Language Teachers as Language Advisors

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Abstract

This small-scale study explores language teacher development through the lens of English language teachers as the researcher reflects on their roles and experiences as language advisors at the tertiary level. In this paper, two different fields of education, teacher development and academic advising, are reviewed in tandem, as they are inter-related fields in the current context.

The researcher wishes to find ways to improve the approaches to academic advising for language learners, and ways of supporting teachers to become well equipped in their practices. After an initial questionnaire survey and a faculty development workshop on advising students, interviews were conducted with language teachers. Additionally, students were interviewed to assess their needs, to fill in the gaps in perception, and to recognize challenges for teachers. The qualitative findings revealed the changes necessary within the institution, namely, the need for resources, flexibility in time, communication, and for greater recognition of teachers' efforts. Based on the findings, several practical changes such as providing students and teachers with guidelines, revision of office hours, and advising awards are suggested.

Key terms: Teacher Development, Academic Advising

1. Introduction

As the educational context diversifies, there is an increasing demand for language teachers to meet the students' various academic needs at the university level. Nowadays there are various resources for language learning that do not always require a teacher's presence, e.g. books, podcasts, websites, computer software, or self-access study rooms. At the same time, teachers need to not only be adept at keeping pace with technological changes but also at dealing with the changing needs of their students, as Wallace (1996) contends. Therefore, teachers need support from those around them in order for them to become able to provide effective advice to their learners. In this study, the researcher investigates what approaches are practiced, and what challenges teachers face in counselling their students on English language learning.

2. Background of the Study

This study is based at a relatively small university in Japan with around 5000 undergraduate students. Half of the students are international students from around one hundred countries, and the other 2500 are domestic students. Currently the university does not have a tutor system in which a faculty member is assigned to advise several students over the course of the curriculum.

The unique characteristic of the university is in its dual language curriculum, where English language courses are offered mainly to students whose stronger language is Japanese. For these 'Japanese-basis' students, English language classes mean a great deal to their university life. On top of completing a certain number of English language credits, students are required to complete twenty credits of content lecture subjects, which are offered in English, in order to graduate. Therefore, English language courses are designed to prepare students for lectures given in English, and the English language teachers' contact hours with students are much longer than those of other faculty in the university. Under the curriculum implemented in 2006, the Japanese-basis students take two four-credit English courses each semester, each of which meets four days a week for a period of fifteen weeks, and over three semesters. In one semester, students receive 120 hours worth of instruction over four months. In the spring of 2011, a new curriculum was implemented, in which the students take one four-credit course and one two-credit course each semester for up to four semesters in a row.

While no official tutor or advisor system exists on campus, according to a survey conducted on campus in 2010, English teachers tend to be the first contact person, or someone many students seek help from when they have academic concerns (Berger,

Iimuro, Hamciuc & Mack, 2011). English teachers reported spending nineteen hours on average counselling students. To give a personal example, I spent 32 hours advising past and present students on various matters during the spring semester of 2010, and 44 hours during the fall semester, outside my designated instructional hours. Topics discussed at these meetings vary: test preparation, study plans, future career, study abroad, how to improve class performance, how to improve a language skill, and many more. Teachers may also assist students whom they do not even know, since additional support from a Japanese-speaker or from a coordinator is sometimes effective.

The following is one of the important aspects of teacher development: to help the teachers become sensitive and observant to their students' needs. Sometimes, teachers can develop interpersonal issues with students resulting from miscommunication or insensitivity. Teachers should learn how to conduct academic advising in which teachers counsel students on their language needs, and how to use their office hours appropriately. There is a need for more teacher guidance on advising students. It is not systemised in the current context yet, thus a framework, or a more systematised approach to counselling students needs to be introduced.

At the studied institution, various types of faculty development workshops are held regularly. These are aimed at enhancing the integrity of the whole program as well as promoting professional development. Workshops provide input for teachers, raise teachers' awareness and motivation, develop collegiality, and support innovations, all of which are recommended by Richards (2005). In 2010, I worked with 3 colleagues and gave a workshop on academic advising to other colleagues. What we did was to first survey both students and teachers to find out the current situation on academic advising, and suggest practical solutions to some of the issues that emerged, such as who to refer students to on non-language specific matters. In addition, two of my colleagues and I presented the English section's issues and suggestions to key faculty in Education Development Learning Support Center (hereafter EDLSC) and staff in the Academic Office to initiate a dialogue among offices and faculty. The aim of this paper is to support this initiative by providing both a review of the background literature and empirical research findings.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Language Teacher Education in TEFL Field

Richards (1998, p.1) proposes six domains of second language teacher education, namely, "theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical reasoning and decision making, and contextual knowledge." Of these, I am most concerned with developing the contextual knowledge of teachers, especially outside the venue of classroom teaching. Some of the factors that need attention include language policies, language teaching policies, school culture, school program, level of class, and learning factors (Richards, 1998). Here the focus is on how teachers gain knowledge about the university programs and how they interact with students in an advisor role.

In a socio-cultural perspective in language education, teachers are concerned with "the co-relationships between language, culture, context, and identity" (Hawkins, 2004, p.4). English teachers do not only teach English, but they also consider what kind of life we are preparing our students for, what kind of roles they will take on, what language skills, identities or cultural knowledge they need to learn. In other words, language teachers provide learning support not only for language learning but everything surrounding the language itself. In a critical sense, teachers are viewed as agents of change who make sure all students receive proper educational support. According to Hawkins (2004), teacher education programs require teachers to be reflective and critical in the way they teach, how they teach the students, and how they ensure an appropriate environment for learning. In order to achieve this, teacher educators need to "engage in critical, reflective practices as well, and to envision their work as creating learning communities within which they also participate as teachers and collaboratively negotiate new understandings of their profession and practices" (Hawkins, 2004, p.6). This field of teacher education has not received enough attention in the literature. It is my intention to learn from my colleagues' reflections, which will then inform my own practices and enhance the teachers' learning community.

An important aspect of teacher education entails supporting teachers with knowledge to become more sensitive and observant

teachers, responding to their students' needs. If teachers are to be trained, it means they develop skills to better approach students by applying their knowledge (Crandall, 2000). Roberts (1998, p.309) tells us, “The nature of a teacher’s development is influenced by the learning opportunities that are available to her.” Thus, conducting faculty development workshops serves as one such opportunity. Knowledge does not suffice, because we learn to teach through practice, which is “a long-term, complex, developmental process” (Freeman and Johnson, 1998, p.402). As an educational practitioner, I feel the need to develop myself, and I believe initiating teacher development workshops support both my colleagues and the language program in a longer term. Like Piai (2005, p.20) aptly reminds us, “You can train me, and you can educate me, but you can’t develop me – I develop.”

3.2 Academic Advising for Language Teachers

Hagen and Jordan (2008) argue that there is one theory of advising for every academic advisor. In other words, there are many theories as well as definitions. Below is one definition of academic advising according to Gordon, Habley, Grites & Associates (2008, p.524) as summarised in a comprehensive handbook on the subject.

> *Academic advising, based in the teaching and learning mission of higher education, is a series of intentional interactions with a curriculum, a pedagogy, and a set of student learning outcomes. Academic advising synthesizes and contextualizes students’ educational experiences within the frameworks of their aspirations, abilities, and lives to extend learning beyond campus boundaries and timeframes.*

Carson and Mynard (forthcoming) are two of only a handful of scholars who consider academic advising in language teaching in Japan. For them,

> *Advising in language learning is the process of assisting students in directing their own paths in order to become better, more autonomous language learners.* (Mynard, 2011, p.1)

Simply put, it is the job of a language teacher to assist students in learning a language. As I understand academic advising in my institution, it is an endeavour to support students to identify ways to excel in class, and discover strategies to help them to eventually learn languages autonomously. In discussing advising in my context, a teacher’s roles do not include class registration or choosing majors, but the main focus is on advising on language learning matters, including goal setting, learning strategies and choosing the right materials. Below is a summary of the roles teachers in the current context fulfil in relationships with the students.

Role	**Duties excluding teaching, preparation and grading**
Part-time instructor	Counselling (not mandatory)
Junior lecturer	Proctoring official exams, counselling students on class attendance, progress, language skills, test preparation, study abroad, etc.
Level coordinator	Counselling own and other lecturers’ students
Director	Counselling own and other lecturers’ students, counselling lecturers
Academic advisor	Holding advising sessions, counseling students regarding anxieties, study, life, and other issues

Table 1. Provider roles based on faculty position on Academic Advising (after Richards, 1998, p.2)

All the roles except academic advisor denote language teachers. Academic advisors are those who belong to EDLSC at the university, and they are specialists in general academic advising. As is evident from the above, teachers take on different duties depending on each position. An important issue here is that the distinction between the roles of language teachers and a specialist academic advisor is blurred.

3.3 Need for Faculty Development Initiatives in Academic Advising

I agree with Hemwall (2008) that institutions are expected to “provide adequate support and guidance to faculty as they advise students” (p.254). In the US, training and development of academic advisors have been studied in recent years (Seki, 2011), but it is

still at a developmental stage in Japan and only a dozen or so universities have advisory systems (Nomura Research Institute, 2005). However, as in many places, there are many challenges to promoting advising, which emerged from a preliminary questionnaire conducted in 2010 (Berger et al., 2011). For instance, teachers are not rewarded or recognized for their time and efforts, or they do not have time to meet all the students outside class hours, and most of them are not professionally qualified to provide advising. Hemwall (2008) stresses the importance of recognition of and awards for academic advising. Such recognition would encourage more teachers to reach out to their students. Wallace and Wallace (2010, p.53) advocate, "If faculty members perceive that exemplary advising is not expected, recognized, or rewarded, especially in promotion and tenure processes, they may feel that advising is not a good investment of their time and professional energy." Therefore, if an institution is to expect its teachers to conduct academic advising, a way of evaluation needs to be in place.

Wallace and Wallace (2010, p.51) stress "the urgent need for professional development for faculty members and others who provide advising services." This need was clearly observed in the aforementioned teacher survey conducted in 2010, in which ten of them said they wished to have more knowledge, time, peer support, and training to do advising. Richards (2005, p.8), citing Berliner (1987), states that novice teachers tend to be "less familiar with subject matter, teaching strategies, and teaching contexts" and that they lack flexibility in how best to react. This has led me to suspect that it may also affect newer teachers' lack of repertoire in terms of advising students on study in general. Through experience and the needs analysis I have felt that there are not enough teacher education programs at the institution. A lot of it depends on self-study or professional development seminars offered by academic or corporate associations. There is a need for more collaboration among teachers.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Questions

Teacher development can take many forms. As Ur (1996) suggests, personal reflection, sharing ideas with colleagues, and holding staff meetings are some of them. Through reflecting on the current practices of language advising with my colleagues, I wish to explore the following three items.

- What approaches are appropriate in advising students on academic enquiries?
- Do teachers feel confident about counselling their students?
- What are the teachers' needs in terms of being prepared for academic advising?

The study is concerned with the individual teacher's perspective on academic advising, and it is conducted based on a qualitative methodology. Using this approach, detailed reflections of teachers' experiences and perceptions are developed, based on semi-structured interviews.

4.2 Sampling and Piloting

In this small-scale research, non-probability samples are collected from the group of teachers in the program, using purposive sampling strategy (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, Palys, 2008) and applying quota sampling (Morgan, 2008) to categorize the data sources. Participants are my colleagues in the language program. Four teachers of the same gender with different positions and different lengths of work experience at the university are chosen, in order to gain holistic knowledge of the faculty. Quota sampling in terms of positions at work is conducted, as is shown in the table below.

Position	**Number**	**Percentage**	**Sample size**
Tenured	3	10%	1
Fixed contract up to 5 years	18	60%	2
Semester contract (Part-timer)	9	30%	1

Table 2. Faculty demography as of fall semester, 2010

These samples are purposive sampling too, as the researcher purposefully selected participants from colleagues who have some

experience and knowledge about advising their students and those who are perceived to be supportive teachers toward their students. Through data gained from these participants, the researcher does not aim to make generalizations, but rather aims to gain in-depth insights from the participants. This qualitative approach to research is supported by Cohen et al. (2007) and Creswell (2009). The total population of the English section is thirty, of which 33% are female. However, it would not have been possible to get a sample from female teachers for the following reasons. Of the ten female teachers, I am one, two were going to be on maternity leave, two were being promoted to new positions within the department, and one was leaving the institution.

Piloting for the teacher interview was conducted via e-mail, by asking colleagues to comment on my interview questions. I received some feedback on how to improve the questions so that it would be easier for teachers to answer. Additionally, interview practice was conducted with a language teacher from outside the institution. Sampling for the students was conducted online, using the online instrument, Survey Monkey. Although the students' role in this study is minor, exploring their needs was tied to the first research question, which is to find out an exemplary approach to offer academic advising to students.

4.3 Procedures

I interviewed several teachers and students with the hope of delving into the best practices on advising English class students. Regarding interviews with teachers, I interviewed teachers who are in different positions and at different stages of their professional development and asked about their needs in academic advising. I interviewed a total of four teachers, two of whom attended the faculty development workshop on academic advising.

Participant (pseudonym)	**Gender**	**Position at the institution**	**Years at institution**	**Workshop attendance**
Andrew	M	Part-time Lecturer (Semester contract)	2.5	No
Bob	M	Lecturer (Yearly contract)	0.5	No
Charlie	M	Lecturer (Yearly contract)	2.5	Yes
David	M	Associate Prof. (Tenured)	6.5	Yes
Eita	M	Student (Second semester)	1	-
Fumiya	M	Student (Second semester)	1	-

Table 3. Participants' profile

Data collection took place in late March and early April, two months after the workshop as well as after classes, therefore the interviewees were reflecting back in time. The interview questions (Appendix A) had been shared via e-mail with the participants, one or two weeks in advance, and they had some time to reflect on the most recently completed semester. The timing was crucial because the interview took place sometime before the new semester started. All of the participants signed the ethical consent form ahead of data collection in which their anonymity was guaranteed and their rights as a participant were explained.

Each interview took between 23 and 35 minutes, lasting on average for 31 minutes. In order to collect objective data, and to allow the interviewer to concentrate (Wellington, 2000), all the interviews were audio-recorded. Data was first transcribed on Word files by the researcher, and was checked by an English-speaking assistant. The data was then reviewed both holistically to gain a "general sense of the information" (Creswell, 2009, p.185) and by section, sorted into three categories of information, the effects of faculty development workshops and the needs of teachers. The interviewees' responses were first reorganized by question, in order to compare and contrast between different participants. They were later put together according to category prior to interpretation of the data.

4.4 Means of Triangulation

In order to triangulate the data, I also conducted two interviews with former students of mine, who had had no contact with the participants. In addition, four students allowed me to use the advising data from the previous semester. The interviews were semi-structured, and questions were based on the preliminary questions I used at the end of the semester based on my advising practice. The interviews were conducted in Japanese, the mother tongue of both the student participants and the researcher. The participants were asked to expand on their responses and provide their suggestions on how language teachers could support them in their studies (Appendix B). Each interview lasted between 20 and 30 minutes, and I asked for their permission to audio record the session, which was subsequently transcribed.

5. Findings and Discussions

My first and foremost concern is, "What approaches are appropriate in advising students on academic enquiries?" To answer this question, I first need to examine what is being practiced and what more needs to be developed. Additionally, I want to know whether teachers feel confident about counseling their students. If their answer is "No," there is a need for teacher development programs. Through this needs analysis, I will consider how the English program can prepare its teachers for academic advising.

5.1 Methods of Data Analysis

Grounded analysis was undertaken in order to classify the texts of over 16,000 words into a few categories, as is suggested by Cohen et al. (2007). In order to organize and present the data, I categorized the responses by both people and by issue, and tried to answer the research questions. Since the researcher is an insider of the program that is being discussed, the data analysis takes the form of "participatory" position in which data are collaboratively interpreted rather than a "declarative form of data analysis" (Freeman, 1996, p.372). This approach is evident in the comments I made during the interviews, often summarising and paraphrasing the participant's input. Contextual factors that contributed to the teachers' experiences include the following points, which are discussed in detail below.

- Administrative factors including time management
- Lack of clarity in terms of advising goals, contents, structures
- Student perceptions and characteristics

5.2 What Happens in Advising Sessions

According to the initial survey of 19 teachers conducted in 2010, teachers reported that when they meet students in their office hours, they generally discuss English classes and how to improve the students' English skills, as is shown in the table below.

Topics	**Percentage**	**Number**
English study in general	100.00%	19
About class (progress, assignments, grades, etc.)	94.70%	18
Study abroad (short and long term, immersion programs, exchange programs)	84.20%	16
Non-academic matters (relationships, health issues)	57.90%	11
Which English classes to take next semester	47.40%	9
Career choice	42.10%	8
Which non-English language classes to take	10.50%	2
Other	26.30%	5

Table 4.Type of advice sought from students

The four in-depth interviews did not contradict this initial finding, but two themes that need attention emerged. One is that not all students seem to be receiving the support they need. Andrew says "if you leave it up to the students to reach out, they probably

won't (approach the teacher)." Charlie also reports "the students who really need support probably are not getting enough." The other theme that is also visible from the above table is that the line between broad academic advising and language advising is non-existent. Language teachers are receiving all kinds of queries from students. I refrain from quoting for ethical reasons, but some teachers have been consulted on students' personal issues such as health and relationships.

5. 3 Effect of Faculty Development Workshop

Agreement of the respondents on the same issues was seen in several points. For instance, three of the participants stressed the need for more structured guidance, especially to help new teachers. Teachers' belief that new members of the faculty need more support is apparent here. In this institution, teachers work closely together as teams, and this promotes the collegiality of the whole program. However, teachers are usually busy with the day-to-day business of preparing for classes, teaching, and assessing students. Teachers are asked to record and encourage students' attendance, but teachers hardly receive any guidance on how to approach students' issues. This may lead to uncertainty among less experienced teachers as to how they should 'advise' their students.

All the participants appreciate the faculty development workshops, but they feel the need for more hands-on sessions. Thus, I feel that the workshop on academic advising was not successful enough for teachers to gain full confidence. One apparent achievement of the workshop was that it was informative, especially in terms of becoming informed with regard to whom to contact or refer to when students have specific inquiries. Another benefit was, according to David, "It was useful to hear other teacher's experiences." No one really is a specialist on advising students, but we do provide tutoring in our own ways. Therefore, seeing how others would approach a student in a role-play context helped the workshop participants. Yet, as Charlie's comment suggests, "the next step would be to have something on paper, perhaps some records that we can keep."

5.4 Teachers' Needs in Preparing for Academic Advising

Teachers' needs as represented across the four respondents are divided into four themes and summarized below, namely, resources, time, communication, and recognition. Each is explained in detail, followed by possible solutions.

5.4.1 Needs of Resources

First of all, there is a need for a concrete guide or booklet, or even better, professional counsellors. Charlie has his own strategies when he meets students in a special program, but he feels there should be a uniform strategy all teachers can use. As Charlie reflects on an extra-curricular program he has coordinated,

> *"Having that structure really allowed the students to talk more…. I didn't have anything for the regular classes, but I wished I had something. I think that would make meetings with the students a lot more focused and give students a lot more."*

All the participants indicate the need for the teachers to be better equipped, as is shown in Bob's comment:

> *"Then also give the teacher something that when the student comes, that the teacher has something ready to start off with. You almost need a kind of a small little emergency kit. If a student comes with a listening problem with a certain level, put out your thing and you are ready. Because I think that's something that would be really useful for us teachers."*

In addition, as Bob points out, teachers are not trained to give advice, and students are often not focused in terms of what they want, therefore it is difficult to offer advice.

> *"I could give them a quick answer, but not in terms of giving solid advice, you need to find out what exactly is it that they want first before giving something…. They need almost a formal counsel – not counseling but formal advising session for that."*

5.4.2. Needs of Flexibility in Time

Secondly, time constraints are a big concern for all teachers. All members of the English program are asked by the university administration to set a period each week to advise their students. However, this university-wide rule does not work perfectly well

for language teachers, who teach more classes and advise students much more closely than major subject teachers. All of the participants are seen adapting the system, by increasing the office hours, booking extra rooms, meeting students in groups, and answering questions by e-mail. There is a definite need for such ingenuity. For instance, Charlie states,

> *"I found it was difficult to meet all of the students in my set office hour. I registered 1 office hour, and that wasn't enough, so I opened up a second office hour, because students couldn't make that office hour."*

An added difficulty lies with part-time lecturers, who advise students voluntarily. Andrew tells us,

> *"When students can and could meet us but we are not specifically chained to our desk, and we are not paid for that time…. Because of the scheduling I'm usually here anyway so it doesn't make a difference to me. If I'm here, eating lunch and chatting with my colleagues, and then students want to come and meet me, I'll be willing to, if it means that classes would go more smoothly, having a meeting with our students 10 or 15 minutes a day. Then I'll be willing to do that."*

It is apparent that Andrew is voluntarily spending extra amounts of time on his students. However, like Andrew, currently the part-time lecturers are not compensated for their 'non-teaching' time. Answering my question, "Do you feel your time and efforts are appreciated by the university?" His answer was "Not really", and indicated, "Maybe if they paid us for that time (they would be able to show appreciation for my time)." As Andrew answered in the interview, they do not always feel their time and efforts are appreciated.

5.4.3 Needs of Communication

Another aspect that has emerged is lack of communication at the university. Teachers want to help, but students are not aware of the opportunity. It is important for the students to know that their teacher is available. Additionally, there is an issue of communication between different sections. Teachers feel that the language section is somewhat separate from major departments and the administrative offices. Bob tells us,

> *"I feel in this university there are many sections, but they don't seem to communicate with each other and I think that's a huge problem…. I think that's possibly one part of the problem why we can't give as much as we would like to, because simply we don't know what others are giving and what's provided and I fear that somehow the students are falling through those cracks."*

Thirdly, there is perhaps an issue within the language section. Bob, who is relatively new to the university, feels he does not have a grasp of how the university runs, and it leaves him unprepared to advise his students.

> *"Maybe there was support and I didn't know about it and could have used it if it existed and was told about it. I think I was pretty busy trying to get used to things the first semester so I didn't feel I had the time to do all of that and then get back to the students…. So it's a question of, I guess, me knowing the system a bit better, rather than it not being available."*

He attributes the lack of knowledge to himself being new, but it may well be the case that the university or the relevant section should have provided him with better guidance at the initiation.

5.4.4 Needs of Recognition

As discussed in section 3.3, I believe teachers' advising efforts should be recognized, but in reality, they are not. I asked all the participants whether they feel the university shows appreciation for their time and efforts. I did not explicitly state who 'the university' denotes, therefore the participants may have been thinking of their directors or the university executives. Their responses clearly show the lack of recognition from 'above'.

> *Andrew: "Not really, no. But I don't know how they would show that."*

Bob: "I don't think that the university knows about it…. I don't think the university has any idea…. I wouldn't say they don't care, but at this institutional level it's very hard for them to show that they care I guess. But I think they should in some way."

Charlie: "I don't think the university gives a lot of feedback, so I'm not really too sure. I'm not sure whether it's appreciated or not, or whether they are aware of that."

David: "They don't really know what I'm doing anyway. If they don't know what I'm doing, how can they really comment on what I am doing?"

David, however, does feel the university appreciates teachers' efforts in general, referring to the time when he met the vice president. Still, at a personal level, there is no formal recognition towards advising students. Nevertheless, two of the participants discuss the value of advising as being for the students rather than for the institution, which makes me realize teachers are intrinsic advisors.

Andrew: "I think it's the students that make us feel much better than the university I think…. I guess that's why teachers want to teach…. Being able to help other people: that's important, more rewarding."

Bob: "I feel that it's appreciated by the students and that's enough for me."

Where teachers' satisfaction comes from, as shown above, is from students.

5.5 Application

Suggestion 1: Guide for students

Andrew, Bob and Charlie all recognize the need for the students to be better informed of the advising opportunities. Andrew, for instance, notices that his students seem as though it is the first time they have ever been told they can come and meet the teachers when he suggests a meeting. Charlie also finds that students sometimes do not understand why they are meeting their teachers during office hours. To counter this issue, it may be necessary to create a visible, concrete guide for all the students. As Bob suggests, a "formalised structure or plan", such as a course planner for the students, would be helpful. On the other hand, however, according to the student participants, that is not the only reason why students do not seek advice. Both Eita and Fumiya say that once they enter the university, students feel it is their own responsibility to manage their academic issues, and that they are too shy to visit a professor's office. This may explain why so few students talk to university professors in general, which was shown by a survey at the same institution by Osawa, Chikamori, Kida & Abe (2006), in which language teachers were excluded from the survey sample. At the same time, however, Fumiya feels it is favourable if a teacher makes a friendly environment so that students can visit the teacher's office easily, which is what happened in his class last semester.

Another issue with the students who do come in for advising is that their learning goals are too broad, such as "I want to improve my English." According to Charlie, "it's taking them enough time to sit down with them and actually focus on figuring out what they would need to do. That's quite a time-consuming process." This way, both teacher's time and students' time are wasted. One of the main problems is "students just don't know what they want to do." This trend is prevalent, as many students seem to have a hard time understanding why they go to the university in the first place. My suggested remedy for this issue is for the whole student body to attend a workshop to identify their specific needs in the language before they come to the teachers. I discussed the need of such pre-enrollment stage goal-setting workshops (Iimuro & Berger, 2011) elsewhere, and I believe expanding such an initiative will be necessary in the future.

Suggestion 2: Guide for teachers

I agree with Bob that having a "little emergency kit" would help teachers, especially those new to the program. Creating one should not be too difficult, as Bob states,

"We've got all the knowledge drifting around between us. We all know kind of, more or less what to advise them."

However, this is not structured in the department, as is also shown in David's comment, "at the moment we all just give answers based on our own experience." Another, more broad suggestion raised by other participants is to have a guideline of when teachers meet students, what they should be discussing, and a way of keeping a record of such meetings, as is also remarked on by Hemwall (2008). In terms of record keeping, the English program shares students' attendance data with the First Year Education program that offers Freshman Workshop, but in reality the approach to 'problem-students' is not systematised yet. One way of improving the situation would be to get training in academic advising, and I propose to hire professional counsellors and guest lecturers who can support the faculty.

Concerning non-academic related issues that emerged previously, Bob stresses the need to improve "communication between departments" that can support students who need immediate attention. A simple flowchart guide for teachers has been distributed at the start of the 2011 spring semester, but this is probably not enough. Therefore, what I suggest as the next step is a standard worksheet available to all the language teachers and students. Students should prepare for advising sessions with their language teachers by filling it in, bringing it to the meetings, and keeping it till the end of the language curriculum, so that different teachers can look at the record in the following semesters.

Suggestion 3: Revising office hour system

One big issue with providing extra support to students is the time constraints. More often than not, teachers' free time does not match those of the students. All the participants, to varying degrees, raised this point. For part-time teachers, they are not required or paid to hold office hours. Therefore, willing teachers dedicate their time and efforts for no extrinsic reward. It was evident from both the teacher questionnaire data and the interviews that some teachers are asked questions off-campus, or via e-mail. A teacher suggests we can save time by passing on student records between teachers and levels. Taking all of these into consideration, there is a need to reconsider how teachers communicate with and advise students outside class time.

Suggestion 4: Advising awards on campus

As seen above, there is a clear lack of assessment in terms of academic advising in the current situation. The participants in this study need not be stimulated by extrinsic rewards such as remuneration or reduced workload, yet it would be preferable to have a system to recognize these teachers' efforts, and a system to involve not just language teachers but other subject teachers in the university in academic advising.

6. Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, as the data is derived from non-probability samples, it is not intended to claim that the small sample is representative of the entire population of the English section. Generalization of the findings is not possible. The fact that no women were included in the sample is a definite setback, as it would have added wider perspectives to the issue. Second, the timing of data collection was delayed by almost two months from the time of participants' actual practice. This is because research proposal and ethical consent forms needed approval before the research could commence. This resulted in participants reflecting on their most recent practice. Finally, the findings do not intend to represent the whole faculty in the language program, therefore they may not be convincing enough to bring any action.

7. Conclusion: Teachers' New Roles on Advising University Students

Returning to the original question of what approaches are appropriate in advising students, it was not possible to reach a conclusion or consensus from this study. As is discussed in 5.5, teachers and students have slightly different ideas about why the office hour system does not always work. It seems as though both teachers and students need a kind of mental shift, in order for the students to benefit more from meeting their teachers. First of all, teachers as well as administrators need to understand the distinctions between academic advising and language advising. Language advising requires a different knowledge and skills set from general academic advising, and how to enhance language advising will be my next task to consider. Secondly, I see from the collected data a need to provide clear information to students and teachers, both new and experienced, on their responsibilities. As was suggested by a few

participants, there should be a structured handbook on advising, readily available to all teachers and students. Teachers will be aware of their responsibilities as academic advisors, whether it is for major subjects or for language. Students will see meetings with teachers as opportunities to get to know teachers, and learn from them. Thirdly, there should be a system to "recognize and reward excellence in advising and provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas and experiences about advising" (Wallace & Wallace, 2010, pp.52-53). I see action research as the next direction to this exploratory research. The interviews helped me understand different colleagues' experiences, advising strategies and suggestions for improvement.

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Appendix A

Questions asked to teachers

1. Last semester, how much time (per week/semester) did you spend for meetings with the students outside class time?
2. What kind of help are you asked from your students?
3. Did you feel there was enough support from the university to advise your students?
4. Are you happy with the way you are asked to hold office hours currently?
5. What problems or concerns do you have on advising students?
6. What changes to the current approach to student's academic support would you like to see?

Appendix B: Questions asked to students

1. 今迄一年間を振り返って、勉強のことで相談があったとき、誰に相談しましたか。
   Who did you talk to when you wanted to seek academic advice?
2. どういった内容のことを相談しましたか。
   What did you talk about?
3. 将来については誰に相談しますか。
   Who do you talk to regarding your future career?
4. 授業の履修については？
   Who do you talk to regarding course registration?
5. 教員のオフィスアワーに行くことはありましたか。
   Did you visit professors during their office hours?
6. 相談をしたいと思った際に、困った事、気になった事はありましたか。
   What problems or concerns have you had when seeking advice?
7. 学習相談に関して改善して欲しい点はありますか。
   Are there any requests for improvement regarding academic advising?