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Papers from the Self-Directed Learning and Advising in Language Education Online Conference. Introduction to the special issue.

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Introduction to the Special Issue

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Self-Directed Learning and Advising in Language Education Conference organized by IATEFL Learner Autonomy Special Interest Group (LASIG) and Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University School of Foreign Languages, Turkey (AYBU SFL) took place online on 24 April 2021. It was originally planned as a face-to-face event in 2019, yet it was postponed to a later date due to the global outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The conference featured two plenary talks, a total of 30 pre-recorded and live presentations in concurrent sessions, and four poster presentations. Around 200 participants from several countries registered for this international gathering. The main theme of the event was Advising in Language Learning (ALL). In this regard, it was the first academic event organized in this field in Turkey. Along with ALL, several related fields, such as Learner Autonomy, Self-Directed Learning (SDL), Self-Access Language Learning (SALL), and Individual Differences in Language Learning, were addressed and discussed by researchers, practitioners, and preservice teachers in different sessions.

This special issue brings together a total of six selected papers presented at the Self-Directed Learning and Advising in Language Education Conference and an additional three review papers. Before presenting the content of the papers, we would like to congratulate the authors for publishing their work in this issue and sharing their valuable insights in their papers. We are also grateful to the reviewers who dedicated their valuable time and energy over the Summer to the publication of this special issue. We are forever grateful for the unending support, encouragement, and guidance which we received from our dear editor-in-chief, Jo Mynard. We could not have done this without her. Additionally, special thanks go to dear colleagues Hatice Karaaslan and Gamze Guven-Yalcin, who supported our efforts in the publication process of this special issue graciously. We would like to thank Robert Werner and Jo Mynard for their suggestions and careful copyediting and Noriko Takasago for the beautiful cover page design.

Taking this opportunity, we would also like to thank the IATEFL LASIG Committee, AYBU SFL administration, AYBU SFL Professional Development Unit (PDU) members, Learning Advisory Program (LAP) unit members, and the organization and scientific committee

members of the event for their continuous support and assistance for the organization and successful completion of the conference.

Selected Papers from Self-Directed Learning and Advising in Language Education Conference

A total of nine papers are featured in this special issue, and the first four of them focus on ALL and SALL. These papers offer theoretical discussions, empirical findings, and administrative and organizational insights in these fields. The next two papers present practical ways and techniques to promote learner autonomy in language classes. The remaining three papers are reviews of the event in general and selected presentations of the authors with different backgrounds and perspectives. In this special issue, the papers are presented as empirical studies first, then the practical classroom-oriented papers, and finally, the event review papers.

In the first paper, **Aslıhan Tuğçe Güler** from Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University carefully studies advising sessions in terms of rapport-building discursive elements. Güler makes use of session recordings between novice advisors and voluntary advisees collected at a learning advisor training program. Through a corpus-based discourse analysis method, Güler explores the ways in which advisors build rapport and provides the readers with linguistic types and categories of rapport building, frequencies of commonly used phrases and words, concordance lines from a small-scale corpus, and sample exchanges excerpted from real advising dialogs.

In the second paper, **Gamze Guven-Yalcin** from Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University presents the reflections of regular attendees in online advising sessions known as the Learning Advisory Program (LAP) Club. She analyzes participants' views regarding well-being and the overall effectiveness of the model. Yalcin first presents the theoretical background of the LAP Club Model, its components, and the implementation procedures, then moves on to regular participants' perspectives collected via semi-structured interviews. The study reveals interesting findings about the role of advising and well-being for an effective learning process.

Next, **Hülya Şen** from Middle East Technical University and **Mümin Şen** from Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University investigate experienced English instructors' perceptions of a learning advisory training program that they attended at a Turkish university. The paper discusses the theoretical foundations of ALL and then continues with the presentation of methodological considerations and their findings. Experienced instructors' views and reflections

reveal their gains in terms of developing a deeper awareness into fostering autonomy for learners as well as the positive effects of the program on their personal lives.

In the fourth paper, **Tarik Uzun** and **Gamze Guven-Yalcin** from Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University present the process and effects of a digitalization process that took place in the Independent Learning Center (ILC) and the Learning Advisory Program (LAP) unit at Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (AYBU). The paper discusses how students were introduced to digital tools and their subsequent responses, which ultimately led to a greater number of students benefitting from the increased number of activities offered.

After that, **Senem Üstün Kaya** from Başkent University and Özkent Akbilek Science High School, Turkey, provide autonomy-supportive, hands-on classroom activities aimed at young learners. Üstün Kaya and Keçik describe their theoretical framework in material design and implementation and introduce the class content step-by-step starting with awareness raising and ending with an assignment. The authors conclude their paper with implications and suggestions for teachers working with young learners.

In the sixth paper, **Ebru Sınar Okutucu** from Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University explores the awareness levels of her students regarding their own learning and study habits. In this practical paper, she outlines her hands-on experience and collected findings from an autonomy-supportive in-class activity. She particularly underlines the importance of ALL integration into autonomy-supportive classroom activities, which could potentially help learners gain the characteristics of autonomous learners.

The first review paper belongs to **Neslihan Atcan Altan** from Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University. The author gives an overview of two plenary talks presented at the conference. She first summarizes a talk presented by Jo Mynard of Kanda University of International Studies that focused mainly on advising. The paper then summarizes the second plenary talk presented by Lawrie Moore-Walter and Christian Ludwig of IATEFL Learner Autonomy Special Interest Group. The speakers focused primarily on self-directed learning and shared learners' responses to classroom activities and tasks aimed at supporting self-direction. Highlights and impressions gained from attending both talks are also presented in the paper.

Then, **Ezgi Celik Uzun** from the Ministry of National Education, Turkey, explores an English teacher's perception of the Self-Directed and Advising in Language Learning Education Conference. She recounts her thoughts and ideas gained from attending plenary talks and several concurrent sessions and relates these to her experiences as a teacher of K-12 grades. She then

reflects on the encouragement she feels from her new knowledge of advising and self-directed learning and how ideas gained via the conference can be applied to her current classroom approaches and her own self-improvement efforts.

In the final paper, **Tarik Uzun** and **Hatice Karaaslan** from Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, and **Meysa Acar**, **Dilek Akin**, **Selen Ertunc**, and **Cansu Yasar** from TED University present the reflections and viewpoints of four pre-service English teachers who attended the conference. Each pre-service teacher discusses their reasons for attending, how the experience benefited their view of themselves personally and professionally, and how impressions gained from the conference led to long-lasting motivation. The paper concludes with a discussion on identity development and mindset changes that all pre-service English teachers could gain by attending and following similar academic events.

Notes on the Editors

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