

Looking Forward

今後のイベント

JALT2023 International Forum

Title - Thinking in different ways: Perspective-taking for growth

Amelia Yarwood

Facilitator

On Saturday evening (25th Nov) between 5:35 and 7:05 in the Multi-purpose hall there will be five individuals standing proudly by their posters. Just as their posters will explore the notion of perspective-taking for growth, audience members will seek to take on new perspectives on language learning pedagogies and practices. At its core, perspective-taking is the consideration of alternative perspectives, the seeking of new information and an openness to new ideas or experiences. As educators, we know that seeing the world through the eyes of others can help us to expand our understanding of who we are, how we interact with the world around us, and how others move through the world in their own unique ways. This year's forum tackles the concept of perspective-taking by asking:

- What kinds of perspectives should we encourage learners to explore? Why?
- What kind of perspectives have been explored in your language classrooms?
- How can materials and resources be used to explore different perspectives?
- What processes are involved in challenging learners' current perspectives?
- What benefits do learners gain from taking on novel perspectives?
- How do learners' past experiences inform their current attitudes toward perspective-taking?

So, hold off on the post-conference drinks and join the LD-SIG forum presentations at the JALT2023 International Conference in Tsukuba, Ibaraki, Japan.

Poster Presentations

Mind the Gap: Student-Developed Resources for Mediating Transitions into Self-Access Learning

Daniel Hooper, Tokyo Kasei University

Making the transition from classroom language learning to a self-access center (SAC) can be a daunting prospect for many learners. This poster is based on a study examining the discomfort experienced by learners transitioning into a SAC and the different cognitive, social, and symbolic resources (Zittoun, 2007) that can help to scaffold this environmental change. Based on a longitudinal ethnography of the LC, a SAC-based student-led learning community, this study determined various sources of anxiety for new SAC users and the ways in which the learning community attempted to respond to these issues. This poster presentation will highlight how gaps in knowledge between exam-focused English study in secondary education and communication-focused English in SAC social learning spaces contributed to learner anxiety in addition to insufficient social scaffolding for SAC newcomers. I will also explain how LC members responded to these problems by operationalizing learners' existing skills, proactively engaging new members, and providing low-anxiety modes of access to new knowledge. In summary, this poster will highlight the various sociocultural obstacles that SAC newcomers must negotiate and the valuable role of student learning communities as socializing agents bridging the gap between learners' past and future worlds.

A New Paradigm: Exploring LD from an English as Lingua Franca Perspective

Ian Hurrell, Toyo University

The role of English in the world has changed greatly during the 21st century. As English is being used more and more as a common language in multicultural contexts, it is often cited that speakers of English as a second language are now more likely to be using English to communicate with non-native speakers (NNS) than with native speakers (NS). As a result, many are now calling for a shift from a native speaker model of language teaching to an English as lingua franca (ELF) model in order to reflect this change. This presentation will start with a brief overview of some of the core tenets of teaching English from an ELF perspective, such as, transcultural communication, translanguaging, a focus on intelligibility, etc. Then, the presenter would like to discuss with the audience some of the challenges and practical methods of introducing these concepts using the results of a questionnaire designed to investigate the perspectives of Japanese university students toward the ELF model of language learning.

Classroom practice: Encouraging learners to broaden their perspectives

Michelle Jerrems, Kanda University of International Studies

Research has shown that real-life experiences such as studying abroad can encourage learners to think about alternative perspectives, and seek out new information or ideas (Enberg, 2013). However, not all learners are able to experience such opportunities as studying abroad, especially in recent years due to the spread of coronavirus. This poster presentation will investigate what things we can do in the classroom to encourage learners to broaden their perspectives through a focus on classroom processes and activities that promote a 'reflective learning style' through the encouragement of student-led inquiry, critical thinking, learner autonomy and reflective learning. This classroom or learning style involves students' reflecting on what they have learned, analyzing their experiences, and finding alternative ways to improve (Flanagan, 2022). The researcher will draw on anecdotal evidence to outline the perspectives explored and methods used. Specifically, the poster presentation will focus on the use of classroom processes and activities including discussion, debate, speaking tests, literature and media review, essay planning, essay writing, and post-activity and assignment reflective tools. Through these processes and activities, students are encouraged to develop critical thinking skills and become more aware of their own learning processes. In this way, they can broaden their perspectives and seek out new information and ideas.

Developing New Perspectives on Writing through Genre

Patrick Kiernan, Meiji University

Writing at university is naturally focused on academic writing. Yet many students struggle to recognise that academic writing differs from language they encounter in other contexts, often resulting in inappropriate borrowings of language derived from informal talk or elsewhere. At the same time, those trained only in academic writing may find that they are trapped in the formal suit of the language of academic writing struggling to adapt to other writing contexts. This presentation reports on a course designed to promote growth and a broader perspective on writing by raising awareness of genre and giving students opportunities to develop their voices through a range of different writing tasks. These tasks include a recipe; a comparative service/shop/product review; formal and informal email exchanges; a blog introduction and personal narrative; and an exam essay. Each task was introduced through models and consciousness raising activities to draw attention to the features of the writing genre. After the writing task, students also compared the way each of their writing samples reflected the genre. Samples of the materials used, student

writing, and feedback on the course will be introduced in this poster presentation. The materials used will be available to participants and I welcome ideas or suggestions.

Recalibration: questions, demonstrations, and requirements from a new perspective

Steve Paton, Chikushi Jogakuen University

Students often engage in counterproductive behaviours which hinder the development of their language skills. Classroom silence, unwillingness to ask clarifying questions, and avoidance strategies are all-too-familiar problems that many teachers face. The reasons behind students consistently bringing these behaviours with them into the language classroom are often deep-seated aspects of culture pertaining to face-saving and perceptions of power-distance (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov, 2010). From the perspective of someone raised and educated within the culture, no frame of reference might exist against which to compare and reevaluate such common classroom practices. It falls to teachers to provide new perspectives for students to view their own behaviours by, whereby they might come to want for themselves to take alternative approaches to classroom activities. Teachers can recalibrate students' classroom behaviours by having them notice for themselves how counterproductive such behaviours would be in other communicative situations. For instance, students often leave a prolonged silence upon being asked a question by a teacher, but balk at the suggestion that they should try, even once, waiting just as long before answering a question from a friend at lunchtime. In this presentation, the presenter will highlight questions, demonstrations, and course requirements that have helped students come to view counterproductive behaviours from a new, but familiar and powerfully-motivating perspective- that of just about every other social situation they ever find themselves in.

LD30 Post-Conference Publication

Call for Reflections and Articles / リフレクションと記事の募集

All presenters at the LD30 Conference are invited to submit a reflection or article on their presentation for publication in the Post-Conference Publication, "Learning for Change and Action, Making a Difference for the Future". This will form a Special Issue of *Learning Learning*, the biannual publication of the Learner Development SIG. All article submissions should be made via the PCP email address ld30pcp@gmail.com.

LD30 Conferenceのすべての発表者は、ポストコンファレンス特集号「変化と行動のための学習、未来への変化をもたらす」に掲載するために、発表に基づいた振り返りや記事を提出するよう招待されています。これは、Learner Development SIGが年2回発行する『Learning Learning』の特集号という形を取る予定です。記事の投稿はすべて、PCPのEメールアドレス ld30pcp@gmail.com を通じて行ってください。

Both students and teachers are welcome to make a contribution. For more details see: [LD 30 PCP Call for Reflections and Articles](#)

学生も教師も投稿を歓迎する。詳細はこちらをご覧ください: [LD 30 PCP Call for Reflections and Articles](#)

The LDJ7 Editorial Team Reflect on *The Learner Development Journal* 7, “Challenging the Conventions of Learner Development Research”

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Right now (November 2023), we are in the final stages of work on Issue 7 of *The Learner Development Journal*. We came together in 2021, thanks to a shared enthusiasm for the experience we each had as writers participating in the communities created around earlier issues of LDJ, Ryo in issue 2 “Qualitative Research and Learner Development” and 3 “Identities and Transitions”, Ellen in issue 5 “The Multilingual Turn in Learner Development”, and Aya in issue 6 “Learning Beyond the Classroom.” Each of us has a different “take” on what we mean by “challenging the conventions” but we share a fascination with learner emotions and the interplay between our identities as teachers, learners and writers. Below we discuss how we came together as an editorial team, the experiences we had as authors in earlier issues LDJ, and why we wanted to focus on challenging the conventions of learner development research. We hope this will arouse your curiosity, whet your appetite in relation to LDJ7 and encourage you to think about getting involved in a future issue of LDJ.

HOW WE CAME TOGETHER AS AN EDITORIAL TEAM: CONNECTIONS THROUGH LD SIG AND LDJ

Ellen Head: Hearing Aya speaking online about dilemmas and trajectories in adolescents’ language learning at the Learner Development Forum at JALT 2020 made me think we could put forward a theme proposal for the Learner Development journal. I was fascinated by the way she drew on her own experience and put this together with interview data and research literature, looking at how learners could reinterpret failure as a source of strength. She was asking new questions. Her use of “Trajectory Equifinality Modelling” (Sato, 2006) as a way to understand life histories, relating that to gender issues in rural Japan, was very thought-provoking. At the time, I had been interviewing students about their experience of online learning during the pandemic, and reflecting on how positioning impacted students’ willingness to communicate (Head, 2022). Our first suggestions for a call for papers included learner emotions in the wake of COVID and how that experience had brought out autonomy in some but not in all learners. Thanks to Aya’s connections, we were able to ask Ryo Moriya to join us. At some point I realized I had already met him at ILA 2018 conference in Kobe and still had the handout of his presentation (about measuring a learner’s emotions and heart rate during an advising session). He shared our curiosity about life-trajectories and research methods which attempt to capture both the subtleties of individual experience and the connection to a larger picture. Thus the theme of “challenging the conventions” emerged.

Ryo Moriya: For me, writing for LDJ was an unforgettable experience that expanded my connections with others. As a first-year MA student, I had read numerous papers on my interests in sociocultural theory and advising, many of which discussed the development of a few people in detail. However, many of the studies in the classes I was taking at the time were based on statistical analysis, and I remember being repeatedly told, “we need at least 30 subjects.” At the time, the terms “qualitative research” and “quantitative research” were not in my mind at all. I was simply bewildered by the gap between what I was reading voluntarily and what was covered in class, and I was unsure if my understanding was wrong. When I talked about my research with people around me, they twisted my head again and again. Some of my seniors even said to me, “Our research is science,” as if my research was unscientific and inappropriate (they may not have meant to offend me, but it is hurtful when someone close to me says something like that). Today,

I would be able to explain Kuhn's (1962) philosophy of science (the idea that "truth" can change depending on paradigms or worldviews) and confidently refute those seniors, but at that time, I did not have the right words to say back to them. I even sometimes cried at my immaturity and inadequacy, wondering if I was not suited for research. But through the personal connections I made due to LDJ editors Christina Gkonou and others, I have come to realize that I was not alone and in fact it was the exclusivity of the research paradigm that needed challenging.

Aya Hayasaki: Like Ryo, I was feeling the sense of loneliness like a lost child in academia, until I became a contributor to LDJ6. I have been working on rather peripheral topics in underrepresented contexts in current applied linguistics research particularly in Japan. My main interest has been in inequalities regarding opportunities to learn English and after learning English, and I started my PhD by exploring life stories of female learners from rural Japan—the kind of context I myself come from. When I joined the response community of contributors and editors for LDJ6 "Learning Beyond the Classroom", I met practitioners working on topics that were similar to my own, such as exploring learners' agency in resource-limited contexts and teaching learners to critically reflect on their learning and develop their own learning goals. This was an empowering moment for me, giving me a safe space to nurture my identity as a qualitative researcher who takes positionality and reflexivity seriously.

Ryo Moriya: One of the features of LDJ which struck me as an author for LDJ2, was the unique publication process that took about one and a half to two years to complete, while exchanging opinions with the editors and other contributors. It was so different from anything I had ever heard of that I could not even imagine at the start, how it would proceed. However, as a first-year MA student and a novice in qualitative research at the time, writing the paper through dozens of close communications with various teachers was the best learning experience for me. When I met the editors and contributors for the first time at the meet-up at Seikei University, I was the only graduate student, while the other contributors were teachers who had already established their careers to some extent. I sometimes wondered if I was worthy of being named alongside them, but I am grateful to the editors and contributors for their thoughtful advice and comments and for the supportive environment they provided until the very end (Moriya, 2018). Looking back, I feel that unfortunately I needed to improve in many areas, such as responding to peer review comments and making revisions, because it was almost the first time for me to write up a paper. However, developing this paper provided a memorable experience as a learner and contributor thanks to this journal. In fact, I notice that when I read a paper, my reading speed and comprehension depend on whether or not I can meet the author and get an image of his/her personality. Related to this, in many journals, there is an aspect of uncertainty because we do not know whether the paper will be accepted until the very end, but having the paper accepted at the proposal stage allowed me as a contributor (with a junior Ami Ishizuka) to write the paper for LDJ3 with a relaxed mood (Moriya & Ishizuka, 2019). I hope that as editors, we have offered that kind of mood to LDJ7 authors.

Ellen Head: Maybe this is a good place to say a bit more about the process of working on LDJ7. In LDJ7, we formed three thematic groups, one broadly concerned with learner emotions and psychology, the second focussed on classroom-based approaches to promoting learner development and the third interested in innovative ways of writing about teaching as a form of self-investigation or auto-ethnography. Between June and November 2022 we had on average three online get-togethers in which we talked in small groups about the draft articles which were being developed. In some cases the research was still being done at the time of the first meeting. I joined the group concerned with learner emotions. What impressed me most was the joy that one of the members showed when talking about her teaching. She could see that her students were shy but she had confidence that they would develop during one school year, and they did. As it

happened, some of the members of this small group were researching their PhDs during the time they were writing for LDJ and were much better read than I in the field of learner emotions. They were able to offer peer feedback to each other, so the group process was still an effective medium for scaffolding writing, even though sometimes I was the person who was learning the most. The written papers do not always catch the whole of the experience, since the things which emerge during a zoom chat or real chat inevitably give it another dimension. We considered making some kind of video part of LDJ7 but we decided that maintaining a confidential space was more important and would not be consistent with videoing our sessions for those outside the group. So we didn't end up venturing into multimedia.

CHALLENGING THE CONVENTIONS

Ellen Head: The idea of challenging the conventions can be interpreted in many ways. In the call for papers, we were influenced by the fact that the pandemic was still going on, and the conditions of learning seemed to have changed utterly from what they had been pre-pandemic. Three aspects of ELT changed radically during the period 2020-2021: online learning became accepted much more widely as a normal and inevitable practice, study abroad appeared to be in jeopardy and so the idea of online study abroad appeared and last but not least, the ability of AI to provide fast and accurate translation raised questions about the future role of teachers and use of AI in teaching. The situation is still changing and causing many changes in our practices as teachers, as learners and participants in communities. The idea of challenging the conventions emerged from our feeling that the conventions of classroom learning had been challenged by circumstances. At the same time, there were multiple ways in which we could understand challenging the conventions of research. Research such as Ryo's and Aya's seemed to challenge the conventions by focusing on the individual learner. One of the things that we were all interested in was looking at learners and learning as part of a dynamic system. Although we are hesitant to use the term "complex dynamic systems theory", at least we could say that as a metaphor, the idea of dynamic systems has allowed us to look at an individual's experience without assuming that learning is a linear chain of cause and effect. As John H. Schumann writes in the introduction to Dörnyei et al. (2014), "[Dynamic systems theory] forces us to rethink our conceptions about cause and categories; it makes us deal with the way the world actually works not simply the way we all think it works...and leaves us open to the notion of investigation without an expectation of an ultimate answer." (p. xvii). Several of the papers in LDJ7 have been inspired by this kind of approach of tracking emotions or autonomy development in one or two individuals over time and experimenting with different ways of quantifying or interpreting the findings. Aya, can you say a word or two about how the theme emerged?

Aya Hayasaki: For me the idea of challenging conventions takes me back into the story of my own research. Initially I believed the goal of my research was clear. My LDJ6 project was also the first step of my doctoral research, concerning my experience as a woman from a rural area whose life choices have been broadened through learning English. The goal was to find people with similar experience, and to disseminate what I have learned from this collection of stories; and to consider whether and how its implications could help people in similar contexts navigate their learning journeys (Hayasaki, 2022). However, I realized through the LDJ6 project that it was not clear what exactly this meant or how it was to be done. In retrospect, from the beginning I could not even define the key words of my research such as "rural" and "empowerment." I also gradually realized that I did not dare to define them. In hindsight, I feel like I did not want to because I was scared of losing important insights or excluding or hurting someone because of my decision to set a boundary. Over the course of the year and a half process of the LDJ6 project, I learned to undo, or deconstruct, the premises I had unconsciously constructed through my personal, professional, and academic experiences. For me challenging convention meant casting doubt

on the taken-for-granted beliefs and values underlying previous literature and my own decision makings in life as a researcher, teacher, learner, and a person. This experience I had through LDJ6 led to the theme of LDJ7. From the beginning of the LDJ7 project to today, one of my favorite and most important topics of discussion among us editors and contributors has been what it means to challenge conventions; what are the conventions we want to focus on, how we can and want to challenge them, and why, both as individuals and as a community. As it turned out, we came away with various interesting answers with some commonalities—some focusing on specific theories, others methodology or writing styles.

Ellen Head: Yes, Aya, in the first draft of the call for papers, it was you who introduced the idea of challenging the conventions. Here’s a bit from our first draft: “In today’s unpredictable society, it is time for us to shed light on the impact of social factors on learner autonomy anew and think about future research on learner development from a fresh angle. How has the pandemic impacted language learner autonomy? Now, who are (or should be) learning what, when, where, how, and to what extent? And why?” It was exciting that you had the breadth of perspective to be thinking about social justice-related issues at the same time as the interior and personal side of learning, and to make connections between them. At the time when we submitted the theme proposal to the steering committee, we had several meetings which helped us to shape our ideas. In particular, Dominic Edsall was on the steering committee when we first met with them. He recommended us to look at the transdisciplinary framework for understanding learning and teaching, created by the Douglas Fir group (Douglas Fir Group, 2016). In his own writing Edsall makes connections between various ways of looking at learner autonomy. We felt this was empowering for us and teacher-researchers in general, because it allows various approaches to be seen as perspectives on a multi-faceted reality. When the papers came to be submitted for LDJ7, there was quite a variety of genre and methodology, ranging from quite traditional, quantitative studies to reflective dialogues. We asked Dominic to write an article for the journal to help articulate the legitimacy of presenting the various interpretations of our theme in one journal. In a sense, LDJ has been about challenging conventions from the start. Tim Ashwell, Andy Barfield and Alison Stewart, who were involved in establishing the journal in 2017, gave a talk about “Breaking with the Third-party Academic Paradigm in Writing about Inclusive Practitioner Research” (Ashwell et al., 2021) at the AILA World Congress in 2021, which made it very clear that part of the purpose of the journal was to build a community of writers which was inclusive and supportive, and to get away from image of the editor as an anonymous gatekeeper.

Ryo Moriya: With regard to the theme of Issue 7 (Challenging the Conventions of Learner Development Research), I consider it “scientia brought about by the negation of the negation.” Scientia is Latin for knowledge in general, and the negation of the negation represents the laws of cultural and historical development in dialectical materialism on which sociocultural theory is based as philosophical underpinnings (Lantolf & Poehner, 2023). Just as all human wisdom has not been built up through mere ‘negation,’ human beings have developed through dialectically respecting and, simultaneously, ‘criticizing (reflecting on)’ the past. In fact, even if we restrict our discussion to the field of foreign language education, transdisciplinary features of Applied Linguistics, the rise of mixed methods research, and constant endeavor to bridge theory and practice can be listed as concrete examples of this.

Ellen Head: You almost lost me with the Latin there, but I think you have identified something important when you talk about “the negation of the negation.” Do you mean that a great diversity of methodologies and voices can legitimately co-exist? Every story has value and it is a matter of how the stories are framed and juxtaposed which can give an impression of chaos or orderliness? This brings us to the question of the frame for LDJ7. The closing commentary is being written by

Dominique Vola Ambinintsoa. When it came to deciding who to invite as author of the closing commentary on LDJ7, we decided to invite someone who has knowledge of learner development as it is seen from the perspective of both advising and teaching. Since many of the papers in this issue refer to contexts in Japan, we wanted the author to be someone who knows Japan but also has a perspective from outside and a background in narrative enquiry. Dominique Vola Ambinintsoa's writing was known to all of us from LDJ6 and we are very happy that she agreed to write the commentary. However, we are trying not to offer too many "spoilers" here. We hope you will enjoy discovering more by reading the full issue!

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An Interview with the Co-Editors of Issue 8 of *The Learner Development Journal*, “Exploring Grassroots, Innovative, and Creative Approaches to Language Learning Materials Development Through Inclusive Practitioner-Research”

Anna Costantino

University of Greenwich, UK
Regent’s University, London

Assia Slimani-Rolls

Open University

Nour Bouacha

Bachir Ibrahimi University, BBA

With Tim Ashwell

Tim: Thank you, Anna, Assia and Nour, for taking part in this email interview. I’d like to start, if I may, by asking about your particular interests in learner development issues, and what appeals to you both personally and professionally about the theme of Issue 8, “Exploring Grassroots, Innovative, and Creative Approaches to Language Learning Materials Development Through Inclusive Practitioner-Research.”

Anna: Thank you, Tim, for this question. It is particularly relevant to working with Assia and Nour, given our shared history of learning materials and practitioner research. I have always been fascinated by materials development due to its crucial role in creating a dynamic language class and its strong correlation to learning. However, my initial perspective on how materials correlate to learning and learner development shifted dramatically when I participated in an exploratory practice (EP) project mentored by Assia in the higher education institution where we worked. During this project, my puzzle was about students’ engagement with feedback. Materials came into the frame because I used them to investigate my puzzle. They were at the heart of the potentially exploitable pedagogical activities (PEPAs) I used. This inquiry came with several understandings, one of which was about the way I had used materials in the past. As I de-contextualised pedagogic activities from my routine usage, some of my assumptions about my students’ beliefs and actual knowledge became shaky. I realised that developing activities based solely on preconceived notions of how our students learn might be misdirected. This understanding prompted me to consider the learning scope of materials further. This understanding also underpinned the pitch for LDJ8, where I aimed to create a space in which language teachers could share their views on challenging the canon of materials development by situating the learner centre stage.

Assia: Thanks, Anna, for this introduction. Two reasons, at least, motivated me to join in with the *LDJ8* project: first, the three-year-long project which I co-directed when mentoring a group of language teachers, including Anna as a participant, to implement an EP approach in their classrooms, which led me ultimately to guide them to write, for publication, about their personal EP lived experience (Slimani-Rolls & Kiely, 2019). The process I used then was essentially that of an editor providing the authors with plenty of timely feedback. I also encouraged them to discuss their writing with their peers, which they found helpful too. So, given this experience, I was keen to know more about the LDJ writing processes, which I thought, at first, to be quite involved. The second interest stems from Nour’s doctoral dissertation, which I supervised. Nour recommended that teachers and learners should be encouraged to create their own materials, given their familiarity with the classroom environment. So, I wanted to pursue this idea in the work with the *LDJ8* contributors.

Nour: Thank you, Assia. As mentioned above, my doctoral thesis was supervised by Assia at Regent’s University London. Part of my Ph.D. research was about learners’ views, wants, and uses of their nationally- prescribed textbooks. To give you a bit of context, the Algerian educational system is a top-down, centralised one whereby all educational decision-making, curriculum, syllabus, and

textbook design are in the hands of the Ministry. Though they are the actual curriculum enactors and textbook users, teachers and learners have been largely marginalised from such processes. The findings of my study revealed that teachers and learners can reflect on their experiences and participate in material development, evaluation, and adaptation. They proved their awareness and ability to play an active role in the process of material development. However, their roles have been reduced to that of technicians and implementers. Nevertheless, the EP practitioner literature suggests that learners can and should be given the opportunity to participate in decision-making and material selection given that they are the ones doing the learning. So, when the theme was suggested, I felt a natural fit and an instant link to my research interests.

Anna and I have only met virtually. But, we built a strong relationship in getting things done and maintaining cohesion remotely as co-editors of this issue. Working with Anna and Assia was a wonderful opportunity for me to exchange views on a topic that is of great interest to all of us. It was fascinating to see how things have unfolded as we talked through and discussed ideas, queries, and drafts with each other to reach toward co-understanding and providing diverse possibilities and perspectives.

Tim: Thank you. It is always nice to understand how co-authors or editors know each other and something about their interweaving paths.

I wonder if next you could explain something about your own teaching contexts and how the theme of LDJ8 intersects with your contexts and your learners?

Anna: As I mentioned earlier, I have always been interested in materials. In fact, my interest in materials led me to teach Materials Development in the MA in Applied Linguistics and TESOL programme at one of the universities where I work. With my students, I encourage them to question the conventional use of pedagogic materials and to explore ways to enhance learner autonomy. As a practitioner researcher, I am currently considering the multimodal quality of materials from the perspective of learner creativity. To a certain extent, this resonates with the work pursued by some of the contributors to LDJ8 and also aligns with Nour's findings.

Nour: Indeed, from my experience working with learners as a Ph.D. researcher and as a university lecturer (I'm currently teaching and supervising master's students in Algeria), I found that learners can and are capable of articulating their views and contributing to decision-making regarding their learning processes. I became aware of the unique nature of each classroom context and the need for learners' involvement and reflection. I found that this LDJ8 issue offers a unique perspective for empowering teacher-researchers to develop their own materials and collaborate with learners much more closely, engaging them and motivating them via materials designed by and for everyone involved in the teaching-learning process. By engaging in LDJ8, I was allowed to engage with the contributors' writing, and explore how they visualise and conceptualise learners' roles in such processes, what puzzles them, and what changes, ideas, thoughts, and adaptations they bring to instructional materials.

Assia: From my perspective as a practitioner, I realised that the student's perceptions of the materials are more determining than any effort put into designing a textbook to make it more palatable to the students. They can create havoc in any task that is given to them, depending on how they perceive the material. A telling example here is the study by Zhang Ruwen (2004), an EP practitioner researcher, who felt that she couldn't successfully attract the students' attention during her reading lessons until she involved them in the search for better understanding of the events which controlled her classes. She appealed to the students by explaining the difficulties that she encountered as well as shared with them the responsibility of bringing to some of the lessons the materials that they thought would engage them and engage their peers, in order for them to build the lesson around

them. Soon, both parties started to pull their efforts towards more constructive reading lessons as they now shared the same motivation to make their ideas work for the benefit of all concerned.

Anna: As Assia pointed out, I can relate to the change of attitude and participation among learners when I investigated their involvement with feedback during the EP inquiry mentioned earlier. By changing the implementation of classroom activities, students had the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings on receiving feedback and interact with the learning materials at their own pace. This experience made me realise that they possessed more knowledge than I had previously assumed.

Tim: You all seem to have had powerful experiences of the ways in which students can exert control over materials when given the opportunity and how this may enhance their learning. It's a strong message!

Changing direction a little, I wonder if you could explain where you are in the LDJ8 process? What are you and the contributors doing now?

Nour: The contributors have just submitted their second drafts – about 2,500 to 3-500 words. The drafts are now with the Review Network. They will submit their third piece of writing between mid December and the end of January 2024.

Tim: I see. And how has the process worked so far? Have you encountered any bumps in the road or have things moved along quite smoothly? What have been the biggest challenges so far in managing an issue of the LDJ?

Nour: Although we were based in different countries with different time zones, we managed to engage with each other and with the contributors through emails and regular meetings. We, as editors, got to work closely with the contributors at various stages to build their proposals and versions. Reading the contributors' drafts has fed into my own thoughts and ideas about material development and learners' inclusivity.

Assia: We realised together, authors and editors, that it is clearly complex to publish for PR. What is permissible and logical in academic research is not in PR. For example, a PR study must be driven by the author's concern about their practice rather than by finding a gap in the literature review to justify the study. Albeit it is evident that practice is central in PR, this principle took a while to take shape.

Anna: One aspect I find challenging when doing practitioner research is the work to untangle our context of practice when confronted with critical instances emerging from our practice. It is not always easy to establish connections between our knowledge, beliefs, the lived experiences of the participants in the classroom, and the institutional interests and constraints. We stick to routines and assumptions. Yet, for me, the striving comes to be about questioning the given. This endeavour is also reflected in the scholarly writing we engage in as practitioner researchers. As Assia mentioned, we tend to resort to the given of literature, as if writing about our practice were ultimately about finding a gap in the literature rather than a bumpy journey of making sense of what we do and experience. The LDJ8 authors are working with all of this.

Tim: It sounds as if the experience of working on LDJ8 may have had some profound impacts on the way you see practitioner research.

Finally, I wonder if you can give us a hint about the range of perspectives we will find in the finished Issue 8? How are people approaching the theme of materials development? Are there any surprises for you in the way some people have chosen to tackle the subject?

Anna: The language contexts explored in this issue are varied, ranging across countries such as Brazil, Germany, Japan, the USA, and Ecuador. Examining their context of practice and teaching

materials through reflexivity lenses is a sound common thread of the contributions. Indeed, the predominant practitioner research frames are exploratory practice and action research, with many of the authors offering a personal take on classroom inquiry in their quest to explore and create learner-centred materials. The other significant commonality across the contributions is the intersecting interest in translanguaging and creative approaches to classroom pedagogy. Returning to the underpinning idea of LDJ8, this is surprising but also telling because it shows how language educators framing their pedagogical work through practitioner research are becoming increasingly open to acknowledging the idiosyncrasies of learner development. Materials are viewed as opportunities for language educators and learners to make sense of their mutual learning, rather than being a given, a magic wand for creating the perfect lesson. This is clearly illustrated by some authors discussing the understanding they gained during a class observation as teacher-students. They detected how a pedagogic material implemented to facilitate English spoken fluency became a tool to repress self-expression and identity and so failed to acknowledge the learner's multiple perspectives present in the classroom.

Another interesting aspect that has emerged in one of the LDJ8 review pieces is mentoring practitioner researchers, which is connected to Assia's experience in mentoring language teachers to become teacher researchers of their classroom environment. It is somehow self-referential within an LDJ issue but nevertheless intriguing. The piece brings to the fore some of the issues language teachers undergo when they engage with practitioner research, one of which is indeed what was mentioned earlier: the practitioner's struggle to put practice and lived experience narratively at the centre of their enquiry. However, this aspect is addressed from the perspective of the mentor and their reflexivity, which might give readers further insights into the journey of a practitioner researcher.

Assia: In terms of surprises, it's actually me, as an editor, who was surprised to see my thinking change about the LDJ writing processes which I first thought were a bit involved and impractical to sustain given the number of editors, reviewers and also contributors required. But, I soon realised that it is this LDJ structure that produces the multivocality needed in terms of a variety of ideas and feedback that benefits the authors. The ethos behind these processes is based on everybody's friendly and respectful ways of producing supportive feedback in a safe and inclusive environment. The feedback is very much helped by the journal criteria that emphasize the provision of necessary but meaningful feedback that is relevant to the author's context. This process helps the author's growth in confidence and self-belief. With hindsight, I think that using such a system in my own project would have heightened multivocality and may even have attracted more practitioners to join in publishing for PR.

Tim: Well, I am very glad that the LDJ is giving you the space and opportunity to develop your ideas around practitioner research. It is great to hear about your experiences so far in steering the LDJ8 project. It is interesting to learn how a focus on something as apparently humdrum as materials has led you to develop your own thinking about teacher and learner autonomy over the years and how you are continuing to work through your ideas on materials production, practitioner research and writing about practitioner research as you collaborate with the LDJ8 contributors. Thank you very much indeed for your hard work on this interview. I wish you and the contributors every success with the project and look forward to reading LDJ8 when it appears towards the end of next year.

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