

Title of Session: Benkyoukai - Autonomy in the FL Classroom

Moderator: Keiko Schneider

Guest Speaker: Kyoto Saegusa

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KeikoS: WELCOME TO BENKYOUKAI.

SunnyL: Seems like I should also greet in Japanese

EmiA: ohisashiburidesu.

KeikoS: Today we have an invited speaker, Kyoko Saegusa of University of Colorado.

KeikoS: She has a paper prepared for this presentation.

OrquideaT: in Spanish too

KeikoS: But first I want to give you a small tip.

KeikoS: Once the discussion gets lively, it may be difficult to keep up with this chat window.

KeikoS: If you see Actions menu on top right of this window...

CeciliaR joined the room.

KeikoS: You will find DETACH from the drop down menu.

KeikoS: Hi, Cecilla

KeikoS: That will make this chat window bigger and easier to follow.

SunnyL: Hi Cecilla

SunnyL: Thanks for the tip, Keiko

KeikoS looks around.

CeciliaR: hi, is this benkyoukai's forum of discussion?

HannahGst6: thanks

KeikoS: If you are not familiar with Saegusa sensei's paper, please follow the blue link.

KeikoS: <http://spot.colorado.edu/~saegusa/benkyoukai/autonomy.htm>

KeikoS nods to Cecilia, welcome!

CeciliaR: thanks!

KeikoS: Do you have any Qs so far?

SunnyL: nope

KeikoS: Then I would like to invite Saegusa sensei (sensei is teacher in Japanese) to introduce herself and...

KeikoS: Everybody please follow her to introduce yourself briefly.

KeikoS: I think we have a good group here today.

KyokoGst2: Thank you Schneider sensei, and thank you all.

KeikoS claps loudly

OrquideaT: welcome

CeciliaR: Hi, I'm Cecilia Rozen, teacher trainer and consultant in Mexico City

KyokoGst2: Obviously, I am curious why you are here. The fact that you are here suggests that you already have thought about learner autonomy, and probably have done something with it. Could I ask you to tell me what you have done in your classroom as far as learner autonomy is concerned?

KeikoS . o O (after the intro, I would ask Saegusa sensei to briefly touch her paper, so please hold the question until she is ready to take some.)

CathGst7 joined the room.

KeikoS: Hi, Cath, we are doing intro here

KyokoGst2: I guess I should begin by introducing myself and why I AM here.

KeikoS grins

SunnyL: Hi, I'm Sunny, a doctoral student at the Dept. of Educational Psychology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I'm interested in Second Language Acquisition and CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning).

KyokoGst2: I have always been a curious individual. I got interested in the learning process, not so much the teaching methods, while I was training in TESOL in 70's. I try, and I emphasize TRY, to foster independent and critical thinking in my students in my Japanese classes. I assume you are interested in the same sort of things.

OrquideaT: hi my name is Orquidea, I am a pre service teacher in Houston, Tx

EmiA: I am Emi from AZ. Saegusa sensee, Ochiai desu.

KeikoS: I am Keiko Schneider, Japanese teacher at heart and teach ESL in New Mexico, USA, occasional helpdesk volunteer at TAPPED IN.

KyokoGst2: Today, especially, I would like to explore the teacher's role in fostering learner autonomy in foreign language classes.

KyokoGst2: Would this be good enough introduction?

KeikoS . o O (everybody intro?)

KeikoS looks around the room

KyokoGst2: Great group!

CathGst7: I am a high school teacher from Victoria , Australia and am getting my kids ready for school at the moment but am interested in following the discussion

KeikoS smiles at Cath, nice to meet you.

SunnyL: Good to see you

KyokoGst2: I do not want to repeat what's in the paper, but would you like me to outline what I think learner autonomy is and how I try things out in my class to foster it?

OrquideaT: we have an international group, excellent to exchange ideas.

SunnyL: Sure, go ahead, Kyoko

KeikoS . o O (again, paper is at

<http://spot.colorado.edu/~saegusa/benkyoukai/autonomy.htm>)

SunnyL: Since I just printed it out, your summary will be helpful.

SunnyL: My advisor, Prof. Gary Cziko is also interested in autonomous language learning, and he created a new acronym, ATALL (Autonomous technology-assisted language learning)

EmiA: I have a question.

KyokoGst2: OK. I believe that a learner must eventually rely on her/himself in the learning process. Even in the school system that we have, where, unfortunately, conformity sometimes comes before independent learning, students cannot help relying on themselves to learn.

KyokoGst2: Ahn sensei, go ahead.

EmiA: In your paper, you said, "in a foreign...the target language itself is one of the.....which the collaborative process is shaped." What does it mean?

KeikoS looks at Sunny. That is interesting.

KeikoS: That is #4 on What is a classroom, if you are looking at the paper....

KeikoS: o O (in part I)

KyokoGst2: Ahn sensei, we, foreign language teachers have a unique opportunity where the very thing students are learning becomes the tool for attaining autonomy and independence.

OrquideaT: I have a question

KyokoGst2: Sure, go ahead.

OrquideaT: why the bilingual program in the U.S. has different problem when dealing with foreign languages

KyokoGst2: I am not sure I understand your question...

OrquideaT: what, I mean is that FL are very important in the curriculum, but it does not always the appropriate attention from the education system

KeikoS looks at Orquidea. yeah.

KeikoS: Orquidea, that is a great question.

OrquideaT: I hope, I am not confusing anybody

KeikoS: However it may be a little different from today's topic.

OrquideaT: could be, but it all relative

KeikoS: It might be best to stick with the stuff Kyoko sensei feels comfortable talking...

OrquideaT: ok

KeikoS looks at Kyoko sensei...

KyokoGst2: OK.

CeciliaR: Orquidea, can I ask what you mean by "appropriate attention? (what do you expect, that you're not getting)

EmiA: I have a question.

KeikoS looks at Emi sensei...

EmiA: I want to go back to my question..

KyokoGst2: I believe that, by acknowledging students as ones who are capable of making their own decisions, I think we will free both students AND teachers from what is NOT essential to learning.

OrquideaT: what, I mean is that it needs more work and more resources to function

CeciliaR: I think it's not only a question of acknowledging that, but to train ourselves as teachers in order to give this confidence to the pupils, to learn to lower our protagonism...

KyokoGst2: I agree with you 100%, Cecilia. That's the point of my paper and discussion.

KeikoS: Can we listen to Kyoko sensei for a while?

OrquideaT: excellent thought Cecelia

KeikoS: I think it is best to follow what she can share for discussion today.

KyokoGst2: So, can I assume that all of you believe in the importance of fostering learner autonomy within you students?

CeciliaR: yes...

EmiA: Yes

SunnyL: yes

HannahGst6: YES

OrquideaT: yes,

ChristinDe: yes

DebbieGst8: yes, very much so

EmiA: I have a question.

KyokoGst2: I think there are perhaps two or three steps that a teacher has to follow to make things work in your classroom.

KyokoGst2: Ahn sensei, go ahead.

EmiA: You said that "learning is a bidirectional process." Would you elaborate this?

SunnyL: I think you not only teach your students (as a teacher), but also you learn something from your students.

KyokoGst2: In this context (classroom) it means that the learner is actively involved in receiving (intaking) and giving feedback (teacher, peers). It's not simply from teacher to learner.

KyokoGst2: Sunny is right, too.

EmiA: I see.

OrquideaT: great

CeciliaR: could you continue, sensei...?

KyokoGst2: In other word, a learner constantly goes back and forth between what s/he takes in, gives out feedback to test what s/he has hypothesized is correct, and so on.

KyokoGst2: That's what I understand to be "interactive" learning. It's just not about two people talking to each other. I think it refers to the inner process of learning.

KeikoS nods solemnly

EmiA: That's why you said we have to be available 24 hours???

SunnyL: Kyoko sensei, you said that "there are perhaps two or three steps that a teacher has to follow to make things work in your classroom." and then you were stopped.

SunnyL: (waiting for the next line,.....)

KyokoGst2: Well, that's a bit different. You DO NOT have to be available for 24 hours, but it happens that way.

KeikoS: iallt.org

CathGst7: (I'm sorry to have to leave so soon but will read the transcript of the discussion when it becomes available - in my situation motivation is a big problem - compulsory language study for students who don't want to learn - so I am very interested in how to create learner autonomy...)

KeikoS: oops, sorry

KyokoGst2: Step One would be to acknowledge and accept that you are dealing with people. Step Two would be to acknowledge that you are one of them. Step Three would be to acknowledge that you are a person first and teacher second.

SunnyL: I also have to leave in a minute to pick up my daughters...

SunnyL: How can I get the transcript?

KyokoGst2: I understand.

SunnyL: (sorry for my ignorance here.)

BJ: When a member logs out the transcript is automatically emailed to them

OrquideaT: it will be sent to your e mail

DebbieGst8: Each learner is at a different stage of 'maturity' in their learning process, and this affects the degree to which they can understand their own learning needs and take responsibility for their own learning. One of the ways we are using to 'reach' students is increasing teacher/student and student/student dialogue by using computer software as a platform. This frees up the teacher to talk to students about their learning, and in many cases, this in itself is a powerful motivating tool.

KyokoGst2: Once you know your job is to relate to your student as people, ideas will start coming to you without trying.

BJ: the transcript will be archived in about a week at www.tappedin.org/transcripts

SunnyL: BJ: I understand that....but what about the part that I'll be missing?

KeikoS bows to BJ

SunnyL: I see. thanks

SunnyL: Okay... bye to everyone. It was great to meet you all and talk to you, though it was short.

SunnyL: Thank you, Kyoko sensei~

KeikoS: Thanks for coming. Join us next time.

SunnyL left the room.

KyokoGst2: I recognize that technology can play a great role in attaining learner autonomy, and given the student clientele, I encourage teachers to use technology where applicable. However, I would also not take light of what we can do person-to-person.

OrquideaT: I agree technology is great when is appropriately used

KeikoS nods profoundly

KyokoGst2: Debbie, do you feel you NEED that software to accomplish what you accomplish?

SunnyL joined the room.

DebbieGst8: Agree. But it is finding time to deal with individual student needs. By using technology (we are making our own) we ensure each student is working on their areas of need, analyzing summaries of errors and so forth, and we go round and discuss this with them. It is a part of the teaching programme.

KyokoGst2: Debbie, perhaps you can tell us more about what you accomplish with that software at a benkyoukai.

OrquideaT: Debbie for how long have you been teaching

KeikoS grins at a Kyoko sensei.

EmiA: I have another question.

KyokoGst2: Ahn sensei, douzo.

EmiA: Would you go over the relation between...

EmiA: critical thinking and autonomy?

DebbieGst8: Teaching Japanese since 1989, started at secondary level and now at tertiary. Started to develop software for kanji learning in order to meet different learner needs.

CeciliaR: I agree on the importance of technology, but if what you do with it is not proactively directed to develop autonomy, (by designing engaging tasks, for example, that demand students' auto-regulation doing them),it becomes just an other activity.

OrquideaT: thanks very much

KyokoGst2: My feeling is that you cannot help being critical if you want to be autonomous and independent. They go together naturally.

OrquideaT: not necessary

EmiA: So if...

EmiA: we could improve students' critical thinking skills....

EmiA: do you think they will be more autonomous?

CeciliaR: you have to be autonomous to bring about your critical thinking skills...

KyokoGst2: I assume you mean "question authority" kind of thinking by critical thinking? If so, yes.

DebbieGst8: There is evidence to link developing skills such as reflection and critical thinking, and the development of higher order cognitive and metacognitive knowledge and strategies, which link back to autonomy.

KyokoGst2: See, as you free yourself from the prescribed curriculum, and so on, you cannot help creating your own curriculum, as it were. This new curriculum of yours, tailored to yourself, is not going to look like one that was made by your teacher.

KyokoGst2: As a teacher, you should expect students to begin to disagree with you, to NOT admire you so much. A great teacher in my definition is one who is invisible.

KyokoGst2: One who is willing to get out of the way of students' learning.

CeciliaR: I wouldn't say "invisible", but "just available"

OrquideaT: get students attention you mean

DebbieGst8: Do you see 30 students designing their own curriculum or doing this by negotiation with each other to come up with a joint curriculum?

KeikoS: I see your point, Debbie

KyokoGst2: In a certain technique that I use to encourage students to be on their own, I do become invisible. I take great pride in being NOWHERE.

DebbieGst8: We are starting to look at working back from assessment and getting students involved in designing assessment criteria, and then working back from this to content. We can do this as we are in control of our curriculum.

OrquideaT: good strategy

KyokoGst2: Debbie, you have a point, and I struggle with this limitation daily, believe me. All I can do is to try to individualize as much as I can within the confinement of the school curriculum.

KyokoGst2: That's a good strategy, and that's how it should be, Debbie.

KyokoGst2: I am so glad to hear that you have a program that allows this, Debbie.

DebbieGst8: Individualizing is the key I think, and one way is to try and engage intrinsic motivation. Again this is different with each student, and sometimes even the student is not aware of what their own motivation is. That is why the one on one mentioned earlier is so important.

CeciliaR: I think if your guidelines before starting the activity or unit are sufficiently clear and you provide enough sources, you can become almost invisible while the students work and learn autonomously.

KyokoGst2: There are "tricks" I use to allow me to become "invisible."

OrquideaT: good point Cecilia

CeciliaR: I think collaborative work is basic for developing autonomy, more than individualizing...

KeikoS 's ears become like Dumbo

KyokoGst2: Yes, collaborative work and developing skills to allow collaborative work are very important.

CeciliaR: why, Keiko, is there too much "noise"?

KeikoS: No, I am interested in Kyoko sensei's tricks

CeciliaR: me too

DebbieGst8: Individualizing - I mean talking to individuals. I agree, that group work/collaborative work is great. Students tend to learn more from each other than me very often - they explain things differently and they offer ideas that appeal.

KyokoGst2: I list a few things in my paper and in the attachment. Perhaps, you can look at them later.

KeikoS: OK.

CeciliaR: ok

KeikoS bows

KeikoS looks at her watch

OrquideaT: I see

KeikoS: Well, I am afraid it is almost time to go.

KeikoS: Is there one last burning question from anybody?

EmiA: I do!

KyokoGst2: I hope you will see from my paper and list of activities and assignments that there are a lot of things students can do without the teacher that really help them become independent, life-long learners.

KyokoGst2: Ahn sensei, douzo.

EmiA: Language is a tool, as you said, so..

CeciliaR: A thought: many times the teacher is not autonomous enough to allow student's autonomy...it threatens his/her authority...

KyokoGst2: That's precisely the point.

EmiA: because it is a tool, do you think we should do something different from the teachers who teach more like content??

KyokoGst2: The teacher herself/himself has to be willing to become autonomous, too.

DebbieGst8: Resistance to change is quite a problem.

OrquideaT: true

KyokoGst2: That makes this task of instilling autonomy so difficult.

OrquideaT: it is a learning process

OrquideaT: it takes time and effort

CeciliaR: it also takes more time than just teaching content and waiting for a one correct answer...

KyokoGst2: Again, the teacher has to search inward and find out why s/he wants to teach.

OrquideaT: and a lot of desire to get

KeikoS looks at her watch.

DebbieGst8: If we focus more on 'process' and cut some content, would we in fact provide our students with the tools to learn content themselves and more effectively?

KeikoS: Well, I hate to interrupt, but...

KeikoS: we are really running out of time

KyokoGst2: Wow, it's been an hour?

KeikoS: I would like to hear if there is any one last word from Kyoko sensei...

OrquideaT: when is the next session?

EmiA: thank you so much.

CeciliaR: well, thank you! It was nice chatting with you all...

DebbieGst8: Would be nice to have another autonomy session. This has been great.

KyokoGst2: I started out wanting to explore the role of teacher in this process, and I hope I was able to say at least that we have to start the process right here and within.

OrquideaT: thanks everyone

KeikoS: I will show the paper URL one last time.

OrquideaT: it was a great chat

KyokoGst2: Thank you all very much. I really appreciated your participation and contribution!

KeikoS: <http://spot.colorado.edu/~saegusa/benkyoukai/autonomy.htm>

KeikoS: I thank Kyoko sensei for her contribution and..

OrquideaT: you welcome

KeikoS: everybody for the great participation!

KeikoS claps loudly

EmiA bows to Saegusa Sensee.

KyokoGst2: It's you who made this work, everyone. AND, thank you, Schneider sensei.

OrquideaT: thanks Sense

KeikoS: If you are interested in future benkyoukai, watch TI calendar and also...

KeikoS: feel free to write ot me at kschnei@sabotenweb.com

KeikoS: Thank YOU, Saegusa sensei!

KeikoS: This was a great discussion.

KyokoGst2: Thank you, thank you.