Transformative Learning in Practice: Teaching Languages and Cultures

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Transformative Learning in Practice: Teaching Languages and Cultures
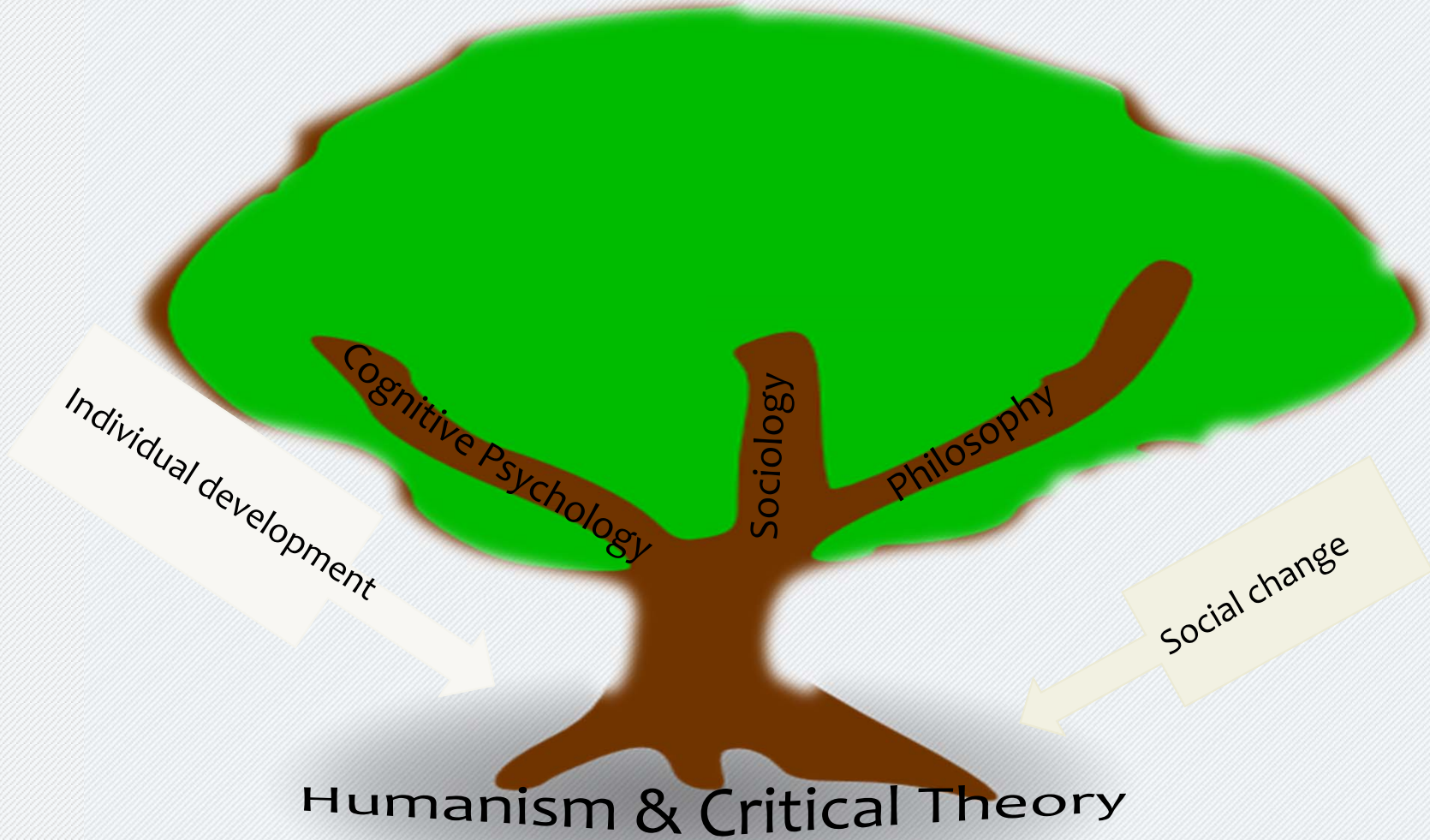
Paulina De Santis, Ph.D.

APAS-FDS

Transformative Learning Theory

Humanism

ADULTS critically assimilate their values, assumptions, beliefs from family, community, & culture

autonomous, free, can make major personal choices

have responsibility to both themselves & to others

the goal of adult learners - to grow into their greatest potential

human potential for growth & development is essentially unlimited

FREEDOM

AUTONOMY

Cranton & Taylor, 2012
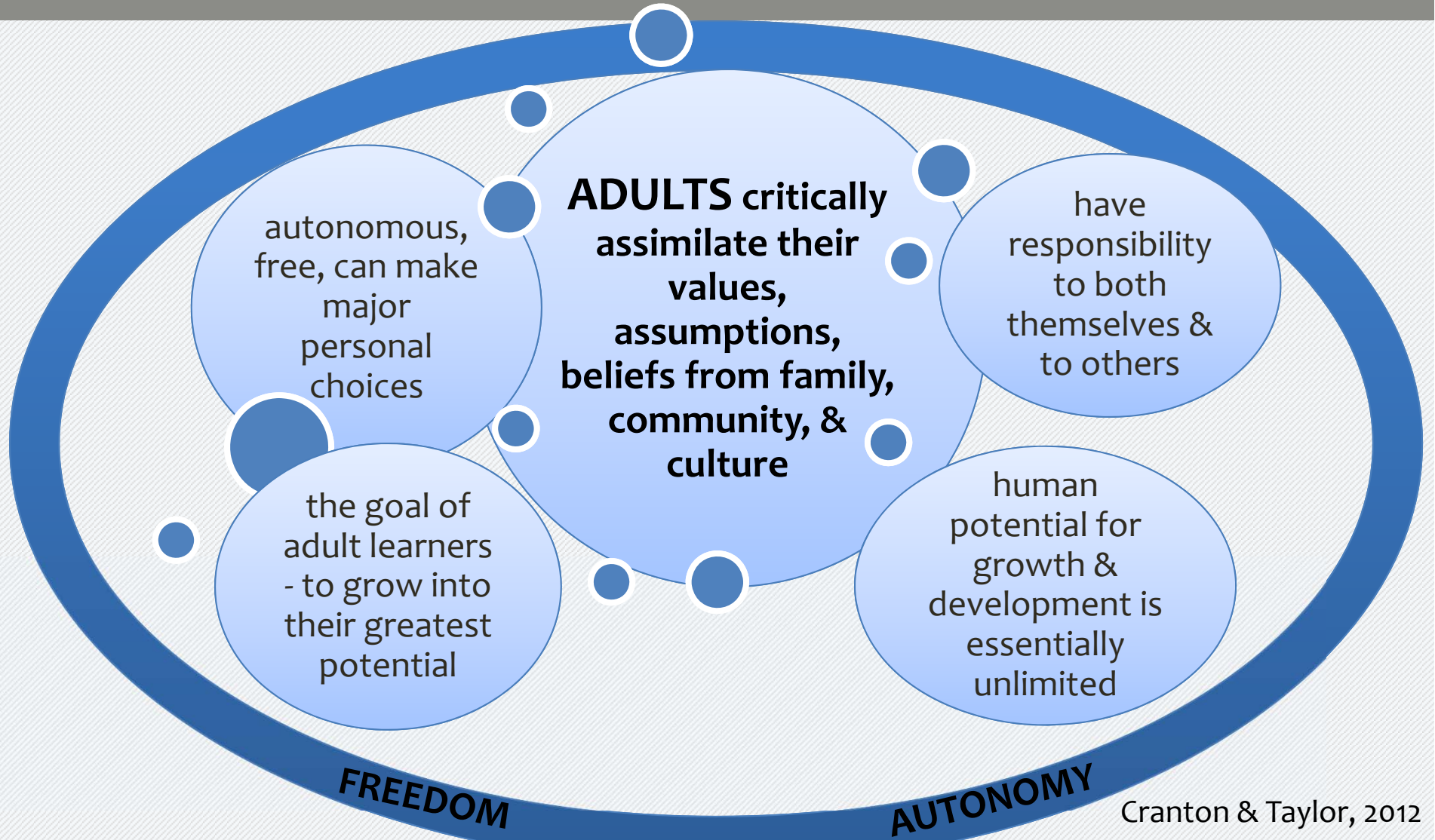
TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

PERSPECTIVE TRANSFORMATION

Patricia Cranton
1949-2016
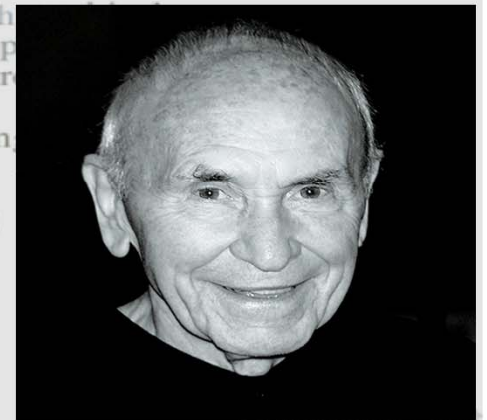
Jack Mezirow
1923-2014

Transformative Learning

"… is a process of examining, questioning, validating, and revising our perspectives."

Cranton, 2016

"Transformation theory's focus is on how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others - to gain greater control over our lives as socially responsible, clear-thinking decision makers."

Mezirow, 2012

Main Concepts

Critical thinking	A thinking process of recognizing and analyzing the assumptions that support one's thoughts and actions
Assumptions	Taken for granted beliefs, values, attitudes, expectations that seem so obvious to us that they do not need to be stated explicitly
Reflection	A process of reconsidering experience through reasoning, reinterpreting, & generalizing
Critical reflection	An act of questioning the integrity of assumptions & beliefs embedded in actions; questioning the validity of one's own world-views

Main Concepts (cont.)

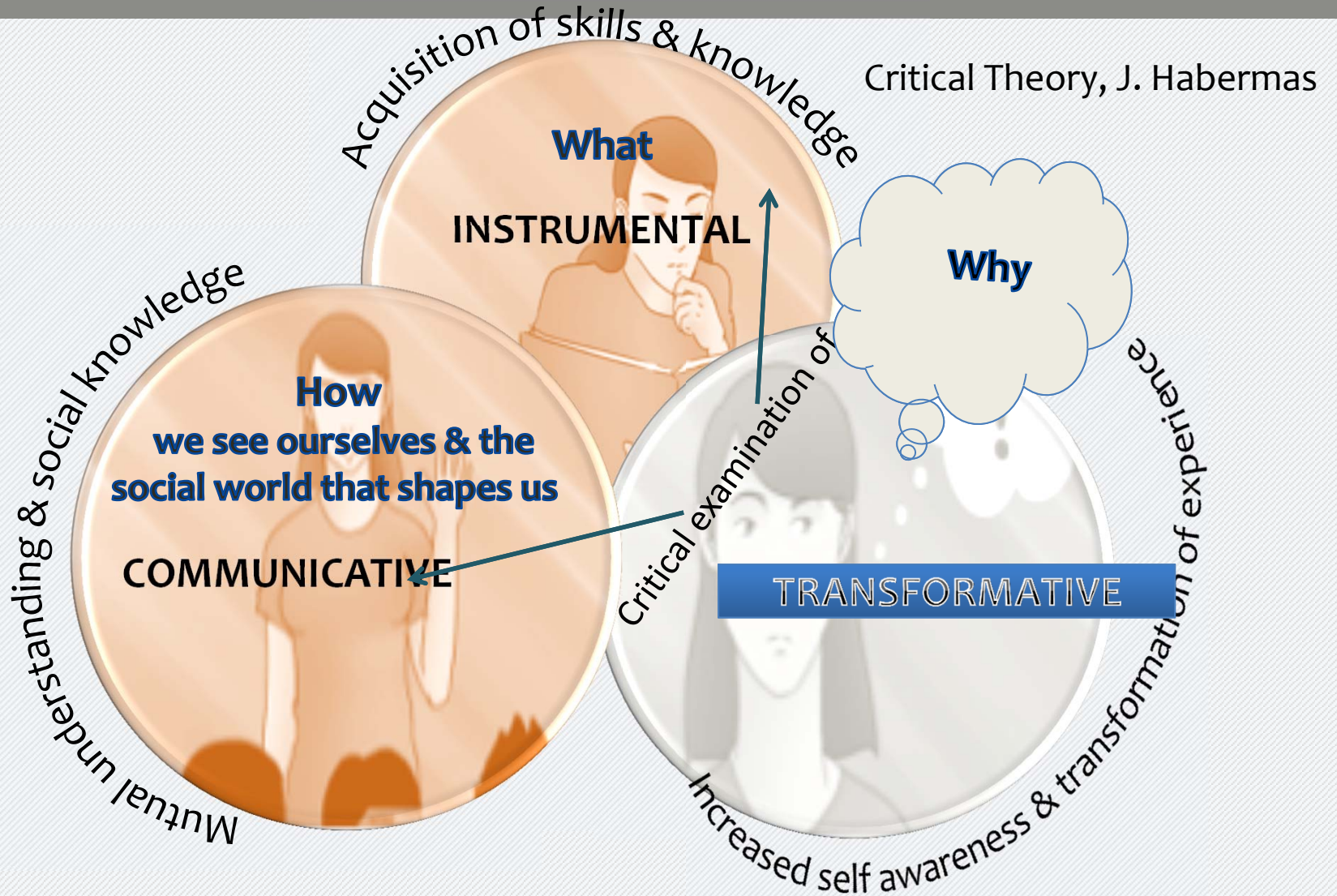|	
Disorienting dilemma	An activating event that typically exposes a discrepancy between what a person has always assumed to be true & what has just been experienced, heard or read
Worldview/meaning perspective	A set of assumptions & expectations through which we understand our experiences; influenced by cultural, political, social educational, & economic codes (incl. distortions, prejudices, stereotypes, unquestioned/unexamined beliefs) that represent cultural paradigm in which an individual grew up through socialization & acculturation
Perspective transformation	A process of becoming consciously and critically aware of one's own life philosophy as conflicts or dilemmas occur & then self-reflectively changing/modifying the way one perceives or understand ideas and concepts

Brookfield, 2004; Cranton, 2002; 2016; Mezirow, 2012

A WORLDVIEW SHIFT

A PARADIGM SHIFT

Domains of Knowledge

Acquisition of skills & knowledge

Critical Theory, J. Habermas

What

INSTRUMENTAL

Why

Mutual understanding & social knowledge

How
we see ourselves & the
social world that shapes us

COMMUNICATIVE

Critical examination of

TRANSFORMATIVE

Increased self awareness & transformation of experience

Critical Reflection

Content Reflection

Examination of the actual content or description of a problem

WHAT?

Process Reflection

Checking on the problem solving strategies that are being used

HOW?

Premise Reflection
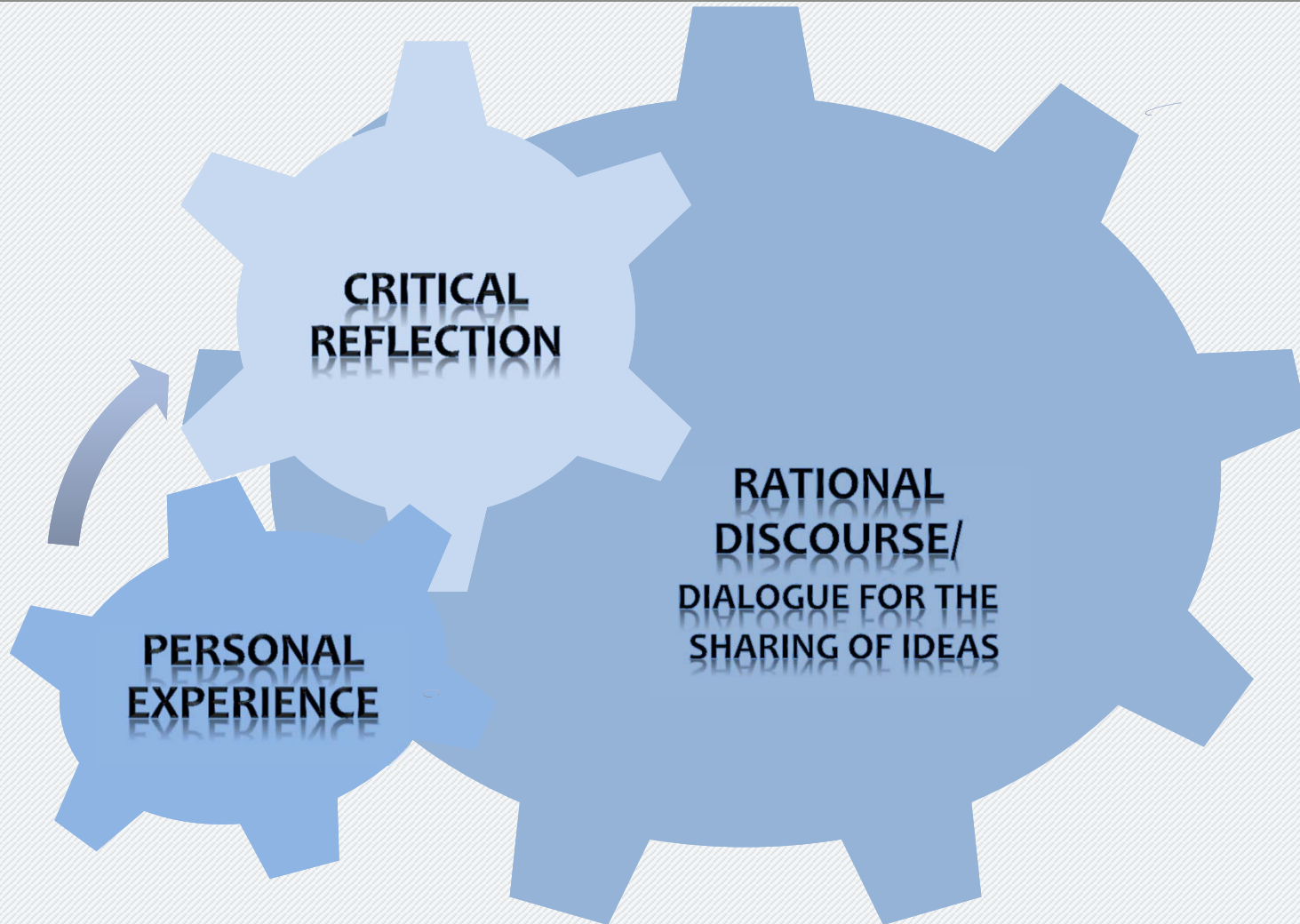
Examination of long-held beliefs and assumptions

WHY?

Reflective Questions

	Content Reflection	Process Reflection	Premise Reflection
Instrumental Domain	What is this? What does it do? What use can I make of it?	Did I miss smth? Did I understand the manual? Did I misinterpret what the facilitator said?	Why do I need to use it? Is it really important?
Communicative Domain	What am I feeling? What is happening here?	Am I overlooking smth? Do I understand myself?	Why am I making this a problem? Why is it important to me? What difference does it make?

The Core Mechanisms of TL

CRITICAL REFLECTION

RATIONAL DISCOURSE/
DIALOGUE FOR THE SHARING OF IDEAS

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

The Phases of Transformative Learning

DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER

Facing/experiencing a disorienting dilemma

Self examination – engaging in reflection & self-reflection

Critical assessment of assumptions

Recognition that the problem is shared by others

Exploration of alternative options through dialogue with others & further self-evaluation

Planning a course of action

Acquiring knowledge & skills for implementing one's plans

Provisionally trying on new roles & new actions

Building competence & self-confidence in new roles

Reintegration of the new perspectives into one's life

Transformative Learning & Language Learning

Study	N	Language	Results
Deveci, 2014	32	EFL	25% completed the cycle of transformation; increased awareness in terms of language learning & cultural knowledge
Johnson & Nelson, 2010	3	Spanish	Perspective transformation - reflected upon their own culture to develop cultural tolerance; built & strengthened their personal connection with the target language culture
King, 2005	208	ESL	66.8% changed views of learning English & learning about American culture; developed intercultural awareness, gained self-esteem & self-confidence
Schwartz, 2013	59	Chinese, French, Greek, German, Japanese, Spanish	15.3% experienced perspective transformation as a result of intrinsic motivation, cultural exposure, & personal connection with the target language culture

Transformative Learning & Language Learning

Study	De Santis, P. & Willis, O. (2016). *From Karamzin to Putin: Transformative Learning in Practice.*
Participants	5 graduate students of *Advanced Russian Course: Russian through Social Sciences and Media* (Harvard University)
Objective	*To see the Crimean problem through the light of Russian history and contemporary political and polemic discourse.*
Method	4 weeks 4 authentic texts Final product: An argumentative essay
Results	All Ss went through the process of TL by critically reflecting on their assumptions, analyzing their thinking processes, and participating in constructive discourse. 100% experienced content reflection 100% experienced process reflection 80% examined long-held beliefs & assumptions on how religion & law support current political system in Russia

Fostering Transformative Learning

Create an environment contributing to learner growth & empowerment

Encourage critical reflection & critical self-reflection

Challenge untested assumptions

Engage in rational discourse

http://jtd.sagepub.com/

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