

The future of language advising at UK universities

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The Language Scholar Journal

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On Thursday 19 May, Leeds University held a series of talks on the future of language advising at UK universities.

The event was led by Professor Mozzon-McPherson from the University of Hull, a lead player in the language advising arena since managing project SMILE (Strategies for Managing an Independent Learning Environment) in 1997. One of Hull's five-strong team of Advisers, Vincenzo Alfano, accompanied her, and Leeds University's expert in the field, Jadzia Terlecka, also played a key role.

The session was split into three parts. Marina first talked about her vision for the future of language advising; Vincenzo then discussed his own personal experiences in the role; and finally Jadzia led an interactive workshop based around scenarios she had encountered.

The focal point of the day was how Advisers can assist students in becoming more independent language learners. This involved encouraging them to move into the 'role of expert', focus on self-reflection and skilful use of dialogue as a pedagogic tool. They also talked about how Language [Learning] Advisers should not 'lead' students as such, but set the conditions for autonomous learning by developing their strengths, strategies and resources. Learning from the skills and role of Counsellor/Coach was considered key to this process, and Vincenzo in particular talked about the different methods and activities he had employed for this purpose. These included advisory sessions, workshops and worksheets based on specific learning strategies.

There was some discussion around the necessity of Language Advisers. Some argued, for instance, that teachers already give the advice and use the strategies associated with the job within their language classes. Others argued that this may be the case in some languages, but research shows that this is still not embedded in teacher training. Therefore, is the role of Language Learning Adviser actually required if many elements may already be fulfilled? The speakers also considered the importance of links between the institution, the classroom and advising itself. They talked about how synergies could be created with other teaching and learning support services within an institution, and how these can greatly influence the level of autonomy language learners can achieve.

Finally, the day ended with an open discussion led by Jadzia on some of the situations she had faced since becoming a Language Learning Adviser in Leeds.

The video can be viewed online on:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5t1wF1HXqo>

Or by scanning this QR code:



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