

interaction is conducive to the development of learner autonomy and how the learner herself attempted to become aware of what Nakai referred to as her “ideal L2 self” through social interaction. The digital media, such as the video game Doko Roko, used by the student during her learning process, illustrated the multifaceted role that digital media can nowadays play in the language learning process.

In addition to the theoretical and luckily often very practical as well as interactive events, the conference offered a varied social programme, including a Sake tasting and a dinner at a traditional Japanese Izakaya. During the final sharing session, one of the student assistants said that she had lately experienced a lack of

motivation during her studies but that interacting with some of the participants and experiencing the vivid atmosphere at the conference has given her a new push. It is comments like this which show us how important it is to listen carefully to each other’s voices. We can only say that we deeply enjoyed attending such a great event. It was great to hear so many new voices and to listen to our own voices from a new and fresh perspective.

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Reflections on ILA 2018

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This was my first time to go to an ILA conference, and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. In April this year I started a new teaching job, and going to Kobe for ILA2018 was a refreshing break for me ahead of the Autumn semester. The thought-provoking title of the conference—*Whose Autonomy? Voice and Agency in Language Learning*—had me thinking long and hard about the meaning of **voice** and **agency** and how important they are within the development of autonomous learning processes. The way the conference was organised also led me to reflect on individual learners and how I can help them make choices and take responsibility for their learning. I felt encouraged to find new ways in my work to promote autonomous learning inside and beyond the classroom.

One of the main takeaways from ILA2018 for me was the importance of advising and reflective dialogue to help learners develop autonomously. In her plenary titled *Supporting Learning Through Dialogue Within and Beyond the Classroom*, Jo

Mynard talked about the importance of advising which she emphasized is the most powerful tool for helping students as it can facilitate meaningful learning beyond the classroom. She touched on Kato and Mynard’s (2016, pp. 9-18; see also Mynard 2018, p. 28) *transformational advising* approach that goes beyond simply giving learners hints and tips: It supports them through a process of intentional reflective dialogue that aims to promote deeper critical reflection on learning and lead to major shifts in thinking, improvements in learning, and learner autonomy. Later on in the conference, I attended Kato and Mynard’s workshop on *Practical Advising Strategies for Promoting Reflective Dialogue*, where participants had an opportunity to do some face-to-face practice advising sessions. Working in pairs, we enjoyed trying out various basic yet very practical strategies such as **repeating** and **summarizing** what a learner has said, focusing on the learner’s **tone of voice** and **words expressing emotions**.

Another main takeaway for me was the importance of creating a space where students have opportunities to find and develop their passions and interests, not just their immediate language requirements, so as to nurture their long-term motivation. Fortunately, I was able to attend the pre-conference tour of three self-access centers (SACs) in the Kobe area and learn about the different features of these centers. Konan Women's University *e-space* was particularly impressive in that it includes a large and well-organized collection of graded readers, thus offering opportunities for students to find interesting and suitable reading/listening materials. *e-Space* also provides students very good opportunities to take ownership of the spaces, for example, by creating specific places on the walls where students can post a note expressing what their motivation is and what their goals and visions are.

I also had a chance to speak with some experienced SAC-practitioners who kindly shared stories of practice and transformation in self-access facility design and management (e.g., Taylor, 2014; Thornton, 2015). As a result of these serendipitous encounters, I soon searched and found that there is a wealth of recent and relevant literature (e.g., Carson, 2015; Chavez & Pena Clavel, 2015; Rubesch & Barrs, 2014; Werner & Von Joo, 2018), containing a lot of practical advice and suggestions on what to consider and what questions to ask when looking into developing self-access learning environments. At my university I am hoping to create some self-access learning opportunities such as more of an online presence to supplement in-person learning opportunities, so I was fortunate to make such connections and find these resources.

I was impressed by how very well everything was organized: The conference team did a fantastic job of putting together a varied programme that aimed to highlight learner voices and promote reflective understanding of how they relate to the development of learner (and teacher) agency and autonomy. The 3-day programme included a pre-conference tour of three nearby SACs, two solo plenaries, one collaborative plenary,

symposia/workshops, a model United Nations, a parallel student conference, an online “video voices” pilot project, and a large number of interactive poster sessions and interesting presentations on a wide range of topics related to the conference theme, including autonomy/agency in self-access centers and in the classroom, motivation, peer reflective dialogues, learning strategies, and advising strategies. The pre-conference SACs tour was an inspiring experience, and I attended numerous interesting presentations that it would be impossible to cover in a brief conference reflection. I am glad, however, to have the opportunity to elaborate on some of my ILA2018 experiences in a Collaborative Reflections piece with my fellow attendee, Naomi Fujishima (forthcoming in the ILA Proceedings on the ILA website in Spring 2019). To conclude, I would like to express my thanks to the organizers—especially Steve Brown, Ann Mayeda, and Hisako Yamashita—for hosting ILA2018 at Konan Women's University. The well-designed conference handbook (downloadable from <http://ila2018.org/news/handbook>) is a testament to the professionalism and dedication that went into creating such a great event. I would also like to thank everyone who took part in the conference for contributing to it in many and various ways.

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Learners about Learning Student Conference

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In conjunction with the 8th Independent Learning Association Conference, “Whose Autonomy? Voices and Agency in Language Learning held at Konan Women’s University in Kobe, Japan, the Kansai Get Together group of the JALT Learner Development SIG, held the 3rd Annual Student Conference entitled Learners about Learning. In this short review, we describe and reflect on the event, share student feedback and offer suggestions for those interested in holding similar events simultaneously with teacher conferences.

The JALT LD SIG Kansai Get Together Group has previously held two student conferences called the Kansai to the World Conference (K2W) (Aden et al., 2017). They were aimed more towards university students focusing on global related issues facing Japan.

This year’s conference, Learners about Learning, held at Konan Women’s University in Kobe, Japan was organized by Agnes Patko, Ann Flanagan and Katherine Thornton. It aimed at providing an opportunity to local and international senior high school and university students to discuss issues of and share experiences and ideas about their language learning. In preparation for the poster conference, students were asked to think about their language learning experience and what made it meaningful to them. They were

encouraged to include ways that helped them to study language like:

- study resources (YouTube, movies, music, Apps, online resources, chats ...)
- language opportunities (English conversations, activities with international students, events at school or your self-access center ...)
- study abroad experiences
- projects in class
- any other activities or projects or ways of studying English.

Before the conference began, students had lunch together which gave them the opportunity to get to know each other in an informal situation as well as calm those presentation jitters. After lunch, Agnes Patko and Katherine Thornton lead fun ice-breaking activities to get students to learn more about each other since they were from different schools in Japan.

At the beginning of the conference, students placed their posters on tables or hung them on the wall. They then did a 20-minute “Gallery Walk” where students toured the room to read the posters and write questions on Post-It notes which presenters could include when they gave their presentation. This was led by Ann Flanagan. This was very effective because it gave weaker students the time needed to engage with text and have the