

Fostering Learner Independence in an EAP environment

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Outline

- UK universities in the 21st century
- Learner Independence
- Critical Thinking
- Implementing a Learner Independence Strategy (model)
- The impact of the Virtual Environment

UK universities

- flexible learning/delivery
 - transferable skills
 - lifelong learning
 - e-learning
 - democratisation
- mobility and employability

Independent decision-making is key

EAP market

200,000 international students (non-EU)

Preessional – preparing students to join academic community

Need to be able to

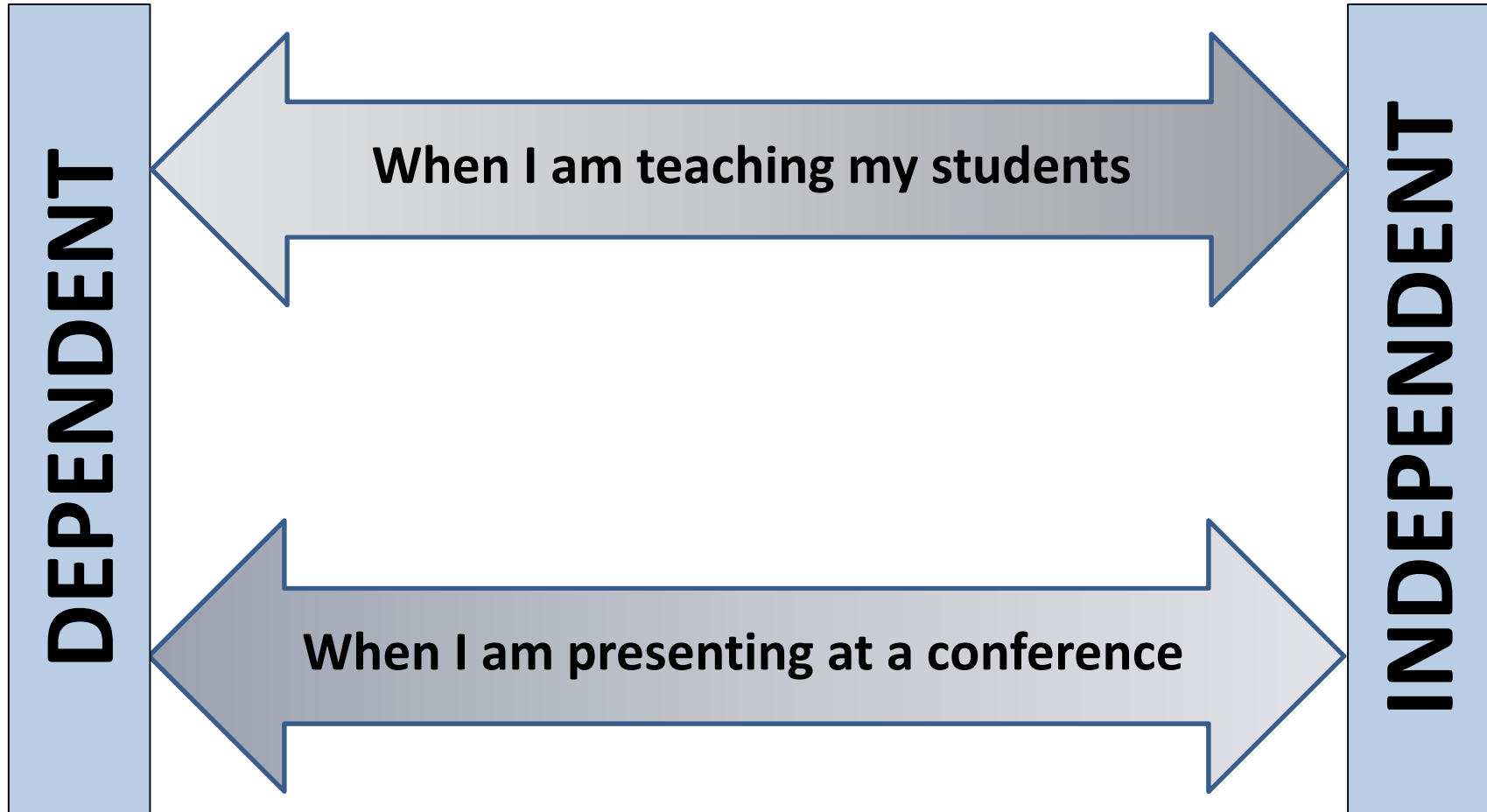
- work independently
- think critically

Issues overlap for UG and PG Native Speaker

Influences on the development of Learner Independence

- 1 Communicative approach
- 2 Constructivism
- 3 Skills-based learner strategies and learner training
- 4 Common European Framework
(Passport/Biography/Portfolio)
- 5 Political role in society; western European model

Stages of independence



Student voices

I'll start at the
very
beginning.....
(Jose)

But how do I
know which
words to learn?
(Maha)

Now I know
how to find
what I need in
the library.....
(Hiroko)

Definition of Learner Independence (LI) in the EAP context

A willingness and ability

To take responsibility

For one's own learning

And apply the appropriate academic and
linguistic competences

In order to function effectively in the academic
community

Definition of Learner Independence (LI) in the EAP context

A willingness and ability to take responsibility for one's own learning and apply appropriate academic and linguistic competences in order to function effectively in the academic community.

Critical Thinking

An ability

to question and analyse

to reflect and think things through

to make decisions and choices

What are challenges of fostering LI ?

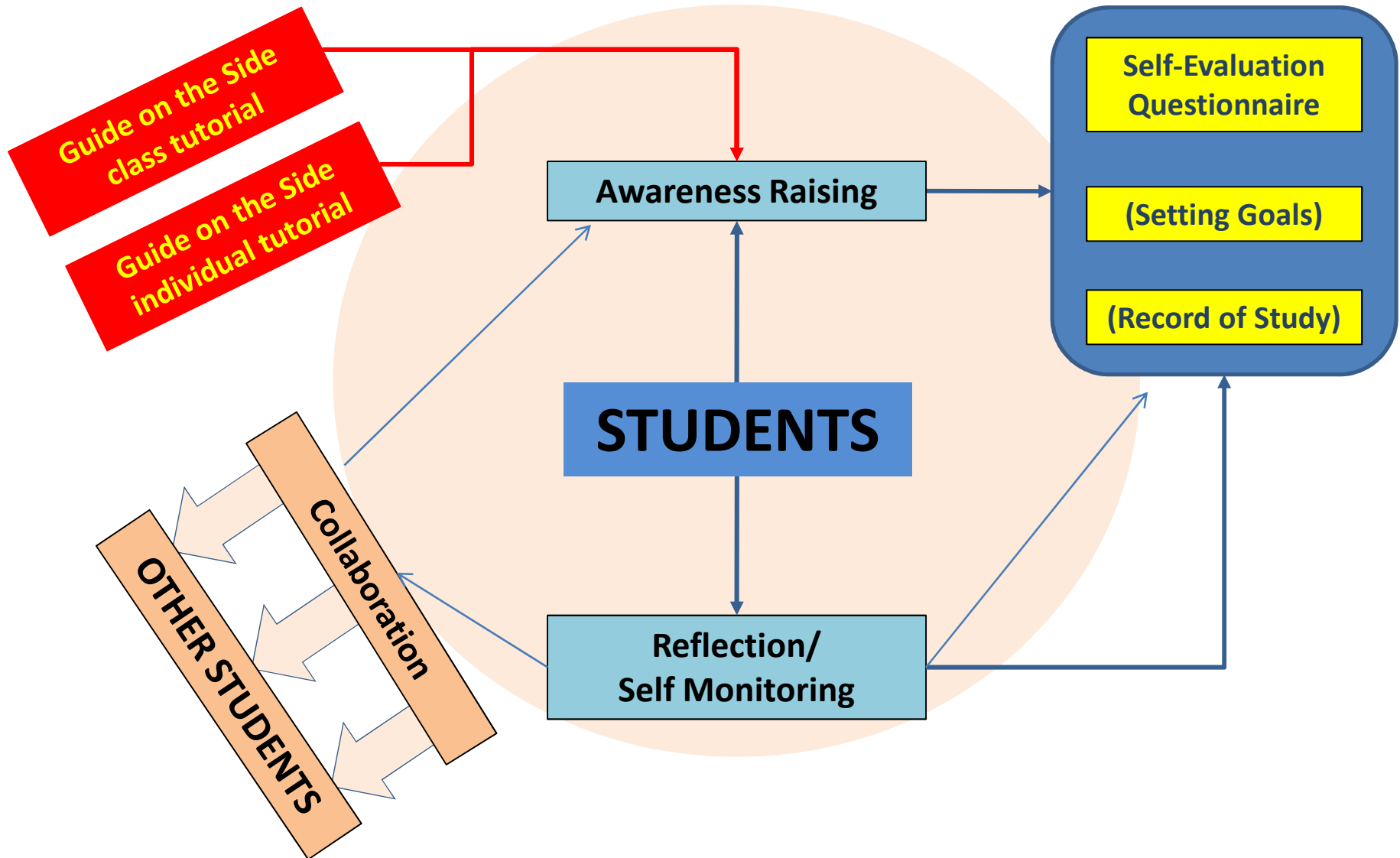
An EAP classroom- diverse student profile

- expectations - culture
- life experience/age
- individual personality
- beliefs about learning; learner style

Role of the practitioner

- Teacher attitude is key
- Understanding where on the continuum learners are
- Creating and integrating opportunities

Model for fostering Learner Independence



The virtual environment– what difference does this make?

- Too soon to evaluate in pedagogical terms
- Learning styles accommodated by multi media
- Google generation/digital natives
- Web 2.0 instruments

An interactive environment, but **needs learner training and teacher training**

Virtual tools to enhance learning

- 1st wav

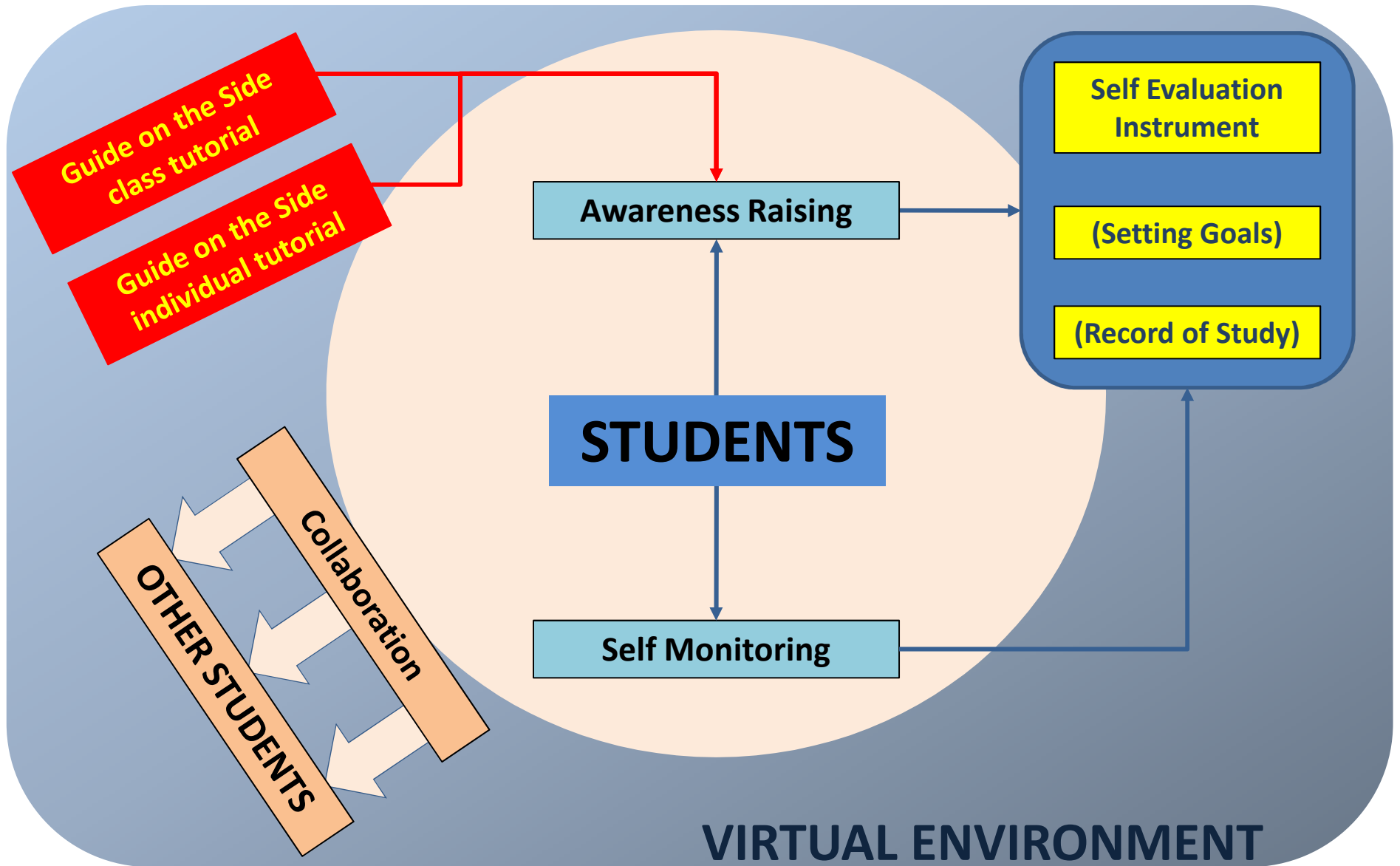
- VLE standard in many places
- Self-diagnostic test
- Interactive websites for academic writing
- Online dictionaries
- Corpora – concordance – text analysis patterns
- Self editing software

Collaboration and co-construction of knowledge

- Forums for collaboration
- Voice now important component -Wimba voice tools
- Student feedback – podcasts/ videos
- Underlying social networking - 2nd life
Facebook /Twitter/You Tube potential?

All embody Learner Independence

Model for fostering Learner Independence



Creating platforms for participation to allow students to realise and leverage the emerging media environment (Wesch 2009)

Virtual environment – LI implicit

In times of change learners inherit the earth,
while the learned find themselves beautifully
equipped to deal with a world that no longer
exists (Eric Hoffer 1902 - 1983)

Questions for you

- What different competencies are needed to participate in the virtual environment?
- Is the role of LI more crucial than ever?
- What do we do with students who have no passion for it?
- What kind of training do practitioners need?

Are we only limited by what we can dream?