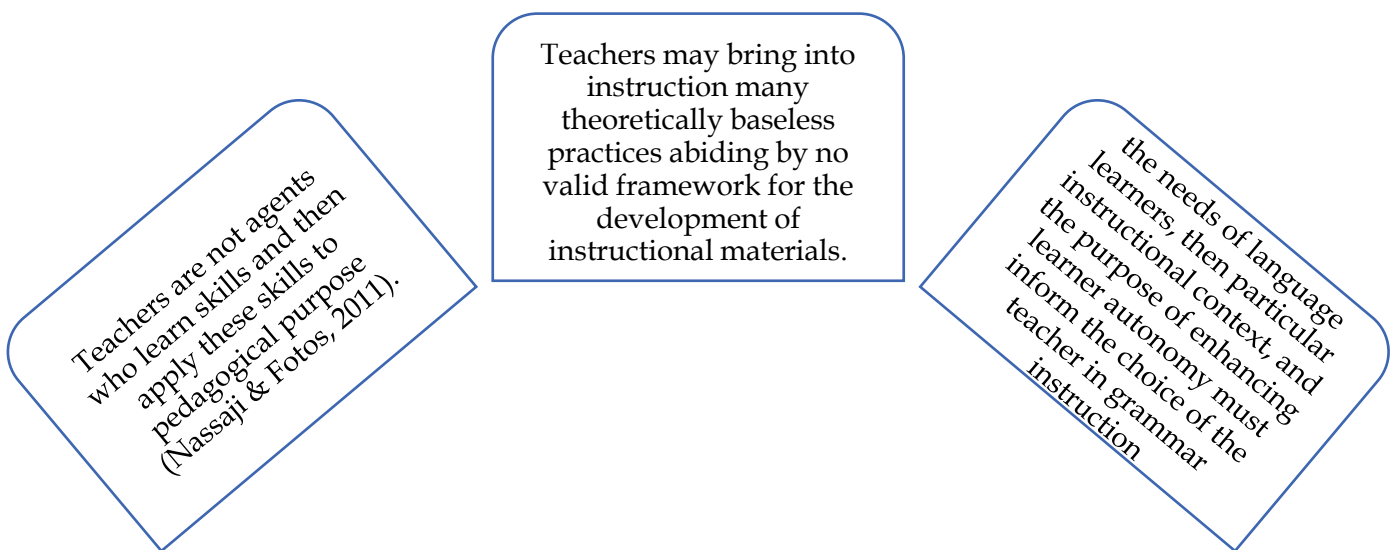


## LECTURE V: Negotiated Syllabus: Towards Learner Autonomy

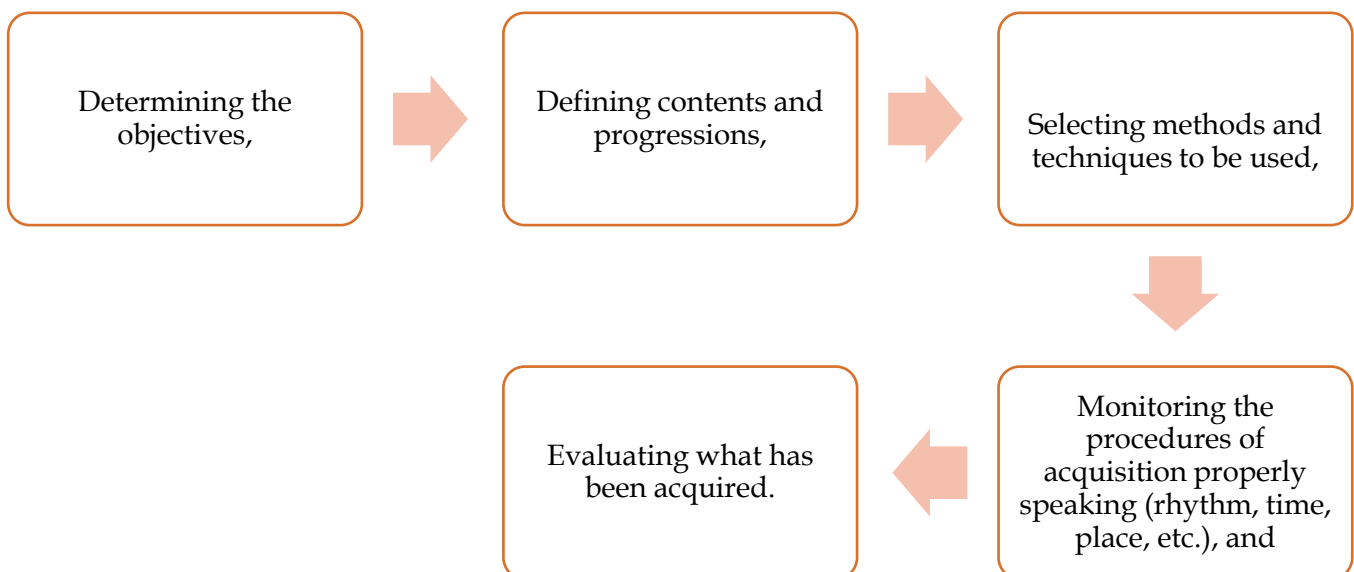
In recent decades of language teaching a shift from a teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches has been discernible, putting more responsibilities on learners' shoulders in the process of learning.

### 1. Teachers and Autonomy for Learner



### 2. Learner Autonomy in Curriculum Development

The autonomous learner is, according to Benson (2009, p. 18), capable of making the following decisions:



Dam's (2009) specification of an autonomous classroom as a teaching/learning environment where "the teacher is expected to provide learners with possibility to be consciously involved in their own learning- to be autonomous learners" (p. 129).

1. A change of language learner role, involving more responsibility for learners with regard to choice of homework, choice of activity, and planning of small projects.	2. Change of language teacher's role, through giving more responsibility to learners, speaking the target language all the time paving the way for more group work.
3. The introduction of a logbook to be used by language learners for pursuing the process of learning inside as well as outside of the classroom.	4. The introduction of new activity types which have their focus on authentic learner interaction.
5. A focus on language learners' written as well as oral evaluation of the work as the responsibility.	6. Other individual preferences.

Learner autonomy pertains to readiness or willingness to act autonomously. A language learner may have a good deal of metacognitive knowledge, but not always take the responsibility (Sinclair, 2009). Learner autonomy, according to Sinclair (2009) is "a construct of capacity which is operationalized when willingness is present" (p. 185).

### 3. Negotiated Syllabus and Learner Autonomy

In the realm of learner autonomy, negotiated syllabus can be introduced as a paramount contributor to deploying materials and arranging these materials aimed at developing learner autonomy, since this type of syllabus takes individual preferences as its center of attention.

Negotiated syllabus is an approach to development of language course where learners' needs and preferences are taken into consideration during course (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). The needs are discussed by language learners and instructors during the course, serving to generate ideas about the content of the course

This syllabus, like learner autonomy, harbors learner-centered approach to teaching. Interest, according to Benson (2009), in the idea of autonomy has grown to a great extent through its association with various forms of practice one of which is negotiated syllabus. Learners working within the programs with a negotiated syllabus can influence the content of their courses and can also assessment issues in such contexts (Rea-Dickins, 1997).

#### 4. Principles of the Negotiated Syllabus

The principle which underlies negotiated syllabus is that the learners and the teacher come together to discuss aspects of the course and reach a consensus on how the course will be conducted, and this how is realized in the control that learners have over them (Sewell, 2004).

Breen and Littlejohn (2000, cited in Nation & Macalister, 2010) make a list of **SITUATIONS** where a negotiated syllabus is unavoidable:

- Where learners and teachers have different background.
- Where there is scant time and useful choices must be made.
- Where there exists a diverse group of learners.
- Where initial needs analysis is not feasible.
- Where there is not any course book.
- Where learners' past experience must be part of the course.
- Where the course is open-ended.

Nation and Macalister (2010, p. 150) contend that a negotiated syllabus involves the following **STEPS**:

- Negotiating the goals, content, format and assessment of the course.
- Implementing these negotiated decisions, and
- Evaluating the effect of implementation in terms of outcomes and the way the implementation was done.

Additionally, six main **REQUIREMENTS** for a negotiated syllabus are proposed by Nation and Macalister (2010):

- Negotiation procedure: How and how often can negotiation be carried out.
- Course planning: participation. Who will work with who?
- Course planning: procedure. What kinds of activities will be worked on.
- Course planning: learning goals. What will be the focus of the work?
- Course evaluation: the continual evaluation of previous decisions and the learning resources.
- Resource and materials: there is a good deal of materials language learners and teachers can draw on.