**A teacher's journey**
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## SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

When teaching is guided by principles of constructivism, the **classroom** will become a **learning workshop** in which **learners will be researchers** who are busy gathering, analysing and working on knowledge. (My translation)
Wolff, Dieter (1994). „Der Konstruktivismus: Ein neues Paradigma in der Fremdsprachendidaktik?" *Die Neueren Sprachen* 93.5: 407-429.

For a **teacher** to commit himself to learner autonomy requires a lot of nerve, not least because it requires him to **abandon** any lingering **notion** that he can somehow **guarantee** the **success** of his learners **by his own effort**. Instead, he must dare to **trust** the **learners.**
Little, David (1991). *Definitions, Issues and Problems*. Dublin: Authentik.

"**To learn** is to develop relationships between (what the learner knows already and the new system being presented to him), and this **can only be done by the learner himself.**"
Barnes, Douglas (1976). *From Communication to Curriculum*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. Cited in: Little, David (1991). *Definitions, Issues and Problems*. Dublin: Authentik.

"Essentially, it (learner autonomy) is a matter of **getting started**, of taking **the first small steps** towards creating a learning environment where **learners** are encouraged to **make decisions** concerning their own learning, where **the teacher dares to let go**, where **evaluation** becomes an **integral part** of the course, where the learning process is made visible.
Dam, Leni (1995). *From Theory to Classroom Practice*. Dublin: Authentik.

# MY "FIRST SMALL STEPS"

- Reflection, evaluation and goal-setting through learner diaries (adapted from Dam (1995))
    - What did we do and how/why did we do it?
    - What did I learn? What did I like/not like about today's class?
    - Areas in which I would need more explanation, support, practice
    - Goals I would like to set myself for the next few weeks/months
- Seating arrangement in groups of 4
- Peer-teaching of grammar points; peer-reviewing of homework texts
- Collaborative learning

# EXPLORING MY OWN TEACHING PRACTICE

"Engaging with and **developing learner autonomy**, and taking control of one's own **professional development** as a teacher are **inseparable.**"
Smith, Richard. Talk at the Pre-Conference Event (PCE) of the LASIG, IATEFL, Brighton, UK. 15 April 2011.

"While in **autonomous language learning**, learners take charge of their own learning, in **action research**, teachers take charge of their own professional development."
See, for example, Burns, Anne (1999). *Collaborative Action Research for English Language Teachers*. Cambridge: CUP.

"In autonomous learning, learners are involved in almost exactly the same **cyclical phases** of **planning, organizing, managing, and evaluating** their learning as in action research."
Dam, Leni. Talk at the 18th World Congress of Applied Linguisitics (AILA). *Learners as co-researchers of their own learning processes: An example from an autonomous learning environment*. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. 27 July 2017.

"This appreciation of the **cooperative character** of the autonomisation process is vital for the understanding why **autonomous learning environments** can be **especially conducive** to carrying out **action research** and how **action research** in return can be a **useful** tool for moving towards **more autonomy** in the classroom."
Ludwig, Christian (2018). "Action Research and Language Learner Autonomy: An Exploratory Journey". In: Christian Ludwig et al., eds. *Fostering Learner Autonomy: Learners, Teachers and Researchers in Action*. Candlin&Mynard ePublishing. 16-23.

"(...) both imply **agency** (...), are **bottom-up forms of self-development** (...). Both learner autonomy and AR presuppose **active participation** and **cycles** of decisions-actions-evaluations, (...)."
Gallo, Elena (2018). " 'Totally Awesome'. Exploring Teachers' Scope of Action to Enable and Support Autonomous Learning." In: Christian Ludwig et al., eds. *Fostering Learner Autonomy: Learners, Teachers and Researchers in Action*. Candlin&Mynard ePublishing. 167-197.

# MY SMALL-SCALE STUDIES

1. Interview study "Introducing aspects of learner autonomy at tertiary level"

   Burkert, Anja (2011). "Introducing aspects of learner autonomy at tertiary level". In: Turid Trebbi (Guest editor), *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching. Special issue: The 10th Nordic Conference on LLA in the FL Classroom*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge/Taylor&Francis. 141-150.

2. "The joint construction of meaning and understanding", using Mercer's (1995) framework of *exploratory talk*

   Burkert, Anja (2015). "Collaborative Learning and the Joint Construction of Knowledge and Understanding." *Language Learning in Higher Education*. Online Journal 5.1: 197-222.

3. "The development of pragmatic literacy through collaboration with peers", using the concept of *linguistic politeness*. Together with Pia Resnik, University of Vienna, Austria.

   Talk at ELT Connect. English Department, KFU Graz, Austria. 11.11.2017.

4. "Learners' voices on collaborative learning and joint meaning-making in the language classroom"

   Burkert, Anja (2018). "Two heads are better than one: collaborative learning under scrutiny. " In: Christian Ludwig et al., eds. *Fostering Learner Autonomy*: *Learners, Teachers and Researchers in Action*. Candlin&Mynard ePublishing Limited. 197-216.

5. "Learners' needs, wishes, expectations and goal-setting practices"

   Poster presentation, IATEFL, Brighton. 9.4.2018.

# WHERE AM I NOW AND WHAT IS NEXT?

"This **autonomy puzzle** will always have missing pieces as it is a **never-ending process** which forces us to **continue to grow** as we look for **new insights.**"
From the Conference Report on *The Canarian Conference of Developing Autonomy in the Classroom: Each Piece of the Puzzle Enriches us all*. La Laguna, Tenerife, 2003.