

International Perspectives on Language Spaces

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We are delighted to present this special issue on international perspectives on language spaces, a collaborative project between JASAL and the International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALLT).

The formal collaboration between JASAL and IALLT began in 2021, with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two organizations. JASAL and IALLT became sister organizations with the goal of sharing information and promoting the counterpart's events. Indeed, the 2021 IALLT conference and 2021 JASAL conference sparked the idea for this collaborative special issue of the JASAL Journal, co-edited with IALLT. Both conferences were held fully online, and both sides made great efforts to accommodate participation from its sister organization, including consideration of the time zones and hosting social events to welcome members of the other organization. This special issue was proposed as a way to maintain momentum and encourage further exchange between the organizations.

As Lavolette (2019) pointed out, US language centers (LCs) and Japanese self-access learning centers (SALCs) have much in common. Both offer spaces for language learners and teachers on their campuses. In parallel fashion, JASAL brings together scholars and practitioners from SALCs, and IALLT brings together scholars and practitioners from US language spaces. This special issue seeks to illustrate perspectives from both organizations, highlighting what language spaces excel at in their contexts. Contributions to this issue come from authors not only in the US and Japan, but also from a binational group of authors in Europe.

Despite the similarities between language spaces in Japan, the US, and worldwide, differences—no matter how slight—may make the respective bodies of literature difficult for nonspecialists to understand. That is, the language and culture of self-access centers is unfamiliar to US LC practitioners, and the reverse is also true. Fortunately, language teachers

and advisors are a group that is extremely well prepared to overcome such differences. This special issue attempts to do so by providing explanations of concepts that may seem unnecessary to one side, but we believe will serve as useful introductions to the other side.

Starting with the US context, the concept of advising for language learning (ALL) is generally unknown. For that reason, US LC practitioners may need more details about the roles of advisors. These advisors are faculty or staff members who conduct advising sessions with language learners, typically one-on-one. The learners generally participate in the sessions voluntarily and without connection to particular classes. The advisors may be full- or part-time, and they may have teaching duties or administrative roles in addition to conducting advising sessions. However, in their advising roles, they do not serve as teachers or conversation partners. Instead, they conduct reflective dialogue sessions with learners about their language learning. The sessions may be conducted in the learner's first or second language, depending on their needs and the advisor's abilities. Rather than being directive, the advisor strives to help the learner reflect on their needs, consider their goals, and reach their own conclusions about how to proceed in their language learning (Kato & Mynard, 2016).

In the first article of this special issue, **Mynard** provides a useful introduction to self-access language learning (SALL) in Japan. After describing different types of SALCs, the article offers an overview of current and emerging focus areas of SALL scholarship and practice, including, among others, ALL, social processes, self-directed learning, translanguaging and multilingualism, diversity and inclusion, and space design.

Readers based in Japan and elsewhere may be familiar with SALCs and language advising, but much less familiar with the roles of US language centers and their work with faculty and staff in particular. For that reason, in the next article of this issue, **Kraemer and Lavolette** provide a general overview of US LCs, including data on language centers and specific examples of three language centers from different institutional contexts.

Following these two introductory articles is a contribution from **Marzin, Pemberton, and Takada**, three novice language learning advisors at the SALC at Kanda University of International Studies, in which they reflect on their emotional experiences during their early advising practice. Moving from the perspective of the learning advisor to that of peer advisors, **Moriya** analyzes the emotional or lived experiences of Japanese EFL learners who participated in peer advisory sessions within the classroom. The article provides practical examples of classroom-based peer advising and a unique perspective on the peer advising experience through the comments from different perspectives (i.e., advisor, advisee, and observer) presented simultaneously.

Fostering language learners' intercultural sensitivity through a self-access module and US-Japan telecollaborative exchanges is the focus of **Terantino's** contribution. Data revealed statistically significant growth in students' intercultural sensitivity and appreciation for the direct contact with target cultural informants and the focus on pop culture. Moving beyond the contexts of the US and Japan, **Jauregi Ondarra, Christoforou, and Boglou's** article describes how the VR social application AltspaceVR served as an immersive self-access language learning space in a collaborative online international learning experience between language education students in the Netherlands and Cyprus. Their intercultural project aimed at increasing the digital and cultural literacy of the students and providing authenticity in the setting of practicing a foreign language by stimulating authentic communication. The final

contribution, by **DiSalvo and Ross**, introduces the Language Exchange program at Harvard University, a database of over 800 active users from the Harvard community. The authors describe what it means to connect language learners for speaking practice in the age of increasingly sophisticated artificial intelligence, how such a platform can promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, and best practices for building a sense of community when dealing with a heterogeneous group of language learners.

We hope you will find this special issue as stimulating to read as we found the curation process. The next step in connecting language spaces around the world begins with you exploring these articles.

References

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