Promoting Learner Autonomy through Developing Process Syllabus—Syllabus Negotiation: the Basis of Learner Autonomy[*]

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Abstract—In the 21st century, the importance of helping students become more autonomous in their learning has become one of its most prominent themes. Autonomy is usually defined as the capability to take charge of, or responsible for, one's own learning. Nowadays, autonomy is widely accepted as a desirable goal in education. With promoting learner autonomy as the ultimate goal of education comes the question of how to foster learner autonomy. In this essay, we are arguing for the provision of circumstances and contexts for language learners through developing process syllabuses in the language classroom to help them make decisions for their own learning through negotiations. This practice of negotiated syllabus emphasizes the value of collaborative learning, learner-centredness, learner autonomy and shared decision making. We practiced producing process syllabus in the Advanced Speaking and Listening Course between 2006 and 2008 and we found out that through negotiations of purposes, contents, ways of working and evaluation, students are going through the various stages of producing languages and by shifting the power into students' hands, they become highly motivated and whole-heartedly involved and take on greater responsibility for their own learning.

Index Terms—learner autonomy, process syllabus, negotiations, responsibility for one's own learning

I. INTRODUCTION: LEARNER AUTONOMY AS THE DESIRABLE GOAL OF EDUCATION

Learner autonomy has attracted more and more attention in education especially in the western world since 1970s. Nowadays, autonomy is widely accepted as a desirable goal in education, and "few teachers will disagree with the importance of helping learners become more autonomous as learners" (Wenden, 1991, P.11). Holec (1981, p.3) defined autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning". Dickinson(1987, p.11)accepted the definition of autonomy as "the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for the decisions concerned with his/her learning and the implementation of these decisions". Little (1990, p.7) suggests that learner autonomy is essentially a matter of the learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning. In Pennycook's (1997, p.45) political-critical viewpoint, development of autonomy and agency must involve becoming "an author of one's own world". All the definitions of autonomy entail capacity and willingness on the part of the learner to act independently and in cooperation with others, so as to be a socially responsible person. Modern education places great value on the development of the learners' humanistic qualities and "humanistic education is based on the belief that learners should have a say in what they should be learning and how they should learn it, and reflects the notion that education should be concerned with the development of autonomy in the learner" (Nunan, 1988, p.20). Developing from moves towards communicative language teaching, recent innovations in classroom practice have emphasized the value of collaborative learning, learner-centeredness, autonomy and shared decision-making in the classroom. "One corollary of learner-centeredness is that individualization will assume greater importance, as will the recognition that the autonomy of the learner is our ultimate goal" (Brookes & Grundy, 1988, p.1).

With promoting learner autonomy as the ultimate goal of education comes the question of how to promote learner autonomy and how to make it more likely that learners take charge-at least temporarily of the whole or part of their learning, especially in Chinese context. In China, working in the context of a centralized educational system which prescribes curricula, authorizes textbooks and sets external exams, students are used to taking the teacher as the authority and expert in handling the textbooks and making decisions about what they should learn and how they should learn. For teachers, it is easier to produce a well-planned, neatly packaged curriculum by deciding well in advance exactly what is to be studied and where and when and how it is to be presented. However, we trust that when students are involved in the process of decision-making, options and choices and when they can have their say through

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negotiation and when they become aware of learning procedures, they will learn best, because 'People learn best from utterances in which they have a strong personal stake or "investment"'(2000, cited in Pnina Linder). Therefore, it is important for teachers to provide the circumstances and contexts for learners to help them rather than prevent them from exercising their autonomy so that they can take charge of the whole or part of their language learning. Here in this paper we are arguing for the provision of circumstances and contexts for language learners through developing process syllabus in the language classroom to help them make decisions for their own learning through negotiations because we trust that "a classroom based upon negotiated knowledge and procedures allows the learner autonomy on an equal footing with others in the group and as a contribution to the good of the learning community" (Breen and Littlejohn, 2000, p.22). The significance of negotiation for language learning was originally recognized by Evelyn Hatch when she explored how learning might actually derive from the kinds of interaction in which learners may be involved (Hatch, 1978). Process means taking students through the various stages of producing language and it emphasizes the value of collaborative learning, leaner-centeredness, learner autonomy and shared decision making in the language classroom. The nature of a process syllabus is, through ongoing process of negotiation, to help students make clear of their alternative assumptions and interpretations, identify the range of achievements and difficulties in the work and reveal their preferences and alternatives in ways of working.

   "Fundamental to the nature of classroom work is the type and content of the syllabus which frames the work teachers and students do together" (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000). In traditional syllabuses, the content is prescribed by syllabus writers before a course begins, therefore, traditional syllabuses are predictive documents because they set out what is to be taught. These syllabuses are product-oriented, which focus on the outcomes of instruction, i.e. the knowledge and skills to be gained by the learner. However, process syllabuses focus on the skills and processes involved in learning language and the learning experiences themselves rather than on the end products of these processes. An important characteristic of the process syllabus is that it is an infrastructure rather than a learning plan, with the syllabus designer no longer pre-selecting learning content, but providing a framework for teacher and learners to create their own on-going syllabus in the classroom (Breen, 1987a, p.166), thus allowing for changing abilities, learning needs, and perceptions in the learners, without specifying particular content, methodology, lexis, structure, or grammar (Breen, 1987a, p.168). The process syllabus is a radically analytic syllabus. In its strong form at least, not only the content but the materials, methodology and types of assessment used in a course are not pre-determined but are negotiated between the instructor and the learners throughout the course. That is, learners help select course content and materials and provide input on how they want to be taught and assessed. Process syllabuses have therefore evolved "as a means of planning, implementing and evaluating negotiation in the classroom, and the decisions to which teachers and students may jointly arrive" (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000, p.2). It distinguishes itself from conventional, content syllabuses by identifying classroom decisions as potentials for negotiation whereby teacher and students together can evolve and work through the actual curriculum of the classroom group (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000, p.29).

II.   A PROCESS SYLLABUS IN PRACTICE: PRACTICE OF A PROCESS SYLLABUS ON THE COURSE OF ADVANCED LISTENING AND SPEAKING

   For many years, from the year 2000 until now, together with a group of teachers in my department (College English Department, DaLian University of Technology), we have been doing research on how to improve learner autonomy through strategy training, developing our own teaching materials and setting up self-access center; and in 2006, we began to focus on the research of developing "process syllabus" in the language classroom through negotiation with students and negotiation between students. We understand from our experience that it is easier to produce a well-planned, neatly packaged curriculum by deciding well in advance exactly what is to be studied and where and when and how it is to be presented than to produce "process syllabus", an on-going syllabus based on negotiation. Working in the context of a centralized educational system Chinese students are used to following prescribed curricula, using authorized textbooks and studying hard for external exams. They tend to regard the teacher as the authority and expert in handling the books and teaching them the concepts and knowledge in the books, so they are used to listening to the teacher carefully and taking notes in class, answering the questions asked by the teacher and finishing the tasks designed by the teacher either individually or in groups. In a word, Chinese students do not have much say in deciding what they should learn and how they should learn. Most of the time, they are just passive recipients instead of active and critical thinkers. However, our interest and desire with "process syllabus" and teacher-learner negotiation stemmed from our belief that it will bring a lot of benefits, and that it can help students to become life-long, independent learners in the long run. We believe that negotiating a syllabus will help to take into account the wants and needs of the students and promote learner motivation, and more importantly it will encourage students to take much more responsibility for their own learning, in this sense, their learner autonomy will be greatly improved. We trust that when students are involved in the process of decision-making, options and choices and when they can have their say through negotiation and when they become aware of learning procedures, they will learn best, because 'People learn best from utterances in which they have a strong personal stake or "investment"'(2000, cited in Pnina Linder). With such strong belief, in spite of the difficulties and challenge, we started to practice "process syllabus" on the course of Advanced Listening and Speaking between 2006 and 2008.

   The course of Advanced Listening and Speaking is the only remaining practical language course for juniors and

seniors at our university and it fell outside the language-acquisition and language-testing part of the degree scheme. All the students have passed National Band-4 College English Test and most of them have passed national Band-6 College English Test. Moreover, we do not have prescribed curriculum, authorized textbooks for this course, so we can choose our own teaching materials to meet the students' needs. Another factor in our favor is that this may well be students' last English-language course in life and they are highly motivated to make it useful to what they are doing at the moment, or to what they want to do after they have graduated. We operate the process syllabus in four classes, each consisting of 25/26 students from Economics Department and Management Department. They are required to take this course to reinforce their English study by their departments (Usually students are not required to enroll in English courses after two years' study at college). The course is timetabled for a two-hour session once a week during the academic year. We carried out the negotiation process in four areas as Breen and Littlejohn suggested: purposes, contents, ways of working and evaluation.

At first meeting we introduced the concept of negotiated syllabus to our students, which is an important step to the success of the fulfillment of the process syllabus. We must help students understand the importance of being responsible for their own learning and how we are going to create the circumstances and context for them to exercise autonomy and take charge of their language learning. I still remember how puzzled and excited they were. They were puzzled because they had never heard of this concept before and they had never thought they could be involved in the process of developing a syllabus. From kindergarten on they have been passively following the syllabus designed and prescribed by educators and teachers. Now when they were given the right to develop their own syllabus, they were at a loss what to do at the very beginning. Meanwhile, they were also excited because they were eager to try something new and they were bored with the centralized educational system with prescribed curricula and authorized textbooks. They were at their late junior year and were eager to make this final English course useful to them in their future work. In this sense they were happy to choose the topics and materials they think useful to them. We are grateful that they were not against this new method of teaching and learning; instead, they were very supportive and cooperative.

A. Negotiation of Purposes

At the start of the first session, we presented a questionnaire to the class to get to know the attitudes, experiences, needs and wants of the students. Fig. 1 illustrates the questionnaire we designed and used.

Questionnaire: What Are Your Wants and Needs?
Name: Student Card Number:
Department:
1. What would you expect that we should do in this Advanced Listening and Speaking course? What are your expectations? Or could you make some suggestions about what should be done to help you gain the most?
2. What difficulties did you have with your listening and speaking?
3. What types of activities did you benefit/enjoy most in your previous English class at senior middle school or at college?
4. How do you like to work in class?
a. on your own
b. in pairs
c. in groups
e. in a taught class
5. What kind of learning materials do you like?

Figure 1

First, we gave students 30 minutes to write down their answers alone. Then, we began to have an oral discussion about their expectations, their English leaning experiences and their suggestions. Finally, these questionnaires were analyzed and the findings were presented to the class and then agreed procedures of work were drawn up. The questionnaire engendered a climate of sharing and thinking about learning and a climate of trust.

Based on the questionnaire and the discussions, we finally set the aims for this course.

1. Listening and speaking strategies training: The analysis and the discussions show that these students are at different levels. Some of them have great difficulty with their listening and are not brave enough to open their mouth to speak English at all and they told me this course should not be called advanced listening and speaking, for they haven't reached the advanced level. Therefore, they need the basic training of listening and speaking strategies.

2. Developing listening and speaking skills through doing: they need to be actively involved in the activities in which they need to practice their listening and speaking. In fact, they will be involved in every stage of their learning process instead of sitting there, waiting for the teacher to assign the tasks to them and finish the activities designed by the teacher.

3. Developing collaborative and team work spirit: they need to work in groups to accomplish the tasks. They will form "student teachers" groups and work out their teaching plan through student-student negotiation before they "teach" in class.

4. Becoming an independent life-long learner: This is the aim we set for them. We trust that practicing negotiation can lead to learner independence, learner assumption of responsibility for learning and potential for life-long learning.

B. Negotiation of Content

For this course there are no prescribed and authorized textbooks. We can enjoy the freedom to choose our own

teaching and learning materials, however, it is difficult to decide on the content in this sense. We have already set our goals at our first meeting, therefore, the choice of the content must agree with those aims. We need to discuss what topics, themes should be chosen, what skills, strategies or competencies should be improved and what puzzles, problems or focus for investigation should be addressed. To make it easier we finally decided that the content should be topic-based. Based on the topics, we will conduct skills and strategies training and help students work out their puzzles and problems.

At the end of the first session we assigned students the task of thinking about what we need to cover in this course and what topics, themes, or specific uses of learning this course should be focused on. They were required to bring back their choice of topics at the second session. At the second session we had a very heated discussion about what topics and themes we need to focus on and how the learning work should be carried out. We did the discussion/negotiation in small groups (4-or-5- person groups) first and they tried to reach agreement on their choice of the topics. Then the group leader presented the results to the class and explained why they chose those topics. Finally, the whole class reached an agreement on the topics that need to be covered in this course. They made the choice of the topics based on their own interest, their ability and strengths, and their needs. At the end of this session they have also decided on the topics they are going to teach as "teacher group", which will be discussed in the next section and they are required to think about how they are going to teach, what activities they will design, what tasks they should assign to their "students" and how they are going to organize the class activities and evaluate their students' learning outcomes. That is, they will act as "teachers" and they will come up with their own teaching syllabus.

In the process of negotiation we are trying to help students understand that the process is the most important content of this course and they will learn a lot more in the process of negotiation and accomplishing the tasks than reverting to teacher dependency. Everyone should commit himself to the joint responsibility for making the course meaningful and productive.

C.   Negotiation of Methods

The method of working on this content is also negotiated. The class is divided into 5 groups, each group consisting of 5-6 persons. Each group will be in charge of two topics and design tasks by themselves. They decide what resources they should use, what types of materials would be most appropriate, what working procedure or set of instructions should be followed and what can best be done in class and outside class. They also organize the whole class to carry on the tasks they have designed. In the process, they negotiate with each other through cooperation and find out the best way to carry out the tasks. We provide help and guidance they need and give them supervision before they present their teaching to the whole class. In fact, they are student teachers.

Here is the process of negotiation of method. Having decided on the topic, teacher groups will work together and discuss what tasks they will design to achieve their teaching aims. In the process they might have a lot of discussions and even arguments, but finally they must reach an agreement in order to accomplish their teaching task. When they are clear about the tasks they are going to carry out, each member will choose the task they are interested in by taking into account their ability and strengths and then they begin to design activities and find the appropriate materials by resorting to the resources in the library and on the Internet. In this process they will work individually but individual can make a difference because they are working toward the same goal and each makes his own share of contribution. After each member has done their share, the group will come together again and incorporate their tasks together and produce their teaching syllabus in which they will present their aims, the content (the tasks) , the method and they must be clear about what tasks they are going to assign to their "students" to involve all the students into the learning process. Next, they will rehearse under the teacher's guidance before they begin their teaching in class. Finally, they "teach" in class and are evaluated by the teacher and their "students" at the same time. (See fig. 2)
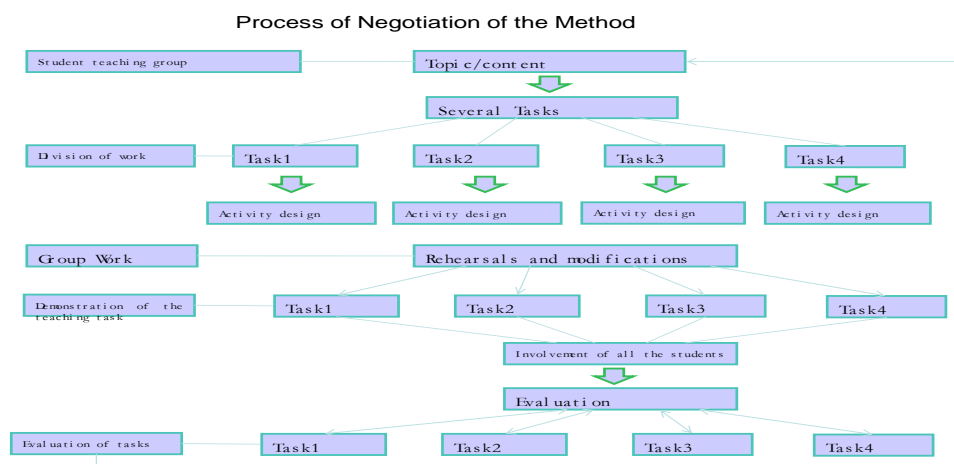

Figure 2: Process of Negotiation of the Method

D.   Negotiation of Evaluation

In the students' previous experience their performance is only evaluated by the results of the exams: Mid-term exam (30%) and final exam(70%), but for this course we practiced formative evaluation (see the evaluation forms below). Students are evaluated by their participation in their preparation for class activities in their groups, by their performances in class activities and by their contribution to the class activities. Each student will be evaluated by their group members first about their contribution to the accomplishment of tasks, based on the following criteria: how much contribution they have made in the designing of tasks, in the choice of materials, in the discussion of methods of how to carry out the tasks and in the technical aspects such as making a PowerPoint, playing video programmes, etc. Then the student teachers will be assessed by the whole class. Each student is a "judge" and they grade the "teachers" based on their observation of the teachers' performance in class: how they are presenting the tasks, how they are organizing the class activities and to what degree they have achieved their aims. We teachers will grade each student based on their overall performance. In sum, the final grade is decided by the three evaluations: one done in their own groups, one by the class and one by the teacher. This process evaluation will account for 50 percent of the total final mark. Another 50 percent is decided by the final exam, which mainly tests students' listening skill. Here are evaluation forms we have used.

GROUP EVALUATION

Group members	Preparations(Ss' involvement in the choice of materials, designing activities, rehearsing, cooperating with others and making PPT) 20 points	Design of Tasks/ Activities 10 points	Performances (language and content) 20 points	Total 50 points
1. Name				
2. Name				
……				

CLASS EVALUATION

Student Teachers	Choice of materials 10 points	Design of tasks/Activities(Ways of working on the content) 20 points	Performances (language and content) 20 points	Total 50 points
1.				
2.				
……				

TEACHER'S EVALUATION

Students	Choice of materials 10 points	Design of tasks/Activities(Ways of working on the content) 20 points	Performances(language and content) 20 points	Total 50 points
1.				
2.				
……				

STUDENTS' FINAL MARKS

Students	Formative Assessment (50%)				Final Exam (50%)	Total (100%)
	Group Evaluation	Class Evaluation	Teacher Evaluation	Average of the three evaluations		
1.						
2.						
……						

The above is the illustration how we practiced process syllabus on the course of Advanced Listening and Speaking. It can be condensed into the following chart.
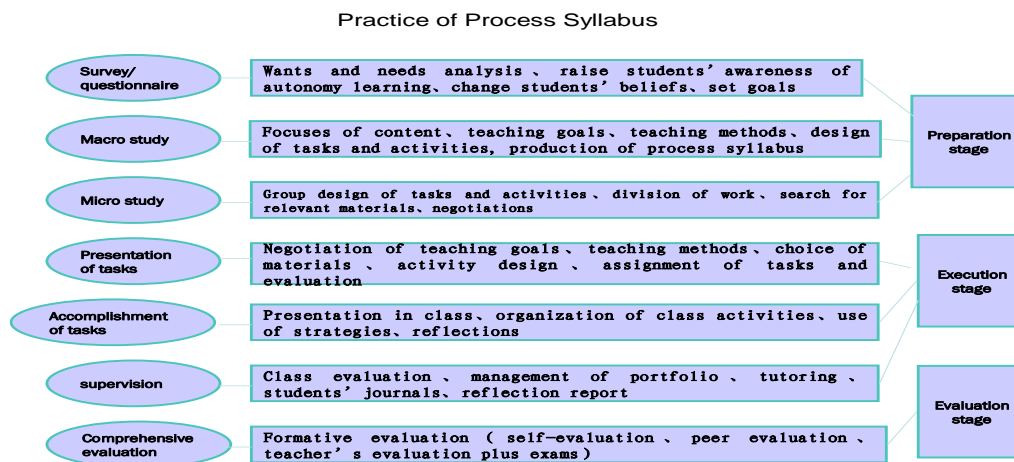
Practice of Process Syllabus

Survey/ questionnaire	Wants and needs analysis、raise students' awareness of autonomy learning、change students' beliefs、set goals	
Macro study	Focuses of content、teaching goals、teaching methods、design of tasks and activities, production of process syllabus	Preparation stage
Micro study	Group design of tasks and activities、division of work、search for relevant materials、negotiations	
Presentation of tasks	Negotiation of teaching goals、teaching methods、choice of materials、activity design、assignment of tasks and evaluation	Execution stage
Accomplishment of tasks	Presentation in class、organization of class activities、use of strategies、reflections	
supervision	Class evaluation、management of portfolio、tutoring、students' journals、reflection report	Evaluation stage
Comprehensive evaluation	Formative evaluation（self-evaluation、peer evaluation、teacher's evaluation plus exams）	

Figure 3: Practice of Process Syllabus

III. REFLECTIONS AND DISCUSSION: SYLLABUS NEGOTIATION-THE BASIS OF LEARNER AUTONOMY

Conventionally, it is assumed that it is the teacher's role to make decisions with regard to purposes of the work, focus of content, ways of undertaking the work and evaluation of students' performances, both covertly as part of planning and classroom management and through overt instructions at key moments in a lesson. However, through two years' experiment and several years' learner autonomy research, there are several justifications for raising such decisions to the level of overt negotiation with students. The process of negotiation functions as managing teaching and learning as group experience and students are highly motivated when they are given the power to make the decisions, options and choices by themselves, when their wants and needs are taken into account and when they have their voices heard by others. Here we would like to cite students' reflections to summarize the benefits of undertaking the process syllabus (Every student is required to write about their reflections on this course in their summarization at the end of each semester).

A. The Class is Students-dominated: Teachers Teach Less, but Learners Learn More

"It seems that the teacher was liberated in class, but we learned more than just listening to the teacher's lecturing," commented student A in his reflections. Student B made the similar comments:

I have been learning English for almost eight years, but it is the first time that I have experienced such an innovative and original method, which fully motivates us to learn actively by ourselves. We acquire new things by doing things with our hands, with our mouth and more importantly with our minds. In previous English lessons it was always the teachers who did most of the talking (lecturing) in class, it seems they taught us a lot, but we learned very little.

The students realize that in class it is not the teacher who is dominating the class, but the students are. It has totally changed the conventional teaching method of students sitting there listening while the teacher is lecturing as an authority in front of them. In this course it is students themselves who are "teaching", and in the process of making a teaching plan, choosing teaching and learning materials, designing class activities and evaluating learning outcomes, they have learned a lot more. This corresponds with J. A. Comenius' education thought, "Let the main object... to seek and to find a method of instruction, by which teachers may teach less, but learners learn more." (website: http://www.leading-learning.co.nz/famous-quotes.html#teaching)

It is believed that students can progress in their ability to learn by becoming aware of the processes through which they learn, by conceptualizing their learning experiences, by being actively engaged in steering the process and by taking responsibility for organizing their learning experience (Esch, 1996, p.37). In this course we greatly encourage students to conceptualize their learning experience by being actively engaged in steering the process and by taking responsibility for organizing their learning experience, which has proved very beneficial to students.

B. Process Syllabus Allows for Changing Abilities, Learning Needs, and Perceptions in the Learners

The Process Syllabuses focus on the skills and processes involved in learning language and the learning experiences themselves rather than on the end products of these processes. An important characteristic of the process syllabus is that it is an infrastructure rather than a learning plan, with the syllabus designer no longer pre-selecting learning content, but providing a framework for teacher and learners to create their own on-going syllabus in the classroom (Breen, 1987a, p.166), thus allowing for changing abilities, learning needs, and perceptions in the learners, without specifying particular content, methodology, lexis, structure, or grammar (Breen, 1987a, p.168).

As teachers, we have all noticed how variously our different learners and groups of learners approach learning tasks. Sometimes learners with considerable proficiency in one domain perform surprisingly poorly in another. Sometimes a student with insufficient English surprises us with a striking skill in some particular area. Student D made the following

comments:

With time passing by, I have gained more and more confidence. I have grown from a shy boy, who was full of fear and panic at the thought of speaking English, to a confident man who enjoys speaking English. I enjoyed every minute in the English class.

This student is poor at oral English, but he is talented at computer and is a very good singer. He is responsible for making a PowerPoint and using English songs to help students practice pronunciation, intonation and other phonetic skills such as liaison and stress. His skill and strengths helped his group finish the tasks successfully and also helped him build up confidence. Being an "expert" on a topic noticeably increased self-esteem, and getting more and more confident week by week gave the learners a feeling of genuine progress. I have witnessed his becoming more and more actively involved in class activities. What's more, other classmates of his are also positively influenced by his change. Here are the comments made by students E:

The lesson I like most is to learn how to improve pronunciation. I love listening to English songs, but I never paid attention to my intonation. After that lesson I became keen on improving my spoken English by listening to English songs, which is very helpful to me. I must say the English songs collected by D are very classic and catchy. His wonderful singing and confident teaching impressed me a lot. I trust he must have spent a lot of time making the preparations. I benefited a lot from this lesson.

Student G's reflections also prove that students can enjoy learning from their peers with different abilities and perceptions.

This semester in the Speaking and Listening course I learned how to cooperate with others and how to listen to other's ideas and suggestions. I found that everybody is very creative and has their own thoughts and good ideas, which helped me a lot in my own study. In addition, in the process of preparing the activities and participation in the activities, my thought and my abilities have been improved, which helped me increase my confidence.

From the students' reflections, we can also learn that students are likely to have much to learn from their peers and they can be a rich resource for each other. Learners, regardless of their aptitude or ability, were capable of a positive and productive involvement in selecting their own content and learning procedures.

C.   The Students are Highly Motivated and Responsible for Their Own Learning

The listening and speaking course in the first year at college is very boring, because most of the time we were doing discussions on the topics given by the teacher. This year, we had a new English teacher, who introduced a completely new method of teaching. Ms Ma entrusted the dominating power with us. We decided what we should learn in each lesson and we are "teachers" and had the power to make evaluations of the performances of students. At the beginning we didn't understand why the teacher did so, but in the process we realized this method could promote our motivation and develop our abilities. When we were being student teachers, we needed to prepare a lot of materials, which, in fact is a process of learning. What's more, we can decide on the content, which allows us to choose the topics, such as movies, cartoons, basketball, travelling, which we have great interest in to promote our learning of English.

The above comments were made by students C, from which we can conclude that by shifting the power into students' hands, they become highly motivated and take on greater responsibility for their own learning. The learner is not simply a passive recipient in the process. Knowles (1990) argues that adults should have a strong voice in their education and in the way they learn. They are likely to be-or to wish to be-self-directed learners and usually need to be assured about the purpose of the learning. He also argues that adult learners move from dependency to self-directedness and use their life experience to enhance learning. Furthermore, learners were also positive in accepting responsibility for their own learning. These were also the findings of Dam and Gabrielsen when they investigated the extent to which young learners were capable of making decisions about the content and processes of their own learning (Nunan, 1996). We believe that in the process of negotiation and collaboration with group members when they are making decisions about the aims, the content, the ways and the evaluations, especially when they are presenting something to another group/class, it called for greater responsibility to their own group and led to increased motivation and greatly improved accuracy. The success of each group's presentation was measured by the response and feedback of the other groups; thus there was a measure of in-built evaluation and a test of how much had been learned.

IV.   CONCLUSION

Dewey believed that the educational process should encourage open-mindedness, wholehearted involvement, and, significantly, a sense of responsibility to oneself and the wider community (Dewey, 1938). Student-initiated teaching combined with syllabus negotiation brought all the learners to be more open-minded to other's ideas, thoughts, suggestions and even criticisms, because greater control over the learning process, resources and language cannot be achieved by each individual acting alone according to his or her own preferences and collective decisions need to be arrived at by individuals achieving consensus and acting in concert. Collaborative decision-making requires the constant balancing of an individual's agenda with everyone else's as well as the balancing of particular goals with personal purposes and preferences for learning. In the classroom group, genuine autonomy has to be exercised in an interdependent way (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000, p.22). In the process of fulfilling the tasks they must be wholeheartedly involved to bring benefits not only to themselves but also to other students they "teach". Above all, it enables them to

begin to take control of their own learning in ways that will be effective in terms of goals that they have determined for themselves. This practice of negotiated syllabus helps students to break out of the cocoon of dependence on the teacher. Once this has happened, negotiation inevitably becomes an ongoing process. It is thus that the foundations of autonomy are laid.

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