Reframing Self-Access: Reviewing the Literature and Updating a Mission Statement for a New Era

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Abstract

This paper documents part of the process of preparing to fully reopen the physical Self-Access Learning Center (SALC) in a university in Japan after being somewhat interrupted during two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Self-access is becoming increasingly complex, multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary and it is necessary to revisit SALC mission statements periodically, particularly after major events or changes. A group of language educators working at the university examined literature and theories from a range of perspectives in order to inform the future directions of the SALC. In a series of meetings over a one-semester period, one or two team members led a guided discussion based on some key papers, talks or other resources related to eight themes. After a semester of such discussions, they returned to the mission statement and re-examined it, making it more theoretically robust and specific, acting as a guide for SALC services for a new era.

Keywords: self-access, theory, mission, complexity

The Self-Access Learning Center (SALC) at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) in Japan opened in 2001 and is in its third iteration. It currently occupies a

large facility and, before the pandemic, welcomed around 1,000 users per day, the majority of whom are Japanese undergraduate students majoring in languages, cultures, or liberal arts. All undergraduates at the university take compulsory English language classes, and the SALC is one of the places where students can access resources, spaces and communities to support their language development, take self-directed learning courses, and attend one-to-one advising sessions to help them to take charge of their language learning. The SALC employs learning advisors, full-time administrators and student staff and is also home to a dedicated research institute.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted operations in Japan in March 2020, and the SALC, like other institutions around the world, was forced to switch online and support students in different ways (Davies et al., 2020). In the second year of the pandemic, the SALC gradually reopened, but we were faced with new challenges, such as ensuring student safety while attempting to maintain a welcoming environment. We continued to strive to support the development of language learner autonomy even when many of our in-person services were still limited. In this paper, we look to the future of self-access in a new era following the pandemic and document an important part of our preparation for reopening; reexamining our mission statement to ensure that it represents a SALC that is well placed to support our students' futures. A mission statement is a public declaration that we can make to outline our core values, purpose and commitment to students and the university community. As part of the process, we took the opportunity to draw on a range of perspectives and examine some of the literature and theories from a variety of fields not commonly associated with self-access language learning. The team (the authors of this paper) comprised 14 members with diverse backgrounds. We are all language educators / learning advisors and researchers, and our characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

About the 14 Authors

Male	7	Female	7
Japanese nationals	4	Non-Japanese nationals	10
Countries of origin			8
Countries lived in			30+
Years of experience as language educators			Between 3 and 30 years
Years of experience with self-access			Between 3 and 26 years

Master's degrees completed (applied linguistics or related)	14
Doctoral degrees in progress	3
Doctoral degrees completed	3
Different languages spoken fluently	7

It is becoming increasingly clear that self-access is a complex, multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary field. As academics, we need to be able to draw on relevant theories in order to understand our work more thoroughly. We hoped that discussions would bring about an increased awareness of the field that could help us to identify areas for growth and change or identify gaps in our current direction and areas for research.

Before outlining the process and summarizing our discussions and analysis, we would like to present our revised mission statements. The first one (Figure 1) is a general reference document and is a short, all-encompassing summary. The second one (Figure 2) gives a more detailed breakdown of what we do and is designed to be shared with the university community and the general public on the SALC website. (See Appendix 1 for the Japanese versions.)

Figure 1

The 2022 SALC Mission Statement

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The 2022 SALC Mission Statement

The SALC community aims to facilitate *prosocial and lifelong autonomous language learning within a diverse and multilingual learning environment. We aim to provide supportive and inclusive spaces, resources and facilities for developing ownership of the learning process. We believe effective language learning is achieved through ongoing reflection and takes variables such as previous experiences, interests, personality, motivations, needs and goals into account and promotes confidence and competence when studying and using an additional language.

*Prosocial behavior is something you choose to do to benefit or help others.

</div>

Figure 2

An Expanded Version of the Mission Statement for the Website

The 2022 SALC Mission Statement for the Website

The SALC community aims to facilitate *prosocial and lifelong autonomous language learning within a diverse and multilingual learning environment.

Specifically, our objectives are to support learners in:

- becoming part of a diverse, inclusive and multilingual learning community
- taking a prosocial perspective by not only interacting in their target languages but also supporting others in doing so
- becoming more aware and in control of their learning processes through reflection
- understanding variables that affect their learning such as previous experiences, interests, personality, motivations, needs and goals
- utilizing appropriate communities, spaces, and resources for their own learning needs
- becoming confident language users
- developing language skills needed for future goals and dreams
- developing leadership skills to understand and direct their own learning and also support others

*Prosocial behavior is something you choose to do to benefit or help others.

The previous (2017) SALC Mission Statement

The most recent SALC Mission Statement finalized in 2017 and printed in our handbook, brochures, and websites is shown in Figure 3. Although we did not disagree with any of these statements or objectives, the project allowed us the opportunity to examine relevant theories in order to substantiate our mission statement more theoretically, expand on it and make it more specific through the process of re-examining the literature. We took it for granted that *autonomy* would form a key part of any revised mission statement. Our institutional definitions are shown in Figure 4. These were developed collaboratively in 2019 in a similar process to the one documented in this paper and are published in internal and public SALC documents.

Figure 3

The Previous (2017) SALC Mission Statement for the Website

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The Previous (2017) SALC Mission Statement for the Website

The SALC aims to foster lifelong learner autonomy as an international community by empowering learners to engage in reflective practice and take charge of their language learning.

Specifically, our objectives are to support learners in:

- utilizing appropriate communities, spaces, and resources for learning
- maximizing their opportunities for interdependence and interaction with others
- becoming more aware and in control of their learning processes
- achieving their language-learning and other goals
- becoming confident language users
- developing language skills for future study and careers
- developing leadership skills

</div>

Figure 4

SALC Definitions of Autonomy and Autonomous Learning

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Autonomy is the psychological freedom to experience self-direction and personal endorsement in the initiation and regulation of one's language learning and related behaviour. Autonomy is characterised by volitional action, and genuine self-endorsement of the personal meaning or self-relevance of a learning task.

Autonomous language learners are students who reflect deeply on their learning, know how to learn effectively as members of a supportive social learning community, and choose personally meaningful goals.

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Procedure

The procedure included several steps over six months. Initially, we brainstormed some potentially interesting areas from the literature on the peripheries of our knowledge. We were keen to expand our understanding of new areas, so we excluded the literature that was already generally within our knowledge and tends to be closely associated with self-access, e.g., learner autonomy, self-directed learning, reflective dialogue, computer-assisted language

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learning, and self-regulation. However, these fields would continue to be an integral part of the SALC mission.

Next, we agreed on ten areas from the wider literature (we only had time to discuss eight of these). We listed some key articles, recorded lectures or other resources that could add to our understanding of these areas and could help us to examine relevant insights for our work in self-access. The team member(s) leading the weekly discussion identified one or two resources in advance each week and some discussion questions that everyone should access and think about before the upcoming discussion.

Each week, the whole team (apart from two instances where one of us was unavailable) met online and spent around 30 minutes discussing the ideas from the articles and lectures, considering how the ideas might apply to our own practice. We did not record the sessions as we wanted to keep the process as informal and non-intimidating as possible and create an environment where everyone felt free to contribute as much or as little as they liked without judgment. The purpose was to develop our knowledge in a collaborative and collegial environment. After each discussion, the team member(s) who had led the session made brief notes on the theories and what we discussed. We later expanded these notes into written summaries. An abridged version of each of these has been included in this paper.

At the end of the semester, we examined the 2017 version of the mission statement and discussed what changes might be necessary to ensure it aligned with our values and understanding of self-access. After this, we drafted our new mission statements (one general one and one for the website) (Figures 1 and 2).

Finally, we conducted a lexical analysis using the qualitative software Nvivo (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2020) in order to discern whether the most common keywords in the written summaries were also present in the revised mission statements. We made some minor adjustments to the wording of the mission statement intended for the website at this point.

Summaries of the Discussions

In this section of the paper, we provide details of the articles and other resources that we consulted, the discussion questions and a summary of the theories and our discussion. The original written summaries of each 'theme' were longer (and we can provide them on request) and have been abridged for the purposes of publication in this journal.

Theme 1: Complexity

Sources Explored

- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2019). On language learner agency: A complex dynamic system theory perspective.
- Hiver, P., & Al-Hoorie, A. (2016). A dynamic ensemble for second language research: Putting complexity theory into practice.

Discussion Questions

1. How does (your understanding of) the theory relate to our work in the SALC? (if at all)
2. What do we already do that could be considered a complexity approach?
3. Is this a theory that we would like to keep in mind for future research and underpinning self-access?
4. Is there any relationship between CDST and self-access?
5. What would be the macro and micro contextual considerations to consider when looking at self-access?

Summary of the Theory and our Discussion

Over the last two decades, complex dynamic systems theory (CDST) has been widely explored throughout different areas of applied linguistics (Larsen-Freeman, 2017). CDST questions the notions of cause and effect, suggesting instead a relational view that embraces emergence, dynamism, openness and nonlinearity of the processes, spaces and agents involved in language learning (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). Current understanding positions complexity thinking as a meta-theory that provides ontological and epistemological principles to understand and contextualize language development (Hiver & Al-Hoorie, 2016; Larsen-Freeman, 2017). One of these principles refers to emergence, defined as the result "that arises from the interaction of the components of the system while interacting with its environment" (Larsen-Freeman, 2017, p. 15). CDST encourages a holistic view of the person, considering not only how they experience language learning but also how they relate with their contexts and other agents in such a process (Larsen-Freeman, 2019).

One of the contexts where language learning takes place is a SALC which is a complex and dynamic learning environment where people with different learning needs, interests and goals come together to learn languages. Different learning opportunities and

resources are offered to these individuals, including advising in language learning, conversation opportunities with students and teachers, learning communities, among others. These opportunities are affordances themselves for students to act on, or they can even be described as complex subsystems, as is the case of advising in language learning (Castro, 2019).

Our understanding is that one of the functions of a SALC is to enhance conditions for the emergence of transformation in language learning. This means that learners should be able to perceive different affordances of the environment and consider how they can operationalize their new knowledge in different learning situations. The conditions for the emergence of transformation include opportunities for students to actively engage in and with the SALC, as well as support for them to reflect deeply on their language learning, considering the affordances available in the environment that may help them thrive and achieve their learning goals and visions. This also involves fostering reflections on who they are as language learners and individuals who are part of different communities, both locally and globally situated.

Theme 2: Self-Determination Theory

Sources Explored
- Reeve, J. (2022). What it means to 'take ownership over one's own learning' in a self-determination theory analysis.
- Noels, K. A., et al. (2019). Self-determination and motivated engagement in language learning.

Discussion Questions
1. Can you identify examples of our SALC as an 'autonomy-supportive' environment?
2. To be as autonomy supportive as possible, what might we consider to be priorities for the next academic year as we "re-launch" the SALC? How could these be implemented and what are some rationales for these priorities or ideas for change?
3. As learning advisors, what are some of the ways we can provide autonomy support and help our learners experience a sense of ownership of their own behavior, and identify ways they can engage in language learning in personally meaningful ways?
4. What might be some potential pitfalls we must be aware of and avoid so as not inadvertently act in controlling ways in our interactions with students?

5. How could we encourage more of a focus on "agentic engagement" in the SALC (while maintaining an awareness of the benefits of focused behavioral engagement)?

Summary of the Theory and our Discussion

At the heart of self-determination theory (SDT) is the assumption that people are naturally inclined to engage actively with their environment, seek personal growth, and develop close supportive relationships (Ryan & Deci, 2017). From an SDT perspective, a learner's autonomous motivation, i.e., the motivational state of volitional and self-endorsed action, is highly dependent on the environment and the extent to which it is supportive of an experience of basic psychological need satisfaction (Reeve, 2022). These needs are: autonomy (the need to experience personal ownership of one's behavior), competence (experiencing growth and effectiveness when engaging with one's environment), and relatedness (feeling valued and cared for in one's close relationships) (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT's basic psychological needs are considered to be etic universals as they can be empirically substantiated as relevant across cultures, age, gender and ethnicity (Ryan & Deci, 2019). However, ways that the environment–person dialectic can support need satisfaction is dependent on local factors, both culturally and as relates to individual differences.

We aim to provide an autonomy-supportive self-access learning environment beyond the confines of the classroom. Autonomy support is understood as fostering both autonomy and relatedness satisfaction, and when it occurs with structure, competence as well (Ryan & Deci, 2020). We view this support as essential to our SALC. When the learning environment supports basic psychological need satisfaction, this facilitates autonomous forms of motivation, which fosters internalization, learner well-being, and flourishing (Noels et al., 2019). Integral to this process is *prosocial behavior* which is "voluntary behavior intended to benefit another" (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 646). The support of prosocial behavior originates in child psychology and has been applied to the field of education by Jang et al. (2020) and to self-access by Mynard (2022). A prosocial perspective will also support the ideas summarised in themes 3, 4 and 5 of this paper.

In our discussions, we identified several autonomy-supportive characteristics of our SALC. We also noted some potential areas of focus for the immediate future. For example, offering optimal support and structure for learning and continuing to support learners in reflecting on their interests and curiosity as they pursue intrinsic goals.

Theme 3: Social Justice

Source Explored

- Keddie, A. (2012). Schooling and social justice through the lenses of Nancy Fraser.

Discussion Questions

1. List possible barriers our students may have to participating as peers.
2. What do we already do well in the SALC to encourage participation for all?
3. What more could we do to encourage participation?
4. What other sociological/social justice issues should we explore in our setting?

Summary of the Theory and our Discussion

Practitioners and researchers in the field of language education have rightly focused on the social-interactive nature of learning and the importance of attending to students' psychological needs. However, the sociology of education is an area that needs more attention. As David Block suggests, language educators globally have made some attempts to overcome injustices related to identity and culture, such as gender bias and racism. Still, they have tended not to explore redistribution issues related to social class or economics (Block, 2018). Social justice is the search for equity and giving respect to all (Atkins & Duckworth, 2019) (see Theme 5). In a university self-access center, that means ensuring every student is supported to participate in the community as fully as they wish.

For our discussion, we explored a paper that focuses on *participatory parity.* Participatory parity within a group comes from valuing all members' knowledge, opinions, and background so that everyone has equal power and can operate as peers (Davies, 2021). In our discussion, some groups highlighted the complexity of achieving this in Japan, where we felt hierarchies that separate teachers and students, native and non-native speakers of English, and *senpai* and *kohai* (upperclassmen and lowerclassmen) are ingrained in the culture. One key factor that team members noted as a barrier to participation was the amount of time students are able to spend in the SALC, and that may be related to social class or economic status of the students and other social factors like the pressure senior students have to enter the graduate job market. Moving forward, we would like to find ways to make the SALC a welcoming place and a meaningful experience and to give a sense of belonging to those unable to spend much time there. Further consideration is needed in how to encourage more

democratic participation by involving students more in the management, planning and running of the SALC.

Theme 4: Multilingualism

Sources Explored

- The Douglas Fir Group (2016). A transdisciplinary framework for SLA in a multilingual world.
- García, O. et al. (2021). Rejecting abyssal thinking in the language and education of racialized bilinguals: A manifesto

Discussion Questions

1. What evidence have you seen for/against students' biases regarding multilingualism / language competence?
2. Is our rationale for the language policies clear? Is it accepted and shared by all parties? *(language policy in the SALC brochure below)*

3. Do we have a role or responsibility in shaping students' beliefs regarding multilingualism?
4. Do ideologies prevent our students from accessing any resources / communities / opportunities in the SALC?

Summary of the Theory and our Discussion

Our team has often puzzled over how to promote English use within the SALC and how to encourage and help students embrace all of their multilingual resources in support of their language learning. In recent years, a key concept that has emerged in discussing the practices of multilinguals from a more holistic view is *translanguaging*, or the ways in which multilingual speakers draw from all of their available linguistic resources in communication

(García et al., 2021; García & Li Wei, 2014). Rather than drawing from separate linguistic systems, in the more holistic/dynamic view of multilingualism, all of a multilingual speaker's semiotic resources and linguistic capacities are seen as part of their competence (Douglas Fir Group, 2016). As it pertains at its core to the agency of multilinguals, translanguaging has substantial potential for transforming how we and SALC users alike think about issues such as language status, ideologies, or power relations in the SALC environment (Li Wei, 2021).

Additionally, ideologies have powerful effects on language learning, especially multilingual learning. Ideologies, particularly negative ones, can create perceptions of multilingual or minority language speakers that place them in disadvantaged positions (see Theme 3). Our own users, particularly those who major in languages other than English or who struggle with their English proficiency (or even our faculty) may be affected by similar, potentially unintended, ideologies existing within the university or SALC. In turn, the effects of such ideologies can influence their usage or perception of the SALC.

In our discussion, three key points emerged. First, issues relating to language learning and/or use made us consider making a bridge between language practice in the SALC and real life. Second, the belief in native speakers or native-like speakers as the ideal for language competence affects learners' perceptions of their own competence. Finally, the current language policies in the SALC should be revisited, and awareness-raising scaffoldings toward multilingual learning need to be introduced explicitly.

Theme 5: Inclusion and Universal Design for Learning

Resources Explored

- CAST (2018). Universal design for learning guidelines version 2.2.
- Rose, D. H. et al. (2006). Universal design for learning in postsecondary education: Reflections on principles and their actions.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2018). Including all students: A complex systems perspective.

Discussion Questions

1. What types of communities exist in our SALC?
2. Do we have an implicit bias to certain groups of students?
3. What kind of communities will promote inclusive practice in our SALC?
4. How can we nurture/welcome these communities?
5. When you look at the UDL guideline (CAST, 2018), what do you notice?

Summary of the Theory and our Discussion

Inclusive education and practice consider the needs of an increasingly diverse population of learners. By respecting gender, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, first language, ability-based diversity, etc., we can create a more supportive learning environment for learners. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has its roots in neuroscience, and it aims to remove barriers through instructional designs that offer learner variability options. By incorporating UDL principles, our learners will be better accommodated with their needs even if they have not yet identified their own barriers or are not ready to disclose them (Tobin & Behiling, 2018). While both inclusive education and UDL share particular common ground in educational equity and disabilities, their approaches for scaffolding learning for learner variability should also be considered beneficial for ALL learners who are all different and have various learning needs inside and outside the classroom.

Through our discussions, we became aware that although we claim to value and nurture inclusive communities, we might show implicit biases to certain groups of students and unconscious exclusive attitudes within our communities in our social climate (see Theme 3). We discussed some examples, such as some students who feel included in a community at the conversation lounge where others felt excluded from this group (Mynard et al., 2020). However, we are already taking some positive steps. Learning communities in our SALC include those based on shared interest and identity, and we have provided training for the community leaders to be autonomy-supportive (see Theme 2) and inclusive (see Watkins, 2021 for course details).

It was helpful to develop an understanding of the institution and society's existing biases towards certain types of learners. For example, not only seeing our students as language learners but as whole people who have their own lives outside our university and are affected by things that happen in these lives. We would like to encourage such views among our students and colleagues in our everyday practice and research to promote an inclusive climate in our SALC communities.

Theme 6: Emotion and Emotion Regulation

Sources Explored

- Wang, Y. et al. (2021). Researching and practising positive psychology in second/foreign language learning and teaching: The past, current status and future directions.
- Gkonou, C., & Oxford, R. L., (2020). Working with the complexity of language learners' emotions and emotion regulation strategies.
- Roth, G. et al. (2019). Integrative emotion regulation: Process and development from a self-determination theory perspective.

Discussion questions

Mission statement-specific discussion:

1. In what ways does our current mission statement (and practice) reflect our students' affective needs? Any modifications needed?
2. What concerns, if any, do you have about including affective strategies/emotional regulation into our mission statement (and practice) (Concerns could be ethical, training, resource-based etc.)

Practice-specific discussion

1. What resources or strategies do we have/use which currently support our students' affective needs? Are there any areas for improvement?

Summary of the Theory and our Discussion

Emotions are at the core of language learning and have a role to play in individuals' ability to function optimally. Promoting student well-being has become an explicit part of institutional vision and mission statements in higher education (Dahill-Brown & Jayawickreme, 2016). Practically speaking, however, equipping all students with the tools and providing the support services they need to thrive is a daunting task for any institution. This is largely due to the complex nature of emotion, and the vast array of conceptualizations, beliefs, responses to, and experiences emotions can elicit. From an SDT perspective (See Theme 2), emotions are vital signals that can serve to provide information that, once identified, can lead to greater autonomous regulation (Roth et al., 2019). As learning advisors, we are able to work with students to develop their self-awareness by focusing their attention on their emotions and helping them to identify what they are feeling and why. In terms of emotional regulation, Gkonou and Oxford (2020) offer strategies to select and modify situations, (re)directing attention, 'reframing' how emotional experiences are viewed

and influencing experiential, behavior or physiological aspects of emotional responding through simple or relaxing activities.

Schreiner (2018) proposes a two-pronged focus on individuals as well as environmental conditions within campuses to address student well-being. In our discussions, we identified our key strengths and ideas where emotions could be better represented. These included involving students in creating a students' mission statement and clarifying the roles of learning advisors. We also discussed some concerns, such as students not having resources or the desire to talk about their emotions. We noted that advising tools have been very helpful for learners (Shelton-Strong & Mynard, 2021) and consider the rapport and trust between learning advisors and students to be the most effective tool for offering emotional support (Shelton-Strong & Tassinari, 2022).

Theme 7: Umwelt

Sources Explored

- Ray, S. (2017, July). Got Umwelt? A children's book that will blow your philosophical mind.
- Chang, R. S. (Ed.). (2009). Relating to environments: A new look at Umwelt.
- Schroer, S. A. (2019). Jakob von Uexküll: The concept of Umwelt and its potentials for an anthropology beyond the human.

Discussion Questions

1. Did learning about the concept of Umwelt make an impact on how you "see" the SALC?
2. In your opinion, how are the Umwels of students unique from learning advisors regarding (but not limited to) the SALC?
3. How are students supported in understanding/processing the many affordances the SALC has?
4. How are learning advisors supported in understanding the many affordances the SALC has (i.e., from the students' perspective)?
5. Continuing von Uexküll's music metaphor, which instrument are you playing in the SALC's polyphonic orchestra?

Summary of the Theory and our Discussion

Umwelt—'environment' when directly translated from German to English—is a concept coined by the German biologist and also an early pioneer in the development of the field of semiotics, Jakob Von Uexküll in his book *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals*. In basic terms, Von Uexküll argued that no matter how simple or complex, all living creatures had to be understood as subjects. With that understanding, each living being's perception of the world is constituted through their specific ways of perceiving it. Thus, each living being exists in their own unique inner world (i.e., their Umwelt).

If we were to think of a SALC as a learning 'meadow' that is a dynamic environment full of all kinds of stimuli: sights, smells, tastes, textures, and sounds. In what ways can the users of a SALC be further supported when we take into account their Umwelt? We can more effectively interrogate the unique inner-worlds of students as they transition from first-year students to seniors and other identities which influence how they process their learning environments. Furthermore, we can enhance the development of research projects, design/layout, language policy, etc., of the SALC by better understanding the Umwelt of teachers and staff.

Our discussions resulted in reflection, allowing us to reimagine the SALC from students' perspectives. Specifically, how the SALC environment may result in 'sensory overload' to first-time users (see Theme 8) and how they can be supported by taking their Umwelt into consideration. Additionally, it prompted a reexamination of our motivations as learning advisors and even a reinterpretation of impactful works of literature (e.g., works by Kenji Miyazawa and Franz Kafka) that could be applied to our practice in new ways.

Theme 8: Linguistic Landscapes

Sources Explored

- Cenoz, J. & Gorter, D. (2008). The linguistic landscape as an additional source of input in second language acquisition.
- Pennycook, A. (2018). Linguistic landscapes and semiotic assemblages.

Discussion Questions

1. Expanding on the discussion on Umwelt, from a student's perspective, what do you feel students see when they enter the SALC for the first time? What does the linguistic landscape of the building teach them?

2. Beyond merely "inclusion/exclusion" and a list of whose voices are represented or not, in what ways can student histories and subjectivities be physically represented in the SALC (either through language or other forms of expression)?

3. Linguistic landscapes focus on language in spaces. Similarly, the SALC can also be viewed as "autonomy landscapes". How is space related to autonomy? How is autonomy used in spaces in the SALC? What encourages autonomy or restricts it?

Summary of Theory and Discussion

While the early definition of linguistic landscapes from Landry and Bourhis (1997) focused on instances of language in public signage, further developments have broadened this concept to include oral language and social interactions with signs (Shohamy & Waksman, 2008) and have also examined specific areas such as 'schoolscapes' (Brown, 2012) and even 'smellscapes' (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). In terms of language learning, the spaces in which languages are displayed and the language artifacts presented play an important role in how students perceive and utilize the space for language learning (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008; Pennycook, 2018).

Our discussion continued from the previous topic of student Umwelt (Theme 7) by asking how students see the SALC upon first entering the building. Our SALC is a large two-storied space with its many displays of language and multiple spaces for various activities that can be exciting for some students but overwhelming and intimidating to others. Students must question where they belong within the SALC space (see Themes 3, 4, 5). The prominent language in signs is abundant to promote language use and events while others prohibit behavior, and others are simply there for the sake of English, removed from their original contexts. Overall, it may be a confusing array of English that may conflict with our intents.

There is a space for students' voices, however. We have boards to display student projects and spaces for resource recommendations and suggested strategies, but other ways such as space for student graffiti may allow students to claim ownership of spaces through language. There are examples of autonomy throughout the SALC but also some examples that restrict autonomy. We concluded that space requires structure for students to clearly understand how to use (or not use) language and should remain flexible enough for students claim ownership of space. Changes to spaces should be actively encouraged for students to experiment and discover new ways of gaining autonomy.

Returning to the Mission Statement

After exploring the literature in diverse and interesting areas, the final group discussion of the semester was to examine the 2017 mission statement and revise it if necessary. The new mission statement need not include *explicit* mentions of all of the literature that we reviewed (this more detailed exploration was the purpose of this paper). Still, we needed to make sure that the mission statement aligned with our values and could incorporate the themes that we identified as being important for the future of the SALC. We made notes in a chart on a shared online document (Table 2) making sure to include all theories we considered important to self-access. Following this discussion, we drafted the new mission statements (one general one and one for the SALC website).

Table 2

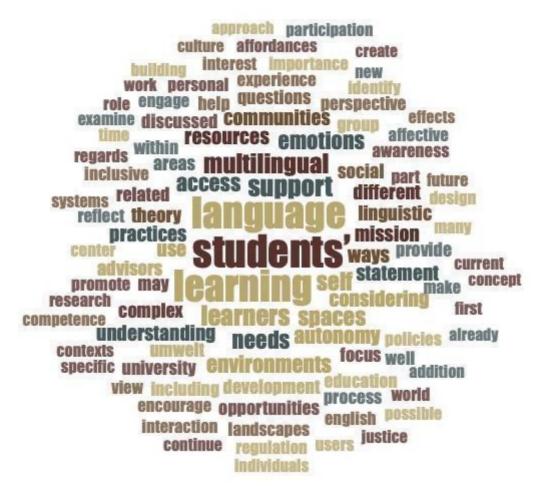*Concepts to Consider When Reviewing Our 2017 Mission Statement*

Concept (alphabetically)	Name	Are our values covered (directly or indirectly) by our mission statement? Add notes here
Complexity		
Emotion/ Emotion regulation		
Inclusion		
Language learner autonomy		
Linguistic landscapes		
Multilingualism		
Reflective dialogue		
Self-determination theory		
Self-directed learning		
Self-regulation		
Social justice		
Umwelt		
Universal design		

A Summary of the Themes

In order to see a summary of the discussions, we performed a keyword analysis using the qualitative research tool NVivo (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2020). We pasted all the text from our written summaries (omitting numbers, headings and auxiliary words) to produce a wordcloud of the most frequent words (Figure 5). We also produced a list of the most frequent 50 words.

Figure 5

A Wordcloud of Lexical Analysis of the Written Summaries

We repeated this lexical analysis with the mission statement intended for the SALC website (Figure 2), and again we also generated a word list of the most frequent words using Nvivo. We created a table containing the two frequent word lists (Appendix 2). This table served the purpose of ensuring that key concepts were reflected in the mission statement intended to be made public. We omitted some lexical items in our mission statements as some words are highly specialized or theoretical and would not be appropriate for a public mission statement (e.g., Umwelt, landscapes, linguistic, universal design) but could be considered to

be present implicitly. In some cases, we chose alternative words that were more appropriate for a public mission statement (e.g., 'confidence' instead of 'emotion,' 'users' or 'learners' instead of 'students'). For this reason, a small number of terms appeared in the keyword analysis of the revised mission statement that were not present in the written summaries (see Appendix 3). During this process, we noticed that two key terms (reflection; inclusive) were missing from the draft mission statement intended for the website and were able to add them. (Appendices 2 and 3 show the revised wordlists after the two missing words were added to the mission statement intended for the website.)

Conclusions

The process of discussing different theoretical concepts and returning to our mission statement was an intellectually stimulating exercise for all of us. We expanded our knowledge and collaborated as colleagues, essentially aligning our conceptions of self-access for a new phase in our SALC going forward. We formally articulated our aim to create an accepting and supportive learning environment that embraces diversity. Our mission statement also expresses our intention to support and nurture autonomous learners, not only in their language-related goals but also holistically in their lives. The process resulted in the final versions of the mission statements (Figures 1 and 2) that we can use to guide our practices and support students in the new academic year starting in April 2022. However, the process is far from over; we now have to share this new mission statement with the wider university community, and we remain open to further discussions and adjustments in the coming months. We may also need to be more explicit about how exactly we can support the language learning outcomes of different departments. In addition, the mission statement is not a practical guide, but we can use it to examine our existing practices and perhaps introduce new ones that allow us to fulfill our mission. Finally, in publishing this paper and sharing our work with the wider academic community, we hope that other colleagues in the field might engage in the discussion, and we welcome their feedback and additions. Indeed, this should be a collaborative and ongoing process.

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Appendix 1

SALC 2022 Mission Statement in Japanese
SALC は、多様性と多言語を尊重した学習環境で、プロソーシャル[1]かつ生涯の学びに通ずる自律的な言語学習を促進することを目指すコミュニティです。協力的で多様性を認め合える空間やリソース、設備の提供を通して、学習者が自らの学習過程に責任を持てるようサポートを行います。私たちは、学習には継続的な内省と、過去の経験、関心事や興味、性格や特性、モチベーション、ニーズや目標への考慮が不可欠であり、言語を学び・使うことは、自信や有能感に繋がるべきだと考えています。

General Version for the Website

SALC は、多様性と多言語を尊重した学習環境で、プロソーシャルかつ生涯の学びに通ずる自律的な言語学習を促進することを目指すコミュニティです。

具体的には、学習者が下記目標を達成する支援をします。

● 多様性と多言語を尊重する、インクルーシブな学習コミュニティの一員となる

● 向社会的な視点を持ち、自身が学習言語で交流するだけでなく、他の学習者がそれをできるようにサポートする

● 内省を通して、自身の学びの過程をより認識しコントロールする

● 過去の経験、関心事や興味、性格や特性、モチベーション、ニーズや目標という、自らの学びに影響する事柄を理解する

● 自身の学びに必要な、コミュニティ、スペース、リソースを活用する

● 言語を活用することに自信を持つ

● 将来の夢や目標を叶えるために必要な言語スキルを習得する

● 自身の学びを理解し正しく導き、かつ、他者を支援するリーダーシップスキルを習得する

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[1]*プロソーシャルな学びとは、思いやりを持って他者の学びに貢献すること。

Appendix 2

The 50 Most Frequent Lexical Items Found in the Written Summaries and the Mission Statement Intended for the Website

Word	Similar Words	Count in Written Summaries	Weighted Percentage	Count in Mission Statement	Weighted Percentage in Mission Statement
1. student	students, students', students'	82	2.41%		
2. language	languages	77	2.26%	4	5.33%
3. learning	learn	77	2.26%	7	9.33%
4. support	supported, supporting, supportive, supports	37	1.09%	3	4.00%
5. learners	learner, learners'	35	1.03%	1	1.33%
6. multilingual	multilingualism, multilinguality, multilinguals	34	1.00%	2	2.67%
7. self		29	0.85%		
8. needs	need, needed	27	0.79%	3	4.00%
9. spaces	space	27	0.79%	1	1.33%
10. emotions	emotion, emotional	26	0.76%		
11. access	accessible, accessing	25	0.73%		
12. environments	environments	25	0.73%	1	1.33%
13. autonomy	autonomous	22	0.65%	1	1.33%
14. resources	resource	20	0.59%	1	1.33%
15. communities	community	19	0.56%	3	4.00%
16. practices	practically,	19	0.56%		

	practice				
17. understanding	understand, understandings	19	0.56%	2	2.67%
18. use	used, uses, using	19	0.56%		
19. linguistic	linguistics	16	0.47%		
20. different	differences	16	0.47%		
21. theory	theories	16	0.47%		
22. social	prosocial	15	0.44%	3	4.00%
23. advisors	advisor, advisors'	15	0.44%		
24. complex	complexity	15	0.44%		
25. development	develop, developing, developments	14	0.41%	2	2.67%
26. umwelt		14	0.41%		
27. opportunities	opportunity	13	0.38%		
28. universal		8	0.24%		
29. education	educational, educators	12	0.35%		
30. group	groups	12	0.35%		
31. help	helped, helping	12	0.35%	1	1.33%
32. including		12	0.35%		
33. perspective		12	0.35%	1	1.33%
34. process		12	0.35%	1	1.33%
35. awareness	aware	11	0.32%	1	1.33%
36. experience		11	0.32%	1	1.33%
37. inclusive		11	0.32%	1	1.33%
38. landscapes		11	0.32%		
39. reflect	reflection	11	0.32%	1	1.33%
40. well		11	0.32%		

41. affective		10	0.29%	1	1.33%
42. encourage		10	0.29%		
43. english		10	0.29%		
44. interest	interests	10	0.29%	1	1.33%
45. personal	personality	10	0.29%	1	1.33%
46. future		9	0.26%	1	1.33%
47. interaction	interaction	9	0.26%	1	1.33%
48. regulation		9	0.26%		
49. users		9	0.26%	1	1.33%
50. view		9	0.26%		

Appendix 3

Words Used in the Mission Statement That did not Appear in the Lexical Analysis of the Written Summaries

Word	Similar Words	Count in Written Summaries	Weighted Percentage	Count in Mission Statement	Weighted Percentage in Mission Statement
diverse				2	2.67%
skills				2	2.67%
goals				2	2.67%
confident				1	1.33%
motivations				1	1.33%
dreams				1	1.33%