# An Interview with the Co-Editors of Issue 10 of The Learner Development Journal


with Tim Ashwell

**Tim Ashwell:** Firstly, thank you for agreeing to take part in this written interview for Learning Learning. I guess that you are now well into the second phase of development with this Journal Issue as contributors begin to build on the first piece of writing - either stories of practice or a practice-related book review, and that you are almost exactly mid-process with the publication date still one year away in November/December 2026.

It is interesting for other LD SIG members to hear how things are going so that prospective editors and contributors to future LDJ issues can get a sense of what it is like to be part of the collaborative process.

I wonder if I could start by asking each of you to introduce yourself briefly to give us a sense of who you are and where and who you teach, and then if you could tell us what your interests are in learner development issues, and what appeals to you, both personally and professionally, about the theme of issue 10, “Teacher and Learner Perspectives on Reflection, Metacognition, and Assessment: Exploring Quality of Learning and Development”.

**Ana Inés Salvi:** Hi Tim. Thanks for inviting us. First of all, let me tell you a bit about where and who I teach. For the last 15 years, I have taught both Academic English and in MA TESOL programmes at various universities in the UK. I am interested in giving space to learners to develop and in being present in their development. Providing learners with the space to be themselves, to feel comfortable learning, asking questions, and making mistakes, and not feeling judged but rather feeling welcome and that they can be authentic. Supporting the development of their authenticity,

the exercise of their agency and autonomy, their criticality, and the knowledge and acceptance of themselves and of others in the learning process are some of the learner development issues I am interested in. Regarding the theme of the current LD issue, what appeals to me about it is the connection between the key terms in it (reflection, metacognition and assessment) and my learner development interests which I mentioned earlier. Engaging students in reflection of their learning interests, their learning growth and development, the learning process, and assessment is part of developing student criticality, autonomy, self-awareness, and authenticity, which are some of my learner development interests.

**Anna Costantino:** My interests in learner development are closely tied to practice-based research, specifically Exploratory Practice, which, in my view, is a continual endeavour in developing learning. Over the years, I have been working with portfolios and alternative assessment practices, both as a teacher and as a practitioner-researcher, with a focus on how inclusive forms of assessment can foster learner agency, reflection, and well-being. The LDJ10 theme appeals to me because reflection, metacognition, and assessment are daily realities in the life and management of language classes. They shape how students engage with their learning, for better or for worse. Personally, I find this theme and the dimensions highlighted in the current LDJ issue meaningful because it goes to the core of how learners make sense of their progress and construct their identities as learners. This can be highly empowering but also challenging, since we know how detrimental assessment based narrowly on metrics and measurement can be. Professionally, it resonates with my interest in designing sustainable assessment and feedback practices that support both autonomy and lifelong, sustainable learning.

**James Underwood:** My interests in learner development stem from teaching a majority of first-year university students who find it challenging to transition from the exam-driven, teacher-fronted nature of high school to university, where they are expected to take greater ownership of their learning. Over the years, I have observed students struggling to study effectively, maintain a sustained level of motivation, manage their time effectively, and set realistic goals. In teaching a self-directed learning course, I have seen significant benefits in both developing learners' metacognitive skills and scaffolding reflection, which lead to students becoming more confident and focused as they take a more active role in their learning. Engagement through reflection, as Ana mentioned, is also a valuable way to monitor their progress and self-awareness. Another important aspect is the nature of the assessment, which can both support and detract from their development, as Anna has said. For many learners, their primary experience of evaluation, up until university level, is its summative nature, as it has been used to gate-keep entry to the next level, often resulting in disillusionment or demotivation due to the washback effect. Very few have experienced the other side of assessment, one that supports autonomy, which I aim to include in my classes. Taking what I said into account, I am very excited to be an editor of LDJ10 and gain perspectives from the LD SIG community and beyond on all three themes: Reflection, Metacognition, and Assessment.

**Amber Kay:** I am very interested in learning ways to improve memory retention and engagement with materials. As a Japanese learner myself, many of the ways I studied kanji were similar with how I teach my students, such as SRS timed intervals for learning, mnemonics, and visual aids. Material or study habits that we teach our students are not just for tests, but for their overall life skills of being able to retain said information for future careers or interests. What metacognitive techniques are the most effective for students to learn? The book that I am currently reviewing for the upcoming issue talks about many techniques teachers can use and it explains which ones are more effective than others based on data and surveys. Metacognitive techniques for math versus English have different effective levels so English educators should know which is more effective for one's professional development.

**Tim:** That's great. It is clear how you all share a deep interest in the main themes of LDJ10 - reflection, metacognition, and assessment, and how these closely connect to your personal vision of learner development. I wonder if we could delve a little deeper to find out how the theme of LDJ10 intersects with your teaching contexts and your learners. Could you each explain something about how you see these three key components of learner development and how they relate to the students you teach? Maybe this will help us to understand better how the three components are linked together.

**Ana:** The research I am reporting on in this issue was conducted in the context of a UK HE master's programme for English language teachers, whom I involved in reflection of their learning experience of the modules I taught, via drawings and explanations of their drawings. The students' reflections strongly focused on the theme of the current issue, namely, the practice of reflection, metacognition, and assessment. Learner-centred teaching practices encourage student reflection on their learning, metacognition, that is, student discussion of what, why and how they are learning what they are learning, and assessment of, for, and as learning. That's how I see the three concepts linking together.

**Anna:** I teach and coordinate Italian language modules in UK higher education, where students often move from highly exam-driven learning backgrounds into more formative, portfolio-based systems. The shift is not always easy. Reflection and metacognition are central to this transition. Learners need to develop strategies for self-monitoring, questioning, and connecting classroom activities with assessment tasks. Assessment practices that integrate feedback and reflective tasks have helped learners feel more in control of their learning but also exposed the tensions between institutional pressures for measurement and learners' needs for space and voice. LDJ10's focus directly addresses this intersection, making it a timely opportunity to re-think how we design tasks that embed metacognitive awareness, autonomy, and wellbeing.

**James:** I teach a variety of undergraduate EFL courses in Japan, ranging from those that are purely language skill-based to those that integrate both content and language. Metacognition and reflection support not only those learners who are finding it challenging to adjust to university studies, but also those learners who, although conversationally fluent, struggle to reach higher levels of proficiency and build confidence in their academic performance. By supporting these learners in their metacognitive development, I aim to help them to develop greater awareness of the learning process, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies they employ, and also monitor their own progress more critically and independently.

**Amber:** Metacognition and assessing highly intersects with my students because at their young age, they are beginning to become more independent and have more responsibility as they are getting older from junior high school to high school. As they are already very familiar with various ways teachers have taught them material, it is highly important to start teaching them awareness of how they learn now so they can have more autonomy in controlling their learning.

**Tim:** I think I am beginning to understand how the three LDJ10 themes of reflection, metacognition, and assessment fit together in the way you see learner development.

I wonder if I can ask a more prosaic question: What brought the four of you together? How did you meet and why do you all share an interest in reflection, metacognition, and assessment?

**Ana:** I am delighted to be working with colleagues who share an interest in reflection, metacognition, and assessment, and are working in different educational and geographical contexts from mine. It's very exciting to have the opportunity to collaborate and share experiences in this sustained way. I always wanted to contribute to the LDJ and my busy working schedule often got in the way of doing it earlier. This time, as I transitioned changing jobs, getting involved with the LDJ became the perfect moment and opportunity. I saw the call for editors and contributors on a theme that strongly resonated with the work I had been doing until then, and I decided that this was the time to do it. Also, the idea of working alongside colleagues for a continuous period of time, helping each other along the way was the type of experience I was longing for. I did not know James and Amber and

I was excited to get to know them and work with them. When I was accepted, I was delighted to learn that Anna, whom I knew from our shared interest in and work on Exploratory Practice, had also become part of the team. Now we are two people based in London and two in Japan. We met online regularly and little by little started developing a pleasant working relationship and our roles as editors.

**Anna:** Through my experience co-editing LDJ8, I was blown away by the inclusive ethos of LDJ, which stands in clear contrast to the canon of many journals. When I saw the LDJ10 call by James and Amber, seeking co-editors and outlining the theme, I felt I could not miss the opportunity to become involved again and re-experience this special kind of "learner development."

**Amber:** Initially, only James and I submitted our proposals for LDJ10 at the same time together. Afterwards, we worked on creating a proposal and a unified way to combine both our proposals together, James leading the meeting with his experience. Thanks to the Learner Development SIG team, James and I were introduced to both Anna and Ana. Anna has previously worked on a previous LDJ so her help has been extremely valuable with helping us figure out what to do next in the entire process.

**James:** Yes, as Amber has said, we both submitted different proposals for LDJ10, and the LD Journal Steering Group suggested we work together as our proposals had similar themes. I then met Amber a few times online, and we collaborated on writing the proposal so that it included both of our interests. This collaboration was very valuable for me. Initially, I had been mainly focused on one aspect of the current theme—assessment for autonomy—but through our discussions, I was reminded how important metacognition and reflection were for learners' development.

After sending out the proposal, we were then introduced by the LDJ steering group to Anna Costantino, who had worked previously on LDJ8. It was interesting to meet her and hear how she has been using Exploratory Practice in her research and teaching to strive for a greater quality of learning in her courses. We then met Ana Salvi after she had sent in her proposal, and through listening to her talk about how she has used reflection with other language teachers, I was reminded of the parallels between learner and teacher development and how important it was to include both perspectives.

**Tim:** I love the way the editorial team has been brought together and how you were all attracted by the collaborative nature of working on an LDJ issue. We seldom get the opportunity to work so closely together with practitioner colleagues over an extended period on a theme we are passionate about. It is great that you feel you are enjoying the experience.

Next, can I ask where you are in the LDJ10 process? What are you and the contributors doing now? I know you are one year away from publication, but what are you and the contributors doing right now?

**Ana:** LDJ editors and contributors work in a collaborative manner within 'response groups'. For LDJ10, we are 4 editors/contributors, and 6 contributors. At the start of the process, we decided to have three response groups, with at least one editor and two contributors in each one. We gave each group a colour name (green, red and blue) and populated the groups based on some common feature in the submitted proposals, such as the type of contribution (a review vs. an account of practice), the topic, or the educational or geographical context.

The green group where I belong to focuses on the UK and Singapore contexts; and some contributions in the group refer to Exploratory Practice. The red response group focuses on reviews of publications on the theme of LDJ10; and the blue response group centres around primary research practices in the Japanese context.

Anna C and myself are part of the 'Green Response Group' together with two other contributors. Right now, we are working on our second draft and aim to submit it by the end of the month in time for the reviewers to read it and provide us with feedback by the end of the year. The way we work

involves working on a draft individually, uploading it on a shared drive, reading and commenting on each other's drafts, meeting online and discussing our comments, and based on the comments, writing a new draft.

**Anna:** Like Ana explained, we are working within response communities. I am currently reflecting on how to articulate the connections between assessment, reflection, and learner autonomy. The process among us is highly dialogic, and after meeting in our response community, I always find it refreshing and leave with something to take home.

**Amber:** Currently, I am doing a final review analyzing my last semester's worth of teaching to apply to my book review. Everyone's writings are about to be sent out to editors in the response community so everyone, including my Red Group, are finishing up their practice related reviews and research to be sent out soon.

**James:** I am in the Blue Group, and like Amber I am writing a Practice Related Review. For this I decided to focus on "*Assessment and Autonomy in Language Learning*" by Everhard & Murphy (2015). I am currently reflecting on how the courses I teach can be supported from the ideas in the book. I am especially interested in how to apply these ideas to my Self Directed Learning course. The other writers in the Blue Group are working on their Stories of Practice, one of which is examining how they can improve their English Communication Workshop, and the other is looking at how their reflective teaching practices have evolved over time, while exploring how these relate to their own experiences as a Japanese language learner. We are all working to meet the deadline for the second draft of our writing.

**Tim:** It sounds like you are all very busy working in your response groups and working towards everyone having a second draft ready soon.

To ask you to indulge in some reflection (and assessment?), I wonder if you could tell us how the process has worked for you 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?

**Ana:** Regarding managing an issue of the LDJ, being four people is very helpful and it makes the work less daunting. It is actually very satisfying.

The process is working well. My favourite part is meeting with fellow contributors within our response group online and discussing the comments we have made to each other's drafts and we have received from others within the response group. Being in contact with people, sharing and learning from each other is exciting and rewarding.

**Anna:** The process has been collaborative and rewarding, but not without challenges. One of the biggest challenges, at least for me, is balancing academic expectations with the distinct voice of practitioner research, as well as foregrounding questions emerging from practice, reflections, and the attempt to write with authenticity. It takes time to break out of established conventions. Another challenge is time management, as we are all balancing multiple professional responsibilities. Yet these challenges are also productive, as they open spaces for mutual support and learning.

**Amber:** Luckily, we have very experienced people in our group which makes things move smoothly. I am so grateful to James, Anna, and Ana on the editorial team and I appreciate all the advice they have given and being so proactive with keeping everyone on top of the schedule. The biggest challenge is definitely time management. Balancing not only one's full-time job, writing a piece for LDJ, and our lives outside the workplace is extremely hard and I myself can admit to not being able to make LDJ meetings due to commitments outside interrupting. Everyone has done an outstanding job upholding their commitment to the journal.

**James:** It has been going well. It is great to be able to not just share the workload with three other people, but also to learn from each other as we progress with the project. Although it has been

going smoothly, one of the bumps in the road I have encountered is finding time to meet up during term time due to my teaching load. Thankfully meetings with the other editors have been at night due to the time difference between Japan and the UK, which has helped with arranging them. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to meet with the Blue group as much as I would have liked, as we are all very busy, and have various commitments outside of work.

**Tim:** Thank you for being so honest! It is a big commitment to become an editor of an LDJ issue and, as you say, it must be difficult juggling this with your day job and with outside family commitments - otherwise known as "life"! Great to hear that the teamwork is helping to carry you through.

Finally, could you give us a hint about the range of perspectives we will find in the finished Issue 10? How are people approaching the themes of Reflection, Metacognition, and Assessment in relation to the quality of learning and development? Are there any surprises for you in the way some people have chosen to tackle the subject(s)?

**Ana:** You will find a range of perspectives in the finished LDJ Issue 10, based on educational and geographical contexts and focus, such as teaching and learning English for Academic Purposes, working with teachers, doing Exploratory Practice, working in schools or in Higher Education, and working in different geographical contexts including the UK, Japan, and Singapore.

When reading contributors' proposals at the start of the process, I was fascinated by the variety of proposals and the way some contributors tackled the subject. For example, I felt happily surprised by one of the contributors' openness and honesty in sharing difficult and ambivalent feelings about the subject. Sharing true and raw emotions as an author of academic work is a topic I have been wary of opening up to as an author, and seeing it in this issue and working in a collaborative way, sharing drafts of work has been comforting in finding answers to difficult questions and writing concerns, and conducive to resolving this issue.

**Tim:** Thanks, Ana, for telling us about the range of work we can look forward to reading about in LDJ10 when it appears in November 2026.

And thank you to all of you for giving us an insight into your work as editors and contributors to LDJ10. It sounds to me that you are fully immersed in the process and are gaining a lot through the collaboration. I am sure prospective editors and contributors will enjoy reading about the LDJ process and that others will be reassured that LDJ10 is in such good hands!

Thank you again for contributing to this written interview.

# An Announcement From the Editors of The Learner Development Journal Issue 9

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## Engaging With and Exploring Autonomy, Creativity, and Well-Being for Learner Development

*Edited by Stacey Vye, Robert Moreau, Ivan Lombardi*

We are happy to announce that a journey that began a year and a half ago is reaching its conclusion, and that issue 9 of the Learner Development Journal (LDJ9), titled *Engaging With and Exploring Autonomy, Creativity, and Well-Being for Learner Development* will be published in December this year. A journey this was indeed—one that the editors and our six authors have embarked on together through discussions, discoveries, and delight. What began as six independent puzzles slowly grew into a web of interwoven stories, all asking, in their own way: *What happens when autonomy, creativity, and well-being become not just research topics or classroom goals, but living practices?*

Each contribution approaches the question differently, yet the thread that weaves the publication together is there to guide the reader through the pages of LDJ9. We open the journal looking inwards, with a reflective piece on meditation and stillness. One passionate language practitioner invites readers to see well-being not as an afterthought, but as a creative act of self-awareness through the story of a learner's journey from anxiety to self-kindness. The next contribution turns outwards, exploring the social side of autonomy and revealing that learner independence often grows through learner interdependence, that is, through collaboration, peer feedback, and cultivating a supportive shared responsibility.

Collaboration also animates a classroom of high school students writing fiction in English, which serves as the setting for our third contribution. Here, in the aftermath of a learner-centered project-based

learning course, we hear the voices of young learners experiencing autonomy and creativity as they emerge in the “messy joy” of co-authorship. Readers will be reminded that care can be the architecture of a teaching and learning situation. The fourth author, in fact, will introduce the voices and personal changes of learners enrolled in an English communication course designed in the shadow of the pandemic and built upon the idea of transforming assessment and classroom interaction into practices of well-being.

In our fifth piece, a Japanese literature course, designed by a thoughtful practitioner, serves as a launchpad for learner independence, demonstrating how scaffolding and critical engagement can enhance rather than limit autonomy. The sixth piece, a jazz-like practice-related review, encourages readers to see language teaching and learning as an improv performance, a playful and interactive space fueled by creativity where dialogue, laughter, and surprise intertwine and contribute to making learning come alive. To end, we are delighted to close with a thoughtful commentary by a major voice in our field, whose reflections tie together the threads of this issue while opening up new possibilities for the future.

Behind the scenes, the process of editing LDJ9 was every bit as exploratory as the contributions themselves. At times, it felt like a puzzle in itself, and one where the number of pieces kept changing! For example, several authors and one editor had to step back, but their contributions as reviewers or supporters were invaluable and ensured that all the ideas generated by our discussions cross-pollinated and evolved. The result of these 18 months of creative process is an issue that not only introduces research about autonomy, creativity, and well-being, but also exemplifies them. Lastly, we hope that you, the LDJ9 reader, will expand your interest in autonomy, creativity, and well-being and that this issue will encourage you to participate in one of the forthcoming LD publications to embark on a lengthy, yet rewarding journey of exploratory inquiry.

## Joining the AILA ReNLA Network

**We welcome all researchers and practitioner-researchers in Applied Linguistics with an interest in Learner Autonomy at any stage of their career or research journey. Doctoral students are welcome. We have up to 500 members on the Network.**

To join the ReNLA Jscmail list and become a member:

- First self-enrol onto our JIScmail list- Auto-L using this link: https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/ selecting AUTO-L from the list. If you do not have an account on JISCmail, you will need to register. You can also do this through your institutional account. If you have any problems, the JISCmail helpline can assist or get back to me and we will sort it out.
- Then complete the registration form with your details, including your interest in the Network, expectations and potential contributions.
- Wait for the approval email. If you are aligned with our joining requirements i.e. you are a researcher and/or practitioner in applied linguistics with an interest in learner autonomy, you will be approved on the list.