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Agency and autonomy through reflection and self/peer- assessment in FL education

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1. Observations by the Assessment Worm

1. Hanne Thomsen (Copenhagen, 2006):

- Use of the ELP in primary English: using the "Can do.." statements ("I can present a topic to others"); tracking progress using the Dossier > becoming **better prepared** and more focussed for the next step
- Teacher: **getting to know** more about the pupils as individuals > **how to facilitate** learning in the best way for **all learners'** work
- > **Self-assessment "fundamental"** for development as an **autonomous** language learner



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Observations by the Assessment Worm...

2. Sanja Wagner (Darmstadt, 2006):

- CEF/ ELP: negotiating a **work plan** for 2-3 weeks' work (what to do next, how to proceed) > making learning more transparent and **better organized** > **awareness** of one's own learning: strengths/ weaknesses, likes/dislikes
- Encourage **self-directed learning**: self-monitoring and self-assessment using the CEF-based descriptors in the Language Biography -> **active role for the pupil** in the decision-making
- Teacher: to stimulate pupils' reflection on the progress, achievement and problems -> develop the **capacity to plan** > **monitor** > **assess** their work



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Observations by the Assessment Worm...

2. Sanja Wagner (2006)... Findings:

- 6-year project of collaborative work: "plans" found very useful; not all in favour of self-assessment
- Pupils were proud of their progress > confidence, autonomy > very important for migrant pupils
- Went beyond the usual "school English" (vocabulary, idioms); learning on their own (films etc)
- No need to correct their self-assessments in the Passport > still, long and difficult way to go in a school system: new culture emerging in textbooks
- CEF/ ELP: potentially important new tools, to be used with consideration (no "prescription") > promoting life-long, autonomous FL learning



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Observations by the Assessment Worm...

3. Viljo Kohonen (Tampere, 2006): 3-year ELP project: importance of reflection for autonomy, involving both self- and peer-assessment -> pupils somewhat puzzled:

I don't see any point in self-assessment, you just have to put something there to keep the teacher satisfied.

Sometimes it's difficult to think what to say. Sometimes I think of writing something but then I don't want to criticize him 'cause I think he might be offended or something...

It made me think of my development. It's good that I have to think about it myself 'cause I don't normally pay much attention to what the teacher says. But now I have to keep pushing myself.

It was a bit awkward to assess yourself at the beginning but in the end, it's part of the learning process and part of knowing yourself.

The foreign language is [used for communication] just as Finnish, it's not just grammar, etc.



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Observations by the Assessment Worm...

- Acceptance by a (small) majority of the pupils, clearly **realizing the benefits** of the ELP for learning:

Evaluating others helps me to evaluate myself 'cause it helps me to discover my mistakes.

I understand better when my friends explain it to me. They explain it in a different manner and use simple examples.

Collaboration improves your conversation skills, encourages you to speak up and to believe in your coping...

Doing the portfolio has made me realize that I do this for myself, for my own good, not for the grades or for the school. It's my responsibility to learn, I'm the one that has to do it. The teacher can't always be there.

- **Collaboration** as an important **resource** for learning; can enhance **learning** and **motivation** -> need to **understand** it well -> **new educational culture** > challenge



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Observations by the Assessment Worm...

4. **Gina Oxbrow (University of Las Palmas, 2007): Interactive dialogue journals** as a resource for student learning
- **Pedagogical dialogue**: students submit written entries regularly, collecting their thoughts -> **teacher responses in the TL: authentic TL use**; valuable channel of **sharing ideas**, going beyond the confines of the classroom
 - **Supportive environment** to facilitate students to monitor their progress through **guided reflection** > new kind of student-teacher relationship
 - **Setting personal aims** -> **monitoring progress** > redirecting learning efforts -> exploring their own learning processes as a shared effort, facilitated by teacher feedback
 - Student **commitment/ involvement** in the learning process, taking responsibility for learning; developing "pride and curiosity"
 - **Self-monitoring** and **self-assessment crucial** in FL learning and autonomy development -> creativity in communication



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Conclusions by the "Assessment Worm"

1. Reflection and self-assessment: intertwined
2. Negotiated, interactive learning essential for pupils' understanding of their task --> socially responsible learning for (increased) autonomy
3. New learning culture: pupils as social actors > delegating pedagogical power to pupils > new roles for all of the participants
4. CEF and ELP new, potentially significant pedagogical tools -- but they need to be used with pedagogical care and wisdom: teacher's understanding as a prerequisite for success
5. Paradigm shift: a question of time, pedagogical effort and commitment by all stakeholders



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Fishing...

- **Give** the man a fish, and he won't be hungry that day
- **Teach** him to fish, and he won't be hungry for the rest of his life

Pedagogical fishing ...

- **Teach** the **teacher** (and the **pupil**) to **reflect** on his/her educational "fishing", and (s)he will develop it ... and also **teach others** to "fish"





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2. Experience, reflection and assessment in FL education

- **Experience** (language/ communication/ learning processes/ personal growth/ cultural learning) is the *key to language learning* – but not sufficient as such
- Experience needs to be **processed consciously**: notice learning -> develop awareness -> take charge of learning
- **Transform observation/** information into *personal understanding* and knowledge
- Learning has to be **done** by the **student**



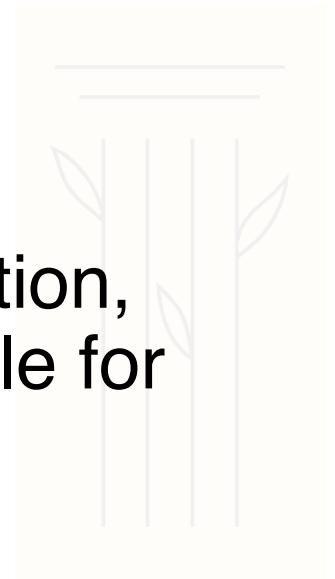
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Reflection, awareness and learning in FL education

Leo van Lier (1996, 11):

“To learn something new one must first *notice* it. This noticing is an **awareness** of its existence, obtained and enhanced by **paying attention** to it.

Paying attention is **focusing** one’s **consciousness**, or pointing one’s **perceptual powers** in the right direction, and making **mental ‘energy’** available for processing”.





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What is reflection?

- **John Dewey** (1938, 87-88): “To reflect is to **look back** over what has been done so as to extract the **net meanings** which are the capital stock for intelligent dealing with **further experiences**. It is the heart of **intellectual organisation** and of the disciplined mind.”
- Interplay between *looking ahead* (action directed by some idea) and *looking back*
- Learning as a continuous *process of reconstruction of experience*: anticipate -> act -> observe -> organise ideas for future use



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What is educational evaluation?

Evaluation: determining the worth of an educational program, product or procedure; Brown (1989): **systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information** necessary to **promote** the improvement of a **curriculum**, and assess its effectiveness and efficiency, as well as participants' attitudes, in a specific context

- (a) Process (formative) evaluation:** integral part of a learning/teaching process, to provide information about it to the participants (for the purpose of developing learning/teaching)
- **by the teacher:** observe > reflect on the process; make notes
 - **by the pupils:** self-/ peer assessment + reflection/ diary
- (b) Product (summative) evaluation:** measuring the outcomes of learning/teaching (achievement, in relation to specified curriculum goals); determining the effectiveness of a program > carried out by the teacher/ educational authorities/ evaluation boards



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What kind of assessment in FL education (CEF 2001)?

Achievement assessment: assessment of what has been taught > learned, with reference to **specific curriculum objectives:** an *internal perspective*: giving feedback of FL teaching to the participants/ stakeholders

> **site-based, contextual assessment** of the degree to which the *pre-specified goals were achieved (criterion-referenced assessment by the curriculum goals)*

B. **Proficiency assessment:** assessment of what someone can do/ knows in relation to the use of the **language in the real world**, assessed by the **criterion-referenced descriptors** (A, B, C levels): *external perspective* – informing others in terms of the descriptors of communicative language skills
> **communicative proficiency**, regardless of how it was acquired/ learned (individual/ institutional perspectives)



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What is self-assessment in FL learning?

- **Bailey** (1998, 227): the ability to assess one's own performance as an **integral part of language learning**
- **Alderson** (1985, 47-49): an ability to **self-assess and critically judge** one's own learning and performance and an ability to **understand**, learn from and utilize feedback and evaluation from a variety of other sources. ... Only once they have **grasped the evaluative criteria** as a result of learner training will learners be able to see **realistic goals** for themselves
- **Valdez Pierce** (1999,128): a **metacognitive learning strategy** that can be taught to students to help them redirect their learning efforts toward improvement. ... **monitoring one's learning process** through **reflection, feedback, and revision**



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Two perspectives to assessment/ learning:

A. Assessment for learning:

- *Pedagogic function* of assessment: assessment in the service of learning, to foster student learning/ understanding of it > fostering **autonomy** (as a *person*, as a *learner*, as an *FL user*)

B. Assessment of learning:

- *Reporting function* of assessment: to report learning outcomes (e.g., to stakeholders, for grading, student selection/ placement and employment purposes)



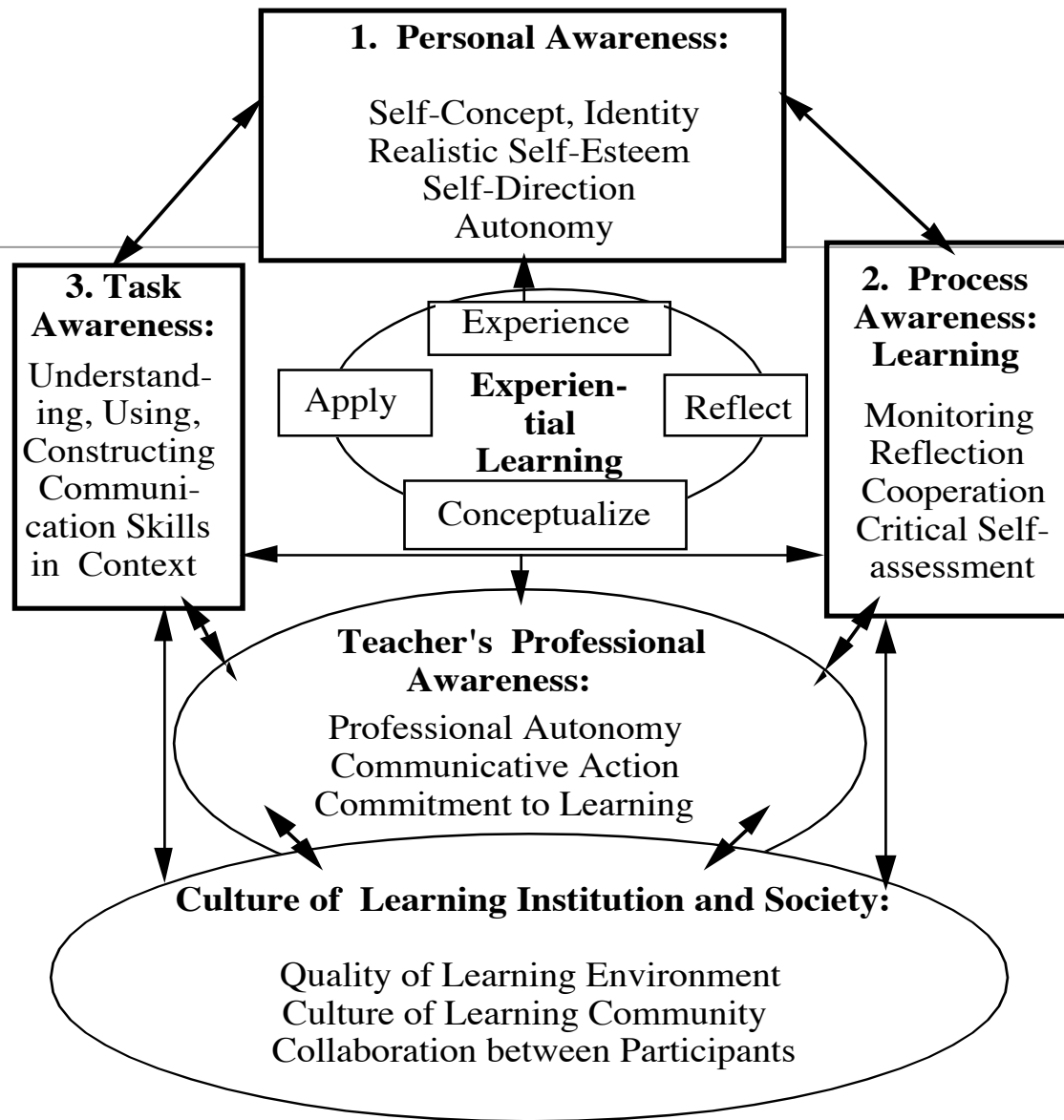
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Experiential learning - (Kolb 1984; Kohonen et al. 2001)

- **Personal experience** gives the life, texture, and subjective personal **meaning** to abstract concepts.
- Learning is a **holistic process** that involves the whole person, including the emotional, social, physical, cognitive and spiritual aspects of personality
- Kohonen (2001): **Pedagogical model** of experiential learning in an institutional context:



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Self-assessment as part of authentic assessment

- **Authentic assessment** (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce 1996, 4; Kohonen 1999):
”... **multiple forms of assessment** that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes on instructionally-relevant classroom activities”, including *performance assessment* [of communicative language use], *portfolios*, and student *self-assessment*



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Properties of authentic assessment

1. **Comprehensiveness:** assessment as an integral part of teaching **throughout the process**: needs > aims > contents > monitoring > assessment
2. **Time span:** continuous, over a long period
3. **What is assessed:** both the learning **process** and the **outcomes of learning**
 - communicative **meaningfulness** of language use
 - student as an **individual**, as a member of the learning **community** in the context
 - **criterion-referencing**: in relation to the aims, and with regard to personal progress



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Properties of authentic assessment...

4. **Data for assessment:** variety of (mainly) qualitative evidence of work -> collected in a number of ways, enabling student to make individual choices supporting self-initiated learning (tasks/projects)
5. **Use of the data:** to improve learning (assessment as an “interface” between learning and teaching)
 - supports the development of the student’s reflective skills, self-assessment, initiative and critical thinking skills
 - encourages cooperative learning and socially responsible group membership



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Why authentic assessment?

1. **Constructivism:** FL learning promoted by the pupil's **active participation** in the entire process, and the reflection on it > self-organised learning > learning TL through USING it actively > **increased motivation**
 - **feedback** on the progress (and mistakes) **essential**
2. **Sociocultural theory: ZPD** (Vygotsky 1978)/ **scaffolding** (Bruner 1983) --> **interaction essential** for learning (> peer-assessment/ reflection) > **social responsibility** in collaborative learning (Lantolf & Thorne (eds) 2006)
3. **Globalization:** intercultural communicative competence
 - > autonomy > respect of cultural diversity/ Otherness
 - > **working/ living** constructively in **multicultural settings**



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3. Common European Framework (CEF 2001) & ELP:

Action-oriented approach: FL *learner* seen as a *social agent* and *language user*, a whole human being with a unique personal **identity**, being developed in response to the enriching experiences of otherness in language/ culture

-> **Plurilingual competence** to which all knowledge/ experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact > to be developed as a *life-long* task: *motivation*, *skill* and *confidence* in facing language experiences (CEF 2001, 4-5)



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CEF (2001)...

Holistic approach: use of the **cognitive**, **emotional** and **volitional** resources and a full range of abilities to carry out communicative **tasks**, using the specific **competences** to achieve a given **result** in communication (also the **non-linguistic** aspects of communication)

Emphasis on initiative, interaction and *social responsibility*: democratic *citizenship education* for multilingual and multicultural Europe > *plurilingualism*: repertoire in languages expands > *pluriculturalism*: “*encounter pedagogy*” - *interkulturelle Handlungskompetenz*



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CEF & ELP (2001)

- **Student autonomy** through an interactive process of *learning to learn* and learning to *use language* for authentic communication
- **Paradigm shift:** plurilingualism/-culturalism: going beyond the attainment of a given **level of proficiency** in a particular language
- **ELP:** an important **tool for developing**, and a **format for documenting**, the language user's *progress* towards **plurilingualism** by recording the *learning experiences of all kinds*
> formal *recognition of proficiency* in each *language* (using **self-assessment**)



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ELP: making the CEF (more) concrete/ accessible to the pupil

- **ELP:** bringing the concerns, aims and perspectives down to the level of the pupils: what they can DO in the TL (at the A, B and C levels)
- **Descriptor:** a clear, transparent, positively formulated communicative act (performing a task) > summarized in the **Self-assessment Grid:** the descriptors describe something definitive and have an independent, stand-alone integrity (at the 3 levels; CEF, 30)
- **Self-assessment:** pupils to consider and specify the level, value and quality of their own products or performances *on their own*



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ELP <--> CEF: an example of descriptor "SPOKEN INTERACTION"

- **Level A1:**

"I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics" (CEF, 26)



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ELP <--> CEF: example of SPOKEN INTERACTION Checklist (A 1)

- *I can say basic greetings and phrases (e.g., please, thank you), ask how someone is and say how I am*
 - *I can say who I am, ask someone's name and introduce someone*
 - *I can say I don't understand, ask people to repeat what they say or speak more slowly, attract attention and ask for help*
 - *I can ask how to say something in the language or what a word means*
 - *I can ask and answer simple direct questions on very familiar topics (e.g., family, school) with help from the person I am talking to*
 - *I can ask people for things and give people things*
 - *I can handle numbers, quantities, cost and time*
 - *I can make simple purchases, using pointing and gestures to support what I say*
- >> **Support** pupils' **goal setting > monitoring > self-assessment** (Language Biography) > more **transparent**, concrete, **accessible**



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The European Language Portfolio (ELP)

TOOL as part of the CEF, having two *complementary functions*:

- (a) Pedagogic function:** to organize > take charge of the ongoing learning process: specify the **objectives** > monitor/ reflect on the **process** and **oneself** as an FL learner/ user in the **social context** of learning > development of **autonomy** (Lg. Biography)
- (b) Reporting function:** to assess > document the **outcomes** in a *transparent* way, using the **Common Reference Levels** (Language Passport; Dossier) > international mobility



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The European Language Portfolio (ELP)...

- **THREE sections:** 1. Language Passport, 2. Language Biography, 3. Dossier
- **Significant instrument** for *documenting* the language user's *progress* utilising a *variety* of authentic *evidence* collected *over time* > self (and peer)-assessment > engagement
- Recording of learning *experiences* and *results* > self-assessment of proficiency in all languages known > making FL and inter-cultural learning *visible* > deeper *understanding* of communication > *autonomy*



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ELP Principles: the common European core of the ELP (Council of Europe 2000/2006)

1. Tool to promote *plurilingualism/culturalism*
2. The *property of the learner*
3. Values the *full range of language and intercultural competence* and experience (*within or outside* formal education)
4. Tool to promote *learner autonomy*
5. *Pedagogic and reporting functions*
6. *Based on the CEF* (the Reference Levels)
7. Encourages learner *self-assessment* the *recording of assessment by the teachers etc.*



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ELP - "ownership" of learning: a student's voice

“Dear Diary, I don't know how to begin. There is much to say and so little time.... It is time to say goodbye soon. Time to leave behind my Portfolio in German ... I feel longing ... the fond feeling is increased when I read the old beautiful tasks (with so many errors) and notice how I made mistakes and what I had in mind at that time when I was 'little'. At times I feel like laughing, then again like crying... these tasks are so nice no matter how many times I was crying when I was doing them, but still. I would not want give up a single day...”
(Upper secondary school student, end of school)



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Self-assessment of FL skills: 3 related documents in Europe

1. **European Language Portfolio (CoE, since 1998)**
2. **Europass (EU: European CV + ELP, Lg. Passport + Europass-Mobility + Certificate Supplement (Vocational)/ Diploma Supplement (operating since 2005, <http://europass.cedefop.eu.int/>)**
3. **DIALANG (EU: www.dialang.org/, 1996-2004): data-based system of assessing FL skills in 14 languages**
 - three skills: 1. Reading, 2. Listening and 3. Writing -> computerised assessment of these skills on the CEF Levels (Alderson & Huhta 2005; Alderson 2005)
 - initially, candidate's self-assessment of the given skill using a checklist -> automatic feedback to the user about this self-assessment in relation to the actual level based on the test scores



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Experiential learning as FL education: principles

1. **Autonomy and personal goals** (psychological and moral stance): acceptance of personal responsibility
2. **Engagement** in the learning process: ownership
3. **Initiative-taking and social responsibility**
4. **In-depth learning**: emphasis on meanings
5. **Reflection and self-/ peer-assessment**
6. **Authenticity of process and content** ("encounter pedagogy"): intercultural action competence
7. **Maximizing the use of the target language**

(Kohonen, V., Kaikkonen, Jaatinen, R., Kaikkonen, P., & Lehtovaara, J. 2001, *Experiential learning in foreign language education*, Pearson; David Little 2005)



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Exploratory Practice in FL education: principles

1. Putting **quality** of (classroom) **life first**
2. Necessity of **understanding** life in FL classrooms
3. **Involve** everybody in **practitioner research** -> bring people to work together
4. Work for **mutual development**: treat **pupils** as **developing practitioners** in their own right
5. **Integrate** work for understanding into **classroom/ professional practices** -> use class time to make **space** for understanding, without losing **FL learning time**
6. **Continuous work** for understanding and integration
(Dick Allwright 2007; Gieve, Simon & Miller, Inés (eds. 2005): Understanding the language classroom, Palgrave Macmillan)



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Action-based FL teaching: agency, autonomy and identity: principles

1. **Holistic approach**: action, mind, body, emotion, all the senses
2. **Structure** and **process** intricately intertwined
3. FL learning essentially a question of **perceiving language** phenomena
4. **Action/ agency**, perception and understanding: inseparable unity
5. **Connecting body** and **mind** -> developing the pupil's **voice** and **identity** -> past-present-future orientations
6. **Pedagogical scaffolding** at three levels: macro, meso, micro: macro and meso levels to enable micro-genesis (Leo van Lier 2004; 2007)



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ELP - making TL learning more "visible"/ transparent:

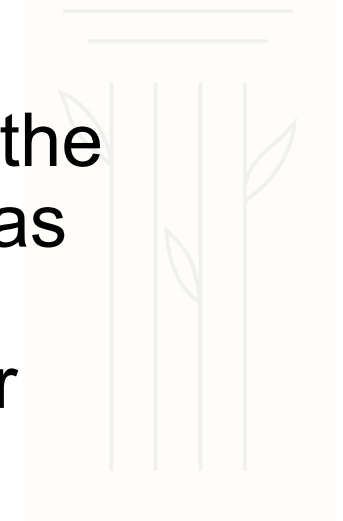
- Commitment > ownership of language learning
- Tolerance of ambiguity in TL use
- Risk-taking in communicative tasks
- Understanding oneself as a language learner > user
- Understanding of one's (inter)cultural identity
- Skills and attitudes for socially responsible language learning > pluriculturalism
- Plurilingualism and reflective language awareness
- Reflective basic orientation to TL learning > enhanced through self-/ peer assessment



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How to undertake the ELP journey?

- **Teachers** need to *understand well the notion of autonomy* and the *nature of the learning task* that they are asking their students to undertake > pre-requisite for successful mediation of the ELP
- Facilitate the **pupils** to understand the *aims of the ELP* > see themselves as *language users* > learn a basic *reflective orientation* > work on their personal experiences of language learning/use and *intercultural learning*





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How to undertake the ELP journey...

- Negotiate *curriculum-based ELP tasks*, using the **textbook** as the reference-point: a variety of **written/ spoken tasks**, to be done alone/ in pairs (e.g, “My family/ home/ hobbies/ home town/ favourite music band”; a review of a book/ movie; writing a play/ poem/ short story/ argument about a topic; doing a CV/ job application)
- **Flexibility of the ELP:** possible to use **at all levels of proficiency**: doing *something personal* with the input > having a feeling of “power” over language > guide pupils to take challenging tasks
- Organize and monitor the learning project of the students > **present/ discuss/ evaluate in groups**



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Proceeding on the ELP journey

- Moving from “teacher-imposed” differentiation to “self-differentiated” learning: guiding students to work **at the frontiers** of their current FL proficiency > aim from “*comprehensible output*” (Swain 1985) > to “*comprehensible interaction*” (Long 1995?)
- **Extend** and *go beyond* the limits by **taking risks** and developing their language skills > taking **social responsibility** for learning: helping others to progress in their tasks (peer-assessment/ correction/ commenting)



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Teacher's role in the ELP-oriented work

- **Significant task** in fostering reflective work:
 - > guide reflection > give **personal comments** on the progress (of the individuals/ class as a whole) at suitable points
 - > specific and concrete *teacher feedback* as an important **source of motivation** for the pupils > teachers **get to know their pupils better** *as real persons* > individual guidance
- **Rewarding experiences** for teachers as well (“**Pearls** in the ELP-oriented work”)