



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI
DI TRENTO

*Putting the student
centre stage:*

***an action based student
centred approach***

A Teacher Training Course

This language teacher goes up to Heaven. St Peter shows her the heaven for businessmen- she has never seen such beauty and luxury.

He shows her the Heaven for Doctors..... need I say more...?

And now he lets her see the Heaven for language teachers- this section is also luxurious and well-appointed but..... it's completely empty!

" Where are all the teachers?" she asks.

" They're down in Hell for a few hours at a Language Learning Workshop!"



The Learner



The Learner

Teacher & Student Perceptions

- Resisters (unruly rabble)
- Receptacles (jugs and mugs)
- Raw material (clay to mould)
- Clients (at their service)
- Individual explorers (Scott vs Amundson)
- Democratic explorers (Page and Brin)
- Partners (people power)

After Meighan & Meighan, *Alternative roles for learners* (1990)



The “Other person in the equation”



The “Other person in the equation”

Teacher & Student Perceptions

- *Enforcers* (quoshing the rabble – grammar police)
- *Distributors* (filling the pots)
- *Shapers* (moulding the clay)
- *Service Providers* (keeping the customer happy)
- *Coaches* (training the teams – drill instructors)
- *Cartographers* (charting a course – pointing the way)
- *Partners* (we’ re in it together)

Riley, *Time to talk: Cross Class Student Debates* (2007)



The Learner

Learner Variables

Age

Cognition/intelligence

Aptitude

Personality

Native Language

Cultural background

Beliefs about language learning

Input (EFL/ESL etc)

Affective factors (e.g. anxiety)

Educational background

Motivation

Learner Style (+ strategies)



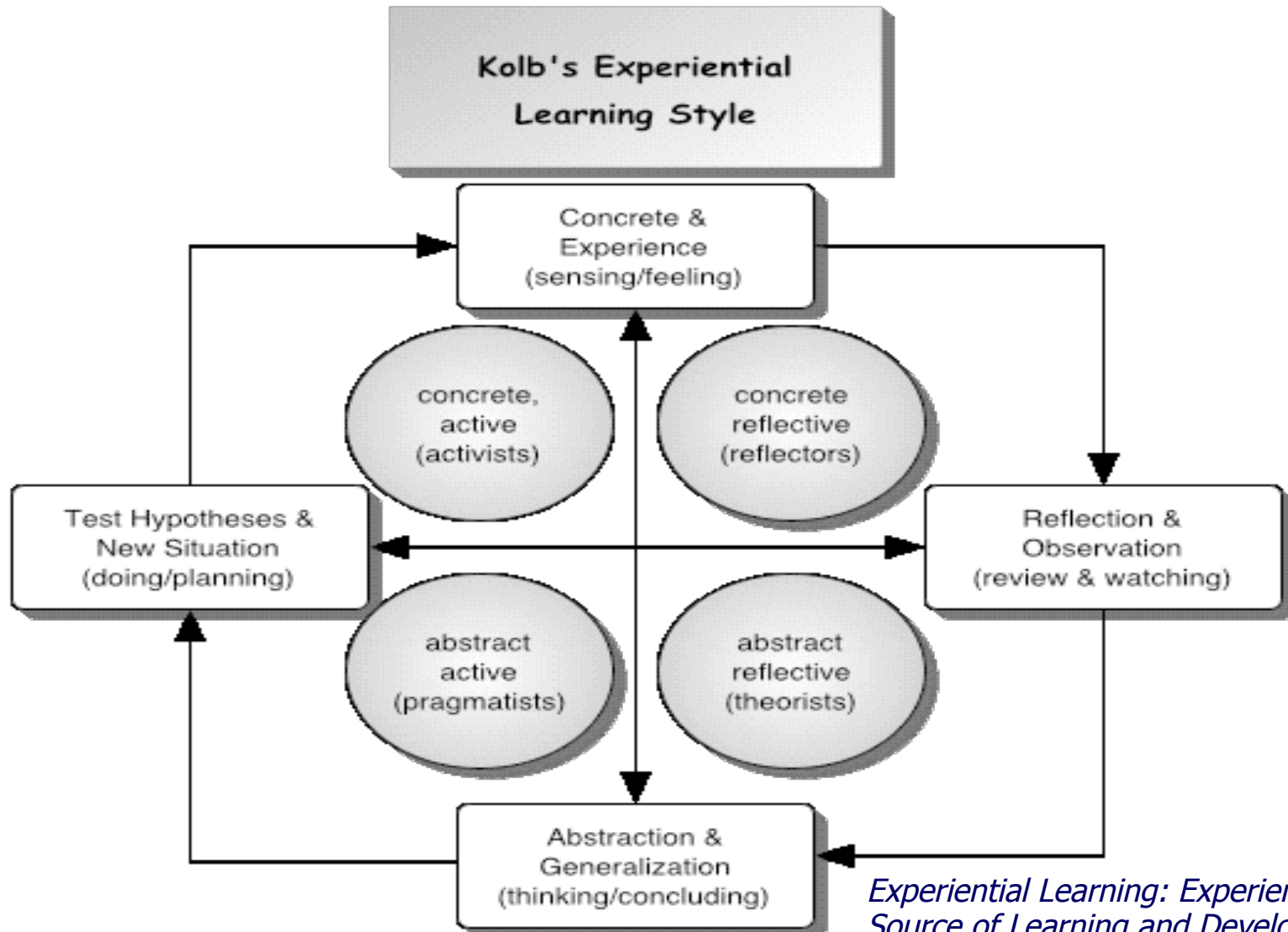
The Learner

Learner types and styles - MANY DIFFERENT TAXONOMIES

- Dunn & Dunn's 3 learning styles (visual, verbal, kinesthetic/tactile)
- Gardner's 7 intelligences (Linguistic/Verbal, Spatial/Visual, Bodily Kinesthetic, Logical/Mathematical, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal)
- Kolb's learning styles (see slide)
- Honey and Mumford's experiential styles (see slide)
- Gregorc's Mind styles (two continua: abstract-concrete, sequential-random)
- Nunan's learner types (concrete, analytical, communicative, authority oriented)
- Pask's serialists and holists



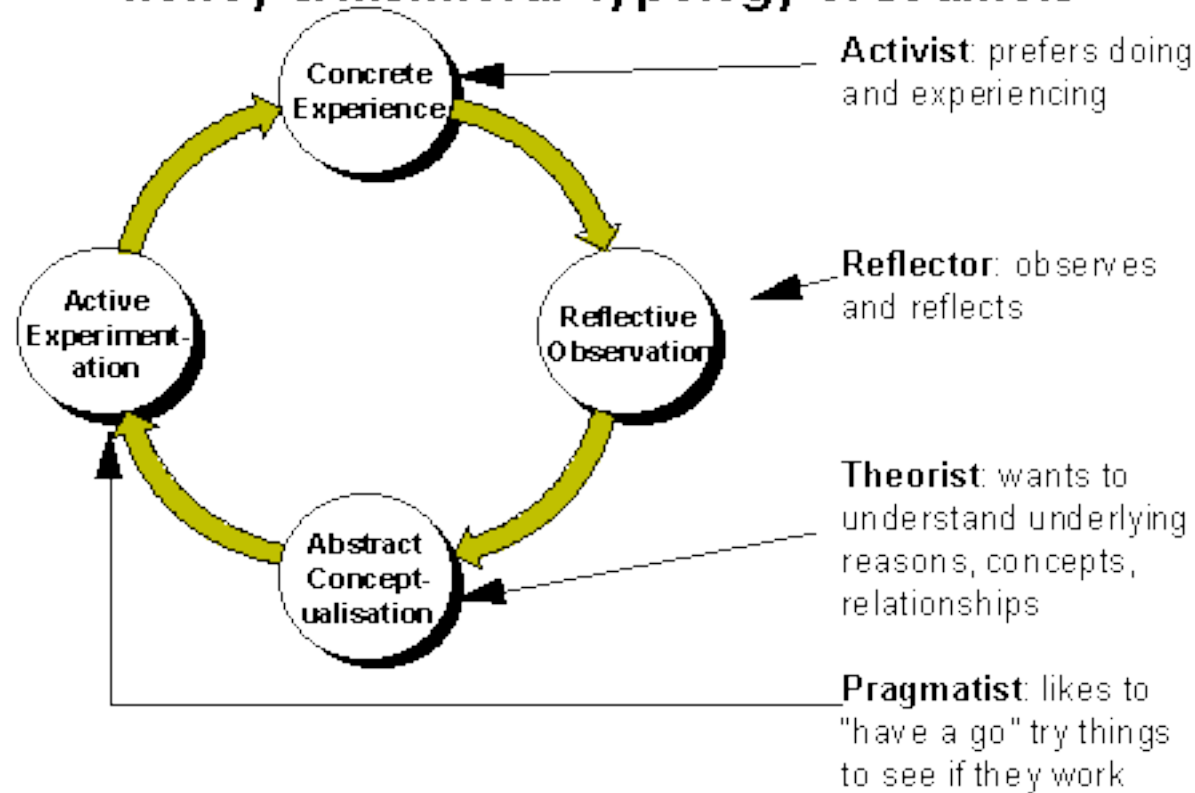
The Learner



Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development Kolb 1984

The Learner

Honey & Mumford: Typology of Learners



26/11/2021

HONEY P and MUMFORD A (1982) *Manual of Learning Styles*

The Learner

BEWARE!!!!



The Good Learner

Characteristics of good language learners

- Find their own way
- Organise information
- Are creative and experiment
- Make their own opportunities to use language
- Learn to live with uncertainty
- Use mnemonics
- Make errors work
- Use linguistic knowledge
- Let the context help them
- Make intelligent guesses
- Learn chunks of language and routines to help them beyond their level of competence
- Learn techniques to engage in and keep conversations going
- Are sensitive to/aware of language use (e.g. register)

After Nunan 1993



The Good Learner

The Mountain Climber Story

PLAN

- ☐ Set goals
- ☐ Preview
- ☐ Activate background knowledge
- ☐ Predict/Brainstorm



MONITOR

- ☐ Monitor sense
- ☐ Selectively attend to specific elements
- ☐ Use imagery
- ☐ Apply rules
- ☐ Relate information to background knowledge
- ☐ Self-talk to build confidence
- ☐ Cooperate with peers

PROBLEM-SOLVE

- ☐ Question for clarification
- ☐ Draw inferences
- ☐ Substitute/Paraphrase
- ☐ Use resources



EVALUATE

- ☐ Check goals
- ☐ Verify
- ☐ Summarize
- ☐ Self-evaluate
- ☐ Assess strategy use

From *Strategic Interaction and Language Acquisition* by A. U. Chamot and J. M. O'Malley, 1993. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

The Learning



“[The] pupils got it all by heart; and, when Examination-time came, they wrote it down; and the Examiner said ‘Beautiful! What depth!’

They became teachers in their turn, and they said all these things over again; and their pupils wrote it down, and the examiner accepted it; and nobody had the ghost of an idea what it meant”

Lewis Carroll, 1893

From Phil Race’s presentation “Ripples” ppt: <http://phil-race.co.uk/most-popular-downloads/>

The Learning

How and why it happens

- Ellis 1997 – students don't learn what teachers teach
- Larsen Freeman (2003) Learning non linear and unpredictable – from grammar to grammaring (or 'languaging' in Swain's (2005) terms.
- Van Lier (2007) – Agency of utmost importance if learning to take place: 'the socioculturally mediated capacity to act' (Ahearn 2001)
- Combination of social-interactive and cognitive-reflective work in the classroom.
- Participation – process oriented rather than simply product oriented.



The Learning

How and why it happens - Nothing new

- Most learning happens casually
- Learning self-motivated
- Most effective learning is to fulfill a personal need

Illich, *Deschooling Society* 1979

- School knowledge is the knowledge which someone else presents to us. We partly grasp it, enough to answer the teacher's questions, to do exercises, or to answer examination questions, but it remains someone else's knowledge, not ours.

Barnes (1976) *From Communication to the Curriculum*



The Learning

Who said this?

'Knowledge is experience, everything else is just information'.

And...

'Imagination is more important than knowledge'.

And...

'I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn'.



The Learning

(Language) learning theories?

Skinner - Tabula Rasa

Chomsky - LAD / LASS

Piaget – cognitive/developmental (schema)

Vygotsky - ZPD

Bruner - constructivist - scaffolding

Long, Lightbown - Input-interaction theory

Cognitive



The Learning

(Language) learning theories?

Knowledge (incl. awareness)

+

Strategies

+

Skills development (meaningful practice)

=

Competence (can do)



The Teaching

(Old) approaches

- Grammar translation
- Audiolingual
- Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching
- PPP (presentation, practice, production)
- Total Physical Response
- The Silent Way
- Community Language Learning
- Suggestopedia
- Multiple Intelligences
- Neurolinguistic programming
- The lexical approach
- Competency-Based Language Teaching



The Teaching

New(er) approaches

- Communicative Language Teaching
- The Natural approach
- TBL
- CBL/CLIL
- project-based learning
- Exploratory approaches
- Experiential approaches
- ESP
- Collaborative learning
- CALL (including blended)
- Handlungsorientierter Unterricht (action-oriented learning)

See <http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/experience.htm>



The Learning

The learner's (new) role

”

In all of these approaches, the learner plays an **active** role in the learning process.

In Finkebeiner's words (2005) this kind of approach
'includes learners' hearts, bodies and senses'

“The learner is a whole person, not an input-processing brain that happens to be located inside a body”

Van Lier, 2007



Language teaching

The cans and can'ts

- Can't teach a language in x hours
- Can't deal with language as a body of knowledge to acquire
- Can create conditions to optimise learning in and out of class
- Can help develop language learning strategies and skills
- Can help develop language awareness
- Can give students the opportunity to put their skills and competences to work
- Can show students how to make the most of their time
- Can seek to tap into what makes students tick (motivation)
- Can involve students in the course development (content)
- Can 'direct' the students along the path to autonomy (**if** they are willing to take on the responsibility)
- Can involve students in course evaluation/needs analysis
- Can use students specific know-how/expertise to develop language skills



The Good Teacher

FIGURE 7.9

Teacher's Checklist for Learning Strategies Instruction		Often	Sometimes	Rarely
PREPARATION				
1	I ask students to describe the strategies they already use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	I include activities such as think-alouds and discussions to help students become aware of their strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PRESENTATION				
3	I select strategies to teach that are appropriate for the task.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I give the strategy a name and explain it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	I tell students why and when to use the strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	I model how to use the strategy with the same kind of task.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PRACTICE				
7	I choose challenging tasks for students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	I provide activities for students to practice the strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	I remind students to use the strategy or strategies I've taught.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	I encourage students' thought processes by asking them how they figured something out.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	I point out any strategies I see students using.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	I praise good thinking more than right answers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EVALUATION				
13	I encourage students to evaluate their own use of strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	I discuss with students which strategies they find most useful for the tasks they have just completed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	I encourage students to choose the strategies they prefer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	I promote student autonomy by fading cues to use strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	I evaluate how I teach strategies and revise as necessary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EXPANSION				
18	I suggest to students how they can use the strategies in other subjects and in daily life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Adapted from Sarah Barnhardt, 1996. National Capital Language Resource Center, Georgetown University/George Washington University/Center for Applied Linguistics, 2600 Virginia Ave., Suite 105. Washington, DC 20037.



Learner autonomy

Nothing new - 2

- “the ability to take charge of one’s learning”

Holec, *Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning* (1981:3)

- Autonomy a capacity: detachment, reflection, decision-making, **independent action**, leading to a personal relationship with the learning process
- Transfer to wider contexts: way(s) of learning AND personal knowledge
- “Learning seen as the result of his own self-initiated interaction with the world”

Rathbone *Open Education* 1971



Learner autonomy

Challenge

To convince students used to a talk and chalk product oriented education system, who are not used to taking responsibility or making choices that they are in fact in charge of their own learning processes.

Do we have a right to challenge their cherished views of language teaching?



Learner motivation

Reasons to learn

- Different taxonomies/theories/labels e.g
Integrative vs Instrumental / Intrinsic vs Extrinsic
Attribution theory (fixed IQ vs Untapped potential)
- It's rather a case of understanding what makes THEM tick – why do they want/need to learn

Learner motivation

Reasons to learn

- “Learning is learner-centred, and it follows that whatever we do in the classroom is conditioned by the learner’s individual motivation and need.”

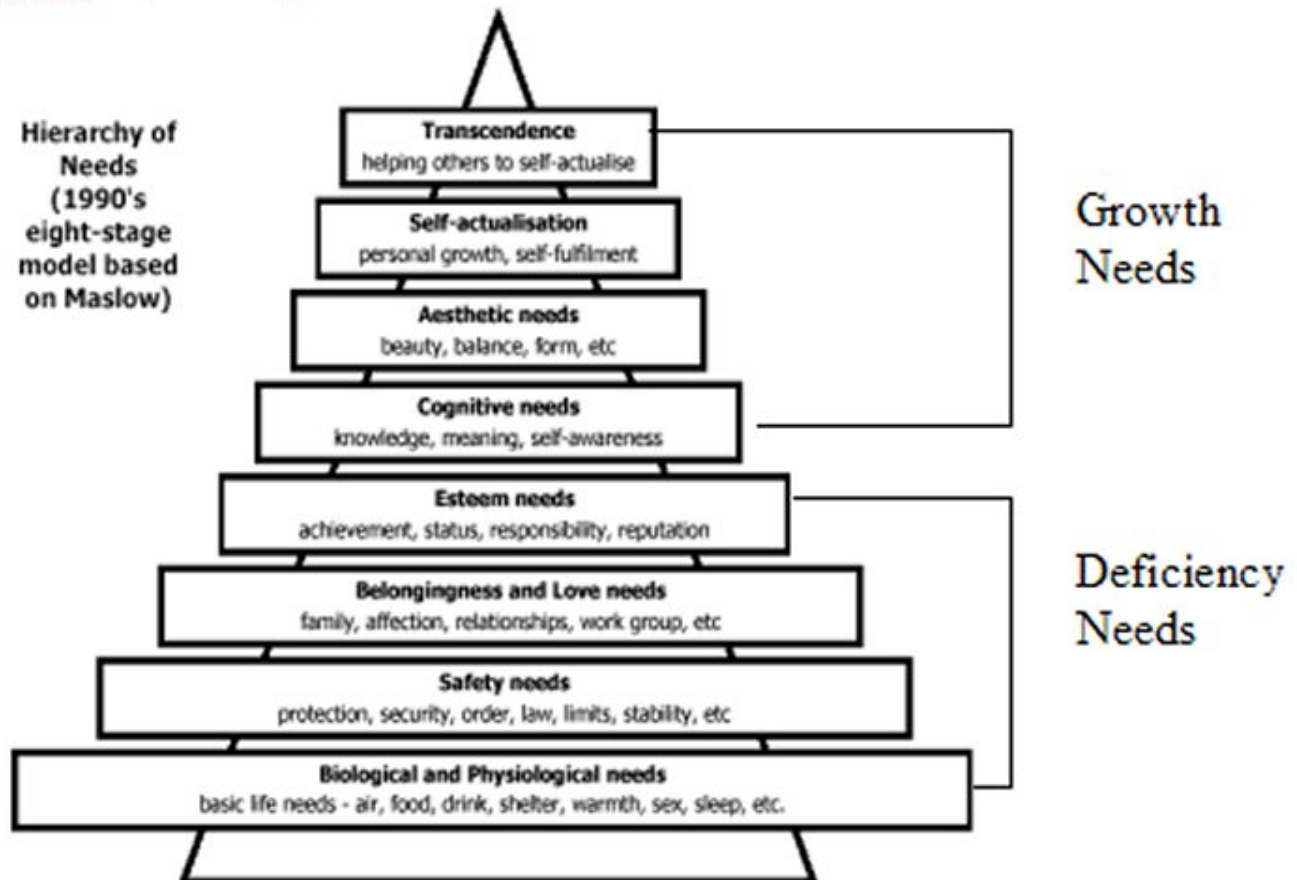
Batstone, *Grammar* 1994

This means treating the students as individuals.



Learner motivation

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Rising to the challenge

Why we need to learn a language.

Motivating students – language not only a compulsory subject but a tool for life, for personal and professional development and not least access to better enjoyment of all manner of entertainment.

Buzz words, maybe, but ones learners are happy to/need to hear.



Learner Motivation

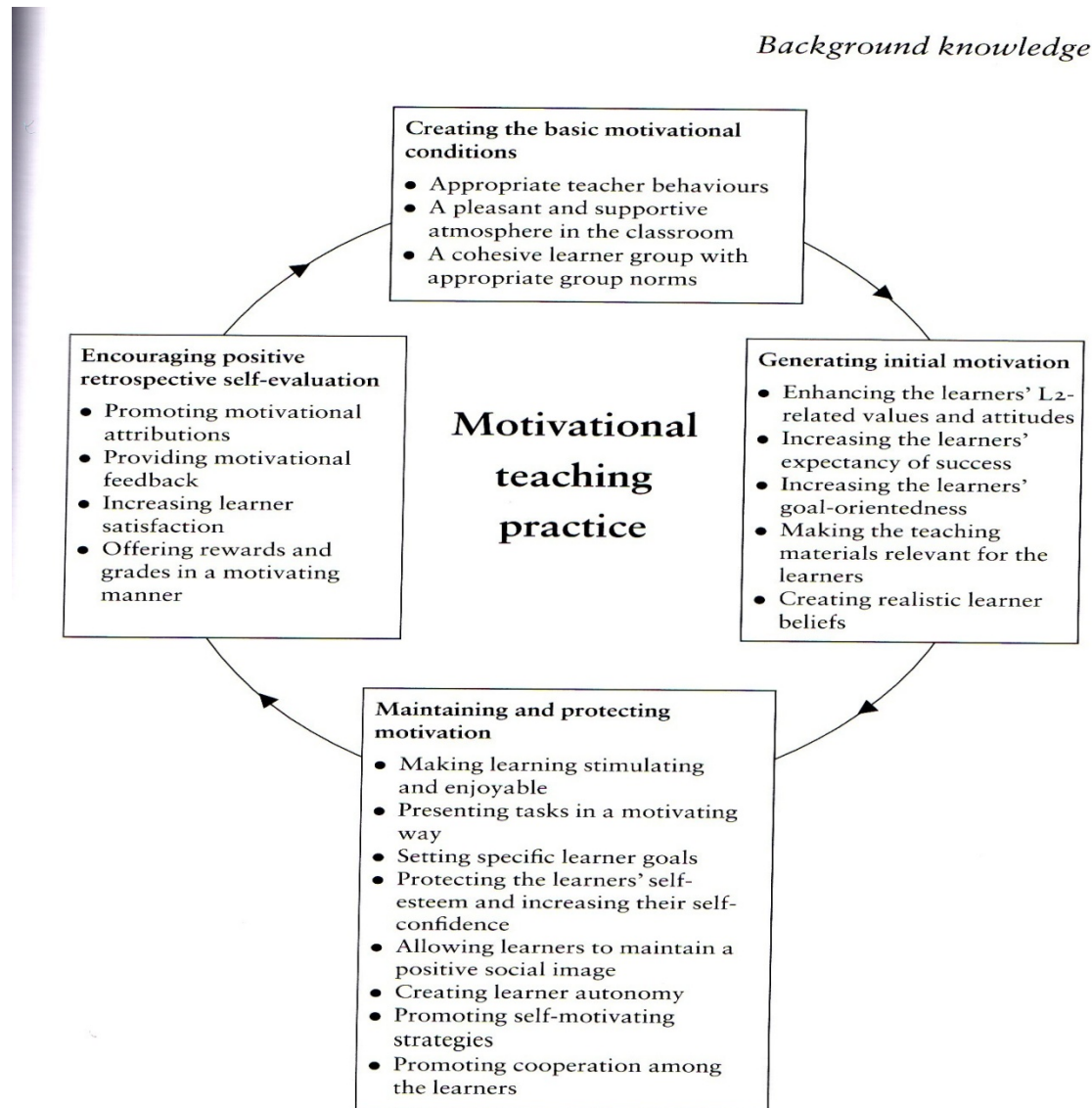


Figure 3 The components of motivational teaching practice in the L2 classroom

Language & identity

General considerations

- Language not like other subjects
- Universal – even deaf & dumb people learn language
- We need it to communicate/socialise
- It is part of who we are, our personal identity
- A new language can change that identity, in particular the degree of control over our own identity
- **Without reasonably proficient language skills we cannot express who we are in a 2nd/foreign language or what we think**
- **Without practice we cannot develop those language skills necessary to give voice to who we are or engage in dialogue that helps us to develop that voice (the core of identity – van Lier)**



Language & identity

Voice

- “The notion of voice [...] is not one that implies *any* language use, such as the often empty babble of the communicative language class, but rather must be tied to an understanding that to use language is not so much a question of mastering a system as it is a question of struggling to find means of articulation amid the cultures, discourses and ideologies within which we live our lives”

Pennycook 1997

To use words in our own voice we have to make them our own. Input not enough – we need to use them as social language users, as participants in the world.



Learner empowerment

What does this mean in the classroom context?

Working with students to:

- determine the objectives
- define the contents and progressions
- select methods and techniques to be used
- monitor the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.)
- evaluate what has been acquired (T & LL)

After Holec, (1981)

- ensure a balance between the four strands of learning (cfr Nation 2007)
- ensure a balance between input and interaction (cfr Gass, S., & MJA Torres 2005)

**TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE DIFFERENT BELIEFS AND
ATTITUDES AND DIFFERENT SOCIAL SCRIPTS**



Styling a Student Centred Syllabus

Matching Syllabus/TU with External Requirements and Student Expectations:

■ overview of present situation

Teacher??? 😊

Ministerial requirements

Student/parent expectations

School expectations

■ setting realistic objectives to bring them all together

Styling a Student Centred Syllabus

General Considerations

- Engagement and motivation
- Focus on individual development of knowledge and competences
- Individual differences/interests
- Input to interaction
- Incidental use of language
- Intercultural competence
- Reflecting on language and enhancing language awareness
- Reflecting on language learning (strategies)
- Developing independence/autonomy/responsibility



What an Experts Says

“The learner is a whole person, not an input-processing brain that happens to be located inside a body”

van Lier 2007

We owe it to our students to provide them with the opportunity to find their own voice.

