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The European Language Portfolio in Pre-Service Teacher Education in Ireland: Reflection, Interaction and Autonomy

Patrick Farren

Volume 2 (of 2): Transcripts
Supplement

Transcripts

Semi-structured interviews with student-teachers: Year 1 and Year 2

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Interview with Myles
May 2004
Part 1

Q1. Can you describe briefly the context of school in which you have been teaching?

Galway city school, first years, mixed ability, mixed motivation. The demography of the school has changed from a sort of rural type of boarding school to a very city centered based. That brings with it some social problems that are there. I teach first years, German – they haven’t decided yet - a broad spectrum. ( ) is streamed for all the other subjects but in languages basically you are either in French class or German class regardless of your ability so it’s basically the whole spectrum of learners.

Q2. In the context of your teaching approach in the classroom – can you explain what you mean by a learner-centered approach?

I understand is that it’s for the students to take responsibility for their learning. That I think the role of the teacher as well as their normal functions is to give the students the skills to go and find information out for themselves so that they are the centre of learning. So they can draw on the skills that you have taught them to teach themselves.

Q3. How in using the ELP have your students benefited from this?

I have drawn that concept into them that I am just a facilitator for them, well a bit more than a facilitator obviously. But that’s the idea that I am trying to get across to them that their learning is borderless if they engage it from a pro-active point of view. From their point of view, proactively, rather than waiting for the teacher to teach them. That’s what I hope they got from it.

Q4. And could you just briefly outline the project that you developed for the H.Dip. (students) in terms of the methodologies course?

What we did was to incorporate a unit of learning into the ELP. I used basically the construction of a timetable in German as a method of reviewing the time structure in German which is quite difficult. The alphabet, the names of different types of breaks that they have and also the days of the week and also the school subjects. They were the five lesson plans within the unit and I used that as a method of reinforcing the chapters that I had done already. So the students then at the end of the process their cognitive learning skill was they got a blank sheet of paper, they were allowed to look at their English timetable, they literally translated that into German
and put that into their dossier. And then they recorded themselves what they were able to do and what proficiency level.

Patrick Farren. In terms of the learner-centered approach are there any comments you would like to make about that in terms of your project?

For example, CSPE and SPHE were two subjects there that there isn’t an exact equivalent in German, so there isn’t any translation as such, so from a learner-centered approach so I got them to come up with the translation themselves. So they went off with their dictionaries and they came up with something. So they took responsibility for their own learning there and we had some suggestions and we built words basically.

Q5. Learner empowerment – in using the ELP have you found negotiating and dialoguing with your learners about the aims, contents and activities has made learning more appealing to them?

I think it has. We had a conversation about intercultural experiences and that was a very interesting class because they went off and said ‘well what is an intercultural experience’ and I brought in the idea that if you met a German person at the pass machine and they didn’t know how to work it would you be able to talk to them. But then they came up with much more diverse things, they were talking about Aldi, Lidl, if you go into Lidl is that an intercultural experience with a German? And I suppose it is because all the products in there are German. So then we started to talk about when I lived in Germany and how in Aldi you can only find guest workers, Germans don’t go to Aldi. So that opened up a big new conversation as well.

Q6. Reflectivity – what has reflective practice - planning, monitoring, evaluating – what has that contributed to the learning process in the classroom?

Well, I think it just brings it to the level of consciousness that they are able to say at the end of it, ‘Am I able to achieve a certain objective I have set out?’ And if they answer ‘no’ to that, well at some level of consciousness they know that that will have to be addressed. It just brings up the level of consciousness of their level of proficiency and the objective that they have set out to do and whether they have achieved it or whether they haven’t. And if they haven’t achieved it – why?

Q7. Has the ELP helped your learners to take an increasing level of responsibility for their own learning?

I would like to think so yes.

Q8. Language acquisition – what does the concept of authentic target language use mean in the context of your teaching?
I would hope that that would mean that the students will have the concept that they will use in someday that will help them and aid them in their lives.

Q9. Did your learners make use of the target language in planning, monitoring and self assessing?
No they didn’t.

Q10. Has the ELP supported the development of target language proficiency in your classroom?
It probably hasn’t but that’s because I am a student teacher. If I was a new teacher going in the start of September with a first year group and I think you could, as somebody said last night, use it to certainly do that. But I would have to say that it was quite difficult to bring in sometimes.

Q11. Has the ELP helped you to develop your understanding of what the concept of what literacy might mean?
I don’t know that it does.

Patrick Farren. Would you say that the ELP has enabled your learners to develop their own understanding of what constitutes literacy?
Yes, I think so, yeah. I think they have a greater appreciation but I think Irish students in general have a good appreciation of literacy in another language considering the background with Irish and all that.

What would your understanding be of the term ‘literacy’?
I am thinking more of a wide variety of vocabulary to the extent of it being of quite an educated person. For example, there was a huge literacy problem with the ELP with the language used to describe it in English. It nearly had to be translated into lower level English for them to understand. That was definitely a problem. That would be my biggest critique that it should be written in a language that is geared towards the first years in a school because they had problems with that.

Q12. Was the process of using the target language in class helpful in terms of developing their language proficiency?
It probably would be if I had more time but I didn’t have time. I used the English forms as opposed to the German forms when we were doing the self-evaluation (self-assessment). Because it was hard enough to explain in English, I mean ‘proficiency level’ I had to explain what that meant. So I would say ‘no’ to that but hopefully as the years go by you could drop the English self-assessment sheet for the German assessment sheet.
Q13. In light of your own experience of using the ELP what modifications, if any, would you like to make to the design, structure, contents of the ELP?

Number one is that I would have the English in it in a much more basic fashion, particularly if it's geared for first years. The second thing is the structure, the actual folder itself. If it's for German and English I would leave it for German and English, I would take out the French, I would take out the Spanish. If we could possibly do that, customise it for each class because the kids take out the Italian one and they take out the Spanish one and it can get a bit noisy.

Part II

Q14. Your own learning in the context of the H.Dip. with respect to modern languages. In the context of your own learning with the ELP, what does the concept of autonomy and autonomous learning mean to you?

Autonomy means on your own. So my concept of that would be that I would give my students the facility to learn by themselves if they have to.

Patrick Farren. For yourself does it mean working on your own?
Yeah, it does, yeah.

Q15. Has working with the ELP in the post primary class helped you in your own learning as a student teacher?

Well the self-assessment is a big thing. The way they fill out their forms in how they have achieved a certain objective, I also have to do that. So that's something that is definitely being reinforced over the year. That would be the main thing.

Q16. Student teacher empowerment – in using the ELP have you found that by negotiating and dialoguing with your learners that your own understanding of what teaching is has grown?

Absolutely, yeah I think so. The discussions we have had as a result of the ELP which I would never have thought would have been subject matter that I would have taught to first years in particular, talk about the European Council, you know things like that, so I would definitely say it would.

Patrick Farren. And has that negotiating and dialoguing with your learners, has it helped your own concept of what teaching is about, to grow?

Absolutely, I think so, yeah. I think the main point of all this is you have to make the teaching, you
have to make the language relevant. Convince them whether it's true or not that they are going to have some use for German in the future.

Q17. How has the ELP supported you in dialoguing with your supervisor?

Very well. The ELP brings in all the strands that are essential to teaching, now whether or not you like the way that it is presented is different. But the headings are there and the drop-down menus are there so therefore it covers all topics. So I would imagine then, as a supervisor, the ELP would also be very useful because it has all the topics there. Nothing is forgotten about between the listening and the oral and all that.

Q18. Has teaching with the ELP helped you to take an increasing level of responsibility for your own teaching?

I think it has. It has certainly put me under more pressure.

Q19. What would you say reflective practice has contributed to your language learning in the language semester course?

Well, it certainly has got me thinking that I have to go to Germany very soon to brush up on my German. So I have been reflecting on that. My German is fine but it has been about three or four years since I have been to Germany. So it's made me reflect on my own level of German and that I perhaps may have to go back to Germany just to tune in again.

Q20. Has learning with the ELP, in the context of the semester course, supported you in developing your language proficiency in German?

Yes, absolutely it has yeah. It has helped me reflect on my own level and therefore I have to address that.

Patrick Farren. Language acquisition – what does the concept of language use mean in the context of the language semester course?

It would be emphasised that if you use the language in the classroom for everyday things, if you are just coming in ask them to take out their books you would say that in German. So that was my concept, during the semester course, What language use is about is actually using the language to do not just the book work, but in every sense of the word in the classroom.

Patrick Farren. Could you give me some idea about what uses you made of the ELP in your German semester course?
Well, I used it as a motivating factor. I used it as a cultural device, obviously the linguistic, that goes without saying, as a cultural device where we would discuss various different cultural issues within the German language and within the broader European context as well.

Q22. Do you think learning in the methodologies helped you understand the processes involved in using the ELP?
Yes, definitely yeah.

Q23. Have you any comments that you would like to make about your experience with using the ELP?
Not really, just to reiterate I think the ELP is a good idea but it’s very difficult for student teachers to incorporate it. You need the serious cooperation from your co-teacher.

Q21. What has reflective practice in the context of your Teaching Practice File that you developed during the H, Dip. in the classroom, what has that contributed to your learning as a teacher?
I use that more as a ‘behavioural’ thing. If I have problems with students in the class I note it there and I note how I am going to deal with it. And I note if that works or not, that’s what I do with it.

Patrick Farren. In terms of your own reflective practice has there been anything in terms of your evaluations or your critical reflective essays that has helped you to reflect on your practice as a teacher?

Well, the page that we do at the end of each month reflecting on the month that has gone beforehand, I find that helpful. Because it brings up certain issues which you can just articulate or maybe just put on paper and just bring it to the level of the conscious to literally put it on a piece of paper.

Patrick Farren. Thanks very much.

Interview with Josephine
May 2004

Part I
Q1. Could you describe the context of the school?

They're fifth year students...there's about 11 in the class. They are quite weak. There's only one of them who likes French. So it's quite difficult in that context...they are not very motivated. The school is here in Galway.
Q2. A learner-centered approach – in the context of the teaching approach that you use, could you explain what you understand by a learner-centered approach?

Well, I understand it to mean that you have the students involved in the class and you have them practising what they have learnt rather than you lecturing for forty minutes and hoping that they go away with some information that you check their understanding and have them practice and get involved in the activities in the class.

How would you go about that?

What I generally do, I take small pieces of information at a time and then use exercises like different activities like role plays and that for them to practice what they have learnt.

Q3. And how would using the ELP have your students benefited from using the learner-centered approach?

Well, I'd say more significantly is the setting of goals. That they know where they are going when they start off a unit and also they are starting to learn about how they learn and the best ways for them… which is good for the teacher to know as well, because you can bring in more visual aids if they find that they learn better through the visual rather than the written.

Q4. Could you outline the project that you did as part of the methodologies course?

Well I chose 'Clothes and Fashion' as the topic. I chose it because of interest to girls.... and I wanted to use the topic to practice adjectives and introduce the idea of agreements and things like that. So.... I just made it learner-centered really by taking small bits at a time, getting them involved, getting them to set their goals beforehand, what they wanted to know at the end of it.

Patrick Farren: Then in the activities that you designed as part of the project – could you tell us something about those, how they would have involved learners in a learner-centered way?

Well, I had them, well when we did adjectives we practise adjectives exercises mostly, just to check their understanding of them, and then, ehm, with the clothes side of things we made a catalogue and... just to, they tend to like to do things practical. I've done lots of projects with them in the past and they're very practical and you know it brings up their writing quite a bit.

Patrick Farren: Okay, and would the ELP have helped in that process at all?

Well, it did in the setting of goals and they had things to add to the dossier, but I didn't find the check-lists very helpful.
Patrick Farren. You didn’t – why was that Fiona?

Well, they are not really at the Leaving Cert. level that is stated on the ELP. The ‘je peux’ statements. They can’t really do a lot of those. So it was kind of negative for them if they looked at that, I find so I don’t really touch on it. Because they say ‘I can’t do it, I can’t do it’.

Q5. In terms of learner empowerment, in using the ELP have you found that negotiating or dialoguing with your learners about the aims and contents and activities has helped them to develop their language acquisition?

Yeah, because they are taking more responsibility and they know what they want to find out and they know where they are going everyday and not just coming into the class not knowing the aim or the outcomes.

Patrick Farren. And do you think that has made learning more appealing to them?
Slightly, they are not too interested from the start.

Patrick Farren. Other effects, e.g. would you think the ELP has a motivating influence overall?

Yeah, I think it does to a certain extent. At times it just seems like extra work to them I think. I think they like to add to the dossier. That’s what I would focus on the most.

Patrick Farren. Can you think of any other effects that the interactive process has had on your learners?

They have become slightly more confident in the classroom I think, more willing to speak.

Q6. In terms of reflectivity – what does reflective practice like planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning as supported by the ELP, what has that contributed to the learning process?

Well, they get to see where they have started off and where they are finishing up and what they have achieved. Because a lot of the time they think they are not learning anything. So I think by having the ELP to look on they can see where they have started and where they have improved.

Q7. Would you say that the ELP has helped your learners to take an increasing level of responsibility?
Yeah, to a certain extent.

Patrick Farren.: Would you see this as a process...that you would like them to take more responsibility?
Yeah, well I think if they had it from the beginning it would be. Because I tried it with the first years then, I only had them for a little while, but it was a big difference because they are starting off.

Q8. In terms of language acquisition – developing authentic language use – what does that concept in the classroom mean for you?

It’s very difficult to use French in the classroom, they are not very open to it and they find it very difficult to understand. They switch off if you use it. So in that sense it’s quite difficult to use. Even in texts, although I don’t change any texts. I get quite a lot from the internet and I just leave it. But they are not very motivated to try and find out the meanings or anything like that.

Patrick Farren. They wait for you?
Yeah.

Patrick Farren. How would you overcome that problem?

Well, I get them to look up their dictionary or get them to pick out the words that they understand and try and guess the meanings.

Q10. Would you say that the ELP has supported your learners in developing their language proficiency?

I think the dossier does in a way because they are proud of their work and they make an effort to get it right. They like to be able to say ‘well I did this’.

Q11. Would it have helped broaden your own concept of literacy?
Yeah, I suppose it did. I don’t know how.

Patrick Farren. Literacy in the widest sense – do you think that the ELP has helped your learners to develop a broader understanding of the term literacy than just reading and writing?

Yeah, I think they didn’t really consider before that there is listening and speaking aspects. I don’t think they divided language into reading, writing, listening and speaking. It did help them to realise that there is passive and active roles to take.

Q9. Did your learners make use of the target language in planning, monitoring and self assessing?

A little bit, not very much. Not in the goal assessing really, they used to put it into English and I had to translate it into French. The actions in the class they would use French when they are told to use French.
Q12. Do you find that this language use in class would help them to develop their language proficiency?

Yeah, definitely if they would use it!

Patrick Farren. Do you find it’s hard to get them to speak?

Yes, it is.

Patrick Farren. Why do you think that is?

Well, I think at that age they have developed their opinions and they don’t have that much confidence that they can do it.

Patrick Farren. Do you think that the ELP has a role to play in developing their confidence in that they feel that they can?

Well, I think that if they had it from first year on then they would be constantly seeing how much they have developed and they could have the confidence.

Q13. Overall, in light of your experience of using the ELP, what modifications, if any, would you make to the design, the structure, the contents of the portfolio?

The format I think is not very exciting to look at. I saw the junior version and it’s much more accessible to students. Of course maybe first and second years might be a bit … it’s more easier to understand. They are just colouring in sections that they can do. The format is much more exciting I think.

Patrick Farren. What about the actual language in the ELP?

I think it’s quite difficult. Even ‘mother tongue’ and things like that.

Patrick Farren. What about the actual of structuring and page referencing and so on? Like you have a passport, a biography, a dossier…?

Well I think it’s well laid out that way. It has to be sectioned off. I find as well the section on ‘how I learn’ is quite difficult. I don’t know do people realise how to learn for a long time.

Patrick Farren. Do you think it’s useful for them to learn strategies like that – learning strategies?

Well, yeah, if they can at that age, I don’t know if they notice themselves.
Part II

Q14. Part two – in the context of your own learning with the ELP, what does the concept of autonomous learning mean for you as a student teacher?

Well, that you reflect on your own learning, you decide yourself what you are going to learn, what you want to know in terms of unit or whatever. Taking the responsibility, to make sure that you do know this.

Q15. And would you think that the ELP has helped you in your learning as a student-teacher to do that?

Well it does, it gives you a structure to go by. Especially goal-setting and outcomes and that.

Q16. In using the ELP have you found that negotiating and dialoguing with your learners in the classroom has developed your own understanding of the concept of teaching?

Yeah, it broadens your mind to the fact is just not all about talking and someone else listening. It’s about listening as well and finding out what’s required.

Q17. In terms of your supervisor, would the ELP have had an effect with your dialogue with your supervisor?

Well we spoke about it. She hadn’t used it before so she was wondering how successful it was.

Patrick Farren. So, did it allow you something to talk about?
Yeah.

Patrick Farren. Did you find that was helpful doing that?
Yeah, because you can get help in overcoming the problems of it.

Q18. In autonomous learning, has teaching with the ELP helped you to take an increasing level of responsibility for your teaching?

Yeah, I would think so but I have always taken responsibility.

Patrick Farren. Whether it would help you plan and monitor and reflect?
Yeah.

Q19. In terms of the semester course, what contribution would the ELP have made to your language learning?
When you are going you can set your goals beforehand. You can decide what you want to know.

Patrick Farren. Would you have done that in the class? Would that have been part of the class? We wouldn’t really set goals in the class, but you could do it yourself and go in and ask her.

Patrick Farren. In terms of language acquisition – what does that concept mean in the semester course for you? What did it actually involve?

I suppose preparation for the orals for the most part of it. Just improving your language and trying to find differently ways to express yourself.

Patrick Farren. And would your understanding of the concept of what literacy means, would that have broadened as a result of what you did?

No, I don’t think so.

Q21. What does reflective practice in the context of your Teaching Practice Portfolio that you use in the school, what has that contributed to your learning as a teacher?

It helps me to keep an eye on the reasons why I am choosing the topics and then how successful I am at getting the message across to the students and how successful they are at understanding and how to make sure and check their understanding. At the beginning of the year I might have taught something then and thought they knew it then and about a month later realised that they didn’t actually.

Patrick Farren. Would the reflective critical essays that you did after each unit would they have been useful to you? Yeah, well looking back on them you learn about what you would do different the next time.

Q22. General comments now about the methodologies course – would you think that that has helped you in understanding the process and philosophy underlying the ELP?

Yeah, it has.

Patrick Farren. How would it have done that?

We would never have met with the ELP before so we had to have some kind of ideas on how it works.

Patrick Farren. Would you have found that using the ELP in the context of the HDip overall, has been a useful process?
Yes, I think it was useful, but I think it could be more useful if you are in with the first years.

Patrick Farren. Are you saying that it would be useful to have it at the beginning of their learning process?
Yeah.

Q23. Have you any other comments that you would like to make yourself that we haven’t touched on? Just about the check list and I think it should be made more general rather than dividing it into Junior and Leaving Certs. because there are so many people at different levels.

Patrick Farren. This version is just called post-primary.

Well, I don’t see why they have to divide it into Junior and Leaving Cert because it makes it difficult for weaker students because most of my students were still at the Junior Cert level of a lot of things. If they just left the statements of ‘what I can do’ without actually dividing it into Junior and Leaving Cert.

Q24. Did you work with a mentor teacher at all, a cooperating teacher with the portfolio?
No, because she doesn’t use it and I take a whole class.

Patrick Farren. So you had the whole group the whole time and you had made use with that group?
Yeah..
With the ELP in particular pupils in my class have learnt to think about what they are going to do. In the first section we look at general aims and reflections and I said to the class 'I want you to think about what you are going to do, what you would like to learn', they had never done that before. That's positive I think.

Patrick Farren: What about in terms of the teaching approach, the learner-centered approach in the classroom context, what would that involve?
I try to incorporate the five types of activity but my preferred approach is trying to get people to speak French from the view that communication is the reason for having a language. I try to get the students to communicate in French even if the grammatical structure is not correct, just get them communicating. Speaking to each other, speaking to me, reading out loud.

Q3. In using the ELP have your students benefited from this learner-centered approach?
They have definitely benefited. They have learnt to think for themselves.

Q4. In terms of the project that you developed – can you outline the project briefly.
The project was on the theme of the school. It covered eleven lesson plans. The students expressed their opinions and feelings on school life in French. I was interested in developing more than just 'yes/no' answers.

Patrick Farren: How did you try to involve the affective and cognitive needs of your learners in your project?
A lot of it is getting them to identify something that they'd like to learn. Then you have to go through a certain amount of practice drill and repetition which is necessary. Then you are hoping that what they learn in relation to school in expressing opinions that they'd be able to apply it to the next chapter.

Q5. In using the ELP have you found that negotiating and dialoguing with your learners about the aims, activities, content of learning – do you think that has made learning the language more appealing to them?
I think initially it took a bit of time to get them used to setting goals, it was alien to them. But now that they are actually doing it and I encourage them to do it not just in French. It's got to be positive. It helps the students building on previous knowledge learned.

Patrick Farren: Are there any other effects of this interactive process on your learners?
I think that they have become more confident as a group. They are not afraid to ask me questions, they are not afraid to approach me. They seem happy in their environment. My classroom environment is very different to other classrooms because the class are a bit more vocal and they can be a bit more giddy. That would be a slightly negative effect but I think it's worth it. I think a language is to be
spoken, children aren’t just going to learn by sitting down in silence. We sacrifice a small bit of discipline I feel but I think the greater good is that they will be more proficient in a language.

Q6. What does reflective practice – planning, monitoring and evaluating as supported by the ELP contributed to the learning process in your classroom?

I guess it's the whole idea of, with a language, you are constantly building and reinforcing what you have learnt. So to reflect on something that you have already learnt means to think over it, to use it again and to reapply it. And I think we all do reflective practices but we are just not usually conscious of them. ELP makes pupils conscious of why they are doing something and how they are doing something and it's just awakening pupils to easier ways or the actual ways they are learning but just to improve it.

Q7. In terms of autonomous learning – has the ELP helped your learners to take an increasing level of responsibility in your view?

Yeah, definitely. Initially it took a bit of work, a bit of persuasion. It's reflected in the dossier work. At the end of each unit I try to get them to do a piece that would encapsulate as much of what we have covered so they’d do a little piece – they came in with photographs, brochures, scanned images, internet pieces and this rubs of in their homework. They start bringing in homework that's printed, typed and not just simple little pieces but complex for their level. Which for me shows that they are actually enjoying what they are doing, taking responsibility for it and wanting to impress me and show me that they have learnt something. I think the evidence is there for itself.

Q8. Language acquisition – what does the concept of language use mean in the context of your teaching practice? What would you understand by language use and how would you engage your pupils in language use in the classroom?

For me language use is to be able to communicate. And the principle way is through speaking and writing at this level. The writing and the reading aspect will take more of a focus in third year for me because they will have an exam at the end but in second year I think it’s the right time to nurture the spoken aspect of it.

Patrick Farren: Would you draw a distinction between what you do and authentic language?

I like to teach them standard French that would be required for exam purposes and then as an aside I would often add in ‘your peers in France would say it like this’. I would make them aware of subtle differences because the French use a lot of slang.

Q12. Would you introduce authentic language, in what way?
Mainly through listening comprehension tests and that. They are not as fluid or fluent as you would expect. So I couldn’t say that my classroom situation would be authentic in a perfect way.

Q9. Did your learners make use of the target language in planning their work, in monitoring their work and in evaluating their learning?

No, they wouldn’t have used it, no. Most of their planning would have been through English.

Patrick Farren: You didn’t use that language in the classroom for reflective purposes? No.

Q10. Do you think the ELP has supported the development of target language proficiency in your class?

I wouldn’t say it has helped it directly. One aspect of it has been how I solve communication problems and there I encouraged the class to write down a couple of expressions that I gave them in French. The ELP has been more of a log book for that, a quick reference guide if they get stuck to get something.

Q11. Literacy is a concept that crops up – what do you think that the ELP could contribute to broadening the concept of literacy for students?

In its current form the language is heavy for young pupils and it might scare some pupils off. Even the English is quite a high register of language and that’s tough enough for them. If a teacher took the time to go through and explain all the terms and concepts it would help but it seems a bit heavy and a bit laboured. It needs a small bit of readjustment in its current form, simplify the language or make a version for younger learners that could be compiled to at a higher or senior level.

Patrick Farren: In terms of what the learners have done in a classroom, would your understanding of literacy have changed?

I would like to think so.

Q13. In light of your experience of using the ELP, what modifications, if any, would you make to the design, the structure and/or the contents?

I would definitely change the physical appearance to it. I would introduce a lot more colour to it especially for first, second, third years. It needs to be more stimulating for them. I’d have more framework pages where they could enter more work themselves. Rather than putting in sheets and pages actually have designated places where they could put the stuff in. I’d develop the biography section a bit more. I’d want them to be able more about themselves and have more lead in questions
and more lead in phrases to get their opinions on a wide range of things. Colour would be a big thing for me in that, particularly with the girls because they are always scribbling and colouring in things and not trying to make it glitzy or entertaining, but I think the aesthetics of it could be improved a lot. There’s a small physical difficulty with it as well, it’s heavy. School bags are already crowded enough that would need to be addressed somehow. In my vision of it you would have first to third years having a simplified version of it and that could be then added to a senior cycle folder as it were. So they could still trace that progression but they could be initiated into the use of it a lot easier. The dossier section would carry a few more ideas and examples for the teachers so that the pupils could steal some ideas from that and develop their own. I’d change the language of it, I’d definitely lower the register of it. I appreciate the idea that the ELP would be a uniform format in a lot of different countries so that pupils can think to themselves ‘French students of my age are doing this same type of activity’ and that might be difficult to maintain the unity of the thing and if you changed the structures.

Part II

Q14. What, in the context of your own learning with the ELP in the classroom and in the H. Dip., what does the concept of autonomous teaching mean for you?

It would mean that I could self-direct, choose an area of study and derive. First for me pleasure would be important, to actually take pleasure in learning something. To get to grips with something without any help in an ideal situation, maybe a small bit of reference and input from other people. But that would be the ideal for me, to be self-sufficient in learning.

Patrick Farren: Would that mean, independent?

I think it’s always good to collaborate with people and to get ideas but ultimately to be able to develop my own opinions on things.

Q15. Has working with the ELP in the post-primary classroom helped you in your own learning as a student teacher?

Yes I have learnt to realise that pupils still need structuring. It’s all well and good saying be autonomous and be reflective and then you can’t really send second year students off into the wilderness to teach themselves French. You need structures and you need systems in place. And the ELP can work as a methodology, not all of the time but some of the time and it’s useful.

Q18. In terms of the ELP – has the ELP helped you to take an increasing level of responsibility for your own teaching?

Absolutely, yeah. This is my first year teaching in a secondary school. I did a lectureship in the
University of Brest in Brittany for a year, I would have gone in there as a language assistant and brought in a few English articles and said 'let's read a little bit of this, let's translate a bit and let's improve our spoken English'. But I didn't have specific goals and targets in mind and now I tend to look at a section and see what would we like to get from this. Those goals are usually set in accordance with behavioural objectives, language, culture and communication and as is probably becoming very clear, I am very big on communication!

Q16. In using the ELP have you found that negotiating and dialoguing and interacting with your learners has helped your understanding of what teaching is about?

Yeah, I wouldn't become over dependent on using the ELP but what I would do, specifically with setting targets and goals, I would bring it in there. Problems that we encounter along the way, the ELP is a system of getting around that problem and then for highlighting fruits of labour the ELP is a good forum and media for discussion. It provokes a reaction, it's something new, it's something different.

Patrick Farren: Did you use the ELP at all to plan, monitor or reflect on your learning in the target language?
Not really, no.

Q19. Reflectivity – what has reflective practice contributed to your learning in the language semester course?
I've got to say that the language semester course wasn't brilliantly structured, I don't mean to be critical but I felt that it wasn't very well structured. It really didn't focus us H. Dip. students on how we would go about teaching French. I felt that it was just a chance where we would get to speak some French ourselves and try and improve. Even the topics of discussion and the way it was introduced wasn't particularly well done. I wouldn't say I would have reflected very much in the language semester courses.

Q20. Has the ELP in the context of the target language semester course supported you in developing language proficiency?
I guess it has helped me but I wouldn't have applied it to my semester course. There's a couple of books that I am looking to read myself.

Q22. How has learning in the methodologies course helped you understand the processes involved in the ELP?
The main focus of a lot of the methodologies classes was emphasising the language, cultural, communicative dimensions to language. So it's something that our lecturer placed a lot of emphasis on. With the ELP in mind you're just always looking for ways to try and teach using these as broad guidelines. They are all interlinked really. It has complemented each part quite well.
Q23. Have you any comments that you would like to make about the ELP or your experience of using it?
I would like to say that overall my experience has been good, positive. One section I particularly disliked was the check list section. Mainly for the reasons of the language was too difficult and it could be done a bit more like the Biography section. I particularly disliked that. But the ideas of solving communication and things I notice I think it's very very good in recognizing patterns in language and helping students to recognise patterns particularly in relation to verbs and grammar where situations reproduced themselves.

Patrick Farren: Overall, have you found using the ELP in the context of the HDip as useful and helpful to you?
Yes, extremely useful.

Q24. Did you work with the ELP in cooperation with another teacher, a mentor-teacher?
No, not really. My cooperating teacher was aware of the ELP and she was happy for me to use it but she didn’t actually use it. She looked at it but didn’t employ it herself in her classroom situation.

Interview with Barry
May 2004

Part 1
Q1. The context, first of all, maybe, you could begin by describing the school and classroom context that you have been teaching using the ELP?

Well, it's a school of about 400 students: mixed. I'm teaching in a class with 12 students in the class altogether of a very weak ability. Second year, pass group. There are actually more in the class but because of serious behavioural problems they are actually given special education. Three times a week I have the others, then twice a week the class are all together again. This has disadvantages in the fact that my plan or method can be disrupted, well not disrupted, but...

Patrick Farren: changed?

Yes, modified.

Q24. Did you work with a mentor teacher in using the ELP, in conjunction or in cooperation, or were you on your own?

No, I was on my own, exclusively...I think, maybe, she tried, attempted to introduce it...ah...because the six or seven she had wanted to know what it was all about, but I don’t think it progressed.
Q2. Now, in terms of a learner-centered approach... in the context of your teaching, using the ELP, maybe you could describe what your understanding of a learner-centered approach means. For me very much, not a didactic approach... to state what its not first of all, not a subject- based, it's exclusively with the learner. What they get from learning, focused on their ability to learn, their knowledge of their learning and their learning experience altogether. Teacher would be seen more a guide or director, yeah.

Q3. How in using the ELP have your students benefited from a learner-centered approach?

As you know, I had to adapt it, maybe because I presented in en bloc – which may have been a bit much for them. I adapted it got them to think what they were learning, how they were learning and had they actually learnt afterwards. KW L grid – what I know, what I want to know, what I have learnt- basing it on criteria, components of the ELP.

Q4. And could you outline briefly how you developed your project in line with your thinking about a learner-centered approach?

Right, my project, in terms of?

Patrick Farren: H. Dip methodologies.
Methodologies...of a learner-centered approach?

Patrick Farren: Hmm. In general, the nature of the approach, perhaps.

My rationale or my approach was very much for a highly participative approach to the unit that I was undertaking.. I hadn’t thought too much before being introduced to the ELP about their learning or how they learnt before that. So I took the ideas from the ELP and I said, 'okay, we are going to think what we're going to do before we start this topic, what you already... your base competency is so far, what would you like to know about it?' Suppose, then. mostly for them it was cultural, they weren’t keen to learn more grammar or other constructions. So afterwards, we had another brainstorming session was used adapting it in process of using the ELP, to see what they thought of the ideas if they had progressed at all. I think the theory is excellent but in its present format it was difficult for my students.

Patrick Farren: So what you are saying is you adapted the process in the ELP to suit your own needs?

Yes, exactly, yeah
Q5. Learner empowerment. In using the ELP have you found that negotiating/dialoging about the aims, content, activities, management of learning, do you think that has made learning in terms of language acquisition, of learning the language, has it made it more appealing to them?

Yes. You are working in partnership with the students, degree of input from them into it with a fully implemented ELP they would have a great input in the way that they could direct their own learning, guided, not totally autonomous. They can express choice, goal aspirations, method by which they learn – empowers them. Rather than dictating what I would like to do by discussing it with them it’s more empowering.

Patrick Farren: What other effects have you noticed about this interactive process?
I think they are much more expressive on what they want, more active, not as passive as before, when you engage students in an initiative, they realise they can take part in this process. We often talk about teaching but not teaching it’s more to do with learning and we should concentrate on. They understand they do have an input, they understand they have to meet me half-way. I can only do so much but the motivation that they have is just as important as well.

Q14. In terms of autonomous learning, perhaps you tell us what you understand by the concept?

I wouldn’t say completely. It wouldn’t be learning by themselves because I don’t think that at that age, they don’t have that capacity to do that. Autonomous learning is giving them a good level of responsibility, but it depends on the actual group, their level and ability, making themselves aware that only they can learn...its the old expression, ‘you can bring a horse to water but you can’t make him drink’. You can go so far but its up to them to take on that...I think that’s in any subject.

Q7. Do you think the ELP has helped them to take an increasing level of responsibility for their own learning?

Yes, to a degree, yes...they have...I mean, the group that I have are very, very difficult group, but they are getting much more able to work by themselves, little things like looking up things for themselves. I was constantly at the start, they would ask for words and I would give them out words whereas now they can look them up for themselves, so they are becoming less dependent on me, which was pointed out by my Supervisor.

Q6. What has reflective practice, understood as planning, monitoring and evaluating learning, contributed to the learning process in your classroom?

Ahm, I think if you set out your stall at the beginning and see what you want to do and then check if you have achieved it. That reflection process well you are constantly learning what you did well or missed. Process of tracking objectives that were attained and if they were in what
way suited the people. Methods that work well? if not they change to something else the next time.

Q8. Language acquisition. What does the concept of authentic language use mean to you in your classroom?

Authentic language use...Using language to communicate a...messages that they would meet in their daily life. well maybe obviously not in their daily lives here but if they were encountering children or pupils of a similar age,... say in France, that they could speak about themselves.

Patrick Farren: Did you use the target language with your students in planning,. monitoring and assessing their learning?

I always try to use the target language as the language of communication in the class. I think its very difficult to do it with the second year class that I haven't had since first year because my method... they're not used to using the language but I try as much in making attempts at it. But in terms of ... at a very basic level: 'Qu' est-ce que tu penses de ca?' C'etait facile? difficile? You know what I mean, and which I think is very much part of that at a very simplified level.

Q10. Would you say that the ELP supported the development of target language proficiency in your classroom?

Yes. It focused in on proficiency and students are becoming more proficient at what they are learning. They think about it much more, so when they actually reflect it's much more than a subject being taught

Q11. Literacy. What is your understanding of literacy...Has your understanding of literacy grown or developed?

I think one aspect that the ELP highlighted the poor literacy skills of the students, first of all because of their difficulty in accessing the messages in the ELP in its present format.

Patrick Farren: What effect would that have on them as learners?

I think, for example, if they took that 'en bloc', in a way the language would be much too difficult. It would need to be taken down to their level for first and second year groups, even for the English aspects, the presentation, 'competencies', weren't too sure what that means, 'mother tongue'...I had the same problem there and it sort of demonstrated in a way the lack of literacy skills in English and I wonder was that a barrier to their adaptation of the ELP.

Q9. Has the ELP helped you to enrich your understanding of literacy?

Very much so, very much in reflecting about how you are doing things and why you are doing
things. Reflecting on language learning in general. Understanding the concepts involved. That it's a planning process that you have goals and aims. You don't just go in one day and that you are thinking of the whole vocabulary ... various parts of the ELP.

Patrick Farren: We often think of literacy as reading and writing – would there be any other way that literacy could be broadened in your view having access to people who weren't able to read and write – would they be able to show literacy at all using the ELP in a different way?

You see literacy is very difficult in a way because when students come to secondary school each subject has its own vocabulary, for Maths you have rations and... for P.E you have 'time outs'. It's very, very difficult for secondary students to assimilate these 11/13 new vocabularies. And maybe, the ELP is good for languages ... the fact that they learn about the bones of language, what language learning is about. I remember last year myself and the Irish teachers deplored that students didn't know some grammatical aspects, just to recognize them not teaching pure grammar. but they didn't understand what a verb or an adjective was because it was a specialized vocabulary and so their literacy skills were lacking in that.. its very difficult to make that leap to second level.

Q12. Was the process of the using the target language helpful in developing their language proficiency?

Yes, I think in the fact that they were much more active, more participative and the methodology was much more inclusive.

Q13. In light of your experience of using the ELP what modifications, if any, would you make to the ELP in terms of the design, the structure and the contents of the ELP?

I think I would have a senior, it's a catch all, this would be very good for senior students but it would need to be adapted. Maybe with less text, with more simplified vocabulary, little grids 'what do I know', what do I want to know?' simplifying the vocabulary. But for students in general to simplify it for them. Not as dense with their questions.

Part II

Q18. In the context of your learning – do you think that teaching using the ELP has helped you to take an increasing level of responsibility for your own teaching?

Very much so because... you can assess yourself in terms of your own plans and objectives, but at the same time I think the ELP has been good in assessing these facts not only for you but for them as well. So you are seeing your method, the effect of your teaching method and if your methods are working or if they are not.

Q16. In using the ELP have you found that by negotiating and dialoguing with your own learners that your own understanding of what the concept of teaching means has grown?
Very much so, I think…by putting it in context I hadn’t really thought very much about your teaching. Obviously from day to day you realise when something doesn’t work but to think of it in a much broader context – why are we doing something, how is it working, am I doing this in the proper method, what do I need to think about myself. So then that gives me the ability when I see where I have gone wrong, where I have gone right, I can take that on, adopt it, change it, adapt it.

Patrick Farren: So in terms of the negotiating and dialoguing with your learners, has that help you develop your own concept of teaching?

It needs to be a partnership. You realize that you can’t stand at the top of the class and direct everything yourself because you have to take into account that there could be twenty at different stages of learning and you have to negotiate with them what’s the best method for the whole class in general.

Q17. So in terms of your dialoguing now with your supervisor, what influence would the ELP have had on that, your own thinking… would the ELP have had any effect on that?

We would have discussed the ELP, did she think it was working for me, what did I think of it Just what I said to you… I thought timing was a little difficult, that it needed to be introduced on day one on a whole school approach some time maybe, that students, that its integrated into their learning rather than being viewed as something that appeared: ‘Oh, my God, is this something extra we have to learn - this big folder. What are we going to do with it?’

Q21. In terms of the Teaching Practice File/Portfolio that you have developed, what effect would that have had in terms of reflective practice? What has reflective practice in the context of the teaching practice file contributed to your own learning?

I think it has fleshed out much more my review sessions and made me think much more about when I have completed a topic rather than jotting down at the end of a class what I have done today. How did it go well? Why did it do well? It has been useful to do that.

Q20. Language acquisition – in terms of the semester course – what does the concept of target language use mean in the context of your semester language course? How would you have used the language in the French course?

It was the medium of the class…we were using the language all the time and so on, but maybe not in a way that I thought we might have.

Patrick Farren: Maybe, you cold explain a little what you mean by that?
Well, we might go in and discuss about various....topics......it was very difficult to...the initiation of conversation...I thought maybe we might speak a little as well, about our own things...we did that to a certain degree, but there might be more of that , whereas we might go in and discuss ...an issues that arose....yeah.

Q19. What has reflective practice contributed to your language learning in the semester course?

I think there was a divorce between the two (slight laughter).

Patrick Farren: Are you saying that you didn't plan, monitor, self-assess?
No.

Patrick Farren: Do you think that learning in the context of the language semester course – has that helped you to enrich your understanding of what literacy means?
No.

Q22. In terms of the methodologies course – has it helped you in your understanding of the ELP and the concepts and processes underlying the ELP?

Oh yes, very much. The explanations, methods about how the ELP can be introduced, its goal, its ... what it intends to do. I mean, yes that was. We had a clear idea of what was going on there.

Q23. Have you any comments on the ELP and how it could be improved?

The theory is great but needs to be adapted. To see the way other people have adapted was very useful.

Q15. Has using the ELP been a worthwhile process overall?
Yes, reflective practice, giving the students more responsibility for their learning and interacting more.

Interview with Jacinta
May 2004
Part I

Q1. Could you describe the context in your school?
It's a first year class in ( ) and it's mixed ability.

Q2. Learner-centered approach – in the context of your teaching approach in using the ELP – can you explain what your understanding of a learner-centered approach means in your classroom?
It means that the learner takes responsibility for their learning so it’s not a case of the teacher telling them what to learn and them learning it automatically or robotically. That they decide what they would like to learn or what they would like to know in French or in their respective language and we work towards giving them that knowledge. So that they enjoy what they are learning and that it is beneficial to them.

Q3. In using the ELP have your students benefited from this learner-centered approach?

They have probably never really thought about their learning before so when you are asking them what they noticed and what they want to learn. What they learn about the language, the culture and things like that, they are actually thinking about it which is great for them. They are finding it hard to get through the language of the ELP, it’s quite difficult for them as beginners. But the actual thinking about it, a bit of dragging blood from a stone but it’s coming about. It got easier for them as the year progressed.

Q4. Please outline the project that you have been developing using the ELP as part of the HDip course?

I concentrated on the house ‘la maison’ so we were doing the rooms and the different objects you find in a room. So with the ELP I explained to them that we would be doing a random thing on ‘the house’ and I asked them what would they like to know. So they wrote down things like ‘Well I’d like to know the words of the different things’. I helped them. We spent a lot of time on the dossier. It was a nice part for them, they got to design and draw. So they drew plans of the rooms and they marked in all the objects in French. They did their houses, marked in the rooms in French. They were enthusiastic about the dossier side of things definitely.

Q5. Learner empowerment – in using the ELP, have you found dialoguing, negotiating with learners about the aims, content, activities has made learning more appealing to them?

Yeah, I think it’s quite difficult to get them … they still don’t get the idea of them taking control of their learning. They are still looking for a lot of guidance. They are not really at the stage yet to be self sufficient or autonomous so they do still need you to guide them in the right direction. They are still a little reliant but I would expect that.

Patrick Farren. What other effects has this interactive process had on them as learners?

It’s making them more confident. They are realising that they do have a say in the learning process and that it’s not just teacher orientated or teacher centered which is definitely a good thing for them. It makes interaction with them, usually I put them into pairs with dictionaries so they can look up the words that they need, so in that way it’s making them aware of the resources that are available to them
other than just me as a teacher.

Q6. Reflectivity – what has reflective practice in terms of planning, monitoring and evaluating learning as supported by the ELP contributed to the learning process in your classroom?

When they are reflecting on what they have done they are noticing things about the language components. They might remark on a cultural difference but mostly differences between the French and English language they notice.

Q7. And has the ELP helped your learners to take an increasing level of responsibility for their own learning?

I’d say a little bit. If the ELP was a bit more fun or looked a bit more attractive to them, it still looks very textbook and very complicated and a lot of words and big and complicated words. For them it’s very daunting unless I am going through trying to make it easier.

Q8. What does the concept of target language use mean in the context of your teaching?

I would be speaking in French all of the time. I would expect them to speak to me in French. They have a handout which I gave them which has useful phrases ‘Classroom Phraseologies’. If they want to go to the toilet they must ask me in French. It’s great to have the sheet because if they forget I say ‘well you have that on your sheet, read it back to me’. Because some of them will have an inability to go home and learn.

Q9. Did your learners make use of the target language in planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning?

Yes. I got them to think of it in their own language first, their mother tongue, because there were difficult concepts to get even in English. Recently I have been focusing on the use of the French language by giving them useful phrases. Guiding them, giving them guidelines. For example if they are evaluating instead of using the things that are in the ELP I do out my own and I’ll say ‘je le fais avec beaucoup d’aide, sans aide’, and ‘peu d’aide’, simple, they just tick.

Q10. Has the ELP supported the development of target language proficiency in your classroom?

I wouldn’t say it’s solely the use of the ELP that has helped but I focus a lot on the use of the target language. The ELP it has in a way that they are looking up words and phrases that might never come up in classroom teaching. It still can be quite complicated for them. I try and just gear them towards the simple.
Q11. Has the ELP helped you to develop your own understanding of literacy in the context of the syllabus you are using?

The way they write things you will be able to focus on the particular mistakes they make but since they are first years anything that they are writing is nearly too high for them.

Patrick Farren. How has it helped you to develop your own understanding of literacy?
I notice at an early stage in them that they are not really to make the connections of a sentence, that you have your subject, your verb, your object – they are not ...

Patrick Farren. How has it supported your development of your own understanding? In terms of what literacy means in terms of the syllabus? In terms of the programme that you are teaching, has the ELP made you think about literacy in a broader frame?
No, I haven’t really thought about it.

Patrick Farren. Has the ELP helped your learners to enrich and develop their understanding of what constitutes literacy?
I don’t think so. I haven’t approached it from that angle.

Patrick Farren. What would your understanding of the term ‘literacy’ mean?
It’s your ability to use the language or to be communicative in the language. The writing ability in the language.

Patrick Farren. Has it helped your learners to develop their understanding of literacy?
It’s helping them in the sense of knowing that they can use the language for other things other than just their homework or something.

Q12. And was the process in using the target language useful in terms of developing their language proficiency?
Yeah.

Q13. In light of your experience in using the ELP, what modifications, if any, would you like to make to the design, structure and/or contents of the ELP?

Well, I’d say it’s very dull, it’s very text heavy. I mean if you are wanting to start at a stage where they are beginners, no chance. Even me as a nearly fluent speaker, who spent a lot of time in France, I would find some of the language used quite complicated and nearly would have to refer to the dictionary myself to look up some of the words. I can’t and no one would expect first years to be able to filter through that language. If it was a bit more colourful even, simplistic, or even if they had different ELPs for different levels. If they were going to introduce an ELP at sixth year, maybe then
you could start to put your complicated language in. But if you are introducing it in first year it needs to be very colourful, a lot of imagery, not as much text. Because they are only learning it for the first time a lot of these kids. So you hand them a book full of a foreign language and they won’t have the motivation, it will disillusion a lot of the students.

Part II

Q14. In the context of your own learning with the ELP, what does the concept of autonomy or autonomous teaching mean for you?

It means taking my own grasp on the language, knowing that I have other resources to refer to. I don’t have to rely on a person to tell me what I have to learn, I know that I can do my own things with the language and if I need to I have other resources to go to.

Q15. How has working with the ELP in a post primary class helped you in your learning as a student-teacher?

It’s made me reflect on what I’m learning and how I’m learning. You think about it a lot more. You notice the kids noticing things about the language and then you start to think ‘well in my learning what do I notice, what do I focus on, what do I want to learn?’ What are my aims and objectives for my own learning? So it does make you a lot more aware and conscious of your own ability and your own power.

Q16. In using the ELP have you found that negotiating and dialoguing with your learners that your own understanding of the concept of teaching has grown?

Yeah, well you realise that the focus is away from just teaching them grammatical points and loads of vocabulary, that you do have to have that interaction with them and you do have to focus on their needs and their levels. You can’t just have this plan of action and it’s going whether you like it or not. You do have to stop and think ‘are the kids receiving this in the way that they should be, in the way that they want and the way that I want to work together?’ So it does focus you in on their role in their own learning. They have to want to do this, they have to reflect on it as well as me saying ‘well this is the way it is’.

Q17. Has the ELP supported you in dialoguing with your supervisor?

In general the ELP, I have spoken to her once or twice. The main points in the ELP are great and I would incorporate them into my everyday teaching but the actual folder might be taken out once a week. Because it is quite hard to use it for even five minutes at the beginning of the class because it’s
the whole taking it out; finding the right page. Because of the structure of it, it is quite a difficult thing to use and to filter through. But the ideas, yes I would use and I would dialogue with the kids and supervisors.

Q18. Has teaching with the ELP helped you to take an increasing level of responsibility for your own teaching?

Yes, it makes you think.

Q19. What has reflective practice as envisaged in the ELP, planning, monitoring, evaluating – contributed to you in your language learning in the semester course language class?

As I spent quite a lot of time in France, I feel that I would be quite competent in the French language. Through the year, dialoguing with other French teachers in the target language is great because you are helping each other. I found the actual dialoguing with the other students more helpful than what the teacher actually put up.

Q20. Has learning with the ELP in the context of the language semester course supported you in developing language proficiency?

Yes, you think about it and you focus in what you want to learn so you are making more of an effort in those particular areas. So it does make you more proficient because you start to say ‘well I don’t really know that, I’d really like to know more about that’. By focusing on what you want to do and your aims and objectives you do end up becoming more proficient.

Patrick Farren. Language acquisition – what does the concept of the target language use mean in the context of the semester language course?

I think it focuses a lot on the verbal interaction. The actual use of the language in everyday conversational. Just basic language, chatting, dialoguing. I find in some places you can be focusing too much on technological French rather than just the dialoguing interaction language that is needed to have a proficiency and a competence in it.

Patrick Farren. Has learning with the ELP, in the context of the language semester course, enriched your understanding of the concept of literacy?

I suppose I think of the language in terms of how I speak it and my ability and my literacy level. I don’t actually think of the actual skill involved. I think the ELP I did more or less on my own, went through it myself and focused on the literature. I don’t think the semester course helped.
Q22. Has learning in the methodologies course helped your understanding of the processes involved in the ELP?

Oh yeah, that was very helpful. There was a lot of literature given and even the discussion topics in the lecture were helpful in the understanding of it.

Q23. Have you any comments you would like to make?

Overall, I would say the dossier part, the kids are very enthusiastic, motivated about that. I find that incorporating the actual folder into everyday teaching is very difficult. The ideas of it, you could conduct orally, you can get the kids thinking and reflecting. But as for the structure of the folder, it's not very student friendly.

Q24. Did you use the ELP in conjunction with a mentor teacher?

I used it on my own. I had the class three out of four times a week so my mentor teacher didn't use it.

Interview with Pat(ricia)

May 2004

Part I

Q1. The context – can you describe the school and classroom context.

It's an all girls school, the group is about 23 first years. They are not streamed but are the higher level at the moment.

Patrick Farren: Tell us about your experience with the ELP.

I had the class specifically for the ELP. I interviewed them first. They were quite interested and excited. They had a positive attitude towards the project.

Q2. Can you explain what you understand by a learner-centered approach?

Where the student takes responsibility more so than the teacher. They are not passive, they are responsible, they have to take notes, mark the areas they have covered. They have aims and objectives.

Q3. Have your students benefited in the ELP from the learner-centered approach?

I think it's a very good idea, but for the first years they are very overwhelmed with it. I had all the sections in it when I gave it to them first and I probably should have separated it. I got them to fill in...
the passport and that... they wouldn’t have that much German. Even the check list in English I went through first and for the project I made a simpler check list for them. They couldn’t use the ELP for the five lessons I had with them.

Q4. Context of the project – can you explain your project?

I decided to do the topic of time, their time table at school and then if I could fit it in their hobbies. I looked at the check-list and it didn’t have the exact things I wanted. So I made a check list that they were familiar with the 12 hour clock, the 24 hour clock, count up to 100. Breaking each section down.

Q5. In using the ELP have you found that negotiating and dialoguing with learners has made learning more appealing to them?

I think it has. It makes it more interesting. They have certain targets that they have to achieve and it gives them responsibility and what they have to do. It helps them focus.

Patrick Farren: What other effects has this interactive process had on your learners?

I think they were quite excited about it. That maybe if they went abroad they would be able to bring it with them. It gave them confidence that they actually know things when they see little check lists. They can tick the first box and move on and they can see that they have improved.

Q6. What has reflective practice in terms of the ELP contributed to the learning process in your classroom?

We did the check lists mid week and then at the end of the week. It probably would be useful if you could use it more frequently then you could actually plan your lessons. You could see what they have learned and whether you can go forward with that or whether you have to go back and revise certain areas.

Q7. Do you think has the ELP helped your learners to take an increasing level of responsibility for their own learning?

I think so. They were quite proud of themselves when they actually ticked in the check list and they were aware they had learnt a certain amount and they had more to cover. It made it fun as well, especially in first year.

Q8. Language acquisition: What does the concept of target language use mean to you in the context of your teaching practice?

I'm teaching a German class so to actually use the language as much as possible throughout the class. Basically, trying to integrate as much of the conversation in the class as possible so they get familiar with using the target language.
Q10. Would you say the ELP has supported the development of target language proficiency in your classroom?
It definitely would.

Q11. How has the ELP helped you to broaden and develop your own understanding of the concept of literacy?
It defines certain objectives for me and the class. It acts as a sort of guideline or tool of steps to go by to progress so it helps you focus on it.

Patrick Farren: Has the ELP helped you in the context of the syllabus on your awareness of literacy?
The ELP is there as a back up to ensure that you have covered areas to the full extent that is necessary – like listening, speaking, writing.

Patrick Farren: Has the ELP helped your learners to enrich and develop their understanding of what constitutes literacy?
I hope so and to the extent that we looked at it they were happy with it and quite happy to use it again and to go forward with it.

Q9. Did your learners make use of the target language in planning, monitoring and evaluating their own learning?
They didn’t. They would have used English. It would have been too much for them at that stage to do it in German.

Q13. In light of your experience of using the ELP, what modifications if any would you like to make to the design, structure and/or contents of the ELP?
I probably would cut it down or pick out parts that were relevant and give out some of it at a time rather than giving the whole thing out. I think that just confused them. Once they got the ring-binders and they were organised it was a bit easier then. The check list was the main bit that I did use. For first years I thought it was too deep for them, even in English the vocabulary might not have been as simple for them as I would have thought it should have been. It would be useful for them if they use it throughout their school years, not just in first year.

Part II

Q14. In the context of the H. Dip. student-teachers’ learning…in the context of your own teaching – what does the concept of autonomous teaching mean for you in the context of the ELP?
It gives objectives in certain areas and subjects. How to go about planning and organising and having aims and objectives and certain targets for the particular subject or language you are using. Something to refer to and go back to and compare.

Q15. Has working with the ELP in the post-primary class helped you in your own learning as a teacher?

It has given me more definition to bring it in again into a classroom. To focus them and to give them that responsibility themselves. Not just me planning and saying you are going to do this that and the other. That they have something else there that they have to follow as well. So you are not the bad person at the top of the room trying to force them to learn something. They have something they can take account or responsibility for.

Q16. In using the ELP have you found that by negotiating or dialoguing with your learners, that your own understanding of the concept of teaching has grown

It helps to organise and structure your teaching. It can be a tool then for other subjects to plan and organise. Even if you were doing lesson plans in future just to know, plan your lessons, have objectives in both written and listening, writing, all the different areas. It is a good way of structuring certain subjects and topics. Breaking them down into more specific daily tasks.

Q17. How has the ELP supported you in dialoguing with your supervisor?

I hadn’t actually dealt with him on the ELP at all because I only had the class on the couple of days.

Q18. Responsibility - has teaching with the ELP helped you to take an increasing level of responsibility for your own teaching?

Definitely it would. It helps you to plan better, set out your objectives, it’s more specific.

Q19. What has reflective practice, as envisaged by the ELP contributed to your language learning in the language semester course that you took?

Just, basically, after a particular class, think about what you have covered. If there are areas that you need to go over or that you need to question, to go back over them.

Q21. What has reflective practice in the context of your Teaching Practice File contributed to your learning as a teacher?

To give an evaluation at the end of your lessons and that guides you then in the next one going
forward. That you can't just suddenly draft up a couple of lessons for the week and hope that everything will go the way you had originally thought. But to actually come out and to assess what went on and had you covered a certain area and do you have to revise something. Planning day by day instead of an overall – to have an overall goal but to help you on your way to achieving those goals.

Q20. Language acquisition – what does the concept of target language use mean in the context of the semester language course?

I suppose developing our own proficiency and maintaining a standard of our own language learning. Keeping it up through the course and throughout the years ahead, not neglecting it.

Patrick Farren. Has learning, in terms of the target language semester course, with the ELP supported you in developing your own target language proficiency?

I hadn't really thought of it in my own perspective, but it would do if I had thought of it. I had thought of it as more directed towards the pupils but we could take it on board, to plan and organise and have objectives for the target language.

Patrick Farren: Has learning with the ELP enriched your understanding of the concept of literacy?

It has focused it a lot more. With the objectives and the learning tasks and activities it's more defined what exactly you need to cover and what areas you need to focus on.

Patrick Farren: Which semester course did you take – French, German, Spanish?

German.

Q22. Overall, have you found using the ELP in the context of the H.Dip. helpful to you as a teacher and as a learner?

Yeah, I definitely think it is a good idea but I probably...if I had been more organised going into the class with it, and even the German assistant I had with me, I don't think he was totally familiar with it either. He said he had seen it before... there was a German assistant with me at the school, the first day I came in. I think he was a bit confused as well. I think it did help focus and you want to be organised and have an aura about you that you know what you are at. It does actually help you plan and organise and have objectives and to follow those plans.

Q23. Would you have any comments that you would like to make yourself with respect to ELP or your working with ELP?
I felt there was too much in it and I should have, I'm not sure if I was supposed to take the sections out, even when they are only dealing with the Irish students, they are only dealing with one foreign language. Maybe in other nationalities across Europe they might be dealing with two. So if it was shorter or more compact for them.

**Interview with James**

**May 2004**

Part I

Q1. Maybe, you could describe the school and classroom context in which you were teaching?

It was a normal second year, sorry first year class. Usual structure, four rows down the middle...mixed ability

Q2. In the context of your teaching, could you explain your understanding of a learner-centered approach?

For me, it would mean that they would take on the learning themselves. Always it had been the teacher who instructed them what to do. I just wanted to change that. They can decide what they want to learn and I have to learn that! Okay, so they decided the objectives and I helped them to achieve them.

Q3. How in using the ELP have your learners benefited from this learner-centered approach?

Well, ehm, let's say by them taking on their own objectives they got to learn what they wanted ...for the stronger students, they got to learn what they wanted to learn, and the weaker students, a small but significant amount.

Q4. You developed a project as part of the Methodology course. Maybe you could outline the nature of the project and how a learner-centered approach was integrated into that project?

The idea was to ...basically, introduce the ELP to the class. They didn’t know anything about it beforehand, which they didn’t and...ehm...to think about it beforehand, to do a lot of pre-planning, to think about how we would introduce a learner-centered approach to it because it wasn’t a learner-centered approach prior to that. So, ehm... I introduced and gave them the ELP, went through it, each individual section, and, ehm, ran it in parallel with a learning-centered approach, so that while I was giving examples we’d go to the portfolio to see how that was achieved.

Patrick Farren. Could you give me an example?

Let me say, at the start, I had to set goals for them as the whole concept of setting targets. Goals they didn’t understand it. So, I’d say, Kevin, maybe you’d like to label your kitchen, okay, know all the
utensils, know all the pieces in it, and Johnny, you would like to be able to do something else. I'd vary the degree of it, and maybe his skill would be, he'd like to understand someone talking about his town, someone describing his town. So, I'd try to vary it that way, okay? Then, I'd go back to the ELP and have them set next targets/goals and then say how well they had achieved that, e.g. if I could name two things in the house at least. That was just showing them at the start...but then when they did actually set their own targets/goals they could see what problems they encountered.

Q5. In using the ELP, did you find that negotiating/dialoguing with learners about aims/goals, content, activities, mad language learning more appealing to them?

Absolutely, absolutely. I mean I spent the majority of class dialoguing with them, cajoling and stuff. They absolutely responded.

Patrick Farren. Did you find that it had an effect on language proficiency, on their learning of the language?

Yeah, absolutely. They definitely took a different approach. Students took it on board, they went off on their own...they 'sailed off' out there! And I think some students were tired of staying at the same pace as the class, and they had the chance to go ahead.

Patrick Farren. What other effects had this interactive process on your learners?

I think it opened them up...much more to the cultural aspects of language learning of France. I left out cultural goals and they're very interested in them...it definitely increased their cultural awareness.

Q6. In terms of reflective learning, what has reflective learning, planning, monitoring and evaluating learning as supported by the ELP, do you think that contributed to the learners' learning in the classroom, getting them to plan, monitor?

The class was always very passive. You always felt that there was a large proportion every time that they went in that was not learning. But in this way you definitely felt that you were increasing the chances that the students were learning. Because you were getting them to plan and you got to see what they were planning and what they achieved.

Q7. Has the ELP helped your learners to take an increasing level of responsibility for their learning?

Yeah, that's what it was all about basically. That's exactly what they did. Students were under the impression that a French class was the same as a Maths class, you go in, you learn the rules and you go on and you build on that. But it's a much more whole world approach to it and I think they got that concept after a while.
Q8. In terms of language acquisition – what does authentic language use mean for you in your classroom?

Well, essentially for me it was tape work with authentic speakers. Because the resources weren’t great I used videos as well. I suppose authentic learning would be better actually if you could get it...

Patrick Farren; That's your understanding.

I suppose authentic learning is also …handing out tickets...real

Patrick Farren: Getting them to talk to one another using their own language, would you have done that?

Oh right!

Patrick Farren. Would you have done that? interact, give messages to ne another...

In the target language? Oh yeah.....I would have done pair working or at least tried...I tried to encourage some bilingual speaking as well because they were only first years and to discuss and use as many French words as they can.

Q9. Did your learners make use of the target language in planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning?
They did, but I really had to help them there. It was just a matter of transcription really because they are only first years.

Q10. Do you think that the ELP has supported the development of target language proficiency in your classroom?
Yes, I would.

Patrick Farren: And how would it have done that?

What I want to know at the end of the topic, do they know more than they would have known if I was teaching just straight up. And for the greater part the overall learning with the 23 students is greater than if I had been normal. That’s my yard stick.

Q11. Do you think that the ELP has helped you to develop your understanding of the concept of literacy?
Ahm....
Patrick Farren: Helping you to help your learners to express their own understandings, express their own messages, to say what they wanted to say about the things they wanted to talk about, and they felt they were able to do that. Would you say that that widened their idea about literacy?

I think so. It was obvious from looking at their portfolios that in the start they had written only a couple of words on their learning whereas in the end, they were actually writing much more. It did help them in...in their oral proficiency. They liked to talk about that, how much more that they could say, how much better they could communicate.

Patrick Farren. Did you do any reading and writing with your students as well? or?

Well not... well I had them in the private chat room between each other. So the reading would have been reading to their peers. But at the same time, there were 23 of them, they could see what was coming up so the... weaker students would be reading what the stronger students would be writing. Everybody had to write and contribute, but it wasn't great reading as such... but they were still reading.....They were at the terminal and they would read what popped up on the screen and they would write replies to each other. Like emailing in real time.

Q12. Did you find that using the target language helped them to develop proficiency, like use, practice and use?
It would, if it was only "je veux etre' : 'I would like to be able,' you know, they are becoming more aware of simple words ... even though it was repetition.

Q13. In light of your experience in using the ELP, what modifications, if any would you like to make to the design, structure, contents of the ELP?

Well, the portfolio itself, I would like to have it in the target language and the mother tongue, the array of languages in there! although I understand the idea of having all these languages and it promotes language learning, I think it would be much simpler if you didn't have sections on Irish, German and stuff and just had French. Then you could number the sections as well because it really is hard to find things. They want a page number. Some parts of the biography is quite difficult, quite detailed.

Part II

Q14. In the context of your own learning in using the ELP, what does the concept of autonomous teaching mean for you as a young teacher?
It's going out there and be willing to explore and to find out for myself the way to go and take it on myself. To accept norms and teachings and stuff but I should go out myself and experiment and find what's the best way of teaching for me.
Patrick Farren. Would that be a lonely isolated work?

No I would like to draw on experience, talk to other teachers especially, getting their experiences but then deciding my own way on it.

Q15. Has working with the ELP in the post primary class helped you to learn as a student-teacher?

Yeah, because it has opened avenues that I wouldn’t have considered. Basically, the whole principal is pretty much the same, our teaching in the college anyway has been more or less to diversify things and the ELP is just reinforcing that.

Patrick Farren. How would you characterise that – what kind of approach, what kind of philosophy do you think?

I think the idea is that each student should be treated individually, he is part of the collective but he is an individual and he needs to be treated in that way.

Q16. In using the ELP have you found that by negotiating and dialoguing with your learners that that has developed your understanding of the concept of teaching?

Yes, it has.

Q17. In terms of the supervisor that you worked with – how has the ELP helped you in that process?

The classes that she supervised wasn’t my ELP class as such. But it has helped in that I got a great sense of where she was coming from when she was talking about getting students to participate. We discussed the ELP and how it was helping them to learn, the structure of it and the goals.

Q18. In terms of autonomous learning – has using the ELP helped you to take an increasing level of responsibility for your own teaching?

Yeah, it definitely helps me to plan better because when I see the students are planning, implementing, reflecting I felt I should be doing that, I should be much more aware. It did help me in that way.

Q19. In terms of the semester course that you took – what has reflective practice as envisaged by the ELP contributed to the semester course learning?

I must say I didn’t apply it too well in that. It was mainly a conversational class.
Q20. In terms of language acquisition – what does the concept of target language use mean in the context of a semester course that you had?

We used the target language all the time.

Patrick Farren. Would the ELP have helped you in the context, supported your language proficiency in that class?

Yeah, to a degree. I was aware of my own language learning because I saw the students using it, but I didn’t actually apply myself to it directly.

Q22. Any general comments on the methodologies class – would that have helped you in your understanding of the philosophy underlying the ELP?

Yeah, I think that was a good help in preparing our lesson plans. We became much more aware and meticulous and realised what we were doing.

Patrick Farren. Overall, have you found using the ELP has been a valuable experience in the context of learning to be a teacher?

Oh yeah, definitely. It has benefited the learners definitely, there’s no doubt about that. Then it has to have benefited me, if I’m getting more out of the students it has to.

Q21. Has reflective practice in the context of the Teaching Practice File that you have developed – has that contributed to your learning as a teacher?

Yes, it has. After every class I evaluate myself and then I’d look to the next class and see what could I do better. I try to avoid the pitfalls. Then every couple of months I did another reflective practice towards the end I was more aware of how I was doing.

Interview with Deirdre

May 2004

Part I

Q1. Could you describe the context of the school in which you were teaching
Well I’m in the ( ), an all boys’ school in Galway city, mixed ability... I was using the ELP with second years, quite a good class but still some students who would be a bit weaker than others, so there would be a mix in it.
Q2. In the context of a learner-centered approach – maybe you could you tell us what understand by the concept, a learner-centered approach in your teaching?

What I understand it to be is conducting the class around the learners...its difficult to explain it...I suppose not just standing up preaching at them, you get them involved in thinking for themselves. Get them doing the actual learning themselves.

Patrick Farren: So learner-centered – where would that come in, the concept of learner centeredness?

In that you are actually giving them the tools to actually do something with it as opposed to beating the grammar into them.

Patrick Farren: The audio-visual method was very structure based ...What would you say, using the ELP and the communicative approach to language teaching, what would you say the focus has been there? Has it been on structures and grammar...?

The main focus would be on production, getting them to speak, to write, to listen and to understand and then the grammar would be secondary, not in secondary importance, but as opposed to pulling out the grammar book and saying 'here we are doing exercises 1 to 10', I would introduce it more subtly. shall we say

Q3. Do you think your learners have benefited from the approach – the learner-centered approach that you have described?

Yes.

Q4. In the context of the project that you developed, could you outline the project and the learner-centered approach that you adopted in that?

For example, I didn’t have any big units on grammar... What I was doing it on was directions. To introduce for example the imperative I did produce a small work sheet for them. For the first class I just introduced the imperative, what we meant by it, giving orders ‘do this, go there etc ...’ Then the second class we went into looking more closely at the structure of it grammatically, I gave them little work sheets to work it out.

Patrick Farren: Learner-centered...where would that cme into the concept of learner-centeredness? If you could expand on the approach that you have adopted there.

In that you are giving them the tools to do something actually with int as opposed to beting the grammar into them, if you know what I mean.
Q5. In terms of learner empowerment – in using the ELP have you found that negotiating and dialoguing with your learners about the aims, the contents, the management of the activities – have you found that that has helped them in developing language proficiency?

Not really. Not with that particular group anyway. I don’t think they are mature enough. That’s what I found was the most difficult part of it, getting them to actually look at it in that way. To look at the portfolio and to come to the fact that it is their responsibility to learn.

Patrick Farren: What about your own approach – did you negotiate with the learners about their plans, about what they were going to do?

I tried to, at the beginning. They didn’t have much of a reaction to it at all. It was ‘let’s play bingo’, that sort of thing.

Patrick Farren: Even the playing bingo...did you allow them to plan their own activities?

I asked them for suggestions regularly, but they didn’t really come up with any. They weren’t very forthcoming with ideas.

Q6. What has reflective practice, planning, monitoring and evaluating as supported by the ELP – what has that contributed to the learning process in the classroom?

I think it depends on the student. I think some of them would be happy that they could do something I pointed out to them, that at the beginning they didn’t know this and now they do at the end. Some of them would be very happy that they have actually learnt something, but others don’t care.

Patrick Farren: Would you have engaged in that process?

I have tried to, yeah. I start all the classes by telling them what we are going to do and so on.

Q7. Reflectivity and autonomous learning – do you think the ELP has helped your learners to take an increasing level of responsibility of their learning?

No.

Q8. In terms of authentic language use – what does that mean to you in your teaching practice?

It means using French as much as possible, even sometimes if you have to repeat it in English. Simple instructions in the classroom, if they want to go to the bathroom, simple instructions like that. In terms of activities, lots of listening work and myself reading things to them.
Q9. In terms of planning, monitoring and assessing – would you have used the target language when they were setting targets or reflecting on their targets?
No.

Q11. Talking about literacy and language learning – what does that concept ‘literacy’ involve for you? Has it broadened at all in the course of using the ELP?
No.

Patrick Farren: Do you think that the learners’ understanding of literacy has broadened at all?
No I don’t think so.

Q12. Do you think that the process of using the target language in your classroom, do you think that was helpful in developing the language proficiency?
Oh yeah, I think so.

Q13. In light of your experience of using the ELP in the classroom could you tell us any modifications, if any, you would like to make?

I think the basic concept is wonderful. The learner centered and they learn to take responsibility for their learning and to realise what they have achieved and that then motivates them. But for younger learners, say junior cycle, I haven’t tried to use it with say senior cycle I think that might work a bit better, but with the junior cycle the language is too difficult. The layout is too difficult. I remember the first time I opened the ELP and I found it off putting so what’s a thirteen or fourteen year old gonna think. I think no wonder they have such a reaction to it really.

Patrick Farren: What would you say about the learners’ ability to come to terms with what is expected in terms of the language in the ELP?

I think for their age it is too difficult for them. They couldn’t, they were just so put off. I think with older groups or else, I think the principles of the ELP are wonderful, but I think it would need to be rewritten. A few cartoons, a few pictures, just to grab their interest.

Part II

Q14. Part two – in the context of your own learning what does the concept of autonomous teaching mean for you?
Discovery learning, it’s going out and doing it for yourself, learning by your mistakes and by your experiences.
Q15. Has working with the ELP in the post—primary classroom helped you in that process?
I would think so, yes.

Q16. Do you think that, in terms of student-teacher empowerment, that your own negotiating and dialoguing with your students in the classroom has helped you to develop what your understanding of teaching is?
Yes, I think so.

Q18. Would you say that autonomous teaching linked to taking more and more responsibility, would you think that the ELP has helped you take an increasing level of responsibility in your own teaching?
Yeah, well I think I sort of took over the responsibility of that myself to start with.

Patrick Farren: Has it helped you to develop an awareness of the importance of planning and evaluating and monitoring?

Definitely. To think about what you have done, did it work well? did it not? why? What can I do differently the next time? and so on.

Patrick Farren: What would your concept of teaching be now?

I suppose I came from my previous teaching before I started the H. Dip. was always to do with adults, university, so it was very much the opposite to the dictator, teacher type of way. So I went into (__) with the same type of attitude and expecting the kids to have the maturity to go along with it, which for the younger ones is not the case. So, I have to take a step back now and think about the impression I make on the first day and I have to go in with a different approach. I read a few books on it, on discipline, not that I had any problems with discipline, just management, keeping control, making sure everyone is doing what they should be at the right time and so on. I think if you give an inch sometimes they can take a mile and that’s even in ( ) which is a very strict, well disciplined school.

Q19. In terms of the language semester course that you took in the course of the year – what has reflective practice as envisaged by the ELP contributed to your own language learning in that semester language course?

You see new aspects, ways of doing things and you take them on board.
Q20. What does the concept of language use in the semester course, what has that meant in terms of your class in the semester course?

I don’t feel I learnt a lot from them. But then I live with a French man, so I speak French all the time at home so it’s slightly different.

Patrick Farren: Has learning with the help of the ELP in the context of the language semester course enriched your understanding of literacy?
No, not really.

Q22. Would the methodologies course have helped your understanding of the ELP and the process underlying it?
Yes, definitely. I wouldn’t have known where to start without that.

Q23. Have you any other comments that you would like to make about the experience of using the ELP?
I don’t think so. I do think that the whole thinking behind it is fantastic and that’s the way it should be taught. It’s just the layout for younger children I think it’s a bit heavy going for them.

Q24. Did you work with a mentor teacher?
Not with the ELP, I was left on my own, she wasn’t using it.

Patrick Farren: Do you think it would have been useful if the two of you were working together with the ELP?
Yes, I think so. It would have made things easier and it would have made it easier for the kids to take on board as well.

Patrick Farren: Thanks

Interview with Helen
May 2004
Part 1

Q1. Could you describe the school and the classroom context in which you have been teaching?
It’s an all boys Secondary school, mixed abilities, and they are not streamed. I have first and second years. Some kids would be very weak and some are very bright. One I think is ADHD so it’s hard to manage him. And I have one guy in my class who has severe respiratory difficulties and I wasn’t made aware of that at the beginning of the year. I only found out about three weeks ago and I think we should be informed about problems like that.
Q2. In the context of your teaching approach using the ELP, what do you understand about a learner-centered approach?

That the pupil takes an active part in the learning of the foreign language. That they see it as something that they can work on themselves. So maybe the ELP highlighted to them, especially the section on intercultural experiences, that if they went to France or did some school exchanges that they would have more knowledge to bring to the classes.

Q3. How would you say, in using the ELP, have your students benefited from this learner-centered approach?

Now they see the acquisition of a foreign language is something which goes on after school finishes as well. It's an ongoing process. The portfolio makes them aware of the different parts of learning a language and maybe it would inspire them to keep learning it afterwards.

Patrick Farren: Do you think that was useful to them?

I said that I wasn't going to look at it so they could be brutally honest with themselves. Whereas if I was going to take them up they would all tick 'I can do it perfectly' even though they couldn't.

Q4. In terms of the project that you did – can you outline the project and how a learner centered approach was used in that?

My project was on buying a train ticket, 24 hour clock, cultural reference to France. They had the opportunity of talking about their experience of being in France, French culture.

Q5. In using the ELP have you found that negotiating, dialoguing, sharing ideas with your learners about the aims, the contents, the activities has made learning more appealing to them and helped them to learn language in terms of language acquisition?

They are more inclined to suggest fun ways of learning that maybe would not yield the results that I would hope to achieve by doing it in another way, a more structured way. They seem to, they are kinda looking for a free ride rather than hard graft. So maybe striking a balance that if I do include some fun things they see that they have added it. And they say 'well she's doing this because we said it would be a good idea'.

Patrick Farren: Has there been any other effects of this interactive process?
I think it's good for them to speak about their experiences in the class. It builds confidence. It lets others learn to give people time to speak and respect for others opinions. They do that in my class.

Patrick Farren: What effect would that have had on them?

It makes them actually sit down and realise, 'well can I do it, or am I just messing with her?'

Q6. In terms of reflective practice, planning, monitoring, and getting them to evaluate their learning and setting targets in light of that evaluation, self assessing as part of the process – how would that have been implemented in your teaching?

I did out a sheet and I had all the elements of the chapter listed on one side and then I had three columns ‘I can do this with help’, ‘I don’t know how to do it’ or ‘I can do it perfectly well’. So I gave them that before a test so they could evaluate themselves what they knew, what they were expected to know and what they had to go home and study for the exam.

Patrick Farren: Is there anything else you would like to say in regard to learner centered – getting the learners to plan, monitor and self-assess?

I only have first and second years so I think at that level, especially first years, it's too 'high faluting' for them. They need everything just handed on a plate, learn this. I think that they are not able to self-assess at that stage and even second years. When you are going through the portfolio and discussing each part they are more likely if they don't know the answers to take down one of the examples given. Even when asked why they are learning French, they don’t have the sense to think of their own things write down what they think they'll just write down what the teacher says what they think is good. Maybe, different versions for different ages.

Patrick Farren: So in your teaching approach, how would you have gone about setting aims, targets, goals?

Well we did a brain storming session. I sort of modified from the ELP because I just found that complicated to follow for them. So at the beginning of the chapter I said 'do you know how to say this?' and 'what would you expect to do in the chapter?' and 'what would you expect to be able to do in the end?' I simplified it for them in tangible pieces.

Q7. In terms of autonomous learning – do you think that the ELP has helped your learners to take an increasing level over time, an increasing level of responsibility?

For some students, yes. But there are some that I don’t think it will ever sink in for them. But I think with second years it's too early to see. Maybe if it was fifth years or sixth years.
Q8. What about language acquisition now – What’s your own understanding of authentic language use in class? What does that mean for you in terms of your teaching?

That would be getting a tape with French speakers on it or a video with French speakers. That’s all the resources that I think I would be able to use in that situation.

Patrick Farren: Is there any of the written work you could use?
Newspaper articles and things like that. But it’s hard to find them for their level.

Q10. Do you think that the ELP has supported the development of using target language in class?
Would you use the target language in class? How would you use it?

Oh yeah. Well I try to use as much French as possible but I find myself that some things they’ll understand other things they won’t. So I repeat it in English if it’s complicated but then after a while they pick it up.

Q11. So we think of literacy as reading and writing – do you think the learners’ understanding of what literacy might be has broadened?

Yeah, well especially in French class, there’s a lot of aural tapes. So that’s an element of literacy as well. But whether they realise that or not, I don’t know.

Q9. Would you get them to use the target language in terms of planning their goals or setting targets or assessing themselves?

No, I think it’s a complicated thing in itself that I would stick with it in English. If they were older we could have used French.

Q12. Now correct me if I’m wrong – you use the target language when you wanted them to use it as a medium of communication like in activities that they did?

Yeah, yeah.

Patrick Farren: And then when it came to ‘what’s our next target?’, ‘how did we do?’ it’s in English?

Yeah.

Patrick Farren: You mentioned there about newspapers, video and television – do you think that using the portfolio in the classroom has widened your own understanding of what literacy might mean in that context?
I suppose so. The five elements of literacy, yeah, but even before that I would have included all five elements in my classes anyway.

Patrick Farren: Do you think that using the target language was helpful in terms of developing their proficiency?

You didn’t use it for planning or monitoring but do you think they have to use it if they are going to develop proficiency?

Oh yeah. To go to the bathroom, they have to say it in French or ‘open the window’ that kind of thing.

Patrick Farren: So… little management issues in class, routine?

Yeah would be in French.

Patrick Farren: And then getting them to interact was through French but planning would have been in English?

Well, yeah some in English. But say when we were brainstorming they would give me the vocabulary in French.

Q13. In light of your own experience, what modifications, if any, would you like to make or be made to the design, the structure, the contents of the ELP?

I think all the language sections together that’s very complicated. And then the pages aren’t numbered, it’s out of ‘sine’. You are trying to say what page you are on so you are saying ‘the blue page’. There’s too many languages on the page, I mean for the students to even pick out French they would find it difficult. When they are evaluating their own levels it’s like… they understood the French but then they’d be asking me what words that would be. I suppose this is a good way of going through the vocabulary and any new vocabulary we would have underlined and learnt. So then we would go on to see how good they could do it. But they only see their knowledge of French of being in the context of being a second year, they don’t see it really as a whole language. So they’ll say ‘well I can do this’ but their capacity is so limited that they think they are at the top of their capacity so they see that as the whole language. So it’s very hard for them to say where they would think they were a three star. They think that they can do more than they actually can.

Patrick Farren: What else would you think, in terms of any other aspect, design, structure, the contents, the language, any other issues that came up? The terminology like ‘mother tongue’, ‘autonomous learning’ – that’s fairly complicated for the level that I was at. Maybe if there were more pictures, articles and stuff, maybe, especially the guy with ADHD he would have loved bits to colour in. Maybe, even bigger with less stuff on each page. I think if I had a Leaving Cert, class I would have got more of it. Level is really another issue.
Q14. In terms of your own teaching with the help of the ELP, what does the concept of autonomous teaching mean for you?
To learn something by yourself, to take something and find out things about it. Become more 'au fait' with whatever it is. Independent, not necessarily on your own, it could be with a group....but you wouldn't have a lecturer telling you what it was.

Patrick Farren: Would you say that's synonymous with taking responsibility, a level for your own learning?
Yeah, in college in first year we had a semi-autonomous approach to language learning. So every week we had to do a reflective journal and what you did yourself outside college to improve your language skills.

Q15. Would you say that working with the ELP in the post-primary class has helped you in your own learning as a student teacher?
Yeah, it makes you more aware from a language point of view, of the different elements of language, especially the elements, what I find hard with this language. You get to know what students find hard so when you are aware of things then you can help them and address these problems, which they might not have told you of before.

Q16. Do you think that negotiating and dialoguing as part of your teaching with your learners, do you think that has helped develop your understanding of what teaching means? Would your concept of teaching have grown over the year or changed?
Oh yeah. Well, I think that would come anyway without the ELP.

Patrick Farren: Where would the ELP fit in there?
I don't think it would.

Patrick Farren: So you think it would happen anyway?
Yeah, I think it would.

Q17. In terms of your relationship with your supervisor, do you think that dialoguing and sharing with your supervisor, did the ELP support you in that interaction with him?
Not really. She's maybe more old-fashioned, but she was very good at pointing out things that you could do differently, giving you ideas. I think she is very interested in your professional development as a teacher over the year.
Q18. Do you think that teaching with the ELP has helped you to take an increasing level of responsibility for your own teaching?
I suppose but when you have a book anyways. The book would decide to a certain extent but then to span out of the book, say there was a match on last night, who was playing, who won. To incorporate different vocabulary, revision, recap, what did you do last weekend?

Patrick Farren: So that you are not just turning the pages, you are interacting?
And trying to make it as real as possible for them.

Patrick Farren: What about the syllabus – how would that fit into your programme or planning?
I suppose you are covering some of the various elements of the syllabus for the Junior Cert, but you are working with the teacher, so they say, 'do this' and 'do that!'

Q24. Do you have a co-operating teacher?
Yeah.
Patrick Farren: Would you have been told what to do or would you have shared that with the teacher?
We shared it but we kind of divided out the chapters.

Patrick Farren: Would you have been aware that they were linked to the syllabus?
Oh yeah.

Did your mentor (co-operating) teacher use the ELP?
No.

So you were on your own?
I have two mentor teachers and no they don't use it.

Patrick Farren: Do you think that would have helped if there was closer linkage?
It probably would, yeah, because I see my second years twice, one group of second years once and then another group of first years twice a week. So they are not my class, it's very bitty. So maybe, if they were my own class, yeah, five classes a week.

Q19. With respect to the semester course – did that help you, by using the ELP in that class, did that help you take an increased level of responsibility for your own learning?
I suppose it didn’t. I felt that I had a degree in French so I concentrated on other things.

Patrick Farren: What other things would you have focused on?
Well, the semester course is the core subject. I have to say that the French teacher, the French oral class, they were practically useless, the teacher, she didn’t know what to do with us.
Q20. In terms of language acquisition, what did the concept of target language use, in the context of the semester course, mean?

Just speaking French the whole time in the class although it might be better if the teacher went in there every week with ideas in her head of what we were actually going to do. She spent half an hour on what we will do and once we had decided it was too late, it was time to go. Maybe that people didn’t have to go to each class just to what interested you. Time tabling – so that you knew beforehand what was going to be done so you could do some work for that.

Patrick Farren: In terms of the semester course, has learning with the help of the ELP supported you in developing language proficiency?
No.

Patrick Farren: Has learning with the ELP in the context of the semester course enriched your understanding of the concept of communication, literacy, reading writing, interactions ...?
It would make you more aware but I don’t know if I implemented it. My head said ‘you’ve done enough French, this is just a revision class’. I suppose I was sick of learning French in a university setting, I just wanted to move away from that.

Patrick Farren: What would you like to have done in the semester course?
More articles about school subjects, cultural awareness could have been improved. Just to perfect them, I would have a certain level, but just to cream them off. And then what I started to do was if a place was mentioned in France we all get out the map and see where this place is. So maybe more – this is autonomous learning as well – if she did features on each region in France. But then I have started to do that this year in school. I have realised that I am not brilliant at is why is this place famous? My supervisor was very good in pointing that out.

Patrick Farren. Do you think there is room for that in the semester course?
Yeah, I think there is. Presentations might be a good idea.

Q22. The Methodologies course – did that help you to understand what was involved in the ELP?
Yeah.

Q23. Any general comments now about using the ELP or any other aspects that we haven’t covered?
In the course that you gave, if you gave more practical examples, I know you had Des Geraghty in and he went through all that. But, maybe, if there was more of that throughout the course...more practical and less of the theoretical perspectives. It’s hard when you are coming in fresh. Maybe every week if people had just for five minutes ‘I did this, this worked well’... also sharing of resources, like children’s songs and stuff... maybe, that is available in the resource library.
Interview with Michelle

May 2004

Part I

Q1. Can you tell me something of the school you are teaching in?
A first year class, all girls. It’s a mixed ability class. It was ( ).

Q2. In the context of your teaching approach using the ELP, could you explain what you understand by the concept a learner-centered approach?
I think you have to be aware of the students’ interests and needs. To involve the learner in all the decisions about teaching and learning. Involve them in reflection about the teaching and learning process as well. So that would mean that after you have identified their needs, their interests, maybe go a step further and ask them for example, if you are dealing with the unit on the body ‘what do you think should be appropriate to learn?’ Well maybe they’ll say ‘well I want to know how to describe the parts of the body in case I would fall sick in France’. Then maybe involve them as well in the kind of activity that they would see as being useful to acquire the knowledge, visuals, songs. Also involving them in the assessment evaluation of their own progress.

Q3. How, in using the ELP, have your students benefited from this learner-centered approach?
I would say the main thing was that they were involved from the very start of the unit. So I think they were a bit surprised first to be asked so many questions about what they like in the classroom, how they would like the unit to develop and what their interests are in the unit. So I would say that they felt very much involved and from the very start they were very much aware of where we were going. Starting from the objective and knowing that there would be such and such an activity that would lead to the final objectives or aims. So they have been benefiting throughout as well since I had involved activities that they like such as songs and poster making and stuff like that. So they saw that things that they asked for in terms of activities and in terms of objectives as being included and helped them reach the objectives we had set together.

Q5. In using the ELP, have you found negotiating and dialoguing with the learners about the aims, content and activities has made learning more appealing to them?
I think yes once they get over the fear of the ELP. I mean the fear of these big folders with hundreds of questions and at the beginning they were a little bit lost because there were the same pages in different languages and when they are first year they have maybe five months behind them. So they find it hard to identify the French page straight away. So once they get over the structure of the ELP and they concentrated on the self-assessment grid that I had prepared for them based on what we were doing in the classroom, they liked this little sheet and putting one star or two stars and seeing that at the end
they had achieved three stars in most of the objectives. The only thing which might have been good would have been if my teacher as well would have used the ELP because I had them once a week.

Patrick Farren: What other effects has the interactive process had on your learners? I would say that in terms of interaction with myself, there has been always been a very good atmosphere in this classroom from the start. But it has helped build a better relationship between me and some of the students who might have been a bit shy at the start. They are asking more questions, showing their dossier to the rest of the class. So really make everybody feel involved in the lesson and the dossier has helped a lot because they have done wonderful collage and posters. It was nice to display them and to show them to the others so I think from the positive learning atmosphere point of view it was very good.

Q6. Reflectivity – what has reflective practice as supported by the ELP, contributed to the learning process in your classroom? I would say the reflective practice, if they had to see if they had achieved this or that objective, they were able to guide me in what was coming next in the unit. For example, one lesson on dealing with a situation at the doctors might have been enough but then they thought about their own learning they said that it would be good if we could do a few more exercises. It helped me change a bit more what I did with them. You’ve also got different steps in reflectiveness and I think that after only one unit of teaching with the ELP they are at the first step. If you are using the ELP throughout the year they would know straight away what are objectives, how they reflect, what is a self assessment grid and things like that.

Q7. Has the ELP helped your learners to take an increasing level of responsibility for their own learning? Definitely, in the sense of setting the objective, helping to design the unit, the choice of activity, pictures, games, songs, visuals. They have taken responsibility in the way as well that they would stop me and say ‘miss can we come back on that’. They see that there was an open door for communication and that they could say at one stage ‘well why not do this’ or after doing a song they asked me could we do another song involving the body parts.

Q8. Language acquisition – what does the concept of target language use mean to you in the context of your teaching practice? For me the use of the target language is the ultimate thing in the classroom. Of course the interaction with the children and the students is very important as well. But I think that when you are teaching a language you can’t teach a language through the medium of a mother tongue. You can sometimes use a mother tongue to help them in an introduction part or something. But I do reduce the use of the mother tongue to the very, very minimum in the classroom.

Q10. How has the ELP supported target language proficiency in your classroom?
I would say that I have always been very aware of using the target language so from the very start they have always used the target language to, for example, go to the bathroom. Give them a sense that they will be using the target language all the time. The only thing that I would say about the ELP is that they have encounter new terms and structures that they would be able to use out of the ELP.

Q11. How has the ELP helped you to broaden and develop your own understanding of literacy, the concept of literacy?
What makes it very clear in the ELP is this division between when you have the self-assessment grid which is very much divided into spoken interaction, communication, written skills, reading skills and listening skills. So you can base your teaching on checking the objectives that they would have to reach as well in part of the Junior Certificate or the Leaving Certificate.

Patrick Farren. Developing your own understanding of literacy, is there any other aspect of literacy and the syllabus that you felt it has helped to broaden?
I try to base the unit not only on the reading, writing, listening skills but as well on the syllabus, basic communicative proficiency, language awareness, cultural awareness. So I think that, since in the ELP as well they have for cultural awareness for example, they will say have you any experience of being in a country where the target language is spoken, or did you see differences between your mother tongue and French and stuff like that. The ELP focused on the cultural awareness and language awareness.

Patrick Farren. Has the ELP helped your learners to enrich and develop their understanding of what constitutes literacy?
It’s really short term, so I think they are really at the very beginning of understanding. They understood that all parts are different, reading, writing, speaking, but included in the learning process. But I think it’s a bit early to speak in terms of ‘literacy’.

Q9. Did your learners make use of the target language in planning, monitoring and evaluating their own learning?
To start with, yes. So the first lesson when we started setting objectives they weren’t really aware so there was one lesson where I had to make them understand what was an objective and what was a self-assessment. Once they understood those terms, then yes we spoke in French.

Q12. Was this process of speaking in French helpful in developing language proficiency?
It’s too early to say after only one unit. All I can say is that they felt confident with their self-assessment grid. I don’t know that if we were starting a new unit that they would feel very comfortable straight away about assessing themselves and reflecting in French.

Q13. In light of your experience of using the ELP what modifications, if any, would you like to make to the design, the structure and/or the contents of the ELP?
The three parts the dossier, the biography, the passport I think that’s fine. The passport – I wouldn’t change anything. The biography section contained too much. Maybe introduce other language progressively. Only include the pages in Irish and French if they are studying Irish and French. Also if there was a person, mascot included that they could associate with a particular language. We decided with the class if we could associate the ELP with a little mascot, so they drew a few mascots reflecting on the ELP, a girl for example. I just asked them ‘what do you think of the ELP?’ and ‘how does it appeal to you?’ ‘In order to make it funny and if you were to draw a mascot what would you do?’ A girl drew an elephant because she saw that learning a language was a lot about memory! Then if we had a mascot to represent the ELP then every time the students see it they will know that we are going to do the ELP also to remind them of the ELP.

Part II

Q14. Using the ELP in the context of the Higher Diploma. In the context of your own learning on the Higher Diploma – what does the concept of autonomy...autonomous teaching mean for you?

I would say to be able to reflect on my own progress. To reflect on my own needs in a particular subject. To be able to know how I could solve problems, knowing that I can go on the net, talk to the lecturers. So all is part of this autonomous learning.

Q15. Has working with the ELP in the post primary class helped you in your learning as a teacher

I think the ELP reinforced what I have tried to do from the beginning – use of the target language, be aware that there is not only one skill, it’s not only about writing, or being able to speak. The language is different skills put together.

Patrick Farren. Have you found that learning and developing your understanding of the ELP on the H. Dip. has been beneficial to you?

Yes, definitely. From all the reasons I have already said. It has been a good overall experience.

Q16. In using the ELP have you found that by negotiating and dialoguing with your learners that your own understanding of the concept of teaching has grown?

I would say, yes. I was very lucky with my class in the sense that they have always been very positive and very receptive. But I could see the use of the ELP with classes that might be a bit more difficult and that would definitely help you understand their needs. How they see language learning and definitely to build a better relationship in the classroom.

Q17. How has the ELP supported you in dialoguing with your supervisor?
We both knew how a unit was built and we were speaking in the same language referring to aims, objectives, referring to assessment. So, I think that I was definitely clearer in expressing myself in terms of a unit in general. I knew my aims, I knew the activities, I knew how to assess.

Q18. Has teaching with the ELP helped you to take an increasing level of responsibility for your own teaching?
I would say that I have always been responsible for teaching.

Patrick Farren. Has it helped you to develop an increasing level of responsibility?
Maybe, in the sense that, for example, the ELP unit is only based on material I have developed myself, so I didn’t follow a unit in a book for example, and say...well that’s it. I selected what I wanted, I constructed the material myself. Definitely, in designing material, in finding the suitable material and not to stick to one book. But definitely, to be responsible and look outside and see, ‘well that is better and that should be integrated in the lesson’.

Q19. What has reflective practice as envisaged by the ELP contributed to your language learning in the language semester course?
I think that when you’ve been studying languages for so long, for people who like languages once you like something you tend to reflect about your own weaknesses or your own strengths. In that sense the ELP didn’t really affect my semester course.

Q21. What has reflective practice in the context of your Teaching Practice File, developing your Teaching Practice File, contributed to your learning as a teacher?
What I did was a short self-assessment after each of the lessons... tried to see what worked well, what didn’t work well, why it didn’t work, what could be improved, or what worked very well and should be used again. What I did as well was after each unit I wrote a little reflective report explaining what difficulties I encountered. How next time I could be better. What was the reaction of the students. That definitely helped a lot for building your next lesson and definitely for teaching because you realise that something that you do at the beginning would work better if it was at the end of the lesson.

Q20. What does the concept of target language use mean in the context of the semester language course?
It’s very important to use the target language as well as a mirror to your own teaching. If your semester course teacher doesn’t speak in the target language how does it reflect to your own practice in the classroom. So I think it’s very important to speak in the target language.

Patrick Farren. Has learning with the ELP in the context of the target language semester course supported you in developing German or language proficiency?
We didn’t really use the ELP in the semester course. It was mentioned once I think. So we didn’t really develop the ELP in the semester course.
Patrick Farren. How has learning with the help of the ELP enriched your understanding of the concept of literacy?
In the courses we spoke about literacy and I am a teacher of foreign languages so it was nice to reflect about literacy in the sense of a foreign language and literate in the mother tongue. How the literacy of a foreign tongue can help you in the literacy of your own mother tongue. Literacy in all the different skills which need to be developed and not to neglect any of the skills which makes a language: listening, reading, writing and ....

Q.23. Have you any comments of your own about your experience in using the ELP?
It was a very good experience. However, it would have been beneficial to the students if their main teacher had used the ELP as well. It would have been good to see the progress if I had been teaching another ELP unit. The objectives, aims would have been more fluent from the students because they would have known how to deal with the new situation. They would have been able to go straight in their dossier or portfolio looking to write down their new objectives and aims. I think it would have been nice to see the progress within two units minimum.

Interview with Duncan
May 2004
Part I

Q1. Can you describe the school?
It’s a girl’s secondary school, a very inclusive school. There are a lot of resource and special needs education in the school. So you are going to get all ranges of abilities and all backgrounds. I don’t think the classes are as streamed as normal. There’s a good range between each class. There’s going to be abilities across the range. The class I had were sixth year ordinary level German. They had been together with the higher level in fifth level, third year and first year. I think they had their own teacher in second year. I was taking over a group of about twelve. I brought in the ELP specifically for the project.

Q2. A learner-centered approach – in the context of your own teaching approach, using the ELP can you explain what you understand by a learner-centered approach?
It’s when a teacher sets aims or objectives, that they take the perspective of the student. They look at it in terms of what the student wants to be able to do at the end and not what the teacher wants them to do. Because it’s not the teacher sitting the exam or doing the task. Learner centered is like the primary curriculum, that you look at the faculties of the student and what they are going to get out of the subject in the end. Where the ELP comes in is that you are not just asking them or telling them what they want to do. You are getting feedback, you are giving them something where they record it.
Q3. Do you think your students have benefited from this learner-centered approach in your classroom?
Yes. We had four weeks to prepare for the oral and at the start I had asked them to write down what they wanted to be able to do by the time the day rolled around and the day after the oral they were able to relate back to the first stage and they felt more as if they were in control of it when they went in to face the examiner.

Patrick Farren: Could you outline briefly your project you developed using the ELP as part of your methodologies process?
This was really the combination of years of work so where I brought it in was the universal A1 and B2 parameters. I got them to assess themselves in terms of where do you think you are in each skill? Reading, writing, spoken interaction, spoken production and aural? We had looked at it before as well, that chart. And I also got them to fill in for Irish as well. To make it easier for them to describe their abilities in German I said, ‘Well, think of your Irish abilities and they were well able to say ‘well I can hold a fairly good conversation, or watch TG4, or listen to Radio na Gaeltachta and follow it’. So then compare that with if you were in a German situation and they were able to get a picture of their German abilities.

Patrick Farren: Is that self-assessment?
Yes, we had gone through that first and then filled in the profile. What I was saying to them was ‘when you leave this year, you will know at what level you are, at least you will have a record of where you stand’.

Q5. Learner empowerment - in using the ELP have you found that negotiating and dialoguing with your learners about the aims, content, activities – has made the learning, in the context of language acquisition, the context of them learning the language, has it made the learning process more appealing to them?
They like to talk about their own abilities and even in negative terms they will still want to put across to you whether you think it’s feasible or not to aim for these things. I think their first reaction is that they find the language in the ELP itself quite scientific. It takes a while to break that down.

Patrick Farren: Do you find that your own dialoguing with your own learners, in terms of course aims, content and activities that you are doing, makes it more appealing to them? Has the language acquisition process been more appealing to them through your interaction, dialoguing with them?
Yeah, because they are used to you saying as a teacher ‘well, here’s what you have to do’ and ‘here’s a list of phrases’ … You are just driving a train over the course of the year whereas if they see that you are engaging in some sort of reflective practice, where you are saying ‘ok that didn’t work’. At least you are stopping every week and saying how far are we now? They like when you say to them ‘where do you feel you are weakest? Or what are you most afraid of?’ Particularly when you talk about their fears. They are most afraid of the oral exam and they appreciate it when you allow them to reflect or
you allow them to point out ‘sir, you’ve done enough of this’…

Q6. In terms of autonomous learning, what has reflective practice in planning, monitoring and evaluating learning contributed to the learning process in your classroom?

It can dig you out of a hole. If you are encountering the same problem or you are using the same way of doing things all the time and they might be ok with that or they might not. They could say ‘look this is great we can do things the same way and we’re not going to have to do so much work’ if you don’t realise it yourself you don’t have a lot of time. After each term I’d come in and write up how many weeks are left. So we’d count how many classes we have and when you put it that way it really hits home. And I did it again after Easter because they needed to know as well so if you set it out like that and reflect on it that way that it’s actually a number of lessons

Patrick Farren: So what about in more specific terms, in terms of their own learning in the classroom, do you think that reflective practice helps them to learn the language? In terms of their own planning, monitoring, evaluating?

They can see straight away how far they have gone and what’s left to do. Instead of finding out these things later on, each day they can see, always reflect back or if they are ever stuck on a word I always go back and try and link it in with a picture story. With picture story they remember pictures, visual recollection, that they can see that when they reach the comprehension, it isn’t just double Dutch to them. They can work out meaning of things by just going back and looking at all the work, picture stories, role plays. They can link in with another unit.

Q7. Would you say that the ELP has helped your learners to take an increasing level of responsibility?

It’s being used as a means of self-assessment and at sixth year level, they’ve had a chance to look through it but they haven’t had a chance to take the work that they are doing and slot it into the ELP. So it’s only been a journal rather than being a dossier or a folder where they can include stuff. It hasn’t really been a teaching tool as much as a goal setter and a goal evaluator.

Patrick Farren: Did you find that helped them in their own way of doing it? The process of planning and evaluating, was that useful to them?

Yeah, because when they came out of the exam they were all smiles and the next day they were saying ‘I was able to come up with something’. And I said ‘well, remember you wrote down that you wanted to be able to hold a conversation about family and hobbies and were you able to do that?’ and they said ‘yes’.

Q8. Language acquisition – what does target language, authentic language, mean to you in your classroom? What does it involve?

First of all, me using the language first, not just for language teaching but for everyday organisational things. Whether closing a door or handing out something, those little transition points are included. And that if they are having trouble with that then a summary in English. Well it means using the target
language and exposure to the language.

Q9. Did your learners make use of the target when they were planning, monitoring, reflecting on their practice? Setting goals and evaluating their learning?
No, I would say the use of the target language is one sided in that class because none of them have been to Germany and from their point of view it was just a case of getting through the next month and getting past the oral exam and after that setting the language aside. Their use of the target language would be simply to carry out the functions that are necessary for the exam.

Patrick Farren: They didn’t orally or in writing put down what their next objective or target was in the target language?
No it would be done through English.

Patrick Farren: Do you think that would be useful for them to do in retrospect?
Yeah, if they wrote down ‘I can’ or ‘I would be like to be able to do this’. When they read back over that or once having written it, they would associate it straight away with the body of work that they had compiled.

Q12. Was the process of using the target language in your class helpful for your learners to develop their language proficiency?
Where I found it particularly useful was if we came across a new word and they asked me what it is, I don’t give them an English or target language equivalent, I explain and work through the target language. Often, using actions or mimes or objects in the classroom until they get it. You are not just explaining the word, they are recalling all the other words you use around it.

Q10. Would you say that the ELP has supported development of language proficiency in your classroom?
No, I’d say it hasn’t been integrated enough in the classroom for that.

Q11. Would you tell us about what you understand about the concept of literacy in terms of language teaching?
More than grammar really.
Patrick Farren: Do you think the ELP was helpful in the students’ widening of the term literacy?
If we had the chance to use the language more, any materials that are outside the textbooks would be all brought together in one format. Well, literacy is then understanding things and giving feedback, communicating with the target language. If it had been used that way I think it would have been helpful.

Q13. In light of your experience of using the ELP in your classroom, what, if any, modifications would you like to make to the design, structure and contents of the portfolio?
Overall, I would have less text and more illustrations, visuals, symbols or even instances of clip art, more to catch the eyes. I would edit the text but the way I see this is not for them while they are learning but for them to look back over at a much later stage. Or for someone else like an employer or another institution to see. It's thinking a few steps ahead.

Patrick Farren: What about the actual language in the portfolio, maybe you could tell us something about the effect of that on your learners’ ability to understand?

Because it's being produced in a third level institute I would say the language is almost third level. The discourse is third level and then you are trying to convert that to second level. It's quite difficult. You would have to have quite good English even to work it all out for yourself without having a teacher there.

Part II

Q14. In the context of your own learning – what does the concept of autonomous teaching mean for you?

Subsidiarity – it’s like devolved responsibility where you are a teacher still leading the process but tasks are outsourced or devolved to the students. Once they are covering elements of the syllabus they have more of a say or input.

Q15. Has working with the ELP in the post primary class helped you in your own learning as a student teacher?

It ties in with reflective practice really more than anything else. Planning and evaluating the units. It’s like having two different kinds of lesson plans and you are used to doing a lesson plan one way and the ELP is like an alternative way. It makes you rethink everything under different headings.

Patrick Farren: How does that make you think or feel about planning in terms of your lessons?

You’d have your own way of doing it already and the ELP is like planning the lesson in an alternative form. If ever it didn’t work one way you’d have another way of doing it. I’m not sure if it’s at the stage yet where people can seamlessly use it as part of the teaching file for the year.

Q16. In using the ELP have you found that by dialoguing and negotiating with your learners that your own understanding of the concept of teaching has grown?

It broadens it beyond the copybook, textbook, exam paper model. That kind of trilogy really that’s been there for years and years. It’s like the art model of a portfolio where you have to supply samples of your work. It’s taking that on and putting it in a language context and I think that’s good.

Q17. In the context of your work with your supervisors, how did the ELP support you in dialoguing with your supervisor?

Not to a great extent because of the year, the sixth year. It did come into play when we were
discussing the project at that stage. But not so much on the teaching side of it.

Q18. In teaching with the ELP has that helped you to take an increasing level of responsibility for your own teaching?
It has made me say to myself, in the beginning ‘well I have to be satisfied in the end that all of this group are able to converse’. I could feel comfortable in letting them go in there and do the picture story and the prose.

Q19. In terms of the semester course, what does reflective practice contributed to your language learning in terms of the semester course?
The language semester course is theme based, but its samples of work that you can bring into a class. Very much, Gabi would bring in something right if you are doing a unit topic on, e.g. the environment here’s source material. In what way could you, where would this fit in? It’s like a series of cutPatrick Farren:outs for the dossier.

Patrick Farren: What about reflective practice in the semester course, how has that contributed to your learning, if at all? I’d say only about five minutes in each class we’d talk about lessons we did and things that worked or didn’t work.

Patrick Farren: In terms of the semester course, would that have helped you to take an increasing level of responsibility for your own learning as a teacher?
Well it makes you think do I have a varied enough approach to doing a topic? Am I using all materials? All the stuff in authentic materials.

Patrick Farren: In terms of planning and monitoring and assessing your learning on the semester course – would you have made use of the reflective practice approach?
Yeah, we usually own up to the mistakes we’ve made and Gabi tends to share as well instances from her own experience where you might try something and it backfires. Or else something you should try again in a slightly different way.

Q20. What does the concept of target language use mean in the context of the target language semester course?
It’s a revision of your own speaking skills. It’s very much like being back doing the primary degree and it’s good because it’s a recap. It’s evaluating whether you feel you can go in day in and day out and speak German without necessarily getting a German response all the time. But how can you involve them, get them to speak German.

Patrick Farren: Has learning with the ELP in terms of the semester course enriched your understanding of the concept of literacy?
I'd say the materials are a lot of cartoons, video clips, comedy clips – different very much like taking a video clip and having a worksheet associated with it. How to take two resources and combining them.

Patrick Farren: So it's wider than maybe what is normally seen as reading and writing? What way can you present vocabulary? Can you present it from a video or distribute first of all some key words that they might not know? Introduce the new stuff first and then play the tape. Rather than just looking at something or reading something and saying 'well what's this word mean?'

Q22. Has learning with the methodologies course helped your understanding of reflective practice as understood with the ELP?
A lot of it is recurrent…or current research, the materials that we were handed is current research on methodology or theoretical perspectives. I think where the reflective practice comes into the methodology class is where you might look at different types of materials. Matching exercises I found particularly useful, that idea at the start of the year. And how to make sure you have listening, speaking, reading, writing in every class but for each one a different type of methodology. A matching exercise for one tape or another. How to break up the whole class into segments.

Q23. Have you any comments that you would like to make about the ELP?
I think the overall marketing of it I don’t know where or how people are with it in this country yet. Whether it has the status of pilot programme or not, I would think it could be advertised or made known as a pilot programme. I don’t know whether they havePatrick Farren: sought funding for it from the department here. I know there are 30,000 using it around Europe but I am not sure how many around Ireland or under what auspices. Whether it is officially recognised or not? It’s something that could be like a pilot language (project) in the primary school.

Q24. Did you work in cooperation with a mentor teacher at all in your school?
Yeah.

Patrick Farren: Is she making use of the ELP?
No, she hasn’t. I think she is hoping to bring it in with her first year class in September (2004)

Thanks very much.
Interview with Braid
May 2004
Part I

Q1. Could you describe the context in which you are teaching with the ELP? The level of the learner and so on.
Ok. I'd be teaching to first years, mixed ability. I actually have two first year classes, so I decided to do the ELP with just one class. Very mixed ability class, there would be a few with special learning needs in the class.

Q2. In the context of your teaching approach in using the ELP could you explain what you mean by a learner-centered approach?
To focus really on the interests of the children themselves. I always try to think about what they are interested in than what the textbook was on the about, and what I was interested in doing with them. For example, if they had interest in sport, all the examples in French using 'jouer' for example, I would use in the context of sport to apply to their interest.

Q3. How, in using the ELP, have your students benefited from this learner-centered approach?
I think, especially with the dossier section, they really enjoyed it. As I explained yesterday, in my presentation, I think a lot of the techniques used in primary school could be also incorporated in the first year of secondary school to ease the continuity, to make it much easier, the transition from primary to secondary. So therefore, I got the kids to do projects on Galway and it gave them an opportunity to be creative in their language and also to use language in one context but to apply to another context.

Q4. Could you outline the project briefly with particular reference to how this learner-centered approach affected your project?
My project was on Brittany. I selected this as it was the next chapter in the book and it was great resonance for children, a lot of them had been to Brittany before, and the great cultural, twinning of Lorient and Galway. So I applied to the pupil's own interest there. I really tried to gear the learning to a holistic type of learning, to encourage them, to gain a bit of self confidence, not only in French but even standing up in front of a class as well. I tried to appeal to the affective domain as much as the cognitive.

Q 5. In terms of learner empowerment in using the ELP have you found that negotiating and dialoguing with your learners about the aims, the content and the activities has made learning the language more appealing to them?
Well, when I brought in the folders they were there 'Wow!' They thought it was something new and exciting. As many people have stated the language is quite difficult, they didn't really understand many of the terms, like even 'objectives', 'communicative', 'mother tongue'. They are quite difficult.
terms for a twelve or thirteen year old, there needs to be an amended junior version of the ELP. I think that otherwise the dossier section they really enjoyed.

Patrick Farren: In terms of your own dialoguing with them and negotiating with them about aims and contents and activities and the management of activities, have you found that that process of you and them has made language learning more appealing? Has it helped them in the context of language acquisition?
I would always ask them what would they prefer? Tape work or role play? They are definitely more interested because it shows that I am more sensitive to what they are interested in. For example, generally in the afternoon they are more inclined towards tape work. Whereas in the morning they enjoyed speaking more. They are given choices, they are far more interested in taking up those choices. Even if they don’t learn more, emotionally they are more interested in learning something anyway as against this attitude of ‘why do we have to do this?’

Patrick Farren: Is there any other effect that this interactive process has had on them as learners?
I’ve had a better relationship with the pupils as compared to my old school where it was a very much ‘us’ and ‘them’ approach towards teaching. There is far more partnership I found.

Q6. In terms of reflectivity and autonomous learning – what has reflective practice, planning, monitoring, evaluating, learning, you know having the learners plan and monitor and self assess and so on contributed to the learning process in the classroom?
I was interested in guiding pupils towards acquiring their own learning strategies especially in first year when they don’t understand. I try to get them to sympathise to language in general, not even French, but how language works, how language interrelates. I encouraged them to build up thematic vocabulary.

Q7. Has the ELP helped your interest to take an increasing level of responsibility over time for their own learning?
I think it’s interested them but I don’t think overall. I think they were too young really to have the concept of responsibility because in primary school everything is so much spoon fed to them that I think they still have a bit of difficulty taking more responsibility for themselves.

Q8. What about the concept of authentic language use in your classroom. Could you explain what that means for you?
I use French as much as possible in the classroom.

Q10. Has the ELP supported the development of proficiency?
I don’t think so. I use the target language anyway.
Patrick Farren: Would it have helped your learners to develop language proficiency?
No, I don’t think so.
Q 11. Has the ELP helped you and your learners to develop and to widen your idea of what literacy means?
Yes, I think so. I explained terms to them.

Patrick Farren: Would you say it has helped them to express their own messages, their own meanings, creatively what they want to say as opposed to what someone else tells them to say?
Yeah, I think, yes.

Patrick Farren: Have they a broader view now of what language use is?
Yeah, and the integrated approach to language learning, the five different skills and cultural awareness is seen as important.

Q9. Did your learners make use of the target language in planning, self assessing?
No, but I saw that they started to use a bit of the target language in the classroom, for example, the started to say ‘Madame’, ‘Mademoiselle’, ‘bonjour, au revoir’. They tried to use the target language a bit more.

Q 12. Was using it helpful in developing their own proficiency in the language?
Yes, definitely.

Q13. Could you tell us any particular changes you would make in terms of the design structure and/or contents of the ELP?
I think a Junior Portfolio would be more suitable. Tailoring the language to the pupils, to get to the pupils own level, to incorporate cultural cartoons and animations in the portfolio.

Patrick Farren: Do you think that's a worthwhile goal as a teacher?
Yeah, it's interesting to see the ELP and maybe a junior ELP as a tool to use the first year of secondary school to encourage kids to take more responsibility for their studies.

Part II
Q14. In the context of your own learning with the ELP – what does autonomy mean for you as a young teacher starting off?
It's all about taking responsibility and looking at ways that every individual learns a language as against people in general.

Q15. Has working with the ELP in the school helped you with your learning as a student teacher in terms of autonomy?
I think so because it has taught me about techniques that I need to learn to encourage students to learn languages such as: gearing them towards strategies to learn. It is about being a facilitator as against seeing pupils as empty vessels to pour information into.

Q16. In using the ELP do you find that negotiating and dialoguing with your learners that your own understanding of the concept of teaching has broadened?
I think so, yes. There's a far more of an idea of partnership if you use the ELP with the class. It's working in conjunction with them rather than for them.

Q17. In terms of working with your supervisor, did you find that the ELP supported, gave you a framework in which to dialogue with your supervisor?
The dossier section we discussed, and the importance of cultural awareness.

Q18. In terms of autonomous teaching, has teaching with the ELP helped you to take an increasing level of responsibility for your own teaching?
Yes. It's given me more ideas as to what language learning is, it's not simply learning off lists of vocabulary. It has given me a far better idea of the holistic nature of language learning.

Q19. In terms of the semester language course, has reflective practice, planning, monitoring and evaluating your learning and self assessing, what has that reflective practice contributed to your learning in the language semester course?
After every class I went through in my mind exactly the steps I took, if the class was successful or not successful and strategies I could have used, or that did not work.

Patrick Farren: In this in your target language class in the school?
Yeah.

Patrick Farren: What about the semester course with your French teacher here in the University?
Would reflective practice have contributed to your language learning in that course?
Not particularly.

Patrick Farren: Did you do a lot of planning, monitoring, self assessing, evaluating what, why and how am I learning? How can I improve?
Not particularly, no.

Patrick Farren: In terms of language acquisition, what does the concept of target language use mean in the context of the semester course? Did you use target language in the semester course?
Yes absolutely, the French oral class? Oh yeah absolutely.
Q20. Has learning with the ELP in the context of the semester course supported you in developing language proficiency?
Not particularly, no.

Patrick Farren: Would you say that learning it with the help of the ELP in the context of the semester course enriched your understanding of literacy?
No.

Q22. What about the Methodologies course – would you have found that you have developed an understanding of the processes, the philosophy underlying the ELP?
Definitely, yeah. I certainly found that far more useful. I didn’t know anything about the communicative approach to language learning, I wasn’t aware that that was the philosophy of teaching in Ireland.

Q23. Overall have you found the ELP helpful to you in the context, did you find it was useful to you to learn and to know and to use the ELP in the H.Dip.?
I think it definitely has a use and will be increasingly important now with the portfolios. But I feel that you really have to think about the twelve and thirteen year olds, all thirty of them looking up at you, and gear a portfolio towards them rather than … I feel it’s far more elaborate and too complicated for them.

Q21. Could you tell me in the context of the teaching practice file you developed in tandem with your teaching in the school – has reflective practice in the context of your Teaching Practice File contributed to your learning as a teacher?
Yes, absolutely. I had my last supervision yesterday and we looked over the first visit and the last visit and there was a huge difference. I think it has definitely come down to me thinking about the importance of having objectives and having an integrated approach to language learning and having increasing confidence. Thinking about what I was doing.

Patrick Farren: In terms of the essay you wrote – the critical reflective essay after each unit – did you find that was useful in terms of your own development as a teacher?
Yes, absolutely, it is encouraging, when I look back at the things I wrote in October and November and the things I write now, it encouraging to note that I took certain things on board and I have worked on them.

Q24. Did you work with mentor teacher, cooperative teacher, in using the ELP?
He didn’t use it, no. I think he left it up to me.

Patrick Farren: Thanks very much.
Interview with Maeve

May 2004

Part I

Q1. Can you describe the school and the classroom context in which you have been teaching using the ELP?

I teach in a city school, very mixed clientele which I found most interesting. The class I chose for the ELP is fifth year, semi-mature and of generally good ability and a very nice group I have to say.

Q2. A learner-centered approach – in the context of your teaching approach using the ELP, could you explain what you understand by the term ‘a learner-centered approach’?

It would mean both that the learner would have some measure of choice as to the activities and the content of the course so that there could be a discussion at the beginning as to their needs and expectations of the course, that could be related to the ELP easily enough. Then there would be, if possible, continuous reviewing of how they are progressing. And they have done this, they have reviewed and assessed themselves, self-assessed their own level and what their weaknesses are etc.

Q3. How, in using the ELP, have your students benefited from this learner-centered approach?

Some of them, not all of them, have really found it useful for evaluating their different abilities in different aspects of the language in different capacities. Also they have found it very useful for organisation. They have told me for organisation, for assessing and for revising that it would be very useful. This is the feedback from those who found it useful.

Patrick Farren: So you have done up your own questionnaire?

Yes, I have a copy of it for you there.

Q4. In the context of the project that you have developed as part of the H.Dip. using the ELP, could you outline that for us?

I see my class only once a week so I decided to have good continuity to take this class for a full week and the team was education, schooling, their school experience, the system in general, teachers, students, relationships, subjects – all kinds of things that are very important to them both for exam purposes and general communication.

Q5. In using the ELP have you found that negotiating and dialoguing with the learners about the aims, content and activities has made learning more appealing to your learners?

I usually always negotiate to some extent. I would generally propose two activities towards that goal, if the class is receptive and mature enough. I found that it only dove tailed into what I usually do and what is good as that they had it as something they could work on at home and come back to me and say that we should study this and that.

Patrick Farren: What other effects has this interactive process had on them as learners?
Some of them have really realised the unbalance of the skills. They are much better at writing than at oral communication. So they are really going to work at this more.

Q6. Reflectivity – what has reflective practice in terms of planning, monitoring and evaluating learning as supported by the ELP contributed to the learning process in your classroom?
Reflective practice is generally very useful for those who are interested, for those who are mature enough. For others it might be confusing or they feel it’s not getting down to the business of learning. They are not used to this talking about learning. It made them think again about what strategies they use for learning. This is something I would be particularly interested in, what strategies can we use for progressing better.

Q7. Has the ELP helped your learners to take an increasing level of responsibility for their own learning?
Yes, and more self-confidence. It would if it was introduced early and over a long period of time. I think the way we did it for the few months is not enough really.

Q8. Language acquisition – what does the concept of authentic language use mean in the context of your own teaching?
For me, it’s fairly straightforward, I am a native speaker of both languages especially French. So I put them in a linguistic bath of the language, from the moment we come in we speak only French. Sometimes with weaker classes I will need to explain some grammar points or some details in English. I always monitor to see if they understand or not from their face or their body behaviour etc.

Q10. How has the ELP supported the development of target language proficiency in your class?
Some of them found the pages of the biography a bit confusing, too difficult to handle, the language a bit too abstract, so if I say to them what would you like to do now (in French) that’s clearer to them than what was in the biography. It’s more immediate and less formal.

Q11. Has the ELP helped you to develop your own understanding of the concept of literacy in what literacy might mean?
For me literacy is a very wide ranging term. You have all kinds of literacies. If you talk about cultural literacy, it’s something that I have always done. Linguistic – specific proficiency also comes natural. Literacy about learning – learning how to learn is something that is interesting and that could be developed through the ELP. It’s something that is very much dovetailing into the Leaving Cert and Junior Cert syllabus nowadays, very much critical thinking and critical skills and self-analysis comes into that. In that way the ELP could be interesting.

Patrick Farren: Has the ELP helped your learners to enrich and develop their understanding of literacy?
I don’t know if it has. It has given them a tool for assessment and organisation and maybe reflection
but I think they are fairly good versed of what learning a language is about, about what literacy is about.

Patrick Farren: Has it helped them to develop their understanding of language as a means of relating to the world outside? Of developing and articulating their thoughts and feelings and attitudes in various media towards a relationship with the society around them? For them, some of them saw it as a very bureaucratic tool. Some others saw it as something they could reflect on and they could really think about their own learning. In that way you could say that it would improve their literacy. I think that I would generally have a big cultural input into the classrooms anyway.

Q9. Did the learners make use of the target language in planning, monitoring and evaluating their own learning?
Yes, in most cases.

Q12. Was the process of using the target language helpful in terms of developing their language proficiency?
We didn’t use it over a long enough period to know if it has actually improved their proficiency. They might have got in a few new words but to know if it has improved overall their linguistic proficiency it is too early to judge.

Patrick Farren: What about the use of the target language in tasks and in problem solving and in activities – would you find that was helpful in developing their language proficiency? You see, I would always insist that they would use only the target language. It is difficult to implement but this is my methodology. When they do group work or pair-work I hear words of English so I go over and I say … it’s not through the ELP that we got into it.

Q13. In light of your experience in using the ELP in the classroom what modifications, if any, would you like to make to the design, structure, contents of the ELP?
It would be best to ask the students but I would keep to one language on the page of the biographies. Just keep to the French and make it simpler, the statements simpler. The checklists are fairly straightforward, they are fine I think they could stay the way they are. The dossier is very interesting but they could be given more examples because it’s fine if the teacher knows how to go about learning strategies but they could be given more examples about what they ought to put into it.

Part II

Q14. A student-centered approach – in the context of your own learning with the ELP, what does the concept of autonomy or autonomous teaching mean to you?
To me as a learner-teacher, at this stage autonomy, I'm a mature student so it probably comes naturally. I'm too autonomous or too individual! What I am interested in is autonomy in partnership within groups, sharing of ideas. I don't want autonomy to mean individualised learning.. You can't learn on your own, I think.

Q15. How has working with the ELP in the post primary class helped you in your learning as a student teacher?
A little bit. In formalising my little learning strategies, in making them clear to students. Also usually I wouldn't take that much time in a class on reflection so it made me take more time on this aspect of learning.

Q16. Student teacher empowerment – in using the ELP have you found that by negotiating and dialoguing with your learners that your own understanding of the concept of teaching has grown?
To tell you the truth my concept of teaching has changed, I don't know if it has grown it has changed in positive and in negative ways. Yes, you can negotiate tasks to a certain extent with the university lecturing. I have done you could do it to a certain extent and then with big lectures you couldn't. In the small class you can but there's other problems of management. So, teaching doesn't only mean transmission of a skill or knowledge or the sharing of a passion but it's also management.

Q17. How has the ELP supported you in dialoguing with your supervisor?
We haven't talked that much about it. Within the classes we worked a lot on it, I would hope that in my Teaching File it would reflect to a certain extent that I am a reflective teacher, that I think about what I do and that I change what I do if it doesn't work.

Q18. Has teaching with the ELP helped you to take an increasing level of responsibility for your own teaching?
I think the teacher is always fully responsible for what happens with the teaching, not totally responsible with what happens with the learning, there's a give and take there.

Patrick Farren: So has the ELP helped you as a tool to take an increasing level of responsibility for your own teaching? Maybe not relying heavily on text book but making you more ... ?
I have never relied on textbooks and I couldn't rely on textbooks when I had classes once a week.
Autonomy I have always looked for my own materials. What I would find is collaborative work – that we would decide together what your goals are rather than me just saying 'this is what we have to do'.

Q19. What has reflective practice, as envisaged by the ELP, what has the ELP contributed to your language learning in the language semester course?
Well it was a very good course. The ELP was interesting in the way that I could self-assess myself which is interesting for me because I have natural language skills but I have never had academic qualifications. So in that way I could point out my exact level in different skills are. Secondly it did
make me set targets and I listed out all the different resources I have used and it showed me I was very much a literary person. It didn’t show me anything that I didn’t know but it confirmed my learning style.

Q20. Language acquisition – what does the concept of authentic language use mean in terms of the semester course that you did?
She was great. We spoke only Spanish. There was a variety of levels so some of us could explain to others or to ask to others if there was problems. We even spoke Spanish before we entered the class etc. So there was no question of the target language being used or not. All our assignments with her were related to that.

Patrick Farren: Did you use the target language as a medium of communication?
Yes.

Patrick Farren: Did you also use it (the target language) as a way of reflecting on your learning like planning and monitoring?
Yes, at the beginning of the year we discussed what we would do with the course. This was in Spanish of course. We discussed how we were progressing, she gave us feedback, we gave her feedback.

Patrick Farren: Did you find that reflective practice and language use, in terms of communication in tasks, did you find that using it in both was useful in developing your proficiency?
Yes, but we are at university level where we have no comprehension problems.

Patrick Farren: How would the concept of learning with the ELP in the semester course, would that have enriched your concept of literacy?
I would know that it involves all of the being, relating in a foreign language involves all of you, it doesn’t only involve the linguistic abilities it involves the emotional, the cultural, the social, the identity, everything, so this is not something new for me really.

Q21. And what has reflective practice, in the context of the Teaching Practice File that you develop as part of your teaching on the H Dip, what has reflective practice contributed to your learning as a teacher?
I have included ELP schemes and I have changed them as the year went on because what you are planning to do and what you are doing is not the same. I think that would be the normal process idea of the ELP. The reflective practice I found that I lacked time in writing a full assessment or evaluation after every class. I mark myself out of five in eight different headings. This is how I have always done it. Then when I have time during the holidays I write a review of what I have done over this term and how it went and what problems I had. That was fairly useful. It is sometimes hard to assess yourself. I would say this and this happened and I reacted like this and I think I did well. Somebody else might think that I didn’t. The students themselves might think that I didn’t react very appropriately. I realised that I had a fairly high tolerance, that I work on an equal standing, I don’t work on the authoritarian
role model which is fine if the class is mature enough. Sometimes the class needs strong management or very clear ‘do’s’ and ‘don’t’. And this is not something that I believe in. The system is not developing in the student this maturity and this sense of themselves that I would like them to have.

Q22. Has learning in the Methodologies course helped you to understand the ELP, the use of the ELP?
Yes, it was fairly clear from the beginning for me, and also we went over it. I really didn’t find it a problem to get a grasp on.

Q23. Have you any comments that you would like to make about ELP or your experience of using it or any other comments?
It needs to assess and evaluate what good or positive aspects and negative aspects it has with respect to learning and teaching. I think it needs a longer time of implementation. It has to be given at the beginning of the course or the teacher who introduces it into that classroom has to do it in the beginning of the year. Then it becomes natural. Then you develop habits relating to it. We didn’t have the time to develop habits in my class. I saw them once a week. We would generally fill in the ELP and fill in the checklist, but you would need the full year.

Q24. Did you work with the ELP in cooperation with another teacher?
My teacher is using a modified one with non English speakers. A simplified one and I find it very nice.

Patrick Farren: Thanks very much.

Interview with George
May 2004
Part I

Q1. Can you describe for me the context of the school you are teaching in?
I was working in ( ) and I was teaching first years and a fifth year in class, well first year of their Leaving Cert. Not the most highly motivated of students, some discipline problems as well. An all boys school.

Q2. A learner-centered approach – can you explain what your understanding of a learner-centered approach would mean?
It’s basically getting the students to see that they are responsible for their own learning instead of expecting the teacher to be teaching them and they learn what the teacher teaches them. Trying to get them to start getting an interest in learning the language themselves. Trying to find an interest, that it’s
useful, they can do it. All of those aspects. It starts to make it more personal with them. They have a relationship with it as opposed to being another subject on the curriculum which has absolutely no relevance to them.

Q3. And how in using the ELP have your students benefited from this?

I used in late in the year. I only used it in one of my classes. My co-teacher, my mentor teacher used it herself. I didn’t go into how she was using it. I kept apart from that. I was revising their aural work. Because it’s one of the failings that these students have is that they have no self-confidence about speaking, about language in general. I used the check-list and we went through certain aspects. They went over firstly what they could do and they thought ‘well I can actually do something’. Whereas if you asked them they would have said that they no nothing. From a motivational point of view it was good. I used levels A1 and A2 even though they were Leaving Cert they were very low linguistically. Then I went through some basic conversation that they’d need for the oral work and then we went over it at the end where we can see did we make any progress and what progress did we make.

Q4. In terms of the project that you developed as part of your methodologies assessment, could you outline that for us?

Well it was...basically, what I just told you.

Q5. In terms of autonomous learning, have you found that dialoguing and negotiating with your learners has made language more appealing to them?

I only used it for four or five lessons so I can only speak theoretically on it.

Patrick Farren: What other effects have you noticed that this process has on them – interacting with you and the learner?

I can only speak theoretically on it, I can’t speak in terms of how it actually worked.

Q6. In terms of reflective practice in getting the learners to plan and to monitor and self-assess – has that contributed to the learning process in your classroom?

Again, unfortunately, I only had a small section of work with them. But certainly it would do. Apart from anything else just to introduce them to the idea of learning and study skills, which is part of the ELP. And those are two concepts which are pretty foreign to them in relation to any subject.

Q7. Do you think, in so far as you have used it, do you think that it did help them to take some responsibility for their own learning?

Well, what I would say is, yes, what it did, using the checklist, it broke down the macro tasks if you want to be able to speak, in to smaller do-able tasks. And then they could actually say ‘well I can do that’. Even with the weaker students there was a degree of motivation which they hadn’t had prior to using it.
Q10. In terms of the language use, do you think that the process was beneficial to the oral, aural area?
I do, yes. I explained from the outset ‘this is what we will be doing, we are going to see what we know now and what we know at the end’. They could also say that there was no testing involved. If they are interested they will do well and if they are not they won’t. So that put the ball back in their court, if you are not paying attention then you are not going to get anywhere are you? It gave them a focus and they knew what they were doing in each lesson and they could see definite progress over a short period of time. I found that a very useful way of using it.

Q11. Do you think that that has any relationship with literacy development?
I do.

Patrick Farren: Do you think it widened your concept of literacy?
A positive goal from it I saw was that the students became aware that they could actually do. They started to learn the concept that there are different parts to language learning really – the four basic skills for instance. And you can have different degrees of competence in each of them. But there is no such notion as, get away from the black and white ‘I can’ or ‘I can’t’. There’s a whole grey area between being absolutely fluent and being born in a country and never coming across the language at all. So, I think it gave them a wider sense of what language learning is and how they fit into it. And I think by the end of the six weeks, if you had asked them at the beginning of the six weeks ‘do you know how …?’ ‘Oh, rubbish I can’t speak French, sir.’ But if you had asked them after the six lessons they would have a far greater knowledge that they could do something.

Q9. Did the learners make use of the target language in planning or monitoring or assessing?
No, their language level is very, very low.

Q13. What modifications, if any, would you like to see made to the design, structure, contents of the ELP?
The presentation. I have no problem with the concepts or how it is set out. And looking at it I think it’s an excellent piece of work. But I don’t think it’s very immediately appealing to students. And when you are talking about students who are very weak anyhow when they are faced with a document like the ELP which looks a serious piece of work. I mean this looks like university level as far as they are concerned. They are not going to be able to read it, to grasp it. There should be various forms of it for different kids as well. Visuals, pictures as we do in the best modern texts now.

Patrick Farren; What about the language itself?
I would have to say to start breaking it down and not put so much information in it. A lot of this information is more for the teacher or for the high level learner. Someone who is sixteen, seventeen and seriously involved in it but not for the twelve and thirteen year olds.
Q14. In the context of your own learning with the ELP what does the concept of autonomous teaching mean for you?

It introduced me to a language learning tool which I hadn’t used before and which I will certainly be using again.

Patrick Farren: What autonomous learning would have meant for you in the context of the semester language class?
We didn’t use the ELP in that class.

Q15. Has working with the ELP in the post primary class helped you in your own learning as a student teacher?
It introduced me to a very valuable tool which I didn’t have before and I can certainly see myself using it again, in the classroom. But I would have to introduce it from the very beginning in first year rather than giving it to kids who are already sick to death of school.

Q16. Have you found that negotiating and dialoguing with your learners that your own understanding of the concept of teaching has grown as a result of using the ELP in any way?
I think so, yes, but I’d be hard put to say exactly how. It does make the concept of language learning – I am well aware that there are a whole lot of competencies which you can achieve. But to see the effect of this on the students themselves where they are made aware of the whole notion of language learning as opposed to learning maths and geography, it’s a slightly different ballgame we are talking about here.

Patrick Farren: That has helped your own understanding has it?
Yes, through seeing how they are reacting to some of the parts of the ELP I get a clear understanding. I think it is definitely going to help my teaching.

Q17. In terms of your dialoguing with your supervisor, has the ELP been a useful tool in that context?
Possibly, theoretically, but I only introduced it late in my teaching practice.

Q18. Do you think the ELP itself got you to take an increasing level of responsibility for your own teaching?
Yes, I do, and specifically it helps you clearly and simply to move away from the textbook, which is always something which is always a bit tricky for teachers. Because you know there is a certain syllabus that has to be achieved etc. etc. and it is a steady base. I can see that it has given me
guidelines that I can move away from it safely and then come back to it. It has given it a format where you can make it work easier. For instance that they have a folder for the dossier work.

Q19. In terms of the Teaching Practice File – what has that contributed to your learning as a teacher? It has made me have to think all the time about what is actually going on in the classroom. That’s the bottom line really.

Patrick Farren: The reflective essays that you wrote as part of your teaching practice file, do you think that they helped you in any way to develop as a teacher?

Yes, definitely. I am all for some degree of reflection on it otherwise you become some sort of a mish mash, maybe there are things going on that you don’t know at all. It’s good for you to set down your thoughts even if it’s only for a few sentences. You can get closure on it. You don’t want to carry over problems if you have any. I mean there are always problems with teaching but you don’t want to keep them with you, you want to get rid of them somehow. See what it is, how can I go about it and then gone. So writing them down helps. It makes it clear to you. They might have been just nagging things in your head but they would be unformulated, they would be unclear.

Q23. Have you any comments that you would like to make about the ELP that you haven’t made already?
I was very pleased to see that it exists. I hadn’t come across the notion of it before and it’s the best language teaching initiative I have seen come out in Europe since I have been teaching languages. I like the way it’s European wide and you are introducing the students to the notion that we are part of a wider framework as opposed to being an isolated language. When the students realise that this is being used by other students in France, Germany, Spain, that gives you a feeling of not feeling so separate.

Q21. Did you work with your mentor teacher in that class or were you separate?
We were separate.

Patrick Farren: Did you find it useful that there was another teacher in the school who was aware of what the portfolio was about?
Yes.

Patrick Farren: How would that have worked in terms of interaction with the mentor teacher? Well, there wasn’t too much interaction.

Interviewer: Thanks.
Year 2
Interview with Elizabeth
May 2005

Q1. It’s a semi structured interview in the context of the European Language Portfolio. Maybe, just to clarify things, introduce yourself, your name, the school you teach in and something of your teaching experience, if you have. If you’d like to do that and then I’ll start.

My name is Linda Monaghan. I’m teaching in ( ). I am teaching first years and second years as part of my H. Dip. My other teaching experience would be mostly teaching English as a foreign language, so teaching abroad.

Patrick Farren: Would you have many years teaching experience, Linda?

Well about one full time and one part time.

Q2. In terms of the learner-centered approach using the European Language Portfolio…learner-centered approach, what do you understand by a learner centered approach, first of all, just to clarify the concept?

Well, putting, basically, the work in to the hands of the learner, where the teacher is more the facilitator rather than the person who is dictating the whole time. I’d see it as getting the class to be more involved, in getting the class to do more, rather than the teacher and for the teacher more to be a guide rather than a leader as such.

Q3. That’s interesting. And would you say how, just could you point to some way how your students would have benefited from the approach?

Well, it keeps them focused and it gives them short term goals because sometimes the goals are aiming for are long term, junior cert let’s say, and that doesn’t have much significance to a twelve or thirteen year old. But if you bring the goals closer and make them smaller and more reachable it, in some of their minds, it makes it easier for them. And it also just gives them a sense of direction and a time frame for everything because they know, for example we are doing a particular unit and that we have aimed, we are aiming to do a certain amount in a certain amount of time.

Q4. Could you outline the project you developed as part of the H.Dip., maybe, the assessment project that you did?

For modern languages?

Patrick Farren: Modern languages, yeah.

Well, I chose to do French, I chose French but I also teach German so, I mean modern languages is my field completely, I don’t have anything else. I chose French just because it came into my head, I could have easily have chosen German and adapted, obviously, the material to suit a German class. The reason I chose health as well was because there was a student in the class I teach who was out with pneumonia, and I just thought this is something that has a little connection with them. And I chose,
normally it (health) would be a second year topic, but I did it with a first year class because they are a strong group and I knew they would be able for it. Because I have been teaching them all year and I adapted it a little bit to suit a first year class, rather than second year. For example, I didn’t do the passé compose, and little bits that were adjusted and, again we’ll say, could be used for a second year if it was built up a little bit, maybe more grammar and that kind of thing.

Q5. In using the approach that you just outlined, linking it with the European Language Portfolio, negotiating and dialoguing with learners about the aims you mentioned and content and activities, did you find that that made the learning appealing to them? Did it help them? Did it motivate them?

I don’t know if I’d say appealing because, well it depends on the students, some of them don’t have maybe much heed in languages, others are really, you know, really interested. Already you can see some of them that will even go on, maybe, to study languages. But it certainly gave them, it made it more manageable for them and even for the weaker ones, who could see no relevance, it gave them some relevancy. And, obviously, for the stronger ones, it increased their interest and, you know, their motivation.

Q6. Talking about reflective practice, as supported by the ELP, how would you say that that has contributed to the learning process in the learning in the classroom?

Well, it makes, it makes the students more responsible and, especially first years, they are coming from national school and they are very much teacher, teacher. They ask the teacher everything where, sometimes, if you put the question back to them, it’s a lot more beneficial than always telling them what they are doing wrong or what they are doing right. For example, if you ask a student, you know they didn’t succeed in whatever their goal was, and if you ask them why rather than telling them why, it may make the next time, it may make them think of it themselves. Because otherwise, it seems like, you know, we are giving out, whereas if they think of it themselves it means more to them.

Patrick Farren: Could you point to any evidence in the use you made of the ELP that would show the learner how, you know, what you say has actually happened? Is there anything that you could point to in what did they did?

Well, let’s say when, at the start of a unit, I would ask the class to, you know sort of, predict almost what they think we are going to be doing in this unit, maybe by putting a question on the board or a word or something that would indicate what topic we are doing. Then we would do our aims and write them down as a group and then it, when I see, maybe, a couple of weeks down the line, a student who is ticking off and they have ticked off their ‘can do’ list before we’ve done it as a group and they’re comparing each others and asking each other “Can you do this?” I think that shows that they’ve more of a genuine interest coming from themselves rather than from the teacher.
Patrick Farren: Could you tell us something about the dossier, for example, I was thinking. Is there any kind of, you know some people have material that the learner actually produced, how did you find them at that?

Well, the way I, what I did was that I use a scrapbook. I used it with this class, the first year class, and I used it as well with the German class but that wasn’t, we’ll say, directly connected with the ELP. And I just found that, when they were, the scrapbook was their own and from day one I never told them what to put into it. I mean, I told them we have a topic, you know ‘la famille’, ‘l’école’, whatever, but I never said “You have to do this, this and this.” I just always gave them a general topic and gave them the control. And, at the beginning, there was, you know, some that were a little bit lazy about it and they wouldn’t put in the effort and they would be asking me “Is that ok?” and I’d just put the question back to them “Well, is it ok with you?” and often you’d find they’d say “No.” and they would go back and work on it. Whereas if I went around ticking this ‘x’ here ‘x’ there, I know well that that would be the end of it but I left it up to them and they improved as time went on. Plus, there was a little bit of competition amongst themselves. They got ideas from each other, you know little things, and it just, I mean they thought of things that I wouldn’t think of doing. So it was all about them, what they wanted to put in. So it’s all about, you know, they decide the effort.

Patrick Farren: Could you give me an example of some, sort of, how it would look, Linda?

Well, we started, first of all, obviously I had to get everyone to get a scrapbook and I leave them in school a lot of the time. They don’t have to bring them home much except every now and again when I have looked at them and they might have little bits to catch up on, they bring them home. So there’s not, there’s not homework as such to be done in it. Then we started off with, in French, with ‘moi-meme,’ just a little bit about themselves, because they knew a lot of this stuff from earlier on, from the beginning of the year, or the basic stuff that we did. Fair enough they obviously, they only had sort of simple sentences: their name, their age and all that. So I told them that they could have really themselves, that they could draw a picture or that they could have a photograph, or they could cut out a picture of a famous person and pretend it’s them. So they, sort of, had the leeway themselves and then they just write in sentences about themselves. Sometimes, they’d ask how to say, how do you say something and I’d put in on the board. And they use their fancy pens and it’s all ...
Q8. Just moving on from that because it’s kind of related to the concept of target language use in the meaning of your teaching practice, maybe you could describe what the concept of authentic target language, target language use, what that means, for you, in your classroom teaching and learning?

Well, it just means that it’s making the language real, it’s showing, I mean I’m teaching French so why should I teach it through English? And I, in the first year classes I have, I’ve two different levels. I mean one of the classes will be, probably, A level and then there’s a C, we’ll say. I mean they are streamed a certain amount and it does, for the weaker class, it does make using the target language a little bit more of a challenge, and I would, we’ll say, repeat a lot more in English. But the way I use it is, I don’t, it’s not just the language, I’d use gestures and I use objects when I say a word. It just, I mean when they see me speaking and they hear me speaking, they are learning, first of all from the sounds and from what I am saying. Plus, it shows them that I actually, you know, I know what I am talking about and, I think, I mean there is no other way to teach a language.

Patrick Farren: Just probing a little bit in that area, the concept of literacy, how would you relate that to their development of literacy?

Well, in French? Well, I mean, there’s problems because some of, in the weaker class some of them have problems with English language, first of all. We’ll say there’s one who is border-line, I mean really he should be getting assistance, but he’s just above the mark, where he’s not. So, I mean, they have problems with English so … (pauses)

Q12 (b). Would you have found that your approach would actually help them to take sort of ownership of their own learning of the language, in terms of trying to put meanings on what they thought was important in their world? And trying to name their world?

Yeah, that definitely makes the language more relevant. I mean I try to relate it to what they know and I try to link it to things that they already know. Rather than giving them a totally different concept.

Patrick Farren: Would that have helped you, I’ll come back to that later, but would that have helped you to actually think out what literacy meant for your classroom, for your learners, as you engaged in that process?

To be honest, it’s probably not something I would have, sort of, stopped and thought about.

Q10. The other one, target language proficiency, do you think that that helped them to develop target language proficiency using that concept of the European Language Portfolio and what you were saying?

Well, it does because, well using the target language, obviously, they are learning with it. And they are learning everyday things that they will need. Like I, everyday terms that you’d have, from walking
into a classroom and walking out, all the terms in between. They are common phrases and they are connected to the student’s life, as such, you know they are relevant to them.

Q9. I’m just interested in moving forward on that that you were saying about planning aims and so on and I was thinking about that aspect and the development of autonomy, learner autonomy. Have your learners made use of the target language in reflecting or planning out or self assessing?

Well, we do, we’ll say, their vocabulary is still quite limited, but often what we always write the aims in French but often it’s myself that would be, we’d say, putting them down. We’ll say, they wouldn’t be able to construct sentences to outline aims and objectives but they would know, we’ll say, vocabulary and, you know, if they give me one word I can build from that. And I always use the whole class rather than the person who has suggested that aim. You know they say what they want, the outline of it and the rest of the class would help make the sentence. But I would, it would be me, we’ll say, using more French there.

Patrick Farren: Just thinking, Linda, about self-assessment in relation to, I think you mentioned ‘can do’ statements. I’m just thinking about that. Maybe you could talk about that a little bit, where that fitted in?

A lot of the ‘can do’ statements would be based on the aims that would be outlined right at the start of a unit. It’s something that they can keep track of in their scrapbooks as well and, for first years, that’s good because they are still very much, they like to show what they’ve done. They like to show each other as well and when they can list off what they can do what they couldn’t do three weeks previously, it encourages them. Even the weaker ones, they can do this aim, although it may not be as good as the next person beside them, they can still do it. And it gives them a little bit of hope, as such, when, you know, they may have negative attitudes, that they are bad at languages, but they actually, you can, without convincing them yourself they convince themselves that they are actually capable.

Q13. Now, in light of your experience of using the ELP, what modifications would you like, Linda, to have made to the design, to the structure or the contents or any other aspect of the ELP in your use? The actual paperwork itself, the concept, I think works, the idea behind it, of setting aims and objectives and self-assessment, ‘can do’ statements, the idea of the ‘scrapbook’ containing all their work, is definitely, can definitely work, but the actual material is too heavy for first years. The particular class I had, they were weak, if I had seen it maybe with a stronger first year class, but I still think that even in a strong class there’s going to be people too weak to grasp, you know, what they are asking for. And it’s more to be introduced orally and, rather than handing them, sort of, paperwork.

This time more focused on your learning. In the context of your own learning with the ELP, and so on,
Part 2

Q14. What does the concept of autonomous teaching mean to you, as a teacher developing your teacher autonomy?

I suppose it means that I have to change strategies that would have been used on me, as such, when I was a pupil. I am sure learner autonomy was coming into language learning at that stage but it may not have been in practice as much as it should have been. So I have to just be conscious the whole time of how much I’m doing and how much the student is doing because it’s very easy for the teacher to do everything and the student to listen to everything and take down everything. So I have to make more of an effort to put the activity back on to the student and, as a student teacher and as a teacher beginning off, that means sometimes, the classroom can get chaotic and it can be a little bit daunting if you have a boisterous group as such. But that’s something you have to get used to, that, you know, just because there’s movement and talk going on there still can be learning going on. So it’s something you have to get used to I think.

Q15. So, in terms of your own student teacher empowerment and involving yourself in the learning as a teacher, has working with the ELP in the post primary class helped you in your own learning as a student teacher?

Well, I mean as a language teacher, I, obviously, have to keep learning myself because languages are always changing. So, I mean, a teacher always has to keep learning themselves. Even ideas that I can use for my own learning, you know, for setting goals, and then, you know, my ‘can do’ lists, as such you know. Even that is useful to me as a teacher, to keep up my knowledge in the language.

Q16. And have you found that, by negotiating and dialoguing with your learners, that your own understanding of teaching, you know, involving that process, has grown, and what teaching means?

It has because, by talking to students, you learn what they, how they see things and how they learn and then that can be adapted into, you know, future things, how you do things later on. You know, what kind of activities and by talking to students and asking them what they liked and what they didn’t like and why you can, you know, tailor it more to suit a certain class.

Q17. And then, in your own learning, in conjunction we’ll say with the supervisor, would you have found that that was helpful when you were discussing it?

It was helpful. Often, it was difficult though because this class, I only have them once a week. It’s only a thirty minute class so there were times when, I mean (my mentor) he’s been a great help. Often though we’d say something would have to be done and in thirty minutes my priority would really would have been to do, because he’s my mentor teacher at the end of the day, I mean it’s his class that I’m taking over. We have to sort of go along to a certain degree with what they say. Although (my mentor) has given me 95% leeway as to what I can do in that class.

Q18. So, the other one, it’s related to that...has the ELP and that process helped you in taking an increasing amount of responsibility for you own teaching?
Well, it has. I think, I’m not sure, maybe it’s the school I’m in but the mentor teachers give us a lot of responsibility. But I think it’s probably the mentor teachers that I happen to have, they give me, you know, the opportunity, to do what I want to do and then they are available if I need them for advice or suggestions or maybe their opinion. But, in general, yeah I would have, I mean the responsibility would have been to me, so that’s been good for me to develop my own ...

Q19./Q21. So what has reflective practice, as envisaged by the ELP, contributed to your own learning in terms of reflective practices as a student teacher? You know, in terms of the European Language Portfolio as you work with students and the Teaching and Learning Portfolio, how would that work? I mean this year has involved a huge amount of reflection, as such, and it’s always, it’s important in the sense that sometimes you’d let something go by without actually thinking why it happened and what it meant and, even just by writing it down, well I write it down I don’t know how other people work. It just, sometimes, it helps things become clearer and it makes certain things obvious, maybe why something went wrong or why something worked really well with one class and not with another class. It just makes you more aware of the classroom and what’s going on.

Q20. In terms of language use, concept of language acquisition – what has that meant for you in the context of your semester target language course with your French teacher, Sylvie?

Patrick Farren: Yeah, how would that, I suppose, how would you have developed your target language, your own proficiency in French? I take it you went to the French?

I did, yeah.

Patrick Farren: Just wondering how that would have developed your target language proficiency in French?

Well, I think my target language proficiency would be quite good anyway but that just helped, I suppose, keep it fresh and, I mean, we discussed issues that we may not have discussed ever before in the French language, you know, to do with education and that. But, really it was just to keep it fresh in my mind, but to be honest I was using French anyway everyday in school.

Patrick Farren: And has the learning, with the help of the portfolio ELP, in this semester language course, that concept, has that helped you to develop your own, I suppose, reflective practice as a teacher and language proficiency?

Has the ELP itself?

Patrick Farren: Yeah, in the context of the semester course really, that kind of notion of the European Language Portfolio in classroom practice?

Has that … sorry?

Patrick Farren: It’s not very clear, sorry, sometimes, has learning with the ELP supported you in developing your own language proficiency?
Again, it’s the concept behind it that I think would have developed, not, but definitely the concept would have because, when I, it just basically gives me a focus as well when I outline what I have to do. Why I have to do it and then I do it. So that would help me, would have certainly helped me. The actual ELP, again, I didn’t actually fill it in or anything myself but I used the theory behind it.

Q22. Now, we have talked about learning. On the other hand, has learning on the methodologies course helped you to understand the process of developing learner autonomy and teacher autonomy?
Yeah, it has, well I mean, we learn the theory as such, in methodology, and then, we, myself I went out and did the practice. And I think the practice is more important than the theory as you can get caught up in the waffle and the terms, but really you have to go out and do it because it may not work. You know, it might work with one class but it mightn’t work with another and, so really, you probably learn more by actually doing it.

Q23. Now have you any other comments that you would like to make about your own teaching and learning and the Portfolio in your experience of using it?
I think it would, I mean I would learn a lot for myself if I did it with a class that I had full time, you know, four or five times a week. Because that means I would have them from the start of the lesson right through, following my own lesson plans and then, at the end, the aims and that. And I’d probably be finding out myself along the way why they succeeded in certain aspects and not in others. Whereas, if a certain aspect was done with another teacher, I couldn’t really help the student find out, you know, why they did well in something and why not in something else.

That’s fine. Thanks very much. I really appreciate that.

Interview with Laura
May 2005
Part 1
This is a semi-structured interview and the first part is teaching and learning in the context of post-primary school and then the second part will be teaching and learning in the context of the H. Dip programme itself. So you can be quite free and open. Now, as you know this is an interview. It’s to do with, basically your work in school and also your work in the methodologies and semester course language classes. Your work on the H. Dip. So there are two parts to the interview. It’s a semi-structured interview and the first one is teaching and learning in the context of post-primary school and then the second part will be teaching and learning in the context of the H.Dip. programme itself.

Q1. So, the first one, maybe you could just outline the school and the classroom context in which you have worked, Siobhan.
Ok I worked in an all boys' secondary school. I taught two groups of first years, mixed ability, one stronger than the other. Mixed ability fifth year but generally quite highly motivated and an extremely weak sixth year.

Q2. With respect to your teaching approach and using the ELP, or the European Language Portfolio, what do you think autonomous learning, developing learner autonomy, has contributed to your helping your learners?

Well, I suppose, they are becoming more independent in looking for information for themselves rather than always coming to the or to the dictionary. We're using more from what they know already. Their experiences in guessing things and to be able to come up with meaning themselves and explore that further.

Q3. Could you tell us, in terms of the learner empowerment, how you would help your learners to engage in that process?

Well, for example, setting objectives. A brainstorm on what would they think they might need to know in a particular situation and that produced a list of objectives on which we worked for a unit. So that was, kind of, empowering them to setting their targets and things like that. Empowering them ... to think off the top of their head ...

Q5. In using the ELP have you found that negotiating and dialoguing with learners about the aims, the content, activities has made learning appealing to them, would you think? Or how has it worked for them?

Certainly, they feel more involved when they are, when there is some negotiation but, I think, as a trainee there is a limit to the amount of negotiation you can control in the classroom or handle. And I think that comes with experience and I don't think ELP works for trainees, if you have a lot of negotiation I just don't have the skill to keep it under control...very structured.

Patrick Farren: Would you have tried to engage them in thinking about what the aims were and what activities would match that?

Yeah, as I said, what would they need to know.

Q4. Could you outline for us, just briefly Siobhan, the project that you developed as part of the formative assessment process?

Yeah, it was a unit on food. We began by brainstorming. There was a child in the class who was going to Paris the following week, so what would Robert need to know if he was to survive, in terms of food. He'd need to know how to order this, or he'd need to know how to say this and so we kind of established learning objectives like that. And then I used a few different media, I didn't have ICT but, I mean, I had flash cards and they designed their own posters and their own menu, for example, the
way I put it was “If you were on death row or if this was your last meal” because, you know, the guys were in to more gorey details, so I said “What kind of menu would you create?”.

Patrick Farren: In terms of the assessment process, how would that have worked for you in that context?
A lot of questioning and answering during class. I did have aural and written assessment at the very end of the unit as well. I did try to ask them, at intervals over the few weeks, what did they think they had learnt by this stage and what did they think they needed to learn. And they found that very hard to articulate, very hard, in the context of the ELP language and everything.

Patrick Farren: So how did you overcome that problem in terms of helping them? Did you help them to assess their own learning?
I don’t think I did as much as, maybe, was needed. I think they needed more direction than I gave. I assumed that they were at an English level that, I mean I did the questions, actually, in English not in their target language.

Q9. Do you think it would have been useful to engage them in reflecting in the target language to some extent?
I think they find it difficult to reflect in their own language. I think they need ... I think the target language, I’m not sure what extra they would get.

Patrick Farren: What year now are we talking about?
First year.

Patrick Farren: We are talking about first year. So they need to be done, kind of ... Very piecemeal, very yeah didactic, I think, to be able to put down on paper the thoughts the ELP require.

Patrick Farren: So when you are talking about assessment, how would that have worked for you in the project? How would you have assessed them in terms of your assessment project?

As I said, there was a terminal assessment, so written and aural. But at various stages throughout every lesson there were exercises to see had they understood the dialogue.

Q6. What has reflective practice, as supported by the ELP, contributed to the learning process in your classroom? Reflective practice?
I suppose it has given them confidence to believe that they have skills that they can research things themselves. They have some power within themselves and they mightn’t have realised that they were able to do something, but if you put it in words, you know, they said “I can actually do that.”
Q7. In terms of the context of the ELP has it helped your learners, do you think, to take an increasing level of responsibility for their learning in that sense?
Honestly, I didn’t do...I don’t think....I think they needed more instruction than I gave. So it didn’t really work in that sense for me. I think they were responsible and enjoyed creating things for their dossier, for which they were responsible. You know, they wanted to make it nicely presentable and things like that.
Patrick Farren: So they were able to see their own?
Yeah, yeah.

Q8. In terms of target language use, authentic language use, what would that mean in the context of your teaching?
It would mean giving classroom instructions in target language and expecting answers back in target language, is one thing. I would probably use target language in conjunction with hand movements, visual images and mime and things, so to avoid having to use English. But at a beginner level English is inevitable. You know, you can’t just have it all, I found anyway, even ...

Q10. Has the ELP supported the development of target language proficiency in your classroom?
The ELP in particular, I wouldn’t think so, no.

Patrick Farren: How about the concepts of ...planning activities, checking how they are progressing and assessing?
In terms of planning activities, I think I was more aware, during the project, of bringing cultural and linguistic and communication objectives together within one lesson, more than I was in previous, before I looked at ELP. I was trying to get the whole picture across in one lesson, tried as much as I could and sometimes I was too ambitious in my aims for the class.

Q11. In terms of literacy development, what role do you think the ELP played for you and your learners?
Well, it was a very practical. I mean when you are creating your role play about ordering from somebody’s personal menu, that’s making it very practical and personal and meaningful. Using their own material rather than looking at a menu from a textbook we used their menus in our restaurant and then we had a garçon and that was quite meaningful.

So could you tell us something about target language use and how you, the role that that played in your classroom? On a typical day how you would have tried to develop target language use among your learners?
As I said, classroom instruction was definitely one, any handouts or material I would always have the
target language only on it accompanied with lots of visual images. And then, obviously, the use of the
tape, the cassette to listen as well.

Q12. And did you find that using the target language in that way helped the learners to develop
proficiency?

Definitely, the more exposure you have to it the more they develop.

Patrick Farren: Are there any examples you could give that would sort of be as evidence of that? Is
there anything that you can point to

in your practice?

For example, playing the tape, instead of saying “I will play three times.” At the end of the first
listening I will say “Facile” and I will raise my thumb “Facile” and I will put down my thumb
“Difficile” and I’ll get an answer and I’ve taught them ‘encore’ and ‘ça va’. So instead of saying “I
will play it three times.” They tell me ‘encore’ or ‘ça va’.

Patrick Farren: So they are beginning to use the language in the way they communicating their
messages. What aspect do you think writing played in that, in the target language use?

What aspect did it play? Do you want examples?

Patrick Farren: What role would writing have played in developing target language proficiency?
In the context of that particular unit, the writing they would have done. We didn’t emphasise too much
grammar but we did do some grammar, very standardised grammar exercises using manger, boire and
prendre. So three, kind of, key verbs that they would use and we would have spoken about them a lot
and then we wrote them down.

Q.24. Patrick Farren: In terms of the portfolio, how often would you have used it with your
cooperating teacher? Give us some idea of how you used the portfolio in the course of the year?

In the course of the year, I would have concentrated on the portfolio for the unit really to be honest.
For the rest of the year we would have done posters together. Like, on ma famille, ma ville following,
for example, a lesson on prepositions and the position of objects, we would have designed our own.
We also did a TV programme, it’s called ‘Crib’s’ and we had one student who was the presenter and
the other the pop star, showing them their house, and they designed the pop star’s house and what else
...

Q13./Q23. Do you think the concept of the European Language Portfolio.... what problems can you
point to with to with the portfolio, the European Language Portfolio, any issues, challenges you met
while using the portfolio?
Time to fill it out. I think you can do autonomous activities and empowerment activities and target things without having to fill out a form but I know it, maybe, crystallises it in a learner’s mind when they write it down. But I genuinely didn’t have the time or make the time I think. And the jargon that was used in the folder wasn’t applicable really to first years.

Patrick Farren: How do you think that could be resolved, just from your own experience of having used it?
Well, after the first experience of the real folders I actually adapted the wording of the questions and put them on handouts as part of, a kind of, recap exercise.
Patrick Farren: So you simplified it?
I simplified it.

Patrick Farren: In terms of that overall, how would you rate the concept of the portfolio in helping them in their learning to take responsibility, to monitor their own learning, to plan with you their learning and to monitor it?

Well any 'scrapbook' or dossier idea is definitely beneficial, you see that “God I actually did this and it’s mine, it’s nobody else’s and not me copying from the , it’s something I’ve personalised myself.” It does make you proud, ok.

Part 2

Q19. Could I go on to part two, a semi-structured interview, that’s to do basically with the Higher Diploma in Education. We are talking here about the methodologies, we are talking about the semester course target language class. Could you tell us how you used the concept of autonomous learning and the European Language Portfolio in your semester course with Sylvie?
I actually did German with Gabi.

Patrick Farren: What was the … how would you have learnt German in her class? What would the approach have been?
She used, sometimes, she would have these flash cards with the word in it and it was up to us to describe the word without saying the word, so there was that. We also took, maybe, a theme each that we found difficult, such as teaching word order or teaching something, and gathered all the material you could and try to present how we might teach that particular theme. And then we all contributed and she compiled different sources that we all found.

Patrick Farren: So in terms of developing your responsibility and involving you, how would you think that the course was...how did it involve you in the setting of goals and monitoring your own learning and self-assessing?
Well, at the start she asked what things we like to focus on. She asked us what things we would like to achieve by the end of this course. And following that list of goals, we each divided the goals between us and we took a goal each and tried to see how we would person in. It was beneficial to actually go and compare ideas. I think that's the key to any learning is to be given the time to discuss our ideas and our experiences, I think it lacks in the H.Dip. It was one of the few venues to discuss experiences, which is what you learn from, not theory.

Patrick Farren: So you were able to discuss the themes that you wanted to?
Yeah, our methods, activities, different things and experiences, what worked in the class and didn't.

Q20. In terms of a language use in the semester course, maybe could you elaborate on that? How your target language use, how you developed your own target language use in that context?
Well practice. Practice, it was through the target language we spoke most of the time but she would, well I suppose it was realistically it was maybe 60/40 or 70/30.

Patrick Farren: A fair percentage.
Yes, quite high.

Patrick Farren And would that have been in terms of planning, how are we getting on? In terms of assessing our learning?
No, it was, it wasn’t assessment. It was just a bit of plain old discussion of how things are going. Maybe you would call that assessment, I don’t know. But more reflection than assessment really.

Patrick Farren: Reflection, so how would you describe that process of reflection in the class?
Well, taking a topic, presenting it, getting feedback on it from the students in your classroom or from your peers and how well you taught that topic. How you felt you taught it and, I think, that out of that comes a lot of ideas about ways to do it differently.

Q22. In terms now, on the semester course, in terms of the methodologies class, did you find that the methodologies class, that I taught on, did you find that there was a coherence, if you like, in what we were trying to achieve through autonomous learning?
Coherence?

Patrick Farren: In terms of the aims of the Methodologies course, trying to develop teacher and learner autonomy?
In the course, I think there was a lot of, you certainly gave a lot of information. To develop autonomy,
what I just said before, I found worked well, it was to be given the opportunity to discuss things. And really I don’t think we were, I think we were given more of an opportunity when the teacher came in. Ok, they were very, extremely practical and it was their coming directly from the school but they didn’t talk more than maybe for a third of the class, I would say.

Patrick Farren: Did you find that experience of working with them helped you with your practice? Absolutely, every language, everybody felt the same.

Patrick Farren: What would that have helped, how would that have helped you in your teaching? Strategies.

Patrick Farren: What sort of strategies? What type of strategies are you thinking about? Reading, for example, reading. How would you approach a reading comprehension. Some people thought and what they were doing and it wasn’t really working for them, was getting different people to read it out in class. Well, what is the aim of reading, it’s not to read out loud, the aim of a class might not be to improve accent, it would be to extract the essential information and that is the aim of reading comprehension.

Patrick Farren: Rather than reading aloud....so you were developing, in a sense, helping the learners to try to become more active in their learning.

Q17. Now in terms of supervision, if you want to move from semester methodologies to supervision, how would you have discovered the supervision in terms of aiding you or helping you or developing you as a? In developing your autonomy?

How would it have helped me? Well certainly, you have to be structured when you are being supervised. You are definitely more structured in your lesson planning. Probably I did make more of an effort to use various materials, media, not just textbooks or magazines, I tried to look as far outside the standard textbook or prescribed tape. More authentic, I think, I made more of an effort to use authentic and be more structured.

Q21. Would that have helped you to develop in terms in of, how would you, in terms of planning, monitoring and assessing your learning, how would you have rated the Teaching Practice File as a tool to help that, to develop yourself?

I think the reflective journal at the end of each lesson is certainly beneficial for me to see, well what happened there, stand back, so what really happened?

Patrick Farren: So you would do a little evaluation at the end of each lesson?

Every single lesson, yeah.
Patrick Farren: And then, after a period of time you did the reflective essay? Well no, you just know, I didn’t. It was just, you learn every week.

Patrick Farren: So you would have done that, kind of, reflective practice on a weekly basis? Yeah.

Patrick Farren: Would you have found that that helped you to improve your own practice?

Yes, there are things you pick up and that’s one way, the reflective journal. Another one was forcing myself to look outside the prescribed textbook. You see other ways of teaching the same topic and you get other ideas. That, I found was beneficial to me to learn how to learn how to improve my teaching. So seeing other ideas, but again, I think, sharing ideas that other s have is as good as researching, you know, as the theory, you know whatever. So being exposed to different material but also people you learn an awful lot.

Patrick Farren: In using the language? Yeah.
Patrick Farren: That covers everything. Thanks very much. Much obliged.

Interview with Pauline
May 2005

Patrick Farren: You are very welcome, would you like to introduce yourself first? Pauline I’m ( ) I’m from ( ) I’m twenty-seven years old and I’m a qualified teacher from ( ). Patrick Farren: lovely. We have two parts to the interview, it’s a semi-structured interview and it doesn’t form part of your H. Dip. assessment, as you know. The first part is to do with the teaching and learning in the context of the post-primary school, the learner’s learning in the post-primary school, and then the second part then is your own learning in the context of the H. Dip. and so on.

Q1. So the first part, maybe you could describe the school, the classroom context in which you teach in the class and so on.
Alright, so, I was teaching second years. It was a mixed ability class, so I had a mixture of kids. So there was a few really good academically probably in every subject and some of the kids very weak. And I have a few new students without any French at all, and one girl with severe learning difficulties. She was in my class but she wasn’t actually participating, she wouldn’t do anything during the year. She wouldn’t even say ‘Hello’ in French, nothing just the last class she said ‘ici’.

Q2. In terms of the learner-centered approach to teaching, using the European Language Portfolio, what would you understand by a learner-centered approach, the concept?
For me, this approach just concentrates on the learner not on me as a teacher. I was just there in the class for them and I had my knowledge, just to give this knowledge to them and they could take as much as they wanted. So it was their choice what they wanted to learn. Because I let them set their own goals and if they want to take more, they could take more, they could ask me for more. They were repeating whatever they wanted so I wasn’t the main person. I was just in the class, I was there for them, they weren’t there for me.

Q3. Could you tell us have your students benefited from this approach?
I’d say some did and it was really good because it learns them a lot of responsibility. So I think it will be very useful for them for the future life. Because some time in life they will have to find the self-motivation because they will just, there will be no motivation they won’t do anything. But some students they weren’t just able for that. They were so used to being spoon-fed, they weren’t able and they didn’t understand what was this for. But, I think that the others, they really found it useful.

Patrick Farren: Could you tell us something about your idea of self-motivation, Anna? How do you think that develops in students
Well, like, I can say about my experience. I didn’t learn French at school. I had French in secondary school, but the teacher, I didn’t like the teacher. The teacher didn’t like me. She makes me learn the verbs and I could say ‘je suis, tu es’ and then I didn’t build a sentence because in the end I forgot what ‘je suis’ was. I couldn’t say a full sentence, so … so I went to France myself because I said I will prove this lady that I can learn and because I wanted myself to learn, I wanted to be able to talk. So I just wanted the same for my students, to find something inside to tell them “Oh I want to learn this because it will be useful for me and I am going to use it. I am going to go to France for holidays.” So, just I want to motivate them to learn for themselves. Just find the reason inside, inside of them and learn the language because of them, not because of me, not because of the exams. And this was a bit hard because every time I mentioned exams they would pay more attention, they would be “Oh yeah, that’s exams, that’s important. But otherwise it’s not important because it’s not exam. Like, I, in Poland in my school it was the continuous assessment all the time so we were actually learning all the time. And here they don’t want to learn from class to class they just think about “Oh, summer tests and Christmas tests.” And that’s really hard because I couldn’t understand it at the beginning. I said to them “You have to learn.”

Patrick Farren: Could you tell us about your experience, then, of how the European Language Portfolio helped you in that process?
It was useful because I didn’t have to prepare anything. I just brought the portfolio, I gave them the portfolio. We just followed the pattern of the portfolio. It was interesting for them, you know, to fill in the passport because, you know, it was, kind of, exciting and then I just used it as a tool. I used the idea of the portfolio, so it just gave me the idea and I could, you know, just change it a little bit for them. For the assessment, the ‘can do’ statement I was looking, alright so they say this “I can do this and this.” So I could adapt it for my needs and for my lessons. So it was very useful because maybe I
wouldn’t think about all those things. As a base, if you want. It was my base and from this, you know, I could do plenty of things because I was thinking I have to work myself, but with this, alright I can use this, that’s very good. So, I’m not saying to use everything and, you know, all the time, just to pick all that is relevant to your class. Yes, it was just like a useful tool.

Q4. Could you tell us about your project, project you developed as part of the ELP? For the H. Dip. assessment?
So, as I said, it was a bit of my ambition to work on the…so we did this Little Red Riding Hood but they accepted. You know, I asked if they would be interested and they said, “Yes”.

Patrick Farren: So, you chose the Little Red Riding Hood as a …
On these four competencies. So I could do the reading comprehension, by reading and answering the questions, really relative to the text, I could do the listening comprehension because I had the recording of the story and then, anyway, when they were reading this they had to listen to each other and understand, because they were acting out it in the end. And I could work on the grammar because there were adjectives there so it did a lessons on adjectives, the placing of an adjective in the sentence. Even like ‘le petit chaperon rouge’, I said ‘chaperon’ it’s a noun so “What do you think? Why ‘petite’ and ‘rouge’ it’s at the end.” Ah so the colours must be at the end, I said “Yes, that’s right.” You know, a simple example, I could work on.

Patrick Farren: And how did you involve the learners in the project?
I said like “I would like to do with you The Little Red Riding Hood, is it alright.” They said “Yeah” they would like to do this. And then I said “What do you think? What would you like to do with this?” So they wouldn’t know about the adjective because they don’t know what’s behind it from this side. So they said “Oh yeah, we’d love to.” Role play was the first thing because they really like now the role play and they like the idea of dressing up. And for them it was a bit of fun, it was dressing up, it wasn’t, they didn’t think so much about the language and using the language but I knew that all this would be through language so.

Patrick Farren: So they did a role play and they dressed up?
They dressed up, they did the role play. They, as I said, they had the reading comprehension, the listening, they were describing each other for the, with the adjectives we learned and so, there was plenty of little things but the role play was the main thing for them.

Q5. So, did you find that negotiating and dialoguing with the learners about the aims and the content and the activities, that that made learning more, that motivated them, made it more appealing to them?
It did, because it’s a bit of like, I actually, I add a little bit, we shared, we shared the responsibility and, yeah, it motivates them and they feel more important. Because I am asking what they think, what is their opinion. So I treat them as equal to me, it’s not that I am boasting things for them, but I accept and I respect what they have to say, so …
Q6. What has reflective practice, as supported by the European Language Portfolio, contributed to the learning process in your classroom?
Like, you mean, the assessment, self-evaluation?

Patrick Farren: The reflective process, in terms of how did you help your learners to reflect on the learning, like planning, what are we doing? Why are we doing this? How can we do it? How can we improve? Did you, kind of, find that you involved them in that process?
Like, this was, maybe, the weakest part of my practice I must say. Because we did ‘can do’ statements and each time, when they finished, I would ask them, “Alright so, can you go now to France and buy this thing in the shop?” And they was like “Actually, yes we can.” So, you know, because they do things but, you know, it takes time for them to realise that they are actually able to do things, even if they write “yeah, I can, no I can’t”. I had to ask them “So, do you think?” I showed them a movie once, there was actually, I think we were doing the unit about selling/buying things, and I showed them the video tape of a man going to the market in France. And I said “Do you think you will be able to do what this man just did?” And they said “Oh yes Miss, we could do this now.” Because actually they were perfectly able for that but, you know, you had to ask them this last question “Are you really able?” And they said “Oh yes Miss, that’s really interesting we can do this.”

Patrick Farren: So you try to help them to think, reflect on what they can do actually?
Yes, because it’s very hard for them to realise, they say “Ah, no I don’t know French”. They would tell you, “I don’t speak and French”.

Q9a. In terms of using the target language in that context, would you get your learners to reflect through that process?
Ah, I never did that. I never gave them the statements in French because they tend to ask me every little question like “What’s that Miss, what’s that?”

Patrick Farren: Do you think it’s important that the learners begin to think through …?
I know that, I probably should have tried. But I was just afraid, that I have, like, seventeen kids and they would be all, instead of writing quietly and thinking for themselves, they would be asking “What Miss, what’s this word?”

Patrick Farren: I’m just interested Anna, when they told you that, you know, when you asked them about when you go to France now, we have done this. Can you ask for steak and chips and lemonade in French? Were they able to think through the target language while they were working that out for themselves?

They have to because, I said, like, before you say, before you answer, before you say ‘yes’ or ‘no’, think about the answer, think about it in your head, how would you ask it. So, but I don’t know how
honest they were, it's …

Patrick Farren: So, it was for them really?
I wish I tried, maybe, later on I might, after exams, maybe I’ll try to do one with in French. But, I notice, like, in the class, they always, they ask, we can’t like. It’s very hard for them to think. Alright, maybe I can find out what the sentence means, no I have to ask. Can you imagine, like, having seventeen kids asking me questions. So probably I would end up translating all.

Q7. Do you think that the ELP helped your learners to gradually take an increasing level of responsibility for their own learning?
A few good students, they are very responsible and, as I said, one day …

Q8. In terms of moving on to language use, what does target language use mean for you in your teaching context?
I’d say it’s their routine, greeting them, how they are, my regular routine with the weather, still they don’t know it perfectly. And then using the language …

Patrick Farren: So you would introduce the weather in French to them each day?
I ask them for it, unless we have something important to do and I am just afraid that I won’t get it done.

Patrick Farren: And they answer you in French?
They answer in French, I ask in French and I ask for the date in French and they write it in French. Sometimes, if I did, like, sport, the next day I would ask them about the sport. So, just a few questions just to …

Patrick Farren: And would this be done in the target language?
It is, yeah, it is. Just the introductions always in French, pure French and there would be a few questions just related to the topics, like, if I did food, “What did you eat?”, so they would answer that question.

Q10. So, would the process of using the ELP helped you in that, in trying to use the target language?
I…just, one day I was in France for my exchange, and I came back to Poland and I had to go on my teaching practice. And because it was, I just was back, and I couldn’t speak any Polish, I couldn’t think in Polish, I couldn’t translate anything. I went to this class and I had to teach them and I didn’t say a word in Polish and the teacher was just “Ah!” Because it was a new thing actually not to speak any Polish in the class and she was just amazed because the children they couldn’t understand what it meant ‘Conversations’. And I was repeating the same thing and you know in other ways and all in French because I just couldn’t find a way to say. And they understood, they understood, and she was, like, amazed. This is the way, this is the way of teaching, you just use
the language and even if they don’t understand you repeat three times and eventually they will understand.

Patrick Farren: So, you found that …?
So, I know that it’s useful. I know that it will help them because you don’t do that everyday, the listening comprehension. So if you talk, so this is like a constant practice of them.

Q9b. Do you think have your learners made use of the target language, made use of French in planning or monitoring or self-assessing their own learning?
For the goals, like, in planning and setting goals we would maybe talk a little bit in English and then I would put the goals in French for them because it would be hard for them to put in French. So, just, a little bit yeah, we try to use the language as much as possible, but as I said, maybe the assessment was and the recollection was the hardest part to use the language.

Part 2
Let’s go on to the second part, which is to do with your own learning on the H. Dip.

Q14. In the context of your own learning with the ELP what does the context of autonomous teaching mean for you as a teacher? Developing teacher autonomy, what does that mean?
It’s like, probably for each person, developing your own way and your own technique and your own strategies as a teacher and also, like, a good example of developing your own autonomy was these units that we had to prepare for your project. Because probably everybody didn’t just reach for a book and open the unit from the book but everybody tried to do something on your own, make up your own stuff and your own unit. This just shows that you are able to think of activities, to think of all, to think of developing all four competencies and prepare the activities around this. So, and you know, like, setting the goals, preparing the lessons and then preparing the assessment and to think did it work or didn’t work. So, this whole process of, it is like, you know the road? You are answering them.

Q15. How has working with the ELP helped you in developing your own learning then as a student teacher?
As I said, it was just useful with ideas and a tool. I wouldn’t be too, sometimes I wouldn’t look at the ELP for a long time and sometimes I would open it and go through, ‘Oh, that’s really interesting!’ I have to use this’. You know, it can be so crazy about this, use it as a tool, as a help, but not to be obsessed with this all the time.

Q16. Have you found that negotiating and dialoguing with your own learners has helped you to develop your own teaching?
Yes, because they give you ideas. Because they want to do what they find useful and sometimes what
they say it’s just the things they like doing. Like “Oh, you want to play games in the class.” That you know, it gives you the idea of what they want. And it’s really important that you respect them and because we could be doing things and they don’t respond well, but you will never find out because you never ask them. So, if you ask them, at least you can improve yourself and I think it’s very helpful.

Q17. Has the ELP, in the process of using the portfolio, has that helped you in dialoguing with your supervisor?
Yes, that was you. It’s very good because sometimes, maybe I didn’t understand well some questions and you came and you just opened my eyes. “Oh, yeah just like this.” So, it was very helpful with the ‘can do’ statements and, for example, at the beginning I just put ‘yes’ and ‘no’ and you said one time to me that it’s not ‘yes’ and ‘no’ because they all probably can say ‘yes’ but it’s a different level of ‘yes’. So the little things like this they were very helpful.

Q18. In terms of the ELP, did you think that the process of engaging with the ELP helped you to take more responsibility for your own learning as a teacher?
Oh, yeah that’s definitely because it required more work and ...

Q21. And in terms of the Teaching Practice File, which has been renamed ‘The Teaching and Learning Portfolio’, how had that helped you in terms of your own development as a teacher?
It is just very logical thing to have. It starts with the administration and then you have your year plan. You think, like, ahead what I am going to do and when and how much time will I spend on this. And then you prepare your lesson plans and then you have to comment on them. Did it work? Did it not work? You know, did I do too much, maybe, in this class? Maybe I should do less? But in a different way. It was good in this sense, but sometimes, I finished a lesson and I said “Hmm, why I didn’t do this in a different way. Maybe it will be easier or better.” So, it just makes you think because you realise, when you are teaching the lesson, “ah, ah that’s not good”. So, sometimes like, even if the lesson plan is here it’s good to just change, you know, go with the flow of the class and adapt to the situation that’s happening right now. And not sticking, all the time to a lesson plan because the lesson plan is sometimes is not good. You think, like maybe, the day before it would be perfect but then it’s not. So then the process of reflection and commenting on this, it’s very good. You can put your thoughts there and then improve the next time, maybe next year.

Patrick Farren: Did you find that writing a reflective essay every so often, looking back on your plans helped you?
It was helpful in a way that I, sometimes, I planned to do something and I forgot and then I was writing my reflection and I said “Hmm I wanted to do this, three things let’s say, and I never did this one and why?” Because maybe I spent too much time on something else so it is helpful. Because you go back and then it really makes you think what and why and so on.
Patrick Farren: And then your self-assessment that you did in class at the end, did you find that helpful and try to self-assess your own teaching?

It’s always hard to self-assess yourself but it was good to talk to other girls and to hear how they felt about this and it’s always useful. But, as I say, it’s hard, it’s hard to do.

Patrick Farren: It takes time.

It takes time, exactly.

Q19. In terms of language use in the semester course with Sylvie, could you tell us what target language use, French language use, meant for you in that class?

Oh, it was, it meant a lot. Because now being in Ireland I don’t have such a contact with French as I used to have before. So, it’s really important to keep the language and it was great because we always spoke French. It was important the things we did because she gave us some ideas for the classes and we were just speaking French and, you know, most of the people were the same level so it was actually very equal in conversation. I didn’t feel like “Oh I’m ahead of somebody.” Just, I benefited from this class so it was extremely good.

Q20. And has your learning, with the help of the ELP on the semester course, supported you in developing your language proficiency as a user of the target language?

I try to keep my language because I had a very good French. I would consider myself at C1 or C2 when I was in my last year in college. But just when I came here I started learning English and, just, I lost a bit of my French so I don’t feel so comfortable.

Patrick Farren: So could you tell us something about the approach used in the semester course, with the portfolio, what sort of approach did you use in the semester course?

In French, like?

Patrick Farren: Yeah.

You mean your portfolio because …

Using the European Language Portfolio and how would that have helped you in terms of your learning of the French language in the target language semester course in French?

Oh, ok I understand. Like the portfolio is only in French so it makes you, you have to read in French. So it helps you read the language, you know to read and you know to think. Like most of the time it’s not so hard, it’s pretty straightforward with the language.

Patrick Farren: Did you use the target language in your own reflecting on “Can I do this?” and planning aims and monitoring and self-assessing during the course of the year?
Like, I did probably a bit of both, a bit of French, a bit of English and I, I just like using languages. For me they are both foreign languages and in this way it’s ....

Patrick Farren: And did you find that process of thinking through the target language helped you to develop your own proficiency?
Definitely.

Patrick Farren: Did it help you to develop your autonomy as a language user?
It did, like, they say if you dream in language, in the target language you are really good. So I had a few nightmares!

Patrick Farren: Has the ELP, in the context of the semester course, has it enriched your understanding of what literacy means?
Oh, yeah, you need to know the language of your subject. So my language is French because I am teaching French and it’s extremely important that you are just fluent in the language. You can’t be hesitating because you have to set an example. It’s extremely important that you have a good level of the language.

Q22. Talking about the Methodologies course, has that helped you to understand, to develop your learning what teacher autonomy means? What learner autonomy means? The process of the methodologies class?
Oh, yeah it’s really useful because, you know, foreign people they would then have idea of what the job of teacher is. So you would just go to the class, “Oh yeah I will write everything on the board. I will be talking and they will be listening and they will be learning.” It’s not like this you have to think “Alright, I have to teach but they have to learn. What am I doing to make them learn?” So, it’s a complex process, so like this course it’s essential. It’s the most important thing in the whole course, the Methodology, because you know you are not teaching the philosophy, you are not teaching the psychology. There’s a bit of this, that, you have to have the tool, how to teach the language. So the Methodology is essential, yes.

Q23. And have you any other comments that you would like to make about the ELP or your experience of using it?
As I said, it was a bit of extra work because everyone had different goals so, sometimes, you have to adapt and help them a little bit. Like, I have a few girls, they are writing now their letters in French. I organised for them the pen pals in France. So they are writing letters. So I had to help them a bit with the letters, you know, providing materials to write the letters. But they are not showing me the letters anymore. So they are doing the work on their own, if you want. So I facilitated them, I organised the addresses, I gave them the material about how to write the letters and now they are working on their own.
Patrick Farren: Overall, have you found using the ELP helpful to you in the context of the H. Dip.?
I would say, yes. It was very, you know, a very useful tool and something new, people are a bit scared
of this but, as I said, I was introduced to the ELP, the portfolio in college so it's ... I totally agree this
method.

Q24. Could you tell us something about your work with the cooperating teacher
She... actually, I got half of her class, so second year students, of her second years. So we said at the
beginning that we will try to keep the same topics. Actually she left me a lot of freedom, she never
questioned what I did, how I did it. She just treated me as a proper final teacher and, so sometimes
"Yeah are you here. Yes I'm doing this. So...”

Patrick Farren: So were you able to, is she using the ELP?
Like I'm sure she's using it a little bit. I'm not exactly sure what she is doing with this.

Patrick Farren: You are working, sort of, together. Do you touch base? Collaborate?
Sometimes we do. But, as I said, my class it was a bit ... Now we tried to do the same topics but, you
know, probably in a different way.

Patrick Farren: Listen, thanks very much. That's the end of the interview.

Initial Supervisors' Meeting October 2003
Participants: Supervisors A; B; and Researcher (Patrick Farren)

Patrick Farren. I'd first of all say that these are all supervisors here present tonight and firstly, I would
like to welcome you and thank you very much for coming and giving up your free time and secondly,
that the burden isn't going to land with you in the sense of meetings, meetings, meetings. I intend to
have about one meeting every two months to three months! So, I would envisage the next meeting
with around about the 14th December. If that is ok and then another one 14th February and another
one in April, then that would be more or less it. It would be every two months, I will keep you posted.
I don’t see the value in burdening people with meetings for the sake of meetings. I think the idea is
that if there is something that we can ‘phone each other and say it would be worth while if we met but
what I will do is I will see if you are agreeable to it that we could meet every two months maximum no
earlier than that and what I want to do tonight is basically set up the context, the background, the aims
and what outcomes and go get feed back from you on the presentation that you... saw.

First of all, you two give back questionnaires I gave out, on values and beliefs and attitudes and
assumptions and I have one for you as well Supervisor A, a questionnaire which I will give you out. I
was just outlining the purpose of the meeting before C.K. joined us and she is from ( ) and you are
very welcome C.K. and the idea basically is to see if we could check that we understand the context
first of all for the present research study and then to see what the aims would be and what possible

1 C.K. refers to a mentor who happened to attend this meeting.
outcomes would be. Most of you have seen the presentation on the European language portfolio by Manolis Sisamakis and I have made video recordings for the others, right. So, it is basically to see if we are going to develop a community of practice to try to link in what we are doing here on the H. Dip. and teaching modern languages and methodologies... A little bit more coherent than it is at present because it can be seen as fragmented, can be perceived as that. So the idea would be to see if since we have done up, we have answered a questionnaire on our attitudes to values, beliefs, assumptions, goals so that should help us to develop what we want out of language teaching. What we see as useful and purposeful in our life as teachers and then to see if when we have come up, you could call it when we have articulated a sort of a mission statement, in terms of our goals and beliefs, what we see as our aims. Then we could be able to use that to help us to assess and to reflect on how we are living our statement, our mission, or life, educational values in practice in our capacity as supervisor, methodologist or teacher. I am just saying that I am aware of the fact that it is a wider community than myself and therefore I think it is maybe useful just first of all just maybe to pull out some of the, I will mention some of my own educational values and beliefs maybe, and then if we could share some of those and then maybe we could see where does the portfolio fit into how would the portfolio help us achieve and implement it to concretise some of our own educational values. I mean I am throwing that open as a question and I think culture awareness is an aspect that is being down played and hasn’t had a central enough role in language teaching really. The context of the actual life of the people, you use the language is an important aspect instead of just giving them survival tool skills. We need to kind of broaden it aswell.

Supervisor B. Actually a question raised was in the last two years I find that the students while they never travelled more in relation to those in the past that they are virtually nil on the cultural context. I am quite amazed at that.

Patrick Farren. Yes

Supervisor B. I know it was something I was constantly stressing when I was doing your job Pat, but they can absolutely fly it over their heads. They don’t make use at all of, you know, to use it as a motivating tool. Just the whole joy of learning about something.

Supervisor A. I think I know part of the reason alright. Girls tend to travel in groups of three, not just two but three and while that is so they tend to look around as little captivating and they don’t make a jump outside that. If someone of the three then say has the initiative to break out of that for a little bit the tendency is for the other two to do a bit of teasing. This is going on all the time so they are forging bridges across so the cultural ambience does not take place. So I used to tell my students get into surrounding where there is a lot of talk, all kinds of talk. Avoid any work upstairs on the second floor looking after bedrooms and corridors. Its like expecting a girl that avoids holy water because it is no good. You should be in a laundry, you should be in a kitchen, you should be in a bar, you should be
somewhere where there is a lot of talk. And go on your own, don't be going with somebody else because when you are with a pal you are naturally falling back all the time.

Patrick Farren. Yes that's right.

C.K.. When I think of the broader level what you could say is that it is a kind of contradiction as well. They have never done more projects on culture even in primary school, children in primary schools do a lot of ancient stuff.

Patrick Farren. They do yes.

C.K.. And yet they go abroad and it doesn't seem to infringe on them. So it is a little bit contradictory and I think its all that they have a lot more money as well and they go rather a lot more often and as somebody said you know it is not Ireland, where Ireland only knows but there is a gap definitely particularly within the last few years. It is paradox if you like. They are going all over the world and yet.

Patrick Farren. Yes. It is yes. Clare you know all of these people, Supervisor A Supervisor B.

C.K.. Yes I know Supervisor A

Patrick Farren. I should have introduced you.

C.K.. You are ok thanks.

Patrick Farren. That is quite interesting because you would think that with all the travel and all the interacting. But you wonder do they interact maybe its just as you say they stay in little groups and they cannot parachute in and parachute out.

Supervisor A. Another thing is the hostel doesn't help. When I was travelling as a young fellow you went to a family and you worked the farm and you eat and dined with them and so on and you participated in their daily affairs. You went out to Mass on a Sunday and you visited the graveyard with all these people. All these things that are missing and largely because of they are using hostels, secondly of course language students today are predominantly girls. Lets say it is 4 to 1, maybe 5 to 1 in places and it is rare habit now a young man going into modern language. So the girls tend to then, find protection in a group of three, more so than in a group of two. We had three young girls in our house for a couple of weeks recently, relatives and German. They moved in groups I watched them. They went off down to Dingle on a bus but I know they weren't speaking a word of English.

Patrick Farren. That's true, isn't it.
C.K.. Huh, huh.

Supervisor A. I know they were speaking German the whole time.

Patrick Farren. What you are really saying is that there is no language learning without language use and you have got to expose yourself.

Supervisor A. There is no language use unless there is contact, social interaction, and a reason for making contact.

Patrick Farren. Right, and a reason for making it and providing that framework, or that context and exploiting that situation to develop your language skills rather than sort of hiding behind three or four other people.

C.K.. Yeah.

Patrick Farren. And there's kind of safety numbers, you know, we can.

C.K.. Huh, Huh. Yeah, it takes a very mature student to go out there on their own.

Patrick Farren. It does, yeah.

C.K.. You know, go off to France and take...

Supervisor A. It's quite dangerous.

Patrick Farren. That's kind of language, isn't it, it's kind of listening to authentic language, even as you say bars and laundries, and various restaurants.

Supervisor A. Workshop situations.

Patrick Farren. Workshop situations, they're forced into using it.

C.K.. Huh, huh (in agreement).

Supervisor A. You know, the most expensive French courses, aren't they.

Patrick Farren.Hmmm.
Supervisor A. Which are, you work with a wheel in ceramics, pottery. You work in there in the workshop with, and you pay dear money for this intense course.

Patrick Farren. Right.

Supervisor A. For it's an intense course, and it's putting us all through French. It must be massive. I never had either the money or the

Patrick Farren. So what you are saying is immersion, immersion in the project target community,, the music that was composed and the politics that went on etc., and that you would have a group of teachers making this presentation, this immersion into it with language as centre. But language in context..

Supervisor A. We tried it years ago in our school something like it. But I can see possibilities for that kind of thing. I think language has nearly come down, with due respect to everybody who teaches language, to communication. I find, for example in Irish now, that grammar or syntax they don't seem to matter that much as long as you can understand what I am saying, whether it's right grammatically or that. So that language has come down to pure communication and nothing else.

Patrick Farren. It's like the message without the structure to support it or the grammar to support. What you are saying is you think, you believe that grammar as a support is useful.

Supervisor A. Well I think it's important as well as the wider context of the language.

Patrick Farren. Well I suppose as you say then, projects giving it a context and a literary context and cultural context can breathe life into it.

Supervisor B. Of course they can't give this if they don't have it themselves. Our students can't do all this if they are not prepared to work on it themselves. I mean this is the key really. You know some will have done literature and some will have done history. I mean it doesn't take a lot to give them basics or get them involved in cultural projects you know.

Patrick Farren. To compare it with their own, yeah.

Supervisor A. I think there might be room for lessons in some key teaching, where you would have a period of say the Third Republic, the poetry that was written at that particular time, the music that was composed and the politics that went on etc., etc. and that you would have a group of teachers making this presentation, this immersion into it with language as centre. But language in context..
Patrick Farren. It would be a multi-dimensional context.

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Supervisor A. On the subject of the multidimensional thing, you mentioned history now. Here’s something I came across in Galway a few years ago. There was a group of students that were studying engineering in Universities in the north of France and they were given a project for their holidays. And you know what it was? To discover the use made by Irish people of gesture. So I sat down with them one evening and I asked them to run down the French gestures. Which is a part of the culture, a part of the communication. This is who do you think you fool. And it can sometimes give rise to difficulties and insults because it may mean something nice but to somebody else it could be an insult. They were actually recording this and asking me about some of them.

Patrick Farren. Very interesting that language is more than just words. That it is...

Supervisor B. I think that in the assessment for the oral exams I think if a student is very very weak don’t they give them some sort of a mark for non verbal communication. So even if they are kind of .... It’s showing that they can in some ways.

Patrick Farren. Respond and understand what is being said. Yeah that’s interesting. I’m just wondering if we were to try to come up with a couple of sentences that would reflect what we believe as a mission statement for example, that we could articulate that. I think maybe I’ll make a go at it. One of the key aspects was that we need to develop language use in context as much as possible. Immerse...
ourselves in it. In interactive situations such as the barber shop, the restaurant, the pub, the diner, the bistro and that we need also to be aware of the value of grammar to develop as language learners. That is an important contribution. It has a contribution to make. It’s not just message giving but that there is a usefulness in grammar, syntax.

Supervisor A. No harm to throw at them their own terminology which is to annoy me the notion and function. You have to, you shouldn’t possibly pick the notions but it should be done in a cooperative way, what will we talk about, what is of interest to students. And they are the functions. The French are very fond of using these terms, I hate the term ‘notion’ because it doesn’t mean a thing to me. The functions do mean something so I certainly think if you pick the right notions and they say the functions will suggest themselves.

Patrick Farren. The other thing that was mentioned was the culture context is important. The projects can be developed in context, historical, literally, musical and so on aesthetic.

Supervisor A. Its like you mention the music because if you go through the tapes now, say the modern language course I have studied around four of them in the last couple of years. There is an absence of real culture, you have a kind of collecting signature running through this course. But the teacher should supplement that because the words of any decent song, or proper song are full of lines to be enquired.

Supervisor B. But you don’t know them you see. The student teachers anymore don’t know things like the popular folk tunes of the country its language they are teaching.

Patrick Farren. That’s a value that they should do now, when they should have...

Supervisor B. So what you can say is language and culture are inextricably linked. It goes without saying.

Patrick Farren. That we would value here that we believe that it is important to mention that a teacher should develop this awareness of literary and cultural aspects of the type of community and be creative in developing it and not expect that his learning has stopped once he sets foot inside the classroom or that it is up to him now just to impart knowledge that he has. That is an ongoing process.

Supervisor A. And enriching for both, for everybody.

Patrick Farren. Right.

Supervisor B. Now also it is important to differentiate between your understanding of culture when it would be the old definition of its relating to the arts and would be seen as salacious but that still holds
but essentially it is really all about the morals and behaviour of a culture in general, isn’t that right. Even if it was only a gesture or whatever.

Patrick Farren. Excellent.

Supervisor A. Some of it is good and some of it is bad and some is indifferent. I was really ??? up the corridor today as part of our culture on a huge poster, the remarks passed by Paudi O’Sé unabridged. That’s part of the culture too. But I agree with you entirely Supervisor B that it is not some elitist thing.

Patrick Farren. Precisely. When I am asking some other particular point I am just using that maybe as a kind of a bench mark or as a kind of an introduction as to how we see language, education going and the way it should be going. What we believe is valuable, what our goals would be.

Supervisor A. Could I just finish off by saying that I don’t know of any teacher who is teaching foreign language without the use of an excepted or an endorsed text course, isn’t that right. There are at least 10 good ones in French, I can’t name them all but everyone of these be spaced principally on dialogues, in context, again with a certain route and that is recorded, now, how much invariably any class I have ever visited haven’t received even a tenth of the amount of listening experience. I am appalled and shocked to discover that they just run it off twice and that is it.

Supervisor B. You are quite right there, they don’t know how to teach....to expose them constantly.

Patrick Farren. Constantly, to the spoken word.

Supervisor A. It is in actually in the foreword of any of these courses to use your tape in the motor car, in the car when you are driving, to use it in various places. You may not be looking at the text but you are listening. You are hoping as well that you are driving properly but they are making the point that you have to dredge at it.

Patrick Farren. I find that very useful for learning Irish.

Supervisor A. You can only say I have acquired it when it actually surfaces regardless. You hear it surfacing in your own mind. It comes to the surface involuntarily, now that will only come from continuous and regular repetition.

C.K.. I think though that there is a major discrepancy between the level of the tape, the level of the student, even for Junior Cert. on an ordinary level tape the language level and the native speakers and the student of 14 or 15 years old, there is such a difference between them which they never let go. There is a major difference there for a weaker student.
Supervisor A. Admittedly I agree with C.K. that there is no instruction or advise given in any of these courses in relation to how to attack these from the point of view of the weaker student. You can throw it at them that’s fine but acquisition will not come to slower language students unless it is broken into parts. They must begin to recognise certain elements, certain units, kinda of sentence and that’s where the teacher has to prepare them. Watch out for this, watch out for that.

Supervisor B. And another thing which is really to do with their coptions that I find continually, if a student is weak at her language, hasn’t a good conscious, he or she doesn’t listen to the tape beforehand because they think this is only first year or something and they are making extraordinary basic errors in their use of the language because not alone do they not know how to use it but they haven’t even checked with the tape.

C.K.. No because even on the orders that take Irish for example on a foundation paper and there are four boxes, one person is say, műinteoir sa rang, the other is ag imirt peile, cad tha a dheanamh ag an duine seo. They wont listen to that they just take jury names, we are not listening.

Supervisor B. But I am talking about the H.Dip. student.

Patrick Farren. Well the H.Dip. student, if the teacher is not doing it, the learner probably wont do it, so would you say they need steps to learn that.

Thank you.

Initial Focus Group Discussion with Supervisors
Supervisors C and H and Researcher (Patrick Farren)
October 2003

Patrick. What I am trying to do here is [show] you and this has been done with the H. Dip. students

Supervisor H. Yes

Supervisor E. And that they are aware that you know what is going on.

Supervisor H. Yes.

Supervisor. Yes
Patrick. And therefore we are all sort of playing from the same hymn sheet
Supervisor. We are all playing at the same pitch.

Patrick. I can assume that what has being going on but I can’t stand by it because I wouldn’t know.

Supervisor H. Yes

Patrick. From the past how could you know because you would be saying hopefully.

Supervisor C. How could you know?

Patrick. What I give here in class supervisors will know, but then if you go into something like portfolio teaching you won’t, obviously there is a different approach. We need to have a meeting.

Supervisor H. Yes.

Supervisor C. Yes.

Patrick. So what I have done here is I have tried to show students there are certain things that we as supervisors would be interested in. So what I have done is broken it up into three, one, two, three. You have got Introduction; I have got the pre lesson and No. 2 the lesson during the lesson, and then No. 3, the conclusion.

Supervisor H. Yes

Supervisor C. Yes.

Patrick. What I have said here is the introduction. In the introduction to a lesson generally speaking you are going to have some kind of a pre session, you know where you give them a feel of it maybe what is learned or known.

Supervisor C. This part of the class is the introduction to the class.

Patrick. This is actually the development. How are they going to go out developing a lesson plan for one lesson?

Supervisor C Yes

Patrick. So they say things like, yesterday we, today we are going to. I would be aware of that I would be linking old knowledge with new knowledge; I would be setting an objective for them in the lesson. I would be aware of what they are doing, where they are going.
Supervisor H. Yes.

Supervisor C. Yes

Patrick. In the next one “What is expected of learners at the end of the lesson, have they thought about that. Providing a schemer of framework, I mean if you are doing listening exercise it is important that you give them a purpose for listening, they might give them for example, “What sort of listening are we going to be doing?” “Is it listening for just specific pieces of information or what?”

Supervisor H. Yes

Supervisor C. Right, right.

Patrick. And they might give them an example. I am not saying that it is all A, B, C, D, and E but there is generally some kind of a rationale. It could be like “Why is this useful or interesting?” Then storming the students for vocabulary related to shopping, before they actually ask them anything to do with shopping.

Supervisor H. Yes

Supervisor C. Yes

Patrick. Asking them to give examples of how this fits into communication, suggestions, re-activities to achieve the object. In other words you are trying to involve the learners. You mightn’t do all of those things in every lesson but there would be some setting the scene.

Supervisor H. Yes

Supervisor C. Yes, ok

Patrick. Supervisor H do you read a lot of journalism or Irish teaching experience? What kind of ideas would you have with respect to say the beginning of a lesson basically?

Supervisor H. Well, you don’t mean the lesson specifically.

Patrick. No, say for example I am just thinking of very general things, what I am saying would you put flesh on it. Say we are talking about..

Supervisor H. But you see I suppose the whole thing is a linking thing. Like you move out from you know, from the personal to the family to the extend. It is very tightly structured, isn’t it.
Supervisor C. That's a nice scene that they know.

Patrick. Yes. That's a good point actually. They link that in with what they have done last week and we are moving on now.

Supervisor C. So it's like whole park.

Patrick. Yes

Supervisor H. That's the one thing that's nice but it is very structured isn't it. It builds.

Patrick. It builds up yes.

Supervisor H. I mean that is the thing about it if you get a lot of stuff in the beginning its very hard isn't it.

Supervisor C. What we are talking about now would you be working from like the text book, from the curriculum, is that what you are saying that its units that are built.

Supervisor H. Well yes it would start off with very basics.

Patrick. The basics.

Supervisor H. Yes, I mean if you think back to you know, ... you know what I mean

Patrick. It starts with as you say, and then even the syllabus would start with yourself and your family and move on out.

Supervisor H. Yes

Supervisor C Yes

Patrick. And even when you go down into a particular lesson there, what you are suggesting there is very useful I think, it is suggesting that we are not looking at isolated lessons.

Supervisor H. Never

Supervisor C Yes
Patrick. We are looking at lessons in sequence in the unit. Under a topic so that when you go into a class we are not just sort of picking one, we are not parachuting in, we will say it is good or it is bad, you will have to pull up your socks the next time.

Supervisor H. Yes

Supervisor C. Yes

Patrick. We are actually looking at developing some awareness of where this has emerged from, where are you taking it.

Supervisor H. Yes

Supervisor C. Yes

Patrick. We will go into that later.

Supervisor H. Where you know in English like, you use the edge on your English, you know usually you might do a poem, tomorrow you might something else. You can spend like sort of two months doing poetry and then, well at leaving cert. obviously. It is a bit more but then I suppose things feeding into each other as well like you know.

Patrick. So then, moving on from say introduction to a unit and then from introduction to a particular lesson as well there will always be some kind of linking. Yesterday we were doing this homework is a good way, obviously what you did for your homework will link us in to where we are going today.

Supervisor H. Yes

Supervisor C. Yes

Patrick. So homework is related. Then No. 2 going on during the lesson there is a communicative approach that means that the developing communicative proficiency through activities learners actively involved in using the target line which is an understandable thing and negotiating meetings. So it goes back again to what we were saying earlier and where the developing language awareness and culture awareness.

Supervisor H. Yes

Supervisor C. Yes
Patrick. What I suggested here is and I put this presentation up here for when we are out as supervisors we are kind of on a roll which is different to teaching and learning, we are kind of wondering well how are we assessed. So some of the issues that should be put to you is like is it creative, imaginative, resourceful. What about the lesson organising the lesson into appropriate sections allowing for simulation and understanding, logic and coherent lessons in other words. Variety in the approach, stimulus, variation and living from one stage of lesson to another and even in the present presenting of the lesson, may be in moving around the room, emphasising particular points. There is a variety of approach.

Supervisor H. Yes

Supervisor C. Yes

Patrick. What about the students use of questioning? Changing from whole class to individual or vice versa. That they are not just up at the board writing.

Supervisor H. Very Good. Yes

Supervisor C. Yes

Patrick. What about their use of, you know, language and learning is, teaching is, there is a lot of spoken words. What about the tone of voice? What about the voice clarity, diction, pronunciation of the target language? What about plan, finances, skipping the learners to say something, or to write something or to take something down.

Supervisor H. Yes

Supervisor C. Yes

Patrick. That the teacher is not doing all the talking and this will link into the loss of prime leader but it is not all teacher presentation. What about learner active learning as opposed to teacher teaching.

Supervisor H. Yes. Filling the jug

Supervisor C. Yes

Patrick. Filling the jug exactly. So that’s an educational value coming across. Do we think it’s important that we give the learners time to use the language to think things through, to participate rather than having the teacher doing all the talking?
Supervisor H. That's very good yes.

Supervisor C. It's eager information

Patrick. So there is a level of things there, use of sensory appeal, visuals, charts, auditory, writing, pronunciation, explanations illustrating, moving from concrete examples to more abstract. Use of board or technology or audio or video or computer or the textbook for that matter. The use of that, how we buried the lesson and interaction of the participants, for example contributing or answering peer work or role play. How do we manage that? How do they settle down?

Supervisor H. Yes

Patrick. Do they bite off more than they can chew? If they do are we going to jump on them or do we say it's useful. Can we give them some advice on how they might do it more simply or maybe avoid it for the moment and do just basic one to one.

Supervisor H. Yes

Supervisor C. Yes, Yes

Patrick. Rather than having chaos. So measure it up and maybe getting them to write something when there they have to have something written or have some box marked with the answer.

Supervisor H. That it is task orientated.

Supervisor C. Yes

Patrick. Again with use of target language. So these things might help us to kind of when we are out there what we are looking at, you know.

Supervisor H. Yes

Supervisor C. Have all the language students gone through this.

Patrick. They have, yes.

Supervisor C. There would be German and Spanish, would Irish be one of the ones gone through.

Patrick. Yes, the Irish we are doing the ADO with Supervisor ( ) would be separate.

Supervisor C. OK.
Patrick. The ADO is through Irish but Supervisor C takes them for Irish as a subject. I plan to move with Supervisor C but I want to take it slowly because otherwise you would get some that are different, things go wrong and I have decided to focus on modern languages next year, this year and maybe integrate with Supervisor C more closely next year. To take it slowly.

Supervisor H. Ok.

Patrick. So then if we look at the conclusion then we have got, generally focus we can recapitulate, it could be follow up question, it could be checking, could be questions, it could be given something to write, some kind of an evaluation assessment of how we have learned, how we have taught it and that’s the idea there anyways. Then what I have down at the bottom is we are trying to give them, trying to develop this reflective practice all the time at the bottom. My objective here within the scheme of things: What am I doing? Why am I doing it? How can I do better?

Supervisor C. Ok.

Patrick. Usually, you know something I suppose develops through reflective thinkers is part of learning, not just language learning but all learning.

Supervisor H. Yes

Supervisor C. Yes

Patrick. Now what I have decided to do there for emerging from that would be to develop a lesson plan for language teachers because it hasn’t been done before. What they have been going out with before, supervisors has been a generic supervisors aim.

Supervisor H. Aim, objectives.

Supervisor C. Aim at the back of

Patrick. Yes and sometimes this approach, if you are looking at that we might have our own ideas on how we can develop it and have it more coherent, you know.

Supervisor C. Yes

Patrick. More what we want rather than someday that wrote something for history or geography. If we look at the lesson plan that students would try to
Supervisor H. I even remember back to our own day we got this thing aim objective and the most negative kind of thing but you felt there no nothing to hinge it on.

Supervisor C. But you had to fill them out then.

Patrick. That’s right. Hopefully, I know what you are saying there is a kind of a, its developed for languages anything that you can do that will contribute to that the better if you come up with a better lesson plan outline you think they can use that don’t make them slaves of the lesson plan you develop really what you think would be useful and I suggest that this is an outline basically what it does is we think about behavioural objectives which one are they focusing on in this particular lesson.

Supervisor C. So that is in particular your reading, your writing, listening is that what you are saying to focus on one of those. Is that right?

Patrick. We have the behavioural objectives. There are the language proficiency, culture awareness, language awareness those are the behavioural objectives.

Supervisor C. Yes, ok.

Patrick. Now when it comes then to… That’s a kind of technical term that’s used in the syllabus and its kind of like there to check is the student aware which one it is focusing on here in this lesson.

Supervisor H. Is it Spanish?

Patrick. So obviously if he thinks about it I am going to try to develop culture awareness in this class I won’t be going in as a supervisor and looking for language proficiency.

Supervisor C. Looking for language proficiency.

Patrick. I am not saying there won’t be language proficiency in the cultural awareness but the focus might be different

Supervisor C. Yes, I understand what you are saying.

Patrick. You will be looking at a wider picture. Looking at a unit and think you can look back and see other lesson plans and look forward so that you are aware that a lesson plan can be for a unit for 3 or 4 lessons. It might not be for just one lesson so you could see a wider unit. The lesson plan could be maybe more, could be bigger than just one. You might want to develop a larger way. Its up to them it’s very useful. But we start maybe with something like this lesson plan here. We have got an activity or a theme so when I go in as a supervisor I am aware of which behaviour objective he is taking on. What topic of the ?? is linking him to? If you look at the syllabus it does give you performance targets.
Supervisor C. Ok.

Patrick. And is he aware what targets has he set himself for this lesson? What objectives has he set himself or herself? A linguistic skills again in structures and grammar. What kind is it reading with or just writing in response to somebody? A letter in response is it writing that you want to develop? Is it listening for the main points? Is it a matching activity? What sort of structures in grammar that go with that?

Supervisor C. Ok

Patrick. What I have done is, I have put organisation then after that, (a) organisation and development of lesson (b) development of lesson (c) conclusion. So we have had an introduction, as we were talking about objectives, what are we doing with this lesson. Then steps of the sequence of activities usually that are going to take place during the lesson. And then a conclusion.

Supervisor C. Right.

Patrick. A recap on checking. What I have done is I have developed that with what is a teacher doing but also what is a learner doing. So a teacher activity, a learner activity so that the student is kind of asking himself what am I going to do and what are they going to do. Or what are we going to be doing together rather than just filling in and something that activity that I am not sure what I am going to be doing.

Supervisor C. Right.

Patrick.
Quick sense then think out where they are going to be at or what they are going to be doing and what the learner is going to be doing.

Supervisor C. When the student teacher starts this lesson would the beginners here or when the station developed or would they actually start at the top and use this as its introduction sort of you know today's classrooms.

Patrick. No, no, that will actually be for you and for them to be aware that this fits in to an overall unit.

Supervisor C. Yes.

Patrick. Then (a) organisation and development introduction is where the lesson will start.

Supervisor C. The lesson will start for them and for us to be ok
Patrick. That is why I am saying like, it might not be necessary for them to sit and say look, this is the behavioural objective every day a different behavioural objective. They might have the same behavioural objective or they might integrate them as much as possible.

Supervisor C. Ok. So they may have two or three there.

Patrick. They may have two or three there, exactly over a period or maybe in one class there might be language to Christmas and they might give some little thing about Christmas an introduction and then they might go on and talk about how to say Happy Christmas and they might talk about gifts and when they celebrate Christmas. When gifts are given in Germany, isn’t the same as in Ireland. So there is a linking in there. But we are aware that when it actually comes to the lesson itself that they are going to be giving objectives. There is going to be an introduction, some linking back to what I was saying here in the other previous sheet No. 2 that there is sort of a feel or a context being given to the learner there.

Supervisor C. Ok.

Patrick. So this could be their beginning and then there middle and then their end, you know.

Supervisor C. Ok.

Patrick. And doing that again with others, I would develop that later with the questionnaires that go along with that. Does that help Supervisor H do you think if you were going in and you had that sheet there as a lesson plan with you and you were able to link it in with the lesson development plan and how they were developing it. You might and they might be able to say well this is useful because I can this is just a kind of a lesson plan frame is just the bare bones but I can say this is the sort of thing you would put in, in the introduction. This is the sort of thing we would be looking at in the middle of your lessons and this is the sort of thing you would be looking at, at the end of the lesson. So we can be quite transparent that we know what we have developed together. This is only a draft and I would hope that you would come back with your own ideas in the course of the year and look Pat it is not about this or it is not about that and I found this was really useful and please share that with us, you know, that is the idea, I know what it is like if we don’t have something to start with then we don’t really have something concrete to go on when we go out next week.

Supervisor H. Thinking in fairness to the H. Dip. students. as well, I think that it will be very useful in that they will get a lot out of the year. You know when you are thinking back to your own time when you sort of fumbled through when a teacher didn’t want three or four classes, gave them to you and never told you anything and in terms of really what you did you got through the year, but did you learn a lot, you know.
Patrick. Hopefully that is the idea that at least they will be able to say well look I know how [a supervisor] is going to be looking at me. She is looking for somebody who is creative and imaginative. She is looking for somebody who can organise a lesson and into a works of pre. and post and we have kind of criteria and we see the next page then what I have is the last two or three pages.

Supervisors’ Meeting
Present: Supervisors: B and C and E

19th May 2004

Agenda: key themes linked to ELP: context, learner-centered approach, i.e. autonomous teaching, target language use and target language proficiency and our own learning as supervisors.

I have been supervising ten modern language teachers... What about you, (Supervisor C)?

Supervisor C. Well, I can’t remember how many I had altogether, I had about three. He had experience of teaching before. I think the other two were quite new. There was a [another] student I had but she was only starting teaching as well. So you would notice the difference between the ones who had the experience and the ones who hadn’t before.

Patrick. I think sometimes it’s relevant in what we discover as a result. If they have had previous experience it helps to make some more refining on what we discover.

Supervisor C. I think the younger teachers were inclined to play safe and say ‘well I haven’t tried it yet and probably the next class’. The older ones would be more inclined...

Patrick. What about you (Supervisor B)?

Supervisor B. I would say the same thing. I think the H. Dip. beginner- students shied away from it and that, perhaps, brings us to something else which is that you probably would need to set aside a block of time to initiate them and even initiate the pupils. Because they find it so difficult to keep, to try to implement what they are being taught in their language methodology and what’s expected and then to introduce them to the ELP. That’s the beginners. I had two very mature students, there’s for and against it must be said, and what I found with my mature students was that one particularly was so set in his ways that it was very difficult to deal with. But that was in general. He kind of thought he knew it all and it was a very difficult task. I don’t know that I succeeded, but I think I might have led

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2 Patrick refers to E, i.e. me in my role as Researcher-supervisor
him in the end. He taught in language schools all over Europe and his language was very good, but methodology not good.

Patrick. So that’s where, hopefully, our effect on them is critical, but also probably trying to link in with the mentor teacher, that can help.

Supervisor B. You see all of this takes a lot of time and we have to be realistic enough to know that they are young, they are nervous they are lacking in confidence, not always or all of them, and this was coming across from what they told me, was they found it a bit daunting and found it a bit difficult to implement.

Supervisor C. Very complex. Only small sections that they could use. They chose carefully what they felt and then they tried to use that, but they were very conservative in their, in what they taught.

Patrick. What part did you find, I was in several classes, one of them would have used the passport for example, which is very reporting, languages that they have learnt in the past, do they have previous language learning experiences that sort of thing.

Supervisor C. I found that most of the time I was visiting I had one or two of these classes. But most of the time I was asking them what they did because I was visiting another subject.

Patrick. Sure, because you had other subjects to supervise as well. This is one thing that as supervisors we need to mention because you are not just modern language supervisor maybe you also have to supervise history in that school.

Supervisor C. You see them on the first week and they are not using anything. And then you might see a French and then two History. So you really only have one …

Patrick. I am taking totally on board and I appreciate the candour and the honesty. If we just look at number two the learner centred approach – using the ELP in the context of supervising, supervisors dialoguing with the learner teachers, and it’s obvious I think from what you said there that you have been doing that, that you are getting feedback. So the first question – does the ELP support the development of teacher autonomy? For example the themes and the biography section, do you remember them, there were themes there – planning, monitoring one’s learning, helping the learner to control teaching, we’ve got aims and reflections, setting goals and thinking about their learning, things that they notice about language and culture, how they solve communication problems, methods they use to learn languages. Expectation there is a bit high for a beginner. And I never actually sat in any class where they used what I come back is there reporting on how they found it. I took a note of everybody’s story. I never actually sat in on a class where they used the portfolio and there’s a kind,
it's in a glass darkly (???) with most of them as yet. That's what I would say myself. They have keyed in to the idea, see it as worthwhile but to try as beginners to incorporate this into all the other things that they are trying to do and have been told to do. They find it difficult. But in the later part of the year they were getting a little bit of clarity on it.

Patrick. I hear what you are saying. The concept underlying it, the concept of being able to plan and to monitor, in other words, what am I doing, why am I doing it, how am I progressing? How can I improve? What's my next target? In light of your visits you would point out something that could be improved on or maybe you would say well your teaching practice style there might be a link there, how are you helping them to take responsibility for their teaching? Learning as teachers.

Supervisor B I suppose, yes. What would come up in the portfolio would have relevance to their teaching practice except that you mightn't be spelling it out as distinctly.

Patrick. I understand. I would feel the same, that you are not actually going in all the time in many instances observing them using the portfolio, but there's an underlying current of them aware of the need to involve their learners in planning what they are going to do as learners and that they as teachers need to plan what they are going to do and that they ought to involve the learner in setting aims and goals and monitoring how they are progressing in achieving these goals. In setting targets, in self assessing how they are getting on in terms of 'can I do this, yes I can do this I can do that'. Now I think even if we get that awareness across that they are in a kind of interactive mode. They are learning as young teachers, the learners are learning as language proficiency, language acquisition. And that it's kind of a dialogue process that you are trying to implicate. And I think what you say it's kind of the beginning of the process.

Supervisor B. It's very worthwhile across the board for all learning, isn't that right? Apart from language learning.. And I suppose maybe as supervisors I would say, as a supervisor, that my aim with the H. Dip. student really is to lead them to self awareness about their own teaching first. The self-awareness as teachers itself. In a sense really in the Dip all you do is dip your toe in the ocean. Isn't that all it is? It's being realistic you know. I mean some people will of course have talent from the beginning. But with a lot it takes time.

Patrick. The other aspect, talking about a learner-centred approach is letter 'D' there - am I supporting the teacher in integrating language proficiency, language awareness and cultural awareness in the context of the syllabus? What I am saying there is - am I getting them to take their heads a little bit out of the book and stop just turning pages but without photocopying everything on to the same - but am I getting them, in other words, to become thinkers, independent creators, people who just don't depend on somebody else to tell them what they are going to do the next day. You know this page 2, page 3, page 4, page 5 - have I made them aware of that concept that the language awareness, cultural awareness and language proficiency is what we are at – and it is integrating them.
Supervisor C. Yeah, I think there is one particular teacher (c) there in (y) and she was the one I felt who took it the most and seemed to use it the most and seemed to enjoy it the most and probably benefited from it the most. I think the way that you have divided the proficiency, the language awareness, the cultural awareness – that was really good. Because when I spoke to them before the class would begin, I would say, 'which are you focusing on?' so I could know. So, if they say, ‘this’, then I’d say, ‘this is fine, as long as I know before we actually do the lesson’.

Patrick. You could see that they had planned ahead and had set targets. You were aware of that.

Supervisor C. And also when I looked at lesson plans I would say ‘well now I don’t see anything to do with cultural awareness in this, would it be good to include something like that’ and they’d say ‘oh well I could mention something about sport or music or something’.

Patrick. What you are suggesting is that there is a dialogue and that sort of dialogue is useful. You are assisting them.

Supervisor C. They weren’t just to me teaching the language, they were going the extra mile and it certainly improving, music and visual aids at times in assisting them in that. At least they probably would then.

Patrick. I would agree with you in that, that it’s something I would try to build into the methodology as you know the whole idea of the language and culture. I would think of that as inseparable and that we need to give them more than a survival tool kit for travelling overseas. We need to give them something that will help them to see what it’s like to live, to choose another culture, to be aware of the richness of that and appreciate it. Digging back into my own experience I think that having seen a similar process like a in her appreciation of the culture, but it’s something in find that you have to work at. They can pass it over, I found a lot of students can pass it over in the class.

Patrick. Even names like as you say – they don’t think about how they can reveal a whole history. La Bastille – why is it called La Bastille, La Place de la Republique.

Supervisor B. Or even I would be saying things like 'you really should have a little encyclopedia'. You’ll get three lines that will be enough. If you don’t know it yourself at least you can look it up.

Patrick. And a map of Paris and the way it is designed. I can still remember vividly being shown a big map of Paris, a bird’s eye view, and all the streets. Architecture and thinking ‘my goodness this was such a well planned city’.

Supervisor B. They would have, these would be absolute basics in their teaching.
Patrick. How would you estimate your success in helping them to develop this awareness of the importance or significance of cultural awareness, of teaching cultural awareness? Would you think that you have done your best in that? You are aware of it obviously, but do you think you kind of succeeded?

Supervisor C. Yes, it was probably a new idea from, I can’t remember if I supervised any language teachers last year, I don’t think I did, so it probably was something new for me as well and I would say, if I hadn’t have mentioned it to the students, they probably wouldn’t have focused on it. I would say they were more interested in having the technicalities of their repertoires more so than something extra.

Patrick. Yeah, they would look at the technical aspects of the teaching plan, as you say, like getting the date and the subject rather than, as you say, what is the link, motivating learners.

Supervisor C. There used to be an — language and culture that I used to have one time are inextricably linked and certainly it would be big with me for a long time. And I would feel that I would gently them along and by the end of the year that they will, and that is not to say that some of them have come already informed. I wouldn’t be so keen on getting them to put down things like cultural component as separate just occasionally, they would have a separate lesson. But I think it’s just in the day to day learning like they are not going to say, ‘tomorrow I’m going to do a cultural thing’. Unless it’s relevant to what they are doing.

Patrick. So you would admit it then to the content of each lesson. So we are saying there that cultural awareness is an important aspect of our job and you have tried to develop that and try to reflect that in our supervision. That seems to have come out of our discussion. What about the question – how can you assess cultural awareness or should it be assessed? If we are going out there as supervisors are we saying that we just promote it but it’s not tested? Would that be sufficient or assessed? Or is there any way that we could propose to teachers that it could be assessed apart from examinations? I’m just trying to go down the road is it something that the portfolio focuses in on. I remember in one particular part of the biography section it says ‘things I notice about the language and culture’. I suppose we are talking about the portfolio, so some aspects of the portfolio are actually what we are doing. So sometimes we are saying ‘fill in this’, but it says ‘before an exam it is important that I as a learner, remember that I have learnt this about the language and indeed its culture. As I learn through different media I can jot down my observations, what I found useful and interesting in this section, I can keep examples of this in my dossier. Then I can use these provisional purposes. Perhaps I could use an example of as a document in my oral exam’. So they can actually bring in something of the cultural awareness component into the oral. Or you could develop assessments through that.
Supervisor B. One thing that I forgot to mention is that I would be encouraging them always to do comparative thing, study. You know when we are talking about something that turns up in terms of the culture in France, bread or whatever you like, and then all this and try and bring them back to ‘what do you do’. It seems to be obvious that you know what you do but you could be the other end of the spectrum and be in France and telling the French about your culture or inviting foreigners. So it would be a comparative approach as well would be very important.

Patrick. Moving on then to autonomous teaching and learning. Can I point to evidence that indicates if and to the extent of which H. Dip. and Ed. students have developed teacher autonomy, learning to gradually develop responsibility for their own teaching that’s number three. In cooperation with us in our role as supervisor, can we give examples of how, where, what of evidence, I mentioned critical reflective essays. You know I asked them to develop their teaching practice file in a sense trying to give them an awareness of where they were going. So I asked each of them to write a little critical essay on a regular basis, after each unit, every three or four weeks. For the most part they have been doing that. What is your own perception or response there?

Supervisor C. I think some of them took to it and others they seemed to be so busy. I think one teacher said no she hadn’t looked at it and she would make time. But then having said that then there were some others, maybe after Christmas they really started to give it time. They got into it and they said ‘oh right ok I must actually do that’.

Patrick. Did you find out did they do that? Did you actually come across any examples of it?

Supervisor C. Besides what I collected from people when I finished. I have a few essays here but they didn’t do those until the end.

Patrick. Ok, it’s the fact that they were able to, did you feel from talking to them that they learnt something from that in the end?

Supervisor C. Yes, but I would say it took a slow start. Gradually maybe as they got more relaxed about teaching and they could think sort of more creatively.

Patrick. They had something to refer to, they could say, ‘well I am improving because’, and that takes time, I think. It would really need time, reflecting in a sense I suppose is planning ahead, it is also looking back. It’s planning, monitoring but also looking back and saying well how have I improved? How have I improved? How could I improve? And we are doing that all the time as supervisors with them. But then the trick is to see can they do it for themselves in some sense. And that’s the rationale really underlying it, it’s not just to develop paper. But what would your response be?
Supervisor B. Well, I guess what Sean was saying there, before Christmas they couldn’t dream of looking at it actually. And then I suppose by the end of the second term really they had some input. And all are saying, 'yes, it was a useful tool'. I jotted down here their remarks. But, not as child friendly as it might be, a little too complicated and .... The portfolio. I think that that is a gradual process during the H.Dip, developing responsibility for their own teaching. Initially, they are inclined to be so afraid and so keyed up and is the supervisor going to say x, y, z. Whatever the supervisor says it used to be gospel. I feel anyway, I am repeating myself now but that the biggest role of the supervisors is to lead them to their own self awareness.

Patrick. That’s kind of autonomous learning really, isn’t it?

Supervisor B. It is really. I mean we might not be using the same language but it’s a different way.

Patrick. Because it certainly relates to what I would believe is my primary role as well. It’s the same, I would have the same idea fundamentally as you have outlined, to lead them to self awareness. And if they can do that they can ??? themselves, rather than somebody else telling them what to do as technicians. They are more creators. So I’m just aware of number three then is target language use and maybe this is a key issue. I think it is. I’ll just run down through some of the key questions that are here from (a) to (i) am I supporting teachers in using the target language in the classroom? In the management of the class? And in the activities and tasks that they offer the students? Being learners using the language to reflect for example, set targets, self assess? Deliver ‘can do’ assessment statements? In relating form and function am I helping supporting them by helping them to relate grammar and the message? Am I helping them in using authentic texts? Texts seen as having a social purpose, communicating purpose. In having a balanced approach between input, reading and listening, and output, speaking and writing, trying to develop these in a balanced way? Am I supporting them making appropriate use of new technology ICT in self assessing as they develop? Effects of all above in terms of motivation and confidence of the teacher? Developing confidence in the location? And the effects in terms of learners to create proficiency in using the target language to communicate in the context of the task or activity? What is the effect of the above in helping the teacher, help the post primary learner in developing language proficiency? Have you any ideas on themes related to those?

Supervisor B. Well, of course that sounds lovely on paper. Certainly but I certainly again it must be a big priority with all supervisors that they encourage the use of the language and again what I find so difficult even with people, except for an odd person, even those who are fluent at the language, will not use it for basic classroom directions. And I don’t know if you would have found that Sean.

Supervisor C. That was a major thing … speak more to give instructions more. I think it’s just habit or nerves that they think pupils are not going to understand if they speak in German or French.
Supervisor B. It’s quite extraordinary because of course on a daily basis they can build up a repertoire so that by the end of the year pupils really should be able to respond to the basic directions. So that has to be, we have got to keep on plugging this.

Supervisor C. That was a major change I would have seen in the student teacher output was by the end of the year they were speaking more French or more German to the class. At the very beginning there was a very low percent. But at the end of the year it had sunk in ‘I can give basic instructions. I can give advice and I can use the language’. And the students may not understand a hundred percent but they get the idea with the non-verbal assistance as well or the visual assistance or whatever. I thought that was the most …

Patrick. The clearest picture I would have is a dialogue and that sort of dialogue is useful. You are assisting them.

Supervisor C. They weren’t just to me teaching the language, they were going the extra mile and it certainly improving, music and visual aids at times in assisting them in that. At least they probably would then.

Patrick. I would agree with you in that, that it’s something I would try to build into the methodology as you know the whole idea of the language and culture. I would think of that as inseparable and that we need to give them more than a survival tool kit for travelling overseas. We need to give them something that will help them to see what it’s like to live, to choose another culture, to be aware of the richness of that and appreciate it. Digging back into my own experience I think that having seen a similar process like a felt too – that stands out that at the end the teacher… I think that helps obviously to develop the learners’ understanding of the language because they learn through using the language.

Supervisor C. And I think the students were delighted coming near the end to realise that they understood a lot more that they could speak themselves or even translate.

Patrick. What about in terms of the learner autonomy, learners developing in conjunction with their teacher to use the language, would you say the teacher learnt from you or developed from what you’ve said the awareness that it was important for the learners to use the language every day in class, in the tasks, the activities, to manage what they were doing?

Supervisor C. I would say in a major way.

Supervisor B. Some of them certainly would have learnt that. But even I had some native French speakers, not this year, but last year, it was quite amazing even they would be using English. I would
say 'you know you are teaching French and you are a native French speaker' ‘well I don’t think they will be able to understand’. It’s quite amazing really.

Patrick. So, if there’s a change, would you have noticed a change this year?

Supervisor B. Not particularly, really. I mean unless a teacher has maybe, you see a lot of students tend to teach the way they are taught themselves, you know that.

Patrick. So you need to keep ....What would your role be in terms of the teachers you supervised, with respect to target language use in class?

Supervisor B. Well, I certainly would say it but yes there was a vast improvement from the beginning to the end. The awareness came which prompted them to do it. Or they are confident enough to do it.

Patrick. So I think some key aspects that we are starting to pull out. Cultural awareness was an important one, and you rightly said that it’s integrated into the classroom rather than seen as separate but also this is something that needs to be focussed on. Also it’s a very gradual process that we don’t expect things to happen overnight. And that the concept of the portfolio needs time to develop, to grow rather than at the beginning. And the third one then was language proficiency that it’s a very important aspect of teaching to get that across. And that the only way they can learn, that learners can learn to use the language is by using it! So would you say you are successful getting up?

Supervisor C. I have to keep saying you need to hear the students speaking the language. I have to keep saying that. I said you speak 95% so I have this, they always ask one student then they ask a row and then they ask a whole class and then they ask a second row and then they ask an individual. So they have this participation, what I would say ‘audience participation’! So much more frequently than the formal.

Supervisor B. A point I want to make there is the proficiency of the teachers themselves. I suppose I had a good bunch of students this year but one in particular who ended up being very confident and gained a lot of confidence, but her own proficiency is not up to scratch. And that’s something that happens every year.

Patrick. I think that’s something we are hoping to address in the near future. Is the lack of proficiency.

Supervisor B. At the same time these people you would see have an honours degree.

Patrick. It is an issue I totally agree with you because it’s an honours degree in business plus French or business plus … we don’t know the extent of French so that’s an issue that we are bringing up.
Supervisor B. Actually I would say that business plus French unless they have had a good stint abroad very often they don’t have an adequate proficiency.

Patrick. I think we need to introduce and I think this is being brought up at a board meeting with French, German and Spanish, if you are going to do a degree in a subject you do an oral exam and a written paper. So that you can see the level rather than not known.

Supervisor B. You mean not to accept it if they haven’t an adequate level.

Patrick. Well, I think that needs to be looked at.

Supervisor B. But, at least, I would suggest to any student who is in that situation you have improved in your methodology and you have worked very hard, but in order to be professionally competent you will need to go abroad again. Without hurting them or downing them but saying well you are expected to be professional and if you are not competent especially in a multicultural country now, they could have children in the class who are native French speakers and they lay themselves open to it.

Patrick. And it goes back to the other point we were making earlier, that it’s in using the language that they learn the language so that means with their own learners, it’s a double body …

Supervisor B. That would be very basic. I wouldn’t expect no non native speaker is perfectly proficient but I wouldn’t expect very basic mistakes which a lot of them would be making. Those who aren’t proficient will make. That’s not good enough.

Patrick. Number four moving on. This is another aspect I suppose of our meeting that by looking at what our teachers, the teachers we supervise, by looking at the impact they are having on their post primary levels it sort of ‘behoves’ us to explore how are we developing as supervisors. And in a profession like this, I suppose, there are implications for our own learning, as by teaching we learn, by supervising we learn. So I think when we draw the circle we begin maybe we should articulate some of our own learning experiences. I have another three little comments here: what we learn as supervisors to take our share of responsibility to develop as learning supervisors, for example, are we learning to act as a team supporting one another as supervisors; are we reflecting on our supervisory practice as we are helping HDip and Ed student teachers to reflect on their practice, planning, monitoring, evaluating; what do the reflective essays reveal to us, have we read, enquired about them; what can we plan for next year in light of what we have learnt this year; any evidence of ?? teachers influence working with the HDip student teacher; evidence of the teacher using the ELP in cooperation with the HDip teacher and any suggestions for future direction from you as supervisors? What have we learnt in our work that can help us do better next year? Maybe not do better, I don’t like to use the expression do better but that could improve teaching practice next year? I think that we have discussed quite a few issues. So as a team now looking at next year, meaning that we are both coherent
when we go out to the schools, we’ll say ‘well I know’ maybe certain things are important. Any observations?

Supervisor B. Something struck me there recently I was thinking that maybe it mightn’t be a bad idea for the supervisor of his or her number of students, like we’ll say you have six or eight or ten or whatever, based on a particular language, to meet them with you. Almost like a mini tutorial, meet them, let the tutor meet the students he or she has for a session, possibly after the first visit maybe. And say ‘now I have observed, these will be the common’ ...

Patrick. That sounds really, really interesting, that’s a really good suggestion.

Supervisor C. Well, in (H) where I work as well, they have a pre-teaching practice meeting with the students and they have a post teaching practice meeting with the students. And the pre-teaching is to go over the lesson plans, schemes of work and you talk about them. And they also give them then what I would call the ten most common errors that are there in whatever subject. Remember, work on these, when I come I will be looking in particular for and then the ten. I would be amazed, if there is a phased student in the mid term and I say: ‘well, I saw potential there lacking,, remember the ten things I said to you, you have them written down, I have to say them again’. So those tutorial things do work very well, especially with a group as well.

Supervisor B. In a smaller group you see they feel, I mean the numbers are great and I know, how many students would you have in modern languages now – that’s a lot to go through everything. They’d be more confident to ask the question.

Supervisor C. The smaller the group the more impact you have on them. When you have a large group you are likely to skim across. Because if you have a group of three or four you can really focus in.

Patrick. So, like a tutorial session, small group sessions. Sounds like a really good idea. If we learnt nothing but that it would be so useful, it feeds back into the whole methodology of teaching, having got you to focus more on group interaction. Also it gets them to know us, what we are expecting and anticipating and we can learn more as a team, sharing the standards.

Supervisor B. And also just what you are saying, Sean, you can get the most beautiful lesson plan written out, although less now than it used to be but in fact that’s the theory but it’s the practice, it’s difficult for them to make the cross over the bridge. Isn’t it, between theory and practice?

Patrick. What about in terms of the lesson plan itself in terms of designing it. What would you suggest for next year if we were to try to work as a team, what kind of lesson plan would you suggest or would you have any ideas? Maybe we could think about that and develop on foreign language teachers next year.
Supervisor C. They were very varied. They were very detailed and some of them were very sketchy. And then some just the whole lesson was, everything was down on paper. It makes you think well this person is insecure that they have to put everything down or that they prepare every lesson to the minutest details so there's no room for creativity or whatever.

Supervisor B. I think it's a pity that we haven't some kind of sample lesson plan. I mean there are so many that come up, just as you say, Sean, and very often so unprofessional. They are like notes, really. And all written in the first person and the kinds of things that they really should be taught how to write a simple lesson plan. I used to find and I still do, that it's not the what, they can tell you what they are going to do, but the weakness lies in the 'how'. It's very easy to say, 'I'm going to do,' but they are not going to tell you how they are going to do it, or present it. I think that's vital.

Supervisor C. I would note from (H) [that they] have their own type of lesson plan that they work on and it's long and it goes across the page and all the other academic subjects and there's a line down the middle and on one side there's the teacher activity and the other side they must have the pupil activity. So if it's all teacher activity you just see this blank and you say 'what are the students doing while you are doing this?'

Patrick. It's interesting that you would mention that because the guidelines that I had written I had a little sample of a lesson plan with teacher activity, learner activity trying to do it as a concept.

Supervisor B. Yes, some of them had that.

Patrick. But some of them didn't and some of them would move away and somebody else said 'maybe we should use this'. Maybe, it's something we should think about early next year.

Supervisor B. For me, looking over these comments from the students that I got them to answer – they were aware of the positive aspects of the ELP. Found it sometimes not as pupil-friendly and a little bit too complicated. One or two of them took a simple format. Or they devised their own. They are beginning something new and then they are trying to do everything, could be more user friendly?

Supervisor B. Yes, that's correct. They don't think it's child-friendly and they would need to take time out at some stage to actually initiate the students. When I say time out it would almost mean that they take maybe fifteen minutes over a period of two weeks or something like that and start it from the beginning. Because they are beginners and they are beginning something new and then they are trying to do everything.

Supervisor C. Everything is new.
Patrick. Absolutely, and that's where hopefully with the focus group next year we can focus with the specific number of cooperating teachers who are enthusiastic and will work with them. And not be left to the HDip students which wasn’t my intention, my intention would have been that the mentor teacher would have worked with them to some extent. Of course things happen.

Supervisor B. Apart from that anyone who has taught themselves knows that teaching is so pressurised that people are willing but they just don’t have the time.

Supervisor C. One remark here – a student she said:

As a result of developing teaching in context of a unit, I find that I am very focused and organised. I have taught in the context of a unit all year through and find that it works for me. However, when pupils set aims and targets I must facilitate their needs and found that I enjoyed the challenge. I like being resourceful and creative in my job. I found the ELP motivated the pupils to take pride in their learning and to enjoy it.

So I thought that was a very lovely way for her to finish. For her to say ‘in the context of a unit’. It seems to have worked for her and she seems to have enjoyed it. She liked being resourceful and creative and she found that it actually motivated the students, to take pride and to enjoy it. Now to get students to enjoy learning is a big thing. So I complemented her on that.

Supervisor B. And just on that point it is enough to recognise that a lot of the students that I have, have pupils with very limited ability. And therefore, it’s extremely difficult to implement a lot of what they are being taught. They would be at a very basic level, everything is lovely on paper and in theory but when you are in there and they are so limited and not interested.

Patrick. That can have a huge impact.

Supervisor B. That’s reality isn’t it?

Patrick. Well, thank you very much B and C for coming along.. Thank you.

Semi-structured interview with Supervisor D May 2004 (absent from Focus Group Supervisors’ meeting in May 2004) and E

Patrick Farren. This is basically on same theme as I used with other Supervisors, B and C, and it is basically to find...what effects did you observe, did you see it having in supervising in terms of the ELP, what effects did you think it, see it having in practice?
Supervisor D. There was only one pupil, one student... most committed and anxious to use the system, but not sufficiently aware of the aims, the detail, a simplified version, more detailed direction on the project... well intentioned, but was not not fully knowledgeable. on the other hand, without being too directed... an ideal candidate to embrace the system.

Patrick. Did you have one or two students?

Supervisor D. There were two actually, but there was only one who had attended some of your lectures, talks... he had some induction and was anxious...as all new teachers to improve. He was given to, we call it...it would be wrong to call them old fashioned terms, but in good pedagogic terms, he used very sound principles that you were embodying in the ELP project.

Patrick. That's good.

Supervisor D. And for that reason he would be an ideal candidate to embrace under somebody's direction

Patrick. What did you observe yourself that you say embodied the... principles in his class?

Supervisor D. First of all... very conscious of basic word structure, sentences, idioms and, of course basic vocabulary and in his...basic requirements...this is in his teaching and in his planning and what he regarded as basic communication on a specific item for communicating on a specific item and of course I commended him for his efforts and he was keen to copper-fasten and confirm structures and a basic modicum of grammar but not to over-grammatize teaching

Patrick. Yes

Supervisor D. And especially with the regular AND irregular verbs...

Patrick. Did you find that basically that he planned and was able to monitor

Supervisor D. He was an excellent planner in terms of his own planning and his own cognition and beliefs.

And his system was alright. It is not a case that the ELP is the best of all the systems

Patrick. Sure.

Supervisor D. Its a very good system once it is properly applied.

Patrick. Right.
Supervisor D. His own understanding was quite in keeping with the best of old time and new time pedagogy.

Patrick. What would you say that was?

Supervisor D. First of all, breaking down, following the text, in terms of units, but apart from that he chose communicative idioms and word structures that he regarded as desirable and actually necessary for reasonable... inside of class from the point of view of the pupils, saying goodbye and then for giving minor instructions, please clean the blackboard, hem...

Patrick. Sure

Supervisor D. In other words, using the imperative form.

Patrick. If you take a learner-centered approach. How do you think he engaged his learners in a learner-centered approach in his classroom?
Would he have involved the learners in their learning? Can you describe the learner centered approach and how he encouraged learners?

Supervisor D. Basic units, units of vocabulary, units of phrases, prepositional phrases, over/under,

Patrick. Contextualised.

Supervisor D. Very much so...The basic verbe in imperative mood and indicative mood and a small touch on future tense.

Patrick. In terms of target language can you describe the context used, a particular topic?
Supervisor D. Probably going to the cinema or someting or going to the hypermarket.

Patrick. In terms of his development autonomous teaching, developing his autonomy in terms of his awareness of how to plan and monitor his own progress How woul you gauge that?

Supervisor D. His own progress as a...

Patrick. As a teacher

Supervisor D. Some of the comments would be similar as to what has gone before, but he was open to analysing his methods more and more from the point of view, of noting what best pupils were capable of doing and what the weaker student hadn't mastered but who were reasonably near mastering. From
the point of individual mastery, he would be ...using a desk diary to note and how certain pupils were progressing and how certain pupils weren't... He knew what to revise and what to practice...

Supervisor D. The idea of recording is a major hinge as to what teachers are doing and he was in that mode. The key, not ploughing too big a field, and range reasonable.

Patrick. What was he recording?

Supervisor D. Again...he wasn't doing, perhaps, enough recording but he was conscious of the need to record...of what attempts pupils were doing

Patrick. Reflecting on what they were doing?

Supervisor D. Very much so, yes...not doing enough reflecting but taking notes in his assessment of himself that he should be doing more of this.

Patrick. Would you have noticed that in a sense helped him in his own development

Supervisor D. Of course, it should have, if a person records...wisely it must help he was kind of student one would like to have and be able to mould.

Patrick. How would you consider that you helped him?

Supervisor D. The two major ways: simple contextual units of mastery fluency and for him to record what pupils had brought up of their own strengths and what he saw could be achieved by more precise recording on his part. I would regard recording as the key to further development.

Patrick. And would you see that as the same as reflecting, planning, monitoring, assessing?

Supervisor D. Yes. If he records correctly this must add to his...ability to... be more precise and... and of course to gear his future planning in a more precise way...Unless you're jammed tight into a narrow education system, otherwise...

Patrick. These are themes that come up in the Biography of the ELP.

Supervisor D. That's right.

Patrick. Would you see that you helped him to gradually take responsibility for his own teaching learning and learning of students?
Supervisor D. That would be the aim for the pupils and the teacher. Yes. In time terms. Yes, but perhaps inside this short thirty-five minutes there wouldn't be sufficient amount of that type of effort. But, at the same time, the pupils were made to reflect, and at the same time there would be little bit of spoon-feeding that doesn't mean that the spoon-feeding was wrong not wrong once it fits into context. Nevertheless, They had a keen appetite for delivery...so that they were developing themselves but perhaps and more conscious of their own individual needs, providing of course that they were made to record themselves.

Patrick. Did they do any of that in terms of using the Portfolio (ELP)?

Supervisor D. The following of the portfolio as it was, was straight from the teacher's desk. That wasn't really taking place in those....

Patrick. More the concept.

Supervisor D. Yes, the concept was..

Patrick. I see....In terms of your own learning as a supervisor, interacting, being aware of the themes of the the Biography, of autonomous learning, reflective practice...how would you characterize the process of engaging the teachers in using the concepts of the portfolio and of autonomous learning?

Supervisor D. When you say, autonomous learning, you mean?

Patrick. Getting the teachers to reflect on their own learning, plan, monitor mad self-assess would you characterize the process as learning and planning and monitoring and assessing themselves?

Supervisor D. Their own methodology

Patrick. And gradually to accept responsibility, to plan and monitor and assess themselves.

Supervisor D. Yes. To set themselves This is where the recording comes in. This fellow was in that mode. I'd say, enough of it doesn't take place. Should be more of gearing in that direction.

Patrick. Do you think it helped you to reflect on what you were trying to do as a Supervisor?

Supervisor D. As a unit, certainly, it is most useful. Some of the thoughts were a bit scattered, but the danger of over-compactness would arise as well because you don't want something to be too directive. I was thrilled to see that the emphasis was placed on recording, for that is a neglected feature of good pedagogy, both by the teacher looking at him or herself and the pupils were achieving.
Patrick. Has the teacher enabled the learners to take more responsibility?

Supervisor D. That's what should take place. That would be his overall aim. Undoubtedly, not done to the degree I'd like, of course. That would be stressed in the ELP.

Patrick. Right

Supervisor D. He was down on side of more...keen recording.

Patrick. Did he involve learners with your help.... did he involve his learners, do you think in setting goals? Engaging them?

Supervisor D. More or less for them to be part of the planning for the next step?

Patrick. And assess how well they were progressing in relation to the goals they had set themselves?

Supervisor D. Well, if you like, perhaps, not enough. They were made conscious of what they were capable of...internalising and mastering within the 35 min. class which is a constraint in itself.

Patrick. As you looked at his Teaching Practice File, would you have seen evidence of growth there of his planning and monitoring...?

Supervisor D. Yes, he was developing his notes in preparation..

Supervisor D. And there would be further development if person had time to discuss and it does take time of course to talk in working terms In ordinary class no time unless, and there has to be a suitable venue and these are not always suitable inside... He was very willing. All were very willing. I always spend half an hour to an hour with each student after the session.

Patrick. Could you tell me, typically, what you think they would have learned from you working with them after a class?

Supervisor D. From speaking to the Supervisor?

Patrick. Yes.
Supervisor D. Oh...well, there would have to be a general feeling of worthwhileness; they were always most thankful. More precise terms, one would be recording strengths, weaknesses, of course from both sides, in that self-analysis aspect of...

Patrick. Strengths and weaknesses of the teacher?

Supervisor D. And of the pupils...Was he pitching his teaching too high? And with a view to communication as one of the key, with communicative language in mind and using language in this confirming manner without rushing, based on a live situation.

Patrick. Authentic language?

Supervisor D. Yes, it has to be authentic, that's what I mean by living.

Patrick. You have really involved them in a reflective practice mode after the lesson.

Supervisor D. That would be the aim, that he would become more conscious of precise recording. I use the term recording purposely, which reflects what has been done and which is going to be a decisive help for what you are going to do. Recording is meant for looking back and also for looking forward. If it's not looking forward as well the actual benefit is not that...it's diluted.

Patrick. That's interesting. In term of actual target language use in class, what would you have observed?

Supervisor D. Could be used a little more often. Not a case of drowning them in language, that they [would] not [be] clear about inside a short period. Language has to be intelligible. It has to be based in authentic situations. Creating the situation is one thing. Pitching the language to suit, in two or three phrases is another. Once the situation is established and everyone knows what the student is about, a kitchen, a roundabout, the physical aspects clear cut, then easy to produce units inside half hour class. That's the great constraint, and to make people aware of that, yes that would be one of the aims.

Patrick. Have you any comments yourself on attending seminars on the ELP and having seeing teachers trying to use the concept, the philosophy underlying the ELP or aspects of it in class. Would you have any comments to make about the structure, presentation, contents at all, how... can you think of modifications or changes that you would advise that should be made to it?

Supervisor D. There would be certainly some modifications. I would be able to...bring them to the forefront.

Patrick. Setting out one's identity, that's the passport.
Supervisor D. That's basic.

Patrick. There's the Biography which involves planning, monitoring of learning and then there's the Dossier. The passport which reflects the teacher in his authentic situation.

Supervisor D. At the moment, I can't call them to mind. I would stress the recording.

Patrick. Feel free to give me your comments. any time.

Supervisor D. It was part of the general situation, one or two., they would like a simplification of the total portfoli

Minutes of Meeting with Mentors A, B, C, D, E

January 19, 2004

I outlined the nature of the research study that involved examining the impact of autonomous teaching and learning, supported by the European Language Portfolio (ELP).

Mentors reflected on their teaching beliefs and values. As researcher I explained the purpose of a mission statement and each one wrote their own mission statement. We shared understandings about the nature and function of the ELP and its part in this research study and the implications for mentors in this study.

Minutes of Meeting with Focus Group of Mentors: A, B, C, D and Researcher (Patrick/Patrick Farren)

May 19, 2004

Venue: Educational Technology building. Room D102

(Preface. As the cassette recorder would not work, it was agreed that minutes of the meeting would be written by me, Patrick, instead, and that each member would be circulated with the minutes, and that if each agreed that they were accurate in content, they would be signed by each, and passed.)

Apologies from Mentor E.

Introduction:

Patrick mentioned, briefly, that each one had written one's own mission statement in January 2004, and that we might relate to our expressed values, in the course of the meeting. One could ask, at the outset, how well have I lived up to the educational beliefs and values that I articulated in writing. Each of us agreed that it was a sobering reminder to reflect on our values, in terms of the degree to which we live them in our teaching. It was suggested that we refer to them again at our next meeting.
Themes for discussion, contained in agenda, were outlined by Patrick: context; creating a learner-centered approach; learner autonomy; target language acquisition; modifications to E.L.P.

Themes 1 and 2: Context and a learner-centered approach. Patrick asked each person to share the context of using the E.L.P. Mentor C stated that she used the E.L.P. in the context of her 5th year class, on her own and in conjunction with the H. Dip in Ed. student, for whom she acted as 'mentor' teacher. She has found that the E.L.P. helps to develop learner confidence, and promotes cooperative teaching and learning. Mentor D used the E.L.P. with a 5th year class. While it supported them in reflecting on their learning, she found that with all the work that 5th years have to do, in the context of the Leaving certificate examination, that having 'no time' was a problem. Her class, she said, comprises very motivated learners, who wanted more and more language work to do, 'that's just the way they were'. There was general agreement that with the exam culture in 5th year, the E.L.P. could be seen as an extra burden.

Mentor A used the E.L.P. with a 1st year class. She found that she could adapt the E.L.P. to great effect. It encouraged learner reflection e.g. 'what have we learned, using 'can do' statements. She has found that it encourages a learner centered approach in the context of her 2nd year class. She added that it is useful in helping the learners internalise the language learning process. Mentor B expressed an interest in making use of the E.L.P. '04-'05, and has made use of concept of reflective practice in her work, but has not introduced the E.L.P. as such.

Our understanding is that, if the E.L.P. is to be used, the earlier learners are introduced to the process, the better. Therefore, using the E.L.P. with 1st and 2nd year learners might be preferable to senior cycles learners. They are 'more open' to the process at that time, one suggested.

Theme 3 Teacher and learner autonomy. This was understood as a concept in which teachers and learners, according to their different roles, need to become involved in planning, monitoring and evaluating activities, a process in which teachers and learners, therefore, shared in the decision making process, where learners and teachers engage in this process, according to their ability to do so. Teachers need to learn to do this, as well as learners. In essence, a dialogic, interactive process is suggested, instead of the teacher saying this is what we're doing. Learner's self-assessing, e.g. in relation to 'can do' statements was central, if learners were to feel that they could gradually take control of learning the language. Mentor A commented that the 'can do' statements really motivated her learners. After a unit, learners were amazed when they reflected on what they could do!

Mentor B made the point that the syllabus allows for this kind of decision-making process re themes, activities etc. unlike some other subjects in the curriculum. Autonomous learning happens, Patrick suggested growing spontaneous language use, in the context of tasks in the language class, reflects growing learner autonomy, and that is our goal. The teacher and the E.L.P are there to support this
process of development over time, on the part of the learner. Patrick outlined the themes of the Biography section: General aims; checklist of target skills; setting goals and thinking about learning; things I notice about language and culture; how I solve communication problems. Patrick reminded the group of how Mentor B’s strategy of paraphrasing an unknown term, using simpler language, ‘using context, headings, visuals’ - suggestions from group, could go under, ‘how I solve communication problems.’ The work that learners engaged in e.g. e-mailing one another, in relating to the ‘assistante’, and other students from the target community, could be noted under, ‘things I notice about the language and culture.’

All agreed that having learners share responsibility was a worthwhile goal, but that the extent of teachers being able to do so depended on the ability of the class. The self-assessment check lists, one suggested, helped learners to see that the language learning process was their responsibility as well. Reflective practice, all agreed, was a useful way for the H. Dip in Ed. student to learn as a teacher, and a useful way for the ‘mentor’ teacher to interact with him/her, and a useful way for us in the focus group to develop e.g. asking questions: what? why? how? How can I improve? What is my next objective?

The concept of a whole school approach was mentioned. Mentor A mentioned that she might be able to discuss with other language teachers about their participation in such a project. Patrick mentioned that it would be really useful for H. Dip students and that, in his opinion, it would be useful for language learners too.

Theme 4. Target Language Acquisition.

In this context, Mentor B made reference to the Gael Scoil, and how learners learn the language in everyday use of language, ‘the natural way’. It was suggested that this would seem to be the ideal way to learn a language, as learners communicate in a variety of contexts and use the language for a range of functions. Authentic language was understood as involving learners in using the language to fulfill a communicative purpose, language with a social purpose. Mentor C agreed, and stated that actual everyday use of the target language is of great benefit to learners in learning Irish. Patrick asked the question, as to how teachers there present, encourage target language proficiency? Mentor B made reference to the approach that she uses by giving an example of learners coming across an unknown word/term. Mentor B explains the term in the target language, ‘at a simpler level’; by miming; by charades. All agreed that this type of strategy is useful in exposing the learner to authentic language and that it works.

Language use for everyday classroom routines was mentioned e.g. Darf ich…? Puis-je…? (Mentors A and B). Teachers expressed how they had been somewhat surprised themselves to learn how naturally learners learned terms in this way, to communicate their own message. The value of encouraging learners to express their meanings in tasks, seems to be central to language learning, rather than having them regurgitate scripted dialogues, one suggested. All agreed. Developing cultural awareness, as part
of language learning, all agreed, was an important part of language teaching and learning. Patrick mentioned that intercultural awareness was becoming a significant part of the language teacher's work. He asked how each tried to achieve the goal of teaching cultural awareness? Mentors A and B and Mentor A made reference to the fact that in their school they have a language assistant. This adds to the perception by learners that language learning is a 'natural' process, and 'not artificial' (Mentor B). A system has been set up that allows learners communicate with a partner school in Koln, Germany via e mail. This helps to integrate language development and cultural awareness. In addition, there is an exchange system between their school (Presentation Secondary school) and one in Germany. Students come over from Germany and France and spend several weeks in their school. The effect of this is that language learning is perceived by learners as a natural process, especially when someone of the learners' own age is using the language. It is useful in many ways e.g. vocabulary building, pronunciation. Mentor A mentioned that it takes away the fear element, and enhances learner motivation and enthusiasm. Mentor D made reference to the fact that she is involved with teaching non nationals, and makes use of a version of the E.L.P. in her teaching.

In relation to the question, posed by Patrick, with respect to the teaching of language skills, reading, writing, listening and speaking, oral-aural interaction, Mentor B mentioned that she introduces listening texts and then speaking, and that, then, she proceeds to reading and writing. Mentor A intimated that she sees reading input as important, from the beginning, and that she begins there. She sees reading input as a good way of developing vocabulary. Patrick said that what both seemed to be saying was that exposing learners to authentic input was important, before learners were expected to produce language. All agreed that striking a balance between input and output was important. Mentor B and others gave examples of getting the learners to do things was important in language learning e.g. pair work; using visuals; drawing weather maps; posters; showing maps; labelling diagrams. Mentor D and Mentor C agreed.

Mentor C made reference to the recent inspections carried out in her school (K). She found the experience positive and helpful, and she discussed the E.L.P. with an inspector. In addition, they were interested in French in L.C.V.P. Patrick mentioned how the modern language inspectorate's recent report, 'Inspection of Modern Languages: Observations and Issues' recommends the E.L.P. 'as one of the most valuable instruments to for the promotion of learner autonomy' (p. 22); that it is central to the recently published discussion document, 'Languages in the Post primary curriculum,' published by the N.C.C.A.

Mentor D made reference to the fact that she uses an E.L.P. with non-nationals and that there is new version coming out next year. She has done some background reading on the E.L.P. and stressed the need to engage in the reading process.

Theme 5: Modifications to the Design of E.L.P. A brief discussion on how to use the E.L.P. was carried out. All suggested that the E.L.P. could be made more user-friendly. Mentor D made reference
to the new version for non-nationals, that is not as complex looking as the post primary version. Patrick reminded the group of the three functions of the E.L.P.: passport for reporting, which could be done at the beginning of a session, and that one could come to it at the end of the year; Biography, and Dossier. Mentor D wondered about the Self Assessment Grid, and if learners would move to any significant degree between the levels (A1, A2 etc.) in the course of the year. Patrick outlined what the levels meant in terms of the Junior and Leaving certificate. Mentor D wondered how often would one use the E.L.P. Others in the group suggested that at beginning and end of a unit, chapter, or theme from the syllabus would be appropriate. Patrick mentioned that when discussing the E.L.P. with his H. Dip. in Ed. students, he portrayed as a ‘flexible process tool,’ and that one should not see it as a book to complete. Mentor B wondered if one should distribute the pages of the E.L.P. according to objectives of particular lesson, as a part of theme/unit. All her students use folders in her class, she said. Patrick suggested that she could adapt the themes of E.L.P. to the purpose she has for using folders, and allow the portfolio to grow. The ‘can do’ checklists could be incorporated into the process that she was using. Mentor C found that the E.L.P. helped organise her learners’ work.

Future Planning.

Mentors A, B, C are interested in using the E.L.P. next year and in being part of a focus group. Mentor A suggested that she would see if other language teachers would like to use the E.L.P. in a whole school approach. Mentor D, while interested, mentioned that she might not have a class next year with whom to use the E.L.P. She will check with Mentor E and [another teacher], and Patrick will, if they would be interested. Mentor B mentioned that she would like to see a presentation by a teacher who has used the E.L.P. in class. Patrick agreed, and said that it was important for teachers and H. Dip. in Ed. students to have an induction.

Conclusion.

All agreed that we learn by interacting with one another and agreed to meet up in September, when Patrick would inform the group of the response he had from other ‘mentor’ teachers whom he has contacted, in the context of taking part in a focus group, from ’04-’05.

If you agree that the above minutes represent a fair and accurate account of the meeting of ‘mentor’ teachers, on May 19, ’04, please sign your name below. If you wish to make comments, please feel free to do so, under ‘Comments’ section.

NAME SIGNATURE DATE COMMENTS
(Signed and dated by all parties)
Initial Planning Meeting with Target Language Tutors. 29 October, 2003.


Patrick Farren. I thought it would be a good idea to get us around the table again because we haven't met since September? Was our last meeting when we discussed... a common approach to semester course teaching classes....with modern language student-teachers.
Can we remember some of the points, key points that came out of that meeting?

Tutor B. We talked about the positive things that would come along with the introduction of this portfolio

Tutor A. Right.

Patrick Farren. And we all have one, an ELP and I've given one to all the H. Dip. students, Spanish, French, German as well. You're actually using it in your class. How do you use it, or how do you feel?

Tutor A. The feedback from the students is very negatively generally. Instead of working against them I decided to invite them to criticise it.

Patrick Farren. Good, good, good

Tutor A. At the beginning, we decided to look at the Passport. Many things. The layout, too professional.

Patrick Farren. The design.

Tutor A. Especially for post-primary.

Patrick Farren. They were thinking about how this would appeal to post-primary students in the classroom.

Tutor A. And they thought they would have to remake it because it wouldn't really appeal to them at all.

Patrick Farren. Right, I understand.

Tutor A. And then...we started working on the Biography last week. And instead of...being with the paper cause everyone wants to chat more than anything else
Patrick Farren. Yes.

Tutor A. We just brought up the questions and started talking about them, 'Why did you learn Spanish?'
All sorts of strange anecdotes and funny outcomes

Patrick Farren. Well, that's useful. I suppose sometimes we look at the portfolio as a kind of product whereas what you are doing by getting them to discuss, why did you take up Spanish, French? that's the process which I suppose is at the heart of the Biography How did that discussion go?

Tutor A. At the beginning of the course I asked them what they wanted to do with this class. So this has taken last fifteen, twenty minute end of the class. The rest of the class was devoted to some things that they wanted to discuss, grammar...role-plays and stuff. Its a sort brainstorming, everybody thinks about... asks free range discussion. Right now, we're at the skills part. Because they wanted to practise grammar and I wanted them to think about that I have incorporated an exercise that goes with that skill e.g. next week they have oral conversations I am using a tape and they can talk about the tape and I'm going to give them some questions and they can think about how much they could understand what they've learned from the tape and then they can fill out (in ELP) one of these skills, just one.

Patrick Farren. Right, Right.

Tutor A. I'll introduce it little by little.

Patrick Farren. I think that's the way to do it, a good way. Like taking something out of freezer or a fridge. You don't take out everything at the same time...you take out one particular item and you might unwrap it and say let's look at this 'how would this help us?' There might be some particular area of the Biography which is like a diary where they keep a record and reflect on their learning. I think that's the way to do it. Its a pedagogical tool for that reason

Tutor A. And keep always open the possibility that the next day they can say this was ridiculous, this didn't help me at all. 'I don't think . We can...'.Because they're really against it.

Tutor B. Absolutely. They see more work for them. They think none of the students would be really honest.

Patrick Farren. They're looking at it now from the perspective of their post-primary student.

Tutor B. Yeah. Its the main....main....
Patrick Farren. Criticism?

Tutor B. Criticism, more work

Patrick Farren. For their post-primary learners?

Tutor B. And for themselves. To look after it... and to check it, if they did it right or if they did something wrong

Patrick Farren. OK I'm interested in the right or wrong issue. Sometimes we tend to think that there's a right and there's a wrong. So maybe we need to- its not a homework- maybe we need to push that idea that the ELP isn't a right or wrong...what its meant to be is...

Tutor B. Its a record.

Patrick Farren. Its a support or a record. So maybe, we need to develop that, maybe I, in my classes need to develop more of that awareness building of the purposes of the ELP.

Tutor B. Ehm. (in agreement).

Patrick Farren. Even though they've heard a presentation on it and I've tried to link language acquisition theory with the learning theory underlying the ELP. Sometimes the idea of the course is to give them experience of using it for their own learning. So that by using it themselves it should help them to develop their way of using it in the classroom...what I find useful for me in language learning... maybe if I use something like that it would work. It puts them in the position of learners in your classroom...can I use this as a learner? and then , maybe it will help me to understand the problems that my students might have also.

Tutor C. In my group, they don't want to use it in the conversation class. because they feel that it is really a conversation class... they just want to talk about any topical issue of the day, just to hear me speak French, them speaking French. I had to divide the group. I had problems with the room. I only started really this week. So, it s been difficult. The thing is that...what they want is just to talk to each other and I'm here as a reference. So, I can give a French opinion on the topic. I can say, 'its not gramatically correct'. But I'm just here, outside the group, just to supervise

Patrick Farren. Faciltate.

Tutor C. I think that it is a real conversation class and they do really well. But they don't want to include the ELP in that class. And they feel that it would be artificial to put it here. The first time we had a conversation about it. But they don't want to use it in that class. Maybe, for other purposes, but
not in that class. I feel that what they do now, that it would be artificial and it would put some pressure and break the dynamism we have.

Patrick Farren. What you're saying there is that your class is obviously topic or theme related. So that, do they take a theme each week?

Tutor C. I'm coming in and I ask, 'What do you want to talk about?' And they look at each other. They think about anything...its real conversation...many topics are discussed.

Patrick Farren. That's the part that I'm thinking about' in relation to the ELP. When you go into a class and you say, 'What do you want to talk about? What I'm thinking about is that we might discuss themes that would relate to their work in the schools, topics that would correspond to their needs as teachers in the classroom. They have to reflect on that and that's the ELP! Planning...what are my goals? what activities can we do that can relate to these goals? what particular skills can we address? It could be any topic and its systematically done. You could use the syllabus of the Leaving Certificate or whichever, and, e.g. they say, 'We'd like to talk about travel and transport'. 'What are our goals for that?' 'What are our objectives?' 'Language targets?' how are we going to achieve these? what kind of activities will we do? will it be, will we get newspaper articles about travel and transport in France? will we use audio-cassette recordings?' This is what the ELP is about. And so, its not that they have to write in your class. They can go home then after taking a note of what they have set out in the class as their objectives, and find out how they will achieve it. And as they are doing it in a subsequent class...they can then start to see how effective it is. They can reflect at the end of the class, 'how effective was that in achieving the objective? and how can we improve it?' So, these are the key questions. I think we need to make it clear that we don't have to have them writing,, but out of a discussion they can go home then...

Tutor C. It is up to them to do that.

Patrick Farren. Exactly, exactly. So just...I think you are right. Everyone wants to talk and we need to say, well, 'what issues do we want to discuss during the course of the year? Set up some kind of a structure, systematic, theme-based approach.

People could be given different responsibilities. So, em could be in charge of listening. 'If you get something on travel and transport, take it in', or if its newspaper cuttings, train-time-tables, then we can reflect on how effective was it. They see it as a product rather than something that emerges from natural discussion.

(The remainder of this discussion revolved around H. Dip and A.D.O. administrative issues that were not seen as relevant to this study)
Language Tutors’ Meeting
A and C, and Patrick (Farren)
14th January 2004

Patrick. We have {Tutors A and C], semester course [language] teachers. It’s the 14th of January 2004. The meeting is to get us together after the new year and to review progress. The students as you know had two weeks of observation at the beginning of the year in a post-primary school they had also got a one week induction course in the beginning of September. So that took us up into the end of September the beginning of October. So we really only had October and November and one or two weeks in December involving ourselves in the process of what this teaching using the European Language Portfolio.

Tutor C. I have to say that for me it’s a bit different because we only started in October so I got one month less.

Patrick. You began teaching in October.

Tutor C. We tried to start before but the group was huge so we couldn’t do anything and then we had to change and divide the group. And then we had problems with the rooms so we started end of October only.

Patrick. I remember you had such a big group you had to divide the French in two.

Tutor C. Still a big group.

Patrick. All of these mechanical problems, of getting the organisational problems of getting people together. The year is so short so it’s interesting to put that in context really. Because now they are out on block release so we don’t have them at all for another four weeks after this week, so they are out there for five weeks altogether. So it will be mid February before they are back and they are only back then for three or four weeks before they are back out again. So it’s quite a broken up year. But in that process what I am trying to do is, in your role, what we were trying to develop is putting them into a learners’ seat and say ‘what is it like to use the portfolio as a learner’; so when they would go out to post primary schools they would have an empathy and an awareness and I suppose an attitude of what it was like to be a learner rather than using it as a teacher. So I am very happy and grateful for you for taking that on because it’s not simple to come in and start up with a new framework. We have had a couple of meetings as you know with kind of building in the background of the processes involved in using the portfolio. So I gave you out a little questionnaire at the end of September and I have received that back from you and I can go through that and I want to just thank you for that. I am also going to fill you in now basically. I’m also giving a
questionnaire out, I am involving some supervisors in the process as well. They are going into schools and they are supervising teaching practice. So it’s important that they are aware of what language learning with the portfolio is about, communicative language teaching and reflective practice, planning, monitoring, assessing, recording, observing in the biography what they notice about cultural aspects of the country. How they overcome communication problems, methods that they used to learn languages, things like that that go in there. Setting new targets, monitoring with the check list ‘I can do the following’ this is what we set ourselves out and then making sure that they self assess and then setting new targets as a result. So it’s quite a interesting framework but it takes a little bit of time to get used to it.

Just to throw it open at this stage after I have just mentioned the background and also the semester course teachers or the supervisors are involved in it. Another third party who are involved in it are the mentor teachers who are working in the schools. They are cooperating teachers who play a role in advising the young teacher as to how to go about, the H. Dip teacher is taking their class so they work together. But it’s not really what you would call, there’s no policy, or no particular principal, it depends very much on the personalities and timing and well whatever you think or do it this way. So there’s a mixed experience there. So the idea is to try to see if we can make the process of language teaching a little bit more coherent and more systematic and that’s why I am involving you people because they are learning the language from you and that should have a knock on effect on how they use the language in class. And the cooperating teachers I have a meeting with them on Monday with the sequential teachers in particular because they are all around Galway... how have you felt it’s gone, are you getting used to it?

Tutor A. Myself, not really. I have difficulties of integrating the portfolio in the class. And I think that it’s difficult also for them to assess themselves thanks to the grids we have in the portfolio because they have acquired a very good level of French and so their targets are so different from the targets you can find in the portfolio.

Patrick. Oh yes of course they would be because that’s basically for ...

Tutor A. That’s what I think was difficult for them. They can do everything because the level is for post primary. So I think it was difficult to use it also because of that. I don’t think it’s well adapted for that kind of student. But it still has this aim about making them thinking about teaching and learning that’s for sure. But really to use the portfolio I think is difficult.

Patrick. Good for you yeah. That’s an interesting point because it’s something that in the little blue book called ‘Common European Framework’ it gives you the grids, the levels of C1 and C2 and what I can do it photocopy them and get them over to you because that would be more appropriate probably.

Tutor C. I went to the website and got them off and then when we were working on skills because I set
every session for a different skill. I got into the portfolio and I designed the C2 and the C1 exactly as they come but in a photocopy and I passed them onto them and leaving some slots because they might think of things that I haven’t thought of. So we did it that way and now what I ask them we finished skills so we still had the long card there so what I told them to do was to fill those parts now in their block release time so they are basically done with all the biography when we come back. And then they can start reviewing it for the oral and we will do more of the practical, we are going to play roles and do more practical things.

Patrick. I think that’s what both of you said is very interesting because that takes us to a new level. And I think maybe the temptation is to see the portfolio as something that contains learning inside the folder of a portfolio whereas what you are saying is it’s role play and active. I think you are getting some of them involved in drama as well?

Tutor C. There’s three right now. There are two in (M) right now and one here. So they are in a play and they are going to be in on and off but I have some contact with them.

Patrick. And the name of the play?

Tutor C. ‘Los Figurantes’ – it’s a famous movie they have it in the library about him, but he is not very well known outside of …

Patrick. So that’s interesting because that will build into their …

Tutor C. Especially the last part, the cultural experience. We’ll see what they do with the drama, fit it in or not. Whether they talk about it.

Patrick. It would be lovely to video record that and they could keep it in a Dossier as evidence of work, of cultural awareness.

Tutor C. They have it on tape because we taped it in December before leaving so that they can learn their lines.

Patrick. I think those points are very useful certainly what you say is very useful too because it’s something that I have to admit I kind of overlooked – the levels. Because when you are not actually teaching the language you kind of expect the portfolio but then when you are actually in the classroom and you are teaching you realise these students are on a different level to post-primary… I hope!

Tutor C. I think it would be very interesting to hear Tutor B because I remember her talking about her ( ) students were far lower level than ours. So, but some even better.
Patrick. I remember she did mention it, it depends very much on the level. But it’s just to make us aware that there is a book called ‘Common European Framework of Reference’ and you can download it. I can get it photocopied for you. It would be useful for you. For them rather than for you.

Tutor C. It’s still a bit loose, it’s not very detailed, so it’s a bit complicated to really come to an objective assessment of it.

Patrick. You’ve got to kind of break down the general descriptors, abstract into sort of little, focus it on particular countries ….

Tutor C. Which is easy in a year course, but evaluating one skill or one point because that’s the time we have it’s a bit more difficult.

Patrick. And then you have them for one hour a week? Which over eight weeks is only eight classes and by the time you get organised it’s not easy. At least it puts them centre stage. It makes them aware that this is something that’s not an extra and they need to think about it and plan and see. Even the problems of scales and assessing themselves gives them an idea of what it must be like for learners out there. So they might think of a way, a creative way of helping learners to self assess. It could be by putting up a big poster.

Tutor A. Well I think they really have this reflection on learning and teaching..Because when we are talking because we have a very free conversation class and we are talking about that what do you do with your students for those who have some. And you can see that they try to find things interesting and they have a real reflection on that that’s for sure.

Patrick. That’s great so thanks for all your work you have put in. The students are very appreciative of that. What I did this morning I photocopied, I was at a presentation given by (S) last year and she gave us a little presentation on portfolio learning and I thought at this point it would be quite useful just to give you a copy of it. Really page 3 to page 9 and it sets out how planning is necessary, planning questions, and it gives a model of how the portfolio can be used and that’s on page 4. Where at the top of page four you have a circle, and it puts the ELP in the centre and the curriculum feeds into the ELP, learning in and out of the ELP, assessment demands in and out of the ELP, and teachers in and out of the ELP. And do you know what I think would be interesting? Semester course teachers ‘feeding’ in and out there too. Methodologists ‘feeding’ in and out of there too and of course we have the learners both post primary learners and teachers who are on the H. Dip. So that is a model of it, it might systematize the framework for us and help us to move forward when we meet up with them again. At least we’ll have a structure that we will say well I’m going to give this to teachers as well in school so that we have an idea that we can overcome some of the problems that (M) mentioned she met when she began with the ELP. And on the right hand side are some notes that I took during the presentation. You can read them, ignore them or whatever,
but that's kind of useful.

Tutor A. What I think also is difficult in using the ELP during the class is that I don't have more experience that they have with the ELP. So just discovering like them and sometimes it's difficult even for me to understand what they need to know how to use it.

Patrick. I agree totally with you and I think that is something, I suppose it's like starting with a new vehicle that you haven't driven before, you have to learn a lot of the functions and a lot of the rules and basic mechanics and then you can actually move from A to B a lot more easily and comfortably after a period of time. So it's kind of natural I suppose, it'll take time for us to get used to it. But I think one particular goal like plurilingualism is useful within a European framework, lifelong learning. Like if they are doing French and German and Spanish and Italian or Japanese or whatever language is in the school, it can develop a whole school approach to language Learning Because at the moment it appears very fragmented. People are doing English think everything they learn in the language there is separate from French. People who are learning French think it is separate from Spanish. There are lots of overlaps, that if they were using a portfolio in French, German Spanish, English and Irish they could actually see similarities and patterns developing and approaches of how they were learning the language, communication issues, cultural aspects.

Tutor A. I remember I had one that I couldn't answer. It's 6, 7, 8, 9 because as I said I can't assess now what we have done with the ELP. It is too early in the year for me to say.

Patrick. Has the ELP helped the learners take more responsibility, more ownership?

Tutor A. For me it's too early to say.

Patrick. Those are questions that we might keep in mind as we go through the next term at the end of May. And it's only to take us up to speed on that. Thanks very much.

Meeting with Target Language Tutor A and Patrick (Researcher)
May 2004.

Patrick. OK, so this is in the context of the semester course language teaching. You took the ( ). And of course any data findings or anything will not be entered in your name so its confidential. OK its in the context of academic research, Ph.D. research that I am carrying out and your input is very valuable

Patrick. Could you describe basically for us, first of all, the kind of group that you taught on the Spanish course?
Tutor A. They were about 10-15 highly proficient students in Spanish though some I would say were more B1 or B2 but most were an A and we used to have our meetings in a room in the Concourse building which is a very horrible building for me and

Patrick. Would they have been a mixed age?

Tutor A. Yea, well that's difficult to say. They were in their 20s and 30s I would say

Patrick OK, with respect to your own teaching approach using the ELP, could you tell us what learner-centeredness or a learner-centered approach meant for you?

Tutor A. Well, they actually designed the course themselves so like I gave them a questionnaire and they decided what they wanted to do with the course and then I filled with I wanted from then on and what they wanted as well. So yea that was my view.

Patrick. Interesting.. Do you think your students benefitted from that approach?

Tutor A. Yes, because it's a very high level already. It's not really one or two level. Last year only a few would be able to follow. All could benefit from it. So they all had their chance to say I want to improve this or I have a problem with this. And in itself, some of them had never thought about that. They just wanted to sit down and be fed.

Patrick. Did you find that negotiating and dialoguing with your learners about aims content and activities made the learning more appealing for them?

Tutor A. Yes, I think it did. At least, it made them more responsible, as a structure of learning as a whole, like you know what I mean. They weren't very happy with the portfolio themselves this year but they definitely applied it as not in previous years.

Patrick. In terms of autonomous learning, what has reflective practice, as supported by the ELP, contributed to your own teaching?

Tutor A. I think it's been the tool that I have always used because I'm not coming from an Education department background. I'm coming from a Spanish department background. So, what I taught and what I wrote and what I worked with, what they told me, so its kind of like its always been my tool in a way.

Patrick. Did you find it flexible, useful or?

Tutor A. It sometimes was too time consuming like because with so many teaching hours and so on.
Patrick. With the semester course students, we’re talking about the H. Dip. students, OK, do you think it helped the them to take an increasing level of responsibility for their learning?

Tutor A. I am totally certain about that. Like at the end of the course you have people asking you I want C levels of Spanish teacher for I am having difficulty with that so I would go ahead with it.

Patrick. Do you think...in terms of literacy of the learner-teacher, what would your comments be about their literacy development?

Tutor A. Certain aspects were more developed. Like, I think in the whole course basically they took on more responsibility but I’m not sure we had a structure of global literacy approach. At least I think it pointed out their weaknesses and they then could take it from there

Patrick. In terms of language use, what’s your own view on language use in the class?

Tutor A. Especially in this one I think it has to be more lingual in Spanish

Patrick. In class, even when they are planning their aims and roles or thinking about the language?

Tutor A. Yes, like the levels was so high as well Like this year I have one person that is not that high, tends to speak English as well. So I think it’s a more confident approach if you have a problem. Last year there was absolutely no problem in negotiating in Spanish I didn’t think it would benefit them especially like some of them had application courses as well so they could use the skills they had before

Patrick. In terms of the ELP, what would you say is the big advantage to it, or is there something that you recall?

Tutor A. Well, from a personal level education I think is best. I love it. Well like my own students think I am daft or something like that in their questionnaires. Its definitely needed. In terms of Secondary (schools), I think it’s a hard process too because I don’t think the awareness or the reflective skills are there so they need to be very, very, slowly introduced to it. I think especially in terms of languages its definitely a good tool.

Patrick. OK. Is there any modification that you think or development or change that could be made to the ELP to improve it in your view?

Tutor A. I think its more a matter of personalising it, like learning what it is about and using it whenever you want and whenever you feel it is important to use it.
Meeting between Tutor B and Patrick (Researcher)
May 2004

Patrick. Welcome Tutor B, Semester Course Language teacher, German teacher with the H. Dip students. Thank you very much for coming along and I want to interview you Tutor B. It's a semi-structured interview in the context of using the European Language Portfolio, the ELP, in the context of the semester language course, German course that you taught to the H. Dip students. Perhaps you could first of all give us the context Tutor B. Could you describe the context in which you were teaching the ELP, the H. Dip. students, their level, your own appreciation of that.

Tutor B. I got to know about the ELP at the beginning of this last semester.

Patrick. It was October '03 was it?

Tutor B. Yeah, October '03, when I got first insight into this and I got another chance to buy a short lecture from someone from Dublin.

Patrick. That's right, Manolis.

Tutor B. Yes, who started, I think.

Patrick. Yes he's the national coordinator.

Tutor B. So I thought of it as a very very good approach. First of all of course to think about Europe in a different context, make it more in a personal, yeah to make it more personal by learning a language, a European language, and secondly, I think that one of the main goals as a teacher is that you should enable your learners for becoming life long learners, independent learners and this ELP really gives you good tools to enable students to structure their own learning.

Q1. Right, what would you say about the level of learners you were teaching, the HDip students, Tutor B?

Tutor B. I had all kinds of levels. In my group I had very advanced speakers, I had intermediate speakers but I had also students who were more on the beginning level. And so for them it was quite difficult to approach this project.

Q2. That can be useful just to give us the background context because that could have a bearing on their use of the portfolio and so on. Let's go on then to a learner-engaged approach. In the context of
your own teaching approach Tutor B, can you explain first of all what you mean by the concept, or understand by the concept ‘a learner centred approach’ using the ELP?

Tutor B. First of all, if you and I think this is more easy to do and to achieve with people who already started to learn a language. But first to become aware what do I have to learn to achieve certain goals. And of course when I already started with learning a language I have a better awareness of how I can structure these learning processes. Well for beginners I think in the beginning it is just all new and it seems difficult. Or you just have to structure much more as a teacher than when someone knows, I already know how to greet someone, how to say or to say how I feel about myself and things like that. So the self centred learning, if I can make aware people of how they can use the language in which context they can use the language, and not just this is the new lecture or we have to, or the new chapter we have to go through. It can be more transparent for them and they can maybe think on their own how to achieve these goals.

Patrick. Do you think Tutor B that the ELP, European Language Portfolio, supported this approach, this learner centred approach in you semester course? The aspects that you mentioned – do you think the ELP was useful in that regard?

Tutor B. Especially for my learner group, for my students? Overall I think yes. Although for HDip.’s it’s a very difficult situation because some of them do teach the whole year through while others are just in blocks. And so for the block students it is especially difficult to think ahead what could be an interesting topic. And also my impression is they didn’t get right from the beginning the syllabus for the whole school year and so they don’t know really where to start and where the students they maybe teach either for the whole year or maybe just in block where they can approach them.

Patrick. I understand. They are not quite sure if they are going to have first year, second year, junior cert., transition year, leaving certificate, which year so it hard to know what aspects. Other aspects that you mentioned Tutor B in a learner-centred approach, do you think, you were talking about transparency and so on, do you think the ELP supported those aspects?

Tutor B. Oh yeah, oh yeah. I think that just to talk about things that are hidden in every text book or so there are these ideas somehow involved in, if you have the more communicative approach to learn and teach a language. But to talk about especially how can I get my students interested in it? And how can I keep them interested? If they can set their own goals and if I can set up a framework where they can do more partner work or do work in small groups so that even in classes you usually have not homogene classes, you have classes of different levels. And so the portfolio could really help with that as well.

Q4/5. OK. In terms of learner empowerment, you mentioned there partnering and group work and pair work, I am just wondering about the ELP, have you found in using the ELP that dialoguing and
negotiating with your own learners, the H. Dip students about what you were saying, the aims, the contents, the activities and so on, do you think that this process was made, that the language learning was made more appealing in this way?

Tutor B. For themselves or for becoming a teacher?

Patrick. Well, both perhaps, yes. For themselves in terms of did it make language learning, language acquisition, language practice, language skills, negotiating with you and dialoguing with you about the aims, the activities, the content, did that make their own language learning more appealing to them and would it have helped them maybe to teach in a similar way?

Tutor B. I hope so.

Patrick. Good, short answer!

Tutor B. What I usually do is I try to find out so that they become also aware of what kind of learner they are, do they learn more by listening, do they learn better by reading, do they learn by seeing things in advertisements or whatever? So that they become aware that you have different learner types in your classroom and to really do an overall approach so that every student can really benefit from what you are doing. You should always have the whole approach. You should always have something to write, something to listen to, something, of course, to say too, using your aural skills.

Patrick. Can you think of any other effects that this interactive process had on your learners, the HDip students?

Tutor B. In the beginning most of them, I think because the whole situation is new and they have to be aware and master so many new things it seems to be as a load on top and to make really clear and try to explain how they can approach it in a way that it makes it more useful for them. It’s not, I think, not as a burden on top but as a very helpful tool. I would see it as a tool but as a beginning teacher I think it’s really tough as a student teacher to be with it right from the beginning.

Q6. In terms of autonomous learning – what has reflective practice, planning, monitoring, evaluating one’s own learning, self assessing in terms of ‘can do’ statements, what has that contributed to the teaching and learning process in your classroom?

Tutor B. I think a better awareness of what learning a language as a process means. Usually students maybe just copy what they know from their former teacher, from their former language teacher and if it was successful they think ‘this is a good method’ or ‘this is how we learn a language’ and I think that the ELP really helps to reflect maybe a different, not just maybe, a different approach towards a new language.
Patrick. So, they are not just taking somebody else’s, they are developing their own sense.

Tutor B. At least it gives them opportunity to think about.

Q7. Do you think that the ELP has helped your learners to take an increasing level of responsibility for their own learning?

Tutor B. Because I start right away to make them aware what it means to be a language teacher it may have, I can’t say that for sure. But usually this is a standard process or one of the main ideas that really runs through the whole.

Patrick. That would be teacher training, trying to get teacher education, trying to get them to take a responsible role in their own progress?

Tutor B. Yes.

Patrick. Would you think that the ELP supported that in a gradual way in terms of language learning? Would it have helped them to take more and more or to show them how they can take more and more responsibility for their own learning over time?

Tutor B. To be honest, I don’t know.

Q8. Ok, that’s fine. In terms of language acquisition Tutor B, a concept of authentic language use, maybe you could tell us what your understanding first of all of authentic language is?

Tutor B. At least to know the difference between written, the written language and the spoken language, I think that makes a big difference. And also authentic that you have an idea experienced yourself how culture, politics, social life are transported by language in the country of the language.

Patrick. Would you be aware, maybe you could share with us how you think authentic language would mean in the classroom? How would you use authentic language? How would you expose your learners to authentic language?

Tutor B. There are many, many ways to do that. You can use tapes, you can use songs, you can use all kinds of materials of course from the target language or from the target country to include this to really give them proficiency.

Patrick. Do you think that the ELP supported learners in developing their target language proficiency through authentic language use?
Tutor B. I think it pushed them into the right direction, to become aware because we are members of the EU so there is a transfer of products for example and so it’s more easy than ever or easier to, for example, look at labels and see the different languages, just as an example.

Patrick. Would the target language in your class, how would you have used the target language, authentic language, in your class? What would language use have meant in your class?

Tutor B. The main goal of my class is to make or to let my students speak as much as possible so every little event, every little thing that really brings them to use the target language is more than....

Patrick. Would the ELP have been used in the context of helping learners, would the target language, would German, have been used by your learners in planning, in monitoring, checking how they are getting on, in setting goals, setting objectives, setting targets, self assessing, would they have used the target German language?

Tutor B. During class we really used the target language but of course it’s just the normal way as long as you are not really into the language you still translate.

Patrick. In terms of setting goals and targets, in terms of self assessing, would they have done that through the medium of German?

Tutor B. Absolutely.

Patrick. What was the result of that? What effect do you think that, using German in communication in the classroom in planning, in monitoring, in reflecting on their learning, what effect do you think that had on their development of target language proficiency?

Tutor B. I hope that they achieve a better basic of vocabulary. That they got to know more idiomatic patterns and just in comparing English with German for example.

Patrick. Language awareness and that?

Tutor B. Become more aware of differences.

Q13. In light of your experience as a teacher using the ELP in your class, what changes or modifications, if any, would you like to be made to the design, the structure and/or the contents of the portfolio?

Tutor B. I think in the beginning it looks a little bit maybe overwhelming for people who are used to these kind of terms and who are not used to reflecting in this way about how to structure things or how
to .... It might look a little bit overwhelming, like ‘oh all these pages I have to fill out and to think about and to be aware’, so I think a good start especially for the HDip’s in the beginning would be maybe to cut it in smaller pieces.

Patrick. Could you expand or explain what you mean by smaller pieces? There are three parts to it – you’ve got the passport, the biography and the dossier – are you suggesting that one of them would be left out? One section?

Tutor B. Maybe, I would start with the biography and then add up in little ...

Patrick. So, if I go into a classroom Tutor B with a portfolio, I have one here, if I take this into the classroom, what changes would you make to the portfolio as it is?

Tutor B. I think that the pages are too full. So less would be better. It’s not just, especially for students in school, I think it looks overwhelming. It looks more like officially ...

Patrick. An official document?

Tutor B. Exactly, yes, like a form they have to fill out and not something that can be inspiring or ....

Q13. Would you have any suggestions about how you think, in light of your experience, it could be made more inspiring? I fully accept the points you have already made, I think those are interesting. What would make it more appealing or inspiring in your view, Tutor B?

Tutor B. For adults I think you can keep it like it is but for students it should be one thing at a time and maybe with pictures.

Patrick. You mention pictures, you mention simplifying the contents, instead of having it so full up you would have less headings, fewer headings perhaps?

Tutor B. Fewer headings, yes.

Patrick. You also mentioned something about some of the language?

Tutor B. Simplify the language a little bit, yes.

Patrick. Fine thanks, that’s great. I am just wondering now, in terms of your own learning because teaching is a very developmental job like most jobs, so I am just wondering if I could ask you a couple of questions about your own learning in the context of using the ELP with the HDip students. What
has it meant for you, autonomous learning comes up about becoming an autonomous learner, what does that concept mean for you first of all, Tutor B, autonomous learning?

Tutor B. As I said in the beginning I think it is one of the main goals that I try to achieve as a teacher.

Patrick. As a learner, as a teacher using the ELP, if I can put it like that, how has working with the ELP helped you in your own learning as a teacher of German on the semester course?

Tutor B. To look at the learning process of a language in a more systematic way and to really bring the attention of my students to, maybe even tiny little things, because overall we talked quite a lot about keeping the interest of students alive and I think that when you say that even tiny little successes should be mentioned usually as a teacher you are seen as someone who is teaching something and in the end there will be an evaluation about this. And so that's unfortunately the approach. It's not about the thing or in this case the language and the culture it's more about 'ok at the end we have to have a test and we have to have so many vocabulary learned' and so on and so on. And I think that the portfolio makes it a more broadened approach.

Patrick. Would you say that the term 'literacy' would have a role there? Would you say that this has helped you and your learners to broaden their concept or broaden the understanding of what literacy means?

Tutor B. Maybe.

Patrick. I'm just thinking in terms of how people communicate, their skills in communicating and reading and writing, we usually just think of it as just reading and writing, but there are other aspects as you were mentioning there. That it involves them as a person sharing their understandings rather than doing something because they have to get tested by somebody else. In other words, would you say that it has helped them to personalise the learning process?

Tutor B. I would hope because if they really achieve that I think they become better teachers.

Patrick. Would you say that the ELP has supported you in dialoguing and sharing understandings about various cultural contexts with your learners?

Tutor B. After clarification and really trying to keep it simple, yes I think so.

Patrick. What was the big challenge that you found as a teacher on the semester course with respect to the portfolio? What was the really big challenge for you?

Tutor B. To really make clear that the portfolio is not something on top, that it should be seen as help and as a tool how to approach language learning.
Patrick. Just to finish then, in terms of self-assessment ‘can do’, did you find any, did you use it for helping the learners to self-assess themselves? To self-assess their own language learning?

Tutor B. No, not really.

Patrick. Thanks.

Tutor B. I should have! (laughs)

Patrick. No, I’m not saying you should have but they might have done, that’s for them to do, they self-assess. But I am just wondering would it?

Tutor B. We tried to talk about it but I think because I had such a group I …

(Tape flickers – not all words clear). I was really careful and reluctant.

Patrick. Yes, you had to be diplomatic about it.

Focus Group Discussion among Supervisors
Present: B, F, G, and Patrick (Researcher)
October 2004

Patrick. Aims: to explore how the ELP can help develop teacher and student autonomy and increase target language proficiency. Now autonomous learning involves negotiation and collaboration between teacher and learner … gradual capacity development. The process involves learners’ independent cognitive, critical reflection through setting learning targets, assessing how well they achieve these and implications for next step, and it involves the social and interactive dimension in relation to the learning process… reflectivity, are we getting the teachers to ask how they are doing it, can we do that in our supervision?

Supervisor B. I think that is key.

Patrick. It strikes me as a focus area. Has anyone anything to say about principles that we might just like to highlight? This is all confidential by the way.

Supervisor B. With regard to learners, own learning we should be talking about is the very basic thing of getting them into pair work. To define the targets and usually some very simple that both teacher and pupil can quickly see the outcome and also always if you get the simple basics then you can build the development.

Patrick. So we are looking to see about getting pair-work started in the classroom
Simple example, help learners, to help pair work it means they are now learning how to articulate and express their own needs and free to interact with other students

Supervisor B. An issue can be based on the model. But that they and the teacher can see some result and then it might be a simple thing like particular construction. It might be a basic thing. It might be interaction and dialogue we now know how to communicate at that basic level and maybe what we are going to do next is maybe listening to a similar dialogue on a tape or maybe going to vary the model, that's just a simple thing.

Supervisor G. Learning from each other

Supervisor F. Learning from each other helps them to take responsibility for their own learning

Supervisor B. They do they do. Its confidence building as well. Reduce the language. The big problem I find Work very hard as a supervisor at least to get the teacher to reduce the language. They are so used to teaching them as passive learners. To get them to reduce the language, very difficult for them.

Patrick. That seems to draw out some of the jargon, some abstractions, taking it down to simple practical thing in the classroom, how we can do that

Supervisor B. Famous character in one of Moliere's play said 'I've been talking prose for fourteen years but I didn't know it was prose'. Doing it but might not be knowing that this is so simple.

Patrick. So trying as you say, trying to build up their confidence in small language target areas Rather than the teacher having transmitting knowledge doing some of the work themselves, not translating each, individual word. Anybody else? Move on to reflectivity

Use of target language in the classroom activities in the reflective cycle that trying to say... em what sort of learning am I happy with it. Do I know what I did today. Time to think about. The suggestion is 'je ne comprends pas, je comprends. Trying to get the student to think through. Instead of trying to say back into the English language. Now, is there any way that we can get them to think in the target language? You know. In class teams, in class activities, in simple ways. I can understand the tape but actually these little self assessment exercises could be done simply and linked to the objectives of the lesson. Would that be possible?

Supervisor F. Simple language.

Supervisor B. Say, they were doing particular listening, comprehension, just you know a simple paragraph and you questioned them for a few ways of exploring it, and maybe now you explored this
way yesterday and a third way tomorrow. 'Of those 3 ways of approaching the exercise, which did you find most helpful to you?- as an example

Supervisor F. Reinforcing the concrete also

Patrick. So that sort of trying to get autonomous learning and target language use as two sides of the one coin as opposed to English and then French. Its trying to develop that notion of reflective practice in simple ways.

Now I have written down: the target language proficiency class, post primary teaching context, in terms of supervisor leading the process. Different people trying to bring this about. Teacher with the learner, with you, and with the sequential language teacher in the language proficiency class

Supervisor G. Isn't there great room for this in the micro teaching

Patrick. Yes, in small groups. They use it actually in so far as is possible. It can build confidence too. Yes.

Reflectivity ...areas like that that could be developed in terms of the supervision, what we are doing in this focus group meeting m and getting them to reflect in class.

OK next one basically Number 4. Writing allows distance between a person and his thoughts, gives him something to mull over, helps them to be more language aware, help them to think out their own thinking. So we can look at that in terms of how we develop that for H. Dip. students, writing reflective essay something to think about

Supervisor F. Very much, like in the H. Dip.. and D.I.O. and these things shouldn’t be taken in isolation. Holistic, joined together, All the component parts. Integrated competency in language use.

Patrick. Important to get that and the more dovetailing creates a holistic experience

Supervisor F. Modern languages, Irish as well.

Patrick. A whole-school approach. Certainly like the seminars we had last year: what are we doing, why are we doing it.

Supervisor B. Positive. How would you define metacognitive capacity?

Patrick. That is really defined in different ways, helping learner to think about thinking, evaluating their learning, setting aims, thinking about how to achieve, different strategies to think about...
Supervisor F. Beyond cognition, thinking beyond.

Patrick. Seems to me that is a key area to focus on as well there is a lot of key areas. These are basically the 4 principles if we were to focus on. If there are other areas that you think could describe the teacher and the student autonomy there is no reason why these could not be taken on board. It would certainly you know. If there is anything you can think of that hasn’t been brought up. What I am getting at is that the autonomous teaching should lead to autonomous learning. The learner should become involved in setting a process.

Supervisor F. As you said in your introduction to the ELP last year, one of the first things learners should consider is their record of learner competence to date very much in presentation as well.

Patrick. I do, absolutely, yes, yes. October 03

Unless there is something else that came up there what I would take out of this. I’ll be looking at the evidence in terms of gathering the evidence this year I was telling Grace I would not be giving teachers a batch of portfolios. I did that last year. Certainly there were 2 things according to the data I have here in terms of the presentation of the portfolio as a portfolio. It needed to be amended.

Supervisor B. Simplified

Patrick. Simplified, good idea, complex, too much, good idea, check lists need to be looked at, marketing, could be done earlier in the year, best yet, somebody else that was to do with the H. Dip. students only using the portfolio. When it came to using it in terms of the classroom use it needed to be simplified, bibliography simplified, divide the sections up more clearly, more colour, could be done for year 1, maybe a junior one, vocabulary too difficult, layout, more pictures and so on and so on.

Supervisor B. The internet there not into that just now. Another version seemed to be more acceptable.

Patrick. Yes, more user-friendly: Other areas that I want to share with you in terms of autonomy that we have touched on tonight. Learner centered involvement, learner centered was it beneficial, yes, yes, yes, with pupil responsibility interactive assess learner centered but projects that they did time, fashion, cultural awareness project there but also something we can build and for supervisors as well. Was it a Help? Yes, yes, yes: all yes in terms of pupils. For their own I’m just going through this quickly. In terms of reflective practice yes, yes, unsure, yes, yes, yes. Develop responsibility unsure yes, yes, yes. In terms of Proficiency too early to decide, yes yes, no, yes yes, too early to decide!

Some of the materials I am sharing with you. Some of the emerging preliminary data. What came out of it in terms of mentor teacher Did the mentor teacher work with you? ‘yes, yes, no, no, yes, no ...’. time it will always demand professional development daily to allow people to explore issues like this.

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Patrick. It does take time it will always demand professional development daily to allow people to explore issues like this

Supervisor B. Should be started in primary school. They are so pressurised in secondary schools to get things done.

Supervisor G. Especially with the introduction of Modern Languages

Patrick. Could be done with Irish, English

Supervisor B. Tremendous pressure. It’s not only for classroom work, doing everything under the sun, pressure, pressure.

Patrick. Lots of exams. It depends on the experience of the H. Dip. student transition year 1st year 2nd year the established leaving cert it seems to drive. Time becomes Mismatch between programmes as well, transition year, leaving cert established

Supervisor F. The whole concept of reflection, it is not something new but its not s thing that experienced teachers do because they are so preoccupied with Its not something that established teachers would have time to or are inclined to do because they are so taken up with courses and examinations

Patrick. This year, what I have decided to do, having looked at the data, if we get 4 student teachers and link in with 4 enthusiastic who would take this on board and give commitment. I have one in the (W) and (V) and one in

Supervisor B. Who's in (V)?

Patrick. (Y), and (X) is the other French teacher. Taking on board those 4 in a flexible way with the portfolio using goodwill and working of the supervisor as semester course language teachers also using portfolio in the semester course we are fortunate in that one of the teachers who did the H Dip. last year and now she is the semester course French teacher this year and she is able to show what her project is like...

Supervisor F. There seems to be an inconsistency H. Dip. students don’t attend a language course in Irish. Whereas they have to do it in Irish.

Patrick. I think, I agree with you, it seems natural and the D.I.O. French, German, Spanish and next year, Italian.
Supervisor F. Consistent right across the board

Patrick. Classes, no reason why you couldn’t suggest it in order to keep their language skills up to date. It makes sense that you have seen something in the meeting that could be improved on. Next year we are going to have Italian with the Italian Dept there is no problem And that has to be done in January or February. Certainly next year. I had hoped to introduce Italian as a semester course this year, but it has to go through Arts faculty.

All I have to say is there’s a little booklet you probably have it from last year but I will hand it out again. Elish O’Toole... a little example shows you an example of what one teacher has done. A school outside of Dublin. I wouldn’t mind contacting her actually. I think it’s Co. Kildare.

Now unless there are other questions there is one thing I would like to bring up and it is this. In teaching supervision, tonight hopefully we will have a shared understanding of what supervision is. But I was wondering if you could think about developing a sheet. If I am going into supervise a class. What sort of outline, is there anything that would be key that would be trying to integrate, what would be the assessment, in terms of. In other teaching contexts you have areas like lesson plan for example like areas of language content, language development, skills, classroom management, something positive, something negative out of that content that’s one. Another one in my interaction with other people was: planning, the the knowledge base of the teacher in terms of what they are doing, what the teaching practice file shows in terms of their planning. 2) point in terms of the second autonomous teaching and learning, in other words is the teacher a developing motivation and awaking interest, sustaining interest is there interaction, is there target language use, is their reflective teaching and learning T and L section, Planning, now as seen also in T L file or portfolio. The way we are developing it is becoming more of a portfolio The teaching and learning portfolio as I would like to develop it. I suggest that we use that 3rd aspect in there is critical reflection is the teacher developing a critical evaluating capacity. Is she able to look at her lesson and pull out where is it going to take me. In other words what is your feeling about developing a generic supervision form or would you rather leave it now and think about. Is there any good to be gained to have one sheet.

Supervisor F. We already have a supervision handbook in the Department with various templates for general subjects

Supervisor B. What I would say is that I would call it an evolving template. I expect certain basics, they are so vital, as year goes on an expectation become greater for first visit I’d expect x, y, z for example, blackboard, questions, basic things, maybe as a person, all the things, like their presence in the room that are prerequisites, present themselves, absolute basics.

Patrick. Absolutely. Then moving on...
Supervisor B. Then moving on and looking back at the early days, we knew so little, we had to learn, I’d always be assessing their use of the language. Its extraordinary what I said bout the culture. Never before have so many gone abroad between au pairing and Erasmus schemes and they still won’t use you know so that would be a must and after that trying to get whatever they’re doing,

Supervisors’ Meeting

Present: B, F, G and

Patrick Farren (Researcher-supervisor)

May 2005

Patrick Farren. Its 11 May and we are meeting again as we have interacted in the course of the year. We are talking about or role as supervisors in this research project that has involved autonomous teaching... to be a community of language thinkers in the classroom and to use authentic language in that way.

Supervisor B. Very difficult.

Patrick. It might be an idea to while we are sort of discussing this that we might describe the classroom context, the people you supervised, and the sort of issues that you found and how you as supervisors embarked and engaged in, the process. So would anyone like ot touch base about what they discovered?

Supervisor B. Well, I thought this year was extraordinary, that the standard was extremely high. About five or six student-teachers were about thirty years of age and had extensive experience in the working world, and therefore, were more confident and organised and aware of what they were doing and where they were going and why they had come on the H. Dip., which was very interesting. Maybe, a little of the point, in that they had worked for corporations and decided that while they were well paid they didn’t want to spend the rest of their lives as a number. They wanted to deal with people. Quite a number had experience abroad. It wasn’t just Erasmus, but two to three years abroad. From my point of view they were very focused and that showed in their planning and where they were going and what they wanted to achieve. They were not the typical H. Dip who came through the system and immediately to do the H. Dip. I was noticing one student. She was a lovely student, but you know, wasn’t...it took an awful long time, much more time, to blossom and just at the end she was opening like a flower, but I mean she obviously need that much time. So, it’s a consideration really, you know. At different levels.

Patrick. Yes, coming in [onto the H. Dip] at different levels.
Supervisor B. To the advantage of those who have decided to come on later, but that cannot militate against the others who will develop their potentiality.

Patrick. Trying to develop capacity, to do that you are talking about developing teacher autonomy.

Supervisor B. If they were young they might not implement it now, but they will become aware and in time, develop autonomy.

Patrick. I see what you are saying. That's interesting, developing their identity and awareness.

Supervisor B. Yes, Yes. Patrick. And becoming aware of the importance of autonomous teaching in that sense an it takes time to grow. Supervisor B. You can't hasten maturity, and I think that's what an old stager like myself who have been at it all these years, and, therefore, you would treat the new mature student gently.

Patrick. Anybody? Would you like to comment about you experience?

Supervisor G. I had a number of students in two categories that you mentioned. I would have people who had their degrees some years ago and the level of maturity was noticeable there and they had a self-confidence that wasn't manifest in those who had come immediately from their degree and I would have advised them, especially those who had just finished their degrees, that they had to tailor their language so to speak downwards in other words from the abstract to the concrete and that sort of thing. To concretize their presentation of let's say concepts and things like that for people whether it be a teacher of History or whatever. In general I would say that those of them who did some work or did not come into the H. Dip. immediately after the degree. In general. I would say they performed better probably than those who came straight from the degree you know in the sense of interacting with the students, in the sense of self-confidence and so on and being able to see where they were going and what progress they were making and so on. I think those, in my opinion, who came straight from the degree, because it was a total new experience for them, they tended to reflect back on 2 types of teacher whom they had experienced themselves, one very good teacher and one possible the opposite and they would probably tried to avoid one and model themselves on the other and I tried to get them to become autonomous in that sense, in other words, to direct their own identity as much as possible and to focus on developing that in the future.

Patrick. Any ideas there yourself?

Supervisor F. I had some ideas as I say something similar to (Supervisor B and G) I had one. I had 3 students on the teaching practice this year, 2 of them were directly out from College but one had taught and one had done her degree some years previously and like what you said Grace I noticed the
difference. This person was at home in the classroom and if you take one area of the ELP that is particularly important the idea of the autonomous learner, she certainly had that interwoven into her teaching practice. What amazed me was that the learners were involved in the direction, the running and the reflective part of the lesson. And I thought that really showed in that person’s case. You know, it was obvious that it wasn’t her first day in the classroom and the others were a bit less confident initially and generally improved dramatically over the course of the year.

Patrick. Just in general. I’m not going to ask each person like to comment but maybe people would come in, in a natural way. In terms of... I asked students to do that to plan about their, as I said, their values their beliefs their aims and their intentions and so on and I asked them also at the end of each lesson to do a little reflective evaluation on their lesson and how it went and then as a follow up on that, that learning is an accumulative process, rather than an isolated lesson to reflect after a unit, a series of lessons, or after a chapter, or after a, you know a period of time say 3, 4, 5 weeks, look back over their learning and write a short reflective essay on critical incidents that occurred maybe that they discovered how using the target language actually worked in the classroom and that people began to understand, learners began to understand how to ask to go outside, or to apologise for not having homework done, or to open the window, close the window. And also to think about using it in terms of self-assessing...

Supervisor B. That was a difficult one (this is a comment of (B) about difficulty use of target language when self-assessing).

Patrick. So I tried to get them to do that in a little reflective essay first of all in terms of their own learning as teachers to see learning as a cumulative thing. Anyone anything to say on that reflective process there moving away from the initial one of values and intentions to writing a little evaluation and then a little reflective essay every so often?

Supervisor B I think that was being done, you know, that was being done. They would say things like I know I should have done. I handled this well or whatever or next time round, I could you know.

Patrick. Those are little tell-tale signs aren’t they because that’s a sign. isn’t it that they are actually aware of how things might have been done differently, they’re measuring their progress. Any other ideas there about the essay that they would have written on their learning?

Supervisor G. I’d be saying, it would be that, you know, suggestions made to them and things pointed out to them that they would have taken those on board and you could see what they wrote, the reflective essay that this went on and these had been taken on board and corrected to some extent.

Patrick. That’s good because you have kind of thought about it and it means the supervisor isn’t just talking, you know, talking one off or in an isolated way ... a process of learning for themselves, by
reflecting critically on their teaching as a reflection on their teaching but also to use it as a product to look back on and something to use, to interact with the supervisor. So they could actually say; Look, this is what I have discovered. That it would give them something for them to... You know when you are talking to someone you have something to go on because you have kind of thought about it and it means the supervisor isn’t just talking you know talking one off or in an isolated way.

Supervisor F. The concepts, that there is a developmental process. One of things I am underpinning this year in the H. Dip. and the D.I.O.( Diploma lar-Cheime san Oideachas) is the concept of the reflective practitioner and certainly I found my students on teaching practice while everything might not be absolutely perfect on the day, did develop and function more logically throughout the progress of the year, you know.

Patrick. In terms of evidence, is there anything that apart from taking out reflective pieces that they wrote? Is there anything that we individually or as a group can actually point towards that would say like you for example (Supervisor B) suggested I could have done, this is what I would plan to do in future that it would be a piece of evidence that would show that this reflective process helped them.

Supervisor B. Well, what I have always been doing now for the last few years during the consultation after the lesson I got them to write down what I was saying, not every word, but the positive and affirmation, affirmative points that had come up and that I was affirming and then whatever were the weak points and then on the next visit if I didn’t see you know that had been worked on I might say well now could we reflect back on what did we say about this person, Mary X, I always make them as if it was the 3rd person I was talking about, on our last visit you know that is the way I would have handled it. Some of them would have automatically remembered it or tried to implement what you were doing but if they didn’t then they had something to refer back to.

Patrick. I agree with you there that’s something I thought was very useful in fact when you tried to give them a number of points that they could work on that there was a kind of concretisation focus and you would say this is the sort of area I think that would be helpful for you to work on. Target language use. Less teacher presentation and more trying to get them into working and sharing meanings and activities

Supervisor B. Or even questioning them: What about? What do you think about? How did you? How was that? What do you think? How was that handled? What about the use of the target language? Was there much of it done? You know, bringing them to their own awareness rather than saying I think you should have. OK. It’s simple enough

Patrick. That’s interesting. It’s an important psychological process helping them to develop that capacity. It’s challenging too. Putting them in the driver’s seat.
Supervisor G. Comments I would make I would say, if you presented this in such and such a way. Would you try to think over it and see if there is another way it could be done. Is there an alternative way? You know. Some other experience that I had was I mentioned methodology at a point in the Tutorial and I would have asked them maybe how can improvements be made in your lesson and I remember two of them saying to me when they going out I remember what you said and I’m sorry I forgot to bring that in? They were reverting to it. Not that I was hauling them over the coals. They did remember it. We could have done that. I’m sorry I didn’t try that. Is that all right?

Patrick. It’s interesting. What seems to be emerging is that we are getting them or trying to develop their awareness. That’s a key issue isn’t it?

Supervisor B. In tandem with the insights of psychology would it? Rather than telling them.

Supervisor G. Offering an alternative or other ways to be involved

Patrick. That process is actually getting them or trying to develop their awareness. That’s a key issue isn’t it?

Supervisor G. In tandem with the insights of psychology would it? In terms of self development as well that you get to know yourself and assume responsibility in what to do

Supervisor F. I saw that as well in the use of the target based language because one of the things Mary Hanafin is on at the moment, as Minister of Education, is Irish being taught through English as a bad idea as David Little mentioned and I saw one student teacher actually encouraging the use of the language in classroom management

Patrick. Yes. Yes. That is a related issue isn’t it? To develop language learning autonomy as seen through the spontaneous use of the language in class, interactions and so on.

Supervisor B. Its very remarkable the standard of French & Spanish is extremely high this year but it is still difficult to get the teacher to realise that he or she can use it at a very basic level. It’s a contradiction. You know in the past teachers weren’t as fluent because they didn’t have as many opportunities and now they have lived abroad for years and they, just as (Supervisor G) was saying, they get hung up a bit on what they were taught themselves

Patrick. Right, right, exactly. And they have to shed some of that. It is getting them to think through issues I suppose as a way to help them to think about teaching

Supervisor G. Their own personality, their background. Something they’ve inherited.
Supervisor B. Long, long ago it is now we learnt Irish that way

Patrick. Right. The other thing then just moving on from that discussion touching on reflective practice their writing a reflective essay and our interaction with the H. Dip student teacher, trying to get them to develop their capacity to reflect on their own learning as teachers and to take more responsibility for it by encouraging them in, I suppose, taking more ownership for their own learning as teachers and that is a psychological process as you were pointing out there and we pointed to some evidence and tell tale signs as to how that happens and how we have tried to do that as a group

Supervisor G. Encouraging professionalism too

Patrick. Right, right. And moving on then I suppose to the other key things before we go into particular details on students would be I suppose just touching base with the little page there that we have the agenda page 7. I am looking at C in particular there. What would we have to say about engaging our student teachers in reflective practice? What are my objectives? Why am I doing it this way? I think that is what we have been doing. Touching on those issues. The other thing that I am interested in too is really what we have said there too is setting targets and what kind of activities would match what you are trying to do. They are all kind of connected aren’t they? The other thing I am trying to work through is maybe if we moved away from work with our student teacher, how that helped them to work with their own post primary learners. Do you see the difference in focus? We have been focusing up until now. Our interaction with the student teacher maybe have we started now to point towards some evidence that we could see and observe in the classroom practice. How did the student teacher in other words try to develop learner autonomy? And again we might reflect on the same 3 key principle areas. Did we see evidence of them involving their learners in trying to reflect with the teacher like what are we doing in this lesson? Why are we doing it this way? What are our aims in this unit? and why do we want to do it? We are talking about family what do we want to learn about our family? How would we go about describing our family? What sort of activities would help us? Why would this be useful to us? Then over a regular basis I would tried to get my own teacher to try to work out to try to interact in that way with her students. In other words trying to get the learners to think forward and to self assess. Now before we, before we touch on that in terms of target language use, you know, the principle of trying to get them involved in that process first of all you know if a student teacher has been able to do that with us then we I think that this is an idea then that that would help them do the same with theirs.

Supervisor G. To push out a little further.

Patrick. So, that they would see the importance of developing that psychological relationship, the learner’s psychological relations with their own learning. That the teacher can only teach but the learner has to learn and that a lot of emphasis has been on teaching as presenting material,
information and that the student learns off a vocabulary and regurgitates it for an exam and what is your own feelings in terms of what you saw in the classroom?

Supervisor G. Well, what I did see with regard to presenting a vocabulary and in that context was always provided by the teacher, you know, whether it be about themes, home, recreation or whatever vocabulary was presented in context not as a series of adjectives in other words it was naturalised to a great extent and in that sense I think there was an inbuilt responsibility not articulated as between the teacher and the student, there was an inbuilt sense of responsibility which was given so to speak in a sub-conscious way to the students. I got the feeling this was something they were taking on board and they felt that they liked it and were taking responsibility for their learning in context.

Patrick. Does that seem to strike a cord with autonomous learning, that they are able then to use the language?

Supervisor G. To empathise with the context and make it their own and then you know acquire the language in a more natural way, natural context

Supervisor B. I agree with Pauric there, that they wouldn’t actually articulate it as much as actually do it because of course they had to allow for the limited time they had, you know, the counselling session alone which might be the length of a full class but they would have been doing things, like I can think of one example. I asked them to bring in photograph of the family so that they can describe it and it has relevance for them as against that that the kind of classes I would have been in I can think certainly of one example the teacher was teaching them how to write a postcard in French and it was like as if she was giving them a lecture, you know and she put all of the points down on the blackboard which took an awful lot of time out of a lesson. Whereas in fact they already knew those phrases. And instead of you know encouraging them to come up with what they knew already she went about it as if she was handing them out notes, you know. So that by the end of the class they had everything on paper but they hadn’t the practice. Whereas had she started the other way they would have know that they knew how to do it and the lesson was only formalising it, you know. As opposed to that then I was in a class where there was a game being played, as a kind of revision of all the year’s work, a board game which was done very, very effectively and of course the students just lapped it up, so again what (Supervisor G) says is they’re doing it but they are not saying, you know. Or they will say; See my lesson plan I wanted them to be able to do and I did this so that you know so I think it is happening not as overtly as you might want.

Patrick. The target language, trying to get the learners to use the language in an interaction with one another, to use the target language in the game in the activity and to learn by doing.

Supervisor B. And the same thing occurred in another lesson it was about shopping and the teacher handed out 2 handouts and they were basic phrases and went to no end explaining, explaining blah blah
whereas they in fact they already very briefly could have carried on this interaction but she felt she had to go around it you know the 'banking' system of education instead of the..

Patrick. In terms of sharing meanings and understanding, sharing the meanings. Just touching on that target language use, you know, as the medium of communication in the classroom to develop an authentic community of practising, an authentic, a language learning community in the classroom, as opposed to learning about the language, learning to I suppose to take responsibility for the language for their own meanings. I saw one very good example of actually one teacher who developed a scrap book about the family and her experience which first of all when she went in they weren’t interested, weren’t motivated and when she took over she said these are only first years there is no reason for curious first years not wanting to learn a foreign language and she began to start to negotiate with them about what would be useful for them to learn. She took the example of a family, they brought in pictures of their brothers and sisters, meanings and discuss about how many bothers they had, how old they were, where they went to school, who the mother was and who the father was, who their parents were, you know. They then took a real ownership of the language, their scrapbook which related very well to the dossier and was their evidence of their learning over the period.

Supervisor G. It reminds me of one of the key cornerstones of ELP encouraging learning for life, lifelong language learning. I saw that in the case of one of my teachers who did a topic on health and they had to work in pairs. Then she got them to work in pairs and she called out various symptoms for example various illnesses and they had to write them down, they were taking on the role of the doctor, and in a sense she very skillfully reinforced what she had done the previous week in a very concrete way. And I thought it was good coming from the fact that, as David Little said, coming from the fact that any community syllabus based in Irish has to be based on the socio linguistic aspect of the thing. If you don’t really need Irish to order a meal in a restaurant or a B&B. I thought it was interesting coming from that dynamic that that the skill had been reinforced indirectly but very very, very well.

Patrick. Interesting. The other thing is developing I s’pose learner autonomy language learning autonomy involves them presumably in as you say using the language, I mean they can’t really learn the language without using the language and using the language involves socio interaction and that translated into the classroom would involve exchanging meanings,

Supervisor G. Doing things, like preparing a meal or something like that , involvement, doing things together as is nearly every subject.

Patrick. Yea, And also linking that in with developing their autonomy as learners if what did you see in your classroom in terms of like they’re using the language to learn the language and activities and tasks and they’ve been thinking what activities would match their particular aim for example transport, a train station and ordering a ticket, listening to a cassette recording, following the route on a map or a timetable, do that and learning the language by doing. Now the reflective process as well, if they start
to go and learn, go outside thinking through English. Is there a clash of 2 languages like? Would you find, what is your experience getting learners to reflect at the level that they are currently at and stretching that little bit more with teacher help, to develop a basic capacity in learners to think in the target language. Would anyone like to mention things in that area?

Supervisor B. They did a lot of pair-work, group-work and that is very worthwhile. How soon you can expect. I mean it is a process and you cannot expect that they will immediately get into the... it’s a process but I think the pair and group work would facilitate that thinking in the in the language and role play and then, you know, they have the backup of the audio which reinforces. Just as you took in the example buying your ticket and going on a train they are usually going with that and there would be a recording, you know, of the train station. It’s as much as you can expect in the time limit in an ordinary class

Patrick. Much of what we are discussing here is emerging from the ELP in terms of identity as the teacher and the Teaching and Learning Portfolio (Teaching Practice File), the values, reflections and keeping evidence of their own teaching in their interactions with you, in terms of ELP in the classroom the learner, in the passport tries to keep their identity, what languages they know, what past experiences. And what level they are at... C1. C2, and the second part of the portfolio is a biography which charts their language level, reflections on setting targets and language learning as a reflective process. That involves using the target language and just to touch base on one aspect, you mentioned also the dossier that’s the third part, where they actually can show us evidence of their work in terms of the teacher developing teacher autonomy in the units and materials they designed for their classroom and project for methodologies just to let you see some examples trying to develop their teacher autonomy and the other thing is self assessment in developing teacher autonomy. To relate that now to the language learner in the classroom, the can do positive language - I have set targets. I have checked how I can achieve them. I can do these things. I can write a letter, a postcard and I can show evidence of that in the portfolio, can do statements, really what I noticed from speaking personally a lot of my teachers what they did , they looked at the portfolio and related the ‘can do’ statements to the particular unit and broke down the more general summaries to what suited that particular unit and in that sense they were looking at the level descriptions and trying to match. Get a lot of .. 'Je peux, je peux acheter'......you know so they were able to.... 'je comprends'......and so on. So there was this sort of thing. I am just trying to touch on language use its in German French Spanish Italian in the portfolio I saw them try to put these in simpler terms for their students. How did you? Any ideas or issues about can do that you saw in evidence?

Supervisor B. Well, while it wouldn’t have been articulated that way. I was very impressed by a teacher who had a class of 1st years of limited ability and she did work and they were absolutely eating out of her hand and killing themselves to do it and doing it quite well considering that they would be normally children that could be disruptive and of limited ability and she was managing them so well they were delighted to be able to say these things about themselves and write them down. It
was very impressed. I would have been in a similar class over the years where there would, chaos would have reigned. So its coming through. It won’t be articulated but its coming through.

Patrick. You’re can see it that’s the idea

Supervisor G. What comes to my mind is a transition year class...3 times since Christmas and I was most impressed with the last visit. The teacher was ...it was a Transition class and a small group who had elected to take French while the rest of the class was doing something else and she engaged them both in Irish and through French and I thought the two languages work perfectly well and proved something to me that French and be taught through French, of course but also through Irish.

Patrick. Right, right. I know what you are saying. She was in an all Irish school

Supervisor G. Her own personality shone forth and involved and probably weren’t the brightest in the class but in a transition class very often very difficult to get commitment and so on, but they were totally committed. It was a small class of 7-8, but I was most impressed

Patrick. That’s Transition Year. Just touching on Transition Year because of the different modes of assessment in Transition Year as in contrast to the Leaving Certificate Established. What would your analysis of that be in terms of their motivation, their appreciation, their language learning in that way? What I am suggesting is that they are not presumably you know one is, there’s a different mode of assessment.

Supervisor G. Yes, Yes. What I would have to say about Transition Year in generally I my own experience is I am in the habit of providing them with a notebook, it became something very personal to do with my subject, to use the notebook to record their progress with other subjects and I told them to continue with that in their 5th and 6th years after Transition and that notebook would become something personal that they would have after school and taking possession of their own development there. In other words assessing their own progress and making it something very personal and there would be other things in it too that they would get from teachers and pick up from the subjects that they would get in text books and so on. So that the whole thing was something that was valuable to them, something that they measured their own progress and recorded and so on. What I was trying to do really was to get them involved in Transition Year and see it as a year where they were maturing in so many ways. I felt that it worked for me anyway.

Patrick. Just to touch base with that because, you know, the way you have a Terminal Exam in the Leaving Certificate, sometimes a lot of teaching, as supervisors, we are kind of, we are in a kind of in a way, trying to walk a tight rope because we are aware that their learners are focused on an exam and their cooperating teachers are trying to get them to learn, to teach, towards an exam and that that can throw out of kilter so to speak some of the natural activities for language learning such as you
mentioned, using the target language and not just regurgitating material that others had given them but that they are not learning vocabulary for the sake of vocabulary but opposed, as you suggested, they are learning in context so there is a kind of a contradiction there sometimes between the different courses and I think your idea, Pauric, that you mentioned about the Transition Year is one that I can relate to where you are trying to get the learner to self assess, to plan, to monitor, to think about their learning as and to use activities that relate to their aims and to assess in a way that is coherent and complementary, that complements the syllabus goals: language awareness, cultural awareness and language proficiency.

Supervisor G. And facilitates growth in that sense of the word in language and personalises it

Patrick. Because I notice that language awareness, cultural awareness and language proficiency when you look for cultural awareness and language awareness in terms of a terminal exam sometimes the wash back effect of the terminal exam means you kind of bypass crucial issues that give them a kind of a low..

Supervisor G. Exam driven

Supervisor B. Yes. It is very difficult really, ideally, unless they have a good 5th year class. Over the years you would find is that over the years they may be would get half of a 5th year class and are asked by the teacher to do either grammar or translation or something. So it is difficult for them they have to accept what they are given. I suppose all you can say is that grammar learning is an essential part of learning in language so it would be difficult to assess them normally in a 5th year class and therefore I would always, if I find they had a class like that, I would ask them to ask the teacher, which I had in St. Mary’s I think this year, to give them another class so that I would be able to see them using their skills. Even if it was only 3 or 4 classes, you know. With regard to Transition I would suppose the ones that were motivated I would have one student there they would try to do things like pop music that they or.. It is a very fluid kind of situation.

Supervisor F. I agree it is a situation also that some of it in Irish as a minority language under the current arrangements is exacerbated by the lack of cohesion between the ELP, now the area I am specifically going on here, in Irish we have the Ga... but the ELP makes a very big distinction between spoken interaction and the spoken production that is not reflected in the syllabi. I can see the effects of that in the classroom That they have to fulfill task A in order to get Result B and that type of thing and I think it is something that will have to be looked at in the future.

Patrick. In terms of the Junior Certificate too the target language use isn’t assessed really.

Supervisor F. Actually, the Head of the Irish Teachers Association this year, when the Commissionery Tainge wrote that the money spent on the language could be better spent, that was, the year
specifically mentioned that they would like to see the introduction of an oral. I know there is the provision for an oral but very few avail of it but to see an oral at Junior Certificate level. Actually, one person came in. This might be relevant in terms of your own research. X from St. Mary’s and he actually starts the oral work which is part of the Leaving Cert exam in first year and each person takes the role, they do role play in the class. One person takes the part of the examiner one week. The next day the student takes the role of the student and actually by the time they come to do their 5th – 6th year they are so accustomed to the language they have the correct vocabulary.

Supervisor B. That would be the ideal actually that is really what you would be advising for Modern Languages.

Supervisor F. I thought that was brilliant. There was no fear of an exam. It wasn’t something that the bogey man was coming or...

Patrick. So it depends on what the terminal exam is like.

Supervisor G. Role play. I suppose to some extent.

Supervisor F. At the same time I think it is a very positive use of theory and putting theory into practice.

Patrick. Now, just to draw this meeting to a close. Thank you very much for coming along. Could I just ask for a general summary from people now. We have been talking about teacher autonomy, learner autonomy. We have been talking about how we as supervisors try to develop teacher autonomy in assisting our teachers and assessing them, to the extent that they have developed their capacity in terms of how they have tried to develop the target language use in the classroom through interaction with the learners, in trying to use the target language, trying to develop, involve the learners and so on and developing reflective practice, able to help learners or teachers to set aims, directions of courses, articulate their intentions, consider the challenges they might meet and think about activities that would match those in their lesson plans to set objectives, to monitor their own teaching and to evaluate their practice and to reflect on by using reflective essays. Would you say overall that we have? How would you rate yourself on that just? That is only just to engage ourselves in that process.

Supervisor F. I can start by saying that part of this year with regard to myself in a slightly more negative role but for this year having been involved in teaching on the skills for teaching course in addition to my language area on the ADO I found that it kind of enhanced that and I tried to encourage it as far as possible.

Patrick. And would you then (Supervisor F), using the ELP process that we have been involved in has help you in that regard?
Supervisor F. I think it has helped me greatly because it has made me aware of my own statements, my own comments and I can look for the positive when I go into a classroom as well as. .

Supervisor G. I would say that my approach again has changed from being somewhat negative in the past to affirmative, supporting of teachers and to enable them to become so to speak masters and mistresses of their own destinies, to become independent and to assess themselves and not to be stuck to text books or things like that you know, and I hope at least I tried to be as positive as affirmative as I could in that area. That is all I can say. It is a very general statement but it has been to stand beside them, to be affirmative, to walk beside them, to help them to stand on their own two feet as independent people and as teachers.

Patrick. Interesting

Supervisor B. I suppose I always look on it as a kind of a partnership really. I was in partnership with my student that we together could make this student who is outside ourselves as objectively as possible as professional as is possible to be when you are only dipping your toe in the class ocean and showing as far as possible opening up all limits and showing this to be a life-long process and that if you don’t keep open and consciously aware you will become stale and stagnant. I would see it very much as raising awareness, consciousness and affirmation.

Patrick. Do you think you achieved, you know, in terms of setting challenges like this you engaged in that process?

Supervisor B. I do, I do.

Patrick. I think I agree with you in my own teaching it is certainly trying to involve the teachers in their own learning as teachers as opposed to just copying what somebody else tells them to do. Try to develop that psychological relationship with their own learning as teachers.

Supervisor B. Yes, and then there are certain givens that have to be observed. You cannot change their personality either. That is very important. They are uniquely themselves but they develop that unique self.

Patrick. I think I agree with you in my own teaching it is certainly trying to involve the teachers in their own learning as teachers as opposed to just copying what somebody else tells them to do. Try to develop that psychological relationship with their own learning as teachers.
Supervisor B. Yes, and then there are certain givens that have to be observed. You cannot change their personality either. That is very important. They are uniquely themselves but they develop that unique self.

Patrick. Could we just for 2 minutes before we go just touch on one thing. When we go into a classroom we have touched base on issues that we think are important in terms of what we would hope that the teacher, I suppose, would involve him or herself in the classroom in terms of target language use. Are there any issues there that...I mean would you think we are on the right track in terms of some of the issues here? When you go into a classroom when you are assessing a teacher... you are in that capacity, as a supervisor, we are looking for target language use, trying to get them to use the target language in the classroom for routines and also in the activities and in trying to think in the target language, according to the level, and trying to develop that capacity. We have touched on other issues I think.

Supervisor B. It is an extraordinary about the target language you know and daily I have been writing this down and next and ask a question what does it mean and what gender? These are repeated hundreds of times year on year. Why not say 'encore', 'comment' 'comment dire?' "O yes, yes, I k now I could do that... I must do that, you know".

Patrick. Do you think that is a critical process?

Supervisor B. Yes very absolutely I mean because that is the whole MOVE away from the grammar-translation method, from the very beginning you can use the most basic phrases and they are repeated over. They are lapping up the stuff for you.

Patrick. To be an authentic language community in practice really. We are talking also about developing their learning autonomy. They are using the language and listening to the teacher and reflecting in the language and in that whole are of reflective practice and .... And involving the learners and trying to get the learners to take gradual responsibility for their learning over time and also to, I suppose, to make decisions about their own learning. They are not just been given material. That there is a kind of a process you mentioned a process, you mentioned family. They were "lapping it up". These are the kind of issues that we are looking for in a good teacher and that we are trying to encourage and promote.

Supervisor B. And tolerance of errors of course is very important, and perhaps maybe the block for young teachers is that they feel that their students cannot say perfectly something perfectly they shouldn't not be saying at all. I mean you will never learn a language if you can't make mistakes. I mean the big thing is to communicate.
Patrick. Just, finally, to close, what would you say is the effect of your supervision in terms of the teacher in terms of developing their motivation and in terms of their capacity to help their learners to set conditions that will improve motivation of their learners. Just touching on motivation what is your feeling in that regard?

Supervisor G. I would be saying in terms of the teacher that I had was, his main aim was to enable the students and to make them enjoy the fact that they were taking ownership of this new language that they were learning that it was becoming theirs. That it was trying to inspire them, to take ownership and I went along with that. I encouraged that.

Patrick. Its intrinsic, motivating because they have achieved a certain thing and have been able to do it and that because of that they have gained confidence and want to do more. And you touched on that they might not think that but they have seen the motivation.

Supervisor B. Yes and they come away with...there’s a good feeling. A feel-good situation. That you have actually conveyed something positive to them. It’s important for everybody for all of us here to recognise here that we are not perfect and we make errors and that’s OK. It is to be aware and what can I do about it.

Supervisor F. I have to say that as well coming from the Irish language perspective I can, there is great hope that teachers coming out from the various institutions that the fact of empowering the learner to take responsibility of their own learning that it won’t be seen as something that is just dead or defunct and as you mention the new Leaving Certificate syllabus makes a very important part of the Irish cultural awareness actually will be incorporated into the syllabus.

Supervisor G. The class that I would have visited would have been a small class in a boarding school where there was a very informal atmosphere, where people felt free to talk and speak, learning throug joy so to speak, and that helped the learning. They were prepared to talk to each other. Mistakes were not pointed out. Whole thing was not regimented. Important for an easy atmosphere which is a necessary milieu for language learning.

Supervisor B. That is an elitist situation.

Supervisor G. Privilged!

Supervisor B. Last words on the situation., my last word and testament would be- inspiration! If you don’t inspire as at teacher forget it.... creativity and dedication. We know a lot of work has to be done and if you don’t love your subject you won’t convey this.
Supervisor F. The student will pick up on the body language.

Patrick. Because of our meetings, phone-calls and letter writing over the last 2 years, would you say that we are kind of singing from the same hymn sheet so to speak, more than we did in the past?

Supervisor B. Yes, with the odd little false note here or there, or maybe, first or second, or perhaps in perfect harmony! A very useful process.

Supervisor G. Yes.

Supervisor F. Yes

Minutes of Meeting with Mentors A and B, and subsequently X and Y
September 15, 2004

Topic:
We discussed integrating ELP into classroom practice with the goal of developing student-teachers’ capacity to take responsibility for teaching the target language. This would be done by engaging them in autonomous teaching in cooperation with their mentor. We discussed goals of mentor working to help student-teacher to involve learners in their own learning by setting targets, selecting activities, self-assessing, reflecting in the target language and making use of the target language in classroom routines. I distributed as selection of literature for their own reflection.

The mentors agreed to make use of the ELP in cooperation with student-teacher, where there was one, and to assess the effects in terms of developing student-teacher autonomy and post-primary learner autonomy.

Meeting with Mentor Y (Mentor of Student-Teacher, Laura) and
Patrick (Researcher)

May 2005
Patrick. Good to meet up with you and to discuss the Portfolio and how it worked with your class group. Thank you for using the portfolio in your class in conjunction with Laura. Today I’m getting feedback in terms of your own teaching and your work with a) Laura in cooperation and how you interacted and it helped her as a student teacher and b) the effects on your students and how in terms of helping them to reflect on the learning, monitoring, assessing, setting targets, thinking about their learning and how how the effects that would have had on thinking about learning. Context – Class Group?
Mentor Y. They were a mixed ability 1st year class. All very enthusiastic. Basically we would do some kind of an activity that would go into it on one of the pages and one of the pages in relation to objectives. I'd use 'Allons'. I spent 15 mins per week using it. It was a good launch pad for initiating conversation, but obviously 1st years, a lot of them tended to forget it. I should have taken them up and reminded them in the staff room each week. That's about all the time I used it. If I didn't do it Siobhan did it with one of her classes.

Patrick. Talking about Siobhan, could you describe the kind of work that you did with Siobhan and if the ELP supported your teaching with Siobhan?

Mentor Y. It was good in a way to have the ELP because the book we had is old fashioned, not communicative. My teaching is drawn on communicative teaching. I normally go through a lesson plan with Siobhan, she'd have ideas and I'd give my opinions on whether or not they might work in class, in terms of motivating the students, its all into the ELP anyway, the idea of getting them involved in their own learning. She'd then try it out with a first year group. I think she had another group. She could try it out on different groups.

Patrick. Has the ELP then supported a dialogic process with you and Siobhan?

Mentor Y. We would do that anyway. As teachers we love talking. Definitey yes. It was another thing to discuss, what could we put in here, and use for brainstorming, how could I do this in pair work, kind of breaking down class and looking at how to structure things.

Patrick. Did it help her to take more responsibility for what she would do it class?

Mentor Y. In the long term, yeah. I mean, initially, she would have taken everything I said on board, and just done what I wanted, and, like every H. Dip. (student) as the year went on, definitely, yeah.

Patrick. Thinking about reflective practice in the ELP and learners, setting goals, monitoring own learning and pushing self assessing?

Mentor Y. Well, I s'pose that is something you'd have to ask them, it's quite subjective. From their own feedback a lot found it was good for looking at what can I get out of it. But as they said in their feedback in the layout of it, some of the language was above their head. In a way the language was more for the teacher.

Patrick. Did it help you to think in terms about getting learners to work out what do we want to do here, to plan, how to do it, interacting with the students?

Mentor Y. I'd normally do that anyway.
Patrick. Can you tell me how you helped to create the conditions to help learners to motivate themselves in class?

Mentor Y. It would depend on the class group and their age. Second year class that I had at that age some found it quite daunting. I got them together in pairs to discuss simple things like what are my objectives?. I found that when they were on their own they were looking to me more, they were looking for my answers, rather than their own. So it was better for them to chat with someone their own age group. At least, it wasn't an adult version, thinking about it from their point of view was helpful for them. Especially 1st years they are always trying to please you. Still kind of primary school mode. It wrecks my head. I want them to be autonomous.

Patrick. Did you find that interacting between one student and another helped them to say what they wanted to say?

Mentor Y. Some brilliant kids with great skills at dealing with any kind of job. I picked pairs carefully, stronger with weaker and quieter with more social to get chatting.

Patrick. Do you think that social interaction helped them in language proficiency?

Mentor Y. Definitely. I used it every day. It changed the atmosphere in the room, more relaxed, allowed them to talk especially when they were talking about what they wanted to say. Everyone was getting a chance. Some are intimidated in a full class situation. When they are in pairs I can point to one person and ask what did you come up with, they are more chatty about it, sharing of ideas

Patrick. What you seem to be saying there Nuala in your class reflective process, thinking about what they want to say, they are communicating and sharing their needs and thinking out loud on what they achieved. Did the ELP contribute to that process?

Mentor Y. Definitely, yes. They still needed my guidance to the extent that I was walking around. They would ask what does this mean? The language was definitely too difficult.

Patrick. What about the process of writing in your classroom, what does the purpose of writing mean, what sort of activities you mention groupwork, pairs. I’m wondering about the written word. What did writing help them to achieve?

Mentor Y. They had to put something into the portfolio. For example ER verbs, something with a verb action in it. I was trying to make the writing part more interesting and visual as well, motivated, rather than just a list.
Patrick. Interesting, so you put pictures on the wall to let them see.

Mentor Y. Yes

Patrick. What would the effect of that be? Bouncing ideas around. Why on the wall?

Mentor Y. Pride, to be praised. To see your own work on the wall and to see sentences that you had written, that you are able to construct sentences. Learning a new language and a sense of achievement. Other classes would come into the room because other classes used the room and they'd see it.

Patrick. Do you think this helped self-esteem?

Mentor Y. Definitely. I would have given a prize for the visual

Patrick. From what you are saying you really help your learners to construct what they are doing with you, like co-constructing tasks and activities and put it on the wall, make it more attractive to the learners. It seems to me that the book doesn’t dominate your teaching.

Mentor Y. Oh no. Especially the book I have. It is terrible. It’s not just the book, its democratic, you choose what you want to draw, you choose the sentence. They pick a verb at the back of the book and there is control over what they are doing.

Patrick. Involved in making decisions. What is the effect of that on their learning?

Mentor Y. They become comfortable in their learning. They learn more basically. I think anyway

Patrick. Getting back to the target language, using French in the classroom, what part the actual use of language plays in language learning?

Mentor Y. From the very first day the first thing they learn is the classroom vocabulary. If they communicate with me there has to be at least one French word in it. That is there all the time. You can’t do anything unless there is a French word in it. Open the Window. ‘Ouvrez la fenetre’. They are learning from the very first day. Immediate communication there. Even when I go into supervise a class for a different subject. Realistically I am not speaking French all the time but it is established. They associate instructions with French.

Patrick. When they were setting little targets, how well did we do, one star, three stars. Did you get them to think through French. Getting them to think through French. Effects on activities they do in
French and when they were setting little targets and how well they did. Would you have used French in a reflective mode as well. Est ce que vous pensez?

Mentor Y. I would probably have used something simpler. I would have used ‘Thumbs Up’ ‘Facile? Difficile? Bien? Mauvais?’

Patrick. Did you incorporate that into your teaching and learning as well?

Mentor Y. I would. Yes. I do that anyway just to get feedback.

Patrick. What is the effect of that on them giving them, to give feedback?

Mentor Y. Independent as possible. As self-motivated. Not to see me as the be all and end all. I want them to be i and end all. I want them to be independent and enthusiastic and to learn more.

Patrick. It seems to me what you are saying is that using the language to think in the language and thinking and interacting their meaning. Beginning to use language, interacting, communicating. ‘Assez bien’. Do you think does this help them to move the process forward?

Mentor Y. Yes, I think they are. There is so much going on in their lives anyway. They have a great sense of achievement or if someone doesn’t know the word, they can get the vocabulary from each other. They’re not always looking to me There’s a great sense of vocabulary for them rather than for me.

Patrick. To conclude you mentioned about the vocabulary and ELP. I have the feedback from your students which was very helpful.

Mentor Y. Very helpful in terms of their maturity

Patrick. Is there anything you wish to add, did it help in the sense of the idea of them becoming autonomous learners, teaching and learning?

Mentor Y. I think realistically I did that anyway. There was nothing new for me. It was the way I learned and the way I like. I love trying new things so I was delighted to do it.

Patrick. This is the first project that the portfolio is being used in teacher education and it is very useful to get a practising teacher and to get your feedback and student feedback. Is there anything that crops up with you to improve the portfolio?
Mentor Y. I think and the kids think it is visually extremely boring, the colours are like a company brochure. It is an adult style not only in language but the look of it. They take out the wrong page. The weaker kid would take out the wrong page. I like the fact that you can put something into it. I don’t like the fact that it is easy to take stuff out of it. The binder type thing. You can lose pages. I would love to see it as part of a book. I’d love to see a school book with this type of assessment at the end of a chapter or at the beginning. A book where there is an actual ‘What have you learned?’ kind of questions. To improve a book rather than be a separate thing.

Patrick. To be integrated into a book with themes

Mentor Y. It would be a very nice thing to have in a book for the first day of the year to discuss who has done French already, who has done French. It is so far removed from some teachers’ style of teaching. If it was part of a system it would give every teacher a structure. Some teachers need to do every page in a book and so they do it whereas if it is coming separate from a book they wouldn’t do it.

Patrick. I have your values and your mission statement and looking back on that reflecting, planning and thinking about your teaching values and see how we can improve the situation, and the purpose I had was to see if I could link people into thinking about how we are teaching, learning and to how we are working together as a team and to get ideas from people on how to move forward

Mentor Y. Teachers realistically have so much going on in the sense of what they are learning themselves. I don’t know what their feedback is on the ELP. I like the idea of being an established teacher who knows the pupils well themselves. Obviously it’s good for the H. Dips. to think more about their own learning

Patrick. I don’t think there is anything else to be honest. We have covered all of the key areas. Reflective process in the classroom, the effects, more motivated, shared, use of the target language to the extent they are able to use the language at that level, third level moving into exams. Talk about target setting. In a sense would you think that that process breaks down the lock step approach, whereas this seems more individual?

Mentor Y. Yes. More individual. I say to the class that they have improved. It is a good that way, you’re moving away from the school system. It is much better. When I came into school I could say ‘Hello’ and now I know these things. It is much better. It would be nice to see that as part of normal education anyway. To be praised for more than just getting an A.

Patrick. Continuous assessment?
Mentor X. Well Pat, at the beginning of the year [Elizabeth], the H. Dip. student, took my class for one period in the week, on a Tuesday. And I had the class for three other periods. Now, the particular group was, is a very, very weak group. The way our school operates, it’s mixed ability but there’s kind banding, which ends up with putting a lot of weak students together, not exactly in a stream but you will have a kind of a majority of those students being weak. Within that group you had, even though it was quite a small class, you had about four or five students who really were pretty negative and a bit difficult really and difficult to motivate to learn. But also they were very, very weak really bordering on remedial, even with their English. So I felt, at the beginning, that putting this actual programme into operation with them, while not impossible, I think, certainly could have been done, I found it a little bit more difficult because I found ... I kind of recognise that it probably could have been used in the class to a certain effect but, like, I could just see it being a lot easier with the other classes I teach. For example like, I would have a third year class who I think would be much more, would show a lot more initiative themselves. Linda was in charge of the dossier, scrapbook, which the students have been compiling and that was certainly a kind of an area where they made decisions about what to put in themselves into the scrapbook, rather than being told directly what to do, you know. They were in some way there kind of assessing, gauging the amount of ground that they had covered.

That said, we did actually try to bring in aspects of it, e.g. Other than that, we did use a lot of, kind of, group work and students talking to each other, which, by their very nature anyway, is a kind of self-assessment in a way too because you are not actually telling them exactly what to say. You are telling them to describe their own day or describe what they had for breakfast. You know, we would be creating quite a lot of conversation situations with that. But, at the same time, I found as a group they are the type of group that responded to the simplicity too. And there was something very simple about, for example, giving them the words for the weather in kind of a very simple and ordered way and then, you know, being able to ask them what’s the weather like today and now. In other words, a kind of rather traditional approach but, you know, one that, I think, they responded to especially being Linda was in charge of the dossier, scrapbook, which the students have been compiling and that was certainly a kind of an area where they made decisions about what to put in themselves into the scrapbook, rather than being told directly what to do, you know. They were in some way there kind of assessing, gauging the amount of ground that they had covered. rather challenged and weak students. I found anything, especially with a first year group like that, I found the main battle was to try to make the whole process appear simple and because you can lose them in first year. Even as it is, I think, some of this group are kind of lost because, basically, it just comes from themselves. They’re probably much good at a lot of the other subjects either and hitting a new subject, like French, there’s a few
boys in that class now who have really learnt very little in the course of the year but we are trying our best.

Patrick Farren. That’s interesting because what you said there, first of all, about using scrapbook, dossier, to keep evidence of their own learning, to keep pieces of work that they had done.

Mentor X. Linda actually did that particular side of it and was telling me that she found it very successful. I think it kind of worked with all of them really, you know, it was a very good idea, like I think …

Patrick Farren. So, in terms of motivation, would that have been a kind of an issue that you would think is the key issue in language learning, language teaching? How to motivate them though is the question?

Mentor X. Oh, I think that’s a huge issue. I think, you know, motivation is nearly 50% of the whole thing.

Patrick Farren. But can we motivate them or does motivation have to come from within, intrinsic motivation, like is that the …? How can we develop generally?

Mentor X. I find, generally, that students are motivated and are positive towards the language, they seem to like the subject. They like the course as it is presented in school. But, as I was coming back to this particular group, it was a particularly difficult group and there was just a few difficult characters in it anyway, who really became apparent, even after a few weeks, that there was going to be big problems motivating them. They weren’t your typical class, basically. But it was a class that I had with Linda so that’s the class we were actually putting the programme in together. And they weren’t the kind of a group, maybe I could have experimented a bit more, but I just sensed from them that they were kind of … Now there were within that group some very nice students, and are, some very nice students in the class who are doing well. But there was another element within the class which kind of limited things a bit in terms of giving a lot of autonomy to the group. Because, from day one, they were kind of a bit negative.

Patrick Farren. Just looking at that, developing autonomy with the group – how would you see that panning out for you in your teaching? How would you, if you like, as a cooperating teacher, let’s say, moving away from the post-primary level for a second, and looking at Linda and your work with Linda, you were saying you were working with her. Obviously, helping her to develop, kind of, learner autonomy and helping her to develop target language use among the learners, I suppose. How would you have seen your role in helping [Elizabeth] in that way? What would have been key things for you?
Mentor X. Well, I suppose, the key thing of course is discussion. Discussion about what you are going to do and cooperating about what you are going to do. But, of course, there are problems with that as well. One of the big problems is the timetable and availability of time. Like the practicality of a day, I might have, some days, eight classes, you know, and when am I actually going to sit down and work out with Linda what we are going to do. Linda would have H. Dip. classes and be coming in straight away after school. Like, the practicality of that situation, well we did sit down and we did go over things, but very often it was in break and things like that. You do need a cup of coffee too. So the actual structure of a typical school day, like say in our school now we have nine classes in the day and on average you would be teaching seven of those nine classes. It would be very likely that Linda, who did a lot of kind of substitute work within the school as well with her teaching I think, but wouldn’t have been there available during the two periods that I wasn’t there, or that I was there. Now that, in the end, is a practical barrier to cooperation between the teacher and the H. Dip. student. But that’s not to say that cooperation, of course, inevitably does go on and it’s essential and it’s crucial. Well, I found out very early on anyway that I seemed to see that Linda was very capable and very, kind of, interested and, kind of, caring teacher. You know, very soon I had every confidence in her ability but I did, at times, give her advice on different things. Sometimes on very practical things such as discipline in the class, school discipline, catering ... you know.

Patrick Farren. An Interesting point about discipline, just to focus on that how would you find, as an experienced practicing teacher, how would you advise a young teacher in terms of managing activities, managing students, trying to develop, kind of a disciplined learning environment? What would your, kind of, approach be to helping her in that regard?

Mentor X. Just very simple, very simple techniques which, no doubt, have been taught her as well in the course here, you know, about speaking to individual students, rather than groups. Positioning yourself in the class so that you are aware of everything that’s happening in different areas of the class. Areas like that, different things came up in the course of the year and I feel that, I’d hope that I was some help to her.

Patrick Farren. The other thing, just to touch base with, we have talked a little bit about before and that was language use, target language use. Would you like to talk about that a little while? About how would you advise her on that in terms of developing learner capacity to learn a language, if you like, to develop? What would you like to say about that in terms of your interaction with (Elizabeth)?

Mentor X. Well, my interaction with (Elizabeth) was that, I kind of saw early on that she was very willing to and eager to use French in the classroom, as I would be as well.

Patrick Farren. As a practicing teacher, what effects do you see that having, as a teacher using the language, in what areas? How would they use it and to what effects? If you could just maybe, I know
it’s not easy to reflect sometimes on these issues, but just maybe if you could engage with that a little bit, about the effects?

Mentor X. I will, certainly, because it’s an area that I’m interested in personally anyway. Now, the idea is that one should try and use the target language all the time in the classroom and something that I see is possible and that I would favour. In reality, I think, the experience of most teachers is that we don’t use it all the time in the classroom for all sorts of practical reasons. For that particular first year class, for example, that I was talking about, with some, kind of, quite negative students really who were, kind of, bucking the system a bit, well there are times that you spoke to them directly in English. Because that was the effective thing to do, to actually maintain discipline in the classroom.

There are times when you are just personally tired, as you can imagine teaching seven classes a day, and you just want to relax a bit and speak a bit of English. But I would be very favourable to using French as much as possible. There would be occasions where I would go an entire class using French, they’d probably be rare but, like, they would be every week, I’d have a class or two where I would. In every class I would go through a period of the class speaking French alone but for all sorts again of practical reasons because you have a fairly heavy day, you have a busy day. I find, like, and I would imagine, I don’t know what goes on in other teachers’ classes, but I would imagine that most French teachers do use English at stages within their class. Now I would be someone very, who would be aiming always to try and use more and more French in the classroom. And I think I am doing that but, you know, it’s not always easy.

Patrick Farren. Sometimes there’s discipline and sometimes there’s notices to be given and sometimes there’s the fatigue.

Mentor X. Fatigue, yeah, yeah, you know, it’s three o’clock in the afternoon and you are tired.

Patrick Farren. Touching on another point about language use in terms of reflective practice, if you like, another key element in developing learner autonomy. This idea of getting the learners to think about, for themselves, what they are doing, why they are doing it, how are they going about it, what helps them to achieve the aims that they have set themselves and, as a result of that, reflective practice, how they can improve their learning, if you like? What would you think you’re work with (a) Linda , (b) with your own students be in that regard?

Mentor X. I think, first of all, I would just like to refer to textbooks. I am using a textbook ‘Allons en France’, the author lives here in Galway, and I just find that within the textbook itself it’s very intelligently designed to, you know, to make the student reflect a bit and be more or less in charge of their learning. And I found, generally, a lot of the Junior Cert. textbooks are, kind of, aware of this need. And so it’s kind of happening naturally by following the book in one sense.
Patrick Farren. So, you find that there's a...kind of framework within the textbook that helps the learner to see objectives and to check how they are progressing? In terms of self-assessment, do you find that that 'can do' statements, as they are in the ELP related to common European frameworks, would you like to touch on that and the effects that that has...

Mentor X. Well, in my teaching now that's an area, probably, that I haven't, kind of, in the sense, in the very kind of straightforward sense, that it came up in the actual forms that you gave me, I haven't done, and it's something it seems to me like a good idea. I think, in a way though, you know, with a lot of, any reasonable student at all, they are kind of doing that all the time themselves in any case.

Patrick Farren. They are doing what now?

Mentor X. They are assessing their own, kind of, standards and learning. And they are, you know, people criticize the exam system but the exam system is certainly a huge motivational factor and the examination, as it stands, in French, I find, now in one sense there is no oral exam which is unfortunate but that is a matter of...

Patrick Farren. There's no oral exam?

Mentor X. For Junior Cert.

Patrick Farren. What's the effect of that on teaching and learning do you think?

Mentor X. Well, I think, inevitably when you get to third year, I would use an awful lot, I would give an oral exam to my first year students, I would give an oral exam to my second year students at Christmas and at Summer, it's quite awkward to do, to find the time to do it, but I would. But, inevitably then, when you get to the Junior Cert, you are focused, to a large extent, on the examination and you find yourself moving away from oral work then because the oral exam isn't there. Now the oral exam isn't there, of course, because of difficulties between the trade unions and the Department of Education. The Department of Education say they want to have an oral exam but the unions aren't accepting the conditions which they want the exam to be. That's why it's not there. But the fact that the absence of the oral exam in the Junior Cert, I think, is damaging really. It's damaging to the whole teaching of oral work in the classroom.

Patrick Farren. You are talking about assessment there it's interesting, you say the wash back effect it has an effect on teaching, the fact that there's no oral in the Junior Cert. has a certain influence on what goes on in the classroom in terms of activities.

Mentor X. Can I make one point as well, because you are talking about the use
of the target language, another area where you are trying to use French as much as you can in the language, whereas in the actual examination, the comprehension and the questions on the tape are in English and that, of course, if you are then doing exam questions, which I am sure every teacher does, well it just introduces English into the classroom in any case.

Patrick Farren. So it can have a ....

Mentor X. It can have a negative effect to the use of the target language in the classroom.

Patrick Farren. How would you overcome that? How would you resolve that problem?

Mentor X. Well, what I have done a lot, but it just makes things a bit more awkward again when you realise that you've got 22 ½ hours teaching or something, but what I would have done a lot is that, rather than use the questions that are given in English, I would give the questions in French, which I think works well. But at the same time because the textbooks and question books will inevitably follow the examination, the students' expectations are also designed towards the examination. There's a lot of pressure on you really to follow the examination type questions when you get in to third year.

Patrick Farren. Do you think the idea of the learner, I mean, what other possibilities for assessment are there, Brendan, outside of that terminal exam? Or, is there a way that the terminal exam can be redesigned that would help the learners to become, to develop their autonomy, to develop target language use? Is there a way that the assessment process could be more appropriately designed that would lead to better teaching, if you like, or activities that could...?

Mentor X. Well, I don't know really because the exam is quite good in many ways, you know. I think the Department of Education, seems to me, to, you know the people in charge there and teaching, you know are excellent really in terms of their, their, you know ... And they would, of course, argue that this is the only fair way to examine comprehension, that you have to have the questions in English, because, for Junior students, if you don't, and they would also say that just because the exam is in this way that shouldn't dictate the teaching methods. But, unfortunately, the reality, it does actually tend to.

Patrick Farren. Just moving on then to, I think we have covered most of the ground actually, in terms of we've looked at reflective practice, in terms of planning and, I suppose, we've looked also at motivation, we've looked at target language use and we have also talked about the assessment process, formal assessment process and the effects that that has on teaching and learning. I'm wondering is there another, is there a way that you would see that the learner could, in a certain sense, how would you expect the ... You mentioned that the learner, the good learner, is able to self-assess and does assess their own learning in the classroom. I am just wondering how you would come to that sort of
analysis, that, you know, you were saying learners, you find, assess their own learning anyway? I mean, if they are just waiting for assessment in the exam, in the terminal exam, and that all the teaching goes then towards that terminal exam and that you are saying that learners are self-assessing?

Mentor X. I just imagine we all do it. It’s what I do when I try and learn something. I think that it’s just a natural thing that we do anyway. Now, that said, I think the idea that came in the forms of actually doing it in a more formal way seems to be a very good idea.

Patrick Farren. Using ‘can do’ statements, type of thing? Positive statements?

Mentor X. Yeah, yeah I think it’s a good idea and it’s one that I’d hope to use, maybe, more in the future.

Patrick Farren. Do you think that should be in the target language? Do you think these little ‘can do’, self-assessment statements, that match?

Mentor X. I don’t know really. It’s something that I haven’t really tried. It seems to make sense but then I just wonder are you just, kind of, putting in words something that most people kind of do anyway. If they are actually serious about learning but it seems to me, at the same time, a good idea.

Patrick Farren. I’m just thinking like, you were mentioning there about the exam questions in comprehension are in English and, therefore, people tend to go towards the exam and they will use English, whereas, if the self-assessment statements, ‘can do’ statements were in the target language, it might have a, logically have a good effect on the process of thinking through?

Mentor X. I think anything in the target language does. Even the smallest of things, you know, like, especially students now in our school, they have to say “Can I rejoin the class?” and, you know, in the French classes they always say “Puis-je rejoindre la classe?” “Je ne sais pas si c’est correct!” At the same time they all know now “Puis-je?” So there’s a constant, all these ideas of putting more and more of these things in to the target language all the time seems to me to be very good. Something now that possibly, the sort of thing that maybe fit in to this thing of analysing your language as well as, you know, this idea of corrections, students get corrected homework back, they have to explain where each mistake was made. And with the better students in the class, and it works very well with some third years, they would explain in French. And they would put down things like, you would give them down things like “J’ecris, j’oublie de mettre un ‘s’ a la fin du mot.” And you give them a list of those sort s of vocabulary but, first of all, it’s the target language. It gets them moving and learning “je l’ai rendu”- even things like that. But the very good students, they will actually pick that up, but at the same time, within, by the very process of correcting in that manner, they are self-assessing. I think. Because all of their own mistakes, they are doing it completely on their own. They’ve all made
different mistakes and they are given time in class to actually correct and explain where they are going wrong. I think that’s the kind of self-assessing that’s going on.

Patrick Farren. They are developing their autonomy too, isn’t it? They are starting to use the language to convey their own meanings?

Mentor X. Even though then, what I would do now in a mixed ability class, I would give them the choice, if they want to, if they can’t do it in French well then I’d say “Well then do it in English.” But you’d find the good ones would do it in French and, you know, I find it very, you know always the different things.

Patrick Farren. That’s (Mentor X), language teacher, of how many years Brendan?

Mentor X. Oh, twenty years.

Patrick Farren. Twenty years. Thanks.

Meeting between Mentor A and Patrick (Researcher)
May 2005

Patrick. So we are meeting in our final session tonight just to look at some of the themes which have emerged for you during the course of the year using the ELP. You have been using it in conjunction with student-teacher (Pauline), the HDip student and you and Eleanor Fogarty, your colleague as well, she is there and she came along on courses and helped us with the student-teachers here on the programme. She gave six hours session and that was useful. Both of you are teaching in the same school, that’s interesting because there is interaction and both of you using the ELP and so on.

Mentor A. And we are both learners of a new language as well, of Italian.

Patrick. You’re both learners of a new language. So that’s an interesting one as well, that’s further... learners of a new language...because that actually complements what the students are doing because they go to a French, German and a Spanish semester course to brush up on their ... it’s the same principle. So it might be interesting just to touch on that theme, first of all, Patricia, just some of the ideas that come from you as a learner of a new language using the ELP.

Mentor A. Well, what I find very useful is, while I’m teaching say French in the classroom, particularly with a Transition year group where there’s scope for more relaxation around how you teach it, I find it very useful to tell them if I am doing French that I am doing Italian.- I have a semester course in Italian- but even when I’m doing French and we come across a phrase I can say, the
Italians have a very interesting way of saying this, and they really are agog to learn it I have to say. Just comparison ... a language awareness, awareness of how people see things differently in different cultures. Even we came across, I recall lately, a text message and 'texto' in French and I said the Italians have a cool way of saying that it's S.M.S. and they really loved it. So basically, playing around a bit with how language, if you like, the same principles, but at the same time how different, another one that comes to mind is 'I miss you' or 'I miss Galway' 'Galway me manque' 'Tu me manques'. 'Me manque(s)' they go into convulsions and if I do an assessment at the end of a term, which I am doing on Monday, and I ask them what phrases do you remember from the introductory course and the first one is always, every year 'me manque(s)' – spelt correctly and pronounced correctly. But I think, at that level of enthusiasm and interest, the joy of discovery, I find it’s caught very much. My enthusiasm for it, I am enthusiastic about French, so I suppose there’s a joy in discovery of a new language and I think that transmits itself.

Patrick. So that’s interesting and do you use the ELP yourself?

Mentor A. Well, I’ll say this much now, I don’t know how much I use it but I feel I use some of the principles of it. I did give it out to them, the actual portfolio at the beginning of the year, to a group of second years, and we spoke about it and I suppose, even last year in my teaching, I would have made an effort to involve the students around decisions around what we would do on a particular week or in a particular term. Or where we were going in the learning of it. Or even, a more general discussion on why they are learning it. And I think the questionnaires that they filled in will be interesting from that in particular. For a lot of them they said 'I like it as a language, it’s fun to learn.'

Mentor A. That they are actually communicating. Well I would, certainly one area that would insist on the use of the target language, is in any dealings with me that have to do, from the learning that’s going on, with classroom management or asking to go to the office, the toilet or whatever needs they have, or open the window, close the window. Or if they come in late, to offer a reason, but in French or if another held them back. It amazes me, every year, how much they actually retain of that through practice, even one of the weaker students in terms of language or who finds that maybe doesn’t apply herself maybe too much to it. But that will actually, through hearing it so often and finding oneself not allowed to say it in English, having a way and eventually finding it. Even to the extent of first years will say, or second years the class I have in second year, 'puis je aller?' You could be teaching that for ...

Patrick. What about the aspect of, well what you are saying suggests, trying to get the learner to use the target language in classroom routines and also in interacting with one another to convey their meanings in the actual activities, in actual planning and self assessing how would you get them to use the target language in ...?
Mentor A. Well in the actual ELP the tasks, the assessments are in a few languages. I asked them that today, would they tend to look at the English or the French, I think some of them looked at the English there alright. But maybe with more confidence, perhaps, they could be encouraged a bit more to look at the French.

Patrick. So that’s interesting that they are actually trying to think, to reflect on the process as well and that’s a gradual, in relation to their level, their capacity to do that and it’s related to your own particular, trying to get it down to their level, because it is in conjunction with the teacher all the time. It means rephrasing I suppose. Would you see value in that, Patricia?

Mentor A. I would see great value in, I don’t always do it now because of demands of this that and the other take over, but I see great value in them actually standing back a bit from the process that they are engaged in. “Why are we learning conditional today?” I mean they will use it automatically as in ‘je voudrais faire quelque chose’. But to actually stand back and say these are all the skills I have now, this is what I have mastered in a term. If I did it more perhaps it would be of great value, to reflect more on my own involvement in it and to get them to be more aware. Songs, opening them up to the target language and just getting them to actually relax a bit. Somebody gave me a tape of an artist, I forget the name now... Brunie or something like that, and ‘quelque’un me dit’ was the first one. The Tansition Year today one of the girls said, “That’s really France’s answer to Norah Jones.” And I thought she’s dead right, it’s that easy listening. Somebody gave it to me as a gift and I thought ‘I’ll try them with that song’ because they really had it, they had the rhythm, they had the words. ‘Quelque’un me dit, que tu m’aimes encore’- they just loved it.

Patrick. That’s their level as well, it relates to their interests as well. So there is that, in terms of setting targets, Patricia, getting the learners involved in trying to set little language targets for particular objectives?

Mentor A. I think I am best really doing that at first year because we start with “how many here have learned or have been exposed to French? How many have had occasion to hear French spoken?” and some of them will have been exposed, maybe in a B&B at home or wherever, or a few but very few in primary school. Very very few and maybe one or two or three would have been on a holiday to France, but again, not many in my experience. So initially it’s all about the country, why learn it etc. and really their enthusiasm is worked up there, they really, they like the sound. I teach them a lot of songs at the beginning, very simple little songs. I start really with the target language, I don’t do much in terms of grammar or anything else in the beginning, it’s all through the target language. The enthusiasm is worked up there. It’s very easy for them to say, you know, you’d like to be able to give your name, your address, talk about your family, talk about where you live etc. engaging in autonomous learning process, how does that interact with their self-motivation?
Mentor A. Well, I think it gives them huge self-confidence when they realise that, you know, 'I can ...' and they can have fun doing it, you know. Describing someone in the class, without saying who it is and they are able to say this 'il y a ... il porte des lunettes'.

Patrick. So, you make it kind of meaningful for them at that stage?

Mentor A. Yes, little tasks that they are very capable or we would do the thing of, describing an object in the classroom; the colour, the size, all of that. What is it? Learning the names of objects, learning...having the confidence to ask a question in the target language, which they don't always do, but one tries to in some way: "Je ne comprends pas, excusez moi, comment dis en Francais?" whatever.

Patrick. Then the dossier, I suppose, they are, as you say, building their confidence because they can actually see what they have achieved over a period of time. They can go back and the self-assessment too, I suppose, relates to that because they have set objectives and for skills.

Patrick. Tell me, you were talking there about using the ELP, in which group again?

Mentor A. In second year.

Patrick. In second year. That's interesting. Would that be a mixed class?

Mentor A. It would.

Patrick. You were talking about reflective practice there in an on-going basis, what are we doing? Why are we doing it? How? How can we improve? type of thing. And also trying to get, I suppose, in relation to the H. Dip. student, would you promote that in your working with (Pauline)?

Mentor A. Indeed, I would.

Patrick. So that's helping her really, isn't it to engage with the same process? And then ... 

Mentor A. And I found her very enthusiastic in the whole area of teaching French as a foreign language.

Patrick. In terms of motivation, 'parliamo un po', 'parlons au sujet de la motivation'. What do you think about the ELP and motivation in terms of the process that it engages them in?

Mentor A. I think, for juniors, a lot of the assessment sheets we'll say it, I think if it is presented in a more colourful way, that that would have a bigger hold on them.
Patrick. Ok, it would make it more appealing and attractive I suppose?

Mentor A. I think, if they see it as something they would like to finger through, at the early stages now, say by third year, by Junior Cert. they’ve moved past that. But, in the very early stages of language learning I think they have to see, kind of, a fun element and colour and all that. They are not really, I think, that conscious of reflective processes. I think it’s more immediate than that level.

Patrick. Apart from the actual presentation of the portfolio itself, engaging in autonomous learning process, how does that interact with their self-motivation?

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Patrick. And they are talking about French? And then of course Anna Falowska, your student-teacher, I should say, the HDip student working with you. That’s very interesting. So there is that learner involvement that you are trying to promote.

Mentor A. Now, I also visited Anna’s classroom where she had been doing a very interesting experiment, I thought, in how she had simplified a fairy tale, Little Red Riding Hood, and she got them really acting it out and I thought it was a very good idea. And I think they will remember the lines that they had, they will remember the structures. I, myself, am not somebody who likes role-play, I would freely admit that, it’s not my forte. I know Mentor B loves it, but I don’t like it at all, it’s just personal. So it’s not my preferred way of interaction with students but I did see a huge value in what
Anna’s philosophy did in the class. And she had it recorded which made it more interesting, set to music.

Patrick. And that’s evidence in itself, too, for them to see themselves and to ....

Mentor A. And they were chuffed that I came in to see them.

Patrick. So there’s that communication to another party as well as to one another, that’s interesting.

Mentor A. And the other group of second years wanted to go in and see it, they were very anxious to go and see it.

Patrick. And then, of course, there’s all that planning that has to go in to video it, costumes design and ...songs and interactions, gestures.

Mentor A. I see great scope in it and, I suppose, I will be looking at it, maybe other ways of teaching ...that would maybe, enliven the whole thing.

Patrick. That’s interesting because it’s, kind of, involving the learners in learning the language by doing. The other issue is that, that’s kind of helping them...y to get them to use it again and again. But it would be very helpful if they have it all in a dossier.

Mentor A. Well, are you talking now about that particular experiment or the ELP or both?

Patrick. Well, both, but your own work, vis-à-vis the H. Dip. student-teacher

Mentor A. Oh, you are asking about encouraging them to take responsibility in the planning? Well, certainly I found that she was very enthusiastic in her approach, she was willing to try new thing, I mean I didn’t have any thing to do with that idea.

I did ask her though, I saw her doing the project and I said that the trouble that she went to with the book was really something. So I did say it to her, “You know I’d love to have a copy, if you are willing, that I might use in Italian or at least give me an idea for ...” and she was very happy to do that, that I would acknowledge her idea in it.

I think the documentation that’s involved in the ELP, the actual keeping of pieces of work,

Patrick. Like in the Dossier
Mentor A. in the dossier, I see a huge value in that. I encourage students, and Eleanor my colleague as well, we would have agreed over years that copies are out for a language. Because they lose them, they have them filled in no time, they can’t organise their material correctly. So for about most classes we try to have a combination of the skills, or as many as possible, it doesn’t always work out in practice, but the listening, the speaking or speaking and listening and moving on then to the other. So, what I recommend from first year, and we do a lot, what my first years really love doing, is drawing, group activities, filling in. We did a bar chart on hobbies and they really enjoyed that. We did a pie chart on how they divide their day and I think they enjoy seeing skills from another subject translate into language as well.

About organising, I think the folder system is what I used to mention, have all the different sections, but the dossier, if you like, puts an even nicer term on it. It’s a way of keeping it from year to year. I did say to you earlier that I find at third year level, particularly now, that they forget the skills that they had, that their learning is based on, they forget it very often and you recall it and you try to get them to use it again and again. But it would be very helpful if they have it all in a dossier.

Patrick. That’s right because they can go back on things, they can see what they have done.

Mentor A. In terms of revision, it’s huge.

Patrick. They’ve done it. You mentioned there earlier that you help, you try to help them to work with you, negotiate with you in terms of setting objectives and the kind of activities they would then, I suppose, would work out from that. In terms of self-assessment then, where would that fit in? I can see it in Anna Falowska’s project that they can actually see.

Mentor A. That they are actually communicating. Well I would, certainly one area that I would insist on the use of the target language, is in any dealings with me that have to do, apart from the learning that’s going on, with classroom management or asking to go to the office, the toilet or whatever needs they have, or open the window, close the window. Or if they come in late, to offer a reason, but in French, or if another held them back. It amazes me, every year, how much they actually retain of that through practice, even one of the weaker students in terms of language or who finds that maybe doesn’t apply herself maybe too much to it. But that will actually, through hearing it so often and finding oneself not allowed to say it in English, having a way and eventually finding it. Even to the extent of first years will say, or second years the class I have in second year, ‘puis je aller?’ You could be teaching that for …

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Patrick. Apart from the actual presentation of the portfolio itself, Mentor A. And they realise they can go back and perfect it or improve it. I do think the whole idea, as a basis for language learning, is worth, is very valid.

Patrick. Would you think it’s a useful process to engage H.Dip. student in, as well, while you are a cooperating Mentor A?
Mentor A. I do, but I do think it's a bit devoid of inspiration in its presentation. I would repeat that again but in terms of the actual idea, I think, it fits.

Patrick. on. In terms of just looking at a broader picture, Patricia, in terms of the context in which you are operating, first year, Junior cert, transition year, leaving cert, established, applied, vocational, do you find that developing a psychological relationship with learning, helping the learners to develop that, IS ...how does it interact within the formal assessment process? Say, for example, in the Leaving Cert. (Established)?

Mentor A. Not alone will they say, you know one thing, but they want to say several things.

Patrick. So, several meanings that come from within themselves, they want to explore those and articulate them?

Mentor A. Yeah, yeah.

Patrick. Then, I suppose you are getting them to reflect on that at a level that's appropriate for them at beginners and so on. In terms of just looking at a broader picture, Patricia, in terms of the context in which you are operating, first year, Junior cert, transition year, leaving cert, established, applied, vocational, do you find that developing a psychological relationship with learning, helping the learners to develop that, IS ...how does it interact within the formal assessment process? Say, for example, in the Leaving Cert. (Established)?

Mentor A. I actually think it is hugely valid because, I'm talking about the ELP, the notion on which it's based, whether you call it ELP or autonomous learning or self-assessment, that whole area because they tend to panic a little bit, I find, coming up, now I'm talking about say I have a small group of Higher level students who are motivated, very motivated. Some of them of different levels of ability and all that. They think "What can I learn?" so much of the written tasks, it's non defined, it's about how they handle the question that's there. The question arises out of the reading comprehension, so it can be a very topical question, it can be something, they may be lucky to hit on a question that we have dealt with in class. We certainly would have covered areas that would be, I know, on the topic, but in terms of having confidence to handle what comes up because it's very broad based.

Patrick. It's kind of helping them to interact or to be spontaneous in their use and be confident. In terms of the actual formal assessment, what do you think that does to, what is the washback effect? Do you see any tensions there in terms of what the exam expect you to do in the fifth year mode?

Mentor A. Well, I think, the more I'm teaching at that level, which is a long time! The longer it's going on, the more I see that it's that skill, it's the skill of not saying, 'we didn't cover this theme or what theme', while one would cover themes, but it's having the capacity, having the innate sense of
how to deal, how to react, how to be someone who can give their own opinion, who can relate to this. I mean they are doing it in English, they are learning how to respond to a question using all their faculties: critical, imaginative, linguistic, you know, it’s all there. But they have to do that and they have to do it in French. And I see it, there’s one student I have in Leaving Cert I have in mind who, I think, from a young age responded in that way and who, no matter what is there, can handle it, can deal with it in a very good way. I mean others will strive and maybe, it will avoid as well, in my opinion, it avoids students learning off and trotting out when they see something that they think “Oh yeah, I’ve learnt something about that.”

Patrick. Learn it off by heart? So, kind of, regurgitate, so it takes them away from that process?

Mentor A. It takes them away from that.

Patrick. That’s interesting. In terms of the...you know, the way there is no oral/aural interaction, now no oral exam in the Junior Certificate, what is your view on that in terms of what you are trying to achieve as a Junior Cert.?

Mentor A. My view is, the more I see it the more I think it would be of great value, absolutely. Because the oral skill, when it’s not developed that much at Junior Cert, I mean one tends, we say the Junior Cert, to focus on some of the other skills. Even though I engage them as well but you are conscious of the other things that they have to have up to speed. I think the oral should be a priority.

Patrick. I’m just thinking about your view on examinations, termian exams as a feature of assessment, formal assessment, what is your view on that? Just your own ideas, is it something that... needs to be reviewed or revisited in terms of what effects its having on practice in the classroom, or would you think that it’s fine as it is, it’s anonymous and we shouldn’t touch it? Or is there a way that we can, in your view, link self-assessment with continuous assessment, informal assessment with summative assessment, if you like, can we link formative assessment and summative assessment? If so, what kind of exam can we do?

Mentor A. I think it would be, I mean, isn’t there talk about standardising, all over Europe?

Patrick. Using a common European framework of reference for the various... C1, C2?

Mentor A. A student who would move from one country to another. I had a student now who left in Leaving Cert year, I think, I think it was Leaving cert for six weeks, it may have been fifth year, because I can’t imagine her going but maybe she was Leaving Cert. She went to, she was a highly motivated girl, and she took herself off to school near Paris for six weeks and was amazed to find, now she was highly motivated anyway and had been on an exchange visit with us to France. But, you know, was absolutely amazed to find how she could get on and, of course, was fluent when she came
back. Now again, it was a short time but she actually found herself in attending French classes, every subject in French and coped. So I think, you know, it would perhaps facilitate that kind of movement even.

Patrick. I suppose if people do move that, as you say, they can understand what level they would be at.

Mentor A. Term-time is more viable because the families are gone away in the summer or whatever. Even exposure to another school and another way of doing things.


Mentor A. Projects or going on an exchange. Not even school exchange, but to go over and find yourself, immersion is probably the key.

Patrick. Is there anything else you would like to say that we haven’t covered Patricia, tonight, that is significant in your view?

Mentor A. Let me say, that I recall the joy, really, of finding a student a few years ago who said to me “I’m going to do poetry for my ‘document’.” So I thought, “Great!” because we have done a few of Jacques Prevert and, you know, a few more that we had come across. And she said “I’m reading Baudelaire in the library.” ‘Les fleurs du Mal’ ….. (friendly banter in French – quoting poetry by Patrick and Patricia!) I had a professor for that. I often think though, really, the joy of poetry! But anyway, that girl had been going to the library, I had not even mentioned Baudelaire, she had never been to France. Yet, she was highly, highly affected by the learning of French and, you know, in the end she actually did Prevert. It was easier to talk about than Baudelaire. But she had been … I suppose what I am really saying is, there’s something good happening as well, when you have students who …. But again, I suppose, the ideal would be to have more of them …

Patrick. Finishing off on a high note, in terms of your own self-assessment because if we are kind of helping, I suppose, student-teachers in different capacities, my role, say as a supervisor in the schools but also trying to involve them in thinking about what they are going to need, how to develop their capacity as student-teachers in the schools, and your work with them. How would you...we’re trying to help them to develop their capacity to self-assess their learning as teachers so that they in turn will be able to help their post-primary learners. How effective do you think, you know, what we set out as goals at the beginning of the year and in discussions, informal mostly in the course of meetings during the course of the year, in visits, presentations and so on, and now at the end of the year. What would you say your own self-assessment, how did we meet...how did you meet, say the goals you set yourself as goals and...how did you meet the goals you set yourselves, e.g. to help them to develop their capacity to accept more responsibility, to develop their reflection, reflective practice and in promoting target language use and so on?
Mentor A. The first thing I would have to say is I was running parallel classwise with Anna, and she came in and took a Leaving Cert class as well. You know, when one was free, like when she was teaching I was teaching so basically there wasn’t a huge amount of time for having a lot of chats here and there. Do you know what I’m saying? Other years I would have had a Dip who would taken a class or two a week often, so it would leave me, say, free to meet and discuss. But I did think that it was, I was delighted I went in, I Anna Falowska. And she came in and took a Leaving Cert class as well, a smaller group, with the result that we weren’t free, you know, when one was free, like when she was teaching I was teaching so basically there wasn’t a huge amount of time for having a lot of chats here and there. Do you know what I’m saying? Other years I would have had a Dip who would taken a class or two a week often, so it would leave me, say, free to meet and discuss.

Patrick. You did mention the project that she did and you, kind of, saw that?

Mentor A. Yeah, to do that I had to get the class off. I had to go to my Principal’s and work to get someone to supervise my class and go in you, I suppose what I am saying is, we are trying to help them to self-assess or to develop a capacity to self-assess their learning as student-eachers, so that they will in turn be able to help their own post-primary learners. (reverse side of cassette tape)

Patrick. We can draw that to a conclusion. It’s been a pleasure for me to interact with you in the course of the year, Patricia, and thanks very much for your assistance during the course of the year and also Eleanor who, unfortunately, because of other commitments couldn’t make it here tonight. I will touch base with her in the near future. Thanks a million.

Mentor A. I was lucky because we have a Transition Year programme in the school and a very good one. And there’s loads to do with them, in the target language, in terms of their experience and what they have done, how they have grown, what skills they have developed. Everything that we are doing, that exciting programme ‘Living Scenes’ and all that. So when I saw that it came up as a question on the Leaving Cert, I thought “Yipee!” but I was talking to somebody else who kind of said “But, you’ve done Transition year.” Whereas it was an organic thing to do because, even when they are two years on in Leaving Cert, it’s a point of reference for them in the course of their education. They are so enthusiastic about it that it transfers into the other language as well.

Patrick. Just, we didn’t touch on Transition Year, what would your, thinking in terms of autonomous learning and the transition year and portfolio learning, is there anything you would like to say about how they relate?

Mentor A. I suppose, I see it number one as a year free for whatever activity they will enjoy and what we do is one term we change and we introduce a new language. So we do it in that modular system. They are introduced to a whole new language. There’s an excitement around it, there’s a point of
comparison, which I find always very useful because they are saying "Oh yeah, there's a similar structure." It's like the French, they are very quick to point out "That's very like what we know in French."

Patrick. So they are becoming aware?

Mentor A. Yeah, it just, it gives them ... so back then to the language they will be continuing, they do in first term and last term, just so that they are exposed to that. I suppose, I like to do film study with them. I think it's a year where they can very validly explore film and they relate to it and they enjoy it. I suppose I could do some, that new film that's out.

Patrick. How would you relate the autonomous learning process in that area?

Mentor A. Right, how would I do that? Well, I'll be honest the film ingredient is part of it and I do it for originality, they love it. It's a different year, you are not thinking, "Oh they'll be saying, 'oh does this cover what I need etc.'" It's language learning at its best because it's for the love of it. But I would get them, of course, to reflect on the year. At the beginning of the year they would reflect on why they are doing the year, their goals and to be able to do all that in French. The different, the new subjects they are exposed to, the new areas of expertise that they are in the process of acquiring, places they are going to, they can talk about their visits, which again, are well worth documenting. And then, in the third term, where most of it, a lot of it has happened, it's a reflective process back. And they enjoy that as well. What they have done, how they have learned, would they recommend the year. What they would say at the end of the year.

Patrick. And would they gather evidence, like a dossier for instance?

Mentor A. Yes, they would have. Now I don't formalise it that much. Some years I have but the difficulty is that while all that is to be done the reality on the ground is they are away. They are gone, they are so involved in activities that sometimes you don't have them.

Patrick. How does the assessment work for you in terms of, obviously, what you are using? Is it self-assessment for you?

Mentor A. What I do at TY level it's, they are self-assessment, I give them, at the end of the modular thing on Italian, some years they have done Spanish, but not with me. In fact, a group of them have done Spanish this year, so they actually had a choice of whether they did Italian or Spanish. A lot of them chose Spanish, I had a smaller group, which suited me, I had nine for Italian, which just made for a lovely atmosphere in the group.

Patrick. Sounds very experimental doesn't it?
Mentor A. Yeah, I do let them, I give them an evaluation, I mean I give them a sheet with questions always at the end, always to see, and it’s always very positive. Now, they have a beautiful coloured book all year, they have to give it back because the school has bought these, they got a grant for these books. So what I advise them to do and I was amazed at what some of them had done, in particular, a student Letizia from Majorca, she had her own elements that we had picked out in the book done in colour, you know she was very excited about the language. She wants to learn it when she goes back.

Patrick. Is that a text-book?


Patrick. In terms of, that’s the evaluation, and how would you access their, they have evaluated the course in terms of ...

Mentor A. Yes, of what I give them, in terms of whether they liked it, what areas they liked, what they remember, test some little phrases.

Patrick. And would there be self-assessment in a sense of what they can do or examples of things that they would have to ....?

Mentor A. That’s built, really, in the book.

Patrick. Ok, we’ll leave it at that. Thank you very much.

Meeting between Tutor D and Patrick (Researcher)

May 2005

Patrick. Tutor D, language teacher on (N) with the H. Dip. students from 2004 – 2005 and Tutor D...

So the first thing to ask, just to outline to you, Tutor D, the nature of the interview, it is a semi-structured interview and it really covers your influence on student teachers in your semester course and looking at, basically at, your interaction with your students, and perhaps your own learning your own views and so on.

Q1. So first of all, maybe you could describe for me the kind of scenario or context in which we are working throughout the year.

Tutor D. Okay, so. first of all, I will describe the class. It was, I think myself, to teach languages it was quite a big class. It was twenty four students, H. Dip. students, I would say that most of them had a very good level. Some of them had a kind of average level and a couple of them I would say had quite a low level. There was a very, there was a huge different the worst student and the best student tin the class. So what I tried to do during the course is give them loads of ideas in terms of teaching out of the
book and I gave them some ideas on how to improve reading how to improve listening, reading in their students.

Patrick. Just to get the context first of all Tutor D, that’s fine. When you talk about the teaching and learning process in your classroom.

Tutor D. Yep.

Patrick. Could you describe to me what kind of teaching approach you use in conjunction with European Language Portfolio?

Tutor D. The teaching approach I use in conjunction of the European Language Portfolio was first of all to use a target language throughout. Even if at the beginning several students came to me after the first two classes that I gave I had several students were a bit anxious and so that maybe it was going a bit fast for them or they had to kind of they felt they weren’t following properly what I was saying. One thing was clear, that I would never speak in English. I think they have a primary degree in French, or they have studied French so they should be able to at least, if not speak, they should be able to follow a conversation. So in terms of the ELP, I stick to the target language to explain objectives as well, I went through as well the ELP because some of them were a bit confused in how to use the ELP in their classroom. So instead of going through theories, I had done myself during the H.Dip. a project on the ELP. So I went through this project, not in the theoretical manner, but in how you say?

Patrick Farren. Practical?

Tutor D. Practical manner. I just explained them, showed them examples on how to achieve a comprehension of the ELP for themselves and for the students and how to use them. How to develop how everything is kind of combined into one other, one another, the unit plan, their lesson plan, that you know, all their objectives, everything fits into the objectives in the ELP, it’s not how you would say, double en poids, it is not of something you repeat twice, everything sort of combines together, and that is what I was trying to show them. There is no extra activities to do with the ELP or to do only on the purpose of the ELP, everything sort of combines together, all the activities all the objectives that you are setting, all the unit plans or lesson plans all combines together and that is what I wanted to show them. What I did as well in terms of the ELP, again on the practical manner, to show them how it can be used is I asked them, what are your weaknesses in terms of the language, what would you like to achieve? What are your weaknesses in terms of teaching, and what would you like to achieve? It’s for them, for them it was just what the students as well, they self assess themselves as well, okay “I am good at that, I’m not as good at that” what would you like to achieve, which are the goals and the objectives that I would like to reach, just to show them how the, the, the, the ELP work in this sort of mentality of self assessment, improvement and re-assessment in sort of a circular ways.
Patrick. Right, right, so how would you say they benefited from that approach.

Tutor D. Some after the class asked me to have a look at my own project and what the students had developed and I had as well a tape where the, my students were singing and things like that and they were interested in all those kinds of concepts of what to do. Maybe filming their students, so they were eager to get maybe ideas to use in their own classroom and I was of course willing to give them all kinds of approaches that would work, I thought, from my own experience, from my own experience worked, easy to use in their own classroom and I was of course willing to give them all kinds of approaches that would work, I thought, from my own experience, from my own experience worked well for me.

Patrick. Would you say that your approach was negotiating and dialoguing with your H. Dip. students about the aims and the content and activities?

Tutor D. All the time, all the time. They were, I think, they sometimes need to be reassured. They are using a tape in the classroom, for example, music in the classroom, and they know themselves that it is good to use music, but they don’t always know how or why or how to use it. So I just go, I just kind of reaffirm the idea, yes it is good. Why? Sometimes just to fill in words for listening comprehension, sometimes as reinforcement for grammar exercises, they just conjugate the verbs for such tense, sometimes it just, it’s just a positive reinforcement. The kids have been good, you are playing some French music, it is not for the purpose of listening or for writing, it is just as a positive feedback, here is your treat, you have been behaving well, and it teaches them cultural awareness as well without even them having to fill in the words and stuff like that. So there are different ways of approaching activities. Such as, as well, the use of pictures in the classroom, as well Power Point presentation and everything like that as well and so that was what I was trying to show them. Practical aspects of that. They were asking me questions, “how would you go about doing this” and “oh yeah, you say they don’t fill in the word, where is the point of listening to music?” I say just for sometimes cultural awareness. If you make the taste bad chocolate, in terms of French they are not going to learn anything. But in terms of culture they will learn something and that I wanted to show them.

Patrick. And ehm, would you have involved your learners in planning, setting objectives, managing activities, assessing activities?

Tutor D. I didn’t. I didn’t. The only thing I did in the classroom in terms of assessment was only as I say, to ask them to write down their weaknesses and things like that in terms of teaching and in terms of the language. I think this thing as well, was that to have this kind of, where you know they can evaluate themselves, and bit more group work, you would definitely need, ideally, a group of six students or something like that, kind of, maybe have, instead of having 25 students in an hour, maybe have, kind of, a session of twenty minutes with 6 students. Practice in your classroom, what does that mean for you and your learners?
Patrick. Would you have, what I am asking really, would your students have been involved in deciding, in making decisions, in selecting what the content of their learning was going to be?

Tutor D. In the classroom?

Patrick. Yep.

Tutor D. Definitely, yep. They ask me as well, I wasn’t, as I said for me it was an oral class. Show them, what I wanted from them is to participate as much in terms as speaking because they don’t have much opportunity to speak the language except in their classroom and some of them don’t feel comfortable speaking all the time in the target language. But for example, they said, grammar for me had to be part of the speaking part as well, if I am making myself clear. I didn’t want to make a kind of grammar course, for the sake of making a grammar course, but they ask me as well to review, for example, le passé, the conditional tense, subjunctive and stuff like that, which I did, but in a very, again, very, active manner, dynamic manner. I said, what do you, do you like you are doing in your classroom, tell me what you know and you start from what you are at. So instead of spending maybe an hour on revision conditional we would spend fifteen minutes and they knew it, but they knew it, they just need to confirm what they know.

Patrick. Em, in terms of reflective

Tutor D. Well, reflective practices goes well on a personal level, reflective practice for myself first of all, how well, how did the course go? What did the students learn? Did I achieve my objectives? Have they understand how to use this, how to do that? Did they speak? Did they have an opportunity to speak? Did I speak too much? What, you know, were we diverted by anything? Or did I…. So its first a personal self reflection, and then from the students, it’s a personal reflection as well, self reflection as well, can they understand the course, how do they feel about speaking French in the classroom, how do they interact with French? How do they interact with their colleagues who might be maybe better than them? Um, have they understood how to use the material in their classroom? Are they able to do it? Or are they still at a theoretical level, where they know how to use things, but they are not quite sure on how to do it on a practical level. So I think on that term it’s in the course, it’s a self reflection, it’s a personal reflection from both my part and from the part of...

Patrick. And would the ELP have helped you and your learners in that process?

Tutor D. I would say, again, it is not on a theoretical level, I did n't take the ELP. I told them, except as I said once, where they are to a kind of evaluate themselves in terms of French and stuff like that, but I think it is something that is constant in my mind, that, are they making progress. Some came with
some concern and I could guide them, 'well listen you can use this to improve yourself, you are still making some mistake there, you are still doing this and that'. They had a kind of, as well, how would you say that, a kind of mock oral exam, where I could target as well their mistakes and stuff like that and again for them, it came them the idea of a self evaluation, how are they in their learning process or in that term, in their language...

Patrick. Talk to me a little bit about the target language in that context.

Tutor D. Target language?

Patrick Farren. [Yes]

Tutor D. In that context, all the time in terms of, of, of I would use, "'quels sont les objectifs? quels sont les buts?'" that you want to achieve and stuff like that, so always use the target language even for words that might be a bit harder, but I think H. Dip students, objective, butte etc. are not hard words.

Patrick. In terms of developing their reflective capacity in becoming self-aware, in developing their own responsibility for their language learning, in terms of developing their capacities I suppose through autonomous learning, do you think that the target language is an important part in that process?

Tutor D. For self-reflection?

Patrick. Yes.

Tutor D. A, for definitely, I mean, the...the, the...it's like, you know when I have always said the day you start dreaming in a foreign language is the day you know you kind of master the language. So it is very important for them to reflect in the target language for their own fluency first of all and to develop their confidence, and they couldn't use the E.L.P. in their classroom if they do not master the vocabulary that is that they are going to go also with their students and they don't understand you know how to do...

Patrick. Would you say that you would promote that in your H. Dip students to carry that process at an appropriate level in their own classroom?

Tutor D. So, to, to, carry self-assessment from the part of the students?

Patrick. Yeah, the whole autonomous learning...and use of the target learning to think about their goals, to reflect on their progress, to see what they need to do to improve. Would you see a role for them to try to develop that? in their own classroom in the post primary school?
Tutor D. So, if I understand your question right, would it be to develop that in themselves?

Patrick. Yes...

Tutor D. Or to develop that in the students?

Patrick. In your class, in themselves...

Tutor D. In themselves?

Patrick. And then when they go into their class, do you think what you did in your class would help them in their class?

Tutor D. I'd say so, I think for most of them it is a matter of confidence, and if you can develop their confidence in your classroom in terms of self-reflection, in terms of fluency in terms of their competence of, of, of give them, show them that they are good teachers, that sometimes what they lack is just this little bit of confidence. They come back into their classroom a lot more confident.

Patrick. Do you think, Tutor D, that what we are talking about here is how to help learners develop their literacy? Through use of the target language and through use of it in metacognition, developing their metacognitive capacity?

Tutor D. Yeah, they will definitely, um, in terms of literacy, they will definitely improve their own literacy, in terms of foreign language definitely improve their literacy of the, of the foreign language. In terms of the students in the classroom as well, if the teacher reflects on what he is doing, and showing that in the classroom when the teacher is clear about the objective and shows that he is reflecting about the activities to develop and stuff like that, the students show that, the students sense that in the classroom and would be a much more positive about self-reflection themselves, although the only thing I have to say about literacy and self-reflection in the target language at post primary level from my own experience I think that for, anyway, the Junior cycle I think that it is not, it is not, I do not want to say impossible, because nothing is impossible, but I think it is very hard for kids from twelve to fifteen to actually um, to use a process of metacognition or literacy.

Patrick. At their level, I'm not saying that they are going to be at our level, people do, would probably develop at different levels and different pace, and would develop over time. That the teachers job, would you think, is to try to do this, to help them to develop that?

Tutor D. In terms of autonomy, definitely. I mean, in terms of, students have, have, have to become aware of their weaknesses, but when you see in, at post-primary level, the amount of private schools...
and the amount of grinds that students are getting, I think that Irish students are very aware of some weaknesses that they might have although they can’t not always put the finger on what their weak...  

Patrick. Talk to us a little bit, Tutor D, for a moment about the effects that you believe, um, teaching the Leaving Certificate Exam has on the sort of activities teachers use in class.  

Tutor D. Even when I was doing the H. Dip I had wonderful mentors teachers, but they stick to the book and stick to the exam. Whereas I think you can stick to the curriculum but use extra curricular activities, I didn’t use paper with my students, I wasn’t sticking to any curriculum, but I was teaching them literacy in French, I was teaching them autonomy, the autonomy of writing or searching material in a foreign language, or re-writing material, so I think that it is not written in the French curriculum that they should be able to produce a French newspaper, it is not written that they should have context in terms of language awareness, or develop exchanges with friends and have pen pals and stuff like that, so I think that most of the teachers, um, I don’t think it is their fault, I think it is pressure from the school first of all, pressure from the parents who don’t always understand, why is my daughter reading a newspaper when she should be learning how to write a postcard from France, or why is my...  

Patrick. Is that a postcard for the exam?  

Tutor D. Exactly.  

Patrick. Right so, so the exam maybe, okay, dominating what is done in the classroom perhaps.  

Tutor D. Exactly.  

Patrick. Right so, so the exam maybe, okay, dominating what is done in the classroom perhaps.  

Tutor D. A lot.  

Patrick. So, talking about writing, you mentioned writing, what role do you think writing has in developing learner’s self awareness, learner’s literacy, learner’s autonomy, learner’s target language?  

Tutor D. I think it is very good. I think that when my students start to, there are two types of students if I can put it like that, the one who will develop a very good oral fluency of the language, they feel very comfortable and they might be very weak at writing. On the other hand, you’ve got the second type of students who are very good at writing and haven’t got the confidence, or don’t feel comfortable speaking the language. I think in terms of the second category of students who feel better writing, we were talking, we were talking again about self assessment and reflection, I mean to keep a littler diary or to have pen pals as well to write to read to make the effort, to have a little why not a French diary for the H. Dip students, to have a little French Diary for the students because you know
they are teenagers and they want to hide a few things from their parents, and if they find the diary they won’t be able to, I think it is a very good little thing. It is something, their little ‘jardin secret’ and I think that it would defiantly help them to master the language again, on an on hand manner, it is their little diary, it is their little secret, it is nothing to do with school and stuff like that.

Patrick. I want to talk to you, to explore that theme in little bit in more depth, the idea that it is their ‘jardin secret’ in terms of learning the language, not so much you mentioned because you want to pass an exam, or because this is what you have to do to pass the exam therefore this is what we do in class. You are suggesting that there is another approach that perhaps learners should learn to communicate what their own meanings are.

Tutor D. Exactly, yep.

Patrick. And using that to learn the language, to think about what it is that they want to say, and plan that in conjunction with the teacher.

Tutor D. Exactly... I think that...

Patrick. So, it is more open-ended.

Tutor D. Exactly, I think some students have um, have sometimes when they don’t like French, they don’t think they’ll use French, they don’t like French, they never went to France, they have absolutely no intention of going to France and this and that. And they are very kind of oh yeah, French is not for me, German is not for me, whatever language. Even here at university, the students that I am teaching here at Cert Level, they say as well, “honestly I don’t think I will be working in a firm in France” and stuff like that. I say, here just to pass my exam at the end of the....”

Patrick. Right, so what you are suggesting is, a kind of natural, that they can naturally express through another language what they feel and what they see and what they think.

Tutor D. Yeah.

Patrick. Then, do that in relation to their own interests and their own um, particular likes and so on ...

Tutor D. Exactly, yep.

Patrick. Rather than doing it just to fulfill some obligations. That is interesting, that is kind of another way of looking at it I think. Then, do that in relation to their own interests and their own um, particular likes and so on ....
Tutor D. Exactly, yep.

Patrick. Rather than doing it just to fulfil some obligations. That is interesting, that is kind of another way of looking at it I think.

Tutor D. I think, always show them the positive thing in something they don’t see.

Patrick. Would you see overall that using the European Language Portfolio in your classroom has given your learners greater confidence, greater self awareness, would it have made them more self reliant?

Tutor D. I would say that I used the ELP on a period of about 6 months, which I think was a bit too short. They were, we were getting there, it would have been good I think to keep doing it I think for another school year and see, they were at the point where they were understanding what we were doing they were feeling confident with all those pages and they understand what we were setting the objectives, the activities that we were choosing together and what we were achieving at the end, they were understanding that everything kind of was linking together, so I think unfortunately in terms of analysis I would say I only used it for six months and if I had carried it for another school year I would have really seen all the benefits.

Patrick. Of course, the H. Dip. is only one year.

Tutor D. Yeah, I will complain about that.

Patrick. Finally, to finish up. To do a little self-assessment ourselves, how would you rate, how would you self-assess your own teaching and learning in the context of working with the H. Dip student teachers?

Tutor D. Ehm, I was, ehm, I was positively surprised I must say, I found myself that I still have a lot to learn, and of course I delighted to get the opportunity to teach the H. Dips. straight after doing the H. Dip myself, I think I had a greater understanding of their problems, of what they were going through, through the simple fact that I was there the year before, so they was a very good connection, and they felt very comfortable to talk to me not only about French, but about small little things that, where could I borrow this book, and do you think I should use that. I think as well in terms, I was teaching as well education and technology, which meant that I was seeing them twice per week, and I think that on that level as well a greater sense of confidence on both parts kind of grew and um, I think this year was a very positive, but of course I know I have to, I still to improve to overcome the way maybe the number of students in the class.
Patrick. It’s a structural problem we need to look at. One other last thing before you go. What role do you think the ELP, European language Portfolio, has played then, in your own learning and teaching?

Tutor D. I would say again, the ELP is, I’ll place it, ELP is not just theory, for me ELP is not just a folder with a few pages to fill in, the ELP is the way of teaching and a way of thinking. For me, I mean, I set my objectives spontaneously, I don’t have to write them don’t on a paper, I can self assess myself, and say, this year has been good, but I hope next year will be better, and the year after will be better, I know I have to improve, I know have to overcome some difficulties in terms of making group sand making them speak as much as possible so I think the ELP is a way of being, or a way of teaching if I can put it like that.

Patrick. Would you write yourself? Would you keep a note? Would you keep a journal? Would you keep a reflective process in your own teaching?

Tutor D. I keep, I keep a kind of a diary of what went well, of what didn’t go well, why, what should be improved and what should I do again the following year, but maybe changing a few things. Sometimes it just, you know if you got role play, you know the vocabulary was to easy.…

Patrick. Would you engage your learners your H. Dip. students in a similar process in the classroom?

Tutor D. To…?

Patrick. To what well, ‘what are we doing?, how are we improving? what should we do next?’

Tutor D. I’m always, I have been asking them all the time, although I think maybe I should have more structure in that sense, and, I don’t think actually it is a flexible structure, I can’t set goals for next year before I have met them. I think I have had a very flexible structure in the sense that they have said, “oh yeah, could you show us a small bit how you would use images or comics in your classroom, how would you make them write, how would you use magic, how would you use this, how would you use that” and maybe one day they would come and say, “listen, I have problems with conditional can you do something about that”.

Patrick. Negotiate and talk to them…

Tutor D. All the time.

Patrick. Over problems and issues…

Tutor D. So I couldn’t plan a lot ahead.
Patrick. But your idea was, correct me, but your idea would be to try to help them to think of what they are doing, why they are doing, how they can do this and how they can improve.

Tutor D. Exactly, and the only thing that this year, I would have liked them to share a bit more about their materials for example, what they think went well in their classroom, how they were using this, how were they using that, and again what stopped me from doing it was that there were too many students. So I think sometimes, I think it is better to have half an hour with ten students than an hour with twenty students.

Patrick. Okay, thank you very much, (Tutor D)

Interview between Researcher (Patrick Farren) and Tutor B

May 2005

Patrick Farren. Could you tell me what were your aims and intentions for the target language course?

Tutor B. I started this time right from the beginning to make them aware what kind of learning types they are on their own, or for themselves, if they are more concentrating on how to write better and catch up with what I put on the board. So, this was one step and also to make them more aware that the European Language Portfolio is very useful - what kind of goals they have on their own for the whole year.

Patrick Farren. How would the teaching and learning process that you engage in, work in practice?

Tutor B. They agree beforehand what kind of level they want to teach and the whole procedure or the next step would be, we talk about how this would be on the beginner’s level or for the Leaving Cert for example. Everyone tries to bring in material and tries to contribute somehow to what one student is presenting..

Patrick Farren. So you would actually set goals. What about the actual activities themselves, would they be involved in selecting activities?

Tutor B. Oh yeah, every student has to present a specific grammar problem in front of the class as if they would be teaching it. We agree beforehand what kind of level they want to teach and the whole procedure or the next step would be, we talk about how this would be on the beginner’s level or for the leaving cert for example. Everyone tries to bring in material and tries to contribute somehow to what one student is presenting..

Patrick Farren. Could you tell us something about what the effects of this was on their learning or on the learners themselves, on the H. Dip. students?
Tutor B. I think first of all they got more ideas on how to teach things, how to present things but also they became more aware of 'how can I do it in a different way?'

Patrick Farren. Could you tell us something about the effect it had on them as learners of the German language in the semester course?

Tutor B. Since I had quite a big number of native speakers I was very happy to see that the Irish students were not embarrassed to speak out for themselves. So this time it was a very good balance and I think in the end everyone felt more confident, that was my impression.

Patrick Farren. Going through the process of teaching and learning in your classroom, could you explain to us something you mentioned about the language portfolio? Could you take us through what part, if any, that the reflective process had in your teaching and your learners’ learning in terms of reflective process? I mean by reflective – say an activity, a discussion, what would the stages be in your teaching there in terms of reflection? Would you have helped them to plan their learning? I think you said they monitor how they are achieving that, would they have been engaged in thinking about what, why, how they are doing it, how they can improve?

Tutor B. Yes, that’s what we really emphasised. That’s what we really look for. How we do things, how we present specifics, other literature, short stories.

Patrick Farren. In terms of the actual target language now, speaking of German itself, would you have done the same process to help them improve their German language?

Tutor B. Since I only speak German I think this is done indirectly anyway from the first moment on.

Patrick Farren. What were the effects of that on them do you think? The effects of reflective practice? What would the effect of that be on your H.Dip. students? Did you notice any particular effects of helping them to reflect on their practice? What that did for them as learners of German?

Tutor B. Some of them became more aware of their own gaps so to speak. When we talked at the end about how do you want to continue to keep up your German, for example, I mean some people maybe think that they know enough to teach in school and some are still really eager and looking forward to how to improve and how to stay in touch with the language.

Patrick Farren. In terms of their feelings about learning, what would you say the effect, if any, has been on them?

Tutor B. I think some really looked at it more as an ongoing process.
Patrick Farren. Looking now at a related point, you mentioned about target language use, just before we move on to that maybe you could give us examples of evidence of how you used the portfolio, used the biography, for example, in helping them to plan, monitor and self-assess, any particular activity or unit of learning or theme or topic that you would have picked?

Tutor B. They had to give a short report about their time in Germany, where they have been and share their experiences and their connections to Germany, for example.

Patrick Farren. This is inter-cultural experience? Would they have recorded that they had been to Germany? Would they take a note of these things?

Tutor B. From each other or I think it was more about making them more aware of how to implement ideas about cultural differences and how we can put this into practice.

Patrick Farren. Could you tell me something of the part writing in the target language had in your class, the actual process of writing?

Tutor B. In the beginning I asked them about this and so they had to write a short essay about what kind of influence their education had on them and which teachers were important to them, reflect their own education in a way.

Patrick Farren. And as they went through the year what sort of writing would be done in the class?

Tutor B. Just very short notes, not long essays, because it's basically more conversation.

Patrick Farren. Moving on to conversation target language use, what would you have done in the target language in your class?

Tutor B. As I said they had to prepare lessons, show lessons and in regard to cultural notes or cultural differences we discussed different customs; how to celebrate Christmas and birthdays and so on and so on. Usually we made a collection of important vocabulary together so that everyone could improve their own knowledge of important vocabulary.

Patrick Farren. Would you be able to tell us something about use of the target language, was it used all the time in class?

Tutor B. Yes.
Patrick Farren. You mentioned about reflective process, about planning and self-assessing, would they have used the target language throughout?

Tutor B. Yes.

Patrick Farren. What were the effects it had on their learning of German?

Tutor B. In the beginning some of them still were writing down their remarks before they started to speak and during the course they did this less and less so at the end everyone was just speaking.

Patrick Farren. Did you engage them in thinking about what they were doing, why they were doing it, how they were doing it through the target language?

Tutor B. Some of them had to teach all year round and some of them were in this block and so whenever they came back from their blocks we had discussions about their experiences in the classroom with their colleagues and we tried to help each other discuss their experiences.

Patrick Farren. What effects do you think that had on their German?

Tutor B. As I said in the beginning some of them were embarrassed and had to write it down before they answered questions. Then at the end they were just speaking out.

Patrick Farren. Would you talk to me briefly about what you think the psychological relationship of the learners of your HDip students was to learning the language? What would you say would characterise their attitude to the language?

Tutor B. I found that they were very open and interested in learning new words and new expressions. When we discussed media, for example, mass media and it’s always these little proverbs or when you have very idiomatic sayings and expressions. So all in all I think they came also, because I had the Irish teacher who teaches German through Irish, that they became more aware of a comparative approach.

Patrick Farren. Do you think, as a native German speaker, that they gained from this comparative inter-cultural experience with you?

Tutor B. I hope so.

Patrick Farren. I think that’s a fair answer. What would you say was your overall outcome as a teacher? How would you self-assess what you achieved in your teaching and learning this year?
Tutor B. My goal was to make them aware of the needs of children in specific phases in school life, and not just thinking about what they have to teach in a specific topic or subject, but also to be more aware of what goes on in their development to turn into a teenager.

Patrick Farren. What do you mean by development? What goes on in the mind of the teenager?

Tutor B. Yes, so that they have a better understanding of what goes on in these little minds. When you are aware of these differences, status or phases I think you are better prepared for what kind of material you can bring in to get them involved and interested in the language.

Patrick Farren. What about the target language in terms of that, what do you think you would have achieved in terms of German, the teaching of German to the HDip students?

Tutor B. By looking at not just the results but the way they presented themselves in the oral exam, for example, they were very confident and there was never a problem to keep the conversation. It was more a conversation than an exam.