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Announcement

Upcoming Event: Empowering Students in Self-Access Learning Conference (ESSALC)
- Student event to be held at *Kanda University of International Studies*, Japan on October 15, 2016 (details to follow). Conveners: Kie Yamamoto, Neil Curry and Rob Stevenson.

Cover design: Curtis Edlin

Virtual and Other Learning Spaces: Introduction to the Special Issue

Jo Mynard, Kanda University of International Studies, Japan

Curtis Edlin, Kanda University of International Studies, Japan

Welcome to issue 7(2) of SiSAL Journal, which is a special issue on *virtual and other learning spaces*. The idea for putting together this special issue arose for two reasons. Firstly, we were inspired by the of submissions for the Self-Access Stories project edited by Katherine Thornton whose aim was to "highlight specific experiences of various areas of self-access management in practice, with a view to providing multiple perspectives on each issue" (Thornton, 2015). Some of the submissions and the ensuing discussion on the topic of virtual and other learning spaces prompted the editorial team to do a further call for papers for this special issue. The second reason for putting together this issue reason is that our own institution is currently preparing for a move to a larger, brand new purpose-built facility and this has inevitably resulted in our reevaluating interpretations of self-access for our own context. We wanted the opportunity to learn from others and invite them to the conversation. Environmental factors play a role in students' learning both inside and outside the classroom and through this special issue we hoped to explore physical spaces, virtual spaces, and even metaphorical spaces in learning, e.g. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development – ZPD, or Murphey's Zones of Proximal Adjusting – ZPA (Murphey, 1996; 2013) from both the practical and theoretical perspectives.

This issue contains four full papers, one discussion article edited by Hisako Yamashita, and three papers that form the fifth part of the language learning spaces column edited by Katherine Thornton.

Full Papers

The first paper, by Curtis Edlin unpacks the notion that learning environments have a significant impact on learning. The author draws on different perspectives (e.g. psychology, neuroscience, instructional design, ecology, architecture) in order to make a case for informed eclecticism and sets out some principles for self-access design. Edlin suggests reconciling previously competing paradigms within a SALC in order to address diverse student needs and learning preferences.

In the second paper, Sahar Alzahrani and Vicky Wright from the University of Southampton in the UK report on the design and management of an online learning space used by a group of Saudi medical students. The online self-access facility increased opportunities for communication and language practice and helped the learners to develop autonomy.

The third paper, by Tim Murphey, Yoshifumi Fukada, and Joseph Falout takes Murphey's (2014) well becoming through teaching (WBTT) hypothesis as a starting point and the assumption that people not only learn better while teaching others in their social networks, but benefit from the experience personally. The authors describe a study whereby learners documented their experiences of teaching others through weekly essays written as 'action logs'. The findings suggest that learners created affinity spaces (Gee, 2004) for teaching and learning outside the classroom, which contributed to their well being and the well being of those they worked with.

The fourth paper, by Yoshio Nakai reveals how a group of learners gradually took ownership over a physical learning space in Osaka, Japan. The learners were care workers from the Philippines taking intensive Japanese courses and the article is a moving account of how the learners appropriated their classroom to construct a learning space which connected past, present, and future selves.

Discussion Article

This issue features a discussion edited by Hisako Yamashita about best practice for advising which incorporates ideas put forward at two events held in New Zealand. The first one was the Association of Tertiary Learning Advisors Aotearoa

New Zealand (ATLAANZ) Conference in November 2013. The second was the Community Languages and English for Speakers of Other Languages Conference (CLESOL) held in July 2014.

Language Learning Spaces: Self-Access in Action

The theme of the newest instalment of the *Language Learning Spaces: Self-Access in Action* column edited by Katherine Thornton is developing learner autonomy through integrating the physical learning space with curriculum. In her introductory article, Katherine Thornton summarises the three contributions in this issue which come from Elaine Wright and Kayoko Horai at Sojo University in Kumamoto, Japan who discuss a collaborative project designed to integrate advising into the language classroom; Vanessa Mar-Molinero and Christian Lewis from the University of Southampton, UK who describe a learning module designed to increase study skills; and finally, Ann Mayeda, Dirk MacKenzie, and Brian Nuspliger from Konan Women's' University in Kobe, Japan who reflect on a stamp card incentive system designed to integrate self-access use into the language curriculum.

Acknowledgments

Notes on the Editors

Jo Mynard is the founding editor of SiSAL Journal. She is an associate professor and the Director of the Self-Access Learning Centre at Kanda University of International Studies in Japan. She has an M.Phil. in Applied Linguistics from Trinity College, University of Dublin, Ireland and an Ed.D. in TEFL from the University of Exeter, UK. She has been involved in facilitating self-access language learning since 1996.

Curtis Edlin is a learning advisor in the Self-Access Learning Centre (SALC) at Kanda University of International Studies in Japan. He holds an MATESOL from SIT Graduate Institute in VT, USA, and has been working in the field of language education since 2007. His current research and writing interests include how we learn,

understanding mediated action in self-access spaces, and the design of self-access learning environments.

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Informed Eclecticism in the Design of Self-Access Language Learning Environments

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Abstract

Self-access learning environments traditionally received only rudimentary treatment and attention compared to classrooms as many educators presumed that it was a teacher and the instructional models, methods, and approaches that were the greatest mediators in learning. In recent decades, self-access centers and subsequently other self-access learning environments and digital spaces have been burgeoning throughout the world, created primarily with the goal of supporting learner autonomy. However, old classroom-centric learning and design paradigms are sometimes applied to the design of self-access environments despite the relative spatial, temporal, and grouping freedom available. By distancing themselves from the tendency to choose one particular learning paradigm on which to base their designs, as is often the case in instructional design, educators and designers open their designed environments to the possibility of becoming a rich space, informed by numerous and diverse fields, that can account for varied ways of learning and knowing. Looking to other fields to further understand what variables can either catalyze or obstruct various ways of knowing and learning can inform the design, development, support, and management of self-access language learning environments. Drawing on knowledge from a variety of disparate fields, this paper suggests six principles that can be applied in order to augment a wide variety of types of learning in self-access learning environments, and particularly those concerned with language learning.

Keywords: self-access language learning (SALL), learning environment design, grounded design

Context

The author's institution, Kanda University of International Studies, in Makuhari, Japan, is currently constructing a new building, which will not only contain a number of new classrooms, but will also become the new home of the institution's Self-Access Learning Centre (SALC). While the architectural decisions have long since been set, over the course of last year and into this year the SALC's learning advisors (LAs), as well as some other relevant parties, have been given the opportunity for input regarding the design (non-architectural elements) of the new SALC. As this is the first foray into educational design for the design firm, and considering that there is often confusion regarding the differences between the needs in language classrooms and

self-access language learning (SALL) environments, the LAs sought to bring attention to concepts relevant to SALC user (LAs, managers, staff, teachers, and students) practices in order to optimize the space to support the kinds of activity and learning intended to take place there. While the process is still ongoing, the idea is that, given all parties have the students' best interests at heart, by working together and pooling our knowledge we can help those operating in decision making capacities make the most appropriate design choices.

Types of Learning Environments

The term learning environments can encompass a myriad of spaces. In an EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative white paper, Warger and Dobbin (2009) define learning environments as follows:

> The term learning environment encompasses learning resources and technology, means of teaching, modes of learning, and connections to societal and global contexts. The term also includes human behavioral and cultural dimensions, including the vital role of emotion in learning, and it requires us to examine and sometimes rethink the roles of teachers and students because the ways in which they make use of spaces and bring wider societal influences into play animates the educational enterprise (p. 3).

In much of the literature in the field of learning environment design, *learning environment* and *classroom* appear to be conflated terms. In fact, an examination of journals like *Learning Environments Research* reveals a sizeable majority of articles gathering data from and/or oriented to classroom environments. Goh and Khine (2002) illustrate the some of the depth and breadth of this classroom-focused research that has taken place in the last 50 years. In reality, learning is not an activity confined to classrooms and educational institutions, and so nor are learning environments limited to such confines. Learning is everywhere, and so learning environments are everywhere. Perhaps more accurately, everywhere is a learning environment, whether deliberately intended as such or not. Learning environments may be planned or natural; formal or informal; real, physical spaces or digital and potentially in the ether that is the Internet. Strange and Banning (2001) give an idea of the elements to look for when trying to understand learning environments: "Key components of all human environments include: Physical

condition, design, and layout; Characteristics of the people who inhabit them; Organizational structures related to their purposes and goals; Inhabitants' collective perceptions or constructions of the context and culture of the settings" (p. 5).

Learning Environment Design

Learning environment design comprises a field of study that began in the late 1960s (Goh & Khine, 2002) and has grown rapidly since. However, literature on the effects of campus learning environments may prove "too *unwieldy and disparate"* for complete and critical synthesis (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. xiv). Still, there is worth in the field because "We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. Whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose makes a great difference" (Dewey, 1993, p. 22). Moos (1986) also states that the "arrangement of environments is perhaps the most powerful technique we have for influencing human behavior" (p. 4). While research in learning environment design outside of classrooms is lacking, Strange and Banning (2001) circumvent this by drawing from literature on human environments, which signals the importance of integrating other relevant lines of study.

Learning has not always been central to design, and sometimes design is informed by outdated ideas of how people learn (e.g. You sit down in a library and read to yourself quietly, and that is what learning is). Over the years, this has led to many ineffective (or less effective) educational environments at postsecondary institutions (Strange & Banning, 2001).

As learning environment design in SALL contexts is yet a fledgling area of study, it may be of benefit to probe a number of relevant fields in regard to factors that can mediate action and learning, thus allowing for informed, grounded design decisions for self-access learning (SAL) and SALL environments. Fields as diverse as sociology, psychology, ecology, cognitive science, neuroscience, information technology, architectural design, and engineering can inform design in terms of physical spaces, organizational factors, and even social spaces.

In this paper, the author will detail some of the differences between grounded design in a SALL environment and instructional design for classrooms, specifically with interest to how various or even "competing" learning paradigms and epistemologies can be viable and accounted for in SALL contexts. Finally, the author will draw on information in a variety of fields to show how those ideas might inform design interventions by citing research in the relevant fields,

discussing the implications, and illustrating what each principle might look like in a real learning spaces.

Learning Environments in Self-Access

The environment can include more than just the *space*, becoming a *place*—the difference between which can understood accordingly, "Ultimately, what makes these [self-access] facilities places are the actions people perform in these spaces and the meanings they ascribe to them" (Murray, 2014, p. 82). Gardner and Miller (1999) make a distinction between two primary kinds of self-access learning environments—*controlled* and *uncontrolled* (p. 20). Essentially, controlled learning environments are those that are designed and organized for learning. On the other side of the spectrum are uncontrolled learning environments, which might include unplanned spaces outside of the control of teachers/counselors/advisors. "These are environments in which learners may see potential for language learning and take advantage of it" (p. 20). Learning environment design, by nature, focuses primarily on the former.

The divide between controlled and uncontrolled learning environments may not in fact be binary. It is not difficult to imagine a continuum ranging from heavily controlled learning environments to uncontrolled learning environments in which there was no deliberate planning (e.g. cafeteria spaces that students use for studying and practicing in various ways, but for which no thought was actually given to activities other than eating). To imagine such a continuum, it may be helpful to employ an ecological lens, viewing environments in terms of *affordance*, "which means a relationship between an organism (a learner, in our case) and the environment, that signals an opportunity for or inhibition of action" (van Lier, 2004, p. 4). Some affordances might be more explicit than others, and learners' noticing and orientation to them may be variable. For example, while a chair affords sitting, so might a window sill. This difference in relative strength of affordance symbolized by a thing helps illustrate a space on the continuum between what may be thought of as controlled and uncontrolled environments. A highly controlled learning environment might explicitly label a space as "conversation practice area," whereas a semi-controlled learning environment might be designed to afford such conversation and speaking practice through the layout and orientation of seating, among other design considerations, but not explicitly state "This is the area for speaking practice!" A highly controlled environment is more prescriptive, either explicitly (the naming of an area), or

implicitly ("These are the materials you should use, because they are the ones provided for you to select from."). A semi-controlled environment might describe a designed learning environment that is designed to present a wealth of affordances but with a less prescriptive tilt. This somewhat parallels how Hannafin, Land, and Oliver (1999) classify *enabling contexts* of open learning environments as externally imposed (explicit prescriptive), externally induced (implicit prescriptive), or individually generated (non-prescriptive) (p. 123-126).

In self-access areas aiming to support agency and autonomy, as they most often do, it would seem best to avoid prescriptive environments. This comes with one caveat, however, and that is that students exhibit varying levels of prior knowledge, expertise, and autonomy. David Ausabel, known for his contributions to educational psychology, asserted, "The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows" (1968, p. vi). This applies not to just language, but the noticing, orientation to, and use of affordances in an environment as well. Skilled and experienced self-access users may find a plethora of affordances to act upon in an open environment, whereas novice self-access users may find themselves relatively lost without any sort of prescription or recommendation, dependent upon prior knowledge. From the perspective of fostering autonomy, rather than simply supporting those learners who are already effectively autonomous, it would behoove educators and designers to develop learning environments which allow for some guidance to learners that need it. By avoiding outright explicit prescriptivism, though, spaces can also accommodate learners with other ideas of how they might want to use the space to support and further their learning. The degree to which prescription features in the design of a space will be dependent upon the context and the institution's goals.

Classroom learning environment design has been greatly informed by instructional design and often presupposes the presence of someone operating in a teaching capacity, meaning that design decisions feature mostly in terms of classrooms' *built pedagogy*— "the ability of the space to define how one teaches" (Oblinger, 2007, p. 1.1)—whereas in a traditional self-access environment such as a library, greater emphasis has been placed on materials selection, organization, structure, and other provisions (including staffing and support) which may mediate users' effective navigation of the space and selection and use of materials as autonomous agents. There may be a wealth of knowledge that can be incorporated in SAL from library design. While self-access centers (SACs) began simply as resource centers, they became distinctly different

from libraries in that many SACs started focusing on resource use and activity. In recent years, however, libraries have followed suit, abandoning the position of being only materials repositories—modern libraries now often feature learning commons (Beagle, 1999). Even in the traditional sense, libraries shared many commonalities with SACs: They are both self-access spaces, unbound by many classroom limitations, and have an interest in making sure that materials and resources are organized and arranged to support access, selection, and use.

Without a class teacher to act as prescriber of action, the other mediating factors of self-access learning environments are doubly important. Design in classroom contexts is not unimportant—in fact, the opposite is true (Allford & Pachler, 2007; Goh & Khine, 2002; Murphey, 2013; Oblinger, 2007; van Lier, 2004) and built pedagogy can have powerful positive effects (Oblinger, 2007). However, physical aspects of a designed learning environment in a self-access context may play a larger relative role in learning and activity for a particular space, thus underscoring the importance of good design in those spaces to create effective places for learning. Design certainly plays a mediating role in possible action, and thus learning, and so it is helpful to think of built pedagogy from the stance that it is also possible for learners to both teach themselves and be taught be others (and teaching themselves is expressing agency over their own learning).

Complexity in Self-Access Language Learning

Language learning can be considered relatively complex and inclusive of a variety of learning processes, particularly when compared with some other subjects and knowledge areas (e.g. history). With regard to learning environments, while this complexity necessitates many design considerations, it also implies that language is a particularly useful lens for studying and understanding appropriate design interventions for many kinds of learning. SALL can include, for example: the development of higher order thinking processes, such as analyzing and evaluating resources; knowledge acquisition, including content knowledge and vocabulary; cognitive skills, notably when receiving or producing language; and metacognitive skills, as used in planning, monitoring, reflecting upon, and revising personal approaches to learning. In addition to the variety of things people learn through and with language, language learners make use of the encoding (creation), potentiation (storage), and recall of all memory types, which can

be regarded as various ways of learning at the physiological level. For discussion on memory types, see Carey (2014) or Hattie and Yates (2014).

This all means that through language learning and learner development in SALL, learning can be understood as a rich, complex, and varied process, suggesting educators remain wary of oversimplification, which could lead to prescriptions that turn out to be either ungeneralizable, or worse, detrimental to learners in varied self-access spaces. This complex nature of language learning can inform approaches to design, and thus design interventions can more appropriately address the needs of language learners in SALL contexts.

Grounded Design in Self-Access

Land and Hannafin (2000) illustrate the importance of *grounded design*, which they view as "the systematic implementation of processes and procedures that are rooted in established theory and research in human learning" (Hannafin, Hannafin, Land, & Oliver, 1997, p. 102). However, Land and Hannafin (2000) are careful to note that, "[grounded design] does not advocate or presume the inherent superiority of a specific epistemology or methodology for design. Rather, grounded design provides a framework for reconciling diverse design practices with the basic tenets of associated belief systems" (p. 3). The point they seek to make is that by design the affordances in a space should match the kind of learning and knowing expected to take place in that environment. They continue to detail the types of activities supported by different learning environments based on different psychological learning paradigms. They illustrate how a behaviorism-grounded learning environment (skill-based drilling and repetition) would differ from a cognitivism-grounded learning environment (focused on mental processes), which would still then differ from a constructivist learning environment (building on prior knowledge and experience).

Reconciling "Competing" Learning Paradigms and the Need for an Informed Eclecticism

Hannafin et al. (1997) asserted that a level of reflexivity awareness is required for the deliberate application in a design, implying a decision to focus on design based on some one

particular theory with which the designers are very familiar. This argument is based on the perspective of Bednar, Cunningham, Duffy, and Perry (1995) who contest that activities informed by one paradigm may derail the effectiveness of an instructional model informed by another paradigm. Wilson and Myers (2000), however, question whether design should be theory-based (suggesting exclusivity, as above) or theory-informed (suggesting possibilities, among others), stating that in reality "Practitioners tend to be opportunistic with respect to different theoretical conceptions; they might try viewing a problem from one theoretical perspective, then another, and compare results" (p. 82). This view is also supported by Allford (in Allford & Pachler, 2007) who states, "There is no single approach suited to all types of learner and all learning environments, and it seems likely that different approaches will be appropriate for different activities and stages of development" (p. 136-137). Sfard (1998) also highlights the danger in narrowly applying a single theory of practice, "When a theory is translated into an institutional prescription, exclusivity becomes the worst enemy of success" (p. 10). He then continues to illustrate why this can be a pitfall: "Because no two students have the same needs, and no two teachers arrive at their best performance in the same way, theoretical exclusivity and didactic single-mindedness can be trusted to make even the best of educational ideas fail" (p. 10-11).

Those in favor of following a single paradigm are very often presupposing a limitation on resources in classroom. SAL environments, however, are not constrained by some of the limitations often associated with classroom instruction, and thus they have the possibility of accommodating a plethora of ways of learning, relatively unbound by time, space, and grouping considerations. Further, with situated cognition as a potentially unifying framework, Wilson and Myers (2000) view various learning paradigms as commensurable, as also posited by Greeno and the Middle School Mathematics Through Applications Projects Group (1998, p. 14).

Many SAL environments to date, with a focus on learner autonomy, have been developed from a constructivist perspective (Hannafin, Land, & Oliver, 1999; Jonassen & Land, 2000; Pritchard, 2005). However, many instruments to measure constructivist environments, such as the constructivist learning environment survey (CLES)—cross validated and used in a variety of countries around the world (Goh & Khine, 2002)—still most often focus on classroom learning environments (see Aldridge, Taylor, Fraser & Chen, 2000; Kim, Fisher & Fraser 1999; Taylor, Fraser & Fisher, 1997), and may require adaptation for SAL environments. Jonassen (1999)

states that actually "To impose a single belief or perspective is decidedly nonconstructivist. Rather, I prefer to think of them as complementary design tools (some of the best environments use combinations of methods) to be applied to different contexts," also noting "This diversity of perspectives and methods is an important aspect of the new paradigm of instructional theories" (p. 217). Kwo, Moore, and Jones (2005) also see the benefit of eclecticism through discussing the sorts of knowledge needed by different fields, adding that "New forms of knowledge are yet to be discovered through connections between interdisciplinary groupings" (p. 5).

Developments in Cognitive Neuroscience and Brain-Based Learning

In recent years, a positive view of eclecticism with regard to approaches to learning and ways of knowing has become further supported by advances in cognitive neuroscience and brain based learning, which offers evidence of the neurological mechanisms behind various types of learning and their respective memory encoding (formation), potentiation (storage), and recall as they work in behaviorist, cognitivist, constructivist, and other paradigms. This is especially important in language learning as it is a domain in which learners benefit from each of these paradigms in different ways (Greeno et al., 1998).

Theories of learning and epistemologies have long belonged to the domains of psychology and philosophy. Knowledge does not progress in isolation, though, and "During the past few decades, research on how brains enable people to perceive and produce language has been advancing at a dramatic pace. As a result, the field now contains a wealth of fascinating findings about this uniquely human capacity" (Kemmerer, 2015, p. xix). These advances purvey knowledge that better informs educators of some of the biological and physiological underpinnings of learning processes, and this knowledge, applied for pedagogic purposes, has become known as *brain-based learning.* "… there are some principles that have developed out of the brain-based learning movement which, if applied, seem to have the potential to improve the learning environment and lead to improved learning" (Pritchard, 2005, p. 75).

What Eclecticism Looks Like: Example Principles for Informed Design Interventions

Drawing from some of the fields, theories, and learning paradigms discussed in this paper, a number of design principles emerge, several of which are detailed in this section. It is

worth noting that the following principles are by no means an exhaustive list, but were developed by the author for the purpose of sharing with faculty involved in the design and decision making processes of a new building that will include a new SALC. The goal was to find core and overarching principles that can positively inform the decision makers involved in the design process while accounting for the variety of activity and learning that can take place in the center. It is worth reiterating that an environment is not just its space, but also organization (and policy) and social aspects, and thus these too should be considered in and as part of the design process.

Principle 1: <u>Positive emotional response</u> improves memory encoding, potentiation, and recall

Memory is vital to language learning, with memories that are connected to strong emotions are easier to recall than neutral memories, with relative emotional-ness as a strong predictor of recall. People can often easily recall emotionally charged memories, including both painful moments in their lives as well as the euphoric ones (Dolcos, LaBar, & Cabeza, 2005). This leads to the first half of the first principle—*emotional response is a strong predictor of memory recall* (see Ludmer, Dudai, & Rubin, 2011).

The relative strength of recall for a memory is also related to the number and quality of connections made with a memory (Carey, 2014), which is in part regulated by working memory. Working memory, often referred to as short-term memory, allows people to make connections with other aspects of the learning context, and it also allows them to effectively juggle known concepts and knowledge/memory at the same time. Effective working memory leads to richer associations and connections, which leads to stronger recall ability. Attention, though, is a limited resource (Carey, 2014; Hattie & Yates, 2014). When learners are anxious, their cognitive processes are busy dealing with stressors and they have less capacity in working memory to devote to other learning (Ashcraft & Kirk, 2001; Ashcraft & Krause, 2007). This is because the fear and anxiety affects working memory similarly to "a resource-demanding secondary task" (Ashcraft & Krause, 2007, p. 243). Further, strong and especially repeated negative experiences associated with some stimuli can lead to fear conditioning, by which stress and anxiety levels are triggered by those stimuli even in the absence of any new negative event. Thus, even in setting morals and values aside, it is impossible to advocate a pedagogy of fear or negativity because of

the detrimental effects on learning at the neuro-cognitive level, which is why this principle necessarily includes a *positive* orientation.

In terms of real SALL environments, this principle might feature in color choices and lighting, which can have an effect on emotions, as well as positive imagery. It would be helpful to have staff who are friendly and welcoming, and processes in place to help students feel they are valued in an environment (Achor, 2009; Strange & Banning, 2001), such as welcoming learner input, and taking real steps to address learner grievances). On the language side of things, it might include helping learners develop the ability to find appropriately-leveled materials, which should be challenging enough to be interesting without being so challenging that learners cannot understand (Pritchard, 2005). This could be achieved through helpful diagnostics, recommendations, signage and organization, or assistance from advisors or staff. If a learner deems their experience worthwhile, they will generally regard it positively.

Principle 2: <u>Low-stress</u> and <u>safe</u> environments encourage risk taking and lower inhibitions to practice, which leads to further learning

While there may be some overlap with the prior principle, the reasons for having a low-stress and safe environment are numerous. First, maintaining a low stress level is beneficial in that it keeps the pre-frontal cortex and working memory functioning appropriately (encoding new memories—learning new things). It also helps avoid fear conditioning, which can stem from anxiety, whether logically justifiable or not. From an identity perspective, if people feel safe, comfortable, and accepted, they are less likely to experience a sort of cognitive dissonance between identities, and instead are more easily able to slide between various appropriate learner and linguistic identities (Gee, 2007; van Lier, 2004). Perhaps the most important thing afforded by safety is the support to try, without fear of failure, and retry if needed. This is important in following an approach to learning called *experiential learning*, which posits that people learn by doing and then reflecting on their experiences (Kohonen, 2001; Kolb, 1984). Gee refers to the ability to act without fear of failure as the *"psychological moratorium" principle,* which he defines as the idea that, "Learners can take risks in a space where real-world consequences are lowered" (Gee, 2007, p. 64).

The need for practice is especially necessary with language activities, like speech, that include motor skills. This need is supported by the concept of myelination in neuroscience, which details how neural pathways get stronger the more they are used (Kemmerer, 2015). While the majority of myelination in the brain happens up through adolescence, healthy adult brains also contain myelin producing cells that are important in the learning and development of at least motor skills (McKenzie et. al, 2014) and potentially other skills. There is also evidence that suggests neuronal pathway use influences the degree and location of myelination (Hines et. al, 2015), meaning that the more you use one of these skills, the more efficient it becomes on a physiological level.

The implications of the concepts detailed above are that: first, a safer place leads to lower fear of failure and increased risk-taking; second, more risk-taking means more experience, offering opportunity for reflection and; third, use and practice of certain skills also supports and influences myelination, which is a biological mechanism implicated in learning and which continues to take place in adults for at least motor skills learning and use (meaning it is useful in supporting speech skills at a minimum).

An environment applying this principle might focus on the culture of learning, where risk taking is encouraged and praised, whether the outcome was "correct" or not. It might orient students to the ability to learn as much or more from failures as from successes, casting trial and error in a positive light. SALL environments are particularly suited to this kind of support as they may not be required to provide some form of summative assessment (i.e. grades), allowing learners and support staff to focus on reflection and feedback that is formative in nature, helping the learners develop from their missteps rather than becoming paralyzed by them.

Principle 3: <u>Social interaction</u> can positively augment learning and development

Vygotsky (1962, 1978) illustrates learner development as inherently social. Learners operate in a metaphorical space called the zone of proximal development (ZPD) or "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Murphey (1996, 2013) also notes the presence of adjustment, and "that students and teachers had variable abilities to adapt

or adjust to partners and situations, displaying variable zones of proximal adjusting or ZPAs" (Murphey, 2013, p. 173). This plays an important role in both learning and communication, perhaps by allowing learners to better target the range at which to engage with others and environments for an optimal ZPD, effectively scaffolding for either others or themselves.

Some learners want relative privacy when working with friends, while others do not mind more public settings and may enjoy opportunities to meet new people. Groups come in different sizes, too, and thus moveable furniture that can be arranged in various groupings and orientations would be helpful. Some groups may want large desktop spaces where they can work together on projects, whereas other groups may be focused more on comfortable furniture where they can relax and chat in a target language. Ideally, a learning environment would be able to accommodate groups of learners of a variety of sizes and with a variety of goals. In addition to this, though, designers should look for ways to create or foster connections between people to build communities of learners (Strange & Banning, 2001). Teachers, tutors, counselors, and other staff may also be part of the community, and may also serve as a more knowledgeable other to help learners function, learn, and develop within their ZPDs.

If institutions are to exploit the benefits of social learning, design interventions need to account for social interaction, including group sizes, orientations, and systems of design in place for connecting learners with one another. At the author's current institution, for example, there is a learning communities wall on which many students attach a paper they have filled out with information on languages they speak and languages they would like to learn, as well as some additional information about themselves, their interests, and their hobbies. Other students interested in an exchange of learning and practice in those languages can get their information and contact them. This helps facilitate contact between students with similar goals and can help them identify who is a more knowledgeable other in a particular area of interest.

Principle 4: <u>Comfort</u> attracts learners and reduces distraction, increasing focus

Several years ago at the Directions in Self-Access Language Learning Symposium at Kanda University of International Studies, there was a session on considerations to account for when setting up a new center (Foale, 2013), and one of the most salient bits of information was the statement that, "Students will usually default to the most comfortable place." That comfort may be physical or psychological in nature. For example, a student may avoid a seating option

that is physically more comfortable if it is near someone they dislike, because it is more psychologically uncomfortable. Comfort is important because it pertains to the most fundamental step students need to take in order to access and exploit the resources available to them—coming to the center. At the other end of the spectrum, people generally avoid uncomfortable places. Oblinger (2006) stated that institutions need to account for users of different body types and movement abilities instead of just assuming that learners are small and healthy. She referred to a sobering experience wherein one university found through a panel discussion that two of four panelists had actually dropped courses they were taking because of the amount of discomfort caused to them by the seating. She argued, "Discomfort makes a compelling distraction to learning" (Oblinger, 2006, p. 2.6).

Dörnyei & Murphey (2003) discuss how temperature, lighting, decoration, and music can play a noticeable role in activity and interaction among language learners (p. 83-84), furthering the case for comfortable design having a positive effect on learner action and engagement, within groups and without. Carey (2014) further illustrates the importance of decoration and variable settings in learning, describing how detail-rich and varied environments allow people to more effectively encode and recall memories, ostensibly due to a richer network of associations and synaptic firing, creating a "stronger" memory by making recall easier. He points out that, similarly, having a variety of study locations supports later recall better than repeated study in the same space, possibly because of the novelty and the overall variety of connections that can be associated with a memory.

In a real SALL environment these ideas might be manifest as a collection of spaces— each unique, but all sensory-rich while still being comfortable. They might include soft touch furniture or a variety of seating options. A good environment would provide ample lighting to all of its spaces, and keep the climate hospitable. Materials and signage, too, should be considered, with extreme high and low heights on shelving reserved for decoration so that learners can search through and for materials with minimal obstruction or discomfort.

Principle 5: Removing barriers and increasing <u>accessibility</u> facilitates action and learning

Accessibility can influence action in profound ways. In saving a small amount of time in access, people can gain a great amount engagement in learning. In his book, *The Happiness*

Advantage, Achor (2009) details what he calls *the 20-second rule*, named after the 20 seconds it would take to retrieve his guitar from the closet if he wanted to practice playing it (p. 150). The 20-second rule essentially states that people become more likely to do things as they lower the barriers to initiation, and less likely to start the things for which they have raised the barriers to initiation (p. 154). Those barriers might be with regard to time, as was the case with Achor and his guitar, or they might be with regard to other cognitive load—if one can make rules or decisions ahead of time, it takes away some of the load associated with the decision making processes when it is time to actually get started (less impetus needed). This principle has several implications for learning environments, and SAL environments in particular. Achor suggested that people can augment their environments in ways to help them form good habits by lowering impetus required for initiation, and discourage bad habits by raising the impetus required to initiate an activity. From a very practical standpoint too, easy access means that, even with all other variables equal, learners will have more time freed up for activities that lead to learning.

In physical spaces, this principle can be applied in regard to materials or other resources. Materials can be placed in a way such that they are near where learners would often use them, and by categorizing or labeling them in ways that make them easy to find, physical and cognitive barriers to access are diminished.

This can also be applied to how learners access resources in digital environments, where one might think about the number of clicks or links between where they start—opening a browser or app—and where they need to end up in order to access resources or engage in some kind of learning activity. As students navigate through these pages or apps, the time it takes to move and to select items and links, and for the computer to process and display information is in a sense the physical barrier of the digital world, whereas the time it takes for a learner to process the pages and complete the navigation presents additional cognitive load. In this case, a homepage or portal that learners can use as a jumping off point for resources and programs that they might use would be helpful.

Socially speaking, the aforementioned learning communities wall and language exchange example (see: *Principle 3)* sports an organization that lowers the barriers—both affective and organizational in nature—that would exist if one student went out searching for others of their own accord to start a language exchange.

Principle 6: <u>Flexibility</u> (adaptability) allows an environment to become and stay relevant

Most people have heard the adage most commonly attributed to Heraclitus that states, "The only constant in life is change." Technologist and X-Prize Foundation founder and chairman, Peter Diamandis expands on this to extoll, "The only constant is change… And that rate of change is increasing" (2014). This is certainly true in the field of education, and particularly so in SAL environments. Education sees a great many innovations, and occasionally *disruptive innovations*—that is, new innovations that have the power to disrupt and displace established markets (this could be in regard to materials, spatial design, or a number of other variables in education). At the author's institution for example, all incoming students have tablets (i.e. iPads), in part to try to provide greater access to digital materials and go paperless. This proliferation of digital materials and the ability for teachers and other faculty to incorporate materials and tools for teaching and learning from a variety of sources means that, in this context, the iPads have displaced many traditional textbooks in terms of usefulness as a classroom resource. Innovation, including disruptive innovation, is evidence of a healthy field full of people constantly seeking to improve the accessibility and quality of learning available to learners.

A healthy and constantly adapting, evolving field also means that those in the field face constant change, or else run the risk of getting left behind. Diamandis asserts that the world will see an increase in disruptive change through the interaction of exponential technologies in the coming years, and at the company level (or perhaps institutional level to educators) he states, "You either disrupt yourself, or someone else will" (2014). Educators often observe this in regard to the rapid introduction and proliferation of new technologies in schools and learning environments. Moreover, given time, there are also changes in faculty, staff, and management; changes in incoming students and their respective skills, dispositions, and needs; and constant changes in materials, tools, and other learning resources. In order to properly address these changes, environments and educators need to be able to adapt as they occur; and for them to be adaptable, they need to be flexible.

Learning Spaces, edited by Diana Oblinger (2006), contains 21 cases of learning environments at various higher education institutions. Flexibility (also expressed in terms of adaptability) features as one of the most repeated design considerations across these spaces. In real terms, a highly flexible environment needs to accommodate for changes in the number of

faculty, staff, and learners; or materials, tools, and technologies; or even spatial configuration and focus in order to better support learners. Moveable partitions in combination with moveable furniture would allow learners to adapt work spaces to be either more public or more private, as they see fit. It would have enough room to allow for reasonable reorientation and a variety of arrangements of furniture. There would likely be a variety of soft and hard-touch furniture, as well as a variety of work surfaces, including digital surfaces and monitors that can connect to a variety of devices via different connectors (i.e. for iPads and Macintosh computers) and ports (i.e. currently including at least VGA and HDMI connections, potentially DVI and Display Port connections, and soon potentially Thunderbolt connections). Other digital considerations also need to be taken into account too, such as ubiquitous access to stable Wi-Fi (or WLAN) coverage and potential Ethernet connections to give Internet access to a variety of users across platforms, which would prevent users from becoming figuratively tethered to some particular area. Such a SALL environment would be flexible in terms of access, too, remaining open for student use as long as realistically possible. It may have an experimental area that allows for new spaces to be trialed. Flexibility would also be built into the budget and staffing considerations, allowing for the reasonable opportunity to adjust to shifts in user needs and numbers.

Conclusion

The field of learning environment design offers valuable perspectives on ways to enhance learning in various spaces. While many considerations that pertain to learning in classrooms may also apply to SAL environments, there are also considerable and important differences between these two types of environments. SALL design in particular is an under-researched area of learning environment design, representing a uniquely rich and diverse context that would benefit from further and deeper inquiry. While grounded design in classroom-based instructional design often focuses on one particular learning paradigm for an environment, the diversity of learning processes at play in learning and language development in SALL environments affirms the necessity for an eclectic approach to SALL design, informed by a number of learning paradigms and disparate but relevant fields. Advances in cognitive neuroscience in recent years have helped bolster the brain-based learning movement and clarify brain-friendly pedagogic implications to augment learning, making learning more efficient and more effective. Many of these implications in fact validate a variety of learning paradigms in different ways, further supporting

the argument for informed eclecticism in SALL environments. Example design considerations informed by a variety of fields and distilled into principles include orientations toward positive eliciting emotional response, low-stress and safe places, social interaction, comfort, accessibility, and flexibility. While these represent only a small number of possible informed design principles, the field of SALL environment design warrants further attention and can potentially benefit from wide variety of relevant fields.

Notes on the Contributor

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Design and Management of a Self-Access Language Learning Space Integrated into a Taught Course

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Abstract

This paper reports on the design and management of an online self-access language learning (SALL) space that was used with a group of Saudi medical students to complement classroom-based learning. The aim was to increase the opportunities for communication and language practice and, more specifically, to help develop the learners' language learning autonomy (Little, 1999). In a pre-study, a questionnaire and a focus group were used to collect information about the students' needs and interests in language learning. The design of this space was informed by the students' feedback on their language learning needs and styles as recommended by Breen (1986) and Marsh (2012). Desire2Learn, a widely used virtual learning environment, was used to provide learners with an online self-access center because of the many features it has which would help learners to take control of their learning. The learning resources and online tools included instant messaging (IM), a news stream, access to a facilitator and other learning support, moderated discussions, videos, images, activities and quizzes, as well as links to external materials and to free self-access language learning resources. A description will be provided of how the materials, the tools, and the facilities were integrated within this space along with the justification for each of the elements. A look ahead to how this study could be extended for use with all learners enrolled in the medical scheme of the university will be discussed at the end of the paper.

Keywords: self-access learning, online language learning space, needs analysis, language learner autonomy, SALL management, virtual learning environment

Background

The increasing interest in learner autonomy and learner-centred approaches to learning and teaching have led to the need for learners to be exposed to new opportunities for language exploration and language use along with the need for the development of helpful learning strategies (Gardner & Miller, 2014). Self-access centres (SACs) were largely developed in response to this need so that users could learn independently with access to appropriate facilities and resources and the guidance of the SAC manager, language advisors or teachers (Gardner & Miller, 1997). The great investment made by different institutions in SACs reveals the importance given to the concept of self-access language learning (SALL) (Gardner & Miller, 2014). Whether SACs are still seen as important is a question that has been posed more recently (Mynard, 2012; Reinders, 2012). However, this question should not

be perhaps about the effectiveness of the, but about the need for the physical SACs as compared to virtual online learning spaces.

SALL has gone dramatically beyond the confines of SACs as a result of the proliferation of advanced technologies and the prevalence of the internet (Gardner & Miller, 2014; Lamb & Reinders, 2005) and social networking. Teaching can now be computer-assisted or computer-mediated, and numerous opportunities for intercultural communication and authentic use of language are nowadays available for learners in synchronous and asynchronous modes (Gardner & Miller, 2014). Nevertheless, technology might not be used effectively when incorporated in SALL. Only a handful of the 45 SACs investigated in Reinders & Lázaro's (2007) study used technology to its best effect.

In fact, despite the large amount of literature on SALL, few researchers have addressed the management of SALL (Gardner & Miller, 2014). The literature of SALL highlights the resources used in SALL and its educational importance, but there is a dearth of studies that deal with SALL management and the training provided to the managers (Gardner & Miller, 2014). In the few studies addressing SALL management, the role of SALL management staff and the time dedicated to this role were underestimated (Gardner & Miller, 2014).

This paper is part of a PhD project which looked at the effectiveness of an intervention to promote learners' autonomy in language learning. It is proposed in this paper that SALL management can be carried out not only in a physical SAC, but also in a virtual space integrated into a taught course (see *The aim of the design of the SALL space* section), as indicated by Gardner & Miller (2011; 2014). This paper describes how different elements of SALL opportunities were selected, combined, and managed in order to support learners and to help foster their language learner autonomy. It presents the manager's perspective on details of the design and management of the SALL space in the context of this study. The researcher in this study played the three roles of the course developer, teacher, and manager.

Design and Implementation Stage of an Online Language Learning Space

The aim of the design of the SALL space

The aim of most SACs is to help learners improve their language, develop learning skills, and enhance autonomy (Reinders & Lázaro, 2007). According to Benson & Voller (1997, p. 15), establishing a SAC has become one of the most common ways over the last twenty years for higher education institutions to support the autonomy of language learners

and this has tended to make 'self-access language learning' synonymous with 'autonomous language learning'. Wenden (1991) described autonomous learners as those who have developed learning tactics, an awareness of learning, and positive attitudes to use these abilities on their own in an appropriate, assertive, and flexible manner. Just as with the common rationale for the establishment of any SALL environment, the aim in this study is to support learners' autonomous language learning. It also aims to create more opportunities for communication and language practice, as recommended by Little (1999), to help learners improve their language proficiency and accordingly their language learning autonomy.

The success of SALL management can be influenced by the style of management adopted by the institution (Gardner & Miller, 2014). Fortunately, the aim of this study was in line with the mission of Umm AlQura University, where this research was carried out. The university invests significant amounts of money in the provision of facilities that can help to incorporate technology in teaching across different disciplines. Moreover, the university has plans to prepare learners with the skills to take control of their learning in order to raise a new generation of lifelong learners.

This study was undertaken with a group of Saudi medical students (N=24) in order to enhance their language learning opportunities. SALL resources and activities were selected and designed in detail to complement classroom-based learning. Learners who took part in this study came from a previous background of minimal access to technology for learning purposes. Part of the aim of this paper is to show how the SALL manager worked to encourage learners to collaborate, to reflect on learning, to practice the use of language, and to have interaction with the learning material, with the teacher, and with peers to reach the ultimate goal, which is the enhancement of their autonomy in language learning.

The SALL opportunities given to the learners in this study were integrated into the taught medical English course they study in the second semester of the foundation year. However, the learners' work on the tasks designed for the SALL space is all voluntary and is not included in the grading system of the main course they are studying. Moreover, the work done in the SALL space is not limited to classroom use, but is available at any time beyond the classroom. The teacher uses the university identification numbers of the students who are taking the course to add them to a virtual learning environment (VLE) and, accordingly, to give them access to the online learning material. As it is facilitated through the course, only learners enrolled in the Medical English course and added to the VLE can join the teacher and their peers inside the classroom. Various tools afforded by the VLE were used in the design of this SALL space to provide learners with different opportunities for language

learning, language use, and development of helpful learning skills. The design of the SALL space is task-based, where learners are given tasks ranging from two to six tasks per optional module (i.e. lesson). These modules were to be worked on voluntarily and collaboratively when the teacher was in the classroom once a week. In addition, they were given the opportunity to access the SALL space anytime, anywhere outside the classroom to learn and practice the language within the online learning community.

Consideration of learners' needs

In order to foster learners' autonomous learning, learners need to be provided with the appropriate SALL opportunities and support (Gardner & Miller 1999; Hurd, 1998; Reinders, 2010). This level of support cannot be achieved without considering the needs and interests of the learners (Lee, 2014; Levy & Stockwell, 2006; Morrison, 2014) because learners are aware of these needs and can help to produce the learning content (Legenhausen, 2013). It is a tenet that learners have the right to decide about the time, the place, the way, and the process of learning they prefer to do outside the classroom (Morrison, 2014).

Despite the suggestion by some scholars such as Gardner (2011), that self-access learners should be the managers of their own learning, SALL managers still have a management responsibility (Gardner & Miller, 2014). Managers need to understand the context, collect the views of learners, teachers, stakeholders, and support personnel in order to get a full understanding of what is there, what is needed, and what is the best way of doing it (Morrison, 2014).

The design of the SALL space provided in this study was informed by the learners' feedback on their language learning needs and styles as recommended by Breen (1986) and Marsh (2012). A pre-study was carried out to explore learners' language learning needs, interests, problems, and learning preferences along with their technology use in language learning. For this reason, a questionnaire was administered in order to collect information from this population of students (N=25). This was followed by a focus group with four volunteer students in order to establish their background and experiences of learning English inside and outside the classroom. The original aim was to include up to ten students but this was not possible as many were not available at the beginning of the summer vacation. In the pre-study, learners asked to be given opportunities for language use and practice, enjoyment, engagement, choice, and decision making in their learning experiences. Learners' responses were taken into consideration in the selection, plan, and design of the elements included in the SALL space in order to satisfy and motivate them.

Selection and integration of the tools, facilities, and materials

The manager of the SAC in this study worked with the hardware, software, VLE, and pedagogical elements in order to ensure that they provided SALL opportunities which would help the learners to develop their ability to take control of their language learning. For this reason, every learner was assigned a computer connected to the Internet so that they could access the SALL space during class time. Learners were also provided with tools that were intended to be easy to use to help them explore information and access the resources.

There are many options for online spaces which can store online resources which learners can then explore and use for their language learning. The decision in this study was to use Desire2Learn, a widely used VLE, to provide learners with access to the intended online self-access learning options. This decision was made mainly because this was the institutional VLE and it was well supported by the university.

This was not the only reason for the adoption of Desire2Learn, as the researcher was looking for a user-friendly VLE with features including an interesting interface and easy navigation. Besides these two features, Desire2Learn has many other features which help learners to take control of their learning and help the teacher and the learners to experiment with the online resources such as an instant messaging (IM), a news stream, a dropbox area, discussion forums, and a quiz tool to design different types of quizzes and tasks.

The IM tool (i.e. pager) embedded in Desire2Learn gives a list of the instant messages received in the inbox of any user of the online space and it can be used synchronously for instant messages or asynchronously to leave a message for someone who is offline at some point. It was used as one of the communication channels for the members of the online learning community to share questions, answers, quick ideas, quick updates, or any emerging issues. Learners used it to communicate with the teacher after university working hours to enquire about any difficulty they were facing when they used the VLE or about what some of the tasks were asking them to do. This tool helped the learners to get the support they need for autonomous learning during SALL.

The news stream is another communication tool provided by Desire2Learn which was used by the teacher to post any update or announcement. It was very helpful, especially at the beginning of the course when the learners received a briefing with pictures about the whole course and what they might be able to do in this online space. Learning was reinforced and their motivation was increased when the SALL manager announced the winners in the competitions among the small groups. The SALL manager also used it to notify the learners about the different support given to them including any needed clarification about the tasks,

any emerging update to be shared with learners, or any further resources uploaded to the VLE.

The dropbox area was used by the learners to submit any document they would like to share with the members of their online learning community, including the teacher and their peers, and to upload the projects they constructed in their small groups. This tool allows learners to view the score they obtained for each of the tasks and the feedback if there was any. This feature of the dropbox tool allows learners to check their scores for the evaluation of their performance and to monitor their progress in learning.

The quiz tool was used by the SALL manager to construct small tasks in different forms such as short answer, long answer, multiple-choice, matching, and picking more than one answer. The number of attempts allowed before the task is submitted is under the control of the SALL manager and can be adapted at any point. This can help both the teacher and the learners to track the progress in the learners' performance by looking at all of the attempts submitted before the final submission. Though learners' use of the VLE is voluntary, the SALL manager was able through the quiz tool to assign the grade points for the different tasks to help learner evaluate their performance and they were automatically getting their scores when they submitted their tasks.

The tasks that the SALL manager designed using the quiz tool all appear in the content area, which is another section of Deasire2Learn. This main content section of the VLE includes a navigation pane on the left-hand side of the screen to facilitate the accessibility of the different course sections (Figure 1). Additionally, this content area presents the course content on a list and this space is divided into blocks. Each block was allocated to the class work tasks as well as to the optional homework task followed by the reflective writing form in each module (i.e. each lesson) in the course. This organization helped the learners to go easily through the tasks in every module and not to confuse which section belongs to which. This clear structure of the content gave learners the control over their learning as they were able to decide which task to do at which time. The reflective writing they were recommended to do was allocated a separate section at the end of each module so that the learners could do this before they left the classroom. After the class, they can do the homework and extended learning tasks either on campus, at home, or on the go using their mobile phones.
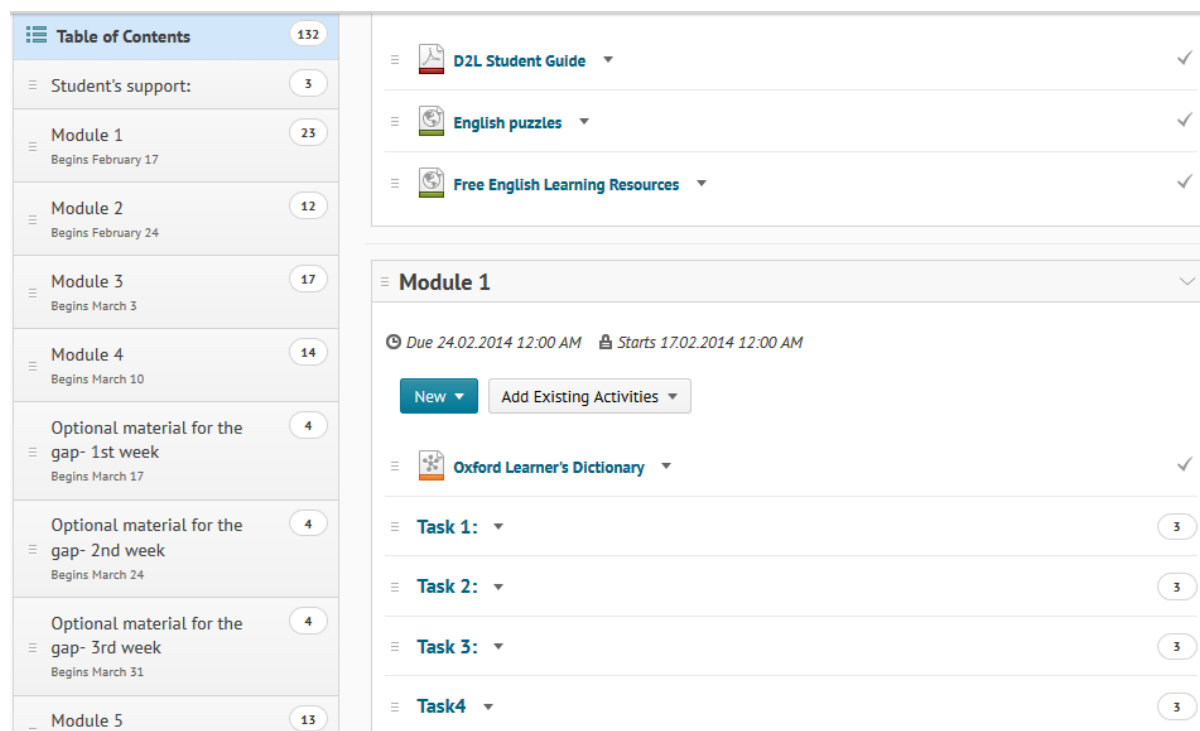
Figure 1. The Main Content Section and Navigation Pane on the VLE

SALL can be successful when teachers promote it either by enhancing learners' beliefs about SALL or by designing the SALL environment in an effective and engaging way (Dofs & Hobbs, 2011; Gardner & Miller, 2014). Therefore, lots of choice was built into the design of the online space whether in the tasks to be performed, into the material to use to finish some of the tasks, or into the time and place in which it would be done. The provision of these choices built on the needs and interests reported by the learners in the pre-study questionnaire and focus group. Additionally, the tasks used in the content of the SALL space were designed to be engaging and to stimulate the learners' critical thinking and higher order thinking skills (e.g. problem-solving, project-based, role-play, communicative tasks). Diverse types of learning materials were uploaded to the VLE and embedded in the design of the task-based content of the online space (e.g. links to dictionaries, links to language learning websites, videos, pictures, Microsoft Word documents, PDFs) to facilitate learners' experimentation with language. At the top of each of the tasks, the learning outcome expected to be achieved after doing the tasks was stated to enhance learners' awareness about their learning which would give them the control over their learning.

Target language use was emphasized in the design of this SALL space based on the assumption that the dominant use of the target language as the medium of communication while learning English and reflecting on learning leads to the enhancement of language

learner autonomy (Little, 1999). To be able to achieve that, communicative tasks ranging from two to six tasks per module were included in the design of the online space. An indirect approach to teaching speaking was used to encourage learners to find a solution through interaction (Hedge, 2000). Problems were given in different types of tasks such as free blended discussions (i.e. learners discuss the discussion topic posted on the VLE while they physically exist in the face-to-face classroom), role-play tasks, and problem solving tasks. The direct approach to teaching speaking skills was also used in the SALL design when topics were posted on the discussion board for learners to talk about either synchronously or asynchronously as self-access tasks while they are at home.

Learners' reflection on their learning was emphasized in the design of the SALL space in order to provide opportunities which contribute to their development as autonomous learners as recommended by Lamb and Reinders (2005) and Schwienhorst (2008). A guided reflective writing form was uploaded to the VLE after all of the tasks in each module with six questions asking about the tasks and strategies the learners liked the most and those they liked the least along with the plan they might have at the end of the session. Learners were encouraged to do the reflective writing in order to get them to think critically and reflect on their learning before they left the classroom, but some were doing it at home instead and were submitting it to the dropbox.

The materials that the SALL manager selected for the tasks on this SALL space were authentic and relevant to the learners' needs and to their subject matter. Gardner and Miller (2014) encourage SALL managers to provide appropriate authentic material mapped to the learners' needs which would help learners to personalize their learning (Dam, 1995) and to increase their confidence (Jones, 2001). Using authentic learning materials as the input for tasks makes learners play the role of the consumers of this material (Littlejohn, 1997). They use this authentic material to discuss and think about the way to do the tasks. Learners can select from the selection of materials given to them to work on. The organisation of the material in SALL plays an important role in the learners' response and use of these materials since good organisation will encourage learners' effective use and avoid their withdrawal (Gardner & Miller, 2014).

The learners' cognitive role as producers appears in the discussion board where they could contribute to the discussion and produce authentic language while discussing the topics provided. Gardner and Miller (2014) note that the more authentic language material learners use and the more authentic language use they have access to, the greater the benefit and the engagement would be. Accordingly, the discussion board is one of the tools built into

Desire2Learn and it was exploited for the SALL opportunities offered to learners in this study to increase the use of language and the interaction among learners within their learning community (Halvorsen 2009, McLoughlin & Lee, 2007; Mynard, 2011; Warshauer & Liaw, 2011). It presents a list of the topics given for discussions with statistics available on the posted threads and replies on each of the topics.

Management of the Online Language Learning Space

Gardner and Miller (2014) point out that the abundance of technology and networked resources together with the integration of SALL into taught courses has made the role of the SALL manager in terms of providing ever better SALL opportunities more complex than ever before. Furthermore, the current blurring of the borders between physical SACs, virtual SALL spaces, and integrated SALL has contributed to making the role of the SALL manager increasingly challenging (Gardner & Miller, 2014).

To increase the likelihood of success in SALL, SALL managers need to coordinate the work with the course developers and the teachers (Gardner & Miller, 2014). It would have been problematic for the SALL manager in this study to liaise with the course developers and teacher if the course was developed and taught by someone else. Being the course developer, teacher, and manager helped to avoid the need to liaise with the other managing partners but increased the work that the SALL manager needed to do.

Different forms of support were given to learners in the design and management of the SALL. The design of the free discussion tasks (i.e. the ones designed to be performed in a blended mode) takes into consideration the provision of supportive elements to the learners including description of the discussion context at the beginning, introducing some input in the instructions of the task, and some pictures to help them to get a feeling of the discussion topic. Quick links to Oxford Online Dictionary were added to every page to facilitate their experimentation and to provide the support they need for the development of their autonomous learning when something makes them pause while learning. Choice was carefully built into the design of the online space both in terms of the activities on offer or the resources themselves.

Support can also be seen in the scaffolding opportunities provided as the tasks allowed them to communicate with their teacher or with their peers in the target language. This scaffolding embodies Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development through their communication with a knowledgeable person. Part of the scaffolding that learners received

was through teacher's written feedback on their performances and activities in the SALL space. The focus of the feedback was not on language accuracy but on their linguistic and metalinguistic awareness as well as on motivation maintenance. The tasks students submit to dropbox are checked by the teacher afterwards. In the dropbox area of Desire2Learn, there was a designated area for the teacher to provide written feedback on each submitted task. The teacher was continuously checking the submissions and was giving prompt feedback to help the learners maintain their motivation while working online. Learners were checking the feedback given on each of the tasks and were discussing it together even while they were working online in the classroom.

Support is also exemplified in the HELP resource which was added to the SALL main content section. This additional block allows access to any element that offers support to learners such as the VLE manual for learners as users, English puzzles, and many other free self-access English learning resources (Figure 2). This support helped to elevate learners' motivation when they find what they needed to know about the use of the VLE as they were heard talking inside the classroom about how the manual helped them to deal with Desire2Learn and they were sharing tips on how to use it. Learners who consulted the additional self-access language learning resources were more engaged with the learning experience and that was seen in their performance of all of the tasks, including optional ones, their continuous synchronous and asynchronous interaction with the teacher and peers, and their attempts to encourage their peers to check out different elements of the SALL space.

Figure 2. Students' Support Section on the VLE

It is not easy to give learners sufficient background information on, for example, netiquette (Gardner & Miller, 2014) and what they can do in SALL. However, SALL managers need to make sure that learners clearly understand the concept of SALL and how to perform within its borders (Murphy & Southgate, 2011). Thus, as a manager, face-to-face negotiation sessions were held with the learners in order to have them report on any potential issues related to their learning using the SALL space. The learning outcomes of the tasks were communicated to the learners to enhance their metacognitive knowledge about their learning which would influence their motivation (Lamb, 2010; Lamb & Reinders, 2005). Because it is important that SALL managers explain to the learners that they will be given the appropriate support while using the SALL space (Gardner & Miller, 2014), the opportunities of decision making and choice offered to the learners in this study were also indicated to them. SALL managers, according to Morrison (2014) and Schwienhorst (2008), need to understand that their role is to manage the learning opportunities they are providing to learners rather than managing the learning. Hence, learners were repeatedly reminded that the work in this SALL space is voluntary and that they will be helped but not taught.

SALL managers play an important role as experts providing knowledge when they are consulted by the learners (Morrison, 2008), guides to provide the support that learners need to perform in a different learning context (Hurd, 2008; Young, Hafner, & Fisher, 2007), and language advisors (Mozzon-McPherson. 2000). Therefore, the teacher, who is the manager of this SALL, ensured she would be present online to check the updates on the VLE regularly, maintain learners' engagement, support them whenever needed, and present herself as an example of a committed learner.

Looking Ahead

The current English courses offered to medical students in their foundation year are conventional, face-to-face, general English in the first semester and medical English in the second semester. Several teachers have now taken the initiative to integrate the use of technology in their teaching. According to the policy of the institution, the core content of these courses should be delivered in face-to-face meetings and technology use can be integrated in the teaching. The core content cannot be achieved one hundred percent through self-access. Therefore, keeping the face-to-face meetings and the core content of the courses is important.

Looking forward, SALL may be integrated into English courses as part of these existing courses in a way that makes SALL and the conventional English course appear as

one whole (Gardner & Miller, 2014). By then, teachers will be able to use teaching approaches appropriate to SALL and learners will develop a sense of SALL and its necessary skills (Gardner & Miller, 2014).

There are plans to open the SALL space to every learner enrolled in the medical scheme of this university. The expansion of these SALL opportunities can form a mini-MOOC directed at medical students to help them improve their medical English and to provide greater opportunities to practice the language in their field along with general English. This extension would add an additional burden to the SALL manager role (Gardner & Miller, 2014). Therefore, we should plan to have one or more paid moderator to ensure that the SALL management is done efficiently. This is because the aim is not only to increase the numbers of the enrolees, as is the case of many of the current MOOCs (Alzahrani, 2015), but also to provide a good quality of learning and effective management of the SALL space.

Conclusions

The SALL space that was created and the efforts made in this study to maintain the space and to manage it were all motivated by the fact that SALL is important to "the learners, the teachers, and the host institutions" (Gardner & Miller, 2014, p. 3). Given the affordances of technology and the learners' need to access a variety of authentic learning resources relevant to their field of study and future career, the provision of SALL opportunities and the good management of the SALL space would help to satisfy these needs and help them to develop essential learning skills to become autonomous learners.

Notes on the Contributors

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Exaptating Students' Social Networks as Affinity Spaces for Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

Students' social networks can become exapted (Johnson, 2010) for the purpose of increasing language learning, or any other kind of learning, as well as the promotion of well-being, through what Murphey (2014) calls the well becoming through teaching (WBTT) hypothesis. The WBTT paradigm holds that people not only learn better when teaching others, but approach and maintain their well-being in wider social networks outside the classroom. The present study explored the impact of WBTT-based activities conducted within students' social networks on their language learning and well-being. The data were collected for 6 years (2010-2015) from students' action logging and case studies. Language students taking Murphey's English classes were asked to self-report their experiences and to write reflections after their WBTT-based activities. The qualitative data indicated that both the students in the teaching role and the people who received their lessons deepened their understanding of both the content (message) and form (target language), forming affinity spaces in different social contexts both in and out of class. Most importantly, it was recognized that both groups of people were able to experience exciting learning or teaching rushes through the engagement in the activities.

Keywords: exaptation, social networks, affinity spaces, teaching-to-learn

Exaptation, a term coined by evolutionary biologists in an influential paper (Gould & Vrba, 1982), originally described when "an organism develops a trait optimized for a specific use, but then the trait gets hijacked for a completely different function" (Johnson, 2010, p. 153). For example, feathers on birds were originally used for heat regulation before being exapted for flight. The term exaptation itself branched out from its biological origin into other uses. An example of technological exaptation would be Gutenberg's appropriation of the design of the wine press for his invention of the world's first printing press (Johnson, 2010). In education it has recently been proposed that students' social networks outside of class can become exapted for the purpose of increasing language learning, or any other kind of learning

and the promotion of well-being, through the well becoming through teaching (WBTT) hypothesis (Murphey, 2014). While the positive impact of students' peer tutoring on their learning has been pointed out in past studies (e.g., Damon, 1984; Fantuzzo, Riggo, Connelly, & Dimeff, 1989), the **WBTT** hypothesis holds that people not only learn better when teaching others, but approach and maintain their well-being in wider social networks outside the classroom (e.g., their friends, parents, or their acquaintances in the community). They also can increase both their social capital (the strength of their networks) and their self-awareness of possessing cultural capital (i.e., cultural knowledge of value).

Teachers may often be aware that they are gaining numerous cognitive and affective benefits by teaching, but their students might be surprised to hear this and conclude that if this were indeed the case, then the person who is learning the most in the classroom is the teacher. But what if the students themselves were invited to teach? What, where, and who would they teach? And maybe more intriguingly, would they gain the same benefits as their teachers? The present study attempts to begin answering these questions with an investigation involving the self-reports from language students who taught what they learned in class to those they choose to teach outside of class. The WBTT-based activities could be initiated not only in the classroom but also in other types of educational programs including self-access learning programs (e.g., Hughes, Krug, & Vye, 2012), tutoring programs (e.g., Mynard & Almarzouqui, 2006), and reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). That is, learners can teach what they have learned in any particular space to others in other spaces.

Any "place or set of places where people can affiliate with others based primarily on shared activities, interests, and goals, not shared race, class, culture, ethnicity, or gender" (Gee, 2004, p. 73) can become an **affinity space**. Affinity spaces comprise social locations where groups of people are drawn together because of a shared strong interest and engagement in a common activity. Affinity spaces can foster **situated learning** (Lave & Wenger, 1991), when skills or knowledge are transferred through mutually shared actions and goals. Gee (2004) states that "humans understand content, whether in a comic book or a physical text, much better when their understanding is **embodied**: that is, when they can relate that content to possible activities, decisions, talk, and dialogue," (p. 39), and also that "when people learn as a cultural process, whether this be cooking, hunting, or how to play video games, they learn through action and talk with others, not by memorizing words outside their contexts of application" (p. 39). Thus when students go out of the class to teach in their individual social networks, their activities can enable situated learning. If what they are teaching relates meta-cognitively to the target language, or simply if the medium of

exchange is through the language (and allowing for code-switching with their mother tongue), situated language learning is promoted among the students and who they are teaching.

The proponents of situated learning, Lave and Wenger (1991) and Gee (2004), state that this learning represents the acquisition of new **identities** through the engagement in social practices or interactions. For teaching-to-learn outside the classroom, students can acquire identities as valuable knowledge holders, positioning themselves in teaching roles. This identity reconstruction through social practice is expected to promote self-awareness of **social capital** (Bourdieu, 1986), that is, the capability of having positive impact on one's own life and on others (Fukada, 2015). Classes can form affinity spaces that spill over into various other spaces beyond the classrooms, into hallways, cafeterias, sports fields, buses or trains, and neighborhoods, as well as in "newsletters and other sorts of texts, websites, computer bulletin boards, email chains, and conferences" (Gee, 2004, p. 87). This can be stimulated even more by giving the task of teaching to others out of class what student are learning in class. When this is given as a standard homework procedure, both students and teachers are more concerned with material that can *travel*, i.e., be valuable for not only for classroom study but in extended networks. Such practice can facilitate the validation of the teaching subject (and the language in which it gets taught) as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), the benefit of non-material exchange, and also the students' formation of their own affinity spaces in relation with others within their social networks.

With a little imagination, these social network spaces can also be exapted as extended classrooms with appropriately interesting classroom activities. While such learning and sharing happens naturally in affinity spaces**,** students find that they need to carefully consider who in their social networks would be interested in what and how they are teaching it— specifically, who might want to learn about English by using it. This is because each person in the students' social networks has different socio-cultural and socio-historical backgrounds and different **Discourses** (i.e., different ways of acting, interacting, and also valuing) (Gee, 2004, 2011, capitalized by Gee). While some people in their social networks may perceive the learning material as valuable, others might see them just as chunks of information. That is, any knowledge or skill cannot exist statically as cultural capital, but can be perceived as capital in relation with others situated in the social space. In addition, when teachers give such assignments, they also need to look for material that is valuable to many others in students' networks as well as to the students themselves (value-added language learning; Murphey, 2013). And when these are realized and teachers get regular teaching reports from

students, they often notice that students seem to have a teaching rush, i.e., well becoming through teaching (Murphey 2016, examples further below).

Exapting social networks as affinity learning spaces involves opening learner's zones of proximal development (ZPDs; Vygotsky, 1978), the ranges of target-abilities that can be developed through receiving relevant-level information and guidance (in the right amounts) from more competent (student) peers, and at the same time engaging their zones of proximal adjusting (ZPAs; Murphey 1996; 2013), the ranges of capacity to adjust. Now let's unpack the concepts of ZPD and ZPA a bit more. As two people jointly adjust to one another, they co-construct an affinity space. Shulman (2004) cites David Ausubel's (1968) epigraph in his textbook *Educational Psychology: A Cognitive View*, "If I had to reduce all of educational psychology to just one principle, I would say this: The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly" (Shulman, 2004, p. 36). This discovering of what students already know is the foundation of scaffolding procedures and the opening of someone's ZPD. Opening learners' ZPDs may be seen as a pre-requisite to design appropriate materials for the peer teaching activity. However, realizing this requires developing a wide ZPA in student-teachers. This is probably best learned in action while teaching, it is not something we can absorb from reading a textbook. Thus, we might as well get student-teachers started early by teaching each other daily, in and out of class. And chances are that they partially already know how to adjust to friends and family in their affinity spaces and that further teaching helps them develop more adjusting abilities (i.e., a broad ZPA, see Figure 1).
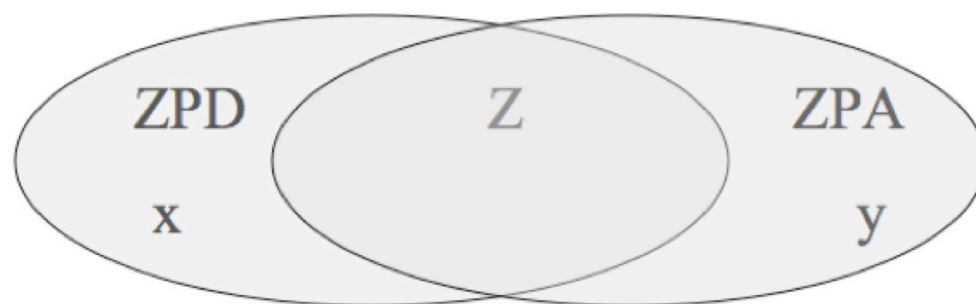
X = area of needs not adjusted to
Y = area of potential to adjust but not appropriate/not needed here
Z = match between a person's ability to adjust and the learner's needs

Figure 1. The Zone of Learning Flow (from Murphey, 2013, p. 175)

Methods

The **WBTT** hypothesis was developed based on Murphey's teaching experiences some years ago with mostly 3rd and 4th year university foreign language students at first, and then later with students in all four years. He found students, who were taking his English communication courses at a private Japanese university, seemed to learn so well by teaching each other in class that he gave them the everyday homework of teaching what they were learning in his classes to others outside of class. It made him think twice about the material he was using to teach them. He wanted the material to be interesting to others outside of his classes also. Then he asked the students to write short reports in English of their efforts in their action logs or notebooks (Murphey, 1993; Murphey, Barcelos, & Morales, 2014), both successes and failures, and he later started asking them to use spaced repetition with "their students" and to do follow-up quizzing. Then he asked them to write up case studies, which evolved into many student-centered class publications (Murphey, 2014; 2016) showing how students taught and learned through teaching and enjoyed interacting with others using the learning materials. Murphey repeatedly read and analyzed students' case studies in the class publications without a preset coding frame, which allowed themes to naturally emerge: Most students reported that their teaching (1) helped them to learn the material better, (2) deepened and broadened their understanding of the material, (3) enhanced their relationships with their "students," and (4) made them feel good because they were helping others learn valuable information, the WBTT (Murphey, 2016). There were only a few slightly negative experiences where a student tried to force too much information to fast upon his/her students. These were left in the publications as guides to things that could go wrong when "teachers" do not appropriately adjust to "learners'" ZPDs.

Activities given in classes for students to teach in their affinity spaces out of class, at least at first, need to be scaffolded within the learners' ZPDs. They also need to be seen as valuable for others to learn or to be co-validated as cultural capital in the students' social networks. These activities may be one-line songlets or popular kotowaza (proverbs), first in Japanese, *Warau kado niwa fuku kitaru,* then in English, *Smiling brings you happiness, let it show the way*; or the 8 ways to reduce stress in the acronym COPS BEES (Mayo Clinic, 2003, see Appendix); or the 10 idioms they learn in class with gestures; or the 7 ways of improvisation (Morris, 2012; see Appendix). From these different types of topics, students could choose freely one or more for teaching what they and their "students" felt were valuable and meaningful. Students in later semesters were also allowed to read what their peers in previous classes had done as possible guiding examples. Murphey also gave them

quotes from previous students' work to show them that the sharing actually worked and could be enjoyable.

As of January 2016, there are 17 booklets online of case studies of students teaching and interacting outside of classes (https://sites.google.com/site/folkmusictherapy/home). Sixteen booklets contain case studies by 3rd and 4th year students from Murphey's content-based classes (usually around 26 students participated in each booklet) on (1) *Music and Song* (twelve booklets) and (2) *Changing the World* (four booklets). The other booklet, with about 50 shorter case studies, is from Murphey's larger-sized class, *Ways of Learning,* a class that is open to students in all 4 years and all departments. Each class member got a copy of their class's booklet, and extra copies were made to loop forward into other classes for further student reading, enjoyment, and modeling of previous students in a kind of self-referential feedback and feed-forward for students in general (Falout, Murphey, Fukuda, & Fukada, 2016).

Let us summarize the iterative levels of learning going on here: From teacher-fronted teaching, students are quickly scaffolded into helping each other in pairs answer content questions (or singing a song, or re-telling a story) repeatedly in class,at first. Secondly, they are asked to choose class-based material and to teach people out of class and report on these experiences in their action log notebooks after every class (which Murphey reads each week). Thirdly, near the end of the semester, students individually choose some of the material from the semester to teach to someone outside the class, and then write this experience in a case study that is to be published in a class publication. In sum, the first two levels of experiences are written about in their action logs for Murphey to follow and adjust to (ZPA). Then the students write a longer case study (not part of their action logs) for a class publication in the form of a booklet.

The case studies in the class publications are actually conducted very autonomously. The students choose from a lot of teacher-presented material, or they invite their "student" (who they also choose) to help select the material to learn (being student-centered), and they choose the times and places and how they will follow up with spaced repetition.

Results

The **WBTT** hypothesis describes the positive feelings teachers can have at seeing someone learn. Many students comment about it in their action logs and case studies. Below is one full case study from 2010 when Murphey began this research and started publishing his students' work in class publications online.

Case Study 11. Minori Wakaume* (Music Therapy Case Studies #1, 2010, pp. 15-16)

I chose my father, Misao, to teach an affirmation song to. He is 57 years old. He is an employee at a town office and he always has to think about residents and his subordinates, so I think he gets tired easily. I wanted him to be relaxed. Therefore, I chose to teach an affirmation song to him. I chose "The five ways to happiness" because I thought it would be the most useful song for him. The five ways "smile from ear to ear, breathe in deep, look up at the sky, sing a melody, dare to show your love" are really practical. When we do the five ways, we can feel happy and be relaxed immediately. Moreover, the melody is also fantastic. The melody is very cheerful and catchy, so I thought it would be his fancy!

At first, I explained about affirmation songs and the lyrics of the song. He knows English a little, so he seemed to understand at once. Then, I taught him the melody, He said, "I love this song." And he was enjoying singing it, so I was happy, too. I was surprised that he seemed to be a little silly while he was singing! Next day, I asked him "What's the five ways to happiness?" and he remembered only three ways. It was complicated for him to remember five ways, so I suggested singing when he does his favorite thing (for example, when taking a bath). A few days later, I asked the same question. To my surprise, he could sing the song perfectly. He said, "I like the song, so sometimes I was singing while I was walking" (walking is his routine). And when he sings the song while walking, he walks longer than usual. He seemed to enjoy walking with singing.

After teaching the affirmation song to him, I found that he looks more relaxed and happier than before. He often hummed the song at home. **He said, "I want to tell the song to my subordinates. They would have a liking for the song."** My mother also seemed to be happy when she saw my father's smile. I was also happy because I could have a chance to talk and interact with my father. Thus, the song had a good effect for not only him, but also my family. If I have a chance, I want to tell my friends about affirmation songs, too.

The following quotes are from the 2013 and 2014 songlets data (italics and bold are Murphey's emphasis), which can also be found on the above website, and which illustrate the

teaching rushes, or the WBTT hypothesis [brackets give some details of the people being taught, space, and time]:

1. **[little brother, at home over 3 days]** . . . watching someone's skill improve was *very exciting* (Yonaha, 2013, p. 8).

2. **[mom, at home over 3 days]** *the most important thing is how much I could enjoy teaching! While I was teaching songs, I could enjoy it and my mother seemed to enjoy singing new songs. Our enjoyment made it a successful project!* (Sekine, 2014, p. 17).

3. **[dorm rooms and school, 2 days]** *It is an effective way to teach that mixes study with happy things* (Sato, 2013, p. 27).

4. **[co-worker, at part-time job over 2 days]** *We laughed many times. We almost forgot that this was studying* (Omagari, 2013, p. 28).

5. **[home]** It was really nice opportunity for me to communicate with my father. I thought *sharing good songs makes us happy*. I will keep teaching songs and things that I learned in this class to everyone (Yamamoto, 2014, p. 4).

While the above extracts show directly the changes in emotions that students in the teacher's role had, many more show the exciting changes in the recipients as the knowledge and skills get passed along, implying a learning rush as well:

6. **[home & phone]** After a week, I decided to call . . . she said suddenly, '*I can change my own mind by singing a song a little bit. I try to change my mind positively more from now*. Thank you for your teaching! Please teach me more . . . '. In conclusion, when we sing a song that includes happiness and meaningfulness, people tend to create positive thinking as above . . . singing a song is a tool to give good effects for mental and physical health (Koge, 2012, p. 11).

7. **[home & with certain people]** *I manage my stress by singing this song* ['What do you love?']. . . . The laughing part was too embarrassing to sing at class. However

I didn't feel embarrassed at home with my mother. Rather I enjoyed singing it with her. . . . That went beyond my imagination . . . I appreciate my mother (Enomoto, 2012, pp. 8-9).

8. **[work-part time job]** from 6pm–midnight . . . I sang it and showed the gestures during a pause in our work. . . . Two hours later when we cleared the tables I started singing the song and she joined me. . . . *We worked humming it for the rest of this work time and enjoyed it . . . our hard working time changed to an enjoyable working time. The song made us happy. She told me that she wanted to sing more English songs. . . . I really enjoyed doing this case study because now I have someone to sing with at my part-time job. Now, we are happier* (Sato, 2013, p. 12).

9. **[friend, face to face & phone, invoking Disney space]** He wanted to know another song, so I taught "how are you" . . . He loved it more than the first because he already knew the melody as a Disney song . . . I found this teaching interesting and difficult. I was interested in how *he changed*. I could see *the changing of his singing and attitude*. At first he was not interested in singing an English song, but after he could sing 'Why do you smile?' he wanted to learn another song. This changing was *really an interesting point* (Kobayashi, 2015, p. 10).

From a pilot study, Murphey (in progress) asked students in three of his classes" to comment anonymously on their teaching in and out of class. One student responded as in 10 below:

10. **[friends, phone, face to face, inviting more friends]** Call report is for that day's partner but I don't think that way! I think it doesn't have to be one-on-one. When I do the call report, most of the time I am with somebody. My partner and my friend can be friends (ex. Doing call report in SALC and talking together).

The above comments signify that both the students in the teaching role and people who received the out-of-class lesson deepened their understanding of both the contents (i.e., message) and form (i.e., target language) of the lessons through social practices. In other

words, both knowledge and skills were embodied through their engagement (Gee, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991) across various out-of-class social spaces such as homes, dorm rooms, workplaces, and self-access learning centers (SALCs), as presented in the above cases.

Discussion

The WBTT hypothesis posits that if students teach others what they are learning, they can learn more together than by studying alone, with the additional benefits of added or sustained interest, happiness, meaningfulness, and resilience in learning something challenging—or in other words, experiences of well becoming. By the students' own accounts (above), they are able to help themselves and others learn something while simultaneously experiencing moments of well becoming. They mentioned aspects such as: forgetting that the activity was actually something they would otherwise normally identify as studying; enjoying the activity itself; experiencing elevations in their levels of engagement; experiencing decreases in debilitative language learning anxiety; imparting knowledge, skills, and joy (i.e., cultural capital) to others via situated learning—in other words, experiencing teaching rushes.

Recently in language learning it has become recognized that learning is not tied to an immovable, static, and well-defined space and place, such as within four walls of a classroom (Falout & Stewart, 2014; Murray & Fujishima, 2016). Likewise, the fluidity of space in learning became underlined in this study. Students reported taking the activities from their English classes to home, teaching family members, and to work, teaching colleagues. These interactions brought about increased interest and sustained learning in the content (i.e., message) and form (i.e., target language) of the learning. Such shared engagement in mutual interests and goals suggests the formation of affinity spaces outside of class, which in turn suggests the portability of affinity spaces. Since shared engagement of people is what constructs affinity spaces, then affinity spaces can be just as portable as the people and their interests and identities can be mobile.

The fluidity or portability of affinity spaces has a relationship with the identities of the individuals involved, their interpersonal relationships, and their ZPAs and ZPDs. Case Study 11 offers examples of these. Minori realizes her father knows English, and by agreeing to take an English lesson from her, the father validates not only English activities but also Minori's cultural capital. As her father struggles to learn the song she teaches him, Minori works within his ZPD and uses her ZPA to adjust, and suggests that her father practice the song while doing other favorite activities. The father practices the song while having baths,

moving about the house, and taking walks. Thus his singing and humming becomes embodied alongside daily routines, and even changes his behavior and emotions, putting a smile on his face, and extending the length of his walks and increasing the enjoyment of them. The father's mobility increases the spaces in which he practices his daughter's lessons, and with their shared interest and engagement, daughter and father turn their home into an affinity space where songs are sung. The portability of affinity spaces can also be implied as the father considers taking this song and teaching it to his subordinates at his place of employment. The most important outcome for Minori, however, was the happiness that spread among the family through emotional contagion, the social attraction of emotions (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994), which provides supporting evidence for the WBTT hypothesis.

While we can learn a lot from reading others' experiences, such as Minori's, it is more convincing when we actually experience something ourselves (Dewey, 1910; 1963) or engage ourselves in the social practices or interactions (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that can lead to teaching rushes. (Teachers reading this article can better understand its main points when they actually experience for themselves how these concepts help learners learn through teaching.) Comments 6 and 10 reveal one way to encourage students to teach each other outside of class: calling each other on their phones. This is another standard, everyday homework in Murphey's classes; to call that day's partner and review what they learned in class. The student in Comment 10 is apparently very social and likes to include other people as well, expanding the situated practice across the social network, and sometimes doing the review face to face rather than on the phone. So the spaces and places for learning can be determined mostly by students themselves, and the activities they generate in these networks and spaces are also directed by them. Comments 6 and 10 also reveal that the students recognize the power of cultural and social capital in relation to their language learning and even health. Assigning students to teach outside of the classroom or SALC is one way to jump-start the exaptation of their social networks as learning spaces. If the students take up an interest in these practices beyond the purposes of doing the homework, then they have taken up the interest as their own, something that becomes identified between themselves and others, and then the learning spaces within social networks become exapted as affinity spaces.

Perhaps the next step in the WBTT approach is to consider further ways in which the spaces can travel, with or without assigning homework. We know a classroom is interactively stimulating, and the lessons have become embodied, when students start comparing it to

places outside of class where they have had good experiences practicing, learning, and engaging with others in something they mutually value. Perhaps that is the test of a great space or activity; can it travel? Do students enjoy learning so much in class, or within school-instituted programs, including self-access learning programs, that they can carry their cultural capital and positive feelings into other places, sharing interests and activities with others, and making these places affinity spaces?

Conclusion

For exaptation of social networks as out-of-class affinity spaces, congeniality is crucial. People usually need to like each other and trust each other and be unafraid of making mistakes in front of each other before they can learn from one another. Participants need to be accepted for who they are, and how they identify themselves, and new participants need to be welcomed. Gee (2004) proposes eleven features for affinity spaces, some of which promote situated connecting and socializing as well as welcoming, accepting, and respecting others, both socially and psychologically. We mention only three here: (1) "common endeavor, not race, class, gender, or disability, is primary" (p. 85); (2) individuals are encouraged to utilize distributed knowledge "in such a way that their partial knowledge and skills become part of a bigger and smarter network of people, information, and mediating devices" (p. 86) (cf. expansive learning); (3) "Leaders are porous" (cf. ZPA) and they (including students in the role of teaching in this case) do not "order people around or create rigid, unchanging, and impregnable hierarchies" (p. 87). Thus, students' social networks can be exapted as language learning or teaching affinity spaces, and furthermore, the affinity spaces can be exapted for the environmental strengthening of students' social capital and agency, and also for the self-awareness of their empowerment, i.e., increased competence, agency, and autonomy. All of these affordances come together in the teaching-to-learn paradigm and the well becoming through teaching hypothesis.

Notes on the Contributors

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Joseph Falout, an associate professor at Nihon University, has authored or co-authored over 40 papers and book chapters about affect, motivation, and group dynamics. His collaborations include creating ideal classmates, present communities of imagining, and critical participatory looping. He is an editor for JALT's *OnCUE Journal* and the *Asian EFL Journal*.

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17 booklets are available at https://sites.google.com/site/folkmusictherapy/home
(12 from the Song and Music class, 4 from the Change the World class, 1 from the Ways of Learning class)

Appendix: Optional Materials Taught by Students

Eight Ways to Reduce Stress
Teacher-made handout originally from a Minute Made orange juice container, but information attributed to http://www.MayoClinic.com
Class-facilitated with the acronym **COPS BEES** for easier memorization:

Connect   Stay connected to family and friends.
Organize   Organize yourself so that you know where things are.
Positive   Talk to yourself positively. Spend time with positive people.
Simplify   Prioritize and pace yourself.

Breaks   Take time to relax, stretch, or take a walk during the day.
Eat well   When you eat well and you're healthy you are better able to handle stress.
Exercise well Some people find exercise not only healthy, but a good outlet for stress.
Sleep well   Make time to sleep enough. Take power naps if they help.

Seven Ways of Improvisation (facilitated by the acronym **PLLYARF**, and the Tedx talk by Dave Morris): **P**lay, **L**et yourself fail, **L**isten, say **Y**es, say **A**nd, follow the **R**ules (play the game), relax and have **F**un

Five Ways to Happiness! English Song: (Tim Murphey) (facilitated with gestures and the well known Christmas tune '12 Days of Christmas')
When you want to be happy, there's (#) thing(s) you can do…
(#: one, two, three, four, five) (Tune: '12 Days of Christmas')
1. Smile from ear to ear.
2. Breathe in deep.
3. Look up at the sky.
4. Sing a melody.
5. Dare to show your love.

Students also had about 20 other short songs (songlets) like the one above to choose from for their teaching.

Ten Idioms (facilitated with gestures)
1. my lips are sealed
2. sweet talker
3. bad mouth
4. sharp mind
5. take my hat off to …
6. lend an ear
7. lend (give) a hand
8. show your face
9. hard headed
10. apple polishing

How do Learners Make Use of a Space for Self-Directed Learning? Translating the Past, Understanding the Present, and Strategizing for the Future

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Abstract

This article aims to reveal how learners make use of a space for self-directed learning to promote collaborative autonomous learning, drawing on data collected at a Japanese language institution for the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) care worker candidates in Osaka. The data analysis shows that, through the activities the learners chose and organized, they imagined an ideal L2 self and created their own L2 world. As soon as the self-directed learning session had started, they created their own group on Facebook and promoted learning activities which were related with their real lives in Japan. These activities on Facebook created a learning space beyond the classroom. These online activities they engaged in eventually returned to the classroom space and led to them increasingly taking ownership of the physical space. This research reveals that an important factor for self-directed learning is providing learners spaces and allowing them to explore the boundaries and possibilities of that space. The learners in this case study used the space to translate their past experiences and present emotions into the second language context, and moreover, to strategize for the future. To encourage collaborative autonomous learning, the activities must be organized around learners' inner worlds where their emotions, experiences and futures exist.

Keywords: JSL, learner autonomy, Facebook, real life, ideal L2 self

Background

This study shows how collaborative self-directed learning sessions within a language training course enabled a group of learners of Japanese as a Second Language (JSL) to construct spaces through which they could connect their language learning with their past, present and future selves. The language training was organized for candidates from the Philippines who were aiming to become care workers in Japan under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which was established in 2009. The EPA training program begins in the Philippines, where candidates are chosen in response to the demand of Japanese host nursing

homes. While still in the Philippines, they undertake Japanese language training for three months. Then they come to Japan and take six further months of language training. After finishing language training, they are sent to nursing homes for three years of practical training before they finally take the national exam for care workers.

The Japanese Language Training Institution

I conducted this research at a Japanese language training center in Osaka, Japan where I worked with trainees as a language teacher. At this training center, Japanese language lessons and lectures on Japanese culture are provided from Monday to Saturday, for approximately six hours a day. The aim of this training program is to develop the students' Japanese language skills necessary to work as care workers and integrate into the wider Japanese community. Moreover, a further aim of the training institution is to develop their learner autonomy which enables them to manage and keep learning with no language teachers after finishing language training.

Language classes are organized according to each candidate's Japanese language proficiency and conducted by a team of teachers. Candidates learn Japanese from elementary to intermediate levels, as well as technical Japanese used in the context of care giving. In addition to these lessons, the institution provides an extra one-hour session, called 'self-directed learning session' in this center. In this session, learners organized their learning activities in a classroom so that they can promote their autonomous learning, with the ultimate goal of adapting to the changes in their learning environment and to the demands of technical training in a nursing home. This session is provided on an irregular basis as shown in table 1.

In this article, I will focus on these self-directed learning sessions and elaborate on how learners promoted their self-directed learning by exercising their learner autonomy.

Table 1. Example of a Typical Timetable

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9:00~ 12:00	Language Class	Language Class	Language Class	Language Class	Language Class	Language Class
13:30~ 16:30	Language Class	Japanese Culture Lecture	Language Class	Japanese Culture Lecture	Language Class	
Extra session		Self-directed learning		Self-directed learning		

Theoretical Framework

Collaborative learning

From the perspective of ecology, learners are living organisms who interact with the environment and this interaction encourages development (van Lier, 2002). Language learning is co-constructed between groups of individuals and their environment, and development in learning is mediated by activity (Kramsch, 2002). Applying these perspectives to a classroom in which the resources are far fewer than one might find in a self-access center, it can be argued that learning together and the interaction this entails can be considered as language learning resources.

In terms of promoting collaborative learning, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the Zone of Proximal Adjustment (ZPA) are the key ideas to be considered. ZPD is defined by Vygotsky (1978) as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

Murphey (1996) defines ZPA as teachers' and learners' variable abilities to adapt or adjust to partners and situations. He states, "Both teachers and students may be learning new ways to adjust, or how to adjust for the particular learner they are with, or learning that some ways are not working well, all of which also adds to their repertoire of adjusting capabilities with future students, thus expanding their ZPA" (Murphey, 2013, p. 178). ZPD and ZPA are not separate but co-constructing because they are interactive and influence each other.

Likewise, interacting with other learners and teachers through activities in collaborative learning leads to learning as students access the ZPD and expanding ZPA with their peer's assistance.

Learner autonomy in collaborative learning

Benson (2011, p. 47) states that learner autonomy is "the capacity to take control of one's own learning" and discusses the three dimensions of control a learner can exercise: learning management, cognitive processes and learning content. From a sociocultural perspective, learner autonomy is a social agency oriented to a social interactive context in which learners interact with and help each other (Toohey & Norton, 2003), and develops through interaction between learners and more capable others (Little, 2000). Thus, peer assistance and learner autonomy are interdependent elements in collaborative learning where learners can develop the capacity to take control over language management, the cognitive processes utilized in the ZPD and ZPA as mentioned, and learning content.

When it comes to learning content, Palfreyman (2014) states that learner autonomy is a capacity for intentional use of a range of interactive resources (which can be material, social, or discursive) toward learning goals. The learner will identify resources relevant to their purposes and the development of their autonomy proceeds as they develop an awareness of these resources and their use of them. As learners exercise their control over the learning content, they make adjustments and discover new ways of using content and materials within the ZPA by learning with other learners.

Moreover, Murray, Fujishima, and Uzuka (2014) discuss the relationship between learner autonomy and space which influences language learning as a dimension of learner autonomy. They assert that autonomy and place are social constructions, emerging from the interplay of action and discourse in a specific space. Learner autonomy is not having control over one's learning space, but having the possibility to exercise one's agency within the space. This spatial dimension of learner autonomy needs to be considered when attempting to foster learner autonomy in collaborative learning.

Research Settings and Research Questions

Research settings

Based on the above literature, I theorized the self-directed sessions as a collaborative and autonomous space for learning. I facilitated these sessions focusing on the promotion of learner autonomy by introducing collaborative learning in self-directed sessions by using exploratory practice. Exploratory practice (Allwright, 2003), which is based on ecological perspective, develops our understanding of learning and teaching environments of classrooms through shining light on our 'puzzles' about classroom events. Allwright (2003) defines what happens in classrooms as not problems but puzzles in order to avoid the negative connotations of problem. Candidates and I worked together as practitioners in a classroom to discover autonomous learners' needs as our puzzles. This practice provides us with a better understanding of autonomous learning in which both of learners and teachers can develop, but it possibly seems likely to induce complacency due to understandings based not on prior research but on practitioners' perceptions.

35 self-directed learning sessions were conducted in the same classroom where learners took language classes during a six-month course from weeks three to 12, and from weeks 16 to 22. The classroom was equipped with desks, chairs, a whiteboard, one PC and wireless internet connection. Learners brought their own textbooks and smartphones and tablets as a learning resource. When the sessions started, I explained to the learners why they were important, and how the sessions would be conducted. In these sessions, I asked learners to carry out their learning according to the three steps based on Little (1991)'s identification of learner autonomy. They are 1) planning for learning and splitting a class into small groups, 2) learning in groups, and 3) reflection and reporting. At the beginning of the session, learners shared their own ideas of what to learn and made groups. After pursuing these ideas for learning in groups, they shared their reflections on what they did and how it went. During these sessions, I gave advice only when they had difficulties in planning or conducting their learning activities. For example, I advised them by offering some example ideas about what they could do with their classmates in the classroom, and answered their questions regarding linguistic issues such as grammar and vocabulary.

Research questions

Given that the self-directed learning space was very open in terms of what students could choose to do, my main research questions were simply:

・ To what extent were the students comfortable with exercising their autonomy?

・ What kinds of activity did the students choose to engage in during the sessions?

・ What can the kinds of activities they chose tell us about the needs of students as holistic individuals?

Data Collection and Method

When I began collecting data, the students in the language class were at an upper elementary level. The class consisted of 10 female candidates who had finished elementary level Japanese language training in the Philippines before coming to Japan. They were between 23 and 31 years old. I collected data during twelve sessions from June 12th to October 27th in 2012. I observed and took notes on the learners' activities and audio-recorded what they said in Japanese during their time for reflection. I transcribed the audio data and translated them into English (shown as quotations below). I also used a teacher logbook in which the other teachers recorded how the sessions went in order to confirm what they actually did in the sessions for data analysis.

I analyzed the data by using case study methodology (Merriam, 1998) to examine how learners promoted and developed their learning in the sessions. Case study is characterized by 'the goal of eliciting understanding and meaning, the researcher as primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the use of fieldwork, an inductive orientation to analysis, and findings that are richly descriptive' (Merriam, 1998, p. 11). Through analysis, I focused on the process of their development of learning, how and why they chose the way of learning, and how they reflected their learning.

Results

In the first session, I explained about the aim of the sessions and how students should conduct them by themselves. However, during the reflection period at the end of this first session, as the students shared their thoughts on the

self-directed nature of the sessions, it was clear that all of them had misgivings as they stated as shown below:

"It's better for us to learn from the teacher."
"We don't know what to do by ourselves and can't understand whether this session is meaningful or not."

These responses show that learners either wanted the teacher to conduct the lesson, or for the teacher to let them go and study completely freely. Even though they complained in the beginning, as my analysis will show, their attitude toward the affordances—"a particular property of the environment that is relevant to an activity" (van Lier, 2000, p. 252)—of this autonomous learning space changed gradually as the sessions went on.

Weeks one to four: From reviewing language to extending the interactive boundaries of the learning space

During the first three weeks, learners chose to do some language activities such as quizzing each other on vocabulary and spelling. In these activities, they divided into two groups, and competed to see who could get the highest score. There was also a describing game in which one learner would be the "competitor" who stood in front of a whiteboard, and the rest of learners decided on a single word to write on the white board behind them and then described it to the competitor, who in turn had to guess the word. Their reasons for deciding on these activities became apparent during the reflection task:

"We need to memorize many words, so we did activities in order to catch up with our lessons."
"I practiced writing letters correctly, because writing is also important when recording nursing care."
"I organized fun activities to memorize words."

From these answers it can be seen that they had decided to use the self-directed time and space to focus on the Japanese language itself, the acquisition of which was necessary in order for them to achieve their shared future goal of

becoming care workers in Japan. However, at the same time, one of them made a private group page on Facebook so that they could learn Japanese enjoyably by sharing their interests within the group. They posted some questions and riddles they made in Japanese, focusing on vocabulary with discussion questions such as "What is your most treasured possession?" They engaged in these kinds of activities in the classroom and on Facebook as well. We can see how the learners took advantage of an online social network site to extend the boundaries of the self-directed learning space.

Weeks five to eight: Using drama and music to explore and 'translate' their past experiences and emotions

After the activities described above, they planned to make a short parody of the movie *Titanic*. This activity was one that I had introduced to them during the orientation session. They chose this activity because they had read the story of Titanic in Japanese for reading practice just before self-directed learning sessions had started. They made a story and cast the roles in the play according to each classmate's background such as their character, special skills, and experiences:

- Injured mother who needed to be left on a ship: a candidate who left her child in the Philippines when she came to Japan
- Chef in a restaurant: a candidate who had experience working for a restaurant part time in the Philippines

During the play, they asked me to take video of it. After that, we discussed their reflections on the activity, and the emotional resonance of performing the drama for the student who had left her child in the Philippines became very clear:

"I really cried when making this film, because it was almost the same situation as when I said goodbye to my family at the airport. I cried out the same words but this time in Japanese."

Here we can see how the learners projected themselves and their experiences into the characters of the movie, integrating real life with a fictional story. One learner posted it on the group's Facebook page as well. After this,

another learner posted some Japanese pop music lyrics on the group page. For example, one of the lyrics she posted was from *Mikazuki*, a song by the Japanese artist Ayaka, in which she sings about both the sadness of being separated from a lover and the solace and strength she takes from knowing they are looking at the same moon. When I interviewed her about why she had posted the lyrics she said that the lyrics really spoke to her and her feelings as her partner was living in the Philippines at that time. This served as a starting point for the students posting lyrics from Japanese pop music and commenting on Facebook. At the same time, they started listening to the music they had posted, translating the lyrics, and singing it together in the sessions. Just as the drama activity had allowed some students to 'translate' pivotal moments from their lives and the ensuing emotions into Japanese, the online and classroom activities they chose to carry out related to pop music also created a space in which they could translate their emotional experiences into the second language and their new lives.

Weeks nine to 13: Claiming ownership of the learning space and strategizing for the future

Around week nine the students started manifesting their classroom network online by posting their pictures taken with their classmates on Facebook and leaving comments about their good relationships with them. I observed the students decorating the classroom walls with cards on which they had written Japanese words. They also made a confectionery corner by using a shelf in the classroom to store sweets and other snacks. I took this as a sign that the students had, perhaps through the above activities, finally begun to feel comfortable in the learning space. Indeed, by decorating the walls and leaving their belongings, it could be said that they had taken ownership of the space.

However, despite these signs that the students had created a space together in which they were comfortable, they seemed to have one eye on the future and were aware that at the end of the course they would be sent to different nursing homes to begin their practical training. In one session the learners talked in English about how to make social networks. They discussed how to make friends with young Japanese people, how to create relationships with people in church and how to meet and make conversation with Japanese people online. During this discussion the learners used the learning space to collaboratively devise strategies

for preparing inter-personal networks to help sustain them in the future once their language training was completed. Their decision to use English also indicates their growing autonomous agency within the space. As they later reflected:

"We didn't talk in Japanese much but it was also important for me to make my life enjoyable."
"If I knew how to make friends, it would be helpful."
"I will have to make friends by myself to become independent after getting separated from my friends in this training center, and to enjoy my life in Japan."

Weeks 14 to 17: Connecting past professional experiences with their future selves

Lastly, they organized a role playing activity in the classroom, which was based on three situations they had experienced in the Philippines.
Situation 1: An insomniac care recipient asked a care worker to stay and chat with him.
Situation 2: A care recipient in a wheel chair wants a care worker to take out him for a walk.
Situation 3: A care recipient with dementia complains about his domestic relations.

During the reflection task, they explained the motivations behind choosing to do these professional role plays.

"Because we are going through technical training so soon, we had better make provisions for all the matters which may happen in a nursing home."
"I have to practice, because technical training starts soon."
"Maybe I guess the same situation I experienced in the Philippines will happen in a nursing home in Japan."

They practiced conversation through the role plays, imagining themselves working in nursing homes. On Facebook, some activities were also conducted in the same way. They posted some situations involving care giving in their imagined near futures, and practiced conversations face to face in the classroom

as learning activities. In these activities, they used the space to draw on past specialist experiences, translating expertise and experiences into L2, while also looking to the future and to reposition themselves, not just as trainee care-workers, but as specialists with expertise in the field.

Discussion

Self-directed learning as a bridging space between the language classroom and learners' real lives

Using Facebook had a great impact on their learning. The Facebook group facilitated a shift from institutional-initiated communication to the personal realm and offered what Gardner (1991) referred to as an 'entry point' that helps learners to engage in learning (Chik & Breidbach, 2014). In this research, Facebook, which was a familiar social media site among the candidates, allowed them to extend the boundaries of the learning space and connect the language learning to their real lives outside of the classroom. In particular, Facebook can be seen to offer 'entry points', and it in turn fostered learner autonomy leading to autonomous activity within and beyond the classroom (Nakai, 2012).

Facebook led to the learners engaging with the learning process by offering space and support for learning activities where learners connect with their surrounding context and where their goals are shaped by the discourse in their context.

Self-directed learning as a space to translate one's experiences and emotions into the second language context

Through the sessions, the learners organized activities that evoked their emotions related to their experiences, both lived and imagined in the future. Through acting in a drama, the learners underwent a transformation where they stepped out of the classroom into an imaginary setting (Stern, 1980). The learners could express their own voices in a second language by overlaying their experiences on characters in the story. Japanese pop music connected language learning to the learners' inner world in the same way as the story-making activity. Through lyrics that resonated with their feelings, they learned language by using

it to express their emotions. These autonomous activities accordingly let them speak their own real words in their target language.

Furthermore, during the activities in which they discussed their networks and created professional role plays, they imagined an ideal L2 self (Dörnyei, 2005) as a caregiver working in Japan, and brought their real experiences and lives in L2 into the classroom. Ideal self represents the person one would like to become and is one of the possible selves people use to conceptualize their as-yet unrealized potential and act as future self-guides (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 11), which motivates learners to learn language so that they can be the person they want to become. This ideal self, embodied in their activities, led to their autonomous learning.

Self-directed learning as a space to foster learner autonomy

Students' learning was mediated and generated by activities helping them learn as language users within a present and future social community of care giving in Japan. As Palfreyman (2014) claims, candidates indeed sought out resources from their context related to their real life and adapted them for learning voluntarily. They exercised learner autonomy by developing awareness of the possible resources surrounding them through interacting with classmates. As for a space, the analysis shows learners claimed ownership of space for learning by exercising their agency within the classroom. This means, as Murray et al. (2014) state, that they exercised their learner autonomy through activities in the classroom as space for learning. In short, the cases of activities discussed above represent the progress of their development through activities in which learners situated themselves in their L2 context by exercising learner autonomy to take control over the learning resources and space.

Conclusions

After some initial trepidation, the students gradually began activities in which they exercised their collective autonomy to collaboratively organize activities within the self-directed learning space. I observed that they were actually using these activities to create sub-spaces through which they were able to craft links between their new language and their lived experiences. Through

these spaces, the learners created opportunities for them to translate and reconstruct aspects of their past, present and future selves into Japanese.

How can a teacher facilitate autonomous collaborative learning? It is crucial for the teacher to help learners find the path from their L2 world to their real life by exploring the boundaries and possibilities of a space for learning, using the space to translate their experiences and emotions into the second language context and strategizing for the future. This is an opportunity for learners to determine the direction of learning which framework their methods and techniques to promote learning. The connection of the L2 with their real world produces a commitment to learn and fosters their learner autonomy.

Notes on the Contributor

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Best Practice Ideas for Learner Advising in New Zealand

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In this article, the authors will present a short discussion about the role of self-access and advising in language education, after which they will describe workshops they conducted, and disseminate ideas for best practice for advising that were shared by participants at two conferences in New Zealand.

Higher educational institutions in New Zealand today are committed to providing optimal academic development and support to both international and domestic students. Two of the most important outcomes of these interventions are to maintain the success and retention rates at the highest level possible. This is in the best interest of the students and also of all tertiary institutions in New Zealand today, as they have to fulfil the Government goals of improved service with funding being performance-linked, and indeed "The Government is starting to see encouraging results from its focus on improving the performance and value for money of tertiary education" (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 5).

Since the early 90's there have been a growing number of pivotal publications about autonomous learning/independent learning/self-access centres (SACs) (Benson 2011; Benson & Voller, 1997; Crabbe, 1993; Dickinson & Wenden, 1995; Gardner & Miller, 1994; 1996; Miller & Rogerson-Revell, 1993; Pemberton, Li, Or, & Pierson, 1996; Sheerin, 1991; 1993). Following an investigation and overview of SACs at Australian and New Zealand tertiary institutions (Anderson & Jones-Parry, 2003; Reinders, Reinders, & Lazaro, 2007), more recent research has focused on the associated student advisory services from both students' (Hobbs & Jones-Parry, 2007) and advisors' standpoints (Dofs & Hobbs, 2011). Other publications discuss establishing ILCs (Gardner & Miller, 1999; Dofs, & Hobbs, 2011), the former giving an international overview and the latter with a New Zealand perspective. What is apparent is that ILC's are here to stay and are increasingly being built on sound theoretical underpinning rather than simply practical factors. Indeed, Ara Institute of Canterbury are currently redeveloping this facility.

As shown in the above studies, many tertiary institutions in New Zealand aspire to provide some form of useful and beneficial Independent Learning Centre (ILC) in order to

encourage life-long learning, and support students towards taking more control of their learning processes. ILCs (sometimes called SACs or ELSACs) are places where learners are encouraged to develop their skills and autonomy. Such centres are increasingly offering student advisory services that hone such skills in the students. These centres are popular with students as they provide a safe, affirming and comfortable place to make progress in learning. The popularity travels far by word of mouth and the state of the art facilities bring a point of difference to an institution. However the nature of these centres may be changing as institutional libraries increase their stocks of suitable materials and provide increasing learner-friendly spaces.

The process of setting up, developing and maintaining such centres has been researched and outlined in Dofs & Hobbs (2011). They found that the goal of fostering autonomous learners at New Zealand institutions is being met in varying ways, using a range of strategies, by different departments and schools within the same institution, from developing and expanding existing centres to providing encouragement for establishing new ones.

There are several advantages in maintaining ILCs, such as:

- They can aid enhancement and development of learner capability for successful further academic studies
- They may attract domestic and international students who want a facility dedicated to autonomous learning
- They are an effective marketing tool for institutions
- They facilitate development of life-long learning skills

There is also a need to optimise targeted support and encouragement for learners so they can become more able to study autonomously and/or on their own, and to teach learners the skills and strategies to do this. Thus what is of the greatest importance is that, if independent learning facilities are to be offered, then an advisory service to match must be developed. According to Cooker & Torpey (2004) when describing the then-new Self-Access Learning Centre at Kanda University of University Studies:

the availability of this state-of-the-art centre does not automatically ensure learner independence. Thus we strive to offer more than just a facility. Our most valuable resource is in fact our learning advisors who work closely with the learners to provide advice on developing learning

strategies, finding ways to use the equipment in the centre, locating
appropriate materials, and understanding particularly difficult aspects of
language. (p. 3).

As a number of authorities in the field rightly point out, just providing these resources does not necessarily foster autonomous learners. Benson (2001) states that "the research evidence suggests that the opportunity to direct one's learning, does not in itself lead to greater autonomy or better language learning" (p. 134). He suggests that it is likely that resource based learning pre-supposes that the learner already possesses some of the skills associated with autonomy. One of the ways to address this is by providing clear pathways into self-access studies. As Jones-Parry and & Vinkenvleugel found:

Another equally important and associated way is to provide scaffolding
stages to help the learner along. We also have to be careful that we do not
expose the learner to a totally individualistic experience. After all, much
of the work done in many self-access centres is of a solitary nature. So
authentic communication is extremely important and opportunities for
learners to engage in small group work within the centre would go some
way to providing opportunities for the cooperative decision making that
some researchers see as vital to the development of autonomy
(Presentation at CLESOL Conference, July, 2002).

Poulshock (2010) states that educators of humanities and science subjects aim to help students develop the following skills and knowledge:

- Critical thinking
- Analytical reading
- Multiple problem solving
- Learning how experts think and learn
- Developing social and global knowledge
- Gaining self-knowledge and moral values
- Integrating knowledge across disciplines

These are key aspects that often arise during learning advisor and student consultations. Mynard & Carson (2012) take this a step further when they describe advising

as involving "the process and practice of helping students to direct their own paths so as to become more effective and more autonomous…" (p. 4). Thus the development of advisory services within the context of an ILC is congruent with the broader aims of an institution in developing its students whatever their chosen discipline.

An ILC is, as suggested above, a melding of many skills, requirements and pathways in which meeting students' educational needs is a major focus. As stated by Dofs (2007), teacher and student voices in mature centres have made themselves clear that there is a need for:

- Practical links to the classroom
- Manifold pathways to learning within the centre
- Advice on how to learn
- Learning how to set goals
- Learning how to evaluate learning

All of these requests can be met by an efficient, pedagogically sound research-based student advisory service. This is the rationale behind student advisory service being a vital offering to students in New Zealand. The journey towards one such advisory service is documented in Vinkenvleugel, Lotovale and Jones-Parry (2004). Advisors with a vast experience of guiding students can highlight any potential difficulties and clarify the issues, on the spot, allowing students to exploit their problem-solving skills. Thus, an effective service introduces learners to alternative learning paths, including the necessary awareness of how to learn best, set goals, measure achievements, as well as conduct self-evaluations. Mozzon-McPherson (2001) believes that learner advising plays a key role in developing independence: "a SAC, having an aim to gradually develop autonomous learners, generates a need for staff in an advising role to supplement the role of the teacher" (p. 5). In some New Zealand ILCs teachers are also advisors for their classes whereas other centres employ dedicated advisors or facilitators.

Being also informed by research by the authors (Dofs & Hobbs, 2011; Hobbs & Dofs 2015), the authors conducted workshops at two recent conferences, one hosted by the Association of Tertiary Learning Advisors Aotearoa New Zealand (ATLAANZ) and the other by Community Languages and English for Speakers of Other Languages (CLESOL). The aims of these workshops were to find out and outline some good practice guidelines for addressing the support needed to enable students to become more autonomous lifelong learners. More evidence of the need for professional development has become apparent in

recent times. Adequate training and qualification pathways for advisors which include the concept of autonomous learning seem not to be available in New Zealand. The authors have each received invitations from external universities and polytechnics to facilitate professional development for teachers who are moving into an autonomous learning advisory role as part of their teaching. There has also been an increased interest recently in purchasing Ara's Autonomous Language Learning Guides, (Dofs, unpublished Master of Language Learning and Technology dissertation, 2011) as a means of establishing learner support at institutions in New Zealand as well as overseas.

The summary below shows suggestions and comments about good advising practice in New Zealand, put forward by conference workshop delegates at two recent conferences. The first one was organised by and for academic advisors, the ATLAANZ Conference, from 27-29 November 2013. The other one was languages based; the CLESOL Conference, from 10-13 July 2014. At both conferences, participants were asked to form small groups to discuss and note down ideas about what they thought was most important for students' success. The following list reflects a summary of these views held by many advisors in New Zealand today. These were mainly educators involved in academic learning development and general learning support, but also some language teachers with a special interest in learning, support, independence, autonomy, and advising (or counselling) students to reach their own goals and capacities. This compilation also includes suggestions about how to enable autonomous learning.

Views of Academic Advisors about Appropriate Student Knowledge and Training

- In order to develop autonomous learning and succeed with their assignments, students need to have access to appropriate information and study guides, which may include a range of specific activities which they can undertake, to improve success with their assignments.
- Students may also require help to develop skills to find useful resources.
- Other 'learning to learn' aspects for autonomous learning mentioned by the Advisors which students can generally benefit from are:
  - planning skills (which may include time management, knowledge transfer, and reasoning skills)
  - reflecting regularly on their own learning

      - knowing how to engage with their studies, which may enhance and empower their learning of specific knowledge and skills for accomplishing assignments
      - understanding the differences between independence versus dependence (including the idea of interdependence, when students may rely on each other for learning, e.g. through study groups)

- It is important to develop critical thinking skills using questioning techniques and brainstorming so that students can question and discuss topics of interest and thereby develop independent thoughts

- It was especially noted that advisors should show students how to reflect on learning and thereby encourage self-reflection.

- For all of the above to be able to take place, advisors need to have a deep knowledge about beneficial study strategies and resources, both in-house and elsewhere, such as those easily accessible on Internet websites and through learning apps.

- Some comments illustrate that some learning advisors see themselves as a link, not only between students and their learning, but also between learners and their teachers, especially if they have acquired knowledge about assignments and difficult passages in the content area. Regular contacts with, and feedback to, both teachers and learners is suggested as means of accomplishing this.

- Access to a safe, secure and comfortable learning environment where students can relax and feel at ease is crucial for successful studies. Building a good rapport and being clear about the rules and the professional boundaries around the advising session creates a sense of safety and comfort for both advisors and learners.

Ideas from the Academic Advisors for Appropriate Advisor Knowledge and Training

Knowledge, skills and experience

      Attendees noted that advisors need to have an eclectic mix of attributes, encompassing both knowledge and skills, such as: specific language awareness within writing and content areas; resources and source knowledge; and a good understanding of the wider supportive institutional systems and processes. Attendees also found the following important: 'learning on the job'

- Prior life experiences

- The understanding and skills that come with the various family roles (of mother, father, grandchild, daughter, son, sister, brother, partner, niece/nephew, etc.)
- Skills and attitudes learned and enhanced through connections and networks with a wide range different people through clubs, interests, sports, church, and traveling.
- Tutoring experience, which was mentioned as a particular necessity
- Knowledge about the expectations lecturers have around assessments and marking criteria as - having a student-centred approach.

Some respondents stated that current experience of being a learner, as well as a general love of learning, would also be very fruitful, especially if this was combined with advisors having previously had the experience of being an advisee. Furthermore, they thought that important skills to enable healthy and beneficial advising situations were; counselling skills, having good communication and people skills, possessing empathy along, having the ability to build relationships, being open-minded and non-judgemental, and being able to easily connect with people using emotional intelligence.

Training

The advisors in the workshop said that useful training for self-development of advisors would be peer observations of similar face-to-face advising sessions, and peer mentoring training courses which would cover many different aspects relevant to their work. Other valued ideas for self-development were: appraisals, workshops and in-service training - particularly reflecting on current practice and adult literacy. They thought that clarification and up-skilling of the advising role could be further enhanced through networking at conferences, participation in e-learning MOOC courses and work situated technology courses. Such activities would also enable them to become more familiar with the online resources associated with advising. Involvement in research projects was also suggested as it would give a deeper understanding of one's own and others' advising practices and roles, and of new trends and innovations in the area. Exchanges between institutions were mentioned as very valuable e.g., a 'wananga' (publicly owned tertiary institution that provides education in a Māori cultural context) and 'non-wananga' interactive experience between institutions.

Suggestions for Good Practice from the Workshop Delegates

This section will outline what the workshop members suggested as good practice recommendations for advising.

Building relationships

The first most important step in any advisor–student relationship was thought to be building a good working rapport with the students. This may evolve from a thorough introduction to self-studies, and a detailed orientation of the relevant premises on campus, which would help create a sense of belonging to the institution.

A specific way to foster a sense of empowerment and of belonging, within the learning family 'whanautanga' in the bicultural New Zealand framework, is to introduce or reinforce the notion of support related to the Maori educational relationship 'tuakina teina', which also involves 'korero' (conversation). As described by NZ Ministry of Education, (n.d.):

> "The tuakana–teina relationship, an integral part of traditional Māori society, provides a model for buddy systems. An older or more expert tuakana (brother, sister or cousin) helps and guides a younger or less expert teina (originally a younger sibling or cousin of the same gender). In a learning environment that recognises the value of ako, the tuakana–teina roles may be reversed at any time. For example, the student who yesterday was the expert on te wā and explained the lunar calendar may need to learn from her classmate today about how manaakitanga (hospitality) is practised by the local hapū."

Some students can respond well to this nurturing and support. This can also be enhanced by Learning Facilitators (alternatively called Tutorial Assistants) being embedded into groups of learners in a learning centre. They have received some basic specific language learning & teaching training, and are often, but not exclusively, current or recently past students themselves. They can assist learners with material and resource selection, bookings, and with technical issues relating to the hardware and software in the Centre. However, they are not highly trained in language teaching, to run advising sessions, or to deeply understand the whole process of teaching, learning and autonomy.

Metacognitive awareness

The conference participants thought it was important that advisors facilitated the metacognitive process needed for successful learning. For example, advisors can support students learn about their preferred way of learning, assess and understand their own needs and goals, and organising their study plans and the necessary pathway for them to achieve their goals.

Study skills and strategies

The participants also mentioned that other tools such as how to access the library service and information about useful websites for guidance are important. Skills for successful studies were also discussed in the meeting/conference and they agreed that it should be introduced at an early stage, e.g., for their writing: such topics as paragraph structures, referencing, proofing, and models to compare own work with, and for reading: top-down and bottom-up techniques.

Self-evaluation

Subsequent meetings with students could then include: reflective practice, encouragement and appropriate feedback, in order to give more opportunities for extended thinking around study skills and strategies for success. These meetings could also model the methods which advisors use themselves and some of the strategies they find useful. Alternatively, advisors could give examples of what other people find useful. Another idea put forward by the workshop groups was to divide the session into three parts: (i) diagnose and recommend, (ii) give student time to work on the piece, (iii) give feedback. It was also suggested that advisors have a checklist, similar to the one suggested by Aoki (2012) which lists 14 'can do' statements under 3 broad headings: abilities, knowledge and attitudes. Aoki reported that this was particularly helpful for teachers planning to be advisors as they map out their own professional development.

It is hoped that both current and future advisors can benefit from the above well-thought-through ideas and suggestions, based on many collective years of experience. Indeed, new and experienced teachers alike, and advisors, should all be able to take and use some of the above comments and use these to the benefit of their learners (and themselves as

advisors), as we all navigate our way through rapidly changing and increasingly digital teaching and learning environments.

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Learning Spaces and Curricula: Models for Enhancing LLS Usage and Learner Autonomy Development Through Integration

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Language learning spaces (LLSs) are established with many different aims in mind and vary drastically from one institution to another. They may have been established to cater for a specific part of the student population, such as a foreign languages department or international students on non-degree programmes, or they may also be open to the general student population, staff, and even the general public. They may focus primarily on providing opportunities for target language interaction, especially in EFL environments where English is not commonly used outside the classroom, or have the development of learner autonomy as their main mission.

Depending on the institutions in which they are situated, and their primary focus, language learning spaces have different kinds and degrees of integration and cooperation with academic departments and other areas of the host institution. Target groups of learners may be required to use the facilities in some form, or there could be a policy of voluntary usage, or some kind of incentive system. In each of these cases, careful thought is necessary to determine the degree of integration and its possible effect on the autonomy of the users, often a key part of a LLS's mission. If badly managed, a model of integration which requires students to spend a certain amount of time or to complete certain activities in the LLS can turn into little more than a homework club with little or no space for the development of self-directed learning skills. On the other hand, facilities with no form of integration at all may find themselves isolated from key academic departments, which can affect their ability to reach potential users, and may result in a lack of understanding about the services they offer and low usage from the target population. Getting the right balance between these two extremes is crucial, but often challenging for managers who many times have to please multiple stakeholders.

The papers in this instalment of the Language Learning Spaces: Self-Access in Action column all address this issue of integration and describe different initiatives which have been introduced to increase student understanding of the facilities

available, prepare students to use those facilities effectively, and make informed choices about the language learning options available to them.

While many institutions choose to bring the students into the centre with some kind of required or incentivised usage policy, Elaine Wright and Kayoko Horai at Sojo University in Kumamoto, Japan brought the centre to the students, in the form of learning advisor. Elaine, an English teacher, and Kayoko, a learning advisor, describe a collaborative project in which Kayoko conducted several class visits to introduce learning advising to students through reflective activities about language learning and group advising sessions. While all students are familiar with teachers, the role of an advisor is often less easily understood (Carson, 2012), and learners may not understand how consulting an advisor can help them. Through this project, Kayoko and Elaine hoped to make the role of the advisor less opaque and help students understand how they can benefit from the process. While the project has not resulted in significant further uptake of the advising service, students generally responded positively to the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their learning, and both the teacher and the advisor felt that they increased their understanding of their students and were able to support each other better as a result of the collaboration.

The target group in the paper from Vanessa Mar-Molinero and Christian Lewis from the University of Southampton, UK, is a group of pre-sessional international students, who attend courses to raise their English proficiency before starting undergraduate programmes. The Language Resource Centre (LRC) at Southampton has developed and runs a course for these students, entitled *SotonSmartSkills,* which aims to help students develop the study skills necessary for academic success. Through this course, designed using the Personal Learning Styles Pedagogy model (Evans & Waring, 2015) students become more familiar with the services provided by the LRC, and have advising sessions with Independent Learning Facilitators, often older students who have been through the same transition that they are experiencing. Vanessa and Christian also touch on another area of integration, reflective of a growing trend in the UK (Allhouse, 2015): the physical integration of the LRC with Library services. They reflect on what effects the loss of a dedicated language learning environment may have on *SotonSmartSkills* in the future.

Finally, Ann Mayeda, Dirk MacKenzie, and Brian Nuspliger from Konan Women's University in Kobe, Japan, reflect on the process of integrating their self-access centre, e-space, into their first and second year English language curriculum

through the use of a stamp card system. In order to introduce the students to the services available, students were required to complete a learner profile and attend an initial advising session, join the centre's English conversation service three times, and complete several learning activities or join events of their choice while tracking their activity on a stamp card, which made up 20% of their class grade. While student responses have been largely positive, the study highlights the difficulty of integrating a new self-access centre with a pre-existing, albeit reformed, curriculum taught by mainly part-time teachers with varying degrees of understanding of the benefits of self-access language learning.

In the case of both the classroom advisor visits and the stamp card system, these integration initiatives have not resulted in a huge increase in uptake of the services. While students may be more aware of what is available to them and more able to make informed choices about whether to use the services, this positive aspect of better awareness may be compromised by a perceptual shift among learners that these are not activities to engage in voluntarily, as their introduction was part of a compulsory class activity. In the case of *SotonSmartSkills,* the authors report that some students acknowledge the benefits of the skills learned in the course only several years after they have completed it.

Few would argue that an isolated language learning space with no connections to academic departments or administrative areas is able to serve its target population effectively. The papers in this instalment offer some suggestions for how certain levels of integration may be achieved, but remind us that we need to be aware of the possible negative effects of any usage requirement or incentivisation, in addition to the positive outcomes that can be expected in terms of learner awareness.

It must also be acknowledged that curriculum integration is not the only way to influence the uptake of LLS services, and many initiatives showcased in previous instalments of this series, such as peer-learning initiatives and the high profile given to student staff, have been introduced at least partly with the intention of making the LLS more attractive to potential users. The growing understanding of self-access centres as social learning spaces (Murray, Fujishima, & Uzuka, 2014) highlights the powerful role that learners can play on each other's learning experiences. The next instalment of this series will focus specifically on this issue of promotion and attracting users.

Notes on the editor of the series

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Raising Awareness: Learning Advising as an In-Class Activity

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Abstract

Learning advising can play an important role in scaffolding the development of learner autonomy. While a classroom teacher might give advice to students about what and how to study, a learning advisor aims to help students to identify specific needs and create action plans to meet their goals. The teachers and the learning advisors can work hand-in-hand to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. For this project, a communicative English course at a Japanese university was modified to include in-class advising sessions. Despite having no English majors, there is a well-curated but underutilized Self Access Learning Center (SALC) that includes three learning advisors. Students are required to learn English but often have limited awareness of the language learning process. The project was designed to increase learner awareness toward their individual learning goals, inform the teacher of students' goals, and increase student engagement with the SALC. This paper discusses the details of the course in the specific setting, as well as reactions from students, teachers, and learning advisors. The article also gives options for teachers who hope to encourage learner autonomy but may not have access to learning advisors in their institution.

Keywords: learning advising, curriculum integration, awareness

Context

The focus of this paper is a project conducted at a private, technical university in Kumamoto, Japan, which has no English majors; however, students are required to attend communicative English courses in their first two years. Students in any year or department can utilize the Self Access Learning Center (SALC). The SALC has two main aims: first, to promote autonomous learning; second, to support the English curriculum. To meet these goals, the SALC has numerous resources, including three Learning Advisors (LAs). This project began with a discussion about a collaborative effort between a teacher and an LA to improve language learning for students by offering opportunities to engage with the SALC in class.

In this setting, most students tend to give little consideration to the language learning process and often do not understand the role of the LAs or how they can help them to achieve their goals. They have also reported feeling intimidated by the SALC, which is in line Croker and Ashurova's (2012) idea that such learning can be new to students who have only ever learned "under the direct supervision and control of the teacher" (p. 237).

For teachers, it can be difficult to know if students understand their purpose as language learners. By understanding the needs of each student, teachers can provide lessons and activities that are better aligned with students' goals and interests. However, because of large class sizes and curriculum constraints, there is little opportunity for this dialogue between teachers and students during regular class time.

Curriculum Integration

Learning advising in the classroom

Working in this context, a native speaking English teacher and a Japanese LA had a discussion about improving student engagement with the SALC as a whole, and with learning advising specifically. They also recognized a need for increased communication between all teachers and LAs because the LAs and teachers fulfill different roles, work on different floors, and have few opportunities to collaborate.

The role of advising in language learning has been well documented. For example, Carson and Mynard (2012) stated the central goal of the advisor is "the development of learner autonomy which includes fostering the ability in learners to identify language needs and personalise the learning experience by selecting appropriate resources, planning, monitoring and evaluating ongoing language learning" (p. 14). However, it is unlikely that the majority of Japanese university students have had an advising session in their previous language education.

As such, it may not be easy for students to understand the different roles of language teachers and LAs. Carson (2012) suggests the importance of raising awareness of advising for students. Connecting the classroom and the SALC may improve the cognitive processes of individual learners by offering opportunities for students to reflect. Regarding the pathway of self-directed learning, Kelly (1996)

suggested that learners need to go through a substantial transformation of their beliefs about language and their role as learners to be autonomous. She also emphasized that "this process of reorientation and personal discovery is directly or indirectly an outcome of learning training" (p. 94). Thinking and reflecting on learning can be a helpful initial step for those who have been educated quite receptively. New learning support by an LA in class may increase students' sense of agency as learners.

Planning of the project

With these ideas in mind, an in-class learning advising project was designed with the aims of increasing learner awareness of their individual learning goals, informing the teacher of students' goals, and increasing student engagement with learning advising and the SALC. The LA wanted to have a chance to meet and understand students who do not usually attend advising sessions. In addition, the teacher and LA wanted to find ways to bridge communication between the two groups.

The project was conducted in the first semester with first year Aerospace and Life Science students who may not have studied English in a communicative classroom nor had any experience with a SALC. There were 30 students in total—15 males and 15 females.

The teacher and LA decided to conduct group advising sessions in Japanese during class time, but out of the classroom. Group advising allowed students the chance to learn from each other while the use of students' L1 (Japanese) was allowed to reduce the stress of performing in English. Also, group sessions were chosen to limit the amount of class time required. The intention was to enhance the students' language learning experience without missing any important parts of the required curriculum. As a result, the following plan of in-class activities was devised. (See Table 1).

Table 1. Timeline and Plan

Time	Activity
Early April	Exploring Beliefs
Mid-April	First Group Advising Session and Reflection
Early June	Second Group Advising Session and Reflection
End of July	Self-Assessment Report

Exploring beliefs. In the first class of the semester, the LA visited the classroom to introduce the project. Each student explored their own thoughts about learning English by drawing a mind map in class, in English or Japanese. Students were asked to write 'Learning English' in the center of the page, and then encouraged to connect any thoughts they had in regards to this topic. (See Appendix A). They were encouraged to think of the past, present, and future, and to expand on any thoughts by answering 'Why?' The teacher and LA gave no other direction in an effort to avoid limiting or driving students' ideas. These were reviewed by the LA before the first group advising session.

First group advising session. After reviewing the mind maps, the LA devised three questions intended to get students to reflect on their own learning in new ways: What does learning English mean for you? Do you think learning English may influence your future, and if so, why? What do you want to learn in your class? These questions were posed to students in groups of three or four in group advising sessions that lasted about 12 minutes. The LA attempted not to guide students' answers in line with the self-determination theory (Vallerand, 1997), encouraging students to transition from their roles as receptive learners and to take responsibility for their own learning.

One week later, students completed a post-session reflection in class. Students were not explicitly told what to write, but were encouraged to think further about what had been discussed. They were also asked to identify one English learning goal, in or out of the classroom, which was simple and easy to maintain, and to think of an action plan and the materials required to achieve it, as well as to evaluate their behavior over the previous week. The LA did not give any specific instructions or deadlines regarding the action plan.

Second group advising session. A second session with the same members was conducted four weeks after the first session. During the session, *My Learning Plan Sheet* (Appendix 2.) was distributed and students were asked to review their own goal, action plan, and learning materials. The LA asked some questions to encourage deeper thinking and further discussion. Next, students were asked to reflect on their comments and to briefly summarize the session on the sheet.

Self-assessment report. Finally, students wrote a self-report in Japanese at the end of the semester. The *Self-Assessment Report* took the place of sit-down, group advising sessions. This report allowed students to focus on their individual goals and also required less class time than group sessions. The report comprised a few identifying questions, followed by four open-ended items. The questions were as follows (translated from Japanese):

1. Do you think your awareness has changed as a result of the advising sessions? Why or why not?
2. Do you think your learning behaviors have changed as a result of the advising sessions? Why or why not?
3. Do you want to continue advising sessions in the second semester? Why or why not?
4. Which do you prefer, group sessions or individual sessions? Why?

Reaction

Student reactions

The students' comments from the self-assessment report were compiled for analysis. Twenty-eight out of thirty students reported that their awareness had changed. First, students were able to reflect on their learning and see the value of learning advising. As an example, one student responded "Reflecting by writing and talking can clarify my thoughts and goals and has raised my awareness." Another stated, "I have studied receptively but through the advising session, I could reflect on my everyday learning and felt learning is much closer to me. I was motivated to learn English." Students had studied English before, but they started to become aware of the importance of learning English for themselves by setting their own goals and reflecting on their behaviors. In fact, 25 students reported that their learning behaviors had improved to a degree through the advising sessions.

After examining their learning plan sheets, the LA and the teacher determined that 22 students were able to set specific, achievable goals. Along with big picture goals such as being a fluent English speaker, students were able to identify and set smaller goals. For example, some aspired to complete the homework regularly, to focus on TOEIC vocabulary or to use only English while in the classroom. These smaller, short-term goals can be stepping-stones to more specific and personalized long-term goals.

Another advantage of the project was the input from other students. Because of the group sessions, students were able to hear the opinions of their classmates in their native language. In the self-assessment report, one student responded, "Listening to other students' learning attitudes encouraged me." Another said, "Instead of continuing on my own, I can hear some other new ideas." They began to think about learning English in a way they never had before.

However, there were some challenges. Eight students struggled to set small achievable goals. It was explained by the LA that they should identify something specific that could become part of their routine, but these eight students failed to do so. For example, they wrote 'improve my speaking ability', just 'TOEIC' without any

targeted score, or just stated 'listening and speaking communication skills.' One student wanted to improve their speaking ability and decided to use the SALC. However, this goal was still too big and unclear. The SALC contains many different resources, so, in the second session the LA suggested focusing on which resources would be the best to improve speaking skills to the students who had difficulty choosing own learning materials. However, the session was quite short, so the LA could not discuss this smaller goal in detail. Perhaps with further advising and more opportunity to reflect on their learning, students would improve in this area. Even for those students who could set realistic goals, follow-through was a problem. Another student planned to use a vocabulary study program every day, but quickly fell behind.

Twenty-nine out of thirty students also indicated a desire to continue meeting with an advisor, which implies they saw some value in the project. In the second semester advising was not an in-class activity but it was hoped that students would take control and continue. They were shown how to reserve a session and encouraged to speak with the LA about any questions about language learning. However, students may have been attempting to please the teacher and not completely truthful. In the end, only two students continued outside of the class in their first year. The reason for this is unclear.

Teacher reflections

After this project, the teacher had a better idea of students' goals and interests. This knowledge allowed the teacher to choose better activities for the classroom. In addition, the reflections provided feedback about classroom activities, which was not an initial goal of the project but was very useful. The teacher was also able to learn information about the students that was easier for them to deliver in their L1. For example, students reported to the LA that they felt they did not know what to say in speaking activities, so the teacher was able to provide more scaffolding for such activities. The regular contact with the LA also provided the teacher with additional support. The LA knew the students well and so could give informed advice to the teacher about problem-solving in the classroom.

There were also some challenges. Students were quite ambitious in their learning plans, and so the teacher had high expectations for students, which could be frustrating when students did not live up to them. For example, all students expressed an interest in speaking only in English while in the classroom, but frequently spoke in Japanese when working in a group. It was also difficult to plan for the group advising sessions, because the class activities needed to be both worthwhile for those in the classroom, but also paced so that students could miss a few minutes for an advising session and not be completely lost. One thing that did work was to set students to do individual or group work that could be done at the pace of each student or group. In this way, missed class time did not result in missed activities.

Learning advisor reflections

Meeting with this group of students allowed the LA to discover insights into attitudes about English learning at this university. Individual students had different beliefs, behaviors, and goals. Many students had a desire to improve their English skills but they did not know how to shift to autonomous learning behaviors. Meeting with an LA could be an initial step for them to consider their learning and to foster autonomy. However, it may be necessary for students to attend multiple advising sessions, without being required to do so, to truly develop autonomous learning skills.

In addition, perhaps shy students did not feel comfortable in the group setting and would have been more forthcoming in an individual session. The LA attempted to get quieter students talking and to allow equal time for all students. Also, using the reflection sheet and "My Learning Plan" sheet allowed all students to make their needs and goals known to the LA without having to speak in front of their peers. The advisor also struggled with her own high expectations of students' involvement outside of the classroom. She had hoped that students would continue their advising sessions beyond this project. However, as shown above, few students did. Finally, translating students' L1 responses into English for the teacher was time consuming.

Final Thoughts

Integrating the SALC with the curriculum through in-class learning advising can be one way to raise students' awareness and encourage them to take responsibility as learners. This project was a success in terms of the goals laid out by the teacher and LA. Students had the opportunity to reflect on their own learning, understand the different roles that LAs and teachers play, and become familiar with the facilities available to them. The teacher and LA were able to learn more about their individual students' needs and interests, especially those who might not have utilized advising on their own. The advisor and teacher were able to communicate regularly, sharing ideas about this group of students, as well as building a relationship that led to further collaboration.

There are many beneficial aspects of the project which could be adapted to any classroom in which the teacher hopes to encourage learner reflection or awareness, even without access to LAs. First, for any students who have never reflected on their English learning, even simple reflective activities could benefit students' awareness. Activities such as mind mapping can allow students to think about studying English in new ways.

In classes with a higher level of English, group discussions can be held about learning in the classroom without specific advising sessions. Also, teachers or LAs could utilize reflective activities such as the *My Learning Plan Sheet* (Appendix B) or *Self-Assessment Report* to encourage students to consider their actions and beliefs.

In any case, more class time should be spent discussing the benefits of learning advising and emphasizing the different roles of the teacher and LA. Students' lack of familiarity with the concept requires that more time be spent explaining the reasons for learning advising (Carson, 2012). Even in learning environments that do not have access to LAs or a SALC, reflective activities in the classroom allow students to think about their learning. These reflections may help students to better understand their motivations, needs, and behaviors. With this knowledge, students may become more autonomous, and as a result, more effective English learners.

Notes on the Contributors

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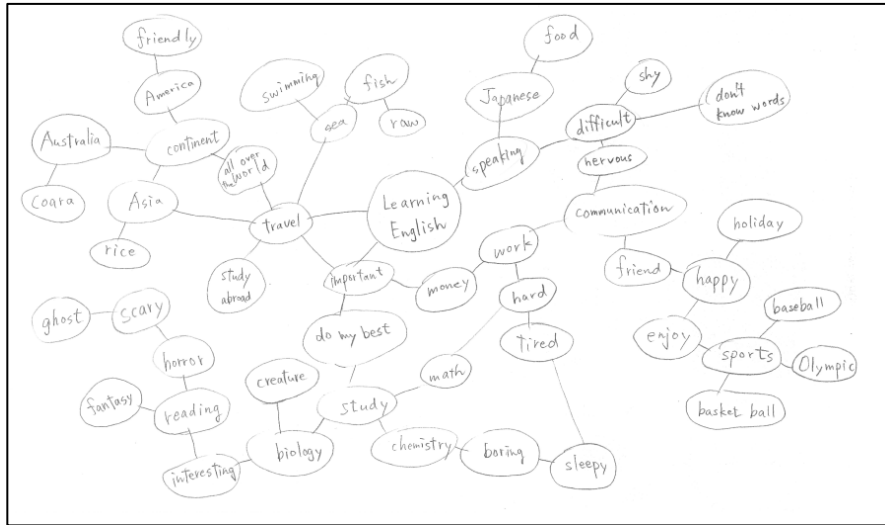
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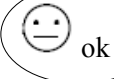
Appendix A: An Example Mind Map

Exploring Beliefs: Mind Mapping (Originally written in English)

Appendix B: An Example Learning Plan (translated from Japanese)

MY LEARNING PLAN

BIG GOAL 大きな目標	Speak English
MATERIALS 使用する教材	Pair work in English class Dictation PraxisEd (Class assignment)
STUDY ACTIVITIES 学習ステップの詳細	Try dictation and quiz more than class goal. Do not neglect PraxisEd. 6 units/week Try not to speak Japanese in conversation. Go to the SALC 10 times. I am not sure whether I'll take the TOEIC but I'll study for it.
EVALUATION 学習活動の評価	☺ good　　☺ ok　　☹ not really
REFLECTION 感想	I can't express myself well in a conversation. So I want to choose learning materials to improve my vocabulary for conversation.

Developing "*SotonSmartSkills*": A Reflection on Scaffolded Independent Learning Programmes

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Abstract

By focussing on the physical and virtual space of a Language Resources Centre and the development of a wide set of digital literacies skills, this article discusses the *SotonSmartSkills* (Mar-Molinero & Lewis, 2014) programme developed at the University of Southampton, UK. Through a wide range of scaffolded courses designed to support the transition to the learner autonomy required of students in Higher Education, the programme equips students with skills, strategies, techniques and tools vital for success in their language learning (for international students) and more generally, in their academic achievement and professional life. In this paper we illustrate this initiative with the specific example of an integrated *SotonSmartSkills* module on our Pre-Sessional English programmes

Keywords: Language Resources Centre (LRC), independent learning, flipped learning, learner autonomy, digital literacies

In recent years the importance of the role of independent learning (IL) (Race, 2002) with its emphasis on student-centredness has been recognised as an integral part of higher education programmes. However, many of our students, both home and international, struggle with the transition to learner autonomy. Within the department of Modern Languages at the University of Southampton (UoS), based in the Language Resources Centre, we have developed "*SotonSmartSkills*" (SSS) (Mar-Molinero & Lewis, 2014), a wide range of modules, with both compulsory and non-compulsory elements, delivered in both virtual and physical spaces. Designed to support this transition to higher education and equip cohorts of students with skills, strategies, techniques and tools*, SSS* is vital to student success in not only their language learning but in their academic achievement and professional life.

SotonSmartSkills for English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Pre-Sessional Programmes

For the purpose of this paper we will consider a module[1] within our Pre-Sessional EAP programme. From June to September a cohort of approximately 1300 students, predominately from East Asia, follow modules in *SSS* as well as in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Below we will discuss the elements that make up this module, its pedagogical underpinning, and reflect on the experience to date.

The Language Resources Centre (LRC) as the heart of a conceptual space

The focal point of the *SSS* module is the physical space of the Language Resources Centre (LRC). SSS was developed at UoS to bring together and update the ethos physically created by the LRC in terms of language learning and autonomy. An LRC encompasses a variety of "resources (materials, activities and support) [….] that accommodate learners of different levels, styles and with different goals and interests" (Cotterall & Reinders, 2001, p. 25) with the aim of supporting and encouraging learner autonomy. For this reason, an LRC can be considered as the hub or "nexus of practice" (Scollon, 2001) where all forms of IL and language learning actions and interactions converge. Indeed, environment, meaning and interaction, are considered important pedagogical elements of constructivist theory (Waring & Evans, 2015, p. 55)[2] which underpin our approach. According to Evans (2015) "individuals process information in different ways" and an understanding of this fact has been vitally important to us as learners, teachers, and researchers. The Personal Learning Styles Pedagogy (PLSP) (Evans & Waring, 2009; 2014) was developed to support awareness of the role of cognitive styles in learning, and importantly to demonstrate pragmatic ways in which this knowledge could be used effectively in teaching. The research and practice-informed PLSP was specifically designed to support student and teacher/lecturer agency and empowerment in learning. Comprehending how to incorporate an understanding of cognitive styles (how we process information) into pedagogical practice is essential within 21st century learning environments if we are to support learners to become effective self-regulators throughout their lives. Fundamentally, the PLSP is an example of a culturally inclusive pedagogy in that it

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[1] At UoS a module is a 12-week long credit-bearing course contributing to the overall programme.
[2] For a more detailed discussion of these theories, see Evans's report outlining the Personal Learning Styles Pedagogy (PLSP) (Evans, 2015)

uses the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of diverse learners and builds a pedagogy incorporating this awareness of individual differences with the intention of ensuring that all learners have access to learning and teaching environments. The actions that take place in our LRC space ascribe the 'meaning' that creates the LRC's identity as the foci for language learning and autonomous practices whether as a physical or virtual place (Creswell, 2004; Massey, 2005; Murray, Fujishima, & Uzuka, 2014).

The SotonSmartSkills structure

The *SSS* module is a combination of compulsory (see Appendix 1) and non-compulsory elements. Together with the physical context of the LRC, advancements in technology have created new virtual spaces that enhance and promote learner autonomy (Watson & White, 2012). The compulsory elements of the module are delivered through a flipped learning environment hosted on an online platform where students use interactive vidcasts (video lectures) filmed in the LRC, podcasts and interactive quizzes to achieve Learning Objects, on weekly topics such as motivation, digital literacies, or concepts of IL for language learners. This prepares them for the related seminar workshop sessions with an Independent Learning Facilitator (ILF). Also on this platform, students write or record reflective blogs or vlogs of their learning experiences. Students also attend regular compulsory language advising sessions, either face-to-face in the LRC or via Skype with their ILF.

The non-compulsory elements, some of which take place in the LRC, encourage students to take further responsibility for their learning and to effectively engage with learner autonomy. By choosing to attend, for example, further language advising sessions, specific skills workshops, language cafés (an informal discussion language group), British culture seminars and other activities suited to their individual needs, students gradually form the habit and reflect on the benefits of autonomous practices.

A Scaffolded approach to learning

The working concept of IL used to design this module is defined by Race (1996) as a process in which a student is equipped with the tools, techniques, and strategies which over time empower an individual to learn for themselves (see also, Broad, 2006). The module is underpinned by Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone

of Proximal Development (ZPD) and also the pedagogical concept of scaffolding the learning process (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). The module is scaffolded to support, develop and give the students opportunities to adapt to a different set of educational expectations in a new learning environment and culture.

Scaffolding is reflected in the module's learning aims. These aims acknowledge "the range of cultural contexts that an individual inhabits impacts on the individual use and development of styles" (Waring & Evans , 2015, p. 93) and that development of learner autonomy is about better awareness of their cognitive styles which allow more informed decisions to be made in relation to the students' learning and development (Waring & Evans, 2015). Some of the scaffolded elements delivered in the LRC include: support in how to use, access and find resources in the LRC both physically and virtually (including virtual and physical orientation briefings); how to find appropriate resources for student learning needs and abilities; how to use and work with a large variety of virtual resources, and signposting to non compulsory support sessions.

Pedagogical integration of flipped learning

Another integral aspect of the module design is the pedagogical integration of flipped learning, i.e, "a pedagogical model in which the typical lecture and homework elements of the course are reversed" (Educause, 2012, p. 1). Flipped learning was employed for various reasons in relation to promoting learner autonomy, individualisation, motivation and developing a transferable skills set. Moreover, technological functionalities can present the learner with a range of "eligible alternatives" and flexibility to enhance their learning (Wall 2003, pp. 307-8. as cited in Hamilton, 2014, p. 3). Providing access to this range of resources is important because it "ensures principles of enriched styles pedagogies are fully integrated into the curriculum" (Waring & Evans, 2015) and students therefore have access to this flexibility, variety and range of resources from the start of the module in order to promote and scaffold IL.

Flipped learning is also employed so as to meet the needs of the students. Using students' prior knowledge of IT creates a more student-centred learning environment as it integrates the learning histories of the students with new concepts (Waring & Evans, 2015). Yet, importantly there is an understanding placed on the fact that students may not have the skills to use these tools for educational purposes.

Therefore, flipped learning is used to scaffold the module framework. Laurillard (2012) argues that the role of the educator has changed shape but has not been replaced by a proliferation of education technology, as some academics suggested as far back as 1973 (Illich, 1973). The Internet hosts information but does not scaffold and support learning, or teach (Laurillard, 2012). This further highlights the educator's role in relation to the development of high-level cognition skills and the ability to be proficient self-regulators, as these are the same skills the knowledge society requires (Laurillard, 2012).

Threading prior knowledge through to future learning with digital literacies

Vidcasting. Prior knowledge is utilised to scaffold the module by using vidcasts within the flipped learning environment. Vidcasts are used in the module to reflect the students as *YouTube* generation learners, where skills are gained by watching videos. This allows student support and development in an environment that they are familiar with. The content of the vidcasts is created for the student to watch, and interact with, in preparation for the workshops. Therefore, the student builds prior knowledge of the topic before the session, reflects and brings questions to be discussed in the workshops.

Shetzer and Warschauer (2000) observe that "flexible, autonomous, lifelong learning is essential to success in the age of information" (p. 176).Waring and Evans (2015) emphasise that pedagogical decisions should be made not only to encourage students' understanding of a specific context but also to be more generaliseable in the future. Therefore, students are made aware of, and guided in, the adaptability of the educational digital literacy skill sets incorporated into the module, and encouraged and facilitated to consider how such "integrated pedagogies" will benefit them "beyond the immediate learning context" (Allcock & Hulme, 2010, as cited in Waring & Evans, 2015, Table 11.1).

Vlogging and blogging. Blogs and vlogs are embedded in our curriculum and act as tools during the module for reflective and critical thought. Students engage by reflecting on their learning journey and development in their blogs and vlogs. They also have the option to create ePortfolios of their academic interests for networking purposes later on in the course, which promotes the transferability of the skills set they acquired when initially creating their blogs or vlogs. During this module, vlogs

and blogs allow the student to take ownership and to publish their work within a safe and private environment and to understand how they may be used in the future. Waring and Evans (2015) highlight the importance of student 'voice and choice' in terms of nurturing autonomy. Students are encouraged to revisit their blogs and vlogs to assess their own development during the course. At the beginning of the module, blogs and vlogs are private between ILFs and students, but during the module, as the student develops, they have the choice and ability to increase their audience if and when they are ready. This allows the student to make decisions on and as "co-designers" of their learning (Waring & Evans, 2015).

Reflections on Work in Progress

Because of the intense nature of the Pre-Sessional programme, a common problem that we find is that students do not have the time to reflect whilst actively practising many of the skills that are in the module. The focus for the student is on 'passing' the EAP programme and at times, without experience of the wider university environment's expectations of IL, we have observed that students find it difficult to grasp concepts that are suggested in the module. They often comment later that only once they are taking their substantive degree programmes and have been faced with these challenges do they begin to understand the importance of the *SSS* in relation to their future studies and success.

To avoid the problem raised above, we employ various strategies. For instance, we have employed a peer-to-peer learning scheme where a variety of graduates and postgraduate students who have been through this transition first hand are recruited and trained as ILFs, to work with students one-to-one and in workshop sessions. Additionally, on other *SSS* modules we have been piloting, we include guest Q&A sessions from students who have experienced the same process. These sessions are also recorded and placed online. It is hoped that these initiatives will help to support learners to integrate into communities of practice and that through peer learning or "shared action and discussion with more experienced learners" (Waring & Evans, 2015, Table 11.1). Students on the module will be encouraged to develop "cognitive insights about teaching elements" (Waring & Evans, 2015).

Recently we have begun to collate data so as to research the effectiveness of the module. A mixture of data collection methods was employed for a pilot study, which was examined to arrive at preliminary findings toward attitudes and changes in learning over the eleven weeks and the progress of our students. This is arrived at by comparing the first assessments in the students' first week used to attain a map of language levels, quantitative and qualitative data collected during the 11 weeks (importantly this includes non-compulsory elements), and the students' grades in their final assessments overall for the programme. A significant statistical correlation appears between the students who first choose to attend non-compulsory elements of the course, and then those who continue to attend these, as shown in their grades and learning in general indicating a greater improvement than those students who did not attend the non-compulsory elements. However, until we have conducted further research, we cannot be sure that this is not only to do with general maturation. We refer to the improvement gained through proactive engagement as "protonomy" (Lewis & Mar-Molinero, 2014) or pro active autonomy, as the student begins to recognise the benefits of autonomous practices and proactively applies the skills, techniques and strategies learnt in the *SSS* module to meet academic expectations.

Looking to the Future: Some Suggestions and Advice

In recent months the physical space of the LRC at the UoS has undergone a radical change and has been physically incorporated into the library. This is the second phase of changes as the 'ownership' of the LRC was moved from the Modern Languages academic department to the library professional services structure in 2013. The new space has been renamed as the "Library and Learning Commons" and redesigned to reflect the integration of the general library space. Alongside this, the Language Resources Manager role has also been split into two positions: the "Library & Learning Commons Manager" and "Academic Engagement Librarian for Modern Languages". As this is the first academic year of these changes we are yet to be able to comment fully on the outcomes of these changes.

However, in the light of these changes various questions must be raised. Firstly, in relation to the *SSS* modules the impact of any such changes must be carefully monitored. In addition, deeper pedagogical questions related to the LRC and learner autonomy in language learning must be considered. In respect of the

integrated pedagogy, questions such as: have the students' perceptions of the use of library versus language learning spaces changed?; will the actions that were ascribed when creating the LRC space change?, and what effect will this have on the *SSS* module? Further questions must be considered with the changes to the LRC managerial role as the literature shows this role to be far more complex than other librarian managerial roles (See Ciel Language Support Network, 2000; Gardner & Miller, 1997, 1999; Lonergan, 1994). We have yet to see what the outcome of removing much of the physical foundation of the autonomous language learning structure and thereby creating fundamental changes will have overall on *SotonSmartSkills*. Institutions looking to implement similar restructuring as that taking place in UoS might be advised to do this in careful conjunction with stakeholders who design and implement the curriculum which is based on the LRC space for pedagogical reasons.

Nonetheless despite the challenges facing us with the uncertainty over the future of the LRC space, we continue to endorse and recommend the successful and effective aspects of SSS*,* and would offer the following recommendations for anyone developing a similar programme:

- flipping aspects of the course to allow for more reflection/discussion in sessions,
- using videos and other formats that students are familiar with,
- providing appropriate scaffolding for the activities, and
- employing ILFs with first hand experience of the transition to more autonomous learning environment.

Notes on the contributors

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Christian Lewis is a language teaching fellow at the University of Southampton, UK. He is presently coordinating learner autonomy modules on several in-sessional English language programmes and is a course leader on the summer Pre-sessional. He also regularly leads training sessions for the University Graduate School. He completed an MSc in computing and is especially interested in the application of digital tools and pedagogies to enhance student engagement. With a background in project management, he specialises in planning, time-management, and motivation. His other academic interests include behaviour and motivation. He is a co-founder and co-director of the University's *SmartSkills* hub.

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Appendix 1

Pre-Sessional Programme 2015
Independent Learning Module
Syllabus Overview

Week	Session Overview
1	Introduction to Independent Learning
2	Applied Project Management: Time, Practical Planning and Risk
3	Critical Thinking and Analytical Strategies and Motivation
4	Practical Researching Skills
5	Academic Problem Solving: Feedback and Reflection, and Practical Applications
6	The Essential Tools for Referencing
7	Consolidating Knowledge and Examination Strategies
8	Opportunities for Enhancing the University Experience and Employability (Part 2)

Pre-sessional Course A 2015: Independent Learning Syllabus

Integrating Self-Access Center Components into Core English Classes

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Abstract

The Department of English Language and Culture at Konan Women's University opened a self-access center in 2011. "e-space" was built into the department common room as part of a renovation project. Two full-time lecturers/learning advisors were hired to develop the language learning resources, offer advising services and to develop a more dynamic language learning community. In 2012, the department revamped its curriculum with a focus on improving the core English courses and facilitating the development of learner autonomy. Self-access language learning (SALL) activities were gradually integrated into the core courses as a way to expose students to the resources available in e-space and to provide opportunities to engage in language learning in a more learner-centered way. In 2013, teachers were asked to integrate SALL into first- and second-year core classes, and in 2014, these components became compulsory, graded sections of the courses. A stamp card system was developed to help students and teachers track the activities. At the end of the year, the cards were collected and student feedback was solicited via an online survey. While teacher buy-in has been difficult to achieve across the board, preliminary results show that the SALL components were generally successful in terms of student participation and satisfaction.

Keywords: self-access, learning spaces, curriculum

Context

e-space, the self-access center in the Department of English Language and Culture at Konan Women's University (KWU) opened in 2011 as a part of the renovation of the department's common room (CR). All departments in the university have a CR that serves as its administrative center to accommodate student needs within the particular department. Before the renovation, the English department CR housed a small graded reader bookshelf, some self-study resources and held lunchtime English sessions, or *English Cafe*, facilitated by international students and teachers. The decision was made to revamp this CR into a more fully functioning self-access center in order to better meet the needs of a more diverse student

body and to promote autonomy in language learning. The expanded space allowed for a larger graded reader library area, more self-access materials, learning spaces, a dedicated advising room and language advising services. *English Cafe* sessions were increased and efforts were made to recruit student volunteers and hire student staff to help develop the "social learning spaces" (Murray & Fujishima, 2013). To facilitate this, two full-time lecturers were hired as learning advisors to focus specifically on developing e-space as a language-learning hub.

Integration of e-space use into the core English curriculum has been established in stages. In this paper, we look at this integration from the perspectives of the two learning advisors who also teach in the core English courses and a faculty member who oversees the general management of e-space.

Stages in Integration with the Curriculum

In 2012, the English department launched an initiative focusing on improving the core English curriculum and facilitating the development of learner autonomy. Changes were to affect one of the Production and Fluency (P&F) courses aimed at helping students develop communicative competence. The decision was made to integrate SALL activities into the courses in order to give students an incentive to make use of the available resources in e-space and encourage them to make language learning a part of their lives outside of the classroom.

The curricular changes were explained to all faculty members in 2013 at a special session. Course descriptions and outcomes were standardized, including the requirement to make use of e-space resources with a suggested 20% grade allotment. However, few teachers incorporated use of e-space into their course in the first year. Thus in 2014 the learning advisors created a stamp card system for introducing and tracking e-space activities and the 20% grade allotment became a requirement. While we were aware of the potential to derail intrinsic interest by adding this type of extrinsic reward system, after much discussion the advising team made the decision to move forward with it with the rationale that learners needed to experience the SALL components first, after which they would then be in a position to make an *informed* choice on whether to continue using them. In particular, we were aware that reluctant learners, even if they knew of the benefits of SALL, would not willingly come on their own.

The e-space Self-Access Components

The ten-space stamp card (Figure 1) was created to familiarize students with e-space and keep track of activities. Other centers have successfully used stamp card schemes for tracking and encouraging usage and attendance (Croker & Ashurova, 2012; Talandis Jr. et al., 2011). In addition, incorporating a percentage of course grades and teacher encouragement seems to have resulted in higher completion rates (Talandis Jr. et al., 2011).
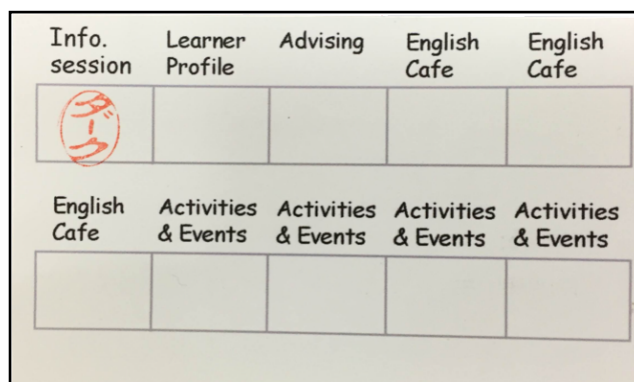
Figure 1. Stamp Card

The P&F teachers were asked to collect the cards at the end of each semester and award two points for each stamp received. This constituted the 20% grade for the self-access component. After grading, teachers were asked to submit their students' cards for record-keeping purposes.

Information session and learner profile

During the first two weeks of the spring 2014 semester, a learning advisor conducted a 45-minute e-space information session for each first-year P&F class. Students had an e-space tour and received instructions for using the stamp card (Appendix A). They were also given a learner profile sheet (Appendix B) and shown how to make an advising appointment online. Students were instructed to complete the profile sheet and to book their first advising session.

Advising

Twenty-minute advising sessions are available for students to discuss their language learning plans and goals. These can be short-term or long-term with the advisor helping the

learner break them down into more realistic or manageable tasks. While each advisor may conduct their sessions differently, there is general consensus that students should come to advising for a specific purpose related to their language learning. This can be anything from questions related to vocabulary acquisition, improving listening skills, working on specific communicative tasks, or discussing issues related to motivation. The advisor might recommend strategies, resources, or offer different approaches to reaching their goals. Learners are encouraged to schedule follow-up appointments to check back on progress.

Four advisors are available in e-space with sessions offered daily from second to fourth periods including lunchtime with some exceptions due to scheduling. Two advisors conduct sessions in English and two conduct sessions in either English or Japanese.

For the stamp card advising session, students bring in their learner profile sheet and discuss their learner histories and what they hope to achieve by the time they graduate. It is an opportunity for the advisors to get to know the students and to inform them of the various resources available to them.

English Cafe

English Cafe has been running at lunchtime for several years. Since the renovation it has been expanded beyond the lunch hour several days of the week. Part-time teachers and international students from a nearby university are hired as conversation facilitators. In 2014, as part of the ongoing efforts to encourage ownership of the center, students in the department were asked to volunteer and several students were hired as e-space student facilitators.

Participation in three *English Cafe* sessions was required on the stamp card. While *English Cafe* has always been popular with a core group of students, it was added on the stamp card as a way to encourage reluctant students to try at least three sessions with the aim of lowering the affective barrier to entrance and encourage future unguided participation.

Activities and events

Participation in activities (Appendix B) and attendance at events in e-space rounded out the last four stamps. Students were free to choose activities and received a stamp after talking briefly with an advisor about what they engaged in. Lunchtime talks and seasonal events were announced periodically over the semester to encourage attendance.

What We Have Learned

Stamp cards

The stamp card system was implemented in 2014 with all first-year students participating in the first semester and second-years in the second semester, in order to stagger the demand on resources. Since 2015 only first-year students have used the cards as second-years had completed them the previous year and would already know what e-space had to offer.

At the end of the spring 2014 semester, 50% of the first year stamp cards were received from teachers (Table 1). The remaining 50% were either not submitted by students for grading, or not passed on by teachers after grading. Of the stamp cards that were returned, 93.3% were complete, indicating that the occasional student had submitted their card without getting all 10 stamps.

Table 1. Stamp Card Data

Semester	Year	Students	Cards submitted	Submission rate	Stamps: Target	Stamps received	Completion rate
2014 Spring	1	128	64	50.0%	640	597	93.3%
2014 Fall	2	141	98	69.5%	980	911	93.0%
2015 Spring	1	131	114	87.0%	1140	1072	94.0%

Overall, students have been consistent in completing the stamp card (around 93% each semester), and submission has improved steadily since the launch of the program, from 50% in spring 2014 to 87% in spring 2015.

While each class had some students who did not submit cards to teachers, the larger issue was teacher non-compliance. Three teachers failed to turn in any stamp cards and one turned in only six out of twenty. One teacher did not collect nor grade the cards but these were collected later by CR staff. This data is included in the figures above.

Survey

At the end of the 2014 academic year, all teachers were requested to administer a bilingual survey on the stamp card and the self-access component. The response rate for the P&F student survey was 60.7% overall, with 76.4% of first-year students and 44.8% of

second-years completing it (Table 2). One first-year and four second-year teachers failed to administer the survey.

      Respondents were generally positive about the SALL components of the course. They felt that the stamp card was a good way for them to learn about e-space, with 80% agreeing or strongly agreeing. They found advising helpful, but were not as enthusiastic as they were about the stamp card system itself as only 70% of students agreed or strongly agreed. *English Cafe* was popular, with 78% of respondents reporting that they enjoyed going and 80% believing that it was good for their English.

Table 2. Survey Data

Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The stamp rally was a good way for us to learn about e-space.	34%	46%	15%	3%	1%
Advising was helpful to me.	34%	36%	21%	7%	2%
Going to *English Cafe* was good for my English.	38%	42%	18%	1%	1%
I enjoyed going to *English Cafe*.	32%	46%	17%	5%	1%

Advising

      All first-year students since 2012 have been required to attend one advising session in the spring semester. Records show a range from 21.8% to 27.6% of available sessions booked during spring semesters (Table 3). This booking rate, while seemingly low, is not necessarily problematic when considering the total number of slots available to accommodate student schedules. Records show that most of the morning sessions are not booked due to classes in session or an unwillingness to come in early for an advising appointment.

Table 3. Advising Booking Rates

Semester	Available sessions	Bookings	Booking rate	Voluntary bookings	Voluntary booking rate
2012 Spring	784	216	27.6%	52	24.1%
2012 Fall	784	142	18.1%	30	21.1%
2014 Fall	756	171	22.6%	27	15.8%
2015 Spring	840	183	21.8%	44	24.0%
2015 Fall	840	80	9.5%	7	8.8%

Fall 2012 saw an 18.1% booking rate with no stamp card running. Fall 2014 had a 22.6% booking rate with one advising session required of second-year students as part of the stamp card task. In fall 2015, advising bookings dropped to 9.5%. (Unfortunately, data for 2013 and spring 2014 was not culled from the scheduling software and was lost.) A slight decline in advising appointments in the fall semesters is not unusual as we generally see a wane in overall enthusiasm after the summer break. The precipitous drop to 9.5% in fall 2015 is, however, a concern. This could be attributed to several factors: 1) it was a busy semester with many events running and an extra class shared between the two main advisors, which reduced the number of prime advising slots available; 2) unlike fall 2014 where all second-year students had required sessions via the stamp cards, there were few compulsory sessions; 3) while the advising stamp served to familiarize students with the reservation process and gave them the opportunity to discuss their learning profiles, a single twenty-minute session may not have allowed students to see the value of advising or even how it is meant to help with their language learning; 4) the non-voluntary nature of the first advising experience may have contributed to the decline. That is, "the learner may make a great deal of effort…when a reward is present; however, when it is removed, it is likely that the learner will quickly cease to engage in the learning process," (Noels, 2013, p. 16). These factors may partially explain the low booking rate but it is an area requiring further attention and these numbers continue to be monitored.

Advising repeaters

Over the five semesters on record, 69.8% of the 792 students who have come to advising returned at least once. Most returnees have come twice (13.3%), three (13.6%), four (11.7%) or five (13.3%) times in total (Table 4).

Table 4. Advising Repeaters

Sessions	Students	%
1	241	30.4%
2	100	13.3%
3	102	13.6%
4	96	11.7%
5	111	13.3%
6	47	5.9%
7	49	6.2%
8	8	1.0%
9	27	3.4%
10	0	0.0%
11	11	1.4%
Total	792	

Although second-year students completed the stamp rally in fall 2014, advising sessions had been required of all first-year students since 2012. This meant that for these students the required advising session via the stamp card task was actually their *second*. This may have lead to an increased understanding of the purpose of advising and the increase in repeat sessions later in the semester and into spring 2015 giving more weight to the notion that a single, twenty-minute session is not enough to understand the benefits of advising.

English Cafe

The number of students the teacher and student facilitators spoke with during their *English Café* shifts is shown in Figure 2.
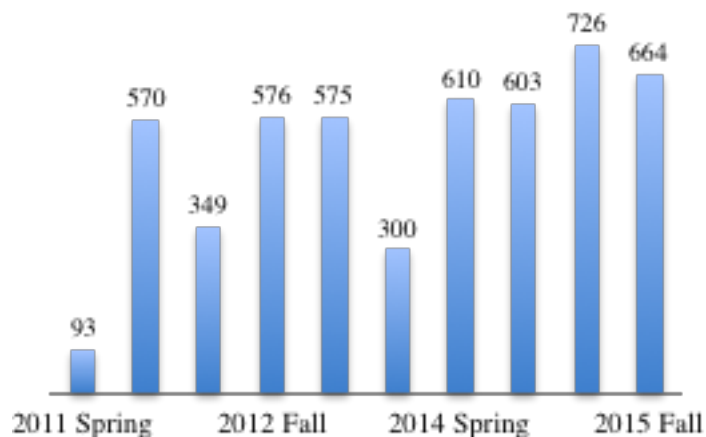
Figure 2. *English Cafe* Attendance 2011-2015

Staff reported speaking to 610 students in the spring 2014 semester, 603 in the fall, and 726 in spring 2015. All three semesters had stamp cards running, in which some 150 students were required to attend *English Cafe* three times each. Interestingly, these semester totals are not much higher than in years previous to the stamp card (570 in fall 2011, 576 in fall 2012, and 575 in spring 2013, for example). Requiring students to attend *English Cafe* sessions has only resulted in a moderate increase. This could be due to seating limitations, as only so many students can join at any one time. 664 students participated in fall 2015 with no stamp cards running. It seems that the stamp card has had a positive impact on voluntary *English Cafe* attendance, although this will need to be measured over many semesters. In addition, while it is likely that the inclusion of *English Cafe* in the stamp card contributed to an increase in numbers of first time attendees, it is difficult to determine whether it contributed to repeat voluntary visits beyond the required three, or if regular participants continued to attend as usual.

Activities and events

As for activities and events, data has not been maintained on the type of activities the students have engaged in for the stamps. Numbers in attendance at events were tracked beginning in 2015. This ranged from 8-30 participants amongst 24 lunchtime talks and special events. However, there is not enough data on how many students required stamps at any one event, nor on the type of events that proved most popular.

On-going Challenges

Teacher buy-in

As most of the core English classes in the first and second year are taught by part-time faculty, the challenge has been to clearly communicate to the teachers the need for integrating SALL content into the bigger curriculum picture. Toogood and Pemberton, in reference to a talk given by Charsup and Sombat (2006) state that, "One of the main hurdles [in integrating SALL into courses] was dealing with teachers who are unsupportive or ignorant of the concept of SALL" (2007, p. 185). This is compounded by the fact that most of the teachers have taught at this university for a number of years and are accustomed to a relatively high level of autonomy over course content. While communicating the need for more learner-centered components in their courses has been fairly straightforward, putting it into practice has been challenging, particularly since teachers were asked to adhere to a common syllabus. To illustrate, the P&F course has eight sections all taught by different teachers. Previously, there was a common course guideline but individual teachers decided on content, syllabi and textbooks. With the revision, textbooks were disallowed and teachers were required to have the same course description and outcomes to include the self-access components, and to then reserve a percentage of final grades to these components. This meant that in order to allow for more autonomy for the learners, teachers were being asked to give up some autonomy over their courses. Most teachers have been open to the changes while a few passively resist through non-compliance as is evident in the failure to submit the stamp cards and the low response rate to the survey.

Advice and Suggestions

While we are still in the process of working out the SALL components of the curriculum, the following are suggestions for those undertaking a similar endeavor.

1. Support the teachers in facilitating the self-access components in the form of offering professional development opportunities or access to relevant professional journals. If the teachers do not understand the pedagogy behind autonomy, how can we expect our students to?

2. Maintain contact. Since much of the responsibility falls on teachers to make sure students are on target; it is important that they understand the specific requirements and deadlines throughout the year

3. Get feedback from the teachers. What support might the teachers need in order to integrate self-access and independent learning more successfully with the course content?

4. Be patient. The process of information filtering down from the department to teachers to students requires several semesters to work out.

5. Transition takes time for both learners and teachers. Asking students to engage in different ways of learning, just as asking teachers to make changes in their teaching, will not happen overnight.

Conclusion

While much of this paper has focused on the framework for integrating SALL activities into the curriculum, it is important not to lose sight of why we do this. Just as students should not be focused on collecting stamps but rather engaging in and understanding the intrinsic value of an activity, our focus should not be on how many stamp cards were turned in or how many advising sessions were booked as a measure of success but rather how all of this contributes to language learning in more deliberate learner-directed ways and ultimately for students to become more autonomous learners.

Notes on the Contributors

Ann Mayeda is a lecturer and teacher educator in the Department of English Language and Culture at Konan Women's University. Her research interest focuses on learner development and issues surrounding autonomy as it applies to young learners and young adult learners. In addition to her teaching duties, she is on the learning advising team and oversees the management of e-space.

Dirk MacKenzie is a former lecturer and learning advisor in the Department of English Language and Culture at Konan Women's University and served as vice-president of the Japan Association for Self-Access Learning from 2011 to 2016. His research focused on student usage of e-space and writing fluency. He has recently returned to Canada to continue his academic career.

Brian Nuspliger is a lecturer and learning advisor at Konan Women's University. Since 2014

he has co-administered the activities of e-space. His research interests include motivation and the self-efficacy of teachers. He is also on the board of directors of the educational NPO e-dream-s.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Stamp Card Instructions

Stamp Card Rally
English Production & Fluency Ia
Spring 2015

e-space tour (1 stamp)
You will be given an e-space tour by a learning advisor during class. On the tour you will be introduced to the Stamp Card Rally and shown how make an advising appointment. You will get a stamp at the end of the tour. If you are absent for the tour, you can book an extra advising appointment and get an individual tour to get your stamp.

Learner profile (1 stamp)
Complete the "My English Profile" in your English Learning Passport and bring it to advising to get your stamp.

Advising (1 stamp)
Come to e-space for a 20-minute advising session and talk about your learner profile. The advisor will give you a stamp.

English Cafe (3 stamps)
Come to English Cafe and join a table for an English conversation. Ask an English Cafe staff member for a stamp. Come three times for three stamps.

Activities & Events (4 stamps)
Basically, anything you do in English in e-space can be considered an activity. Examples include:

- Reading a magazine
- Reading a book
- Chatting with friends
- Watching a DVD
- Playing a game
- Making sentences using Magnetic Poetry
- Listening to a CD
- Using an English website
- Watching Youtube
- Using an app
- Listening to a podcasts
- Using the smart board

After doing an activity, tell an advisor or e-space staff member what you did and ask them for a stamp.

Special events and lunchtime lectures will be announced over the semester. Please check e-space for posters or friend "Espace Kwu" on Facebook to get updates. You can get a stamp at the end of the event. Do four activities and/or events for four stamps.

Grading
At the end of the spring semester, give your stamp card to your P&F Ia teacher. Each stamp you get this semester will count 2% toward your P&F Ia grade, up to a total of 20%.

Appendix B

Learner Profile Sheet

My English Profile

(April 2015) Date: 2015/ /

1. My Overseas Study/Travel Experience (using English)

Country	When? How long?	Why? How much English

2. My English Ability

Skill	How good is your language ability? Excellent -------------|---------------|----------------|------------- Not so good
Listening	|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
Speaking	|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
Reading	|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
Writing	|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
Vocabulary	|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
Grammar	|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|

3. My English Learning History
Draw 2 lines to show your changing <u>confidence</u> and <u>motivation</u>.

Elementary School | Junior High School | Senior High School | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 University

4. My English Learning Goals

5. My Test Scores (ACE, TOEIC . . .)
年／月：スコア

ACE Placement	/ :	/ :	/ :	/ :	/ :
TOEIC	/ : L: R:	/ : L: R:	/ : L: R:	/ : L: R:	/ : L: R:
	/ :	/ :	/ :	/ :	/ :
	/ :	/ :	/ :	/ :	/ :
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/ :	/ :	/ :	/ :	/ :	
/ :	/ :	/ :	/ :	/ :	
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2   3