



MACQUARIE  
University

## UECA PD Day: Creative People Creative Spaces

*Making use of the mental and physical spaces of the classroom,  
the outdoors and the community.*

# Exploratory Practice on Independent Learning

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**The stimulus for this project  
started with students' thoughts and challenges  
they were facing  
about independent learning.**

**The purpose of this initiative is  
to motivate learners  
to become more independent learners.**

# Using Professional Judgement

## What issues can be identified?

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Hi, I'm Pablo!

I have been living in Australia for four months now. Since I arrived, I have been attending English language classes for four hours each day, five days a week. I have made some progress, but find it very difficult to speak with local people because I can't understand what they are saying. In the classroom my teacher speaks slowly and clearly, so it's ok. However, as soon as I leave the classroom, I go back to speaking Spanish because it's just easier. My family at home all speak Spanish and try to help me with my English, but I seem to give up quickly. It's just too hard!

My teacher gives me homework, but it is mostly boring and not useful to me. So I tend to make an excuse to get out of it.

# The framework of the study

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## Two classes and two teachers:

### MaryAnn

- General English 3
- 18 students
- Lower intermediate level
- Mixed cultures
- %50 male, %50 female

### Gamze

- Academic English 3
- 18 students
- Upper intermediate level
- Mixed cultures
- %40 male, %60 female

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- **Ongoing initiative for three blocks, 15 weeks**
  - **Implemented new activities during a 5 week course (G3 and A3)**
  - **Spent approximately 40 to 60 min per week (3 days)**
  - **Asked students' opinions and suggestions at the beginning**
  - **Integrated new activities to enrich the curriculum, not to replace it**

**What are the differences  
between the education systems  
in countries  
around the world?**

# Student responses

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**“In my country, teacher gives all the answers.”**

**“Here, we need to find them!”**

**“In western culture, we need to learn by ourselves!”**

**“Independent learning?”**

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**Let's brainstorm some ideas!**

**How do you help / What actions do you take  
to help your students  
become more independent learners?**



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## This study aims to

- **expand** learners' understanding of independent learning
- **encourage** them to become more involved, responsible and active with their own learning processes
- **develop** an overarching concept about their own learning

# Outcomes and Objectives

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- To create an **adaptable framework** for different courses, language levels and teaching styles
- To encourage **teacher creativity** and use of professional judgement
- To develop a **supported environment** where learners are moving towards taking more control of their learning experiences

# Outcomes and Objectives

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- To implement a **life-long and ongoing** learning process
- To engage learners in learning experiences **involving the wider community**
- **More autonomy** through the curriculum, rather than adding to the curriculum
- To work in **partnership with learners**

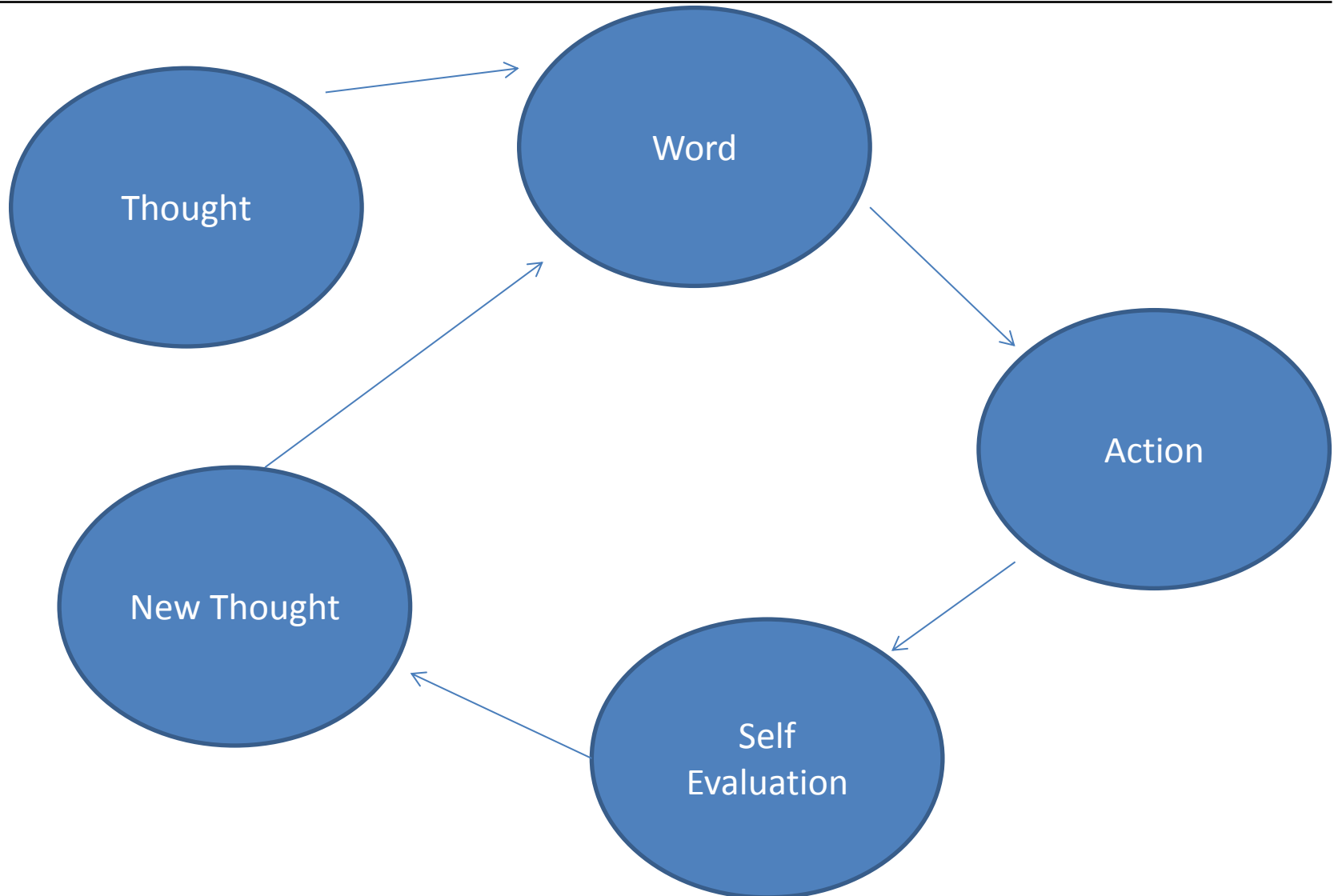
# How?

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by initiating **new thoughts, words and actions...**



# Framework



# Framework

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**Week 1 – Thoughts**

**Week 2 – Thoughts + Words**

**Week 3 – Words + Actions**

**Week 4 – Actions**

**Week 5 – Reflection & new thoughts**

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## Exploratory Practice

**Learners and teachers  
work together  
to develop new and effective  
independent learning strategies**

## Enhancing Independent Learning

**Inside** the classroom

**Outside** the classroom

**How?**

**Please give examples**



# Learning tools, concepts

*Different activities were incorporated throughout different courses for three blocks 15 weeks*

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## Mary Ann: General English

- Group discussions
- Brainstorming
- Music
- Interviewing
- Keeping a scaffolded journal
- Video/ Voice recording

## Gamze: Academic English

- Brainstorming ideas
- Pair/group discussions
- Keeping a journal, weekly entries
- Mind mapping, critical thinking
- Presentations, video recording
- Role playing

# Learning tools, concepts

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- **Starting from simple thoughts & words**
  - **Co-constructing – Students work together to develop ideas by creating meaningful, practical concepts**
  - **Blending curriculum with extracurricular activities**
  - **Creating opportunities – learning inside and outside the classroom**

# Learning tools, concepts

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## **Sharing & reflecting between:**

**learner – learner**

**learner – teacher**

**teacher – teacher**

## **Developing contextually appropriate and effective pedagogies:**

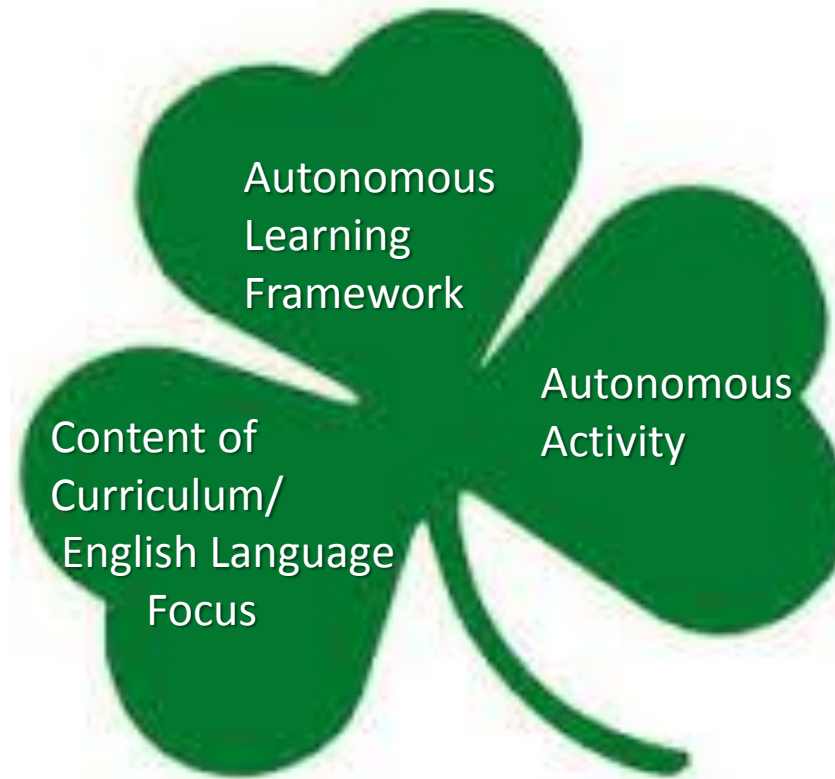
**Goal setting**

**Needs-based**

**Practical applications**

# Teaching Autonomous Learning through Curriculum Content

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Always 50/50 in relationships

The shoes on my feet

I've bought it

The clothes I'm wearing

I've bought it

The rock I'm rockin'

'Cause I depend on me





If I wanted the watch you're wearin'

I'll buy it

The house I live in

I've bought it

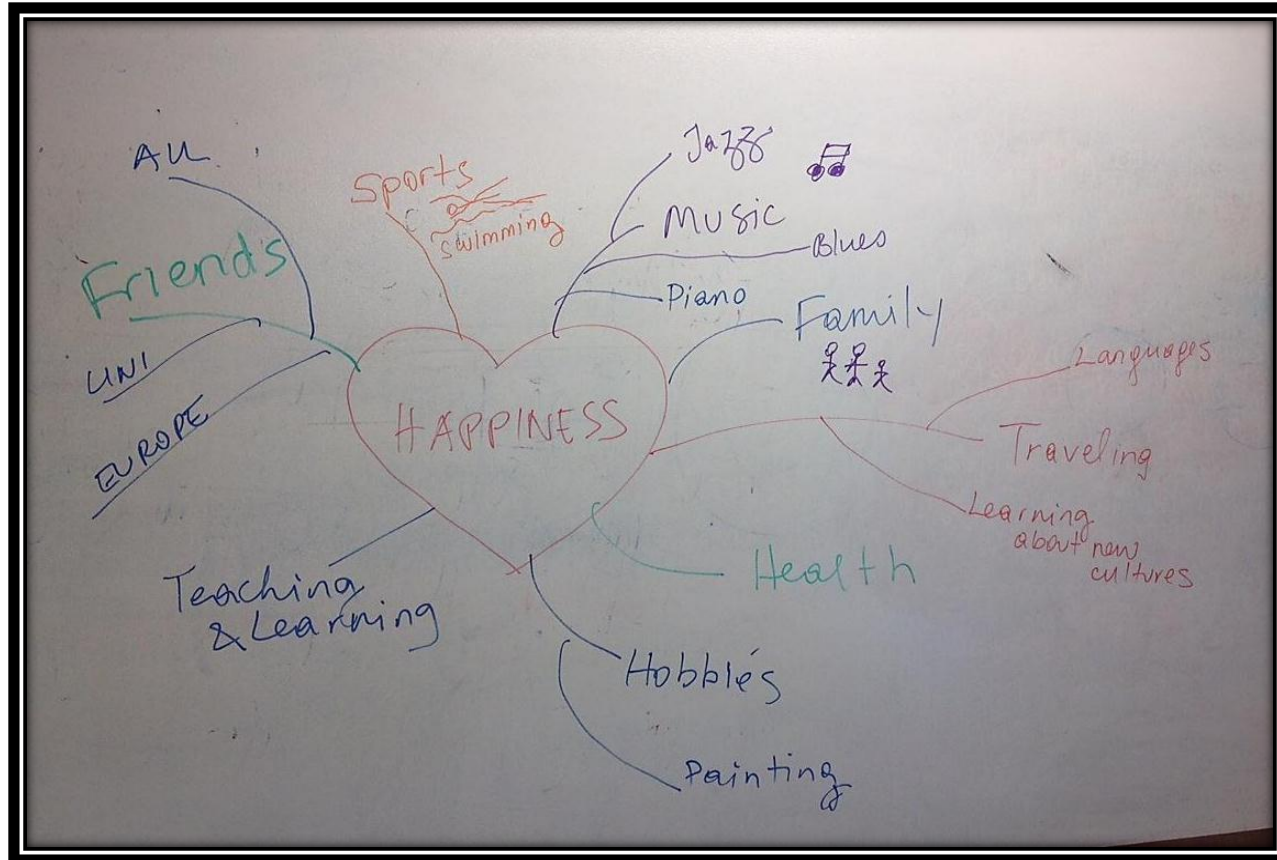
The car I'm driving

I've bought it

I depend on me

(I depend on me)

# Concept mapping



# What does the word 'independence' mean to you?

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**“Independence means ‘A boy becomes a man’”.**

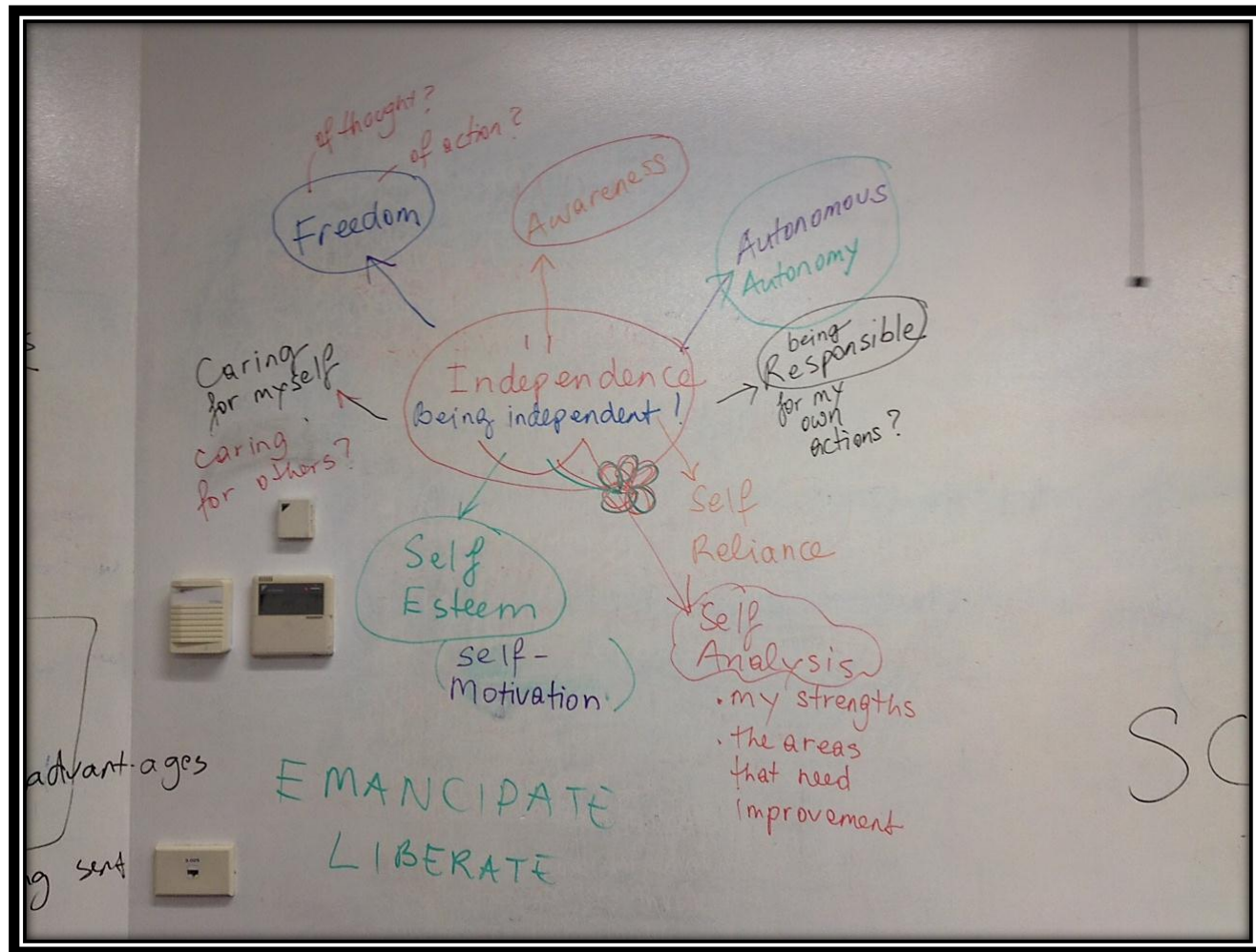
**“Independence is like freedom of living.”**

**“Independence refers to people making decisions and solve problems by themselves, it is a social ability...”**

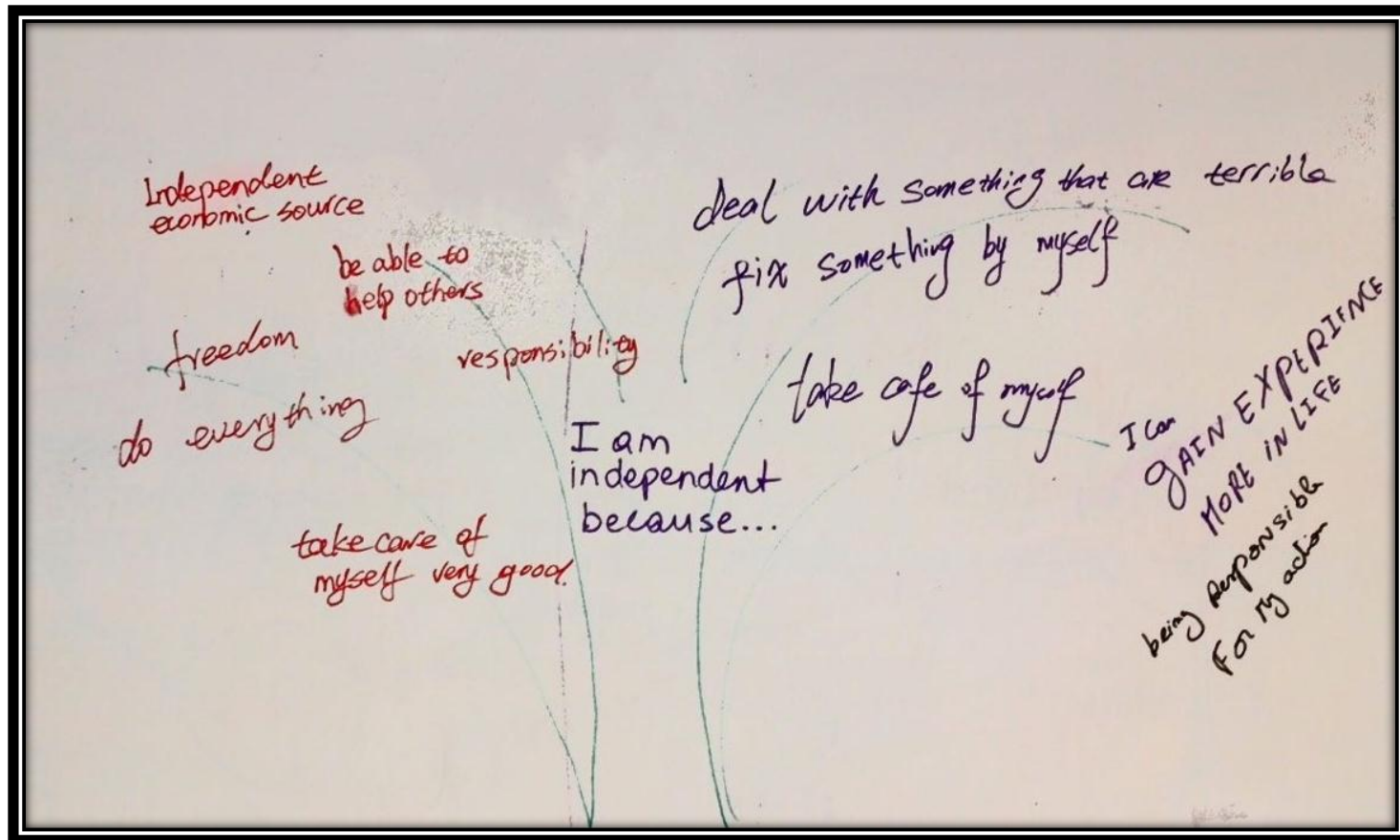
**“Independent means people who are not rely on others mentally.”**

**“Being independent is important because you do not limit your thoughts and skills, for that you will be a fearless person to have or do your own idea. To be independent is the bright side of life for each person.”**

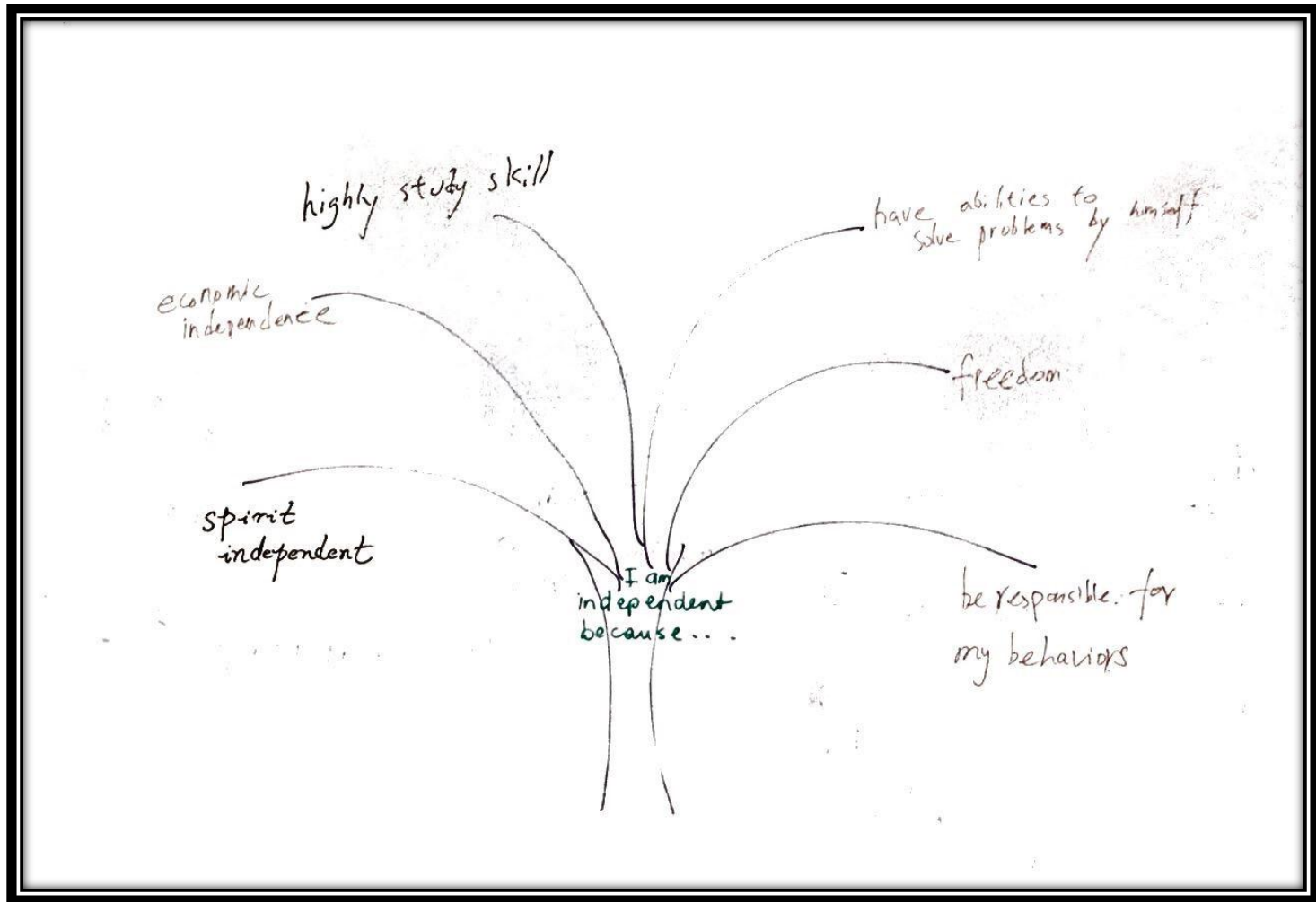
# Analyse & synthesize



# Independence Tree



# Independence Tree





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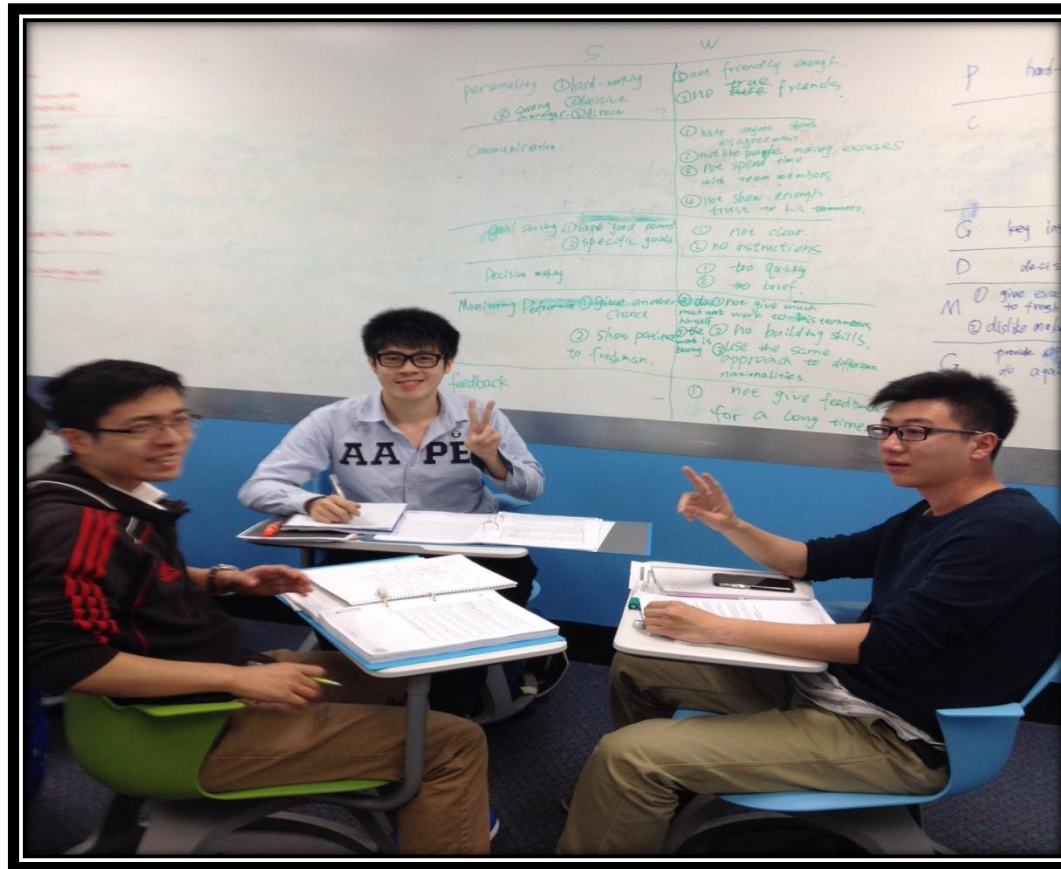
Students apply these concepts into  
their own learning context  
**inside** and **outside**  
the classroom

# Groups in action





# Groups in Action



# Exploring practices outside the classroom

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# Outcomes

Students' comments about what they have learned

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***“Independent learning will give us more motivation and confidence.”***

**“I have learned different methods about independent learning. It makes me more effective and also it makes me more confident.”**

***“Independent learning is not only inside the classroom, but also a kind of life, trying to learn in every moment of my life.”***

**“I have to like study in my deep heart. If I longing for the knowledge, then study is not a job anymore.”**

***“I learned two things in order to be independent, **one** is to take a step to do simple things with extraordinary love; **two**, give it back to the community by serving them voluntarily.”***

# Outcomes & Reflection

## The two teachers' views

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- **Creative & fun**
- **Better learning & better understanding**
- **Putting concepts into practice**
- **More effective (and richer) curriculum**
- **More enthusiasm among students**
- **More devotion to learning**
- **Life long learning**
- **Integrating into university's academic culture & environment**
- **Becoming more independent & confident**

# Reflection

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**Let's share our creative ideas that really work!**

**Let's learn from each other, collaborate.**

**Share with senior teachers and managers.**

**Enrich the curriculum – make it work better according to students' needs.**

**Implement, put it into practice.**

**Strive for excellency together!**

# Reference List

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

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# Thank you

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