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## **Groningen 2021**

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Last year, on August 18th, the Research Network on Learner Autonomy (ReNLA) symposium entitled “Autonomy in the time of complexity in a changing world” took place as part of the online AILA Congress 2021. Together with Andy Gao, we planned the symposium carefully between 2018 and 2019 for the original 2020 congress. We were obviously disheartened when the congress had to be postponed and disappointed that we could not meet old-time friends and new faces physically as we had originally envisioned. Nonetheless, we were happy with the outcome of the online symposium and the possibility to see and interact with the presenters and attendees even if it was through a screen. Although it was particularly difficult to work around the time differences with presenters from different continents and time zones, the symposium was a fruitful ground to learn and discuss what autonomy colleagues and enthusiasts are doing to promote and further understand learner autonomy in different parts of the globe.

The symposium was divided into morning and afternoon sessions (Central European Summer time), and for each session we had featured speakers whose trajectories, expertise, and knowledge in the field set the mood for the rest of the sessions. The morning featured speaker was **Phil Benson** (Macquarie University, Australia), who discussed space as a factor in the complexity of language learner agency and identity. The afternoon featured speaker was **Jo Mynard** (Kanda University of International Studies, Japan), who presented results of various research projects into language learners’ perceptions and use of a self-access centre in Japan.

The symposium included a total of 11 standard presentations and three poster presentations that featured studies exploring different elements of learner autonomy in different and diverse contexts. Some studies explored how language teachers undertake strategic efforts and achieve autonomy in professional practice. Other studies critically examined how language learner identity and agency could be used to generate insights into autonomous language learning. The symposium featured studies from Brazil, China, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Kingdom.

The different presentations provided further insights and understandings of emerging topics in the field of learner autonomy. Some of the main areas covered by the different presentations included learning in the classroom and beyond, teacher autonomy, self-access centres, language advising settings, and technology-enhanced language learning. Undoubtedly, this symposium, which has become a tradition among the learner autonomy community for the past nearly 30 years, is one of the most important forums where we come together to meet and discuss new ideas and understandings of our shared passion: learner and teacher autonomy.

### **Notes on the Contributors**

Dr Diego Mideros is a lecturer in Spanish at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus in Trinidad and Tobago. He holds a PhD in Linguistics awarded by the same university. His research interests include learner autonomy and qualitative approaches to language learning research. He is the author of the book “Am I an autonomous language learner? Self-perceived autonomy in Trinidad and Tobago: Sociocultural perspectives”, published by Candlin & Mynard.

Dr Kerstin Dofs is an autonomous learning practitioner and researcher based in the language self-access centre (LSAC) at Ara Institute of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand. She has been an active contributor to the autonomous learning field since she first participated in the Individual Learning Association (ILA) conference in Auckland in 2005. Her more recent research interest is around fulfilments in an LSAC of the notions for enhanced motivation in the Self Determination Theory (SDT), related to the concepts of competence, relatedness, and autonomy.