

# A New General Service Vocabulary for 2nd Language Learners

## Dr. Charles Browne

With more than 600,000 words in the largest dictionary of English, the task of learning English as a second language is an incredibly daunting one. Luckily, though, English is also a language that contains a lot of built-in redundancies, meaning that certain words are far more important in our daily lives than others (just the word *the*, for example, makes up 6-7% of all the words in any book, magazine, or newspaper, and the top 100 most frequent words in English account for an astounding 50% all the words we will ever meet).

The scientific study of the mathematics of English vocabulary is called “corpus linguistics,” and, in 1953, Michael West published a remarkable list of about 2000 important vocabulary words known as the General Service List (GSL). Based on more than two decades of pre-computer corpus research including input from other renowned, early 20th century researchers such as Harold Palmer, and several vocabulary conferences sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation in the early 1930s, the GSL was designed to be more than simply a list of high-frequency words. Its primary purpose was to combine both objective and subjective criteria to come up with a list of words that would be of “general service” to learners of English as a foreign language. However, as useful and helpful as this list has been to us over the decades, it has also been criticized for being based on a corpus that is considered to be both dated, as well as too small by modern standards (the initial work on the GSL was based on a 2.5 million word corpus that was collected under a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1938), and for not clearly defining what constitutes a “word.”

On the 60th anniversary of West’s publication of the GSL, my colleagues (Brent Culligan and Joseph Phillips of Aoyama Gakuin Women’s Junior College in Tokyo, Japan), and I would like to announce the creation of a New General Service List (NGSL) that is based on a carefully selected 273 million-word subsection of the 1.6 billion-word Cambridge English Corpus (CEC). Following many of the same steps that West and his colleagues did (as well as the suggestions of Professor Paul Nation, project advisor and one of the leading figures in modern second language vocabulary acquisition), we have tried to combine the strong, objective scientific principles of corpus and vocabulary list creation with useful pedagogic insights to create a list of approximately 2800 high-frequency words which meet the following goals:

1. To update and greatly expand the size of the corpus used (273 million words) compared to the limited corpus behind the original GSL (about 2.5 million words), with the hope of increasing the generalizability and validity of the list.
2. To create a NGSL of the most important high-frequency words useful for second language learners of English which gives the highest possible coverage of English texts with the fewest words possible.
3. To make a NGSL that is based on a clearer definition of what constitutes a word.
4. To be a starting point for discussion among interested

scholars and teachers around the world, with the goal of updating and revising the list based on this input (in much the same way that West did with the original Interim version of the GSL).

### The NGSL: A word list based on a large, modern corpus

Utilizing a wide range of computer-based corpus creation and analysis tools not available to West and his colleagues, we began the development of the NGSL with an analysis of the Cambridge English Corpus (formerly known as the Cambridge International Corpus). The CEC is a 1.6 billion-word corpus of the English language, which contains both written and spoken corpus data of British and American English. The CEC also contains the Cambridge Learner Corpus, a 40 million-word corpus made up from English exam responses written by English language learners.

The initial corpus was created using a subset of the 1.6 billion-word CEC that was queried and analyzed using the SketchEngine (2006) Corpus query system (<http://www.sketchengine.co.uk>). The size of each sub-corpus that was initially included is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. CEC corpora used for preliminary analysis of NGSL

Corpus	Tokens
Newspaper	748,391,436
Academic	260,904,352
Learner	38,219,480
Fiction	37,792,168
Journals	37,478,577
Magazines	37,329,846
Non-Fiction	35,443,408
Radio	28,882,717
Spoken	27,934,806
Documents	19,017,236
TV	11,515,296
Total	1,282,909,322

However, because the overwhelming size of the Newspaper sub-corpora (748,391,436 tokens) dominated the frequencies (and also had the problem of showing a marked bias towards financial terms), and the academic sub-corpus (260,904,352 tokens) was a specific genre not directly related to general English, both corpora were removed from the compilation. Table 2 shows the sub-corpora that were actually used to generate the final analysis of frequencies. While smaller than the corpus described in Table 1, the corpus is far more balanced as a result.

Table 2. CEC corpora included in final analysis for NGSL

Corpus	Tokens
Learner	38,219,480
Fiction	37,792,168
Journals	37,478,577
Magazines	37,329,846

Non-Fiction	35,443,408
Radio	28,882,717
Spoken	27,934,806
Documents	19,017,236
TV	11,515,296
Total	273,613,534

The resulting word lists were then cleaned up by removing proper nouns, abbreviations, slang, and other noise, as well as excluding certain word sets such as days of the week, months of the year, and numbers. Then we used a sequence of computations to combine the frequencies from the various sub-corpora while adjusting for differences in their relative sizes. Based on a series of meetings and discussions with Paul Nation about how to improve the list, the combined list was then compared to other important lists such as the original GSL, the British National Corpus (BNC), and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to make sure important words were included or excluded as necessary.

**The NGSL: More coverage for your money!**

One of the important goals of this project was to develop a NGSL that would be more efficient and useful to language learners and teachers, by providing more coverage with fewer words than the original GSL. One of the problems with making a comparison between the two lists, indeed between any well-known vocabulary lists, is that the way of counting the number of words in each list needs to be done according to the same criterion. As innovative as the GSL was at the time of its creation, West’s definition of what constituted a word was, by his own admission, non-systematic and arbitrary: “no attempt has been made to be rigidly consistent in the method used for displaying the words: each word has been treated as a separate problem, and the sole aim has been clearness” (West, 1953, page viii).

This means that for a meaningful comparison between the GSL and NGSL to be done, the words on each list need to be counted in the same way. As was mentioned in the previous section, a comparison of the number of “word families” in the GSL and NGSL reveals that there are 1964 word families in the GSL and 2368 in the NGSL (using level 6 of Bauer and Nation’s 1993 word family taxonomy). Coverage within the 273 million-word CEC is summarized in Table 3, showing that the 2368 word families in the NGSL provides 90.34% coverage while the 1964 word families in the original GSL provides only 84.24%. That the NGSL with approximately 400 more word families provides more coverage than the original GSL may not seem a surprising result, but when these lists are lemmatized, the usefulness of the NGSL becomes more apparent as the more than 800 fewer lemmas in the NGSL provide 6.1% more coverage than is provided by West’s original GSL.

Vocabulary List	Number of “Word Families”	Number of “Lemmas”	Coverage in CEC Corpus
GSL	1964	3623	84.24%
NGSL	2368	2818	90.34%

**Where to find the NGSL**


The list of 2818 words is now available for download, comments, and debate from a new website we’ve dedicated to this list: [www.newgeneralservicelist.org](http://www.newgeneralservicelist.org)

**Bibliography**

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(NOTE: This article is a revised version of “*The New General Service List: Celebrating 60 years of Vocabulary Learning*” which appeared in the JALT National Conference Featured Speaker issue of *The Language Teacher* in the summer of 2013).

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# Doing Things Again and Again! Annamaria Pinter

Repetition is an important principle in language learning. However, it is often associated with rather negative ideas such as mechanical practice, drilling phrases and sentences, memorizing lists of words, and generally engaging in activities that are considered a bit boring.

However, repetition and doing the same thing over and over again does not need to be boring. Those of us who have worked with children have all experienced their natural need and desire to do things again and again when they are enjoying the experience. Children enjoy listening to the same story again and again, or playing the same games again and again. Whenever they enjoy an activity, quite spontaneously they ask for more!

## “Spot the Differences”: learner A’s and learner B’s pictures

In this short article, I would like to share two activities that I have used with children again and again, with a great deal of success. The first example is a game called “Spot the Differences.” The object of the game is to find six differences between two pictures (learner A and learner B) by talking about the pictures and asking questions. It is important that learners do not look at each other’s pictures.



The children that I worked with were 10-year-old beginners. They found the game challenging but enjoyed it. After class I noticed them drawing their own pictures and played the game in the break. I decided to capitalize on this and encouraged them to draw pictures for each other to practice with in class.

Here is an example:

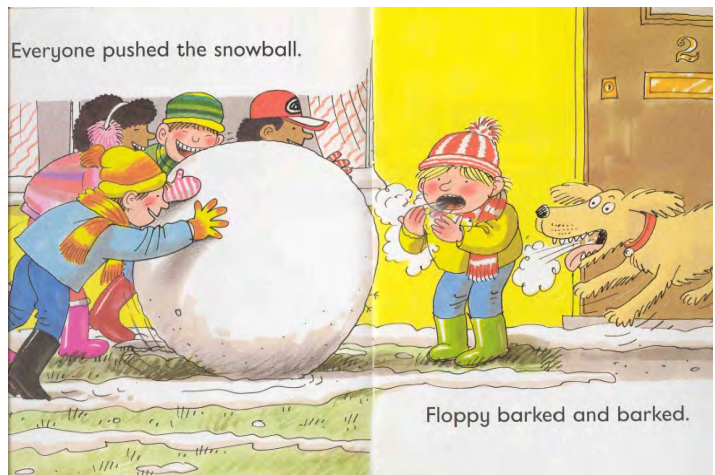
Drawing for further practice with “Spot the Differences” in A and B



Having practiced with houses, suddenly, someone had an idea, and instead of houses, they drew parks, zoos, shops, and other places. I helped with the designs and decisions regarding the six differences, but most of the children worked autonomously and enjoyed creating challenges for one another.

The benefits of this repetitive activity were many. The children were motivated to draw and play the game, they were practicing their English, and they were fully engaged in class. As a teacher, I was genuinely pleased that the children themselves generated such good language practice. Even after a few months, many of the children remembered the game and asked if we could play it again!

My second activity also grew out of the children's suggestion. The children I worked with were reading books regularly from the Oxford Reading Tree (Hunt & Brychta, 2003). A typical page from a lower-level book is below. There is usually a short story with pictures and just one sentence to read on each page. Most children like these books because the storylines are excellent and the children can easily identify with the lives of the characters. One day I noticed that some of the children were copying the books. Some copied the original stories and others enjoyed making their own stories. All followed the format, the style and the general presentation of the original books closely. In a sense they copied the general structure of the stories and practiced writing new stories within this 'safe' framework.



Annamaria Pinter was trained as an English language teacher in Hungary at the Eotvos Lorand University in Budapest after studying linguistics and literature. She completed her Masters and PhD in ELT/Applied Linguistics at the Centre for Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick, and is now an Associate Professor at the Centre, teaching on the Masters in ELT and the EdD programs and supervising doctoral students.



And here is a page created by an 8-year-old English as an L2 learner.



Inspired by the children's enthusiasm, I decided to promote this activity in class and encouraged the children to make their own books. Some children made several books and some continued making them at home. The activity was successful because it was feeding off the children's original spontaneous desire to do something that they enjoyed. I simply encouraged them to do it again and again.

Children will give you direct feedback about what they enjoy. In your classes, you could try the following:

1. Observe what activities children enjoy;
2. When you notice they enjoy something, offer to do it again;
3. Encourage the children to take control and repeat the activity a few times, perhaps allowing some variation;
4. Stop the activity just before the children get bored with it

In a nutshell, as long as the children enjoy whatever they are doing, they will be highly motivated, and actively involved in learning and practicing English. Encourage this natural process. Have fun!

**Reference**

Hunt, R., & Brychta, A. (2003). *The snowman*; Oxford reading tree (stage 3). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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# Philosophy of (Language) Teaching and Beyond

## Dr. Graham Crookes

When I began drifting into this field, let's say 33 years ago in 1980, the default setting was that there was research, and it would tell us how to teach. Or at least, that's how I recall matters. This position may have been one that I myself arrived at, or derived, filtering the various professional experiences I possessed (e.g., in a certificate in Applied Linguistics and the Teaching of English at the University of Essex in 1980) through my own scientific lenses. But at any rate, professional practice seemed highly distinct from personal values at that time. My personal values at that time were a rather unexamined set of individualistic but somewhat alternative positions derived from growing up during the late 1960s and early 1970s (a time when my home country, the United Kingdom, had a socialist government, when the USA was in retreat from its most recent imperialist adventure in Vietnam, and South Korea was encased in the military dictatorship of Park Chung-Hee).

Just teaching a second language as "efficiently" as possible seemed the major goal of the work of young English language teachers in those days, and as I went on to graduate studies and was trained as a researcher, that was still the default position in the early 1990s. I began, however, to have doubts, and to encounter some colleagues whose personal separation of values and research practice seemed to weaken both aspects of their activities, and other colleagues whose unification of values and research seemed to strengthen them.

Academics in our field often have to combine the responsibility of researcher and teacher educator. I found this difficult to do, given that the identity of a junior or student language teacher tends to be bound up with a role of helper of language learners, rather than implementer of research-based practices. The helping role, even if minimally articulated, is a moral position in which personal relationships and personal values concerning the nature of teaching, the classroom, or the school are uppermost, if not implicit. It is difficult to make a connection to this social and values-based context from the depersonalized and individualized research conception of second language learning that used to be dominant.

There are many ways to make a values-based perspective on our field more visible. Having grown up in the mainstream of old-line SLA, it was when I was responsible for the practice teaching of junior language teachers that I found it necessary to assist the integration of research-based knowledge with the development of a language teacher's personal values. In some cases, I was faced with language teachers who had no particular affinity with research-based knowledge of language learning, seeing it as having no real-world implications, given the nature of the English language teaching classrooms they had already been in. They also had no values associated with language teaching, seeing it as primarily a financial transaction between themselves, their school, and their students.

So where does one turn under these circumstances? What point is there in talking about "professionalism" when there isn't adequate professional knowledge, there aren't professional working conditions, and the real desire to learn, if there is one, concerns learning something that claims to be English but is actually some kind of abstract knowledge unrelated to communication in the real world?

Gaining some command of the domain of "teachers' values" is an initial move. And, if we have the time and conditions to do this, we should do so within a historical perspective. It is always valuable to ask "where did this come from?" For language teachers, whether international or domestic, this subsumes a question like "how did I arrive at this position?" Gaining command of this area means, for me, developing a statement of one's philosophy of teaching. There are many sources for this, including one's own life experiences, reflected upon, but a major academic area is the philosophy of education. And that is something I provide entry to, as a resource, in my book *Values, Philosophies, and Beliefs in TESOL*.

But then, let us return to the matter of the likely conflict between one's aspirations as a language teacher and the common, usually inadequate, working conditions. Or let us return to the matter of the conflict between what language teachers want to teach and what students (in South Korea, and elsewhere) want to learn. Or to the conflicts between what the government wants teachers to do, and what teachers themselves want to do. Or the conflict between what the rich in South Korea are able to achieve in English proficiency for their children, and the concomitant entry to prestigious universities, and what the poor are (not) able to achieve in this area. What does that imply for the values-based (and research-based) language teacher? One response is to attempt to articulate a critical perspective in one's actions as a language teacher: for this, conceptual and practical resources that are hard to come by are needed, and this is what I work through in my book *Critical ELT in Action*.

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# Using Neuroscience to Understand 3Ls

Curtis Kelly

Unless you work at one of the top schools, you have probably encountered what the field calls “reluctant learners.” In fact, if you teach English in the kinds of schools I did for 20 years, the majority of your students might be of this type. In two of the schools I worked at, attendance was normally about 50% and homework completion (not counting scribbled copying just before class) 10%. It was not that these students were less intelligent or from a lower economic class than other students, they just didn’t have the inclination to learn what we were teaching. And I believe that lack of inclination was often based in a lack of ability as well. In fact, I called these students “3Ls,” meaning they are caught in the self-reinforcing cycle of *Low ability*, which causes *Low confidence*, which leads to *Low motivation*. Since low motivation results in less study, they get even further behind in ability.

For twenty years, finding a way to reach these 3L students has been my passion, probably because, to some degree, I was once one of them. After my first Japanese class at the University of Hawaii, I went to the language lab to do the required daily tape practice. It was a listen and repeat exercise, and it simply overwhelmed me. Simple phrases, but they baffled me, and they came far too fast (I never realized I was supposed to push the pause button). I was so disturbed after that one experience that I never went back. Then too, since all the other people in the class had lived in Japan or had some contact with the language, while I was starting from zero, it was hard for me to keep up. I got further and further behind until I too slipped into the world of 3Ls.

Because of my own difficulties studying language, I decided to try to reduce this debilitating problem for my students. I am sure you have seen the same misery, dejection, and complete loss of self-esteem in some of your students’ eyes that I have, and it angers me that we allow this to happen to our young learners. If they have become 3Ls, the blame ultimately lies with us. So, I decided the mission of my life would be a simple one: to relieve the suffering of the language classroom, or at least to try. To accomplish this mission, I turned to the fields of education, psychology, and more recently, neuroscience for understanding. In addition, with the generous support of certain publishers, I have tried to implement what I have discovered in the way I wrote ELT textbooks, but I had only limited success getting them out there. It seems that the primary requirement for reaching lost learners – making the activities playful, creative, personalized, open, and at a level they cannot fail – although popular with students, does not fit the academic image most schools wish to project.

So what have I learned from neuroscience that has helped me understand 3L students? There are a number of things, some expected and some completely unexpected. The expected includes a better understanding of: a) how the brain learns, especially in regard to dopamine, and b) what the brain learns. The unexpected includes: a) the critical

roles of sleep and exercise, b) the importance of preschool for adult success, and c) the role of gender in stress.

*The expected:* It does not take long in teaching English to realize that some activities and topics activate students more than others. Nor is it a surprise, that when activated, students retain more of what they are being taught. This is related to the role of dopamine. Dopamine is an important neurotransmitter for a number of brain functions, including movement, drive, and reward, but its presence also facilitates long-term learning. Right there, that dopamine connects drive, reward, and learning gives us a picture of how the brain learns: your brain remembers things related to what you desire, and things that make you feel good. That makes perfect sense in evolutionary terms. Remembering a rich food source, a victory, a way of speaking that influences others, enables future success. That memory management occurs in the emotional center of the brain (which ascribes all value) supports this conception of learning. Emotional apparatus determines what is relevant and meaningful to us and tags it for retention. The task then, is to find out what is personally meaningful to your students and use it as a vehicle to get the language in.

*The unexpected:* Although old information now, when I learned 15 years ago that sleep was critical for long-term learning and understanding, it was a complete surprise. Before that discovery, there was no clear theory as to why humans slept at all, with popular (wrong) theories being that sleep allowed the body to remove toxins or cool off. Now we know that the key gain from sleep is in learning. No sleep, no learning. Less than adequate sleep – say only 7 hours a night for a high schooler – and after awhile that student will slip from the top 10% to the lowest 9% of those who do get sleep. Exercise too, is critical for good brain function. Suddenly, it became clear why so many of my students, who seemed to master something in English in one class, had totally forgotten it by the next. Lack of sleep was probably the culprit. Sleep might also be the key factor for who gets into what universities.

This spring, I found another reason for the disparity in student performance. It has always baffled me why some students do so poorly in school and some do so well, or more accurately, why some try so hard while others hardly try at all. The 3L cycle and role of sleep might explain some of it, but not all. Then, in brain studies related to teaching children, I found the answer. There are certain prefrontal cortex skills gained at preschool age, called executive function. If these skills are not adequately developed at that time, they can only be gained later with great effort. The offshoot of these skills, which include flexibility, inhibition, and working memory, is character. They form the basis for the tolerance, reasoning, and conscientiousness needed for success in adulthood. Research has found that conscientiousness, far more than IQ, is a good predictor of success in school and also in life. So maybe the reason some students study so hard while others do not comes from the quality of their preschool experience.

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# Practitioner Research *Must Be Good Pedagogy*

## Dick Allwright

Research in the classroom takes time, and it can waste a lot of class time. But it need not, and it should not. If we teachers don't want to waste anybody's time, but do want to do research in our classrooms, then the question is: HOW? Experience has shown, over more than twenty years, that it can be done, and it can work well, if you:

(1) Use your normal pedagogic activities, and their language content, as your investigative tools. The language learning will continue un-interrupted, and no time need be lost from teaching and learning.

(2) Focus your research on whatever puzzles you and/or your learners about your teaching and learning lives together, rather than getting your research topics from anywhere else (academic publications, for example).

(3) Turn your learners into researchers, too, to get them properly involved. And if they are investigating their own puzzles about being a learner, they will neither waste time, nor resent whatever time it takes.

As an extra bonus, they will develop not only their language skills but also their understanding of classroom language learning. So, if you:

(4) Get them working together, with you, to develop your understandings in a process of mutual development, all can benefit.

(5) Better still, take the sharing into the world beyond the classroom.

### Hopelessly Unrealistic?

Perhaps, but a good number of teachers and learners around the world are finding these ideas all possible and highly valuable. I developed the idea of Exploratory Practice (EP), with Brazilian colleagues, in the early 1990s (see the "Epilogue" to Allwright and Bailey, 1991). EP is entirely based on the good teaching I found in Rio in 1990. Brazil is where the most, and most adventurous, development work has been done since then, by Ines Miller and her colleagues (teachers and learners) in the Rio Exploratory Practice Group. The whole story is told in the book Judith Hanks and I published in 2009.

### Aline Santiago's Story

*In the beginning of this year, I was in a quite difficult situation because I had to face an eighth grade group that has been seen as the worst at school, principally in relation to discipline. After some bad moments together, I was quite irritated and could not stand the situation. So I decided to start some work based on an Exploratory Principle using the subject I was dealing with according to the course plan ("must" X "should"). The starting point was a brainstorming considering "Quality of Life" immediately linked to "Quality of Life in class" – one of the EP principles. The following moment was to write sentences using "should" or "must" regarding the role of students and teachers in class. I collected the sentences made in groups, and in the following class, the sentences were shared with the whole group. On that day, they had the chance to write their comments about our work and future life in class, taking into consideration the sentences made by them. In addition, they could try to guess what my initial puzzle*

*was: "Why am I so irritated when I have to face the 807 group?"*

*To my surprise, my terrible group was able to understand that it was necessary to improve our life in class and really took part in the talk and process of understanding what was happening. They realised that the responsibility of having a pleasant class needed to be shared, it was not only my own concern.*

*Also, they helped me realise that I was partially responsible for our bad relationship, because I was unable to listen to them. After three classes sharing ideas, we could understand that respect from both parts was necessary. Also listening was part of our life in class, although we were not exercising this ability. I can say that we have grown with this simple way of understanding something that has made us so uncomfortable in class. Now, we really are a group! Our life in class is much better!*

*(Santiago, 2006; also in Allwright & Hanks, 2009, pp. 191)*

Aline used her normal teaching activities and normal language content (Suggestion 1) to investigate her own puzzle about her relationship with her students (2). She involved the students quite directly in working with her on the investigation (3), and the bonus was, through all the shared work for understanding (4), a much better understanding all round of how to work together.

All that's missing is sharing beyond the classroom (5). In Rio, that is done through the annual EP Event, when teachers and learners (up to 300, mostly school-age children) bring posters of their work for understanding to a joint conference.

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Dick Allwright is one of the most influential applied linguists in the field. His main areas of interest bridge theoretical and practical concerns in the area of language education. An early enthusiast for observational classroom research, Dr. Allwright is more recently the originator of the innovative and increasingly influential pedagogical movement called Exploratory Practice (EP).



# Fostering Autonomous Language Learning With e-Portfolios

## Lillian Wong

Interest in learner autonomy has increased substantially in recent years with the promotion of student-centered pedagogy and the growing awareness of the need to address learner diversity. New directions and developments in technology are driving and, to a certain extent, enabling more innovative approaches to learning and teaching by providing more and more varied online resources, network services, and educational platforms, which create opportunities for interaction and support for learning outside the classroom. More recently, developments in mobile technologies and the explosion in the use of social media have accelerated and extended opportunities for autonomous language learning, both in the classroom and beyond.

### What Is Autonomous Learning?

Autonomous learning promotes student control over their own learning. It is associated with self-direction, motivation, and individual differences. Learners are stimulated to evolve an awareness of their learning goals and paths. They participate actively in the processes of learning to meet their needs, interests and preferences. They are motivated to act independently and collaboratively with others and are encouraged to reflect on their learning and find ways to improve it.

### Using e-Portfolios to Foster Autonomous Language Learning

Recent advances in new technologies offer great potential and support for autonomous language learning. The use of technologies encourages the learner to take more responsibility for learning, which helps to motivate them in their learning processes. In the following, we are going to focus on the ways in which e-portfolios provide the technological personal learning environment that promotes autonomy in language learning.

### What Is an e-Portfolio?

An e-portfolio is a diverse evidence-based process that combines inquiry, reflection, documentation, and representation. It engages learners in ongoing, reflective, and critical analysis of learning. It focuses on purposeful, selective outcomes for both improving and assessing learning. It is a personal record of learning and growth over time and an expression of self-identity in a digital medium.

### Processes of the Language Learning e-Portfolio

#### 1. Setting Goals and Making Plans

Learners set the learning goals for their e-portfolios and describe how they envision the e-portfolio process will serve them. Teachers can help learners by negotiating their learning goals, giving them suggestions on learning activities and resources, and discussing their plans and strategies with them. Learners post their goals and self-analysis to the e-portfolio. They revisit these at various points of the e-portfolio development process and reflect on their learning progress.

Having learning goals and plans for the e-portfolio encourages learners to explore a wide range of ideas for sharing their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It also places them in the active role of setting goals and making plans on achieving their targets. Learners are motivated to take control of their learning.

#### 2. Building the e-Portfolio

Learners save artifacts that represent a wide variety of achievements, skills, and knowledge of the specific learning targets and growth opportunities. This e-portfolio development process involves numerous possibilities for learning.

For *writing*, learners can post various drafts of the same written work, such as academic papers, to show how they have dealt with research challenges, citation and referencing, arguments and organizing of ideas, and so on. The various drafts include annotations demonstrating learner awareness and improvement in language and writing skills. The process involves learners' responses to teachers and peer feedback, and their self-analysis and reflection on their learning.

For *speaking*, learners can record their presentations using their smartphones, upload them to YouTube, and link them to the e-portfolio, together with their presentation slides. Learners keep records of various rehearsals and of the final presentation. These demonstrate their achievements, as do reflections that focus on self-analysis of feedback from peers and teachers. Other speaking artifacts can include videos of student participation in discussion and debates, and audio clips of pronunciation and intonation activities.

For *reading*, students can post summaries of journal articles they read for writing a research paper, reviews of books, and so on. They can also post vocabulary logs from reading, with examples showing usage of new words learnt. Learners can illustrate their reading process with annotations that show their analysis of a text, such as author's voice, claims and arguments, structure and organization, and use of language. In addition, they can also paraphrase some parts of a text to show understanding.

For listening, learners can post comprehension activities with their marks and teachers' feedback, and summaries or notes showing understanding of listening materials. Learners can also be encouraged to reflect on and evaluate the strategies they used, and what they learnt by using various strategies in different activities and for different language skills.

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Finally, I have always wondered about the effect of stress on learning. After all, stress is ever-present in the classroom, often by design. We know that long-term stress, or distress, has serious effects on health and learning, but what about the little stresses we create with quizzes, competitions, class presentations, and chiding? The literature is contradictory. Some writers say stress inhibits learning, while others say a little aids learning. It was not until I read research coming out of Europe that I understood that both views are right. Cortisol, the main stress hormone, both helps and hinders learning at the same time. This model has implications for the classroom and another unexpected finding. A little stress usually has a positive effect on men's cognitive processing, but almost always a negative effect on women's.

I suppose I understand the 3Ls a bit better now. I doubt I can solve all their problems, but what I have learned has helped me design methods and materials that relieve a bit of the suffering. And that leads to the final surprise. I no longer teach 3Ls – the vast majority of my students are diligent and hard working – but the highly personalized, playful materials and methods I made for the 3Ls work just as well with them. Maybe they have been suffering too, but are better at managing it. After all, a brain is a brain. Each might have different contents and strengths, but the means of processing is conserved across all learners.

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### 3. Identifying and Selecting Artifacts

Learners review and evaluate the artifacts they have saved, and identify those that best demonstrate their achievements of specific standards, and reflect the learning goals of the e-portfolio. It is important to state clearly in the introduction section the specific goal or purpose of the e-portfolio. The selection of artifacts should only focus on samples which provide evidence of the highest competencies of specific targets.

### 4. Reflection on Learning for Improvement

Learners explain their thinking about each artifact selected in their e-portfolio, evaluating their growth and achievements over time. Through reflections, learners analyze their knowledge, skills, strategies, and attitudes as well as changes within themselves in the processes of development and learning. Learners state their rationale for choosing each artifact to demonstrate their reflections. The reflection process also involves self-assessment and critical awareness of what is going well and why, and stimulates changes for future improvement.

### 5. Connection and Presentation

E-portfolios can be presented on Facebook, which many learners are familiar with and are probably constantly connected to. A group is set up for each class, it is private to the learners in the group, and they can control the setting of their own e-portfolios to not show any private matter. Peer feedback can be easily done as comments or document attachments as well as by posting videos and audio clips. Teachers can post activities and messages to the whole class in the same way as the learners, if they prefer. The message function can be used for private dialogue between learners and the teacher. Learning management systems such as Moodle or the e-portfolio platform Mahara can also be adopted to present e-portfolios.

### Conclusion

The development of e-portfolios adds a new dimension to learning and creates new opportunities to enhance learners' autonomous learning and self-development. The process encourages learners to take an active role in engaging themselves in critical thinking and self-assessment in their learning and in choosing representations of what they have learnt. E-portfolios offer authentic and readily updated information on individual achievements, strengths, and potential by incorporating appropriate evidence. They provide a comprehensive and systematic personal record of learning and a dynamic expression of the learner's own identity through multimedia technologies.

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