

# Developing Learner Autonomy through Projects

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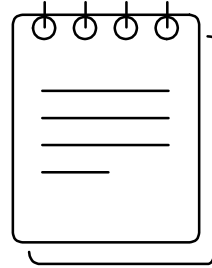
# About me



- Education
- Professional Experience
- Interests

# Content

- Teaching Context
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- Conclusions

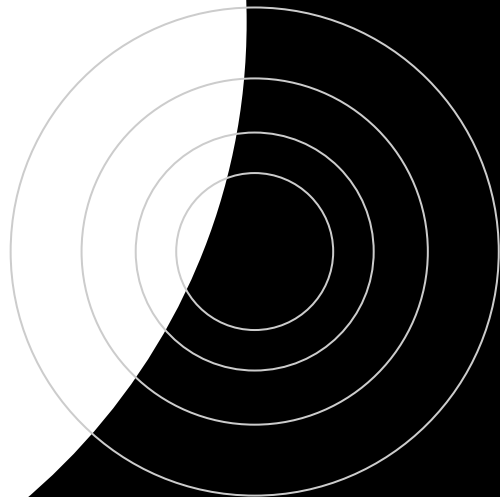




1

# Teaching Context

Ethos  
Lesson Structure  
Project based  
Learning



slido

What springs to mind when you hear the term  
"learner autonomy"?

 Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

The background is a solid black field. A large, bright white circle is centered on the page. To the left of this circle, there is a smaller, semi-transparent grey circle that overlaps with the white one. To the right of the white circle, there is a series of five concentric white circles of varying diameters, also overlapping with the main white circle. The text 'Theoretical Background' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, centered within the white circle.

# **Theoretical Background**

# Who is responsible for learning? (Harmer, 2001)



- "Good learners don't just wait to be taught."
- "Students need to be aware that we cannot teach them English unless they themselves are prepared to take some of the strain."
- "Learning is a partnership between teachers and students."

# Learner Autonomy – Definition



- Based on Little (1991 p.4), “autonomy is a capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action”. The author points out that autonomy capacity will be shown not only in the way the learners learn but also in the way they transfer the acquired knowledge to other contexts.
- Benson (2001) mentions autonomy is more about people taking control in their own learning, both in and outside the classrooms. In addition, for him autonomy in language learning is a matter of taking control over the purposes for which they are learning a language and the way they learn. Moreover, the author adds that autonomy involves abilities and attitudes that people possess.



# Learning how to learn



-Dickinson (1992) argues about the importance of learner training. The main objective of it is to make learners more capable and independent in their learning, and it is an essential element for those who wish to become autonomous.

-Scarcella & Oxford (1992, p. 63) gives us another important concept related to learner training, which is learning strategies. As reported by them, learning strategies are “specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques – such as seeking out for conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task – used by students to enhance their own learning.”

slido

How autonomous do you think your students are when it comes to their own language learning?

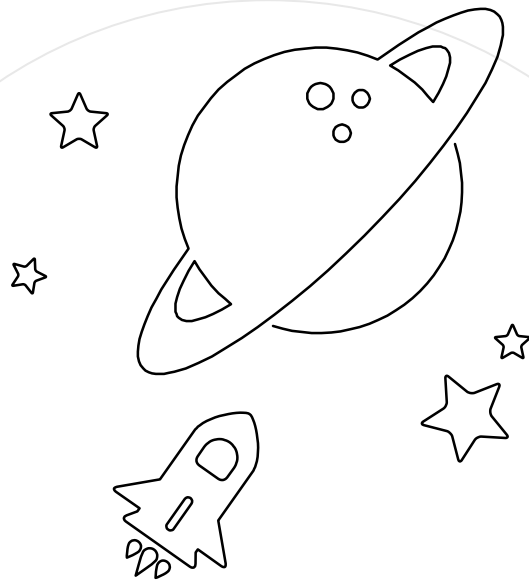
1-not autonomous at all  
5-super autonomous

 Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

# Project: Learner Autonomy

- Motivation
- Procedure
- Students' input
- Outcome



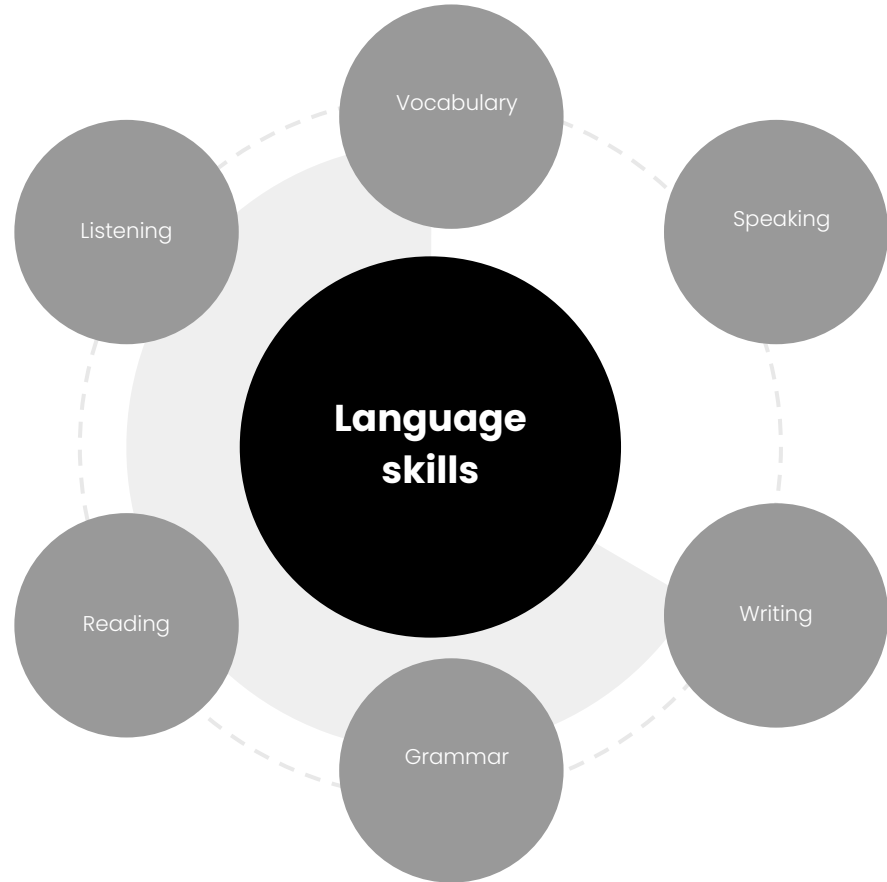


# Participants

B1 students

# Procedure

1. Setting the context
2. Students individually select one skill they would like to improve.
3. Form groups 3-5
4. Students research and test different strategies to improve that specific skill over a 2-week period and register it in Google Docs.



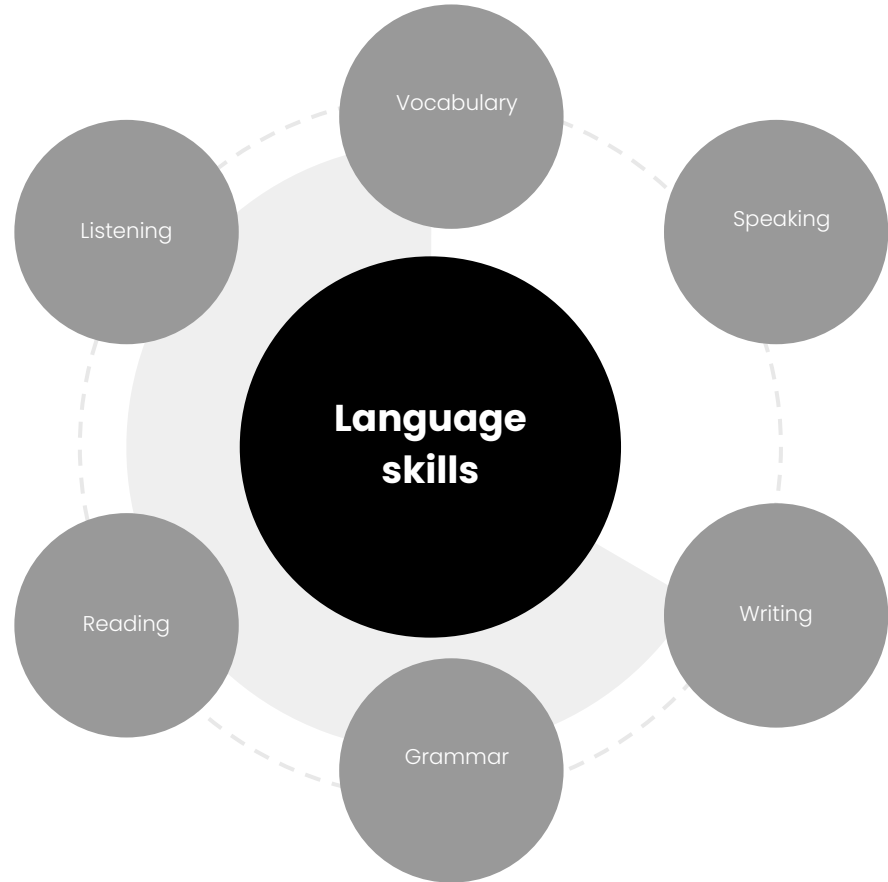
## Google Docs - Table

Listening		
Strategies	Day/ Time	Report
<p>Listen to this podcast: <a href="https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-podcasts-series-01/series-01-episode-04">https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-podcasts-series-01/series-01-episode-04</a></p> <p>Take notes to understand the general idea of it.</p> <p>Answer some questions; Check audio transcript to check understanding.</p>	Monday - 05/02 - 8:00 - 9:00 pm	<p>I had to stop the podcast a few times but I was able to understand the general idea.</p> <p>I got most of the answers right.</p> <p>I wrote down a few new words that I tried to use during the week in my conversations.</p>

# Procedure

4. After researching and putting their strategies into practice, students would reflect and create an infographic with their best tips

5. Deliver a presentation



# Students Input – Writing

Strategy	day/time	Group opinion
Writing a diary/journal, describing our day and activities and sharing with colleagues to help each other.	Tuesday / 10am to 10:20 am	<b>Caroline:</b> I think that the strategy worked well, we could learn new words and use them in our vocabulary.
<p>We got one web sites that we want to recommend :</p> <p><a href="https://writeandimprove.com/">https://writeandimprove.com/</a></p> <p>On that web site you can do a test to see how your writing is going and get feedback</p>	Friday / 11am to 12:10 am	<p><b>Guilherme:</b> I wrote a letter on 'Write and Improve' - web site and I could learn many different things, before I started to write the letter I was reading some advice that helped me a lot.</p> <p><b>Tip</b> - Practice spelling whenever you have free time.</p>
		<p><b>Ananda:</b> I used this website to improve my English writing. The website showed me how repetitive I am when I write something simple. Sometimes I lack vocabulary. The feedback is very nice, I will try more times. The website is free.</p>





# Students Input – Grammar

First day - Testing the APP and using all functions.

Tuesday (5/11) - At home

**Suzi:** I swap the app because the first English Grammar Book was too boring for me. Now I'm testing the **Duolingo**

**Wellington:** I use **Grammarly** when I write on WhatsApp with friends or at my job.

**Samantha:** On my first day I showed my colleagues the function of the **Merriam Webster** application. I have time using this application and I like it because it has different means to learn grammar.

**John; Oxford Dictionary** shows you the meaning of the word, the correct way to use it in the past, present, and future sentence.

**Beatriz:** The APP looks exactly like a book but you have access to corrections and a nice glossary that explains some concepts like "a noun". The glossary was the only part of this app that makes me feel interested. (**Grammar in Use**)



# Infographics



## HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR WRITING SKILLS

1

### WRITING JOURNAL/DIARY

**Start writing about everyday things:**

Try to turn it into a habit, describing your day and things that you have done.

2

### READ INFORMATION

**Newspapers & books.**

small texts or newspaper at least 10 minutes per day;  
Change your phone and computer language to English.

3

### WEBSITES/APPS

There are many web sites that will help you and you can use those as a platform to get formal vocabulary to help you write well.



# Infographics

## HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR GRAMMAR



### BOOKS

- Grammar books can help you with the small details.
- Try reading Literature. Something you like.

### APPS

- Download a variety of options with different functions but always related to grammar
- Download apps that work both online and offline and set daily 'grammar time' reminders.



### MOVIES

- Learn with subtitles
- Enjoy the learning moment



### EXERCISE

- Use games and grammar challenges, to make language learning a fun experience.



# Infographics

## Listening Learning

### STRATEGIES



#### PODCAST

Podcasts can be funny, entertaining and informative. There are so many different kinds of podcasts that everyone can listen to.



#### VIDEOS

YouTube is a great source of input for English language learners and teachers, you just have to find the right channel



#### AUDIOBOOKS

They help your English pronunciation and listening. You can have a native English speaker read books to you whenever and wherever you want!



#### MUSIC

Listening to music is an amazing way to learn English because we can listen to music every day, on our phones, on the street, at school etc. When you listen to music your subconsciously process what you have already learnt.



# Online possibilities

This project can be easily adapted to the online environment. Students usually work using collaborative tools anyway (Google Docs, Google Slides, Google Sites, Canva, etc.).

They can interact in breakout rooms and share their findings and discuss the best approach for their project.



# Final Considerations

By taking ownership and responsibility for their learning, students started to get to know more about themselves as learners and to discover what is effective and what works for them and what does not.

The Learner Autonomy Project became part of the curriculum and has been improved since then.

Although Project Based Learning works towards solving a problem or designing a product, the most important part of it is the learning journey not the end product. All the skills that are acquired on the way such as research, collaboration, problem-solving skills can be transferred to other environments.

The satisfaction of presenting the product (a blog, a questionnaire, a brochure) that they created motivates them to continue independently seeking for knowledge and as result improve their language skills.



# References



Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning*. London: Longman.

Dickinson, L. (1992). *Learner autonomy. V. 2: Learner training for language learning*. Dublin: Authentik.

Harmer, J. (2001). *How to teach English: An introduction to the practice of language teaching*. Harlow: Longman.

Little, D. (1991). *Learner autonomy 1: definitions, issues, problems*. Dublin: Authentik.

Scarcella, R. C., & Oxford, R. L. (1992). *The tapestry of language learning: The individual in the communicative classroom*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

A circular frame containing a photograph of a desk. In the center, a large, black, three-dimensional letter 'A' stands on a wooden surface. To its left is a potted plant with green leaves in a white pot with a lace-like pattern. To its right is a wooden block with the letter 'S' carved into it. In the foreground, a smartphone with a white case and a blue 'V' logo is visible. The background shows a window with white curtains and a dark vertical stand.

**Any questions?**





# Thank you!

You can find me at  
[nbernard@tcd.ie](mailto:nbernard@tcd.ie)

A series of four concentric circles in a light gray color, centered on the left side of the slide.

# Credits

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

- Presentation template by SlidesCarnival
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