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Jo Mynard, Kanda University of International Studies, Japan

Satoko Kato, Kanda Institute of Foreign Languages, Japan

Kie Yamamoto, Kanda University of International Studies, Japan

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Reflective Practice in Advising: Introduction to the Column

Jo Mynard, Kanda University of International Studies, Japan

Satoko Kato, Kanda Institute of Foreign Languages, Japan

Kie Yamamoto, Kanda University of International Studies, Japan

The purpose of the regular ‘Reflective Practice in Advising’ column in *Relay Journal* is to highlight the importance of reflective practice in the professional development of learning advisors. Taking a narrative inquiry approach, the column will include examples of advisor reflective practice in each issue. These contributions will include case studies where advisors engage in voluntary self-reflective professional development, and analyse and reflect on their advising sessions and their developing practice. In this introduction, the authors briefly review the literature in the field of advising and provide an overview of how this column aims to contribute to the growing body of work. Examples of reflective practice in our field will be disseminated with the intention of providing researcher-practitioners with examples of advisor development in action and opportunities to contribute to our understanding of advising processes.

What is Advising in Language Learning (ALL)?

Advising in language learning (ALL) is intentionally-structured dialogue designed to promote learner autonomy. The dialogue aims to engage a learner in reflective processes leading to a deeper sense of understanding and control of language learning (Carson & Mynard, 2012; Kato & Mynard, 2015). Advising is normally a one-to-one dialogue, but differs significantly from a regular conversation as the dialogue goes beyond simply providing learning tips to learners. The dialogue in advising is intentionally structured to support learners’ transformation to make a fundamental change in their learning, and in such reflective dialogue, learners often experience an ‘aha’ moment as their existing beliefs are often challenged (Kato & Mynard, 2015). Esch (1996) notes that advising is a “system of interventions which aims at supporting students’ methodology of language learning by means of ‘conversations’, i.e., by using language in the framework of social interaction to help students reflect on their learning experience, identify inconsistencies and steer their own path” (Esch, 1996, p. 42). Taking a sociocultural view of learning, the role of dialogue (i.e. advising) is key for promoting reflection, resulting in shifts in thinking.

An effective advisor draws upon a “skilled use of language that extends and enhances the learner’s thinking processes and helps him/her to gradually develop his/her way to self-manage learning” (Mozzon-McPherson, 2012, p. 46).

The concept of reflection is central to research and practice in the field of advising. One way to explore reflection in advising is to draw upon the work of Dewey (1933) and Schön (1987). Dewey defines reflection to be “active, persistent, and careful consideration” of beliefs or knowledge (Dewey, 1933, p. 118). Schön (1987) established the concepts of reflection-in-action (i.e. the here and now) and reflection-on-action (i.e. looking back at what you have done) and these concepts can be applied to advising practices; learners can be assisted in viewing their learning from different perspectives in order to develop a greater awareness of their learning process and progress.

Previous Research in Advising

There is a growing body of research in ALL which examines the field in different ways. Candlin (2012) emphasises that advising “requires us to analyse the linguistic, discursive, pragmatic and social psychological features of such a process among persons in defined sites of engagement” (p. 13), and it is the intention that this column will become a regular feature of *Relay Journal* in order for us to develop a deeper understanding of such processes. For convenience, we can explore ALL research within the framework / research trajectory proposed by Kato and Mynard (2015, pp. 274-275). The research trajectory for ALL encompasses four segments for research related to advising:

- Getting started: Noticing and describing
- Going deeper: Analyzing and understanding
- Rising to the challenge: Interventions and action research
- Giving back: Collaborating with and mentoring others

Research related to dialogue

One of the most common areas for research in advising has involved analysing and understanding the discursive features of advising in order to develop an awareness of how advising dialogues unfold. Much of this research could be said to be situated in the initial two segments of Kato & Mynard’s (2015) research trajectory for ALL. Projects are often conducted by researchers new to the field, but as the field

itself is relatively new, it is an appropriate place for us to start. Researchers (e.g. Kelly, 1996; McCarthy, 2010, 2012; Mynard, 2010; Mynard & Thornton, 2012; Pemberton, Toogood, Ho, & Lam, 2001; Rutson-Griffiths & Porter, 2016; Shibata, 2012; Thornton & Mynard, 2012) have attempted to explore the discursive features and categorise them in order to understand what advisors do, thus facilitating greater awareness and control of effective dialogue. Connected with research into advising dialogue, the roles of advisors has been another area where a lot of work has been done; again, this is appropriate for a new field (e.g. Aoki, 2012; Ciekanski, 2007; Clemente, 2003; Lammons, 2011; Morrison & Navarro, 2012).

Research related to advising practice

Another fruitful area of recent research in advising has been related to understanding features of advising practice (see Hobbs & Dofs (2015) for a good overview). These projects could be said to be situated in the fourth segment of Kato & Mynard's (2015) trajectory as the researchers 'give back' to the advising community in some way. Research has included a focus on how advising can be integrated into a class (Carson, 2012; Horai & Wright, 2016; Sakata & Fukuda, 2012), and how advising has been developed in particular contexts (Karlsson, Kjisik, & Nordlund, 2007; Mozzon-McPherson, 2007; Reinders, 2007; Victori, 2007). In some cases, this has resulted in the development of advising protocols (Blake, 2007; Harootian & O'Reilly, 2015) or suggestions for managing advising services (Ogawa & Hase, 2015; Terlecka & Schneider, 2015).

Although the body of knowledge on advising is increasing, few case studies about advisor development have yet been published. This column contributes to the field by collating advisors' reflections on their sessions in the pursuit of professional development with the aim of creating a body of knowledge and a deeper understanding.

Research related to sociocultural dimensions of advising

While advising is considered to be a tool to promote learner reflection on their cognitive as well as metacognitive learning processes, there is a growing interest in investigating sociocultural dimensions in advising discourse. Echoing the social turn in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) (Block, 2003), the importance of social context in understanding learner autonomy has been widely argued in notable

literature (e.g. Aoki, 2009; Benson & Cooker, 2013; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Mynard, 2012). Previous research shedding light on sociocultural dimensions of advising includes investigating emotions and feelings in advising (Tassinari, 2015; Tassinari & Ciekanski, 2013; Yamashita, 2015) and learner identity (Karlsson, 2015; Karlsson & Kjisik, 2009; Yamamoto, 2017). Taking sociocultural approaches to analysing advising discourse allows learning advisors (or other practitioners) to understand the learner ‘self’ in depth and provide him/her with socially-informed support. Simultaneously, it enables advisors to exercise reflexivity in order to reflect on their own backgrounds, beliefs, and identities (Karlsson, 2012; Miyahara, 2015; Mynard, 2018, this issue).

Aims of the Column

Having summarised some of the relevant research in advising so far, the following sections describe how this column aims to contribute to this literature and our understanding of advisor development through their reflective narratives. There are several aims for this column: (1) to provide advisors with an opportunity to reflect deeply on their advising practice; (2) to create an archive of reflective accounts of advising sessions to serve as examples to new learning advisors; and (3) to create a body of work that will contribute to the field of advising, deepening our knowledge of practices, concerns, challenges and successes.

Methodology

The case studies are interpretative in nature, drawing on qualitative research methods such as narrative inquiry. A case study approach is appropriate to this kind of research as it provides a framework for analysing social behaviour, relationships, and roles. The wider project could be said to be an example of a multiple case study (Hood, 2009) in that each of the cases are unique, yet will help us to understand the role of advisor reflection in advisor education. The wider project is the growing collection of advisor-researcher reflections that will be published in this column. It is creating a corpus that in itself could be used for deeper analysis and understanding of what advisors are concerned with in their reflections. This corpus is freely available to other researchers too which serves to expand the conversations.

Roles and reflexivity

The advisor's role in narrative research is complex; as advisors explore the narrative data as researchers, they have the dual role of being both the researcher and the learning advisor, so they must attempt to record and analyse the data as faithfully and systematically as possible. A reflexive approach (Karlsson, 2012; Miyahara, 2015) is inevitable in order to acknowledge the impact of the role of the researcher/advisor on the research and research participants. Each interpretation will be unique as it represents the views and backgrounds of the researcher. As Karlsson points out: "the researchers will become the researched and need to practise a researcher's reflexivity. They will need to acknowledge how their own thoughts, feelings, motivations, educational, social and personal histories inform the process and, very importantly, their very writing" (Karlsson, 2018).

Approaches to Data Analysis

During the analysis stage, the researchers of each of the case studies consider the data sources and their dual roles as both researchers and advisors. Each researcher creates a narrative account or 'story' which helps to explain the experience of an advising session. The analysis involves the following processes:

- conducting and recording an advising session, engaging in reflection-in-action (Schön, 1987) as they do so,
- listening to the recording while engaging in reflection-on-action (Schön, 1987),
- transcribing relevant excerpts of the session, simultaneously developing assumptions,
- reading and re-reading written data,
- making notes and re-listening to recordings while attempting to understand phenomena,
- discussing assumptions with colleagues while engaging in intention reflective dialogue (IRD) (Kato, 2012),
- returning to the literature on advising, and engaging in constant reflection and reflexivity.

Conclusions

Through the analysis of the case study data, advisors are able to gain a deeper awareness of their advising approaches through reflecting on their contribution to the dialogue. The contributors' interpretations of their advising sessions are influenced by

their background and experiences and also by the contributions of the participants themselves. These complex processes result in a deeply reflective account of an advising sessions which lead to shifts in thinking and possibly transformational moments for an advisor.

The editorial team sincerely wishes that your contribution - either as an author or a reviewer - to the 'Reflective Practice in Advising' column in *Relay Journal* will serve as an opportunity to connect with others and empower your professional development.

Notes on the contributors

Jo Mynard is the Director of the Self-Access Learning Center at Kanda University of International Studies in Chiba, Japan. She has an EdD in TEFL from the University of Exeter (UK) and an M.Phil in applied linguistics from Trinity College, University of Dublin (Ireland).

Satoko Kato is a Chief Learning Advisor at Kanda Institute of Foreign Languages and a lecturer at the graduate school at Kanda University of International Studies in Japan. She is developing and implementing advisor education programs for novice and experienced advisors. She co-authored *Reflective Dialogue: Advising in language learning* with Jo Mynard (published by Routledge, NY in 2016).

Kie Yamamoto is a learning advisor at Kanda University of International Studies. She holds an M.S.Ed. from Temple University Japan, and is currently pursuing an Ed.D at the University of Bath in the UK. Her research interests are language learner identity, second language socialization, advising discourse, and narrative analysis.

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