

## SHORT ARTICLES | 小論

### Supporting Learners Through Dialogue Within and Beyond the Classroom 教室内外における対話を通じた学習者のサポート

Jo Mynard, Kanda University of International Studies

Email: <Jo Mynard <jomynard@gmail.com>



#### Abstract

The purpose of this short article is to give a brief overview of some of the themes that I will explore in my talk at The Independent Learning Association conference in Kobe in September. I will briefly explain what I mean by advising, touch on some of its merits, and give examples of how it can be enacted in practice both inside and outside the classroom.

**Keywords:** *advising, reflective dialogue, learner autonomy, language learning*

#### 概要

本稿は、2018年9月に神戸で開催される学会The Independent Learning Association Conferenceにおいて発表するテーマの概要を述べるものである。学習アドバイジングで行われる対話の意義、およびその利点に触れると共に、こうした対話がいかにして教室の内外で活用できるかにつき、いくつかの例を挙げて紹介をする。

**キーワード：** アドバイジング、内省的な対話、学習者の自律性、言語学習

One of the most significant ways that educators can support language learners is through dialogue. Although dialogue can take many forms, I am particularly interested in what has been termed *advising in language learning* (ALL) (Mynard & Carson, 2012). ALL is normally a one-to-one interaction with learners which has the purpose of promoting learner autonomy. Drawing on a sociocultural view of learning (Lantolf, 2000), learning advisors and researchers have argued that this kind of discourse can have a powerful effect on learners by helping them to activate deep reflection on learning (Kato, 2012; Kato & Mynard, 2015). Unlike regular conversation, Esch (1996) notes that advising is a “system of interventions which aims at supporting students’ methodology of language learning by means of ‘conversations’, i.e., by using language in the framework of social interaction to help students reflect on their learning experience, identify inconsistencies and steer their own path” (Esch, 1996, p. 42). Colleagues at the University of Helsinki in Finland also explore how the dialogue is connected with identity construction; i.e., advising dialogue gives learners opportunities “to find and strengthen their learner voices and explore their learner

identities” (Karlsson, 2012, p. 188). Having the opportunity to reflect deeply and discuss learning with an advisor provides opportunities for these kinds of explorations.

Although this might be overly simplistic, an advising session might look something like Figure 1. The left-hand column shows pertinent areas of focus that a learning advisor helps a learner to navigate, and the right-hand column shows some of the discursive advising strategies that a learning advisor might draw upon in order to help a learner reflect deeply.

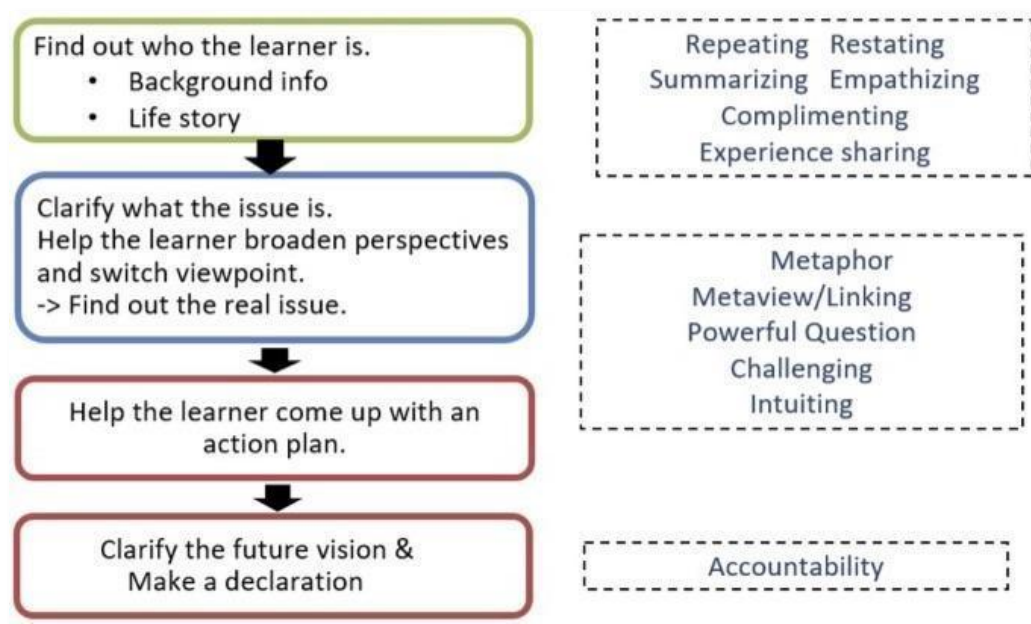


Figure 1. Example Structure of an Advising Session (Kato & Yamashita, 2015)

## Engaging Learners in Reflective Dialogue

There are various ways in which we can engage learners in reflective dialogue while simultaneously ensuring that the responsibility for learning lies with them. Depending on their previous learning experiences, it is likely that learners need support with taking responsibility for language learning. For example, we can engage them in dialogue when they are making a learning plan, choosing resources and strategies, implementing a plan of study, evaluating their progress, finding opportunities to collaborate with others, or regulating their motivational and affective states. It is helpful to consider the degree of awareness that learners have about their own learning when deciding how best to support them. Everhard (2018) conceptualizes degrees of autonomy by drawing on work by researchers within and outside the SLA literature to visualize the autonomy-heteronomy relationship. Figure 2 shows a continuum whereby learners can (hopefully!) move from being dependent on others to being autonomous. Being dependent on oneself implies the acceptance of uncertainty (Jiménez Raya, Lamb, & Vieira, 2017) which makes an advisor's role particularly important as learners navigate this.

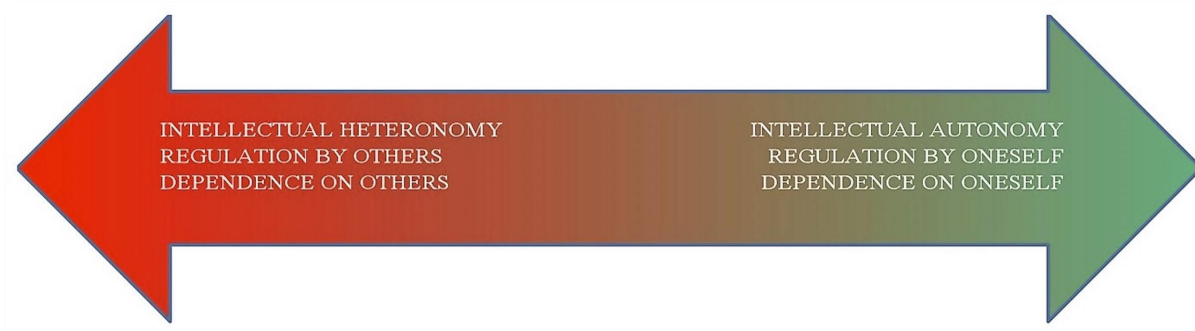


Figure 2. The Autonomy-Heteronomy Relationship (Everhard, 2018, p. 89)

In practical terms, the ways in which we work with learners who have been largely dependent on others to direct their learning will differ from ways in which we work with autonomous learners who are able to regulate their own learning. As Figure 3 shows, at the beginning of the autonomy journey, it might be effective to prompt action by giving suggestions to learners. However, as a learner becomes more aware, the advising dialogue seeks to broaden their perspectives, translate awareness into action and may promote fundamental changes in beliefs and approaches to learning (Kato & Mynard, 2015).

Figure 3 illustrates the four approaches described in Kato and Mynard's (2015) approach to advising. The term “transformational” here emphasises that ALL goes beyond simply giving learners hints and tips, but serves to promote deeper reflection on learning which can in turn lead to significant shifts in thinking and the nature of learning.

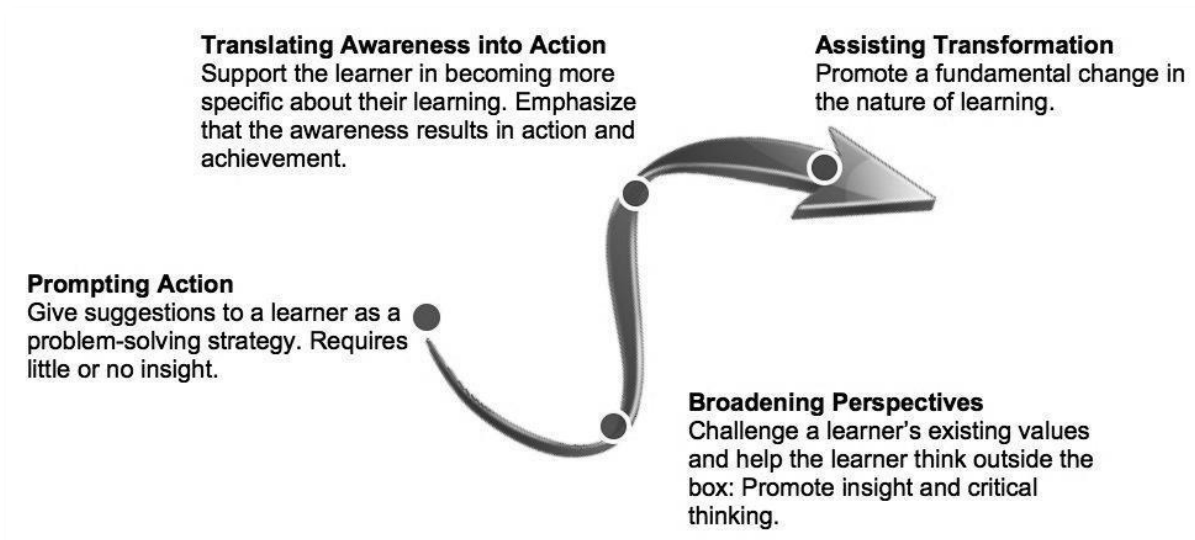


Figure 3. The Four Approaches in Transformational Advising (Kato & Mynard, 2015, p. 10)

## Written Dialogue

In addition to face-to-face advising, written advising also offers opportunities for reflective dialogue with learners. Writing has been reported to promote reflection on language learning (Little, 2007, 2018) as it has the benefit of allowing more thinking time and offers an alternative

form of expression. Leni Dam and others have long advocated the use of learning logbooks (e.g., Dam, 2009, 2018); Tim Murphey has used action logs (Murphey, 1993); and written advising has also performed a powerful learning function (Mynard & Navarro, 2011; Thornton & Mynard, 2012). In all of these cases, learners activate their inner reflective dialogues as they write about their learning. Interaction (written or spoken) with a teacher or learning advisor can help learners to go deeper, often resulting in realizations about their learning or “aha moments” (Kato & Mynard, 2015, p. xxi). A further benefit of written advising is that it can be more practical and time efficient than meeting with individual learners, particularly when working with large classes.

### Advising in the Target Language?

Whether the dialogue occurs in the target language or in the mother tongue has been debated and more research is needed. One view is that there are benefits for learners if the dialogue takes place as much as possible in the target language, as the whole process encourages the activation of agency for the target language through the target language itself (Little, 2013). Another view is that having access to the mother tongue allows the learners to go deeper without struggling to express themselves in another language; we should not deprive learners access to the mother tongue as it is a powerful cognitive tool (Yamashita, 2015). Another view might be to take a multilingual and multimodal approach to co-constructing dialogue (Koike & Blyth, 2015) which has yet to be researched in ALL. Whatever one’s views on language choice, practitioners would generally be in agreement that the learners should ideally have the choice (Kato & Mynard, 2015; Thornton, 2012).

### Promoting Autonomy Within and Beyond the Classroom

The promotion of learner autonomy through advising can be incorporated into language classes to a degree, but it is important to support learners outside the classroom too. In fact, *learning beyond the classroom* can be said to be the most powerful kind of learning and this may not necessarily involve teachers (Benson & Reinders, 2011; Reinders & Benson, 2017). One established platform for supporting learners and developing learner autonomy outside the classroom is self-access. Self-access centers have taken various forms, e.g., resource centers, conversation lounges, online hubs, language support desks, or a combination of these. However, the focus has certainly shifted in recent years towards a social language learning community (e.g., Murray & Fujishima, 2013, 2016) mainly due to technological advances and our growing awareness of how languages are learned (Mynard, 2016). Whereas traditionally self-access centers may have been the only source of materials and learning opportunities available to learners outside the classroom, nowadays, language learners have access to any number of resources and opportunities for language study and practice (Benson, 2017). However, the need for support may be greater than ever as language learners navigate the increasing opportunities available to them (Curry & Mynard, 2014). The kind of support needed depends on the learner, but it should always involve dialogue as this mediates learning. In addition, if learners have the opportunity to decide on, plan and implement a personalized course of study, advising can be a natural part of the process and can form a bridge

between the classroom and the self-access center. Activities related to awareness raising of learning and implementing a learning plan can be embedded into language classes or offered as stand-alone classes. As managing their learning is often something new for learners, having learning advisors available—particularly outside the classroom—to facilitate the process is essential.

I hope this article has provided a summary of why and how teachers might engage their learners in ALL within and beyond the classroom. My aim was to highlight the important role of dialogue about learning when aiming to promote learner autonomy. Taking this view expands the in-class opportunities and offers support for outside-class learning.

## References

- Benson, P. (2017). Language learning beyond the classroom: Access all areas. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 8(2), 135-146. Retrieved from <https://sisaljournal.org/archives/jun2017/benson/>
- Benson, P., & Reinders, H. (Eds.) (2011). *Beyond the language classroom*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Curry, N., & Mynard, J. (2014). Directions in self-access learning [Editorial]. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 5(1), 1-7. Retrieved from <https://sisaljournal.org/archives/mar14/editorial/>
- Dam, L. (2009). The use of logbooks. A tool for developing learner autonomy. In R. Pemberton, S. Toogood, & A. Barfield (Eds.), *Maintaining control: Autonomy and language learning* (pp. 125-144). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Dam, L. (2018). Developing learner autonomy while using a textbook. In K. Schwienhorst (Ed.), *Learner autonomy in second language pedagogy and research: Challenges and issues* (pp. 51-71). Hong Kong: Candlin & Mynard.
- Esch, E. (1996). Promoting learner autonomy: Criteria for the selection of appropriate methods. In R. Pemberton, E. S. L. Li, W. W. F. Or, & H. D. Pierson (Eds.), *Taking control: Autonomy in language learning* (pp. 35-48). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Everhard, C. J. (2018). Investigating the true colours of autonomy in language learning. In K. Schwienhorst (Ed.), *Learner autonomy in second language pedagogy and research: Challenges and issues* (pp. 73-103). Hong Kong: Candlin & Mynard.
- Karlsson, L. (2012). Sharing stories: Autobiographical narratives in advising. In J. Mynard & L. Carson (Eds.), *Advising in language learning: Dialogue, tools and context* (pp. 185-204). Harlow: Pearson.
- Kato, S. (2012). Professional development for learning advisors: Facilitating the intentional reflective dialogue. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 3(1), 74-92. Retrieved from <https://sisaljournal.org/archives/march12/kato/>
- Kato, S., & Mynard, J. (2015). *Reflective dialogue: Advising in language learning*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kato, S., & Yamashita, H. (2015). *Advising in language learning*. Workshop given on advising in the Kanda University of International Studies MA TESOL course on learner autonomy, Kanda University of International Studies, Chiba, Japan.
- Koike, D. A., & Blyth, C. S. (2015). Introduction. In D. A. Koike & C. S. Blyth (Eds.), *Dialogue in multilingual and multimodal communities* (pp. 1-22). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Jiménez Raya, M., Lamb, T., & Vieira, F. (2017). *Mapping autonomy in language education: A framework for learner and teacher development*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Lantolf, J. P. (2000). Introducing sociocultural theory. In J. P. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp. 1-26). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.



- Little, D. (2007). Language learner autonomy: Some fundamental considerations revisited. *Innovations in Language Learning and Teaching*, 1(1), 14-29. Retrieved from [http://languagesinitiative.ie/images/Language\\_Learner\\_Autonomy.pdf](http://languagesinitiative.ie/images/Language_Learner_Autonomy.pdf)
- Little (2013). Language learner autonomy as agency and discourse: The challenge to learning technologies. *Independence*, 39, 13-15. Retrieved from <http://lasig.iatefl.org/uploads/1/1/8/3/11836487/little.pdf>
- Little, D. (2018). Language learner autonomy, Vygotsky and sociocultural theory: Some theoretical and pedagogical reflections. In K. Schwienhorst (Ed.), *Learner autonomy in second language pedagogy and research: Challenges and issues* (pp. 5-27). Hong Kong: Candlin & Mynard.
- Murphey, T. (1993). Why don't teachers learn what learners learn? Taking the guesswork out with action logging. *English Teaching Forum*, 31(1), 6-10.
- Murray, G., & Fujishima, N. (2013). Social language learning spaces: Affordances in a community of learners. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 36(1), 141-157.
- Murray, G., & Fujishima, N. (Eds.) (2016). *Social spaces for language learning: Stories from the L-café*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mynard, J. (2016). Self-access in Japan: Introduction. *Studies in Self-Access Learning*, 7(4), 331-340. Retrieved from <https://sisaljournal.org/archives/dec16/introduction/>
- Mynard, J., & Carson, L. (2012) (Eds.). *Advising in language learning: Dialogue, tools and context*. Harlow: Pearson.
- Mynard, J., & Navarro, D. (2010). Dialogue in self-access learning. In A. Stoke (Ed.), *JALT2009 conference proceedings: The teaching-learning dialogue: An active mirror* (pp. 95-102). Tokyo: The Japan Association for Language Teaching.
- Reinders, H., & Benson, P. (2017). Research agenda: Language learning beyond the classroom. *Language Teaching*, 50(4), 561-578.
- Thornton, K. (2012). Target language or L1: Advisors' perceptions on the role of language in a learning advisory session. In J. Mynard & L. Carson (Eds.), *Advising in language learning: Dialogue, tools and context* (pp. 65-86). Harlow: Pearson.
- Thornton, K., & Mynard, J. (2012). Investigating the focus of advisor comments in a written advising dialogue. In C. Ludwig & J. Mynard (Eds.), *Autonomy in language learning: Advising in action* (pp. 137-154). Canterbury: IATEFL.
- Yamashita, H. (2015). Affect and the development of learner autonomy through advising. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 6(1), 62-85.

**Bio** Jo Mynard is a Professor in the English Department and the Director of the Self-Access Learning Center (SALC) at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) in Chiba, Japan. She holds an Ed.D. in TEFL from the University of Exeter, UK and an M.Phil. in Applied Linguistics from Trinity College, University of Dublin, Ireland. She is the founding editor of *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal* and has also co-edited four books related to learner autonomy and advising. Jo co-authored *Reflective Dialogue: Advising in Language Learning* with Satoko Kato (published in 2015 by Routledge, NY). In 2017, she was appointed Director of the Research Institute for Learner Autonomy Education (RILAE).

## A Meeting of Hearts and Minds 「心」が出会うとき



**Chika Hayashi,**  
Seikei University, Japan  
Email:  
<c-hayashi@econ.seikei.ac.jp>



**Leena Karlsson,**  
University of Helsinki  
Language Centre, Finland  
Email:  
<leena.karlsson@helsinki.fi>

**Abstract**

In our virtual dialogue across continents we puzzle out our storied professional lives and histories, our shared interests, concerns, passions and challenges as practitioner-researchers and teachers. We create “data” for our plenary and pave way to meeting each other in person in Kobe. Through our dialogue we hope to jointly (re-)construct our stories, to co-learn and co-write to better understand ourselves and each other, our inner voices and that of the other. We also hope to give the readers of Learning Learning a glimpse into our journey of exploration towards the plenary.

**Keywords:** *narrative inquiry, learner voices, co-learning, experience, affect, collaboration*

**概要**

大陸を超えた私たちのバーチャル対話では、研究的視点を持った実践家そして教員として私たち自身の教員人生、歴史、共通の関心、懸念、情熱、挑戦について考察している。私たちは神戸でのプレナリーに向けた「データ」を作り、対話を通して自分自身、お互い同士、自分たち及び他者の内なる声に対する理解を深めるために協働的にストーリーを（再）構築し学び執筆している。『学習の学習』の読者の皆様にも、私たちの探究の旅の一部をお届けします。

**キーワード：**ナラティブ・インクワイアリー、学習者の声、協働学習、経験、情意、協働

Dear Leena,

Our first encounter was a retreat for *the Learner Development Journal 2* (LDJ2), one of the JALT LD SIG publications. As the editors of LDJ2, Masuko Miyahara, Patrick Kiernan and I organised the retreat, which was held at Seikei University on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017. As one of the “distant” authors for LDJ2, you joined the retreat via Skype with Fergal Bradley, the co-author of your paper. We were physically distant (it is about 7,500 km between Finland and Japan!), but listening to your talk, I gradually felt some empathy and noticed that there are some similarities about our educational practices and approaches. Feeling a sense of empowerment, my experience at the retreat was distinctively imprinted on my mind. Then a few months after this “catalytic experience”, I was invited to be a joint plenary speaker with you at ILA 2018. It was a big surprise to me not only because I did not expect that I would be part of the plenary session but also because it was something that I had never heard of or experienced before. More importantly, it was a joint plenary with you, Leena! With both

excitement and apprehension, I sent email to you for the first time in September 2017. This was the very start of our collaborative conversation, which has now continued for over six months already.

Dear Chika,

Again, I am writing to you, having a conversation with you through my written text. Since starting to prepare our joint plenary for ILA 2018 we have become true textual friends: we *talk* about our research and practice through writing emails. We have thus become co-writers who read and interpret each other's texts in order to find the themes we want to focus on in our plenary. When I looked at some of the "big" themes we have so far named in our emails, that is, well-being at work, professional development, learning as practitioner-researchers, and being and becoming co-learners with our students, I realized that they are all processes inherently collaborative in nature. We have both collaborated and co-written with other colleagues in the past: I, for example, have carried out autonomy-inspired narrative inquiries with colleagues from my own context, the ALMS programme in Helsinki. And, in fact, the very first time we "met" was in 2015: we were co-writers for the *Stories of Practices* (edited by Barfield & Delgado). This collaboration and writing across continents also happened in a narrative, dialogic manner.

We have also "met" each other through our published texts before and after our virtual meetings. Inspired by van Manen (2002) I have come to think of research reading as re-writing: as readers, we "fill in the gaps" in other people's writing. In our own publications, we have written about the "small" themes that we both feel strongly about, that is, our histories, passions, concerns, motivations, and challenges as narrative practitioner-researchers. These will be one thread in our joint plenary. So far, as readers of each other's texts and emails, we have been filling in the gaps with enthusiasm! I often feel it is difficult to describe and summarize the richness of detail in my context of work when writing; texts only give a glimpse of an experience. The experience itself, its dialogic uniqueness, is often missing. And yet, writing in qualitative research writing aims to give the reader "an evocative sense of being addressed by the text" (van Manen, 2002). I feel that we are practising this way of writing in these emails.

In our live conversation in Kobe I visualise us sharing our research stories and the stories behind the writing of those stories (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) but also having a heart-to-hearts about our daily life on our landscapes of practice.

Dear Leena,

Through the interactive process of re-storying, as textual friends, we have been engaged in connecting, echoing, developing, questioning and constructing (Savvidou, 2008). Each story was developed and became more vivid as we connected each other's stories to our own. I realised that one of the things we have in common is our deep interest in learners and that we both emphasise the importance of learners' voices including their feelings and emotions. We both have tried to elicit and understand their inner voices using various tools such as diaries and drawings, and even reflect on our professional and personal selves, which we think are not possible to separate from each other. Moreover, both of us believe that learners and teachers including counsellors have a symbiotic relationship to each other, which reminded me of a "parallel process" (Levin and Shanken-Kaye,



1996). It is the phenomenon of shared affective experience; one's emotion moves another person's affect. If a student feels good, so does a teacher, and vice versa.

Minimising the apprehension and maximising the excitement that I had at the beginning of our collaborative conversation, I found myself enjoying sharing my professional and personal stories with you. Moreover, I even came to realise that our collaborative conversation itself became a parallel process. Your emotions moved my affect and we shared affective experiences by sharing each other's stories. I hope that our parallel process will be even more dynamic and intensified in our joint plenary at ILA 2018, Leena!

Dear Chika,

It is so true that “shared emotional experiences” happen when stories are told and their impact on the tellers is shared! We both have a concern for learner voices that need to be heard, supported and respected; we know students will learn from telling their stories from experience and we both want to support them in doing this. When I was reading about conversational collaborative research in *Creative Practitioner Inquiry in the Helping Professions* (edited by Speedy & Wyatt, 2014), it struck me that, in a way, through these virtual conversations we are writing a collective professional biography. In particular the chapter on collective biography as a method by Sue Porter inspired me into thinking of our preparation work as a kind of collective biography, although perhaps not in the strictest sense of term.

I had a flashback to the very early days when I started working with language learning histories and invited my students to do collaborative memory work: they discussed, shared and co-wrote their collective stories. For me as their teacher, it was one way of truly “hearing” students' *insider* experiences and their learner voices. They illustrated the stories with photos and drawings and, in their discussions, often had vivid flashbacks that opened up windows into the classrooms of their past. Engaging in collective biography of this kind was a way of for the students to listen to each other's stories, to reminisce together and to co-write personally meaningful, empowering texts with their peers.

The two of us are in the process of re-storying our professional pasts as practitioners, researchers and persons. We are busy exploring our umbrella theme, a collaborative reflection on our professional journeys with learners' voices, and yet, I feel, we started our collaboration, not that long ago, “not knowing” (Porter, p. 185). From the very beginning, however, I have experienced the deep resonances of our professional and personal stories from our different contexts, our unique narrative landscapes of research and practice. Just like in my students' memory work, the snowball is rolling: memories re-surface, I am in the process of naming and choosing epiphanies, critical moments and episodes, and I have started reconstructing my narrative, yet again, in this new timeplace through this on-going virtual dialogue.

I wonder if the idea of collective biography and memory work will open up new horizons for us and make our collaborative writing about, analysing and theorizing the work we do more experience-based and holistic. At the ILA conference, we will have the opportunity to meet in person and to discuss, to share and care, and, perhaps, a web of experiences will emerge, unique and individual but also connected and shared, our experiences interwoven with our students'. I feel

we will know more in September and understand better how we have promoted our pedagogies for autonomy and what we could/should do next.

## References

- Ashwell, T., Miyahara, M., Kiernan, P., & Hayashi, C. (2018). An interview with the co-editors of Issue 2 of *The Learner Development Journal Issue*, "Qualitative Research Into Learner Development." *Learning Learning*, 24(3), 66-70. Retrieved from <http://ld-sig.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/LDJ-Interviews.pdf>
- Barfield, A., & Delgado, N. (Eds.). (2013). *Autonomy in language learning: Stories of practices*. Canterbury: IATEFL. Learner Autonomy SIG. Retrieved from <https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/311760>
- Levin, J., & Shanken-Kaye, J. M. (1996). *The self-control classroom: Understanding and managing the disruptive behaviour of all students, including those with ADHD*. Dubuque, IO: Kendall/Hunt.
- Richardson, L., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2005). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 959-967). London: Sage.
- Savvidou, C. (2009). Storytelling our learning: A narrative approach to language teacher education. In B. Beaven (Ed.), *IATEFL 2008 Exeter conference selections* (pp. 56-58). Canterbury: IATEFL.
- Speedy, J., & Wyatt, J. (2014). *Creative practitioner inquiry in the helping professions*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Van Manen, M. (2002). *Writing in the dark. Phenomenological studies on interpretive inquiry*. London, Ontario: The Althouse Press.

## Bios

Leena Karlsson is University Lecturer in English at the University of Helsinki Language Centre, Finland. Chika Hayashi is an Associate Professor at Seikei University, Tokyo.

## Creating ILA 2018 Together: Plans, Hopes and Reflections from the Conference Chairs 共に創る ILA 2018: 大会主催者の抱負

*Whose Autonomy? Voices and Agency in Language Learning*

Kobe, Japan

September 5th – September 8th, 2018

<<https://ila2018.org/>>

Steve Brown, Ann Mayeda, & Hisako Yamashita, ILA2018 Conference Chairs



**Steve:** Someone asked me why we chose this particular theme -- *Whose Autonomy? Voices and Agency in Language Learning* -- for ILA 2018. I actually find it easier to think in terms of how it came about. The three of us were tossing ideas around, sometime in early 2017 I think, and **voices** and **agency** were the two key words which leapt out and remained a central part of the conversation. For me, one particularly strong influence was Kelleen Toohey's chapter in the "parrot book" (Toohey, 2007), where she talks about learners as being "not agentive or autonomous on their own," but rather "that the social setting in which they participated both imposed constraints on, and enabled their agency." (p. 232)

For all three of us, I think, the voices of individual learners within the language learning process is an essential part of our own understanding of how the process works: how those voices, together with others (of other learners, teachers...), serve to exercise individual agency within their community/ies (be it the class, in self-access spaces, groups of friends, online groups...).

And I think/hope that's feeding into the kind of conference we're trying to put together. Not just in terms of the content of plenary and other sessions, but across the conference as a whole, in the way it's formed.

**Hisako:** Yes, and one of our missions as educators in this field is to encourage and help learners realize that they can be in touch with their feelings and emotions in their language learning process. --and to discover that their voices are their own precious resources that will help them reach their goals in self-fulfilling ways. We are looking forward to hear presentations that will touch on how teachers and advisors can support learners in classrooms, self-access environments, or in advising sessions to learn to hear their own voices and to apply their reflections into their actual language learning journeys.

**Ann:** One thing that has struck me as we have worked towards this conference (well, even before) has been that all three of us work in the same environment, with the same group of students, and are generally on the same page when we discuss issues in agency and voice in our daily learner-teacher community. This is positive in the sense that we don't always need to say much to be understood and move forward. The downside is that we might *assume* understanding by

others and in a sense lack the diversity of thought, opinion and action required to challenge ourselves in our own practices.

Organizing and hosting the conference has already been a great way for us to peek into others' ideas about the theme and for us to realize that it can be perceived quite differently. This, I think, is why it is so exciting to be able to bring everyone together under one roof. While it might be easy to work in a vacuum, the more challenging conversations can serve to stimulate and broaden our thoughts and actions, right?

**Steve:** Absolutely. And as we approach the conference, I can already feel there's a kind of to-ing and fro-ing going on between reaching out to others who'll be at the conference, hearing their voices; then reaching back in to make sense of what those voices offer in the context of our own learning/teaching environment; and then reaching back out again to see how we can empower voices and agency at the conference. Aside from the plenaries by James Lantolf and Jo Mynard, examples of this include: the plenary "dialogue" between Leena Karlsson and Chika Hayashi; interactive poster sessions; and *Video Voices* -- short videos of learners and practitioners around the globe (including some who may be unable to attend the conference in person).

There are workshops/symposia on developing learner voices and agency through Model United Nations, self-access learning in practice, fostering children's autonomy, and advising strategies. The programme also includes short papers and posters on agency/autonomy in self-access centres and in the classroom, motivation and autonomy/self-directedness, identity, reflection and journal writing, blogging, teletandem learning, peer reflective dialogues, teacher/student agency . . . and a wide range of other practices and issues.

We're particularly excited to be holding a parallel student conference on one of the days (open to all participants to observe), where students from different schools and universities have the opportunity to share their learning experiences, before presenting their insights to the main conference. There are still many details to work out, but the conference is taking shape week by week, and we invite you in September to add *your* voices to the shared experience of ILA 2018.

## Reference

Toohey, K. (2007). Conclusion: Autonomy/agency through socio-cultural lenses. In A. Barfield and S. H. Brown (Eds.), *Reconstructing autonomy in language education: Inquiry and innovation* (pp. 231-42). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

**Bios** The three of us work together in the Department of English Language and Culture at Konan Women's University, the host for ILA 2018. Aside from our teaching responsibilities, we all act as learning advisors in e-space, the Department's self-access centre. **Hisako** is the current president of Japan Association for Self-Access Learning (JASAL). Her research interests include affect, affordances, and reflective dialogues. In addition to her teaching and advising duties, **Ann** coordinates the Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYLs) program and is active in primary teaching training programs in Japan and Nepal. Her current research interest centers on the impact of learner-centered practices on teacher beliefs and practices in other subject areas. Apart from being a (part-time) advisor, **Steve** is currently Director of the University's Center for External Affairs, responsible for study abroad programmes and visiting overseas students as well as domestic outreach programmes. His present research interests centre around learner agency and learners' imagined future selves.