer in their minds, then when they were ready, they would signal the researcher to begin the interview.

Students were also advised that they could ask for time out from the interview if they were becoming tense or nervous. This was intended to reduce anxiety and allow for more concentration on message over form.

Since their response time nor the accuracy of their speaking was being tested, it would seem that the above methods helped allay the fears and anxieties of the learners during the interview without corrupting the answers in the data.

5. Results of the Surveys

Survey Findings

Survey results to the question: **Was the project effective?**
Over the four-week project period, each student answered for the four speaking areas. The total number of respondents varied from week to week according to attendance.

TOTAL RESULTS:

SPEAKING (Week 1: 121 students)

YES	NO	NEUTRAL
88	28	5
(72.7%)	(23.1%)	(4.1%)

LISTENING (Week 2: 116 students)

YES	NO	NEUTRAL
87	22	7
(75%)	(18.9%)	(6%)

READING (Week 3: 123 students)

YES	NO	NEUTRAL
72	46	5
(58.5%)	(37.3%)	(4%)

WRITING (Week 4: 117 students)

YES	NO	NEUTRAL
63	50	4
(53.8%)	(42.7%)	(3.4%)

The speaking and listening workshops were considered effective by a large margin, but the reading and writing workshops received ratings as effective from slightly over half of the respondents.

In answer to the question: **Which area can a student help a fellow student most?** Students overwhelmingly chose speaking as the field most likely for peers to be most able to help. The question was carefully framed to avoid the learners citing their personal weak points, so the inquiry referred to their classmates in general providing peer advice.

In order of preference, the responses favored:

1. Speaking:　　**51 responses**　　　　**(43.2%)**

2. Writing:　　**21 responses**　　　　**(17.7%)**

3. Listening:　　**19 responses**　　　　**(16.1%)**

4. Reading:　　**18 responses**　　　　**(15.2%)**

5. Other:　　**9 responses**　　　　**(7.6%)**

This is not meant to under-emphasize the need for peer advice in the other areas, but is meant as a guide to help focus this study. Investigation into the advantages and drawbacks of peer advice in the other three areas would be the eventual goal.

The data would lead us to infer that metacognitive advice on speaking is considered helpful by

students because they are practicing speaking while doing so, more than the actual content itself.

5.1 Merits of the Approach

In clarifying what is meant by effective, we take as our model the evaluation of whether "it provided practice in a skill in which they felt themselves to be deficient..." (Wenden 1986a: 193).

In researching apparent patterns in the students' evaluations of the peer advice, several recurrent themes were frequently found in the answers of the open-ended questions.

For merits of the project, general categories of the student's answers included the following:

Speaking practice in English	**31**
Could hear different opinions/ideas:	**25**
Useful/instructive advice:	**23**
Comfortable/less anxious atmosphere	**14**
Enjoyable/fun	**6**
Interaction with fellow classmates	**5**
None	**4**

Perceived merits which rated only one or two respondents each included the following:

Easy to understand	**2**
Other	**2**
No reason given	**1**
Chance to become teachers	**1**
Autonomy	**1**
Good questions	**1**
Simple vocabulary	**1**
Makes you think	**1**
Could use Japanese	**1**
Active	**1**

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRES

Following is a brief discussion of some of the more salient points found in the data. In regard to the recurring statement of learners being at ease and comfortable asking questions of classmates, we can gain some insight into this by referring to Lebra's categorization of Japanese behavior adjustments based on three situational domains: *ritual, intimate, and anomic* (Lebra quoted in Mutch 1995:14).

The former would be descriptive of traditional classrooms, where reserved behavior and an avoidance to make errors is typical. But the second categorization is the one which describes the behavior we are trying to encourage with the project:

"An intimate domain could be seen as one where participants would relax and behave more spontaneously due to a closer relationship with each other. Obviously, the latter situation in the classroom would give rise to a more natural, relaxed use of English where students were not reluctant to try out their English skills" (Mutch 1995: 14)

Reduced teacher talk and the resulting increase in students speaking surfaced in the questionnaires as a benefit of the group tasks. Researchers have claimed that some groupwork can foster student communication rates of between 40% to 80% of class time, contrasted with traditional, teacher-lectured classes, in which teacher talk was estimated to be at least 80% of the time (Bejarano 1987: 495).

Relating to the amount of verbal interaction in traditional classrooms where teachers dominate the speaking floor, Flanders says that teachers speak up to 75 percent of class time, which allows students little time for speaking opportunities (Flanders quoted in Harel 1992: 156).

Other studies also support the claim of increased speaking chances compared to 'lockstep lessons', (Long, Adams, McLean, & Castanos, Doughty & Pica, and Pica & Doughty, quoted in Long & Porter 1985: 221).

Speech by learners in traditional classes is referred to as *sequential*, with one student speaking at a time. Research on cooperative learning-modeled groupwork, shows that it discourages *sequential* learner speech, allowing simultaneous speaking chances for learners:

"In contrast, up to 80 percent of CL class time may be scheduled for activities that include student talking. Because this student talk is simultaneous, half the students may be engaged in language production while the others are engaged in language comprehension. This results in increased active communication for all students" (Olsen & Kagan 1992: 5).

A reduction in anxiety has sometimes been found to result from groupwork arrangements (Bejarano 1987: 495), and although none of the participants are native English speakers, the practice of such peer speaking activities has been shown to be valuable (Varonis & Gass quoted in Long & Porter 1985: 217).

Other merits of the project are reported by the students themselves. For example:

-"Because of the small groups, it was very easy to ask questions. I was very happy to have this chance to ask questions because I have never had such a chance before".

-"Small number of participants was a good point".

(Additional comments on the project are available in more detail in the Appendices.)

5.2 Disadvantages of the Approach

Groupwork is not for everyone, especially if the goal or reason for the groupwork is unclear, students will sometimes find no merit in such work (Kinsella 1996: 25). Also, researchers and teachers must be prepared for the fact that students often bring pre-conceived ideas of what a classroom is and of the roles of teacher and student (Bialystok quoted in Brown 1987: 95).

Also necessary to keep in mind when evaluating the project is the notion that students are sometimes differently motivated with different objectives, although they may be in the same class together. Bailey (quoted in Brown 1987: 117) has pointed out four different orientations to the student's motivation, which teachers may need to pay closer attention to in addressing learner needs:

INTRINSIC

Integrative: L2 learner wishes to integrate with the L2 culture (e.g. for immigration or marriage)

Instrumental: L2 learner wishes to achieve goals utilizing L2 (e.g., for a career)

EXTRINSIC

Integrative: Someone else wishes the L2 learner to know the L2 for integrative reasons
              (e.g., Japanese parents send children to Japanese-language school)

Instrumental: External power wants L2 learner to learn L2 (e.g., corporation
              sends Japanese businessman to US. for language training)

While devising different metacognitive workshop activities for each of the above categories of motivated learners is beyond the scope of this paper, we can use the above categories to help us understand how some learners would find the advice useful and others would have no interest in it.

Wenden, researching students of a seven-week ESL university program concluded that the students didn't find learner training relevant in of itself, and working with individual learner training in metacognitive awareness, found resistance from students. She reached the conclusion that a more integrated approach would be necessary (Wenden quoted in Legutke & Thomas 1991: 283).

Researchers have also reported resistance from some Asian students to using certain second language

strategies. In this instance, Asian students in a control group used the strategies of rote memorization of vocabulary so well that they actually did better on the task than the experimental group, which was using imagery and grouping strategies to learn vocabulary (O'Malley et al. quoted in O'Malley & Chamot 1990: 165).

Out of a total of 120 respondents, the most recurrent disadvantages of the project cited were:

TOTAL RESPONSES: 120
CATEGORIES OF ANSWERS FOR BAD POINTS:

Japanese use	25
Nothing	13
Redundant	11
Difficult	9
Advisor is the respondent: says he/she couldn't give good advice.	8
Time (too much or too little time allotted to the project, a waste of time)	8
Quality of advice is unsatisfactory	7
Boring	6
Unskilled advisors	5
Method	5
Other	4
Theory	4
Participation	3
Simple answers	2
Unease/unfriendly	2
Can't use advice	2
Logistics	1
Same level	1

(the advisors and
advisees are the
same level of English)

Not improving	1
Don't understand	1
No correction	1
No response	1

In answer to the categories featuring the largest responses, we will now address the issue of possible

factors contributing to each problem, and briefly discuss potential solutions to help reduce the frequency of such problems in future projects of this sort.

To reduce the use of Japanese in the classroom projects, as mentioned earlier, the advisors, as leaders of each group, were asked to try to keep the utterances in English as much as possible. The instructor, while monitoring the different classrooms in a general manner and rotating from and to each classroom, made attempts to remind students of the need to try to use English. However, it would be easy for students to revert to Japanese when the 'real teacher' left, and unfortunately, there was no accountability system for ensuring the use of English, except for the presence of the advisors.

Exploring another prominent response, we see that either polite modesty or lack of competence in their own ability tended to affect some advisors, as they reported that they doubted the quality of the advice they gave. This would appear to correspond to 'feelings of competence', according to which it is claimed that "the extent to which students are willing to participate in and contribute to small group activities depends on how they think their contributions will be received. To some extent, these perceptions are linked to the perceived status and/or abilities of individual group members" (Barnes quoted in Johnson, K. 1995: 156-157).

The learner's perceptions of themselves has been reported to relate heavily to their successful performance in the language classroom, self-esteem can suffer when students are afraid of making mistakes or speaking in front of many people (Foss & Reitzel , Young quoted in Hilleson 1996: 272).

The entry of time was interpreted as a perceived problem generally regarding allocation of time to achieve the project. More negative responses used the phrase 'this project wasted time' in describing what they felt was a bad point. If learners do not believe a project to be coherent or relevant, they may tend to feel that the class activity is a waste of time for them (Block 1996:192), thus making it an important area for improvement in future modifications of this project.

6. Evaluation
6.1. Criteria for Evaluation

The rationale behind soliciting the learners negative and positive comments was to enable a later proposal in the future to more adequately and effectively implement the project. It should be noted that students' metacognitive evaluations have sometimes been found to be integrated to a certain extent with learner beliefs as well as fact, but nevertheless, their value in showing learner perceptions and metacognition does not appear to be weakened. (Wenden 1986a: 197).

Criteria for evaluating the investigation will be based on the perceptions of the learner participants as measured by the surveys and interviews. It is also hoped that examining these views will help in pinpointing particular weaknesses of the approach to be avoided in future work, as well as strengths of the approach, which can serve as a basis for further research in future endeavors.

6.2 Effectiveness in Encouraging Behavior

The criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the project in encouraging positive learner behavior will be provided by examining the statements of the learners themselves. An example of positive behavior would obviously be if a student claimed that he or she autonomously tried advice which he or she was exposed to in the weak point workshops. We would not be able to guard against the possibility that the student makes a false claim in order to favorably effect the final class grade, since the researcher and the instructor are the same.

However, if we are measuring perceptions, that means that it is necessary to measure what learners say they believe. According to the respondents' answers:

DID YOU TRY THE ADVICE?   TOTAL RESPONSES: 117
    YES 88 (75.2%)　　　　　　　**NO 27**　　**(23%)**　　　　**NEUTRAL 2 (1.7%)**
IF YOU TRIED THE ADVICE, WHAT HAPPENED?
TOTAL RESPONSES OF STUDENTS WHO TRIED THE ADVICE: 88
IMPROVED (USEFUL):　　　　　　**33 (37.5 %)**
A LITTLE IMPROVEMENT:　　　　**12 (13.6%)**
NO RESPONSE　　　　　　　　　　**2 (2.2 %)**
NO CHANGE/NO CHANGE YET:　　**18   (20.4%)**
NEUTRAL (Includes I DON'T KNOW, and responses which made no
reference to improvement or lack of it).   23 (26.1 %)

In tabulating favorable responses, of those choosing to respond, the categories of learners noting perceptions of some or a little improvement total 45 responses, and the responses noting no perceived change or not addressing the question total 41 respondents.

While we would not wish to rely too heavily on the above figures statistically, we could safely say that based on students' reported perceptions, approximately half of the respondents reported a perceived improvement or usefulness after trying out the advice.

Of course, several caveats must be stated here:

(1) Just because learners say they tried advice, it doesn't necessarily mean they actually did so. There is a possibility that they are saying what they think the researcher wants to hear.

(2) Researchers did not observe the students to verify that they actually tried the advice, or that the strategies they used were those suggested by the advisors.

(3) This study is not attempting to show that the advice was indeed useful, only that it was perceived as being useful by a considerable number of respondents, and at least a perception of advice that is effective would not seem to be an unfavorable beginning.

It would be beyond the focus of this paper to go in depth in exploring why a student would not

voluntarily follow the peer advice, but the most obvious possibility would be that some learners did not find the advice applicable to their situation, or did not find value in the advice.

"Individuals will choose to use certain strategies if they have a clear purpose for using them and they feel that accomplishing a particular task has value to them personally" (Williams & Burden 1997: 164).

6.3 Evaluation of Project

In summarizing the findings of the above research instruments, it is worth re-iterating the students' perceptions of project merits and disadvantages.

The most prominently reported merits were said to be, in order of frequency:

1. The use of English and the amount of opportunities for speaking practice which this project offered learners.

2. The variety of opinions, ideas, and beliefs which learners discussed during the advice workshops.

3. The perception among the participants that meaningful, instructive, useful advice was conveyed from the advisors to the advisees.

4. The project provided an atmosphere which was conducive to a less anxious, more comfortable classroom situation for the students.

   Although the following items did not rank as the top reasons, they did garner more than several responses each:

5. Fun and enjoyable.

6. Interaction with fellow classmates.

   It is regrettable that the inclusion of the fifth description, that of a learning activity being enjoyable, is so rare as to attract attention by researchers and teachers alike, when it appears in research data. In reviewing the key disadvantages as perceived by the students, speaking Japanese presented a problem in the usefulness of the project. This is most likely a common problem generated by the linguistic homogeneity of the groups.

It would seem that the learners' perceptions of the project overall reflected the previously cited claims from researchers, that certain peer interaction activities can indeed afford learners with more meaningful speaking opportunities, interaction, and reduced anxiety. We must at this point caution that the concept of peers working together is not a panacea. While it may tend to alter the traditional notion of the role of teacher, it is not nor should it be used as a baby-sitter or a replacement of the teacher. Instructors still have valuable things to teach learners, as do the learners themselves. A practical approach would attempt to integrate the two resources, in order to provide the learner with the best language acquisition opportunities that are available.

7. Conclusion
7.1 Further Work to be done

With such a wide range of related issues, further needed work in this area is relatively easy to anticipate. In addition to the present evaluation of perceived effectiveness, a critical need exists in helping to further evaluate the project through before-and-after standardized testing to verify whether the students actually achieved progress in improving their perceived weak points. Such tests would vary according to the field to be measured. For example, TOEIC or other standardized listening tests for listening, cloze testing to evaluate reading ability, and essay-based exams before and after the project to assess writing. Testing would also be valuable at the start of the project to verify whether the students' actual strongest and weakest points were the same as their perceptions.

It would perhaps also be advantageous to conduct a comparison between teacher-oriented advice and peer-oriented advice. Feedback from data on this research project shows that at least some students would rather ask a native English teacher for advice. This is based on the assumption that the teacher could provide more assistance on learning strategies although a native speaker, by definition has not personally used such strategies in acquiring English. Further work to compare results in actual and/or perceived progress between teacher-advised groups and peer-advised groups would contribute much to our focus.

Another possible issue which merits investigation is to attempt more of a training program before implementing the projects so that participants are more prepared to give advice to others and can better assess metacognitive strategies for their own use. In fact, Wenden recommends as a high priority that beginning students be taught metacognitive terms in order to talk about learning strategies (Wenden quoted in O'Malley & Chamot 1990: 160).

7.2 Summary

Earlier in this paper, we outlined several questions as our focus, to be answered in evaluating the project. The following is a review of those proposed questions and a brief summary of the answers (as based on the evaluations by the learners) to the questions which comprise the focus of this paper:

As perceived by the learners:

Is the project effective, and in which skill can learners best advise peers? What are the most prominent merits and problems of the peer advice project? Would participants voluntarily implement the advice and would it be effective in improving their weak point?

Learners chose speaking as the area in which peers could most help each other, and listening was rated as the most effective workshop, with nearly 3/4 of the learners rating both listening and speaking effective.

According to surveys, the most commonly mentioned merits of the workshops were that they afforded students opportunities for speaking practice and allowed students to hear various strategy ideas. The

problem featuring most prominently in the survey comments was that students had a tendency to revert to using Japanese instead of English.

Since approximately 3/4 of the students claimed to have tried the advice, it would seem that our goal of fostering effective peer advice is worth further attention and study by researchers, teachers, and learners. If the above results reveal anything of pedagogical relevance, it is that language learners seem to be both willing and able to devise and attempt strategies aimed at improving their weak points.

Of the learners that said they tried the advice, approximately half claimed some or a little improvement in the target skill after trying the peer advice. Such survey results of course do not tell us that the advice caused improvement, merely that a significant number of students believed it to be useful when they tried it outside of class.

The research described above appears to increase the students' speaking opportunities and the language used is authentic because it is intended for fellow students as an audience. It is not just speech for practice, it has relevant content available to be used at the discretion of the learner.

"The challenge therefore is not helping learners to think about learning and offer learner training so that they become good learners and then teach them a language. Rather, the task is to teach them to communicate in the L2 while helping them to learn and think about their learning." (Candlin quoted in Legutke & Thomas 1991: 284).

Keeping the above proposals in mind, it is hoped that the current research discussed in this paper has helped to lay some groundwork for further investigations into peer learning opportunities, and that it has also planted some awareness among the targeted learners attempting to assert their own ideas about the issue of their learning, in which they have the potential to nurture their own growth.

Practitioners may criticize the lack of data showing skill improvement, and this is certainly a useful future goal, but before such steps are taken, it would appear vital that students become aware of their capabilities as advisors and self-directed learners. It is hoped that this study has assisted in that respect.

(14, 984 words)

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Appendix 1

Pre-project survey

1. What do you think are your weak points in English? (1. is weakest)

a. Speaking   b. Listening   c. Reading   d. Writing

    1. -------------
    2.--------------

2. What do you think are your strong points in English? (1. is strongest)

Please do not choose the same answers from Question 1.

a. Speaking   b. Listening   c. Reading   d. Writing

    1.------------
    2.------------

3. What are 3 questions you would like to ask an advisor about improving your weak points? Please write 3 questions for each weak point:

Questions about weak point 1:   Questions about weak point 2:

1.   1.

2.   2.

3.   3.

Appendix 2

PEER QUESTION CATEGORIES AND RESPECTIVE ADVICE LIST
    Compiled from post-project surveys.
COMPILED QUESTIONS REGARDING HOW TO:
(Answers in small case)

1. TALK A LOT
learn vocabulary by heart

2. SAY WHAT I WANT-THINK
use simple words
use gestures, it's a good way to communicate
when speak to foreigner, prepare vocabulary and use dictionary
learn many English words

3. SPEAK TO TEACHERS-FOREIGNERS
don't be shy, you have to make a chance
speak with gesture, you can communicate with foreigners
when you speak with foreigners, ask where they are from

4. SPEAK FLUENTLY-IMPROVE SPEAKING
just speak to foreign people
I think you should communicate with foreign teachers. don't be shy, anybody is beginner at first
that's the only way is to speak to foreigner, make a chance to speak to foreigner in English by yourself
use English all the time
you should talk with the teacher in our school
always practice English and think with English words
you should try to speak English fluently
you should like speaking English and try to speak with foreigners as much as possible
practice reading English books
you should go abroad

5. KNOW WHICH WORDS TO USE
ask foreigners and use dictionary
have time for using dictionary
6. NOT PANIC WHEN SPEAK

before you speak to a foreigner, you try to relax, then try to talk to him.

everyone makes mistakes so don't worry

you have to think you are #1 girl

speak to foreigners many times

don't be afraid, the important thing is that you want to speak

7. REDUCE GRAMMAR MISTAKES

even if you make grammar mistake, you can communicate

listen to English tapes many times

8. PRONOUNCE

watch a movie you like many times and practice their words as they are speaking

when you don't know pronunciation, use gesture

listen to English tapes many times

9. SPEAK QUICKLY

speak with native speakers many many times

practice speaking many times

10. NOT BE SHY

don't be shy

don't be afraid of mistakes

11. SPEAK WHEN I FORGET WORDS

speak with foreigners many times

in my experience, when I cannot express my message, I try to use broken English and gestures

speak English with gestures

12. IMPROVE SPEAKING

learn many whole sentences by heart

study English

go abroad

memorize many words

always speak English, not Japanese, if you have a chance

memorize whole sentences and practice speaking often

listen to English radio programs and repeat the sentences

Appendix 3

<u>Post Project Survey</u>

If you were an advisor (teacher) in today's project:
1. What is the best question you were asked?

2. What was your answer?

===**If**
   you were an advisee (student) in today's project:

1. What questions did you ask?

2. What were the answers?

===

Please answer ALL of the following:

3. Was this project effective? Why?

4. What do you think were the good points of this project? Explain.

5. What do you think were the bad points of this project? Explain.

Appendix 4

Responses to the questions: What were the bad points of this project?
What were the good points of this project?

BAD POINTS followed by GOOD POINTS

Translated from Japanese:

　Monday　Class SPEAKING

1. Everyone asks the same basic questions

and so gets the same answers

1. I think this exchange of ideas is a very good thing.

2. We are speaking English, but we also end up speaking lots of Japanese.

2. We can understand our friends' weak points and that is instructive.

3. Many of the answers are the same.

3. We can hear many different opinions.

4. Just because someone is good at speaking, it doesn't necessarily mean that they are good at listening,

　　so it takes time for the advisor to comprehend the English questions.

4. We could get many useful answers.

5. The answers we get are not very profound.

5. It is easy to ask questions and we get answers from a student's vantage point.

6. The answers to the questions we ask are common/ordinary.

6. It is enjoyable to speak conversation to everyone in English.

7. When a question is asked, sometimes the answer that is given is not very good.

7. Because we are all among friends, we can participate easily without being shy or embarrassed.

8. When the teacher isn't here, we sometimes end up speaking in Japanese without realizing it.

8. We can do our best even with using simple vocabulary.

9. It is likely to waste too much time.

9. We can ask others' opinions.

10. Because the questions are all alike, the answers are also all alike.

10. When you get an answer that you weren't expecting, it makes you think.

11 .It tends to move slowly at times.

11. I can feel more enjoyment in English.

12 .Because of the exchange of questions, the easy to ask questions are soon exhausted.

12. Each student is required to participate and has a chance to speak.

13. When it becomes too difficult to say something in English, we end up speaking in Japanese.

13. In order to improve, we are taught good instructions.

14. We get tired of this project

14. We can communicate.

15. Nothing bad in particular.

15. It was easy to enjoy because we were all among students.

16. It took up too much time.

16. Class proceeded easily.

17. The answers were not perfect, they were somewhat vague.

17. I could understand how other students felt.

18. Everyone ended up asking the same questions.

18. Because we were with other Japanese, we could understand each other's feelings.

19. When it was my turn to give advice, sometimes I couldn't advise well. I think it was difficult.

19. I was comfortable asking questions.

20. Answers weren't very clear.

20. Because the things that were said were easy, it was easy to understand.

21. Sometimes the answers were vague.

21. There were many instructive answers.

22. Sometimes the answers were vague.

22. Whenever we couldn't understand the English, we could speak Japanese.

TUESDAY CLASS   SPEAKING

1. I ended up speaking Japanese because I couldn't give good advice in English.

1. I could speak to people I hadn't spoken to before.

2 The people who were advisors weren't necessarily that skilled.

2. I was taught some useful methods by some skilled advisors.

3. Its not possible to improve perfectly.

3. I could apply things that I thought about.

4. There aren't enough participants.

4. If we practice English, we will get better.

5. I think the advisors and advisees levels were the same so the advice wasn't useful.

5. We were able to comfortably ask and answer questions with each other.

6. We don't seem to be improving.

6. We have the chance to use English.

7. We end up speaking Japanese.

7. Since we are all at the same level, we can relate to each other's advice.

8. It was a problem when some people answered in Japanese.

8.We can speak without worrying about mistakes.

9. The questions all seem the same.

9. A skilled person can teach an unskilled person as a fellow student.

10. I didn't know what I should ask.

10. I could hear advice that I had never thought of before.

11. If someone made a mistake, there was nobody to correct it.

11. We could speak English with our classmates.

12. All of the questions tended to be the same.

12. I could learn how strong point advisors differed in their ways of thinking.

13. The questions tended to be the same.

13. We could speak English conversation.

14. We tended to use a lot of Japanese.

14. This was very interesting because it was the first time I had ever heard of such a project.

15. We didn't know each other very well so we weren't so friendly.

15. I think that after we get to know each other we can begin to speak in a friendly manner to each other.

16. We had to think of our own answers to give as advice.

16. We were able to become teachers.

17. When an advisor was asked a question, he couldn't answer soon, so it took a lot of time. It would be better not to use Japanese, but we ended up using Japanese.

17. I think there were useful things to learn from cooperating with others. Class became more cheerful because I had a chance to speak with people I hadn't spoken with before.

18. The questions were all about the same so the answers were already decided. I think if we could speak longer English sentences, the conversation would be more enjoyable.

18. It was a good opportunity to ask other people's opinions.

19. The answers were a problem because I was also asking myself the same question.

19. I think it would be better to ask a real teacher rather than a student, but I thought it was inevitable that we still learned a lot.

20. Because we are friends we ended up using Japanese.

20. Because there aren't so many participants, we can ask questions without being embarrassed.

21. Even though I was an advisor, I didn't know how to answer. For example, I don't feel that I am in a position to recommend how to improve speaking to another person.

21. When a student gives advice, it not only helps the advisee conquer his weak point, but the cooperation helps the advisor to conquer weak points as well.

22. We soon ended up speaking Japanese.

22. Because we are all students, we could clearly ask our questions, and we were able to hear different opinions.

23. I can't speak optimistically.

23. We can speak English to other students.

24. There isn't really anything we can use, we don't know until we try it ourselves.

24. We can learn how others study.

THURSDAY CLASS　　SPEAKING

1. We spoke Japanese.

1. It was useful to ask fellow students questions.

2. We spoke Japanese.

2. It was useful because before I always thought I could only speak English to foreigners.

3. The answers are from Japanese students so there's no guarantee that they are correct.

3. Because the advisors are Japanese students, they understand my problems and what I want to say. When I don't understand in English, they can explain in Japanese.

4. I talked to many different people and got many different opinions so they may not all suit me.

4. I can understand what kind of problems other students are having.

5. Nothing

5. I could learn many different ways to master English.

6. I wish I could ask a larger variety of advisors.

6. I can hear opinions different from my own.

7. Nothing

7. I could consult many people and get good advice.

8. I didn't know before that memorizing sentences could help my English, but I also think I could speak without having to follow this advice.

8. Up until now I had not enjoyed speaking English, I couldn't make sentences, but now I think memorizing sentences and using them in conversation is not such a bad idea.

9. No bad points.

9. It is good to ask our teacher questions, but I think it is better to ask our friends different advice.

10. When the teacher is away, the pace tends to be slow.

10. Our fellow students as advisors can help us understand things we have trouble with.

11. The advice on speaking was nothing new to us so I think it is not useful. I think it would be better if we each made effort every day to inspire ourselves to improve. We have to do it for ourselves.

11. No good points.

12. We can't comprehend all of the advice perfectly.

12. We can hear different opinions and learn different ways to improve.

13. Many of the questions were the same and as advisor I didn't know how to advise well.

13. I could hear Japanese students' opinions about English.

14. The questions were a lot alike.

14. I could meet and speak with everyone.

15. It would be better to ask a larger variety of people about our weak points.

15. I was able to learn how to improve my listening.

16. I could ask friends advice that I normally couldn't ask.

16. I can't find a good point.

17. Everyone didn't speak actively.

17. Everyone has a chance to speak English.

18. Our English doesn't change.

18. We can relax.

19. No bad point.

19. I can learn about mistakes in the way I study and can learn useful opinions.

20. Rather than have just one advisor, I would like to have more people advising me.

20. Because of the small groups, it was very easy to ask questions. I was very happy to have this chance to ask questions because I have never had such a chance before. Small number of participants was a good point.

FRIDAY 1 SPEAKING

1. The advisors can't convey their advice to the advisees very well.

1. We can speak English with each other about various things.

2. Even if I make a mistake, no one will correct me.

2. We have good practice at communicating.

3. We spoke a lot of Japanese.

3. We can understand each other's thoughts.

4. Even though I am a little strong in an area, it doesn't mean I am very good at it.

4. I can meet people I do not know and as an advisor, I am compelled to advise and I find I do have some   advice to give.

5. Even though I may think I am strong in an area, others may think me weak. Each person has varying abilities.

5. I was able to use English a little.

6. We spoke a lot of Japanese.

6. I have to think for myself.

7. We spoke a lot of Japanese.

7. I was able to hear many different opinions and questions, which I had not thought of before, so it was useful.

8. We spoke a lot of Japanese. It took a long time to get answers.

8. There was a larger variety of questions than I expected.

9. I think it would be better not to limit the amount of questions we can ask.

9. I was able to express my own thoughts in English.

10. I confused the advisor because I'm not very good at writing questions.

10. The advisors spoke to me in easy to understand English.

11. Sometimes the advisor nor the advisee knows the answer to a question.

11. The answers are simple and easy to understand.

12. Sometimes the question wasn't understood, so we spoke a lot of Japanese.

12. It was instructive to hear other opinions.

13. When I was advisor, I didn't know whether I could answer the questions or not.

13. Because of the small groups, everyone had a chance to speak. I was able to get answers to questions I   had wondered all along.

14. It would be better to ask any advisor we want a question instead of only the assigned advisor.

14. Among the advice for different people, I found advice that I could use for myself.

15. I didn't have many questions to ask so it was a problem for the advisor. I should have prepared more questions.

15. I could relate to others' questions, so the answers to questions was very useful to me.

16. My question wasn't completely answered.

16. We always ask our teacher questions, but it was good to ask our fellow students from the same vantage point.

17. It is not useful to speak to Japanese of the same English level as myself. I already knew the answers.

17. We can think of ways to improve our English.

18. When I was advisor, I felt that my advice wasn't suitable.

18. We can comfortably ask questions which were too difficult to ask of a teacher.

19. As an advisor, it is difficult to give good advice so I am troubled.

19. We can use the questions to decide what to do with our study so it is good.

20. I would rather ask a foreigner's opinion because I think a Japanese person's way of thinking of English   is quite different.

20. I could learn how to study English differently than I had done before.

21. I couldn't answer difficult questions so I didn't have good advice.

21. I could hear about useful advice from others.

22. We are all about the same level so there is not much to choose from when it comes to advice.

22. It was good to meet and speak with others about each other's English problems and advice.

23. Sometimes I couldn't express my questions well in English.

23. It was instructive to hear other different ways of thinking and opinions.

24. The advisor wasn't very precise with answers and the questions were a little biased and not listened to.

24. It was enjoyable to do.

25. It was only among Japanese people.

25. It increased our chances to speak English.

26. We spoke a lot of Japanese.

26. I could hear many different opinions.

27. We spoke a lot of Japanese.

27. I could think of and speak my own thoughts.

28. Most people speak Japanese so I think it doesn't mean English practice.

28. I can communicate with class friends.

FRIDAY 2　　SPEAKING

1. We spoke a lot of Japanese.

1. We could ask comfortably.

2. We spoke a lot of Japanese.

2. We could ask comfortably.

3. We spoke a lot of Japanese.

3. I could learn other ways of thinking and my advisor tried very hard to help me.

4. I don't understand the purpose.

4. We can master our weak points.

5. The advisor should speak more.

5. It was an at home, comfortable atmosphere.

6. No bad points.

6. It increased our chance to speak English.

7. No bad points.

7. We can learn our weak points.

8. Not enough time

8. I could learn a lot of useful advice for myself.

9. The English was difficult to understand.

9. We could speak in English.

10. No bad points.

10. The advisors did their best to help us.

11. The advisor wasn't skilled enough to help us.

11. As advisor, I wasn't able to give good advice, but everyone was able to speak in English the whole
    time.

12. No bad points.

12. The advisors were kind in answering our questions.

13. I still don't understand English.

13. Little by little we could enjoy it.

14. We were hurried due to lack of time.

14. No good points.

15. No bad points.

15. We were able to consult about different things.

16. We spoke a lot of Japanese.

16. We got used to speaking English and we could communicate.

17. No bad points.

17. I could think of my own opinion and write and speak it in English.

18. No bad points.

18. We could use English a lot.

19. A lot of time was unfilled.

19. We had a chance to use English.

20. It became difficult for everyone to participate.

20. Sometimes it was fun.

21. We didn't use much English. We spoke a lot of Japanese.

21. We could hear a lot of different opinions.

22. I don't feel like I am studying English.

22. Absolutely no good points.

23. Since the advisors are also students, if I ask an advisor a question I don't know the answer to, neither does he.

23. We all decided and were able to speak English and we did it comfortably.

24. The advisors didn't seem to understand.

24. We were all active.

25. The advisor didn't have his heart in it.

25. It was inevitable that we use English, and we could understand the advisor's ideas.

26. There wasn't much time.

26. The advisors were students so we weren't nervous.

Appendix 5

Merits and Disadvantages of Project

Categorized responses of open-ended questions to post-project surveys.

Survey Results to the questions: **What are the good points of this project?**

What are the bad points of this project?

Answers to open-ended questions as categorized by the researcher:

CATEGORIES OF ANSWERS FOR GOOD POINTS:

Category is followed by number of respondents.

Could hear different opinions/ideas:	25
Useful/Instructive advice:	23
Conducted in English	19
Comfortable/less anxious atmosphere	14
Speaking practice	12
Enjoyable/Fun	6
Fellow classmates	5
None	4
Easy to Understand	2
Other	2
No reason given	1
Chance to become teachers	1
Autonomy	1
Good questions	1
Simple vocabulary	1
Makes you think	1
Could use Japanese	1
Active	1

TOTAL RESPONSES:　　　　　**120**

CATEGORIES OF ANSWERS FOR BAD POINTS:

Japanese use	25
Nothing	13
Redundant	11
Difficult	9
Advisor is the respondent: says he/she couldn't give good advice.	8
Time	8
Quality of advice	7
Boring	6
Unskilled advisors	5
Method	5
Other	4
Theory	4
Participation	3
Simple answers	2
Unease/unfriendly	2
Can't use	2
Logistics	1
All students same level	1
Not improving	1
Don't understand	1
No correction	1
No response	1

TOTAL RESPONSES: **120**

Appendix 6

Breakdown of responses by class.

Survey Results to the question: Was the project effective?

(See following page for total of responses)

MON 2	YES	NO	NEUTRAL
SPEAKING	15	6	1
LISTENING	16	6	2
WRITING	8	11	0
READING	11	11	1
TUE 1			
SPEAKING	14	9	1
LISTENING	12	11	3
WRITING	13	12	1
READING	13	13	1
THUR 1			
SPEAKING	16	4	0
LISTENING	13	1	0
WRITING	12	5	1
READING	16	5	0
FRI 1			
SPEAKING	21	6	1
LISTENING	22	1	2
WRITING	17	11	1
READING	17	6	3
FRI 2			
SPEAKING	22	3	2
LISTENING	24	3	0
WRITING	13	11	1
READING	15	11	0

Total responses vary due to fluctuations in attendance each week.

SPEAKING

TOTAL RESPONSES: 121

YES	NO	NEUTRAL
88	28	5

LISTENING

TOTAL RESPONSES: 116

YES	NO	NEUTRAL
87	22	7

WRITING

TOTAL RESPONSES: 117

YES	NO	NEUTRAL
63	50	4

READING

TOTAL RESPONSES: 123

YES	NO	NEUTRAL
72	46	5

Appendix 7

Student Interview Questions

1. In which area can a student help a fellow student most?

a. Reading   b. Listening   c. Writing   d. Speaking   e. Other ____

Tabulated responses to the question: In which area can a student help a fellow student most?

Total responses: 118

Class	READING	LISTENING	WRITING	SPEAKING	OTHER
Monday	5	4	3	14	0
Tuesday	1	2	3	11	5
Thursday	6	4	4	7	0
Friday 1	3	4	7	11	1
Friday 2	3	5	4	8	3
Total:	**18**	**19**	**21**	**51**	**9**

Appendix 8

Survey results to the question: Did you try the advice? (Why/Why not?)

MON	YES 18	NO 6	NEUTRAL 0
TUE	YES 21	NO 3	NEUTRAL 0
THUR	YES 9	NO 9	NEUTRAL 2
FRI 1	YES 26	NO 0	NEUTRAL 0
FRI 2	YES 14	NO 9	NEUTRAL 0
TOTAL	YES 88 (75.2 %)	NO 27 (23%)	NEUTRAL 2 (1.7%)

88 OUT OF 117 RESPONSES

FOR THOSE WHO TRIED THE ADVICE:

CLASS (Number of students who tried advice.)	IMPROVED (USEFUL)	IMPROVED A LITTLE	NO CHANGE	NEUTRAL	NO RESPONSE
MONDAY (18)	11	3	1	3	0
TUESDAY (21)	3	4	8	4	2
THURSDAY (9)	4	2	0	3	0
FRIDAY 1 (26)	11	3	4	8	0
FRIDAY 2 (14)	4	0	5	5	0
TOTAL (88)	33	12	18	23	2

NEUTRAL includes I DON'T KNOW, and responses which made no reference to improvement or lack of it.

Appendix 9

SCHEDULE OF CLASS PROJECTS:

SPEAKING WORKSHOPS:

CLASS	MONDAY	TUESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY 1	FRIDAY 2
DATE	May 19	May 13	May 22	April 25	May 9
NUMBER OF ADVISORS	2	11	2	6	2
NUMBER OF ADVISEES	20	14	18	22	25
ADVISOR TO ADVISEE RATIO	1 to 10 (held in 2 groups of 1 advisor to 5 advisees)	7 groups of 2 advisors to 2-3 advisees	2 groups: 1 advisor to 9 advisees in each group	6 groups: 1 advisor to 3-4 advisees in each group	2 groups: 1 advisor to 12-13 advisees in each group

LISTENING WORKSHOPS:

CLASS	MONDAY	TUESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY 1	FRIDAY 2
DATE	May 12	May 20	May 15	May 16	May 16
NUMBER OF ADVISORS	8	7	3	17	2
NUMBER OF ADVISEES	17	19	11	8	25
ADVISOR TO ADVISEE RATIO	4 groups: 2 advisors and 4 advisees in each group.	7 groups: 1 advisor to 2-3 advisees in each group	3 groups: 1 advisor to 1-2 advisees in each group	5 groups: 3 advisors to 1-2 advisees in each group	2 groups: 1 advisor to 12-13 advisees in each group

READING WORKSHOPS:

CLASS	MONDAY	TUESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY 1	FRIDAY 2
DATE	June 2	June 3	June 5	May 23	May 30
NUMBER OF ADVISORS	19	18	18	16	23
NUMBER OF ADVISEES	4	9	3	10	3
ADVISOR TO ADVISEE RATIO	4 groups: 1 advisee to 4-5 advisors	3 groups: 6 advisors to 3 advisees in each group	3 groups: 1 advisee to 6 advisors in each group	7 groups of 2-3 advisors to 1 student	3 groups: 7-8 advisors to 1 advisee in each group

WRITING WORKSHOPS:

CLASS	MONDAY	TUESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY 1	FRIDAY 2
DATE	May 26	May 27	May 29	May 30	May 23
NUMBER OF ADVISORS	15	15	13	15	15
NUMBER OF ADVISEES	4	11	5	14	10
ADVISOR TO ADVISEE RATIO	3 groups of 5 advisors to 1-2 advisees	3 groups: Groups (1) and (2): 5 advisors to 4 advisees. Group 3: 5 advisors to 3 advisees	5 groups: 1 advisee to 2-3 advisors in each group	7 groups of 2-3 advisors to 2 advisees 5 groups:	3 advisors to 2 advisees in each group