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Essential Advising to Underpin Effective Language Learning and Teaching

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Abstract

This paper is aimed at managers, teachers and advisors who are involved with language learner advising. It will first give a historic background to autonomy and advising (Benson & Voller, 1997; Crabbe, 1993; Holec, 1981), then discuss what advising means and what skill set is required for this. The paper will also look at how autonomy is linked to advising, strategies for effective language learning (Oxford, 1990), and self-regulation while using these strategies (Oxford, 2011; Ranalli, 2012; Rose 2012). It will then touch on more recent ideas around processes for helping students become more effective and more autonomous through advising (Mynard & Carson, 2012). Some practical approaches for advising (Kelly, 1996; Mozzon-McPherson, 2002 2007; Riley, 1997) will be referred to, as will the all-important differences between teaching and counselling approaches. Finally, the article will briefly discuss reflection as a useful professional development tool.

Keywords: autonomy, advising, autonomous learning, self-access, language learning, self-access centre, independent learning

Literature Review

Background to autonomy in language learning

Late 1960's Europe was a time of political turmoil and enhanced expectations in life, stimulated by post World War 2 idealism and individualisation, and by Europe's reconstruction (Benson, 2011). Rather than material well-being and consumerism being a measure of progress, quality of life and respect for the individual became the new benchmarks. As a response to increasing optimism, growth, self-direction and empowerment, the Council of Europe was formed in 1949. It is separate from the European Union (EEC), and cannot make binding laws – it is simply an advisory body made up of 47 member states comprising about 820 million people. Its aim is to promote co-operation and understanding in terms of standards, charters and conventions in the areas of legal standards, human rights, democratic development, the rule of law and cultural co-operation. The Council employed Henri Holec, a man often credited with being the first person to use the phrase 'learner autonomy', to initiate a Modern Languages Project which offered adults lifelong learning opportunities, including self-directed learning. Individual freedom was fostered, so workers acquired the enabling skills and abilities for making informed and responsible decisions about their own lives and learning. Study 'after normal working hours' was required, so there was

an increasing interest in, need for, and support of self-access study, which led to a growth in research about autonomy, the autonomous learner and advising. Thus the Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues (CRAPEL - Center for Research and Applications in Language Teaching Centre for Research and Applications in Language Teaching) was established in 1971. Holec (1981) famously stated that autonomy is “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (p. 3), and he later elaborated (Benson, 2001) that being autonomous is “to have and to hold responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning” (p. 48), in terms of determining the objectives, defining the contents and progressions, selecting the methods and techniques to use, monitoring the acquisition process, and evaluating that acquisition. This implies that becoming an autonomous learner involves active learner engagement, so Holec’s project led to the establishment of a self-access resource centre and the idea of learner training to maximise its benefits. This was an inspiration for other centres to be developed in many other parts of the world including the UK (Sheerin, 1989), Hong Kong (Gardner & Miller, 1999), and indeed in New Zealand, by the centres in the two institutions discussed later in this paper which were also established in the late 1990s and have used these publications mentioned above as valuable resources.

Researchers following on from Holec’s seminal works focused on the transition of the locus of control (i.e. the extent to which individuals believe they can control events affecting them) from the teacher to the learner, and then moved their attention on how to advise learners. This involved identifying and classifying a list of strategies, both direct and indirect (Cohen, 1998; Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, Todesco, 1978; Rubin, 1975; Rubin, 1981; Stern, 1975;), which were later differentiated as cognitive and metacognitive (O’Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzaneres, Kupper, & Russo, 1985). The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire was developed (Oxford, 1990), so students could assess their strategy use and then ‘fill the gaps’ with learned strategies and skills to become better autonomous learners. Research then moved from clarifying definitions to investigating the critical features involved (Cohen & Macaro, 2007; Macaro, 2006). Others considered self-regulation rather than simply strategies (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003) i.e., they moved from thinking about a set of skills to thinking about self-selection of those skills. As Griffiths (2007) states “language learning strategies will be taken to mean ‘activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning’” (p. 91), and she also draws a connection between strategy use and proficiency. Oxford (2011) proposed a revised model of strategy use which also embraces self-regulation, in her Strategic Self-regulation model (S²R), and this concept of self-regulation has been gaining ground more recently (Ranalli, 2012).

In 1993 Crabbe was writing about autonomy in the classroom situation as desirable for three main reasons: ideological (the right to be free to exercise one's own choice), psychological (people learn better when they are in charge of their own learning) and economic (it is too resource-consuming to always teach to individual needs in the classroom). Benson and Voller (1997) later collated five definitions of autonomy:

1. for *situations* in which learners study entirely on their own
2. for a *set of skills* which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning
3. for an *inborn capacity* which is suppressed by institutional education
4. for the exercise of *learners' responsibility* for their own learning
5. for the *learners' rights* to determine the direction of their own learning

(pp. 1-2)

Hobbs and Dofs (2011) used these as the basis of showing that tertiary institutes can foster autonomy by using self-access centres (SACs) and/or developing classroom-based autonomous learning programmes:

If institutions choose to encourage autonomous learning they can in fact adhere to all the above definitions by setting up self-access centres and/or incorporating self-study time into the curriculum. In so doing they can: (1) provide for self-study situations, (2) teach transferable skills for independent studies, (3) actively encourage learners to use their innate aptitude to learn, (4) create opportunities for learners to take accountability for their own learning and, (5) let learners take control of their own learning as much as possible (pp. 2-3).

Recently there have been two more reasons put forward for autonomy which lend broader support and rationale for learning centres around the world. These are, firstly, the pedagogical aspect, from Holec (2009) "As past experience has amply shown, the autonomous learner/self-directed learning pedagogical option provides more satisfactory answers to language learning challenges than independent learners/co-directed language teaching" (p. 44) and secondly, the social aspect, from Benson (2011) who claims that autonomy makes people more responsible and critical members of communities. In fact the place of learning centres and associated social spaces and places for language learners is a topic of much interest currently (Murray, 2014).

Hornby and Dofs (2006) state that "if we use autonomous learning environments to augment (or even replace) class learning in our schools, then we have a responsibility to support learners to use those environments to enhance their learning". Simply providing a self-access centre does not necessarily lead to autonomous learning (Benson, 2011) – it is the approach applied in the centre

that leads to the development of autonomous learning and independence. Grabe (2014) discussed the need for people with ability to pass on the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of language learning – and this is where workers in Independent Learning Centres (ILCs) can effectively foster autonomous learning.

Most institutions have a learning centre where academic learning and/or content experts (variously called advisors, knowers, consultants, academic development lecturers, motivators, clarifiers, etc.) meet with learners to discuss and enhance their learning, within the framework of advising (once again, variously referred to as counsellors, facilitators, helpers, mentors, tutors etc.). While these all appear to be synonyms for a similar role, the disciplines they come from and the associations around them vary considerably, which is why it might be difficult to establish a definitive word that all parties agree to use.

The nature of advising

Kelly (1996) advanced the notion of macro-skills and micro-skills for advising in language learning, both of which use a different discourse combining a more direct approach with an indirect one. She describes a learning conversation as “a form of therapeutic dialogue that enables an individual to manage a problem” (p. 94). This can be transformational and according to Mozzon-McPherson (2012) “... although learner-training programmes may directly or indirectly lead to this transformation, counselling provides the framework to develop new ways of interacting with learners” (p. 52). While learner advising is not ‘counselling therapy’, there are parallels that can usefully be drawn between the disciplines of personal counselling and language advising. Indeed, Ciekanski (2007) explored how advising sessions create and maintain educational relationships which can help foster student autonomy. This then encourages and promotes a learner-led culture. She suggested that advisors assume multiple pedagogical roles when assisting learners, ranging from advising, tutoring, teaching, and being a companion, to accompanying them on their journey. She claims that advisors switch between these roles frequently with the same learner and as part of their practice, advisors also use five basic emotional strategies: (1) negotiation about what information is needed, (2) preservation and creation of knowledge, (3) professional and personal exchange, (4) engagement and, (5) recognition of individual styles for both parties. These require ‘reciprocity’ i.e., mutual actions depend on what each interlocutor does for the sake of learning, and this in turn needs ‘dialogue’ and ‘donation’. This aspect of advising was later extended to a consideration of four main areas - advisors, expertise, use of language and the communicative process (Gremmo, 2009).

Whatever name is given to the role of advisor, the central goal is to foster autonomy and support for the learner in the best way possible to enable them to reach their own goals and ‘self’ control. An advisor’s self-assessment tool (Aoki, 2012) lists 14 ‘can do’ statements under 3 broad headings: abilities, knowledge and attitudes, and this is reported to be particularly helpful for teachers planning to be advisors as they map out their own professional development.

Differences between advising and teaching

The nature of the learner-advisor interaction is quite different from the learner-teacher interaction (Riley, 1997). He lists the main differences between teaching and counselling as planning, sourcing learning materials, time management, and assessments (p. 122), all of which relate to responsibility for learning i.e., teachers are more in control of students’ learning than advisors are. The two roles may tend to overlap as many teachers nowadays have moved away from total learner control, as e-learning increases and as language programmes often include outcomes of ‘autonomy’ in their descriptors. While the advising role can be described as a dynamic process of consultation (Voller, 1998), skills are also important (Mozzon-McPherson, 2001): “Whilst many good teachers may recognise themselves in using some of the macro skills (guiding, modelling, giving feedback, supporting, evaluating, etc.), it is the second set of skills (attending, restating, paraphrasing, questioning, confronting, reflecting feelings, empathising) which contributes to distinguishing advising from teaching and associates it with counselling therapy.” (p. 12), and these have a unique discourse.

The discourse of advising

Pemberton, Toogood, Ho and Lamb (2001) also researched advising and devised a list of 26 advising discourse strategies divided into 4 major features: asking questions, clarifying, advising and motivating. Kelly’s idea of a therapeutic dialogue to empower learners was furthered by Morrison & Navarro (2012) who suggested that an extra macro skill should be added – that of clarification, in terms of a negotiation of meaning between learner and advisor. They also noted that guiding was the most problematic macro skill for advisors because it was hard to maintain a ‘correct’ balance between advising and prescribing. Mynard (2011) pointed out that, in accordance with both constructivism and sociocultural theory, social interaction *and* conversation are both required for learning to take place: “dialogue in an advising session facilitates the collaborative construction of knowledge through social negotiation of ideas in an authentic context” (p. 32). This centrality of dialogue to advising is progressed by Mynard’s (2012) ‘tool model’ (p. 35) in which dialogue is defined as a psychological tool based in sociocultural theory such that the learner is led

to uncover their self through three stages – mediation, negotiation and transformation. The ‘tools’ can be described as having three parts: cognitive (for the learner) e.g., plans, journals, guides etc.; theoretical (for the advisor) e.g., theory and knowledge etc.; and practical (for the advising sessions) e.g., space, and the organisation required for the sessions. The tools are also situated within a specific context, underpinning the advising encounter, and can be either (1) personal i.e., the learner’s view of advising, beliefs (e.g. attribution theory), motivation, and both cognitive and affective factors; (2) physical, i.e., the space available to have the session (in real time and place); or (3) contextual i.e., set within the history and systems of the discipline, and the academic development/learning support services at institutions.

Why practise advising?

There are several positive impacts of advising. Mozzon-McPherson (2012) shows that cognitive and meta-cognitive learning behaviour is associated with facets of autonomous learning development, while Mynard and Carson (2012) point out the importance of advisors who can encourage development of inner dialogue, and guide learners to make deeper connections: “Inner dialogue is very important ... The learner is thinking through how he or she is learning. The learning advisor is processing this and planning how to best guide the learner to make deeper connections” (p. 33). Moreover, through advising, learners can become aware of the benefits of taking more control over their learning (Dofs, 2008; Hobbs & Jones-Perry, 2007). Mynard (2011) notes that just the initial step of arranging advising visits puts the locus of control firmly with the students:

A learning advisor tends to work outside the classroom and outside class time (often in a self-access centre) and is available to work with individual learners on their needs ... (and should) be voluntary. This means that the learners take the responsibility for making the decisions, including the decision about seeking help in the first place (p. 2).

As mentioned above, there is a social aspect to autonomy and the notion that the capacity for learned self-control can be of great benefit to society in general (Benson, 2011; Murray, 2014). Indeed, this is a pertinent topic currently in the media in New Zealand. Woulfe (2014) describes the importance of self-control to our young folk. She discusses development psychologist Professor Laurence Steinberg’s book *Age of Opportunity* in which she says he

highlights an emerging wave of brain science that is revealing adolescence to be what he calls a second ‘window of opportunity’ ... adolescence is a second

make or break period of neuroplasticity (and) is ‘our last best chance to make a difference’... Steinberg thinks of plasticity as ‘the process through which the outside world gets inside us and changes us’. To him the plasticity peak in adolescence presents a second chance to influence how the brain – that is, the person – turns out as an adult (p. 14-16).

This chance is supported by educational establishments, for example through learning advisors and other student support services at universities, polytechnics and private training enterprises (PTEs) in New Zealand. This is particularly so during the student’s first year of study when effective study habits and study skills are being developed and formed, which should set them in good stead for successful completion of their courses. The above institutes enrol many adolescents (teenagers) aged 17 and above and there is a strong focus on success and retention of students. The benefits of this is indirectly also suggested by Woulfe “The capacity for self-regulation is probably the single most important contributor to achievement, mental health and social success. This makes developing self-regulation the central task of adolescence and the goal that we should be pursuing” (p. 18).

In some respects, the current political, financial, educational and technological climates are dictating increased technology-enhanced learning, and this could well necessitate a growth in learner awareness of autonomy and autonomous learning. However, as Benson (2011) points out, this depends on the technology chosen and how it is being used. There will most likely be a greater need for well-qualified, effective advisors who can apply their transformational expertise rather than simply transactional expertise to learner development, in both on-line and face-to-face learning contexts. In other words, there may be an increasing requirement for advisors who can advise and support learners make the changes they want to their learning behaviour from a deeper level within, rather than simply making surface level changes, or a simple imparting of knowledge. This could also involve intrinsic learning factors taking precedence over extrinsic motivators. While the virtual advisor role with distance learners in America has been discussed for some time (Steele, 2005), in New Zealand, online advising is still an emerging scenario with increased investigations into the use of various platforms e.g., Blackboard Collaborate, Google Drive, Moodle and Skype. Also, as in the United States (Nutt, 2003), there is an increasing imperative of showing that advising has the added benefit of increasing success and retention rates, in the new e-learning era.

There are also recent indications that face-to-face rather than all online advising should be encouraged in learning, especially with regards to speaking development. In a recent article, Dixon (2014), interviews the British scientist and writer Greenfield, who talks about “the new reality in a

world where social media is, particularly for the so-called Digital Natives, making face-to-face interaction uncomfortable and online interaction preferable ... that non-oral communication such as text messaging provided the same emotional support to people as not having bothered to speak to anyone at all” (p. 17). Dixon mentions that similar recent research in New Zealand “has shown primary schools around the country are witnessing a decline in the spoken-language abilities of new entrants. Experts suspect this could be the result of children using gadgets too often and parents not talking to them enough” (p. 17). Even if, as pointed out in the article, the notion that online communication affects young people’s socialising ability and empathetic capacity in one-on-one conversations has not yet been empirically established, it is a trend that needs to be looked at more, as this might present a growing challenge for advisors. It is also a worrying aspect, particularly for language learners, as many institutions are moving towards more flipped classroom delivery methods. These typically have more online and virtual educational media, thereby reducing class contact hours and opportunities for face-to-face contact, and its resultant dialogic negotiation, with both teachers and peers.

Therefore it can be seen that advising is an important learning tool to help students become autonomous learners, as they become more cognitively and meta-cognitively aware of the learning process in general, their own learning in particular, thus enabling a deeper level of learning and self-control over their learning in an increasingly digitally-enhanced environment.

Examples of Advising at Two New Zealand Institutions

There are various and flexible contexts where advising takes place, depending on many variables concerning the learner, the advisor, the physical situation, and the tools available for use in that situation, so there is an equally wide array of forms of advising in different institutions. The following two examples of current practices illustrate the range of advising situations, methods and practical activities even within two very similar institutions which have comparable teaching and learning environments.

During the first semester of 2014, the Unitec Department of Language Studies opened their Language Learning Centre (LLC) to English Language Partners (ELP), a teaching organisation working primarily with refugees and migrants studying at low levels of English. The LLC is a well-established and very well-resourced Self-Access Centre for language users and learners whenever the Library is open (i.e., from, 8am-9pm Monday-Thursday, 8am-6pm Friday and 8am-4.30pm on weekends). Resources include study skills information and autonomy sheets as well as class materials and a wide range of self-access activities for further study, grouped according to level, language skill, topic and subject. To support ELP, who mainly offer free or subsidised classes, an

ELP teacher and her class has been using the LLC for free, nominally for 2 hours per week. Most of the learners are not used to (Western) academic study environments and may not yet have acquired the requisite academic literacy skills for further study in New Zealand. Danaher (2014) suggests:

It is recommended that self-regulated learning skills be explicitly taught, using the embedded phases of forethought, performance and reflection. This model is easily adaptable to the context of adult refugees and migrants, whose lack of these skills compromises their success in learning. Teachers should support learners by scaffolding tasks carefully, and establishing a tight-knit class community, with a particularly strong teacher presence in initial stages. Adult refugees and migrants are a notably high-need group, so intensive teacher support should be planned for (p. 7).

To accommodate these (and other) students, the LLC advising sessions are scaffolded and supported in several ways. Firstly, the teacher focuses learners' attention on resources that support the current focus of study – e.g., on Friday of Week 8 (see Appendix 1), students were studying Listening and the NZ Education system, so they are guided by the 8 activities outlined on the left hand side of the schedule. They are given ideas to discuss with a librarian about education in NZ, thereby also practising speaking and listening). They are then encouraged to move out from the Centre into the Language Studies part of the campus which runs English courses, to enquire about courses, once again to practise more real-world authentic speaking and listening. Each LLC session also has a computing component, as e-learning is generally becoming increasingly important, as indeed is autonomous learning. The latter was addressed in Week 8 by directing learners to 'Ways to Learn' resources in the LLC. The activities on the advising/work sheet also encourage learners to study more English and become familiar with a wider educational environment. More detailed and focused Listening tasks are specified by the 'Readers/Talking books' (+CDs) box, which can have a dual purpose. The freer and/or more autonomous component comes under 'Listening' and 'YOUR choice', where learners are encouraged to seek out appropriate resources for themselves. As with all the tasks on this sheet, learners are asked to self-assess and evaluate their own learning, and to think about what they may want to do next time – all key aspects to becoming a successful autonomous learner (Little, 2003).

The second example is from Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT) where all English language learning classes are scheduled for weekly self-study sessions in the Language Self-Access Centre (LSAC). Students are encouraged to take more responsibility over their own learning through autonomous language learning guides, (Dofs, 2011). These study guides aim to

help foster autonomous language learning both in- and out-side the classroom, through learning facilitator-supported self-study time in the LSAC, in combination with teacher-led autonomous learning awareness activities in the classroom. The guides are published at three levels; (1) Pre-Intermediate (A2 in the European Language Portfolio), (2) Intermediate (B2) and (3) Upper-Intermediate (C1). Each level consists of separate guides, one for the student and one for the teacher. They include thought provoking quotes, learning advice, and teacher-led exercises (for self-knowledge, motivation, style and strategies), as well as suggestions for suitable resources to use during self-study time in the LSAC e.g., books adjusted for self-study, in-house study packs, audio materials, equipment for listening and speaking, and language computer programs. These resources and information about strategies and useful self-study activities aim to encourage students to take greater ownership of their own learning.

In the first two weeks of a term/semester, teachers start encouraging autonomous learning by assisting students as they undertake self and study awareness activities (i.e., metacognitive skills), where they consider their own needs analysis, and then use a planning sheet to help organise their self-studies. These remain in the LSAC to enable further interaction between the teacher, the Learning Facilitator (LF) and the students. The teachers and LFs also involve all students in a thorough introduction to working in the centre with the guides, which includes familiarisation with the English language resources and materials, computer programs, and equipment held in the LSAC.

In the following weeks, students and teachers continuously work through the exercises in the guides relating to style, motivation and strategies, as well as using additional resources to support on-going encouragement of autonomous learning in the classroom. Thereafter the advising is undertaken during weekly self-study sessions in the LSAC, by the LFs, who encourage and support students without taking over too much. The skill of maintaining an appropriate balance between support and encouragement on the one hand, and being overly directive on the other, is continually monitored and discussed at PD sessions, in order to develop and maintain awareness about the advising role.

Professionalism

The development of advising as a discipline led to discussions about the need for professional development (Mozzon-McPherson & Vismans, 2001) and indeed, the recognition of the new and (then) emerging profession of learner advising. Others advocate for advising to be recognised as a profession in its own right (Morrison & Navarro, 2012). For this to happen, advising needs to have high visibility within the institution, and there needs to be specific professional

development and training offered. Mynard & Carson's (2012, p. 5) framework shows advising in language learning professions as the 'third space', the overlap between humanistic counselling on one side and language teaching on the other. Influences from discourses and practices from other fields are also exerted on this third space, from other areas such as counselling and social practice (e.g., being person-centred and not directive), business, and careers (in terms of personality styles). As advising in language learning is still emerging and still defining itself, this can be problematic as the practice, terminologies and methodologies can change within different contexts.

Other entities have made an invaluable impact in raising the profile of advising as a profession – Kanda University and the *Studies in Self-Access Learning (SiSAL) Journal*, the Independent Learning Association (ILA) with its conferences and proceedings publications, IATEFL Learner Autonomy Special Interest Group and its associated publications, and the Research Network Learner Autonomy (ReNLA) an arm of the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA).

Universities themselves are also at the forefront of thinking about advising as a profession and considering relevant guidelines. In the June 2014 monthly newsletter of the Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association (ANZSSA), there was discussion about the ongoing development of a draft set of "Guidelines for Effective Practice in Orientation and Transition and Quality Standards for Student Advisors" which covers among other topics: the definition of advising; expectations around core competencies, key knowledge and skills and minimum qualifications; supervision and professional development and training standards that should be expected of employers; the writing of job descriptions and use of titles; and appropriate working spaces and conditions. The ANZSSA definition of advising is similar to that of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), i.e., it also includes holistic welfare services such as well-being, financial, housing, student advocacy and disability support. However, ANZSSA still views the role as providing a "transformational function as distinct to a transactional function", i.e., advice which "typically involves a greater depth in the relationship between the staff member and the student. The issues may be complex, and require on-going advice and support over a period of time."

Professional Development and Reflection

For many years CRAPEL has been involved in advisor research and training, and their work and publications have informed many advisors working and researching today. Besides 'in house' observations and training within tertiary institutes, advisors working within the profession can undertake external training for language learner advising e.g., at the University of Hull (2011). Of

course this training never ends – as Gardner & Miller (1999) state “counselling is not a static technique that can be learned and then applied. Staff development in counselling needs to be an ongoing process” (p. 189). A wider, more generic advising course at Kansas State University (2014) is another means to establish a core body of knowledge, which has the added benefit of helping to further establish the discipline’s professional credentials.

Reflection is already an important part of professional practice and informal PD for many counselling and teaching professions. Self-reflection or peer evaluation can also be very useful for learning advisors. This could be done through analysing and reflecting on the ‘hard data’ of audio and video recordings of sessions or on the ‘soft data’ of counselling skills. The reflection approach currently being used at CPIT is done on two levels, ‘in action’ and ‘on action’ (Westberg & Jason, 2001). In action requires reflection when involved with the learner in action; when eliciting information, observing, questioning and assessing the assistance the students would benefit from, and when adjusting the level of assistance to the situation continuously. After the session, there is reflection on action; i.e., the advisor remains reflective and writes down thoughts on the situation, such as surprises, troubling events, or unanswered questions. Reflecting in this way enables continuous learning from experience, and provides high quality support to students.

Audio visual recordings of sessions can offer further support when re-viewed by the learner and/or advisor, and can also be used to enable both parties to self-repair and self-reflect if necessary. Counselling expertise required during the advising sessions are generally active listening skills, where the tone of voice is used to elicit a response, pauses give time to reflect, learners may be asked to clarify, and listeners may rephrase and feedback what has been said. If these strategies are used appropriately, advisors can become highly skilled mediators – exemplars of the ‘in-between-ness’ of learning advisors, and the conversation can become a catalyst of change.

Kato (2012) has proposed a “Wheel of Learning Advising” (p. 82) to help advisors self-assess their changes in practice over several sessions using intentional reflective dialogue. The sectors suggested are Student talk, Advisor talk, Questioning skills, Active listening skills, Learner satisfaction, and Student progress in autonomous learning. Malthus (2012) has since developed a tool for advisor reflection, which is currently being tested by her colleagues at Unitech, whereby advisors reflect on 1-1 learning development sessions, using a checklist covering the three stages of the session – Before (Introductory), During, and After. This is an area also being pursued in Australia where researchers (Berry et al., 2012) have proposed a theoretical framework, which acts like a 360 degree review. It is composed of a set of triangulated considerations appropriate to academic language and learning centres, using three main sources of input data i.e., peer observations, self-reflection and student questionnaires.

Conclusion

It is widely accepted that students today need to become more autonomous in this ever changing and challenging world, so that they may not only benefit from becoming more involved in their own learning but they will also eventually be able to meet the expectations in the work force, as well as become better equipped for actively controlling their own lives and engaging with and participating in their societies. The educational systems in different countries mean that some students rely heavily on external motivators, such as the teachers or advisors. This is making advising a fine-tuned balancing act between the need for ‘pushing them’ on the one hand, and ‘pulling ourselves back’ on the other i.e., the necessity of enabling students to be in control.

Language advising is not yet widely recognised as an occupation with its own qualification and pre-set skills, and today’s practising advisors have a rather broad range of backgrounds and skills that may be employed in advising situations. Relatively recently, with access to new technology, the needed skill-set has been extended to also include synchronous as well as asynchronous advising on-line, as students today often negotiate their way through diverse spaces e.g., at home, at institutions, and in public places, to create their own preferred places of study. This poses other interesting challenges to the already diversified advising occupation: advisors need to be technologically literate and they need to make use of their phatic and imaginative skills at a distance, as they might not even meet some of the students live. Students, on the other hand, have to clarify what they mean to the advisor and to themselves, and they may also need to negotiate their understanding of the advice given, without being able to use and interpret visual body language clues, which might make it even more challenging.

Time will show what environment future advisors find themselves in. If we judge from previous experience, they will probably skilfully negotiate their way through their future advising situations, as adept and interactive as ever.

Notes on the contributors

Moira Hobbs has worked within the educational field for many years, initially as a pre-school educator, then as a tertiary ESOL teacher. For the past fourteen years, her role has involved developing and managing a Language Learning Self-Access Centre for mainstream language students, and researching various aspects of language learning, at Unitec in Auckland, New Zealand. Her research interests are around self-access and self-access centres, autonomy, and language learner advising.

Kerstin Dofs manages a Language Self Access Centre (LSAC) at Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT) where she has worked for thirteen years. She was previously an English language teacher in Sweden and New Zealand and has a Master of Arts in Language Learning and Technology through the University of Hull, UK. She is now undertaking PhD studies in the area of adjustment challenges faced by non-English speaking background (NESB) students in mainstream (i.e. non-language) courses.

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Appendix 1. Unitec Day (Friday, Week 8)

Name	Partner(s)			Date:	
Place : Library and Language Learning Centre	Activity What I did	Level	This helped me to learn.....	I enjoyed 5= GREAT 4,3,2 1= Not at all	Next Unitec Day I will -Do it again...Why? -Do something different... Why?
Library (9.30 – 10) Ask librarian for websites and /or books or magazines about NZ education and schools. Find the book, magazine or go on-line					
LLC and Library (10 – 2.15) 'Ways to Learn' information ... Find these laminated pages. Choose 2-3 that have useful ideas you want to try. Write them down or photocopy the pages	Learning Information Page I read:				
Listening Practice I did this week: Name of book or resource:					
Readers/Talking books Practise listening, reading, pronunciation, vocabulary & grammar					
YOUR choice Listening, reading , speaking, watching DVD, study vocabulary, grammar pronunciation ...					
Computer Room Log into a computer. Find an English Learning website and do some exercises	Website URL:				
Other Unitec places I went to ... Find Building 170 and the Department of Language studies. Find the reception office. Ask some questions about English courses that they offer. Ask for a brochure.					

The best activity I did today was _____ **because** _____

Next time I want to... _____