

*Some thoughts and suggestions about the idea
of interfacing language learning 'in the wild'
with classroom instruction*

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Structure of the presentation

1. Some comments and questions on the metaphore of '(re)wilding' and on the idea of interfacing language learning 'in the wild' with classroom instruction
2. Four positions about the concept of (non)interfacing language learning 'in the wild' with classroom instruction
3. The experiential learning model by D. Kolb as a possible theoretical framework to foster the interface position between language learning 'in the wild' and classroom instruction. An example with the preparation and exploitation of a brief stay abroad
4. Conclusion
5. Bibliography

1. Some comments and questions on the metaphore of ‘(re)wilding’ and on the idea of interfacing language learning ‘in the wild’ with classroom instruction

- ◆ If we oppose classroom instruction to language learning ‘in the wild’, doesn’t it imply that one considers the school context as an *artificial*, a *disembodied* world? (Simons *et al*, 2001)
 - Doesn’t the school context appear to be ‘artificial’ because the communicative approach is based on the SIMULATION paradigm (Puren, 2013): ‘Imagine you are Mr Smith’, ‘Imagine your best friend is a native speaker...’
 - Isn’t the action-oriented perspective more conducive to ‘rewilding’ than the communicative approach, since it considers the learner as a ‘social actor’ who must carry out tasks to learn the foreign language?
- ❖ If one uses the prefix ‘re-’ in ‘*rewilding*’, does it mean that one considers that the school context was wild... before? If so, when?
- ◆ Does the ‘wild’ remain ‘wild’ when one tries to have it enter the school context... or is it automatically ‘tamed’ or even disembodied by the school context?
- ◆ Can language learning ‘in the wild’ be compared with what Krashen (1981, 1985) called ‘*acquisition*’ and learning in a school context with what he called ‘*learning*’? If so, do we agree with Krashen’s NON-interface position between acquisition and learning?
- ◆ How can we help teachers to (better) interface language learning ‘in the wild’ with classroom instruction?

Definition of the action-oriented perspective

*'The approach adopted here, generally speaking, is an **action-oriented** one in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as 'SOCIAL AGENTS', i.e. members of society who have TASKS (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action. While acts of speech occur within language activities, these activities form part of a wider social context, which alone is able to give them their full meaning.'* (EFRL, p. 9)

Whereas the main paradigm of the **communicative approach** to language learning is **simulation**, that of the **action-oriented perspective** (AOP) advocated by the EFRL is **action**. (Puren, 2013)

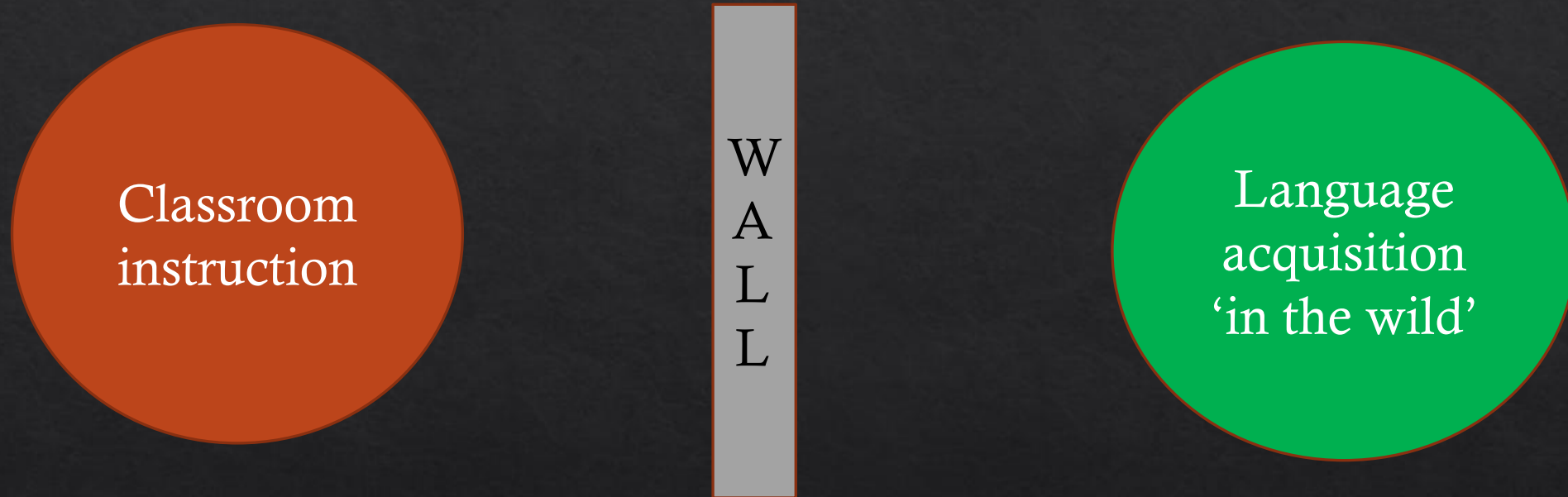
Two ways to implement the AOP:

- Textual genre-based learning
- Project-based learning



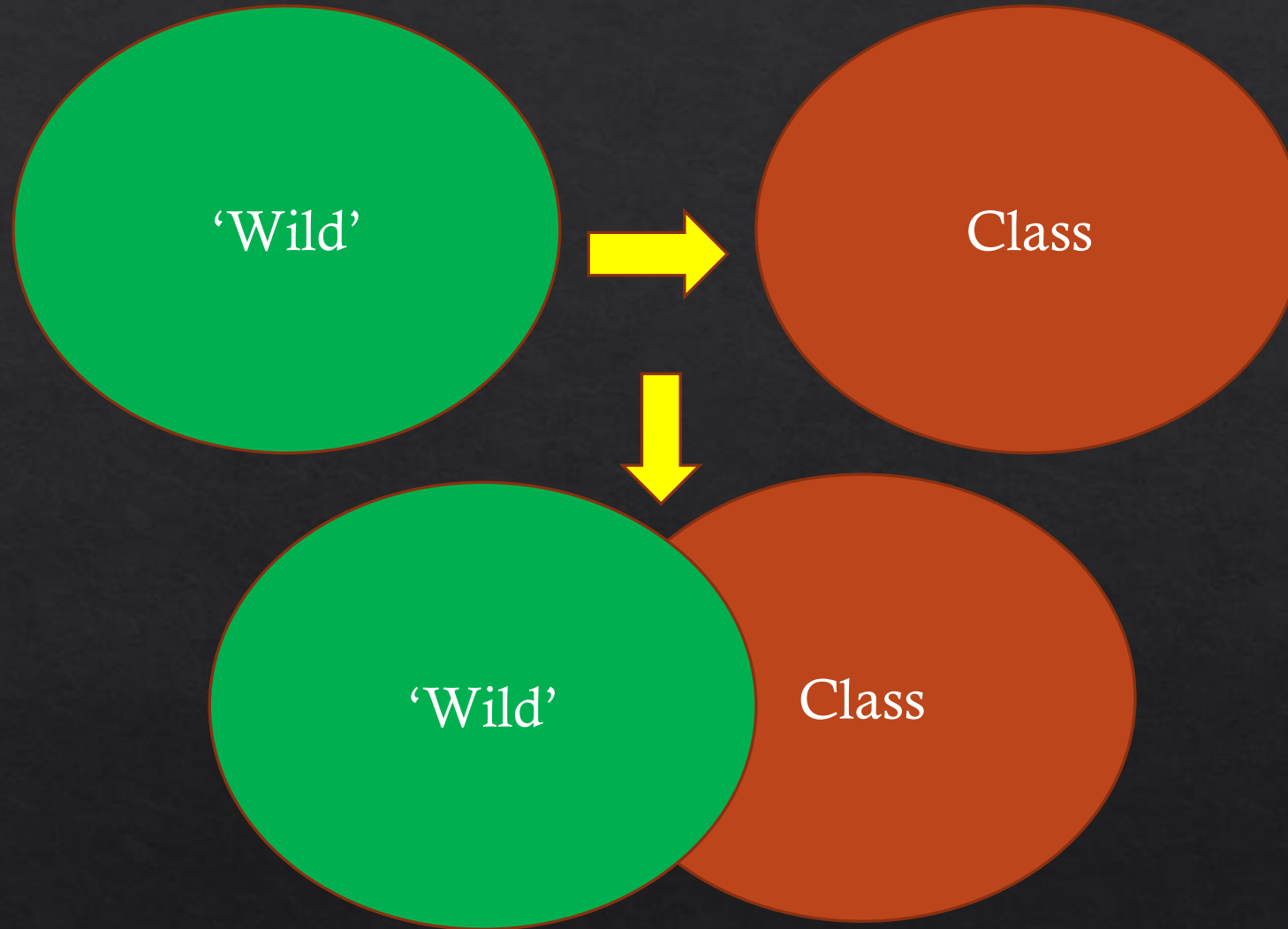
2. Four positions about the concept of (non)interfacing
language learning 'in the wild'
with classroom instruction

2.0. The NON-interface position: *the two worlds are definitely separated*



No desire to create an interface between the two worlds. On the one hand, there's language learning in the school context, and on the other hand, at least for some students, there's language acquisition outside the school context : some play video games online, some watch series, some have friends abroad...

2.1. Interface position #1: *from the wild to the school context*



A possibility is created by the language teacher to enable his/her students to make contact with native speakers, **but within the framework of the foreign language course.**

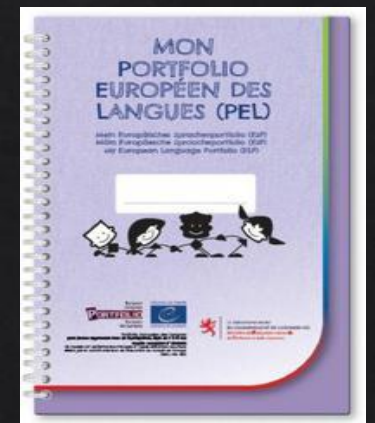
Some examples

- English/American students attend language classes in Belgium.
- 'Tandem learning': students interact with a native speaker (e-mails, WhatsApp, Teams/Zoom...).
- (Serious) video games organized by the language teacher at the school's multimedia center.
- ...

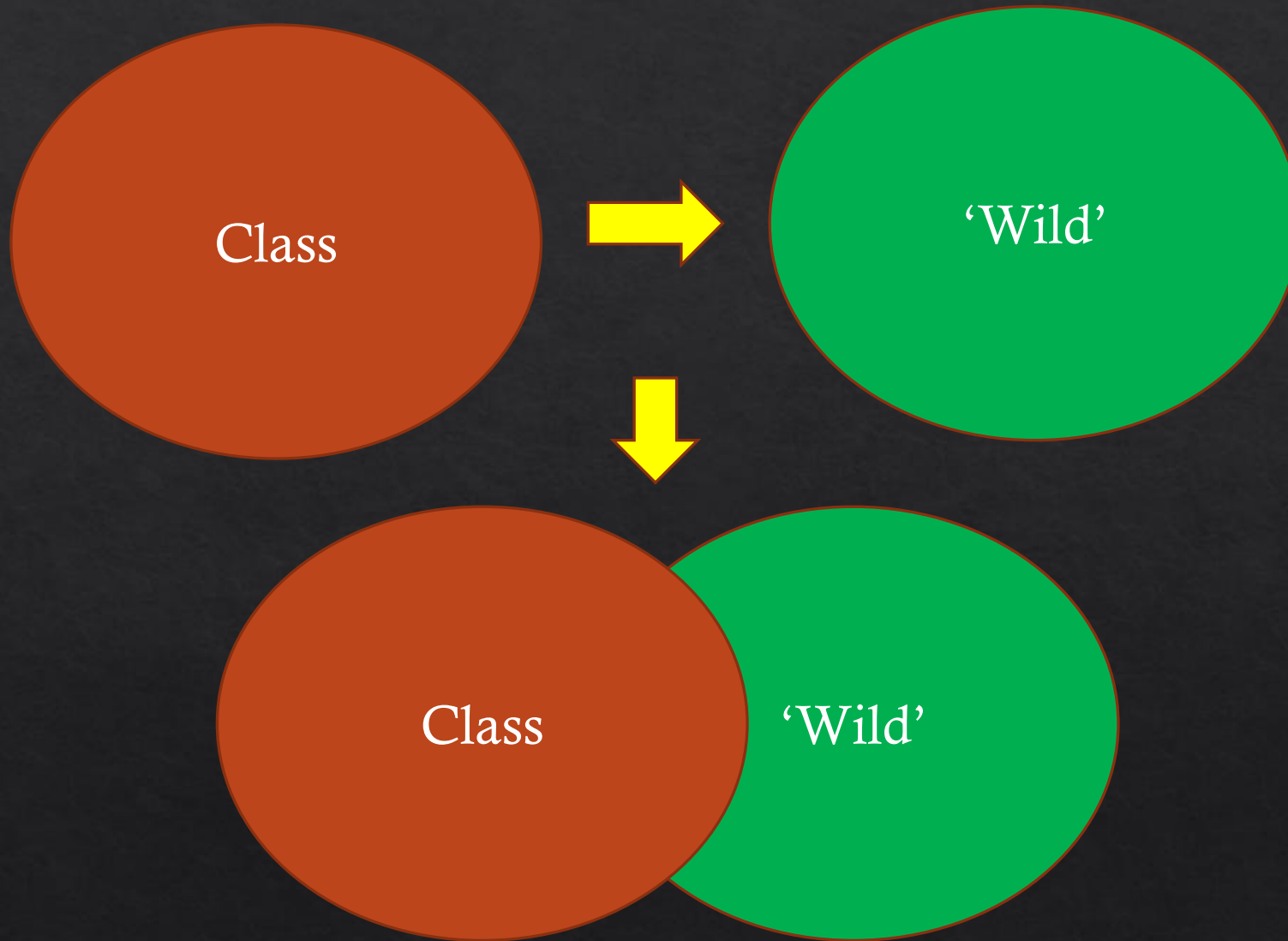
The European Language Portfolio was an attempt to value an experiential acquisition of FL within the school context.

'In an ELP all language proficiency is valued, whether it was gained inside or outside formal education.

It has three components: a language passport, a language biography, and a dossier.'



2.2. Interface position #2: *from the school to the 'wild context'*



Some examples

- School **excursions** and school **exchanges**: students carry out activities **in the foreign country**, but these are often **guided** and **controlled** by the teacher, like in the school context. For instance, students visit a foreign city and/but
 - they receive *questionnaires* to fill in,
 - they have *pictures* to take at different spots to PROVE they really visited the different monuments.
 - their participation in activities is sometimes even ASSESSED!

2.3. : Interface position #3 : *the language classroom as a place for preparing and exploiting experiential learning 'in the wild'*

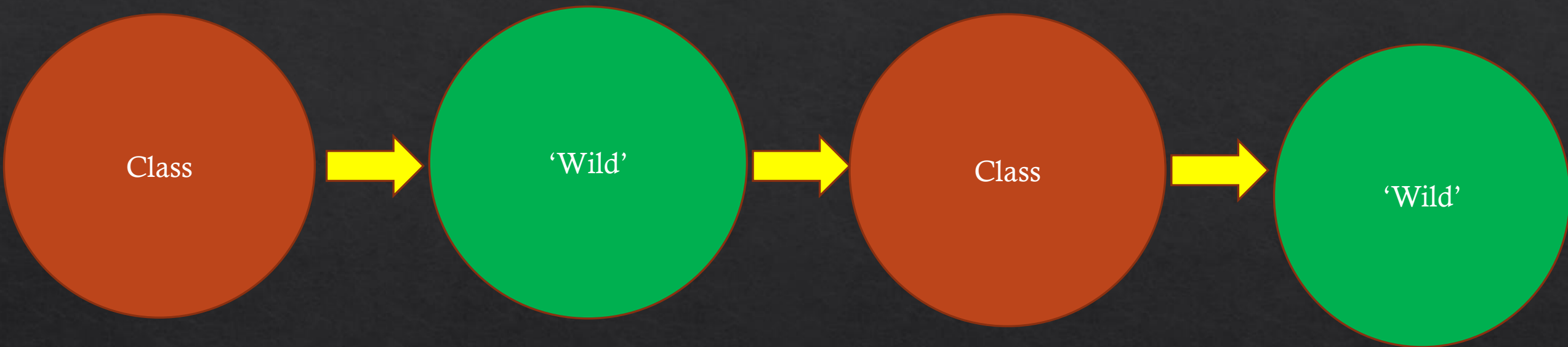
Project-based learning in the action-oriented perspective

Towards an operational **definition** of project-based learning

*'[...] a project is a **task envisaged, wanted and decided by the group, involving team members in a spirit of cooperation and leading to a useful achievement.***

*Defined in this way, the project necessarily involves the collaboration of several teachers to promote an interdisciplinary approach to problems. It **must be related to real life and open up to the outside world.***

*It is part of an **active** pedagogical approach and must be based on the principle of **problem solving.**' (Carpentier, Lecocq & Roosen, 1988, p. 30; Simons, 1992, 57-62; Simons, 2024, 20-37)*



Main principles:

- The school doesn't pretend (cf simulation) to be 'in the wild' any longer. It *prepares* and *exploits* a project-based learning experience.
- The school context functions as an *observatory* and *laboratory* for experiential foreign language acquisition which takes place... in the 'here and now' = 'in the wild' (Simons, 1999).

3. The experiential learning cycle by D. Kolb
as a possible theoretical framework to foster the
interface position between language learning 'in the
wild' and classroom instruction

3.1. The theoretical framework

3.1. Description of the model

DEFINITION OF LEARNING BY D. KOLB (1984):

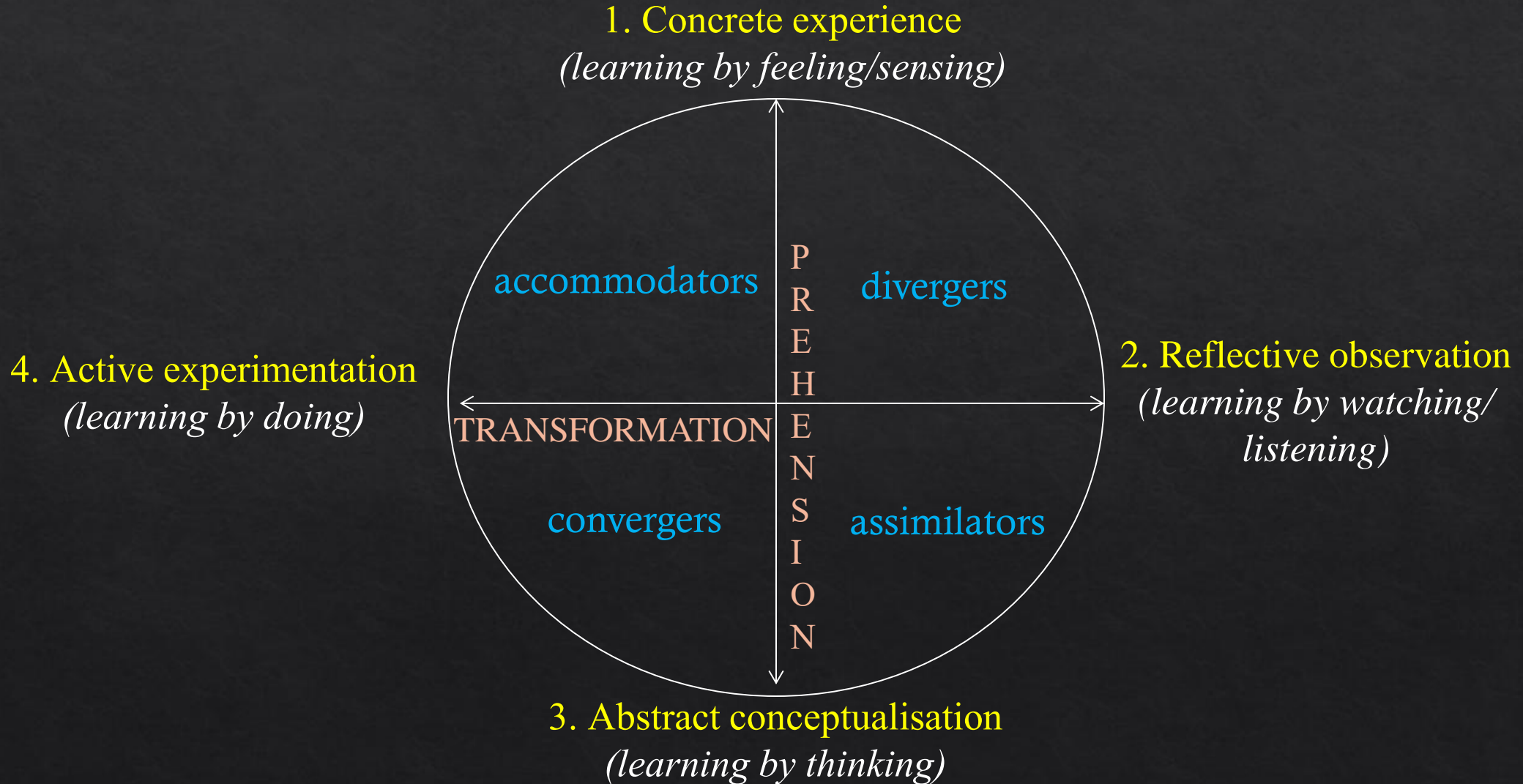


'Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created by the transformation of EXPERIENCE.'



1. Learning is a **process**... not a product.
2. The driving force of the process is the **transformation** of experience.
3. **Experience** plays an essential role in learning.

Experiential learning model by David Kolb

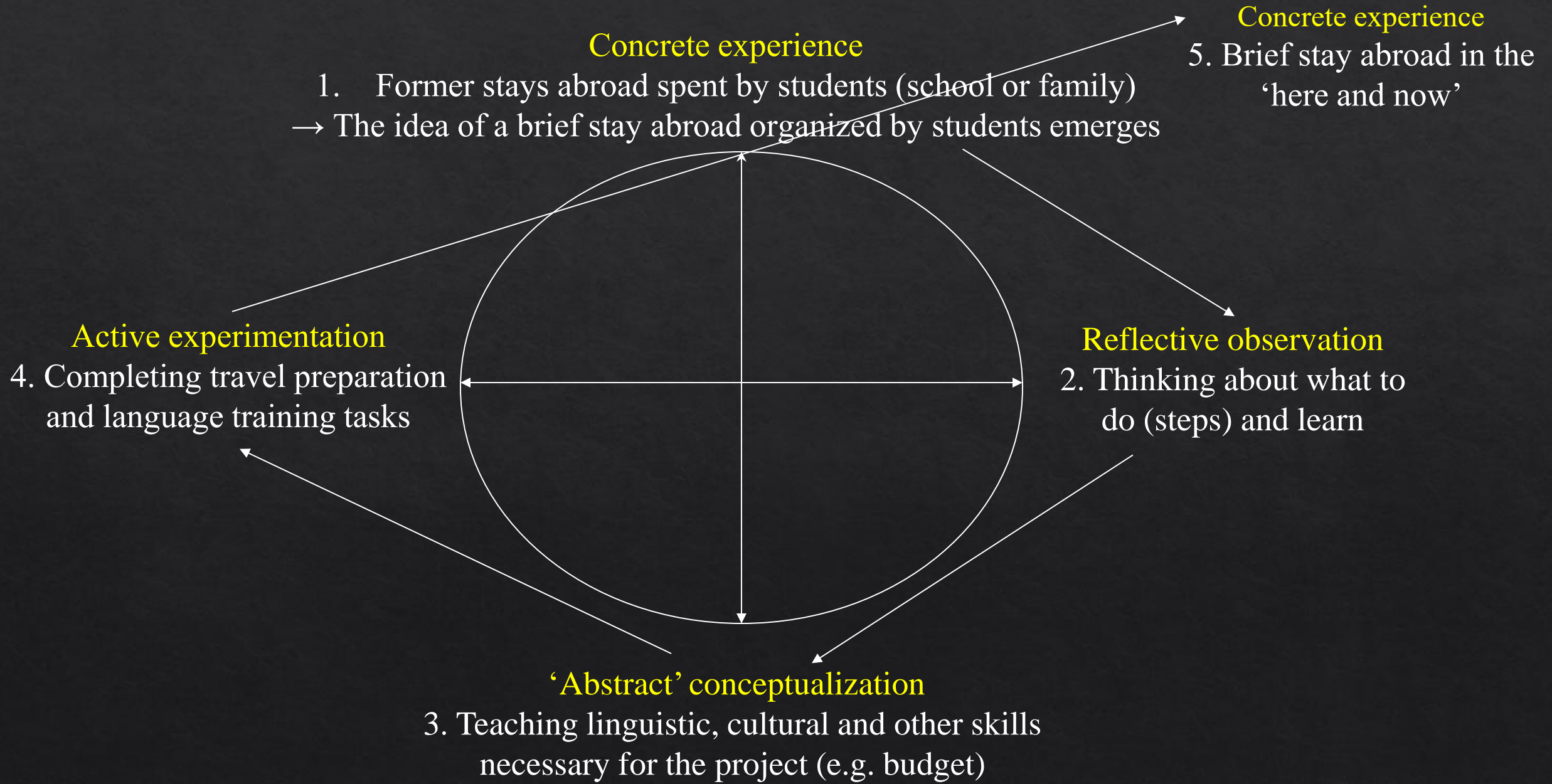


3.1. An example: the ‘stay abroad’ project

(Simons, 2001, 2023)

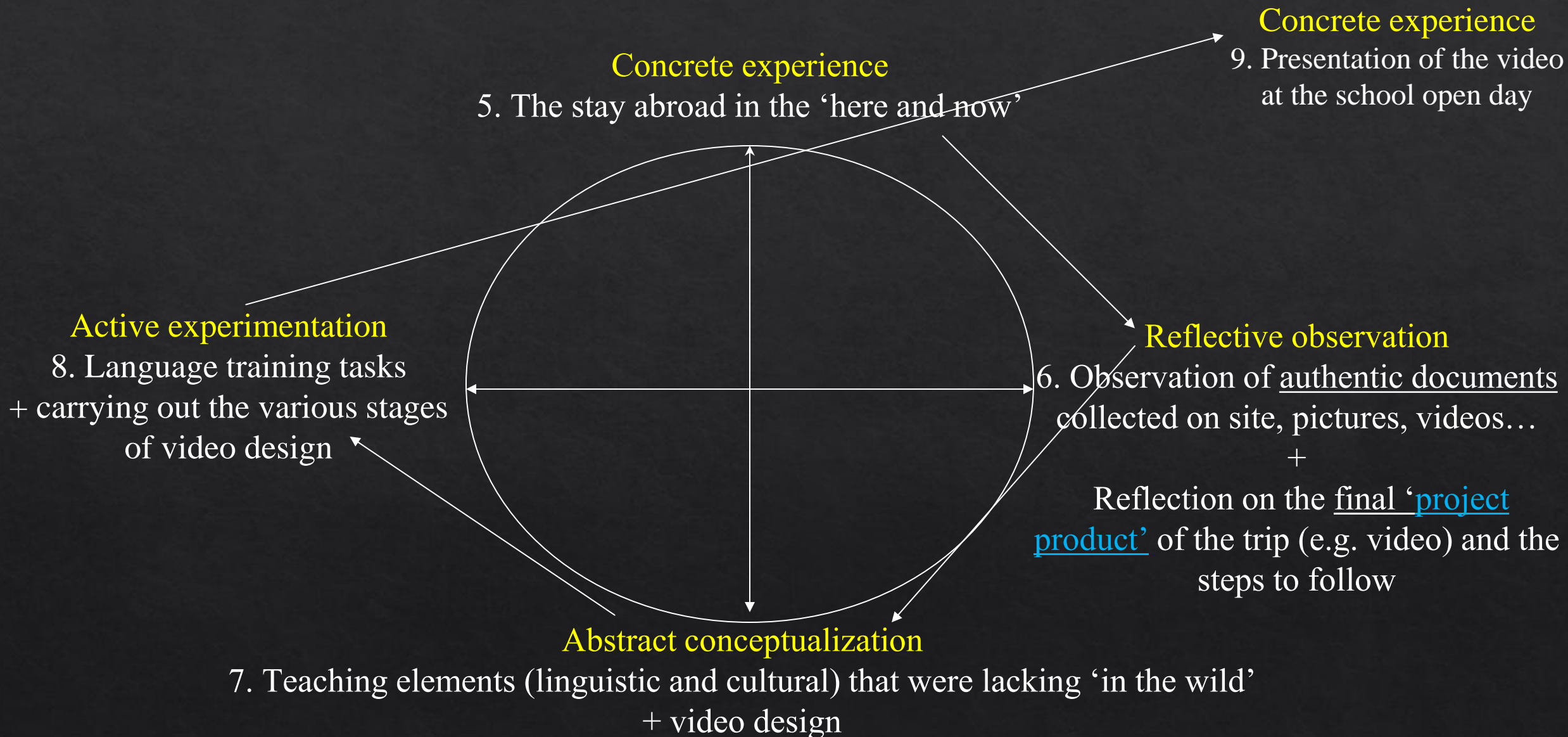
First cycle:

At school, preparing the stay abroad



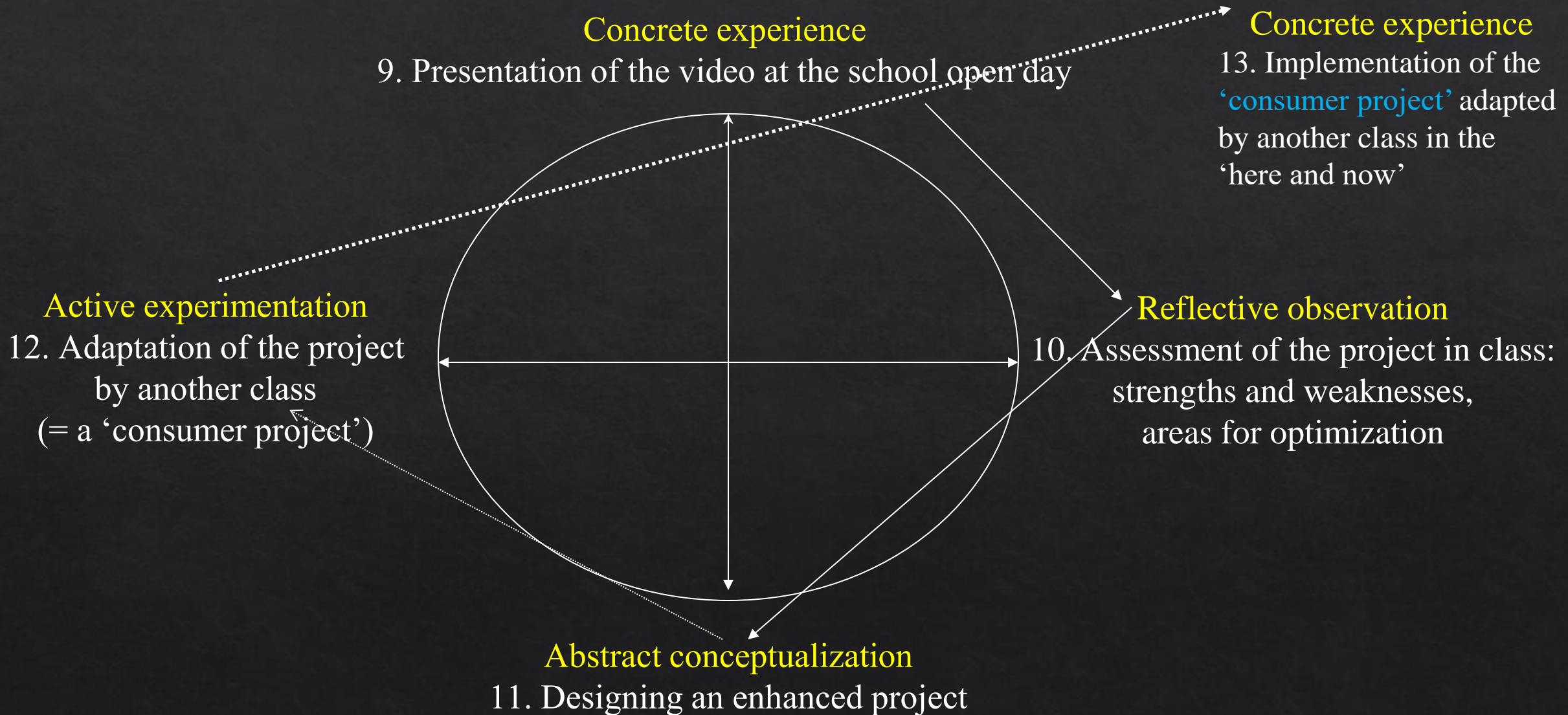
Second cycle:

From the stay abroad to its linguistic exploitation in class and its assessment as a project



Third cycle:

*From the school open day where the stay abroad was presented
to the assessment of the whole project and its possible implementation by another class*





**3.3. Zoom on the methodological approach that can be used to teach the linguistic and strategic resources mobilized while students were shopping during their stay abroad
(Simons, 1999, 2001, 2023)**

Concrete experience

5. Transfer of new knowledge and strategies during another stay abroad.

Concrete experience

During their stay abroad, students shop for a limited budget, identical for all.
A student/teacher films (smartphone) the interaction between the students and a native salesperson.

Reflective observation

1. At school, presentation to students of audio(-video) extracts illustrating certain interactions between students and native speakers. The teacher explains a) the communication problems encountered by the students; b) the communication strategies developed by some students (e.g. mime, gestures, switch to native language, paraphrase, concrete example, etc.) and their relative **effectiveness**.

2. Presentation to students of an **input** illustrating interactions between native salespeople and customers.

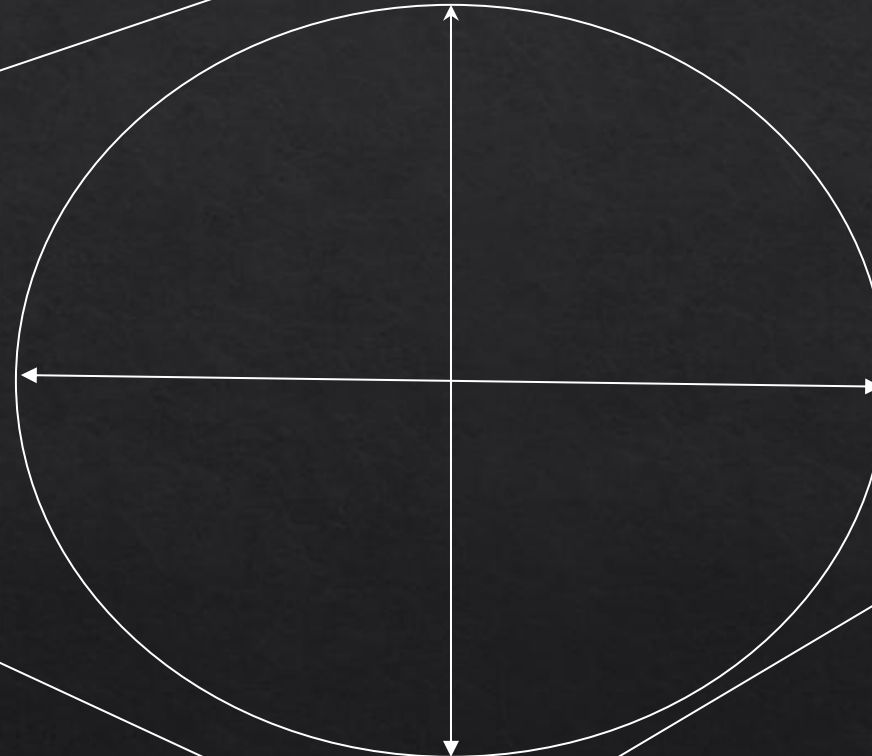
The teacher leads the students to **compare the two performances** (= 'noticing the gap') and to look for linguistic means in the native speakers' output that they could use to **solve** the communication problems they have encountered (lexicon, grammar, language functions).

Active experimentation

4. Application of communication strategies and new linguistic knowledge through various simulation exercises that gradually deviate from the initial situation.

Abstract conceptualization

3. Clarification of the lexicon, grammar and language functions used by native speakers that students lack.



4. Conclusion

- ❖ It is *possible* and *desirable* to interface language learning 'in the wild' with classroom instruction.
- ❖ To achieve this aim, the language classroom should stop pretending to be abroad. It should move away from its exclusive simulation paradigm and position itself more as an *observatory* and a *laboratory* for the experiential learning of the foreign language. This posture is also more in line with the action-oriented perspective advocated by the CEFL.
- ❖ Kolb's theoretical model of experiential learning provides a theoretical foundation for this interface position. We have proposed an adaptation of Kolb's model to the main steps of project-based learning.
- ❖ Another advantage of the model is that the cycle route enables the teacher to encounter different learning styles, which not only makes teaching more equitable, but also helps to teach students to learn differently from their dominant learning style.

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Thank you for your attention!