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Learning Advisor Transformation: A Collaborative and Reflective Collage

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Abstract

Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) and Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (AYBU) are collaborating on a learning advisory education program consisting of the modules of *Getting Started*, *Going Deeper*, *Becoming Aware* and *Transformation*. This training has been made possible with support from the 3934 BAP (Scientific Research Fund) at AYBU. The first module was taken by the participants face-to-face at KUIS and the second was completed with live online lectures or recorded sessions, set readings, practice tasks and online forum discussions. The aim of this document is to provide an account of the transformation process of instructors of English. The authors have focused on reviewing and reflecting on their recorded advising sessions, tools for advising, intentional reflective dialogue (IRD), dealing with emotions, giving positive feedback and researching advising in Module 2.

Keywords: Reflective dialogue, advising, reflections, transformations

Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) and Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (AYBU) have collaborated on a learning advisory education program provided by the SALC (Self-Access Learning Center) and RILAE (Research Institute of Learner Autonomy Education; see www.rilae.org). Members of AYBU School of Foreign Languages (SFL) Learning Advisory Program (LAP) (see [http://ybu.edu.tr/yabancidiller/custom_page-477-ogrenme-danismanligi-programi-\(lap\).html](http://ybu.edu.tr/yabancidiller/custom_page-477-ogrenme-danismanligi-programi-(lap).html)) have been attending this advisor education through face-to-face and online courses. This document is to provide an account of the transformation process of instructors of English into learning advisors. The KUIS SALC RILAE Advisor Education Program is conducted by Yasushi Iida, Dr. Jo Mynard, Satoko Kato and Yuko Momata. Program participants from AYBU SFL LAP team are Mümin Şen, Dr. Hatice Karaaslan, Gökçe Arslan, Müge Akgedik Can, Stephanie Lea Howard, Abdülkadir Güllü, Gamze Güven Yalçın, Ebru Sinar Okutucu and Tarık Uzun.

The program consists of four modules: *Getting Started*, *Going Deeper*, *Becoming Aware* and *Transformation*. The first module was taken by the participants face-to-face at KUIS and the second has also been completed with online or recorded live lessons, set readings, practice tasks for participants to try out and online forum discussions. The

participants have focused on reviewing and reflecting on their recorded advising sessions, tools for advising, intentional reflective dialogue, dealing with emotions, giving positive feedback and researching advising in Course 2. Trainees' works and reflections on various aspects of the program will be presented in this document. Each piece in this document is a different voice each time. This work was supported by the Scientific Research Fund (BAP) at Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Turkey, as part of Project 3934.

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kuis sale rila aybu sfl lap

“Advisor Education”

Module 1 ~~completed~~
Module 2 ~~completed~~
Module 3 loading...
Module 4 coming soon...

KUIS SALC RILAE & AYBU SFL LAP Advisor Education

Initial Reflections of Prospective Learning Advisors

INTRODUCTION

Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) and Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (AYBU) have collaborated on a learning advisory education program provided by the SALC (Self-Access Learning Center) and RILAE (Research Institute of Learner Autonomy Education; see www.rilae.org). Members of AYBU School of Foreign Languages (SFL) Learning Advisory Program (LAP) (see [http://ybu.edu.tr/yabancidiller/custom_page-477-ogrenme-danismanligi-programi-\(lap\).html](http://ybu.edu.tr/yabancidiller/custom_page-477-ogrenme-danismanligi-programi-(lap).html)) have been attending this advisor education through face-to-face and online courses. This document is to provide an account of the transformation process of instructors of English into learning advisors.

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By Yunus Emre (1238-1320) a Turkish poet and Sufi who greatly influenced Anatolian culture.

Motivation and feelings were so connected to each other that I can say that without feelings it was nearly impossible to motivate advisees. When talking about failures and success stories their eyes, tone of voice and facial expressions changed. Negative and positive feelings directly affected their self-confidence and thus motivation to pursue their dreams or not. We as advisors can always find true success stories in every individual and help them reshape their own beliefs about themselves. This process requires advisees to go deeper into their universe and can be achieved by “what if?” questions and metaphors, which were truly amazing since when asked, the advisees looks and eye movement showed that they were struggling and really going deeper into their universe.

A word cloud shaped like a brain, containing terms related to learning and cognitive processes. The words are arranged in a way that suggests the flow of information and thought. Key terms include: MOTIVATION, DISCOVER, SUMMARIZING, SETTING GOALS, PARAPHRASING, RESTATING, MIRRORING, EPIPHANY, AUTONOMOUS LEARNERS, POWERFUL QUESTION, REAL DIALOGUE, SELF-DEVELOPMENT, PREJUDICES AND MISCONCEPTIONS, and RAPPORT. The words are in various sizes and colors, with some appearing more frequently than others.

The advisee and I shared our experiences about how there might be **miscommunication** with the others when we don't **listen to those with our body, mind and soul**. When you are really into the conversation, when it is a **REAL dialogue**, the advisee feels it, **opens herself up** and then the flow brings **the key questions to unlock the case**. We challenged ourselves to try using **metaview** as a strategy there as the big picture can sometimes be different from our own perspectives. We live in a country where there are some **prejudices and misconceptions**. It is not easy for a Turkish engineering student to be interested in drawing more than anything else and to **confess** this as this will be regarded as a **weakness, laziness and this may cause trouble with the family**. And unfortunately, this may be the reason he **fails** at preparatory school but it won't be easy to **discover**. All in all, **sharing experiences and opinions** is one of the **best ways to learn** from each other. **"Individually we are one drop, but TOGETHER, we are an ocean."**

"What did I like about my first session? It is not easy for me to analyze the success of the session as it was the first time for me having an advising session. I believe I will develop more insight about the strengths and things to be improved when I gain experience in advising. However, thinking of my purposes before the session, my observation is that the session had a proper structure. In other words, steps followed each other smoothly and logically. Listening to the session, I realized that, mostly, the strategies I used sounded natural to me. Last but not least, there was a positive atmosphere during the session. Overall, for the first experience, I am somewhat satisfied with the session. What would I do differently? I would have let the advisee talk and reflect more. Plus, I would focus more on what the advisee says rather than checking the steps of the session and the strategies I use."

[illegible]

PICTURES AS METAPHORIC TOOLS: BRING YOUR MESSAGE TO THE SESSION

Having thought about their possible uses and had experience using some of them (time management tool, my study log), I am quite aware of the advantages of tools, especially with respect to creating a basis for dialogue and allowing easier and perhaps richer expression of ideas and feelings. Therefore, now I tend to favor the less structured but more artistic ones, like the vision board or metaphors that help to elicit linking and analogy. I previously thought about using My Study Log and even designed it in a colorful way and shared with my students; but again, as it was delivered in the form of an imposition, it did not return the reaction or response I expected. Far from taking it as a reference tool to check up on their progress or have a rough estimate of the time they spend studying listening and reading, they perceived it as another assignment that was compulsory, not to my surprise. I hope my assumptions will leave me alone some time.

So I was lucky enough to test my Plan B, which was the metaphor tool I thought of deriving from my students' portfolio speaking task, using pictures that tell a story or message and talking about the message/story behind for about two minutes. The plan would be leading them into a discussion on language learning and metaphors. And boy you wouldn't believe one of the students just made my day with his "as if reading my mind" response. I am sharing his picture/metaphor and audio file of his presentation here. Please go ahead and listen first to see how incredibly he did all that linking and how the door to self-awareness and deeper reflection was just beginning to open before our eyes. Describing everything in detail and in relation to the great picture he had brought to the session, he helped all the students visualize the situation. It was much better than a "why didn't you study hard enough" speech. It all came out in the form of natural confession. (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjloBXVemPw&feature=youtu.be>)

So when you let things get loose, the advisee may just let you in, invite you to his inner world, sharing his concerns, fears or plans. And this metaphoric tool was excellent in that respect. I love it!

Below you will find some more from my students' pictures with messages collection!

"Each tool serves a purpose(s) and I think each and every of them is applicable for a certain area. Choosing the best(s) was like choosing what to wear while standing still in front of your wardrobe;) Because it is not possible, in my case, to talk about all of them, I picked one cognitive, one theoretical and one practical that I like best. The cognitive tool I find useful is Viewpoint Switching Sheet. This tool helps the learner look at a situation from different point of views. Sometimes when we go too deep into our problems, we miss the big picture and everything seems insoluble. Therefore, it may really help to dive into someone's mind, especially someone we love or admire, and see what she might say about the situation.

I think Learning Diary is a great practical tool as it focuses on organization and self-management. Sometimes, students may not be aware of their personal studies and whether they are sufficient or effective for themselves. Seeing what they have accomplished weekly and planning the other week may help them in terms of self-awareness, self-management and self-confidence. As for the theoretical tools, affective strategies tips may be highly effective for learners to overcome their motivation and anxiety related issues."

- **Wheel of language learning:** The most important thing is how it leads to deep understanding and evaluation. Generally, learners are so focused on themselves or the bigger goal that they are unable to see the short-term achievements, their feelings, level of motivation to accomplish the tasks and more significantly, their strategies to find their way. Therefore, WLL is the best method to shake the advisee up and understand what is going on.
- **Things I want to achieve:** This tool is fantastic as it lets the advisee imagine. Imagination and setting goals are the initial steps to act so when people are asked to write down about what they would like to achieve in life, they need to stop whatever they have been doing and listen to their inner voice, which will alter their mindset positively. Especially, I'm impressed by the order: health, career, physical environment, money, family, relationship, self-development and finally language learning. It is similar to Maslow's need hierarchy order: physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualization so the advisee will start from the basics and finish with acceptance of facts about his future life.
- **Vision board:** I have always believed in the power of imagination and visualization in achieving goals. With the help of this tool, the advisee can prepare his/her board full of images, words or pictures and will have the chance to increase his/her motivation by revising the items on the board whenever s/he feels the need. Sometimes, it is difficult to explain your wish but it is easier to express your inner feelings by drawing or visuals without words.

Gary* (pseudonym) surprised me by getting very excited and positively motivated while filling out the wheel. Neither of us was sure how to actually do it, but through reflecting about the different questions listed on the Wheel sheet, he eventually realized he'd always wanted to organize all his paper stuff—organize all of his university papers, tests, research work, etc., into one place where he could truly access it with ease at any time. He even filled out an action plan with this in mind, listing all the places where his information and materials are located and deciding realistic time frame for making it happen. He also identified goal of attending more conferences and seminars about teaching Russian. I've known this teacher for a long time, but I've honestly never seen him so energized and happy before.

RESEARCH INTO ADVISING

Currently, a number of research projects are being designed by AYBU SFL LAP team members. These projects are all informed by the existing literature, the advisor education and the advising practice itself. Such studies form the basis of the Learning Advisory Program which was first launched in 2015.

One such study has already been submitted to an international conference.

WHY EMOTIONS MATTER? A CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

The next lesson after the break, they came back to the classroom with food, drinks and happy birthday songs, to my SURPRISE; I was about to say "Why didn't you tell me? Whose birthday is it?", when I realized they were celebrating mine, quite in advance though, much before April 26th.

It was such a GOOD feeling;
I couldn't find THE words to tell how I felt,
still don't know how I can tell that feeling,
but there WAS that feeling

They were there to thank me for all the effort I put in helping and supporting them all the while and the way I made them feel CARED FOR. They were happy, I was happy. The tears just by the corner... EYES were happy... After enjoying the nice food and fun chat, in the last lesson, it was my turn for the surprise party: my cute, little poem...

"When we plant a rose seed in the earth,
we notice that it is small,
but we do not criticize it as "rootless and stemless."
We treat it as a seed,
giving it the water and nourishment required of a seed.
When it first shoots up out of the earth,
we don't condemn it as immature and underdeveloped;
nor do we criticize the buds for not being open when they appear.
We stand in wonder at the process taking place and
give the plant the care it needs at each stage of its development.
The rose is a rose
from the time it is a seed to the time it dies.
Within it, at all times, it contains its whole potential.
It seems to be constantly in the process of change;
yet at each state, at each moment, it is perfectly all right as it is."

by W. Timothy Gallwey

We all in silence read the poem, and then I wanted each one of them to memorize a line, and while they were reciting their lines, I recorded their voices as a memory of our gathering that day (See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nW5o_43KnDg&feature=youtu.be). Then as I wanted to do some linking and METAPHOR-ING, I asked them "So what is being described in this poem?" one said "WE ARE", and that was the MOMENT again. There we talked about how people have the entire potential all the while, and we need patience and persistence for them to reveal that. We LINKED it to positive feeling and positive thinking, being hopeful and optimistic, welcoming change and diversity, and expanding and spreading all that as we are parts of the same WHOLE. I wasn't there to teach anything, not even English I said, other than instilling this seed in their heart and mind, just to SCRIPT or PAINT a HAPPY day to experience "How they would feel if they passed!" without even asking the question, like in their surprise birthday party for me: "How would Hatice feel if it was her birthday that day?" Some celebrations can be held much in advance!

"One of my colleagues and I had a deep conversation, which both of us hadn't planned before. While we were talking about school issues, she wasn't in the conversation so I changed my seat and got closer to her, eliminating the hierarchy of the administration chair as we were in my office. I let her speak about the topic we were discussing and left space for silence intervals. After a while, she felt relaxed and started looking into my eyes. She became interested in my words as I was into the conversation with my body language and mind. I used some strategies: summarizing, paraphrasing, restating, and mirroring to bond with her. Then, at some point, I asked a powerful question. Suddenly, she was burst into tears. Without any judgements or crucial comments, I let her talk and relieve her stress. Then, I asked questions to change her viewpoint such as "Can you change this situation even if you try?", "If you were the other part, how would you feel?" and "Do you think blaming yourself would solve this problem?". I didn't comment on any of her answers. While answering the questions with long pauses, she stopped crying, her mood changed and she even started making jokes about the issues. I felt that sometimes we have to stop to listen to the others and sometimes the best remedy is to talk about the issue without the concern to solve it. This is similar with our learners. If we have the prejudice that they are lazy and shallow, we don't mind listening to them or asking questions to identify the real issue leading to their failure. They are generally depressed, furious and lack confidence even though they have enrolled in a university. The best way to deal with such negative emotions is changing that negative mindset for both parties. Complimenting, praising, even thanking for what they achieve or try to achieve will be a good start. Then, providing them with short-term achievable goals will help them develop self-confidence and when they manage to appreciate themselves and what they do, they will find their way to embrace themselves, their learning and become autonomous learners who are aware of their strengths as well as weaknesses."

Salvador Dalí, Genio Del Surrealismo

MY JOURNEY

Here's a journey to the-real-self
within which one walks the path of one's-own-self
while helping others unfold each layer of themselves
by REFLECTION.

TRANSFORMATION ⁽¹⁾: FROM TeachERPILLAR TO AdvISerFLY

Once, a little TEACHerpillar	meets a beautiful ADVISerfly .
Now most inspired, the little	one sees herself too plain to fly
Craving, like the beautiful one,	to fly gracefully high
will do just about anything	to be like that butterfly
The first thing to do is	to open her mind's eye ⁽²⁾
Letting "the self" listen and mirror	are the key to trust ⁽³⁾ thy
Opening the doors to brain⁽⁴⁾	helps shift in perspectives⁽⁵⁾ to ask "why?"
Every day turned another	page to unfold her to modify,
In time she becomes every aspect	she is meant to come by.
Waiting every moment patiently	to emerge in her sky
Thrilled she feels ⁽⁶⁾ to see	each change that she can personify
One day a sparkle⁽⁷⁾ appears	in her mind, the moment of "oh, my..."
the darkness fades away	with the light beam from the sky
the ADVISerfly ⁽⁸⁾ appears	to come out for a bonfire
That moment it just comes	down on her, known to inspire:
÷ divine wings of transformation	are born of reflection ⁽⁹⁾ with desire.

- (1) **TRANSFORMATION**: I've found myself in **another dimension of life** where I truly enjoy every other person's **unconscious** reflections in daily life since I've been somehow **unfolding the myth of reflecting** in advising.
- (2) **REFLECTION**: (of an observer) It was clear that the dialog between the two slowly turned into a more **constructive path** in which Gamze began to come up with **a better understanding/realization** of what could have made it a more successful one.
- (3) **IRD**: I think the success of this conversation depends heavily on how successfully Gamze led it. It didn't take me long to realize that Gamze studied Stephanie's reflections very carefully even **attending** to every single line. She got involved in the dialog with **timely interventions** asking very smart questions. She also came up with additional ones building on Stephanie's reflections and I think they were quite **powerful and encouraging** for Stephanie to **deepen her reflections**.
- (4) **EMOTION**: I imagined **emotions** like **the doors to brain** metaphorically speaking. Thus, children at their early ages can be the best examples of non-directive and fully autonomous learners who can relate their emotions to any piece of knowledge in an instinctive way.
- (5) **TOOL**: I've definitely experienced that the Wheel as a reflection tool is **magical** in terms of giving the advisee some **insight** into some questions however experienced they may seem in their profession and I was well convinced that the Wheel is like a versatile toy for the advisees to play however they want during our sessions.
- (6) **EMOTION**: When we get older, we start to talk about our feelings and emotions less and less, maybe even not at all, unless asked. Therefore, I just happened to **gain a perspective** about emotions in my mind that when we start voicing our emotions, we may well be attaching them to our feelings in our childhood or this voicing our feelings helps us get deeper into the core of the situation with an **enormous strength**, similar to strong emotions that we have in our childhood. Speaking of the strength, everybody must have witnessed a child's reaction to refusal against any of his/her willing: Crying hard. Therefore, we can easily imagine **the power of emotions**.
- (7) **COLLEAGUE**: Within an advising session, a colleague of mine came to a revelation using an oxymoron that is integrating "the fun aspect to a serious ritual of teaching" being her source of her never ending motivation. She even came up with some definitions of reflection, which was really motivating for me as an advisor. (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFIDXSxwtH4&feature=youtu.be>)
- (8) **POSITIVE FEEDBACK**: I don't know how to express my appreciation on how deeply touched I feel during and after each and every session or moment we share. Seeing that my other friends are being fed not only academically but personally as well confirms that feeling. I hope I will be able to reflect this to my learners, my colleagues and even to my beloved ones and let them feel they always have me aside, if I can. This is the same thing I feel about you Satoko and Jo, **my lifelong guides**. And I am really grateful for this ♥
- (9) **REFLECTION**: Reflection is almost the **shadow** of what's happening or the body of an event or the body of the tree that has a shadow. Therefore, reflection should more focus on the **feelings** and the **effects**, not the thing itself or its content.

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