

**Radboud University**  
**Nijmegen-Netherlands**  
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**11:55-12:25. Room 2.50**

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# **ENCOURAGING LEARNER AUTONOMY: PORTFOLIO WORK WITH ILLITERATE IMMIGRANTS IN GERMANY**

# Outline



- The Situation in Germany
- Why Learner Autonomy
- Working with the Alphaportfolio
- Three Steps to Learner Autonomy

# The Situation in Germany



# Illiteracy in Germany

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Literacy	Alpha Level	Proportion of the adult population	Number (projected)
Functional illiteracy	$\alpha 1$	0.6%	0.3 million
	$\alpha 2$	3.9%	2.0 million
	$\alpha 3$	10.0%	5.2 million
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>14.5%</b>	<b>7.5 million</b>
Poor writing skills	$\alpha 4$	25.9%	13.3 million
	$> \alpha 4$	59.7%	30.8 million
<b>Total*</b>		<b>100.1%</b>	<b>51.6 million</b>

Table 1: functional illiteracy and poor writing skills in the German-speaking adult population (18-64 years of age)

\*(Difference in the totals of 100 percent due to inaccuracies from rounding up and down)

(Grotlüschen & Riekmann 2011)

# Languages and Illiteracy

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Proportion	Functional illiteracy				Poor writing skills		Proportion of random sample
Alpha Level	$\alpha 1$	$\alpha 2$	$\alpha 3$	Total $\alpha 1 - \alpha 3$	$\alpha 4$	$> \alpha 4$	
Percentage of first language German	27.9%	49.4%	63.2%	58.1% (4.4 million)	80.4%	93.7%	85.1%
Percentage of other language	72.5%	50.4%	36.8%	41.8% (3.1 million)	19.6%	6.3%	14.9%
Total	100.4%	99.8%	100%	99.9% (7.5 million)	100%	100%	

Table 4: first language analysed for functional illiteracy and poor writing skills in the adult German-speaking population (18 - 64 years)

(Grotlüschen & Riekman 2011)

# Employment and Illiteracy

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Proportion	Functional illiteracy				Poor writing skills		Proportion of random sample
Alpha Level	$\alpha 1$	$\alpha 2$	$\alpha 3$	Total $\alpha 1 - \alpha 3$	$\alpha 4$	$> \alpha 4$	
Employed	55.5%	54.2%	58.0%	56.9%	64.5%	69.5%	66.4%
Unemployed	19.1%	21.5%	14.6%	16.7%	8.9%	4.8%	7.6%
Unfit to work	2.7%	2.3%	2.3%	2.3%	1.5%	0.9%	1.3%
Housewives/ house husbands, parental leave	17.9%	10.7%	9.4%	10.1%	8.2%	7.9%	8.3%
Retired	5.2%	6.3%	6.4%	6.3%	6.2%	3.8%	4.8%
In vocational training	0.4%	4.0%	7.9%	6.5%	9.9%	11.6%	10.4%
Other	0.0%	0.8%	1.4%	1.2%	0.8%	1.4%	1.2%
Total	100.8%	99.8%	100%	100%	100%	99.9%	

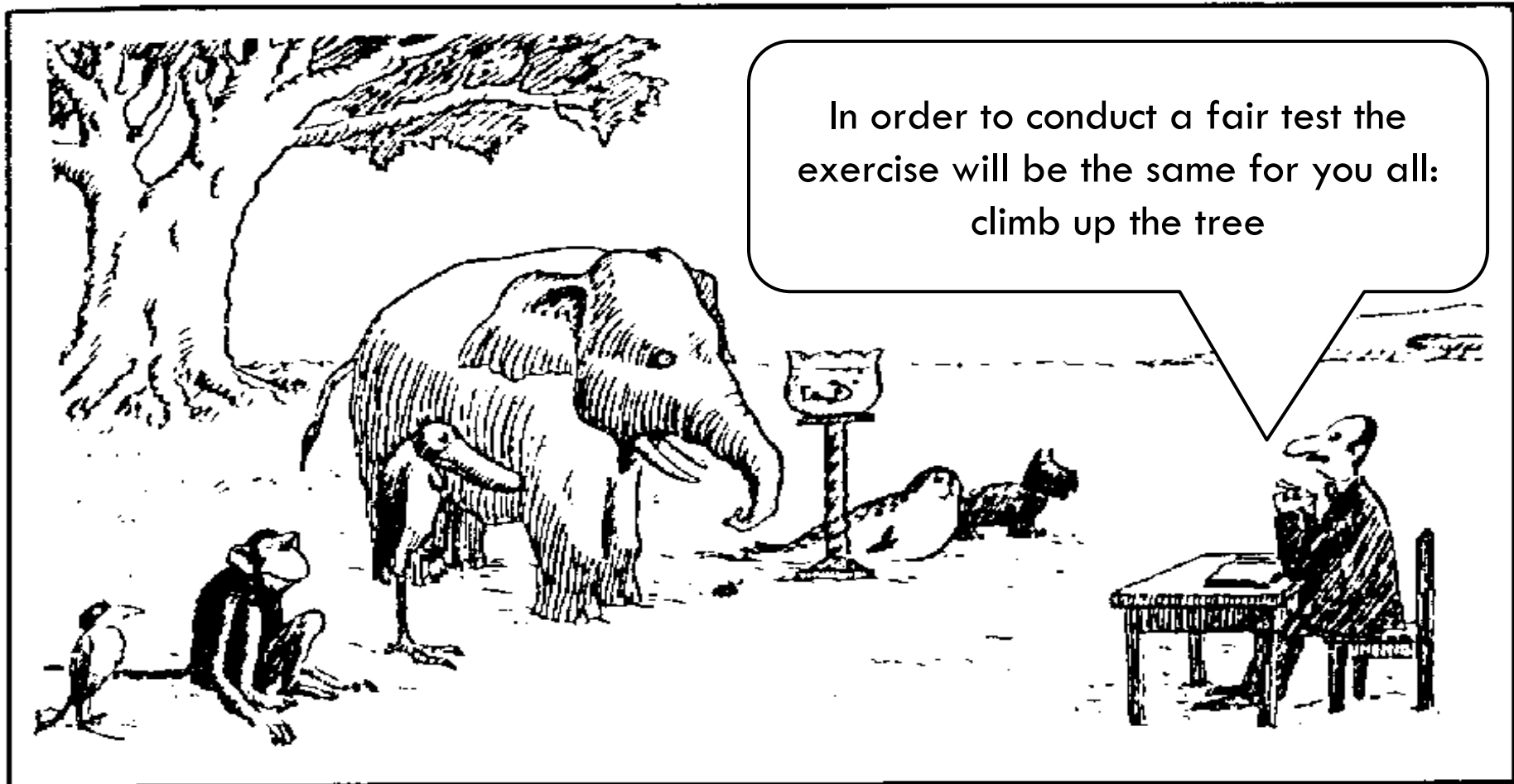
Table 6: professional status according to functional illiteracy and poor writing skills in the German-speaking adult population (18 - 64 years)

(Grotlschen & Riekmann 2011)



# Why Learner autonomy?

# How fair is our teaching?

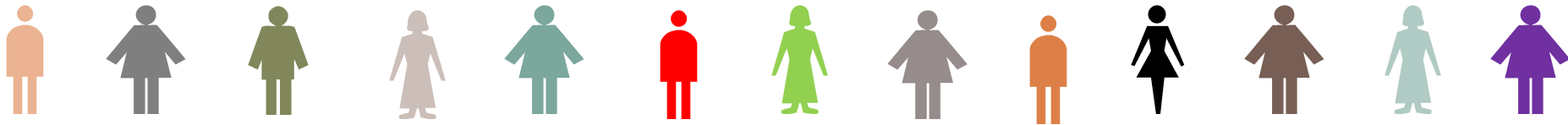


Source: Bolton, S. (1996): Probleme der Leistungsmessung. Fernstudieneinheit. Langenscheidt [Translation A.F]



# Heterogeneity as normal situation

→ Starting conditions are not equal for every learner

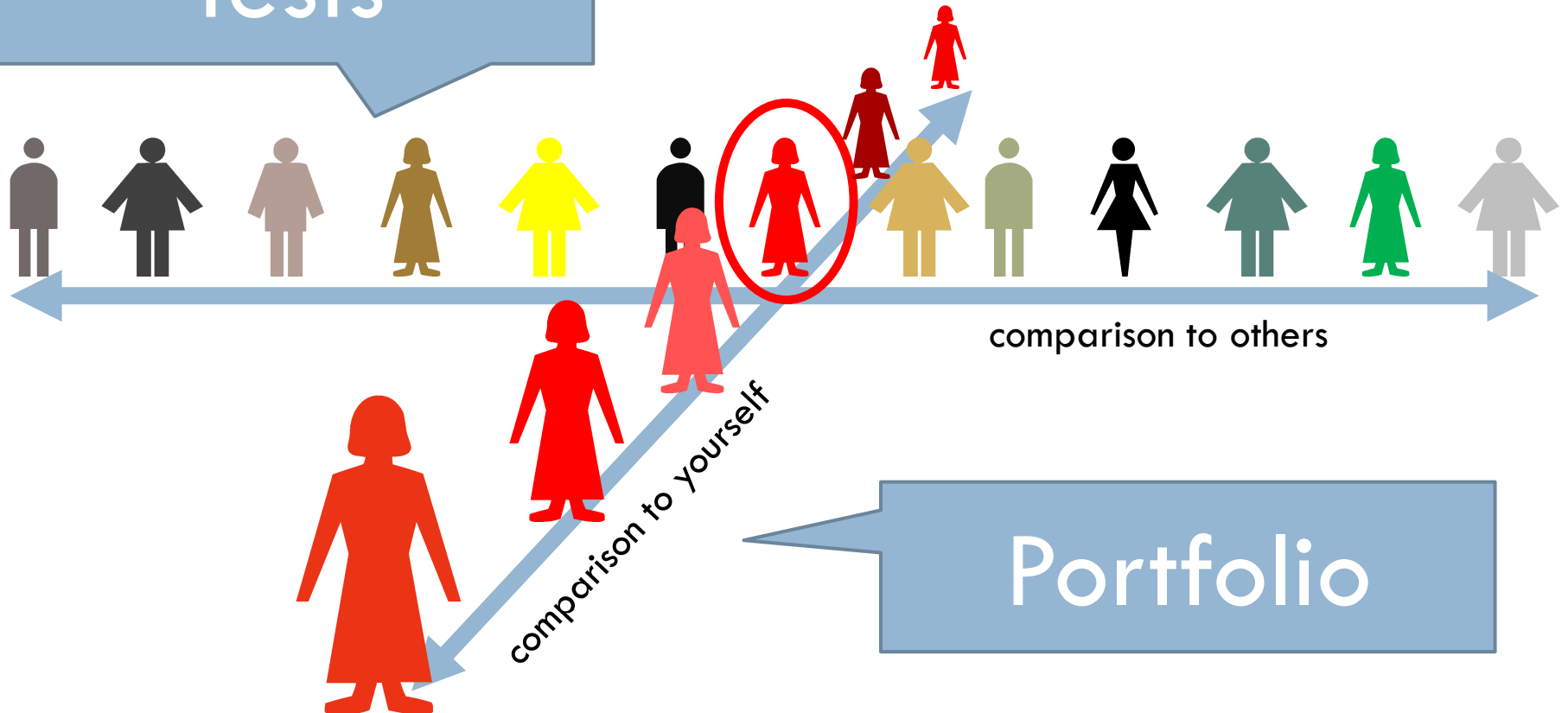


# Heterogeneity as normal situation



# Comparability within heterogeneous learner groups

Tests



# Learner autonomy

„The basis of learner autonomy is that the learner accepts **responsibility** for his or her learning. This acceptance of responsibility has both socio-affective and cognitive implications: it entails at once a positive **attitude to learning** and the development of a capacity to **reflect** on the content and **process of learning** with a view to bringing them as far as possible under **conscious control**“

(Little 1995, p. 175)

(see also Oxford 2003)

[emphasis added by A.F.]

# Learning autonomy as a goal

- Learner autonomy is not just a instrument to be used to achieve „real“ goals (e.g. grammar)
  - Learner autonomy is a competence and gradual (Kohonen 2012)
- Learning autonomy is a goal by itself:
  - Which contents can you teach?
  - When do you teach this contents?
  - How long do you need for these contents?
  - How do you test learning autonomy?

# L2-Literacy classes in germany

(Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2009)

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Die inhaltlichen Schwerpunkte verteilen sich etwa wie folgt:

■ sprachliche Förderung:	ca. 25-30%
■ schriftsprachliche Förderung:	ca. 25-30%
■ Förderung der Lernerautonomie:	ca. 25-30%
■ Herstellung teilnehmerorientierter Unterrichtsmaterialien:	ca. 5-10%
■ Weiteres, etwa Förderung der interkulturellen Kompetenz oder der Medienkompetenz:	ca. 5-10%

Die Gewichtung ist der jeweiligen Kurssituation anzupassen.

*National Concept for Literacy Courses, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2009, p. 14*

→ i.e. 300-400 hours for learner autonomy  
in a 1200 hours course



# Working with the “Alphaportfolio”

# Teacher Autonomy

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„Genuinely successful teachers have always been autonomous in the sense of having a strong sense of personal responsibility for their teaching, exercising via continuous reflection and analysis the highest possible degree of affective and cognitive control of the teaching process, and exploiting the freedom that this confers. If, as I have argued, **learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are interdependent** then the **promotion of learner autonomy depends on the promotion of teacher autonomy.**“

(Little 1995, p. 179)  
[emphasis added by A.F.]



# Dealing with different „concepts“ in your class

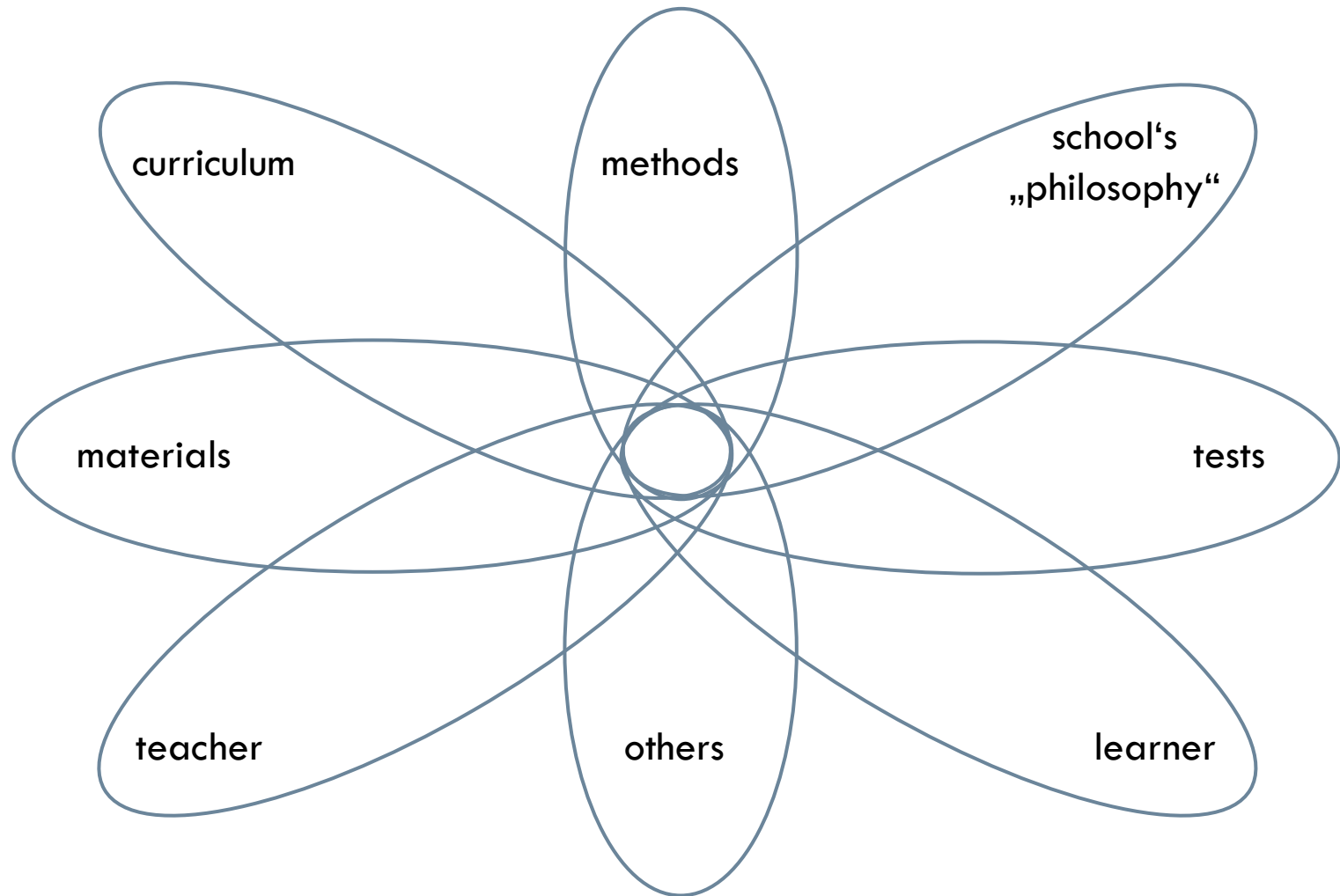
## Concept for learning and teaching

(Feldmeier 2010; La Ganza 2008; Little 1995)

- in the curriculum (e.g. of the government)
- in the „philosophy“ of your school (e.g. own school curriculum)
- in the teaching materials (i.e. of the developer of a book)
- in the tests (e.g. a standardized B1-Test)
  
- of the teacher
- of the learner
  
- of the colleagues?
- of the parents?
- of the family?

# Conflicting concepts?

(Feldmeier 2010)

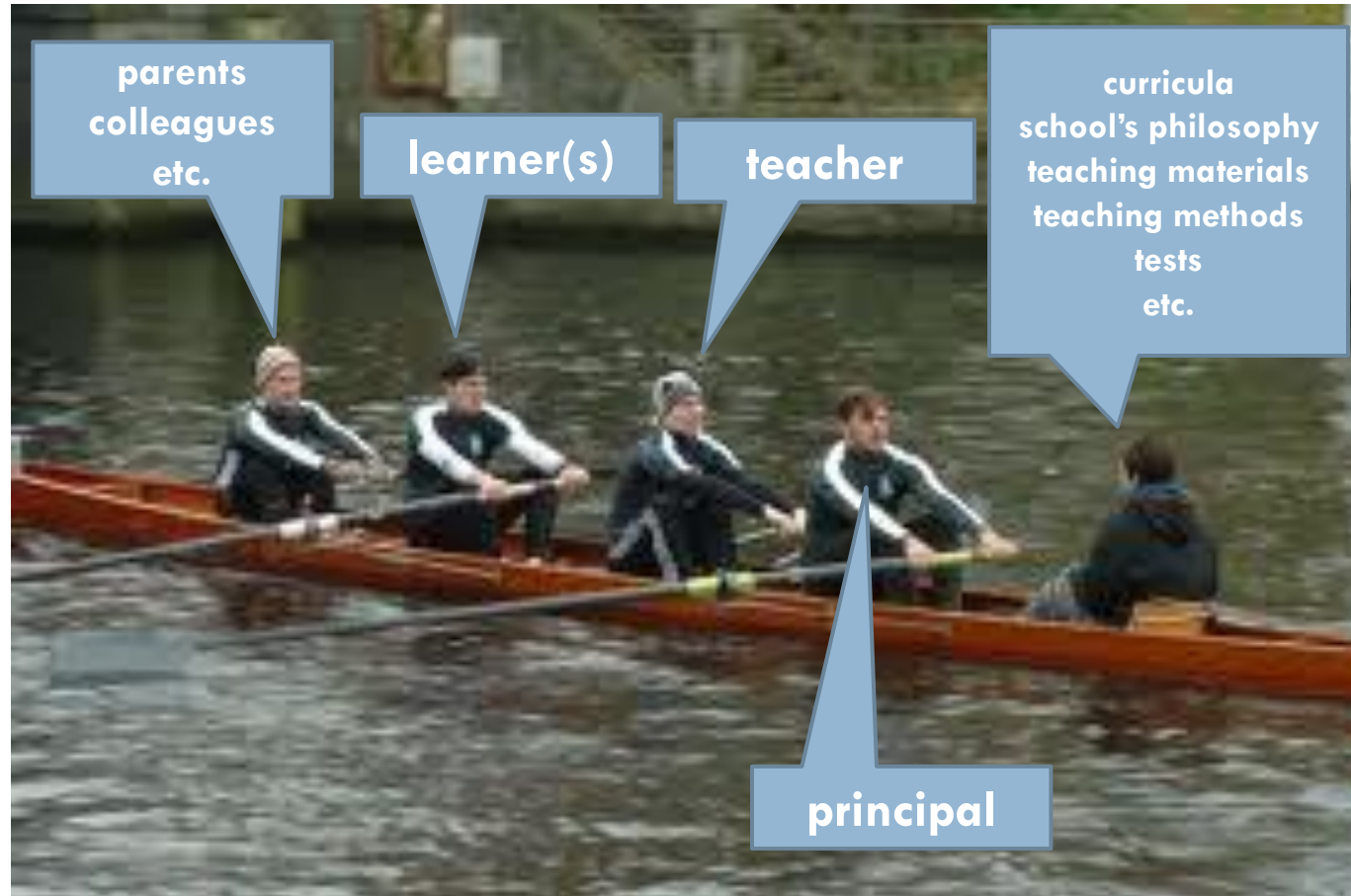


## Learner autonomy as a collective effort



Source: [www.fotocommunity.de](http://www.fotocommunity.de)

# Learner autonomy as a collective effort



Source: [www.rudern-hamburg.de](http://www.rudern-hamburg.de)



# Three Steps to Learner Autonomy

# Three Steps to Learner Autonomy

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**portfolio**

# Workplace oriented portfolio A1

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|  
My Languages

My Course

My Learning

My Job

**My Goals**

Dossier

Name: .....  leicht ☐

Datum: .....  schwer ☐

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## Meine Ziele

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 <input type="checkbox"/> mit Kindern arbeiten	 <input type="checkbox"/> im Imbiss arbeiten
 <input type="checkbox"/> in der Küche arbeiten	 <input type="checkbox"/> mit alten und kranken Menschen arbeiten
 <input type="checkbox"/> als Hausmann arbeiten als Hausfrau arbeiten	 <input type="checkbox"/> putzen



# Learner's portfolios

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# Three Steps to Learner Autonomy

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**portfolio**



**learning  
ageement**

# Learning Agreement

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Datum 	Station 	Aufgabenebene	Fertigkeit    	Stufe   	Aufgabe	Wie lange?  10 Minuten	Leicht oder schwer?   
10. 2. 2013	gartn GeRet	       	   	  		10 Minuten	  

date

Name of  
„station“  
Orthography is  
not important  
here – it could  
also be a  
picture

phonemes  
syllables  
words  
sentences  
texts  
grammar  
lexic  
games

hearing  
speaking  
reading  
writing

easy-difficult



















































time needed

self estimation:  
Was it easy?

Wochenplan für die Woche vom 11.2.13 bis zum 15.2.13

Vorname: Ali Yilmaz

Nachname: Yilmz

Datum 	Station 	Aufgabenebene	Fertigkeit	Stufe	Aufgabe	Wie lange? 	Leicht oder schwer?
10. 2. 2013	gartn GeRet	<del>X</del>       	   <del>X</del> 	<del>X</del>     		10 Minuten	  <del>X</del>  
10. 2. 2013	gartn GRet	 <del>X</del>       	  <del>X</del>  	<del>X</del>     		10 Minuten	    <del>X</del> 
12. 2. 2013	garten GeRet	   <del>X</del>     	 <del>X</del>   	<del>X</del>     		15 Minuten	  <del>X</del>  
12. 2. 2013	gartn	   <del>X</del>     	<del>X</del>    	<del>X</del>     		20 Minuten	  <del>X</del>   
12. 2. 2013	gartn	     <del>X</del>  	   	<del>X</del>     		20 Minuten	  <del>X</del>   

# Three Steps to Learner Autonomy

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**portfolio**



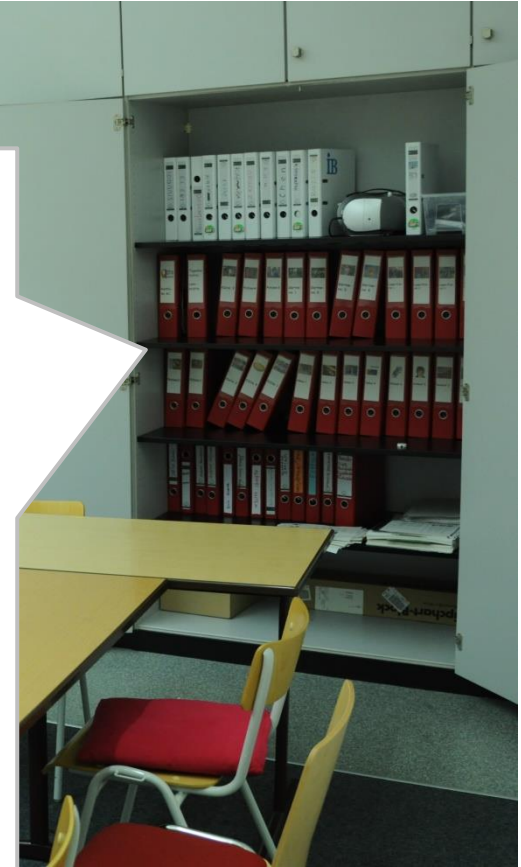
**learning  
ageement**



**working  
„stations“**

# The materials

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# Letter-syllable-word-sentence-text

Name: ..... Datum: .....


1. Buchstabe schreiben

1.1 Welche Buchstaben siehst du?




A

Welche Buchstaben siehst du?



SCH

Welche Buchstaben siehst du?




K


Alphawerkstatt – A1 – Nähen – Station 3

Name: ..... Datum: .....


4. Silben schreiben!




S




W



B



N



M


Alphawerkstatt – A1 – Nähen – Station 3

Name: ..... Datum: .....


4. Wörter schreiben

4.1 Ordnen Sie zu


Bügelplatz, Nähplatz




Wir



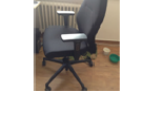
Nähplatz



für



brauche



Bügelplatz

Alphawerkstatt – A1 – Nähen – Station 3

Name: ..... Datum: .....

4. Texte schreiben

4.1 Schreiben Sie die Wörter in die Lücken!

Legen Sie neben die Nähmaschine dein Werkzeug?

□□, ich lege neben die Nähmaschine das □□□□□□.

Brauchen Sie ein Bügeleisen für den Bügelplatz?

Ja, ich brauche ein □□□□□□□□ für den □□□□□□□□.

Brauchen Sie eine Nähmaschine für den Nähplatz?

Ja, ich brauche eine Nähmaschine für den □□□□□□□□.

Alphawerkstatt – A1 – Nähen – Station 3

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Das ist ein Text. Ich lese ihn.

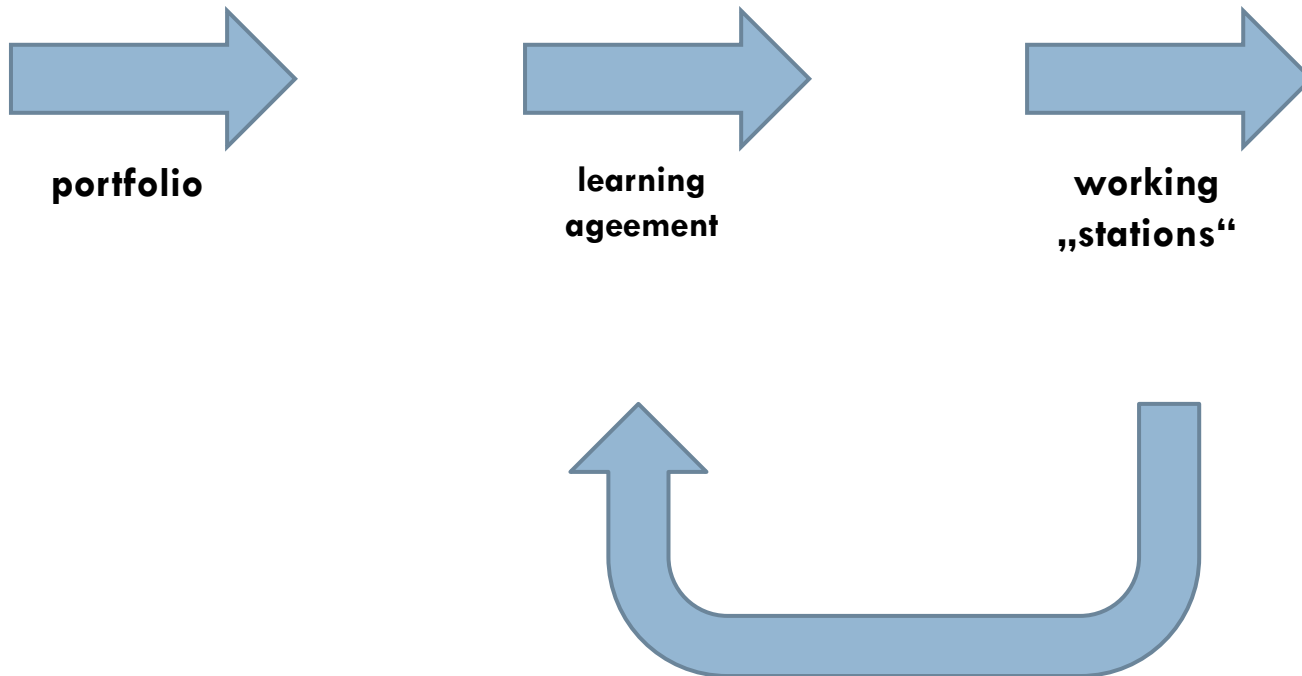


😊 leicht ☐

☹ schwer ☐

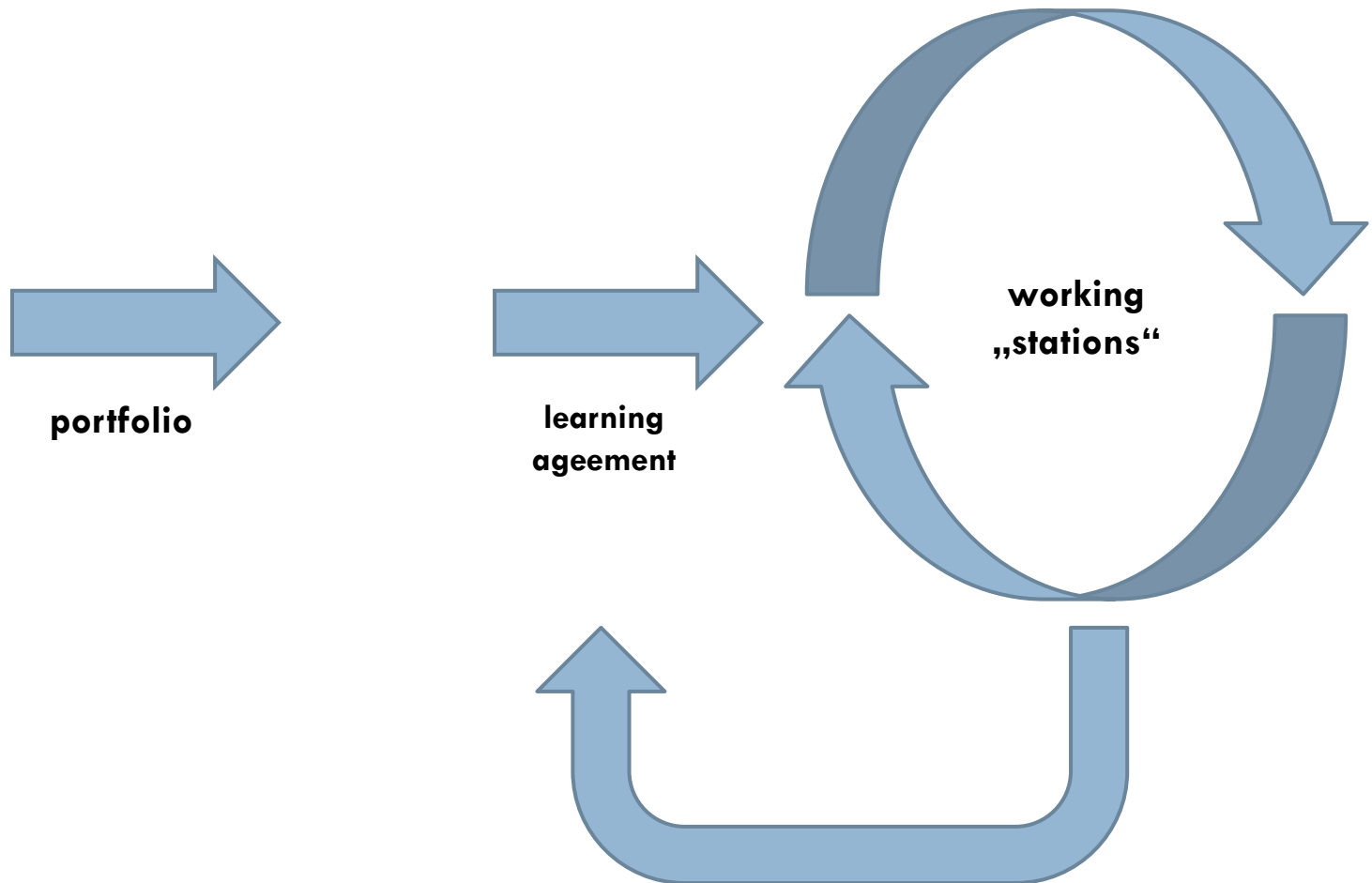
# Three Steps to Learner Autonomy

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# Three Steps to Learner Autonomy

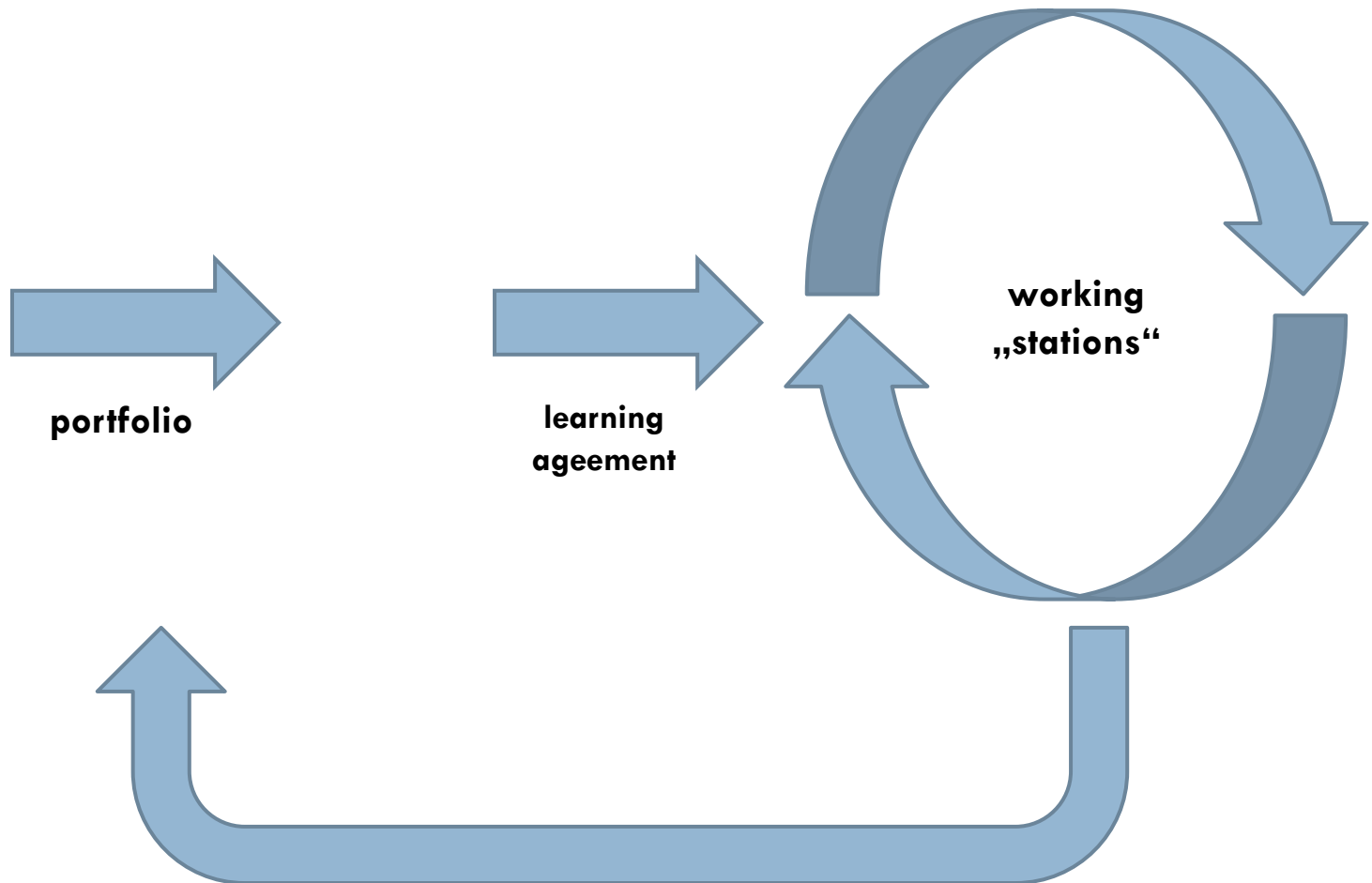
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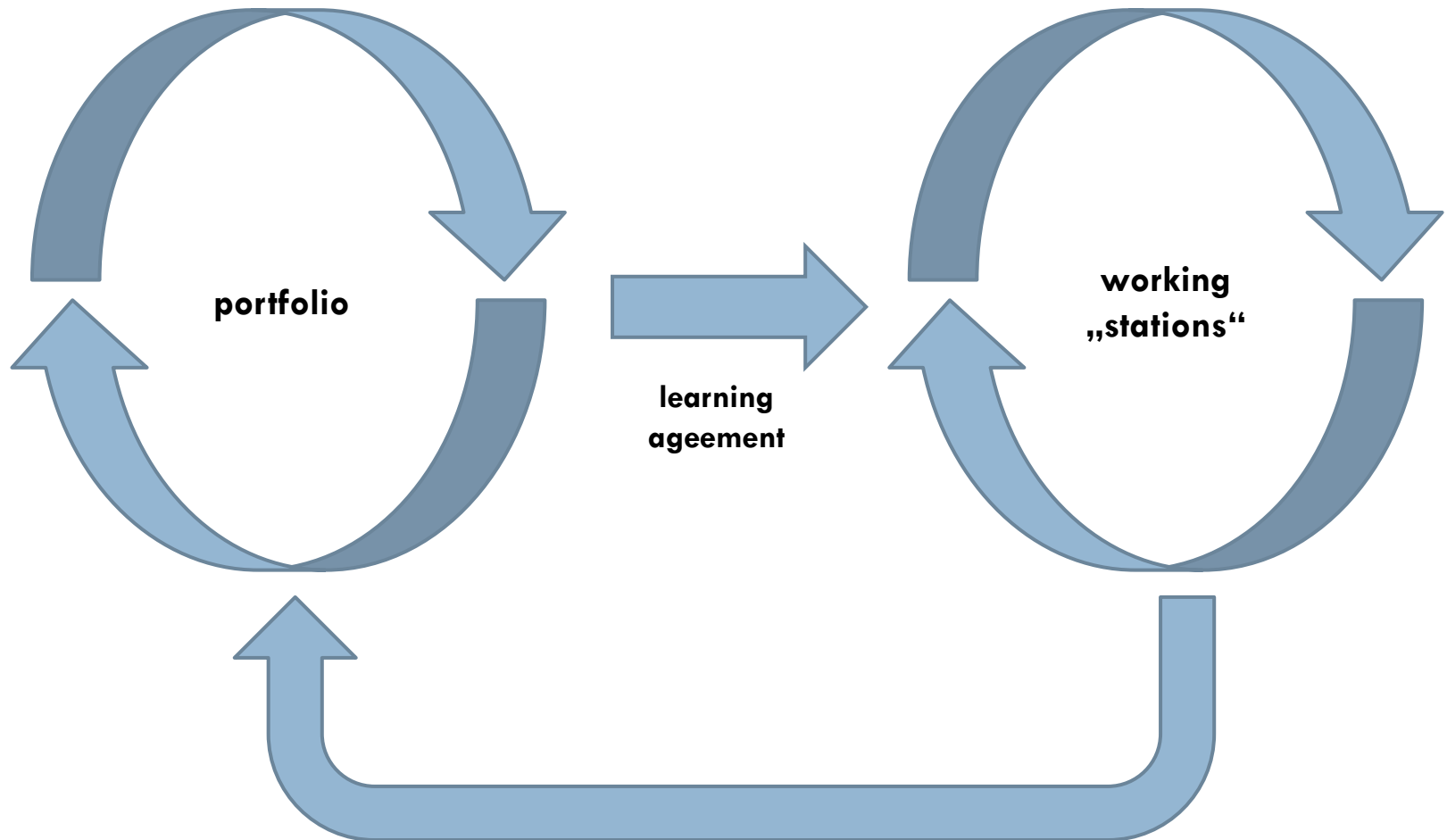
# Three Steps to Learner Autonomy

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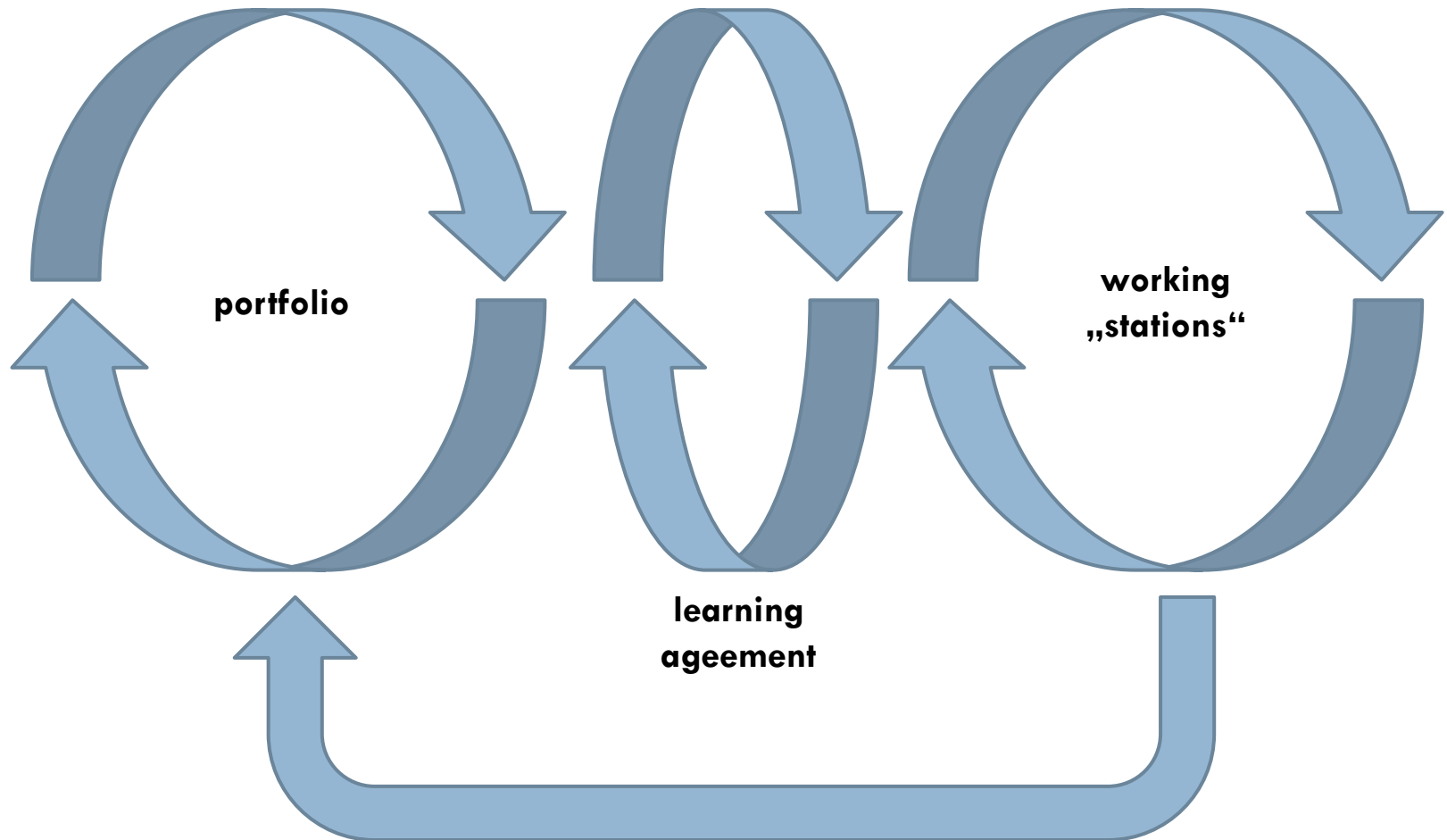
# Three Steps to Learner Autonomy

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# Three Steps to Learner Autonomy

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# Research Design and First Results

# Goals of the Project

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- explorative, qualitative (and quantitative)
- hypothesis generating
- triangulation

Goal 1: Development (based on theory), test and improvement (based on empirical data) of a

- workplace oriented portfolio for literacy, German as second language
- teaching materials needed to follow up the portfolio (learning agreements and stations)
- didactic descriptions (how to work with the portfolio and the materials)

Goal 2: research on the important factors for individualized teaching

- factor „teacher“ → „teacher autonomy“ (Interviews, observations, video)
- factor „learners“ → learner autonomy (Interviews, observations, videos, portfolios)

# The Data

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- Development of the materials for learner autonomy (based on theory)
- Interviews with cooperating teachers (before the courses: 2xA1, 2xA2, 2xA2/B1)
- Train the Trainer Workshop on using the materials
- „Portfolio-experts“ go along with the teachers and help them
- Interviews with the cooperating teachers (after the beginning of the course: 2xA1, 2xA2, 2xA2/B1)
- Observation of the classes (until now only 2xA1)
- Final Interview of the teachers (in a group)

# Observations

## Course 1 (A1) and Course 2 (A1)

### Course 1 (A1)

2. month

- Materials are used in a "classic" teaching setting
- Some Learners seem to be challenged, others are bored

7. month

- Learning Agreement (LA) is used as a documentation
- Working with the Learning Agreement (LA) is not understood

9. month

- First observations that the LA is used properly
- auto corrections

10. month

- Independent use of the LA is still not observable
- No reflective learning
- high motivation of the learners

11. month

- Learners decide not to use the materials

12. month

- reflective learning together with other learners
- Learners begin to develop own learning strategies
- high motivation of the learners

### Course 2 (A1)

1. month

- Materials are used in a "classic" teaching setting
- Learners learn by their own

2. month

- Learners refuse working with the portfolio
- learners mark items in the portfolio without reflection

4. month

- Working with the Learning Agreement (LA) is not understood
- "Abstract" exercises are difficult for learners

5. month

- Working with the stations is not clear for the learners

6. month

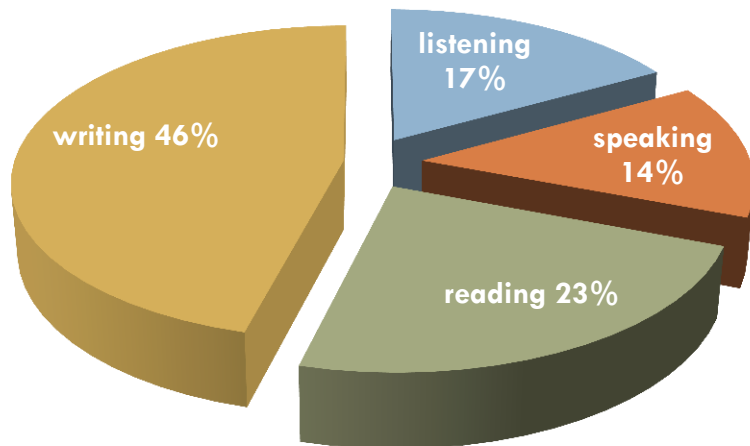
- independent use of the LA and the stations
- first observations of self reflective learning
- Teacher still needs to clarify some exercises
- Learners help each other

7. month

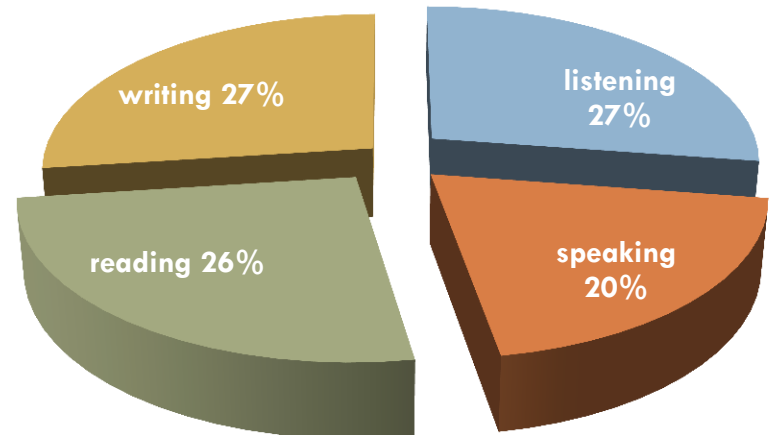
- Self reflections and development of approaches to solve problems
- Learners begin to develop own learning strategies

# Analysing the Portfolios

**Course 1:**  
**Language activities in the exercises**



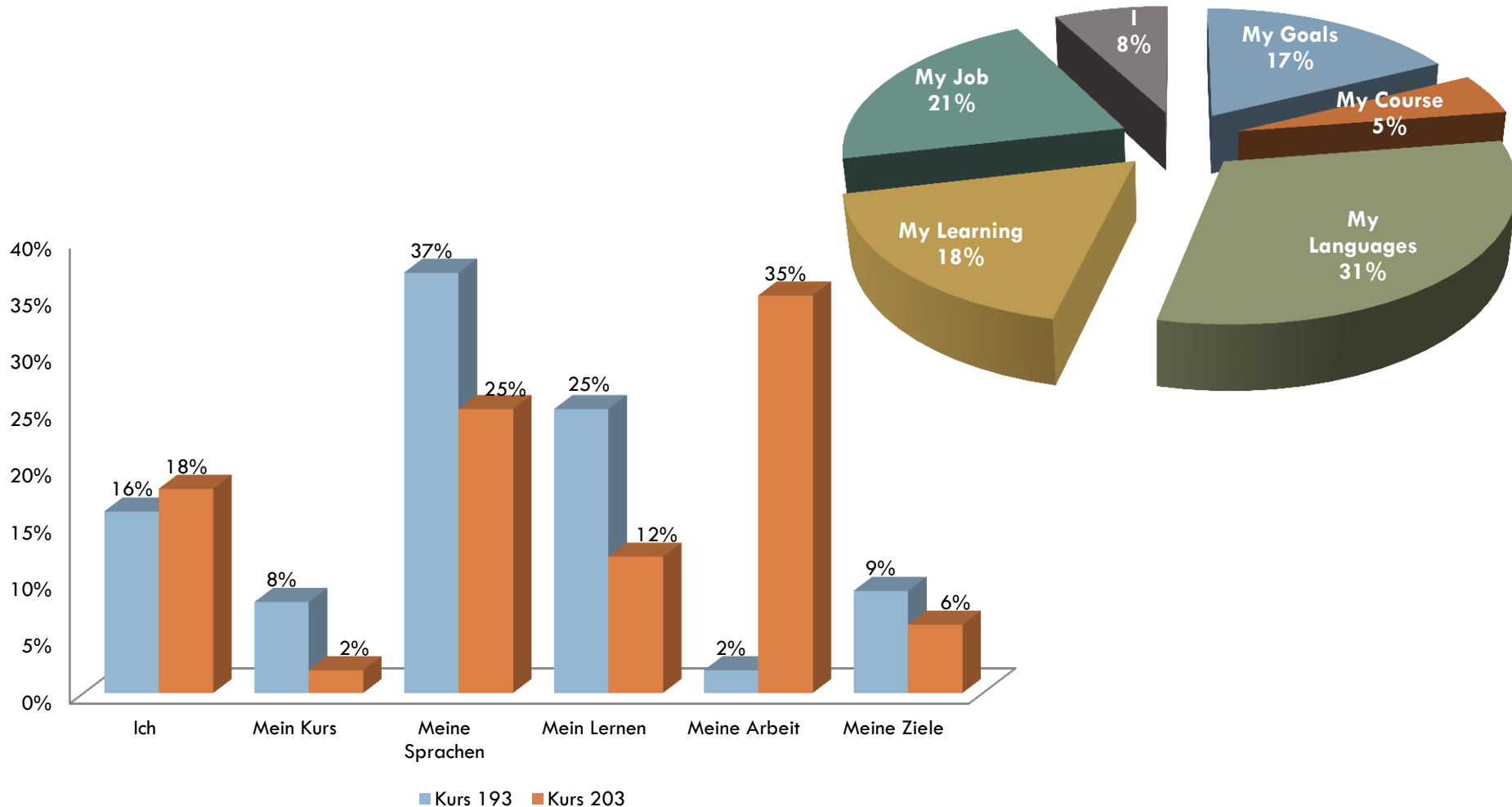
**Course 2:**  
**Language activities in the exercises**





# Analysing the Portfolios

## Working with the Portfolio in Course 1 and 2



**THANK YOU**

**DANK JE WEL**

# The „Alphaportfolio“ project

- [www.uni-muenster.de/germanistik/alphaportfolio](http://www.uni-muenster.de/germanistik/alphaportfolio)
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MÜNSTER



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