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Abstract

The present case study aims to investigate the effects and implications of a semi-structured, small group advising scheme led by a peer advisor (PA) who graduated from a previously offered scheme. The scheme involves a seven-unit Personalized Learning Module (PLM) that simultaneously combines four key points: (1) reflecting, (2) mindset training, (3) personal motivation and success, and (4) teaching students how to limit overwhelming sources of information as part of creating an actionable, personalized learning plan. Each unit of the PLM consists of an integrated, scaffolded set of original advising tools. Four learners were trained in a group by a PA. Data were collected through PA open-ended feedback forms at the end of each unit, metaphor drawings and the advisee feedback form containing the learners' reflections on the efficiency of the module. Additionally, the PA's feedback form containing the PA's observations and reflections were used for data collection and data were analyzed through content analysis. The outcome of the study reveals promising results for future PA programs.

Keywords: advising in language learning, peer advising, advising tools, small group advising, peer advisor training

This paper explores the effects and impacts of a small group advising scheme (known as the Personalized Learning Module - PLM) led by a peer advisor (PA) on both the advisees and the PA. The PLM was previously designed and piloted at a state university in Ankara, Turkey. The paper investigates whether it is possible to appoint a graduate of the PLM as a PA without giving them formal training but only mentoring when they need it. Also, it explores whether the advisees would benefit from using the PLM with their PA as a leader. The main reason for conducting the study was to see if there is an alternate method of a PA program for the PLM is possible and how that would affect the advisees.

Advising in language learning (ALL) is a process of helping someone to become effective, aware and reflective language learners (Kato & Mynard, 2015). Learning advisors help learners become more autonomous with the help of reflective dialogue. To make the dialogue more effective, cognitive, affective, and practical tools can also be used. With the

help of reflective dialogue and tools, ALL utilizes language to increase learner autonomy and self-directed learning while showing the advisees how to set goals, plan for the future and increase their motivation. Advisors do not always have to be chosen and trained among instructors, there can also be volunteers among learners as well; that is students can be trained as advisors. This concept is not new to academia and it is known as peer advising which will be explained in the next section.

Peer Advising in Language Learning

Peer advising programs are common in different departments at universities. However, they are different from peer advising in language learning. According to Barman and Benson (1981), in traditional forms of peer advising, a PA provides students with “academic assistance” (p. 33). These kinds of programs are sometimes called student counseling services or student support services and they can be found in many departments. The PAs in those programs offer help in academic areas such as editing an essay in a writing center or giving support to freshman students to help them get accustomed to their new environment in their first year at the university (Poling, 2015).

Peer advising in language learning is, on the other hand, another form of advising where “students help students” (Diambra & Cole-Zakrzewski, 2002, p. 56). In this form of peer advising, there are mutual benefits. The advisee gets the help they need, and, in some cases, builds a rapport with the PA. This can be because of the similarity in age or the feeling that a PA might understand the advisee better than an advisor as they might have experienced similar problems (Lockspeiser et al., 2008). Since a low affective filter—affective filter is a term created by Stephen Krashen in his ‘Affective Filter Hypothesis’ for second language acquisition meaning that students’ feelings and emotions can block learning in times of stress and if it is low, the best emotional conditions for learning to occur (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)—is important in creating a successful dialogue with the advisee, PAs can help achieve this faster than advisors. Also, PAs benefit from the sessions as in these sessions, the PAs ‘challenge their existing beliefs to raise awareness in learning’ (Kato & Mynard, 2015, p. 11) just like they did when they were advisees in the PLM. In this way, they can transform a second time by advising their peers (Kao, 2012; Carson & Mynard, 2012). Transformation of the PA initially occurs when they are advisees in the PLM; they challenge everything they know about learning and themselves and they think deeply how they can apply all the things they have realized about learning and themselves into their learning. The first transformation is usually the transformation that is expected in ALL. The second time transformation occurs

is when the PA challenges everything while leading others. The PA continues to explore things about themselves while helping other people they are leading in their first transformation. Also, PAs function as good role models to those in need of help; yet they do not need to be perfect but need to be genuine while making errors (Newton & Ender, 2000).

Peer advising programs in language learning help the faculty as well. When there may be a high number of advisees waiting to get appointments from only a handful of advisors, PAs can help relieve the heavy workload of the advisors and shorten the waiting time of the advisees. Their work might be similar to professional learning advisors; they do not have the same experience or training but they can conduct face-to-face advising sessions and do written advising or group advising, which are different kinds of advising conducted when face-to-face sessions are not possible or preferred.

Challenges in Peer Advisor Training

Training PAs is a challenge faced by many in learning advisory programs. Howard (2019) touches upon the training of PAs in her article and remarks that the PAs in her study could only finish half of the program in a semester and this reveals the most challenging issue in training; it takes a lot of time both for the trainers and the trainees. Howard also mentions specific challenges such as “explaining key concepts” (p. 8) of ALL to the trainees.

These two issues always arise when training new PAs. Trainees need to find suitable time in their schedules in their departments and for the trainers as well, who are also teachers and advisors with busy schedules. Before the pandemic broke out in 2020, there had been a successful student-centered peer advising program piloted in the institution where this study was conducted, (Howard, 2020). Yet, challenges remained. The program was time-intensive; instructors had to invest a lot of time training students before those students could begin to help other students. The present study was conducted to investigate if an advisee who finished a small group advising module consisting of some units and tools could guide another group of advisees to autonomy using the same tools, even without significant additional training.

The Present Study and the Seven-Unit PLM Course

The current study was conducted to investigate if there could be an alternative form of a peer advising program. This is an extension of an earlier study, conducted two years ago, that piloted the PLM (Howard et al., 2021), incorporating integrated sets of original advising tools. The PLM was designed to be implemented by one advisor across seven small group advising sessions which involved the same group of students (typically 5-7). The pilot PLM study was implemented by advisors with English preparatory year students at the School of

Foreign Languages, part of a state university located in Ankara, Turkey. This PLM was created to help learners discover a greater level of autonomy than they currently possess. It is an actionable, step-by-step personalized learning plan that targets learners' self-identified learning problems or goals.

The pilot PLM study aimed to determine if learning advising can be combined with current psychology principles in order to benefit the participants' understanding of themselves. To realize this aim, learners were trained via small group advising sessions that utilized the PLM to simultaneously combine three key points: (1) learning advising tools and techniques, (2) explicitly teaching students about fixed and growth mindsets (Dweck, 2016), (3) teaching learners how to select and condense resources into actionable steps and advice as a critical part of creating a targeted learning plan for themselves. Students began the PLM by choosing their own PLM focus issue, namely a learning problem or goal upon which all units and activities within that learner's PLM focused on. Next, learners were introduced to activities where they could find the difference between a fixed and growth mindset, how to improve their growth mindset and subjective well-being, learn how to set effective, actionable goals, and create steps to realize them. In the PLM, learners also saw the importance of focusing on their emotions and reflecting on their plans.

As the outcome of the pilot stage indicated the PLM was successful, some learning advisors started to use this PLM for small-group advising. It was during one of these PLMs that the idea for the present study arose, when a pivotal question was asked by a graduate level student at the end of a PLM: "Has a PLM student ever supported other students using a PLM? What would happen?" This student, who would later go on to be the PA in the present study, had already finished a PLM successfully. It was his success and newfound feelings of subjective well-being that had prompted the question. He wondered if a student PLM implementor could lead other students to enjoy the same positive benefits he had received from the PLM. Consequently, the incentive in this study was to see if there is a way to (1) shorten the current amount of training time involved in training a PA, and (2) and help other students at the same time. After that student's question about leading a group, the researchers started to form questions to start the research. While forming the questions, we wanted to evaluate the seven-unit module as well.

Research Questions for the study were as follows:

1. What are the opinions and reflections of the students and the PA regarding the PLM content and the implementation?

2. Can a student, a prior participant of a PLM, implement this module as a PA without significant additional training?

Methodology

In this case study, data were collected from the participants ‘in action’ and ‘on action.’ Schön (1984) describes two types of reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Schön says that while we are doing something, we reflect on the task to complete it more effectively and that is reflection-in action and after doing the task they reflect on the action to see what they gained and he calls this reflection-on-action. In this study, in-action and on-action data were gathered to see if a PA could train students to help them discover a greater level of autonomy than they already possessed while focusing on the students’ and the PA’s emotions and perceptions. The project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the university, and all the participants gave their consent to participate.

Participants of the Study

There were four students and a PA as the participants of the study. An advisor trainer was invited to the study to mentor the PA where necessary. The advisor trainer was also the advisor of the group that the PA graduated from. The advisor trainer conducted face-to-face sessions with the PA after the implementation of each unit and the PA could reach the advisor trainer whenever they had any questions about the content or the implementation of the PLM. The third author in this study was the PA of the PLM and the first two authors were the advisor trainer of the study and the researchers. The students and the PA were graduate students on a government scholarship program in Turkey and they were learning English to start their graduate studies abroad at the time of the implementation. As they were all from the same scholarship English study class, they were known to each other and had some level of friendship prior to the commencement of the PLM study. They were at the B1 level of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). There were two male and two female students. Their average age was 25, and they were all in the same English class. At the time of the study, it was observed that their stress levels were high because they were preparing for an international English exam and if they could not get the grade they were required to, they had to repay the scholarship they got from the government. Hence, they needed help from the advising program. Seeing that their classmates had benefited from small group advising, they volunteered for the study. In this study, they are referred to as ‘advisees.’ The PA was also a student in the same class, and he had already finished a PLM and wanted to become the PA for this study.

Data Collection

One group advising session facilitated by the PA was conducted for each unit of the PLM, and the sessions generally took one hour. The length of the sessions depended on the time spent on reflection and feedback; therefore, some sessions took more time than others. The participants came together once a week for each unit. They met in an empty room of their choosing within the institution.

Data were collected through open-ended feedback forms at the end of each unit (see Tables 1 and 2). At the end of each unit, two questions were asked to the advisees in the feedback forms. For the PA, there were three questions on the feedback form at the end of each unit.

Table 1

Feedback Form Questions for Advisees (Howard et al., 2021)

Advisee Open-ended Unit Feedback Form Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn by completing this unit? How do you feel about yourself and your ability to learn now? • Did you like or enjoy this unit? How can this unit be improved for future students?

Table 2

Feedback Form Questions for PAs (Howard et al., 2021)

PA Open-ended Unit Feedback Form Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn or observe by implementing this unit? • How do you see yourself and your language abilities after implementing this unit? Did you like or enjoy implementing this unit? Why? • If you could go back in time and implement this unit again, would you do anything differently? (Would you change anything?)

The advisees were also asked to draw metaphors to show how they picture themselves with their PLM focus issue at the beginning of the PLM in unit 1, and again near the end of the PLM in unit 6. In both cases, the advisees spent time reflecting on the symbolism in their drawings and responding to comments or observations shared from the group. Learners were asked to comment on their drawings as part of the reflective aspect of the sessions. In other words, after completing their drawings, they took turns explaining what their drawing meant

or symbolized. Other students and the PA often commented or asked questions about the drawing being discussed. Metaphor drawings were also used to understand more about the transformations of the advisees. In unit 6, each advisee's reflection was immediately followed by the PA revealing their original unit 1 drawing and asking the advisee if they would like to discuss the symbolism evident in both drawings. For the advisees, seeing the changes between their two drawings helped them to understand how differently they now saw themselves and their area of focus in the PLM. It was particularly revealing because the drawings—and the changes they evidenced—had been recorded by the students' own hands (See the findings from RQ2 for the drawings and a detailed look at the transformations evidenced within them). These drawings, like the feedback taken at the end of each unit, were collected for data analysis purposes.

Data Analysis

Data gathered from advisee and PA feedback forms were analyzed by two researchers utilizing the NVivo qualitative data analysis software. Responses from the feedback forms were recorded in NVivo and general themes and codes were found. Inductive coding was used for the analysis and line by line coding was done while analyzing the data. Codes were periodically cross checked for clarity and mutual understanding during periodic research meetings. Drawings were analyzed by asking learners to describe them and also asking questions on their description.

Findings

The general response of the advisees to the questions and the content of the module was positive. Overall, they reported improvements in many areas, and they developed more self-awareness towards their learning problem and the solution. There were only two negative comments in a total of 28 responses. Both of the negative comments referred to an alternate, worksheet version of the highly interactive Problem-Solving Puzzle Tools. Both versions of the tool were provided to students at the same time. The less popular worksheet version required learners to produce a great deal of reflective writing, whereas the preferred interactive version contained colorful visuals and required less reflective writing. Based on student feedback, the worksheet versions were later removed from the PLM.

Selected Excerpts from the Data Explained

Excerpt 1

Excerpt from advisees

“Yes, I enjoyed this unit. With this unit, future student might learn how to improve themselves.”

“I like this unit because I face myself and I realize some *[off]* my problems.”

There were also some unexpected findings in the study concerning the PA’s self-improvement and his transformation as a PA. For his self-improvement, it was seen from PA feedback of all the units (see Excerpt 2 as an example) that throughout the entire PLM, he noticed many things regarding his skills of leading the group and his awareness. He noticed changes in himself as a PA and also outside the PLM. In addition to his self-improvement, the PA transformed from being a PLM graduate to a PA and was able to look back and reflect while also looking to the future. The PA in this study noted that he transformed a second time. The first transformation happened when he was an advisee, and he overcame his own area of focus in the PLM in much the same manner experienced by the advisees in this study. As a PA however, he said it happened from another angle. When he began his implementation of the PLM, he was worried about his English abilities and his ability to lead others. But at the end of the process, he said he could see himself from an advisor’s viewpoint as well and his reflections on different topics became deeper thanks to this experience. It was later discovered that one of the advisees was dyslexic, a fact unknown to anybody in the group at the time of the study. The PA did not know what dyslexia was or have any information about it at all. When he noticed the adviser’s metaphor drawings and when he saw that she had an “aha moment” (Kato & Mynard, 2015, p. 156) about her dyslexia, he also experienced an “aha moment” (see Excerpt 3).

Excerpt 2

Unit 5 PA Feedback. PA’s viewpoint change.

“Defining their own success criteria made them realize their life goals. It added more passion and ambition to them in order to reach their aims. ‘Off the record – outside of PLM sessions’, as I talked to advisees with their daily life problems, I realized that they took a friend, who they think is successful, as a role model. The worst side of this situation is they also think that friend’s success criteria is the same with them.

However, after tool 05-2, I thought they will have their own limits rather than other people’s.”

Excerpt 3

Unit 6 PA Feedback. His ‘aha moment’.

“The best tool, metaphorical drawing, helped us to see their progress... Another advisee, whose problem was confusion about words’ order drew herself as a strong warrior who is fighting with letters... These are the progress I could catch from their drawings. It refers to that when people try to draw their feelings, whether consciously or not they are generally open and honest about their problems.”

Revisiting the Research Questions

The feedback gathered from the open-ended questions, metaphor drawings and overall comments on the units and the PLM all provided answers to the questions asked for the purposes of this study. Selected excerpts will answer the research questions.

RQ 1: What are the Opinions and Reflections of the Students’ and the PA Regarding the PLM Content?

The advisees’ and the PA’s responses to the open-ended feedback questions at the end of each unit provided answers for the first research question. In unit 0 (see Excerpt 4), the PA was not sure if he liked the unit or not. He faced his self-doubts and tried to overcome the seriousness of the first session. The advisees were his friends but when they started the session, everybody was serious, and the PA found himself having to make jokes to break the tension. For the advisees, the data show a strong correlation between one’s effort and one’s ability to learn. Through genuine effort, they learned that they could change their views of themselves and their ability to improve themselves.

Excerpt 4

Unit 0 PA Feedback Form Excerpts

“There isn’t too much work for advisor on this unit.... That’s why I couldn’t tell I enjoyed or not.”

“To be honest, I was nervous before PLM session started. There were too many questions on my mind such as ‘Are advisees going to like PLM?’... However, I tried to memorize PLM sessions on which I attended as an advisee. After that, I believed myself and I think I handled well.”

“Even if advisees and advisor were friends, there could be a serious and intense atmosphere on the first session. As a friend and advisor, I tried to make some jokes in order to clear the air... However, I succeeded in getting people enjoy. Therefore, I see myself a person who is able to do what is necessary at that time.”

Unit 0 Student participant excerpts

“I think that everybody can change his or her intelligence and talent. This is because talent and intelligence base on effort of individuals. For example if someone wants to draw picture, even if he or she doesn’t know how to do, people can learn by making an effort.”

“I thought that intelligence and talent could be improved. I thought my life and my achievement. I learned that intelligent and talent can be developed with working and patient. I proud of myself. Because I recognized myself with improve my ability to learn.”

Unit 1 was marked by strong beginnings of self-awareness. Not only was the PA starting to feel confident about his abilities to guide the advisees, but he was becoming aware of many details that showed some aspects of advisees’ struggles as well. In unit one, the data (see Excerpt 5) show the advisees beginning to experience perspective shifts about themselves and their problems, such as learning that bad situations are temporary and can be overcome. They also learned they were not the only ones experiencing problems. This finding was important because prior to this unit, and the study, unconsciously, they had all believed that there was something wrong with them simply because they were experiencing problems in their academic lives. However, their reflections at the end of the unit display a collective realization that they are not the only ones experiencing problems. Furthermore, this newfound knowledge appeared to negate their aforementioned belief that having a problem was evidence that there was something wrong with them personally.

Excerpt 5

Unit 1 PA Feedback Form excerpts

“I think advisees faced little toughness while thinking about bad day (PLM Tool: 01-4). They all answered the questions differently. I was surprised when they shared their opinions about that specific day. I realized that all the people are growth mindset. It is just not occurred for every situation. When I looked at advisees’ answers, they were really mature dealing with problems. They have their own techniques to handle with problems. But the main point was that they had welcomed their problems partially – not all.”

“Making comments on metaphorical drawings made me confident. I think I’m good at associating drawings with real life feelings. I am always looking at details. When I

saw the details on their drawings, I wanted to talk about it. I felt confident about my English abilities after implementing this unit.”

Unit 1 Student participant excerpts

“I feel that this study helped me to reach my thoughts and it make me closer to understand myself. Especially for these units, I got that there is no a behavior problem and this problems can be solved with my patience.” “Yes, I was glad to discover my minds.”

“I learned, my problems are big according to me but most people have lots of different problems in this unit. [I learned in this unit that most people experience/ have problems.] It is natural because we are humans. I feel better talking about my stress.” “I like this unit because I face myself and I realize some my problems.”

In Unit 2 (see Excerpt 6), the feedback from the PA shows that he experienced a deepening of his developing awareness. His confidence in his language abilities was increasing, and he was spending more time engaged in reflective thinking. He noticed that the real problem was about people being unable to organize and apply information in a step-by-step fashion. For the advisees, the data show that they are starting to become hopeful about their future success and the possibility of overcoming their problems.

Excerpt 6

Unit 2 PA Feedback Form excerpts

“While most people don’t like getting advises, some people need those. ...although they had advises in order to reach goal or problem solution, they couldn’t find the way going through success(accomplishing objectives). As a consequence of it, I realized that people have everything in them, but the real problem is putting them in an order and applying step by step.”

“My confidence about leading and directing them on tools are getting higher session after session. As most experts say, language abilities increase by using it.”

“When I saw them happy and motivated, I became satisfied. The complexity of puzzle part made me a little nervous. But I could handle easily now.”

Unit 2 Student participant excerpts

“I have learned that if I followed this learning path, I will be sure that I will be successful. I feel quite better about this.” “I enjoyed. This unit made me be relax. This is because there is not thing I am afraid of.”

“Most people give an advice about my problem. Firstly, I feel uncomfortable because I have to think my stress. Now, I feel better about my problem.”

“This unit so enjoyable because it is like a puzzle. I think it’s more effective way for solving problem.” It’s active thinking about problem and so I can find problem and solution myself.”

The data from unit 3 (see Excerpt 7) indicate a possible perspective shift on the PA’s part. He noticed the advisees appreciated the reframing sentences exercises (the main exercise of the unit) because they believed they could immediately apply them to their real lives. The PA also realized how important it was for people to hear things about themselves. For the advisees, the data show that they were starting to see a connection between mindset training and awareness development at this point.

Excerpt 7

Unit 3 PA Feedback Form excerpts

“Reading about Fixed and Growth Mindset as an advisor was different from the one, I did as an advisee. When I was an advisee, I thought two types are not enough to explain people’s ways of thinking. However, observing advisees’ thoughts, I realized that all the ideas people have for themselves constructed on these two mindsets. And also trying to get rid of being fixed mindset on tool 03-4 made people relaxed, because by crossing out fixed mindset statements and turning them into growth mindset advisees thought that they can apply this method in their daily lives.”

“Sometimes people need to hear positive things about themselves. The jar makes it for you, if you couldn’t find a person to talk about your feelings.”

Unit 3 Student participant excerpts

“People with fixed mindset cannot improve themselves “I learned it that I don’t have enough motivation sentences. I should find more, I think =)”

“I have learnt that discovering my mindsets and my mind paths helps discovering myself and it is very useful way to discover myself. I am being more confident, I think in this methods.”

“I have enjoyed very much.”

The data collected at the end of unit 4 (see excerpt 8) show that the PA was reflecting deeply on everything. He recalled his own experiences from days when he had been an advisee in one of the PLMs. This led him to see how much he had progressed. He started to

wonder if anxiety is triggered by unfamiliar things or if being prepared for what life brings us is the most important skill for a calm and happy life. For the advisees, the data show an emerging self-awareness, including a deeper understanding of how their own motivation works, and why it is so critical to start questioning oneself.

Excerpt 8

Unit 4 PA Feedback Form excerpts

“When advisees were talking about their passions and interests, they were relaxed. But I realized that after talking to them, they had already been using techniques they wrote for Step 3 of 04-02. I supposed that their calmness is related to this situation. However, step 4 caused their calmness being lost. Because there were 2 common examples everybody could think of at first, It made advisees think more in order to write unsuccessful methods. They became nervous then. This made me think people’s anxiety could be triggered easily with the things they are not familiar with. That’s why being prepared what life brings us is the most important skill for a calm and happy life.”

“While talking about motivation, I was satisfied the content of my speech. When I looked at my progress on language abilities, I’ve learned so much.”

Student participant excerpts

“I learn that people make motivation themselves with variety way.”

“ I find my solutions and I think that while I face other problem, I can find again solutions.”

“ I have learnt that the first progress of learning process is asking yourself, if I question me with right questions, I can solve the problem easily.” It is very effective to question yourself and it is important to start being awareness.”

“Also my motivate words are change and improve.”

In unit 5 (see Excerpt 9), the data show that the PA was experiencing a possible transformation. He noticed he was starting to act like a PA outside of the PLM in his real life, and for the advisees, their awareness was still increasing in many areas. They learned that defining one's own success criteria is critical.

Excerpt 9

Unit 5 PA Feedback Form excerpts

“‘Off the record – outside of PLM sessions’, as I talked to advisees with their daily life problems, I realized that they took a friend, who they think he is successful, as a role model.”

“We were going to the end and I could see how much they had improved”

Unit 5 Student participant excerpts

“I learned meaning of success for me. Actually after meaning of success, I feel better and I focus on my aim.”

“I have learnt that there are many ideas about learning but I could organize all of them so that I can benefit from all of them.”

“I feel happy when I see my problems and thoughts are changed.”

Being the last unit of the PLM, unit 6 (see Excerpt 10) marked the end of the small group advising for this group. According to the PA, the most satisfying point of unit six was just to see how the advisees and himself progressed particularly in the metaphor drawings. For the advisees, as can also be seen in the excerpts they expressed their ideas about the whole PLM and they once again commented on the parts they liked and additionally they wrote about the change they had undergone thanks to the PLM.

Excerpt 10

Unit 6 PA Feedback Form excerpts

“I thought I am able to explain my thoughts well. Also, my speaking organization is improving day by day.”

The best tool, metaphorical drawing, helped us to see their progress. One of the advisees’ drawings included size difference comparing with the students’ first drawings. It referred to ‘It’s not a big problem for me’ as he said. Another advisee, whose problem was confusion about words’ order drew herself as a strong warrior who is fighting with letters. One advisee, whose problem was focusing, drew himself isolated to reach his goals. The last advisee, whose problem is basically stress, drew herself as a comfortable person in front of people who were there to listen to her.

These are the progress I could catch from their drawings. It refers to that when people try to draw their feelings, whether consciously or not they are generally open and honest about their problems.

Unit 6 Student participant excerpts

“I saw my changes (???) before PLM and after PLM Thank you =)”

“I have learnt that having control of emotions helps your aim and achievement. I feel better about my problem and now from my perspective, this problem is getting seem like easier.” “I have enjoyed.

“I learn my perspective is changing in this unit. Especially, metaphor draw is so important for me. Because my feelings changed.”

For RQ1, the findings suggest that both the PA and the students undergone a change with the help of the units in the PLM, they became aware of their problem, self-awareness started, and a possible transformation was seen in the feedback they provided at the end of each unit. Advisees noticed changes and improvements in themselves, and every one of them experienced an “aha moment” in their metaphor drawings when they compared the last one to the first one. The metaphor drawings were also analyzed to answer the second question in this study.

RQ 2. Can a Student, a Prior Participant of a PLM, Implement This Module as a PA Without Significant Additional Training?

In their book, Kato and Mynard (2015) talk about how advising tools are utilized “to facilitate reflective practices, which in turn promotes learning” (p. 29). They also underline that tools can be used in conjunction with reflective dialogue. The process of combining tools with dialogue is maximally powerful at facilitating learning and provides alternative ways of discussing a problem.

At the beginning of the PLM, all the students had to choose a learning-related issue on which to focus, and they worked on this one issue throughout the entire PLM. The issue they chose was their learning problem and they were asked to draw a metaphor on how they (at the time of drawing) felt about it. Advisees’ issues ranged from specific situations and emotions, such as “while I’m talking in public and learning new things, my stress level is getting up,” to very vague issues, “having distraction.” The figures seen below are the advisees’ drawings. Analyzing the drawings by using both verbal (asking the advisee to describe the drawing and also asking questions on that reflection) and visual tools (asking questions about the drawing) (Kalaja et al., 2013) can demonstrate how far they improved during the PLM and how the PA helped them in this PLM.

Figures 1 and 2 show drawings about the same issue: how the advisee perceives oneself with the learning issue at two different points in time. In the first drawing from unit 1

(Figure 1), it can be seen that the drawing is quite large, and it even goes outside the border in a couple of places. Also, his essay is huge. It dwarfs the size of the student. In the second drawing from unit 6 (Figure 2), everything is nice, neat, and compact, and the advisee is about the same size as his essay. After listening to the learner's explanation and comments, the PA commented that the advisee no longer saw his issue as a big problem. The learner agreed.

Figure 1

Advisee 1 Metaphor Drawing - Unit 1

Figure 2

Advisee 1 Metaphor Drawing - Unit 6

Excerpt 11

Advisee 1 Metaphor drawing audio script

A: Uh, my drawing is... it's me, and uh also at the end of the PLM. I know uh how to study to uh memorize academic words. Uh, I think that I become winner at end of the PLM because uh, I know a lot of academic words so uh I can reach all academic essays.

PA: Um, ok, thank you. Would you like to compare your first and second drawings?

A: Actually, uh, the first time, uh I don't I don't know how can I learn uh academic words uh but at the uh step by step in the PLM, uh I learn uh and also, I uh I learn how uh do, how to do uh plan my aim. Uh, in the first time, I uh forget my uh words which I memorized, but now uh I don't forget it because uh I study to uh, I study with a plan, therefore its uh I think I become the winner at uh the end of the PLM.

PA: Actually, I realized something, uh as the difference of your first and second uh drawings. First of all, at the beginning, uh, your academic essay you need to uh discover your need to read is too big, it's bigger than you on the [...], according to size.

A: This is because uh I uh close to / cross to academic essay. Uh I think that uh how can I understand this academic essay. And also, these academic essay uh bigger than me. Uh, therefore. But now, I know a lot of academic words, and also, I can read and understand these essays.

PA: So, yeah, actually, it refers to, I think, uh you can easily overcome them

A: Yeah

The next set of drawings in Figure 3 were done by the dyslexic advisee. On the first drawing at the beginning of the PLM, she drew herself quite small and in the word cloud, all the letters are huge. She appears to be very confused. She's tired, and exhausted. In her second drawing, the PA noticed that she drew herself as a strong warrior who is fighting with letters and her image is about the same size now as the word cloud.

Figure 3

Advisee 2 Metaphor Drawing - Unit 1

Pre-Training Metaphor Drawing

Name: _____ Date: _____

My PLM learning problem or goal: forgetting and mixing words are my biggest challenge in my learning process.

Instructions: Use this advising tool to show your advisor how you feel or how you see yourself with your PLM learning problem or goal. Think about how you feel about your PLM learning problem or goal. What do those feelings look like? What do you see inside your head? Can you imagine what your problem or their goal would look like if it was a picture? Draw this in the space above.

Figure 4

Advisee 2 Metaphor Drawing - Unit 6

Post-Training Metaphor Drawing

Name _____ Date _____

My PLM learning problem or goal: forgetting and mixing words

the Alphabet girl

3 A X I Z
4 B D H
2 C T 3 E K
1 2 M O

Instructions: Use this advising tool to show your advisor how you feel or how you see yourself with your PLM learning problem or goal now that you are at the end of the module. Think about how you feel about your PLM problem or goal as a result of everything you have learned in this module. Draw this in the space above.

Excerpt 12

Advisee 2 Metaphor drawing audio script

A: I draw. Ok, after the PLM, I feel that I can type problem and I write the Amazon Girl here [laughing] and a shield? Is that call a shield?

PA: Uh-huh, shield.

A: ...And I type my problem

PA: You don't have a mouth...

A: Yea, I don't know, maybe I can't--

PA: --Is it because of the [pain/paying?] dedicated? -

A: --Maybe I, I couldn--

PA: --about the [words/world??]

A: maybe [both laugh] I think I am strong; I can do it. I draw that.

PA: Ok, that's so nice. Would you like to compare yours?

A: Yea.

PA: Mm Actually, it's so good because uh, at the beginning again, you are --there are lots of letters and uh, letters and numbers around you--

A: Yes

PA: ...it's all round, it's everywhere and... you have one question mark on the first and there's a mouth --

A: [laughing]

PA: --and actually, it seems nervous--

A: --yea--

PA: --right? But now, you, you have a defense mechanism against these letters and numbers. It's a good expression, I think.

A: Awe, thank you. I think I get over afraid.

PA: Hmmm. That's so nice.

A: Yea.

In the next set of drawings (Figures 5 and 6), the advisee was distracted by everything, and he could not maintain his focus and showed that by drawing himself with multiple arms. Even when he is in bed, his mind is busy with the things he is supposed to finish. In his final drawing, however, he is much larger than his research table with all the data, and he drew himself separate to indicate that he is now able to focus on something.

Figure 5

Advisee 3 Metaphor Drawing - Unit 1

Figure 6

Advisee 3 Metaphor Drawing - Unit 6

Excerpt 13

Advisee 3 Metaphor drawing audio script

A: That's my picture, yes.

PA: Now there's an order.

A: [incomprehensible] as you see.

PA: Yea? You are smiling. [student laughter] Yea, not always. On the first drawing, he's not smiling actually. [student laughter]. Well, would you like to explain?

A: Actually--

PA: --I see some numbers on the table--

A: --my feelings. Actually, this is just the beginning of solution, but because of PLM, uh, I have, I have got ...flow awareness about me and, uh, I can remember again to ask me what you want, what you be, how do you find a solution. And after that, uh, there is awareness help me to solve in this process.

PA: Actually, as I've known you before PLM, you are like, you use like question yourself about things, about the situations. But now, it's like, as you said before on the previous sessions, you remember questioning yourself again. Right?

A: Yes. Yes.

PA: I think that's the most important point that PLM gives you.

A: yes.

PA: Ok. And also, there's an order on the table, right?

A: yes.

PA: You are smiling now--

A: --and--

PA: --in the second drawing

A: Other interesting point is ...actually, my PLM learning is or go hard. By [incomprehensible]. I have right now is having destruction. Actually, it's uh, focusing on problem. Uh, the new one? This is focusing on solving, solution.

PA: I couldn't--

A: --managing destruction problem.

PA: Umm, that's so nice. So, actually it's, uh, it could be explained as you accept that problem and you just need to know that problem. I mean, you need to live with it--

A: Yes

PA: --you just need to organize, as you said, manage this. I like it

A. Thank you

In the final drawings (Figures 6 and 7), the PA noticed that this advisee's problem was stress related. The first picture showed her stress, and the second picture showed her confidently presenting in front of others; she drew herself as a comfortable person in front of others who were there to listen to her. According to the PA, this is surprising because she was

afraid of speaking in front of other people. Yet, she drew herself as a presenter experiencing enjoyment, which indicated a transformation on her part.

Figure 7

Advisee 4 Metaphor Drawing - Unit 1

Pre-Training Metaphor Drawing

Name: _____ Date: _____

My PLM learning problem or goal: While I'm talking in public and learning new things
my stress level getting up.

Instructions: Use this advising tool to show your advisor how you feel or how you see yourself with your PLM learning problem or goal. Think about how you feel about your PLM learning problem or goal. What do those feelings look like? What do you see inside your head? Can you imagine what your problem or their goal would look like if it was a picture? Draw this in the space above.

Figure 8

Advisee 4 Metaphor Drawing - Unit 6

Post-Training Metaphor Drawing

Name: _____ Date: _____

My PLM learning problem or goal: my PLM learning is stress. While I'm talking in public and
learning new things my stress level getting up

Instructions: Use this advising tool to show your advisor how you feel or how you see yourself with your PLM learning problem or goal now that you are at the end of the module. Think about how you feel about your PLM problem or goal as a result of everything you have learned in this module. Draw this in the space above.

Excerpt 14

Advisee 4 Metaphor drawing audio script

A: I [nervous laughter] My PLM problem is stress. And [paper rustling sound] second drawing, uh, that's me and I find my presentation and my feelings so could calm into it, and before presentation, I feel a little nervous, but it's normal. After the PLM, I can take, um, more um slowly, and how can I order, how can I study effectively, and I learn like this And before the PLM... drawing, I tried too much and I am not confident about the topic--

PA: hmm

A: --because I want to be, um, perfect. But now, uh, I see it's not necessary actually.

PA: Huh. So, you now are more, you are more comfortable--

A: yes

PA: --for instance, presenting something, and uh you are more confident, right?

A: yea

PA: Ok, that's so nice. Thank you.

To answer RQ2, the metaphor drawings were used. Both the metaphor drawings and the audio scripts show that a PA, a prior participant of a PLM, can implement a PLM and lead a group of students in their path to self-awareness.

Implications

One of the biggest findings of this study is that in order to implement a PLM, a graduate of the PLM does not need a significant amount of training. The graduate can act as a PA, with mentoring from the advisor trainers when necessary, they can lead a group of students in the PLM. In addition, in this study, the PA gained a lot from this experience. He gained confidence and leadership experience, and he became a role model for his friends by being open and honest, as Newton and Ender (2000) also pointed out, a PA does not need to be perfect but does need to be honest.

The advisees, on the other hand, started with questions and they had high stress levels since they were unsure about how to progress in their studies. After the completion of the PLM, they were clear about how to proceed. They expressed positive subjective well-being, as well as a positive outlook on their future. One participant remarked on their unit 6 feedback form, "I have learnt that having control of emotions helps your aim and achievement. I feel better about my problem and now from my perspective, this problem is

getting seem like easier.” Another commented, “At the end of the PLM, I learn how to do plan to study and memorize word. Thanks to PLM, I learn a lot of words and hence (???) I don’t overrate an academic essay.” Overall, the advisees chose an area of focus, they focused on that issue throughout the PLM and while trying to overcome their challenges in there are of focus, they gained an understanding of their overall learning process.

Limitations of the Study and Implications for Further Research

There are some important points to note concerning the study. One, this is a small case study and the findings are not generalizable. Secondly, as mentioned in the methodology, the student and PA participants all knew each other from their English exam preparatory classes. In this study, this familiarity was a benefit as it provided motivation and encouragement for everyone to complete the study. It would be interesting to repeat this study with other learner groups, to see whether any positive outcomes are experienced.

One of the most surprising outcomes involved a dyslexic student in the group who was able to overcome her fear concerning her problems with confusion surrounding letters and numbers. As previously stated, her initial PLM focus issue was “forgetting and mixing words are my biggest challenging in my learning progress.” However, during her comparison of her two metaphor drawings, she summed up what she learned as, “I get over my afraid.” Her dyslexia was not known at the beginning of the study, but the results are extremely encouraging. Thus, it would be interesting to see a follow-up study that focuses on the participation of learners with learning difficulties such as dyslexic students to see if they could all benefit from the PLM.

It was seen that the trial was far more successful than hoped at the beginning of the study. This program can offer an alternative to the learning advisory programs in other self-access centers that do not have time to offer lengthy peer advising training programs. It can also be a self-sustaining program because advisor trainers can train PAs while they are facilitating the PLM for the other advisees. This study has presented a time-efficient model for the institution it was conducted in, and it can be conducted in other institutions to see if other learners could benefit from their participation. The materials and tools used in the study are currently in the process of becoming a resource book for learning advisors by Howard et al. (2021).

Conclusion

This study started with a question from a student who finished a small group advising course (PLM), and at that time, the researchers were trying to find an alternative to the

existing peer advising program. The student wanted to become a PA and the researchers wanted to check if this was feasible. The aim was to see if a PA, without significant training, could lead a group in a PLM. Research questions were prepared to see the impacts and implications of such a study. Data were gathered from feedback forms of the advisees and the PA and analyzed by two researchers to find common themes. In addition to the feedback forms, advisees were asked to do two metaphor drawings one at the beginning and another at the end about how they feel about the PLM focus they chose, and the drawings were also analyzed using verbal and visual tools.

As a result of this study, the researchers suggest that a PLM can affectively be implemented by a PA who is a prior graduate of the study and as significant amount of time and training is not necessary to train a PA for a PLM. The students can gain a lot with the help of the PA. The results indicate that both the PA and the advisees benefited from this experience and this study suggest an alternative to other PA training programs.

Notes on the Contributors

Stephanie Lea Howard is the Co-coordinator of the Learning Advisory Program (LAP), the assistant coordinator of the Independent Learning Center (ILC), and an EFL instructor and learning advisor at AYBU-SFL. Her interests include mindsets, perfectionism, advising in language learning and advising tools.

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Hamid Furkan Suluova is a peer advisor who holds a BA degree in Engineering and is pursuing his graduate studies in the UK. His interests include intelligent systems, robotics, and improving himself and his ability to provide motivation and support to his friends.

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