

# Language Learning × Needfinding

Global Grand Challenges - Team 4

# 13 Interviews

We spoke to a mix of people with different language learning experiences, some successful and some unsuccessful, and a range of people with English as a native or foreign language.

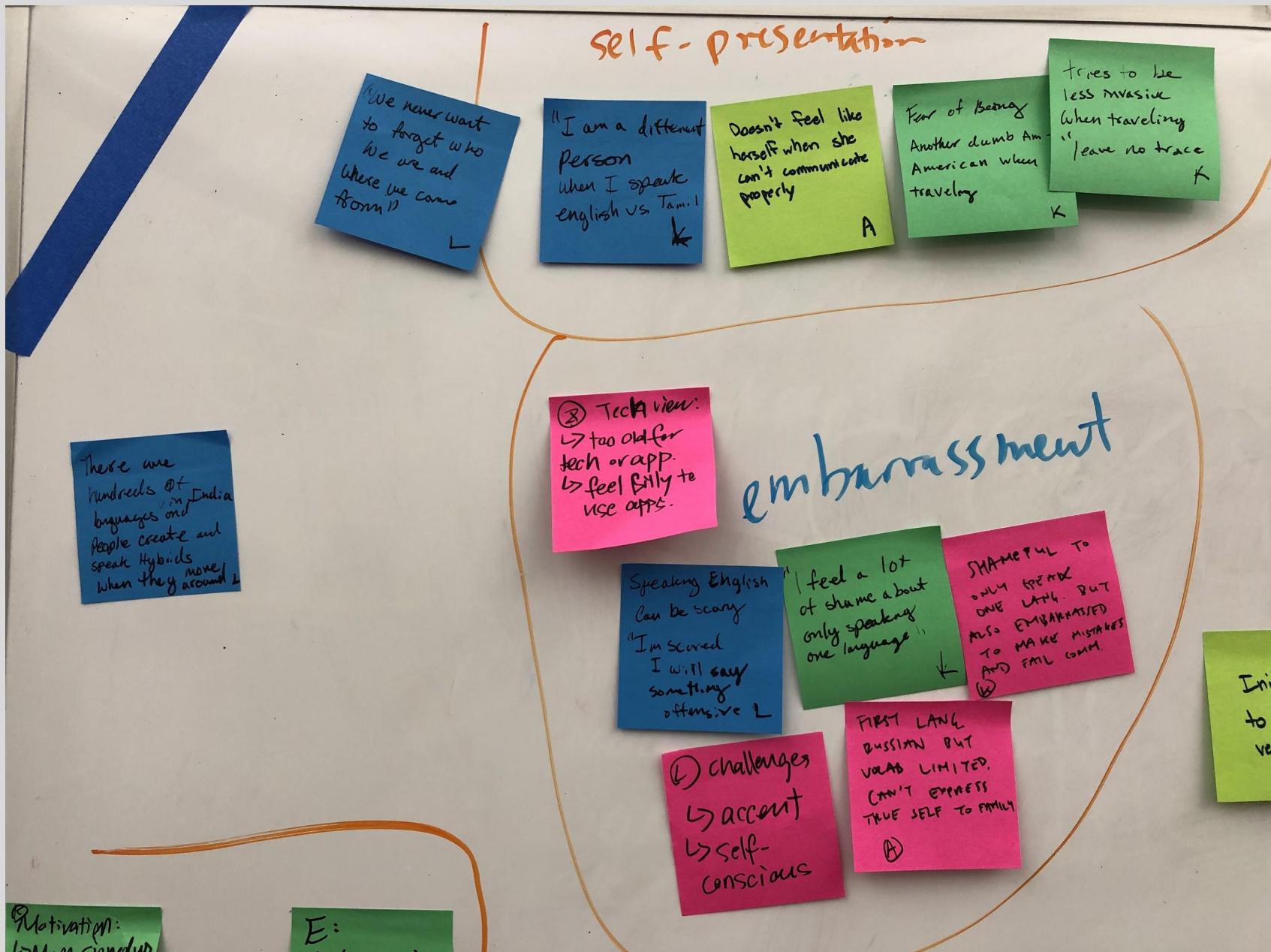
Age	Native language	Foreign language	Notes
Adult	English	Spanish	"unsuccessful" grad student at Stanford
	EXPERT		director of Habla Tutoring Program for Stanford affiliates to learn English
Adult	English	Spanish, Russian, French	"successful" grad student at Stanford
Adult	English	Chinese	from Ireland, teaches in China
Child	Chinese	English	native Chinese, in kindergarten here in PA, 6 years old?
Adult	Chinese	English	visiting scholar
Adult	teacher		from the UK; teaches in China
Adult	Tamil and Kannada	English and Hindi	successful learner
Adult	English	Spanish; Chinese	successful in Spanish, not so much in Chinese
Adult	Chinese	English	successful
Adult	Chinese	English	from Singapore; successful bilingual
Minor	Chinese	English	"unsuccessful" ESL and attending pre-college training because of low language score
Adult	Russian	English	successful

# Affinity Mapping

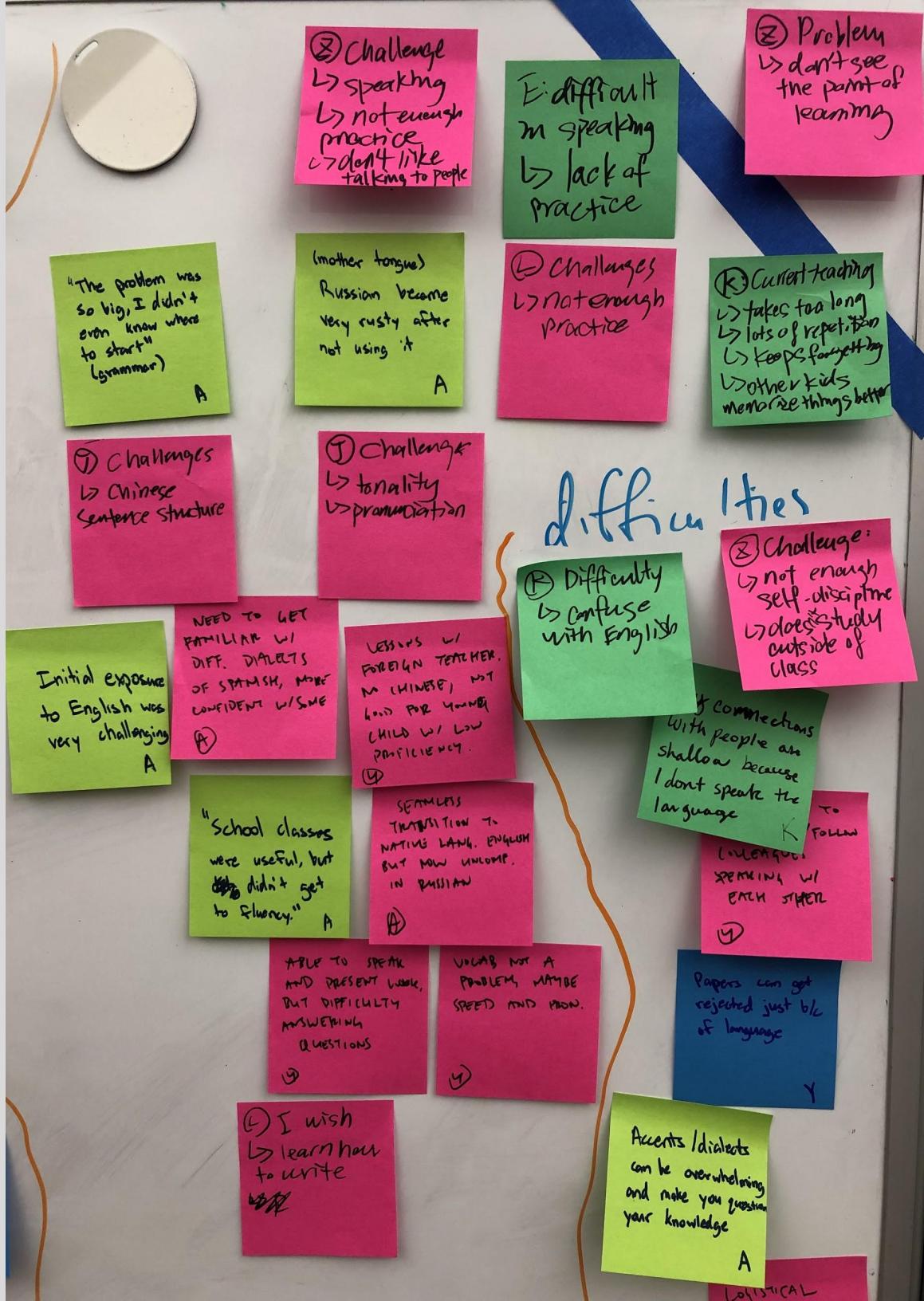
Themes: *self-presentation, embarrassment, difficulties in learning languages, difficulties caused by language, technology making communication difficult, culture, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, immersion, prior knowledge, traditional classes, and what works.*



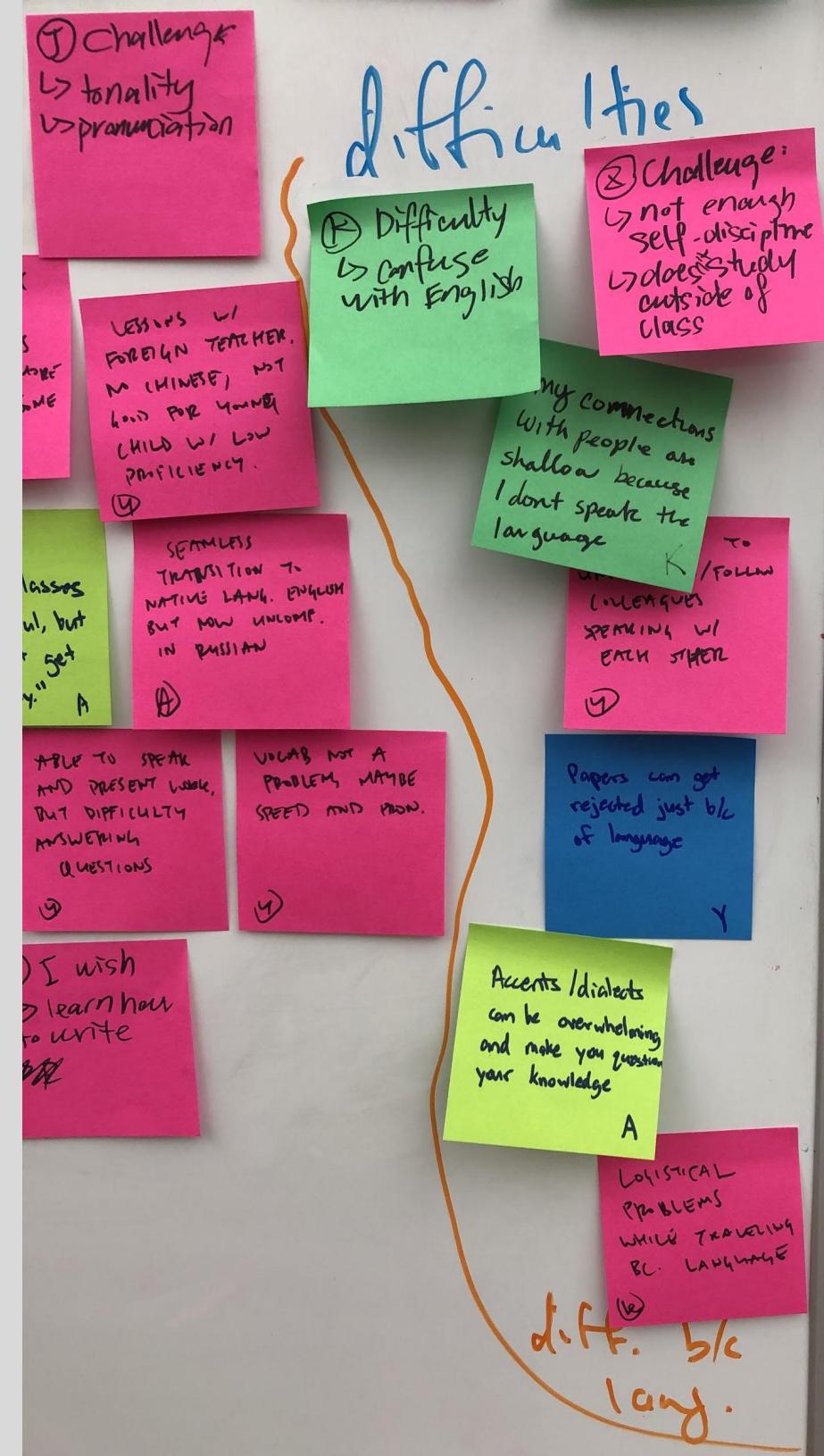
# Embarrassment



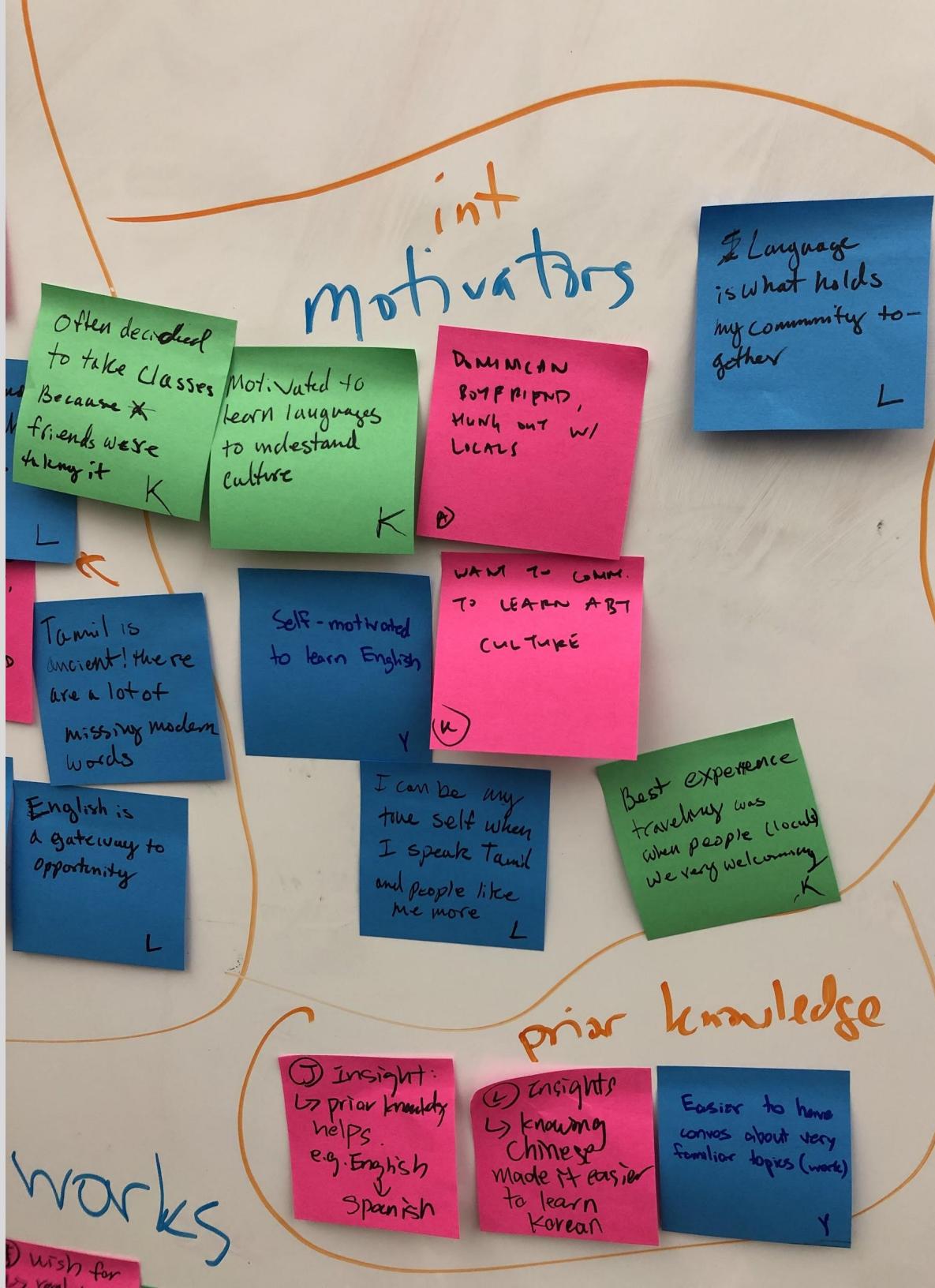
# Difficulty



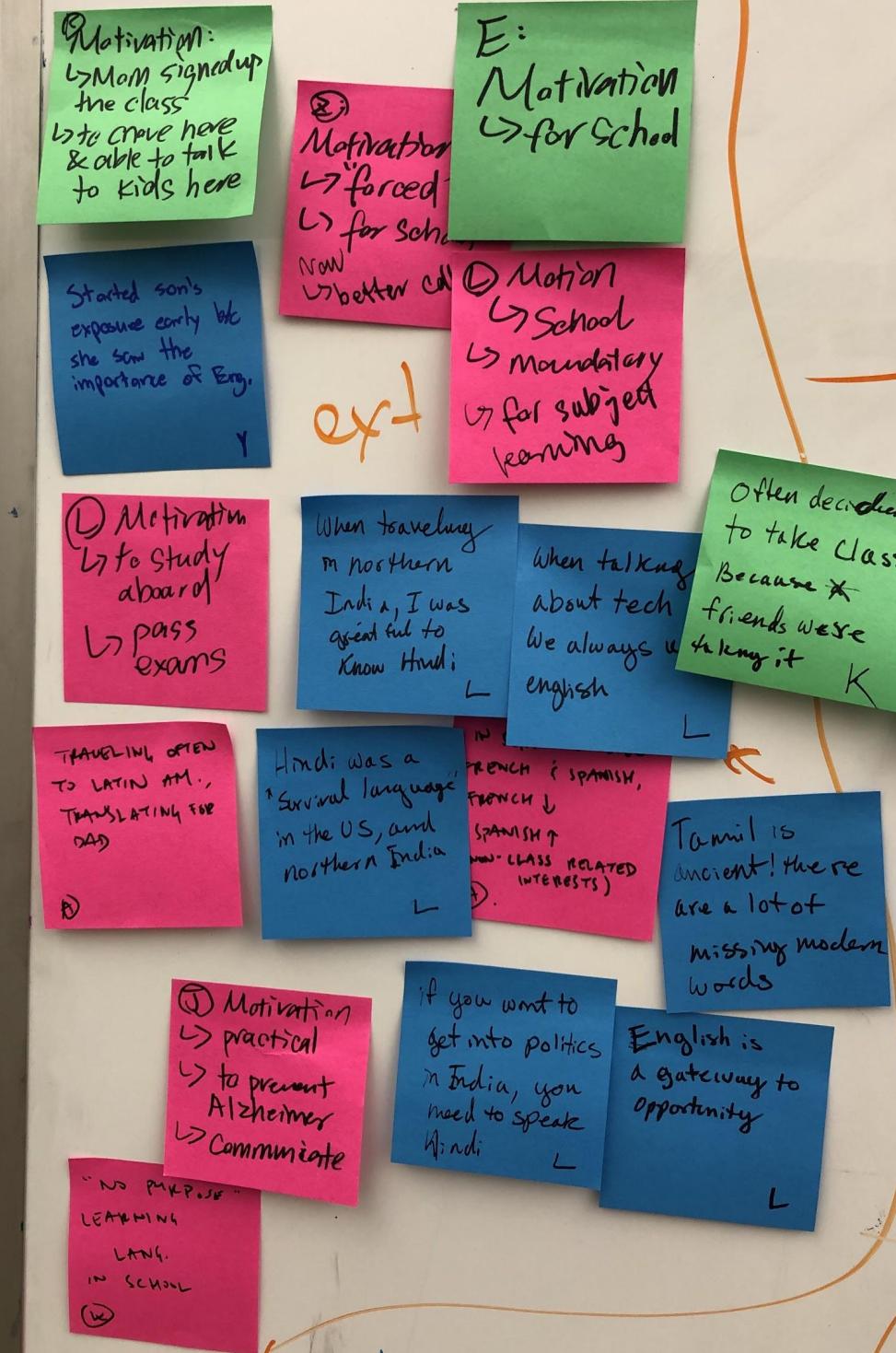
# Difficulty due to language



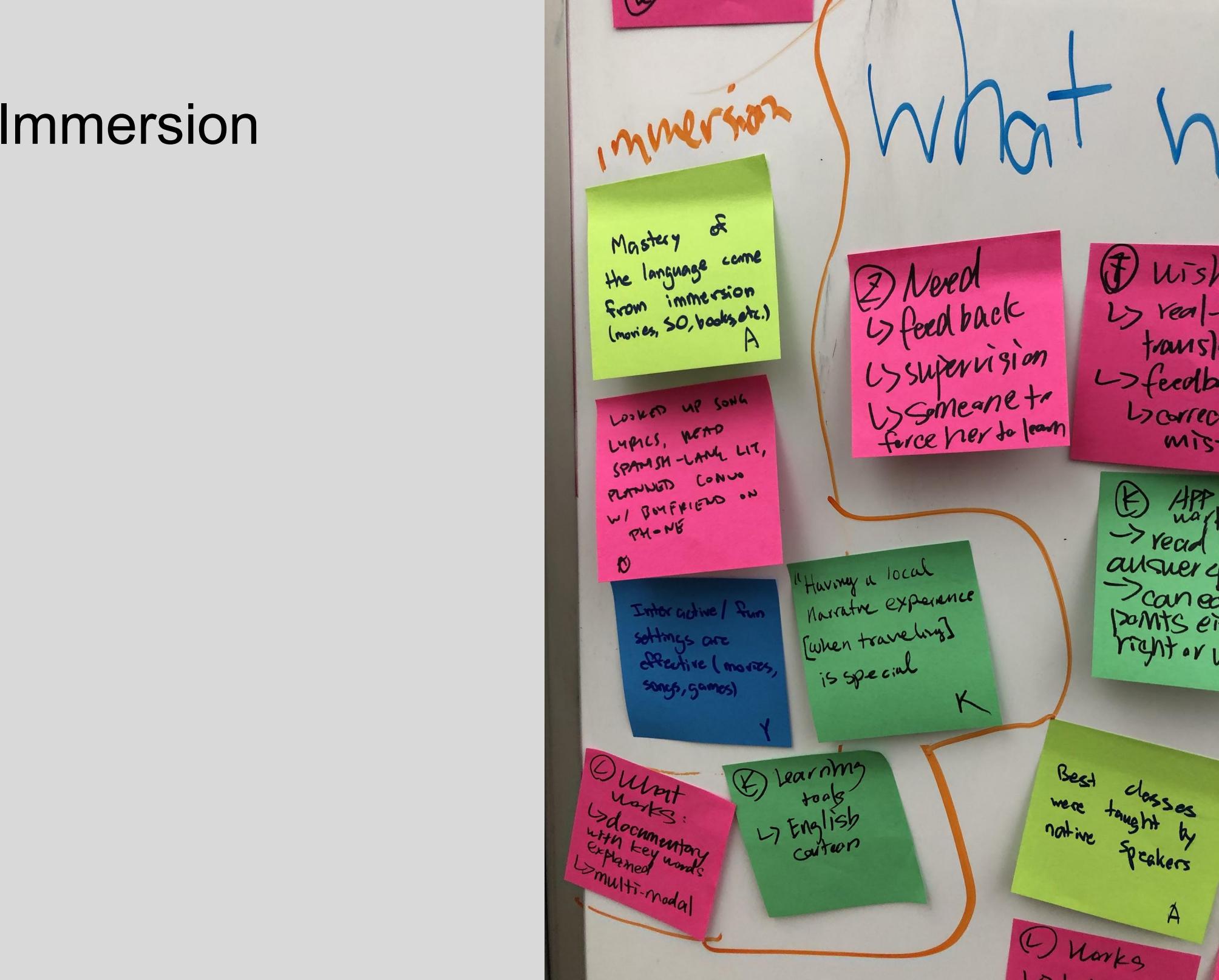
# Intrinsic Motivations



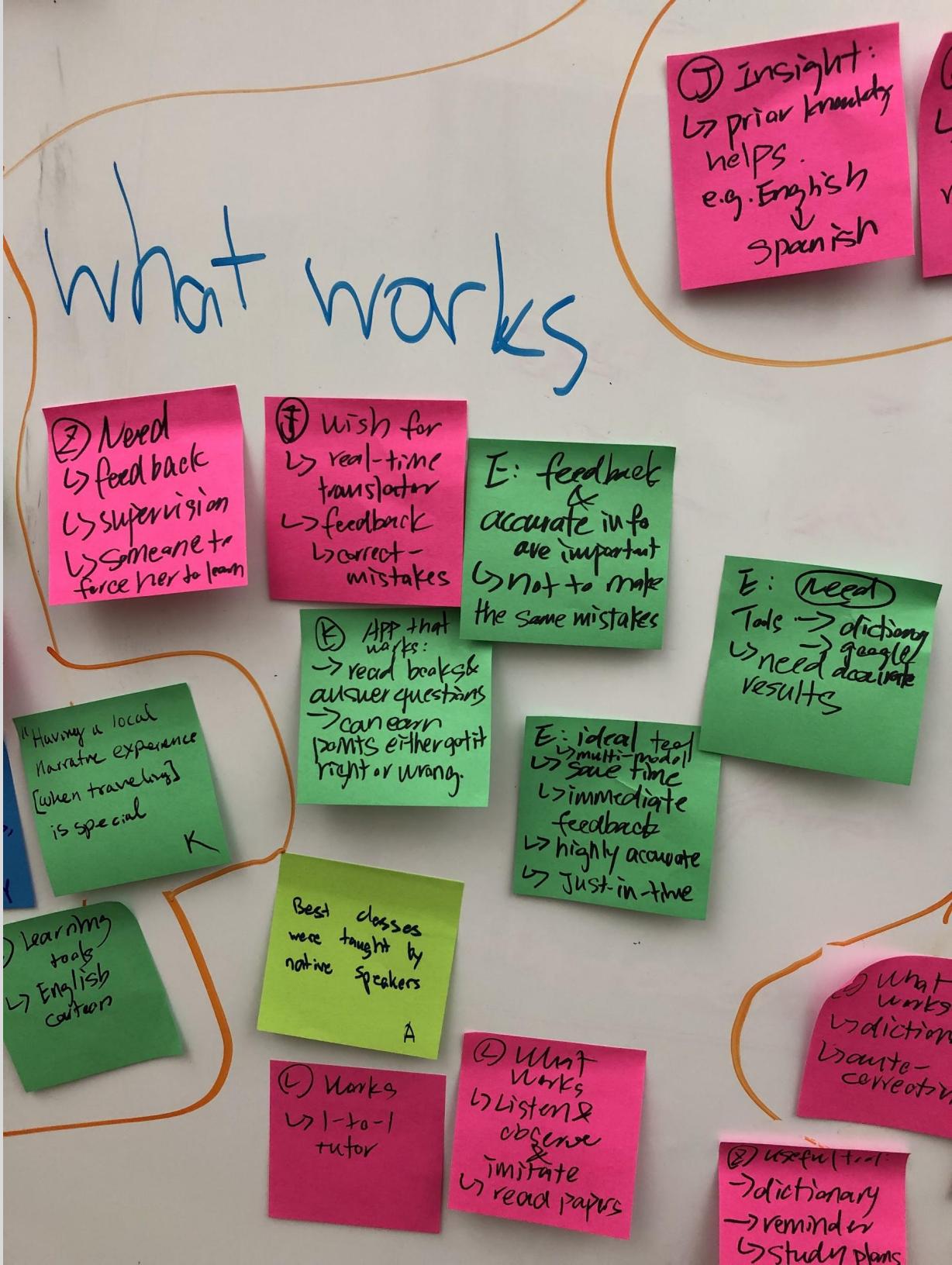
# Extrinsic Motivations



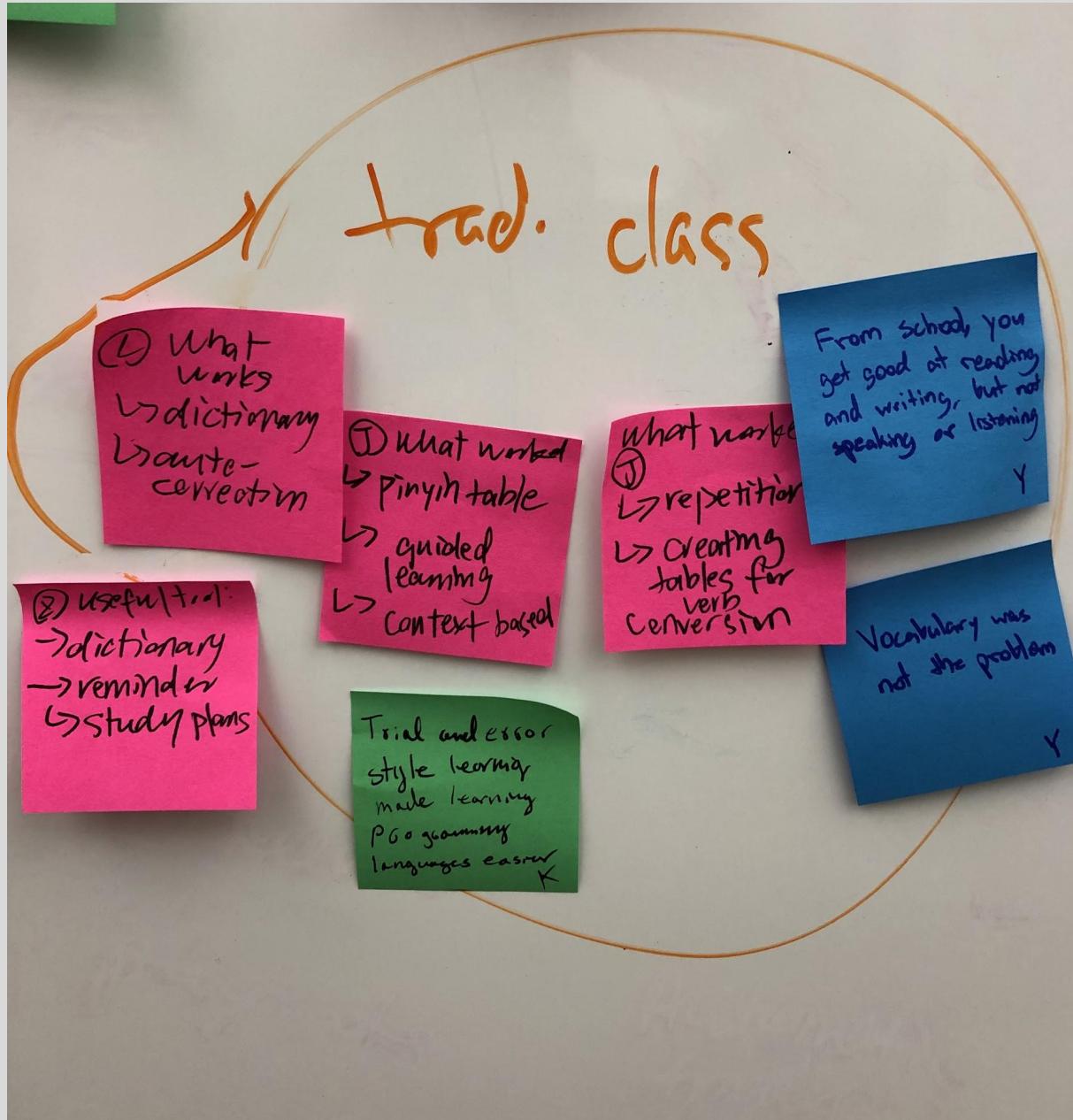
# Immersion



# What works



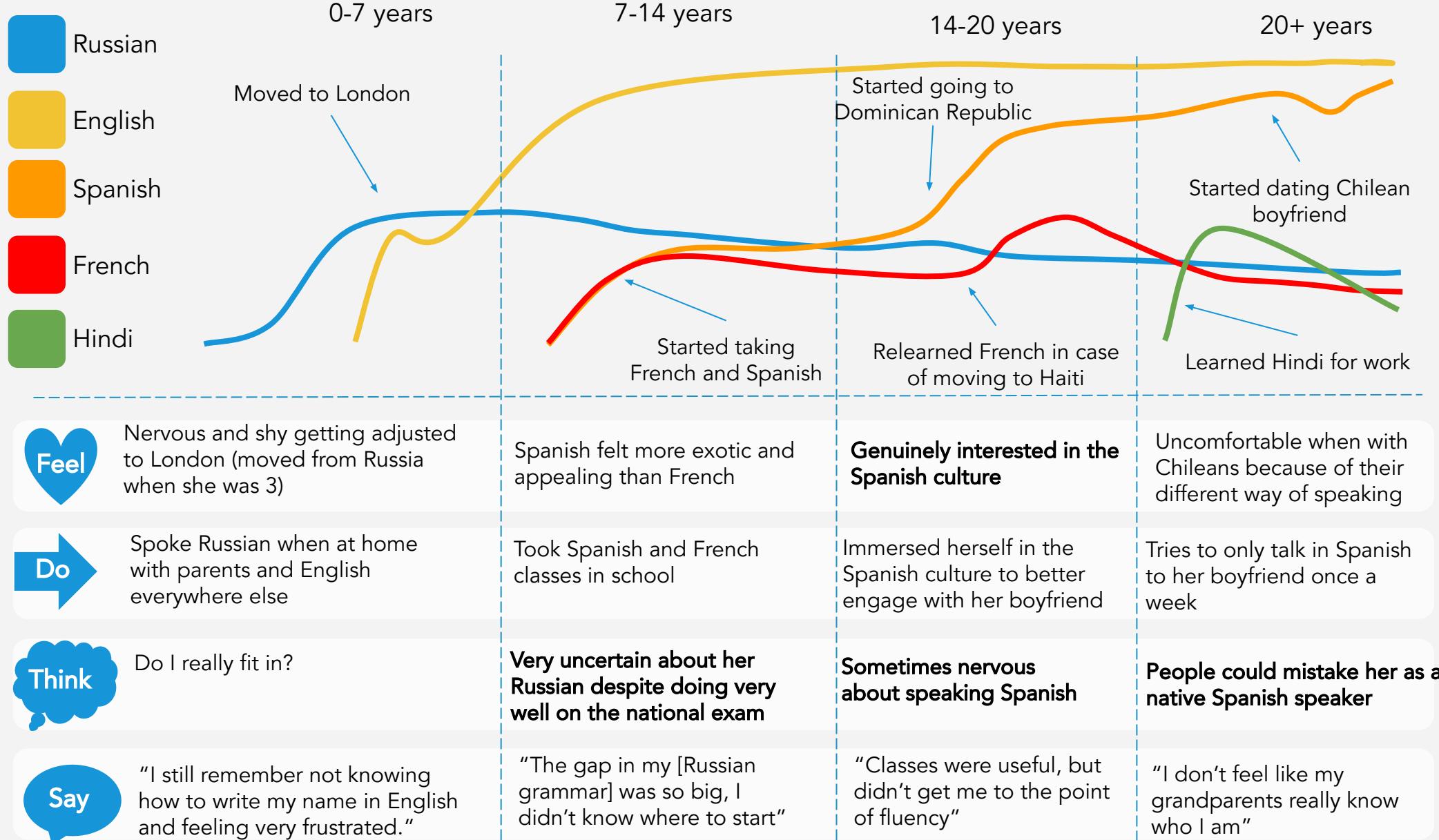
# Traditional Class/Teaching





# Anna's Language Learning Journey

Successful learner



## Key Insights



The best classes were taught by native speakers

True mastery of Spanish came from full immersion

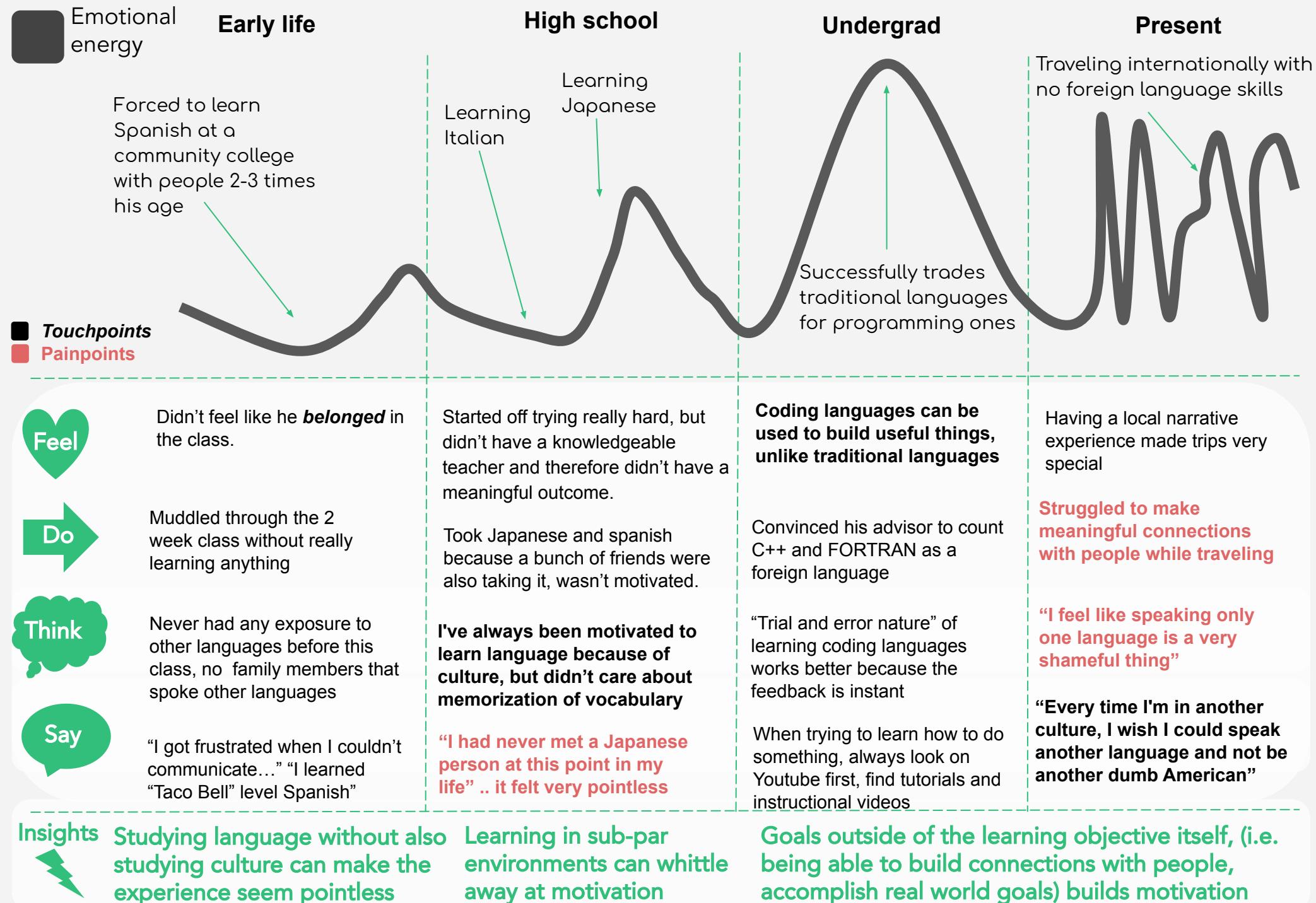
Using a language in real world settings is very engaging



# Klint's Language Learning Journey

Unsuccessful learner

"I am very monolingual"



## Say

"When I was at school, there is no motivation ... I was a good student and did all the homework"

"If I can immediately ask someone, then AI might be better (24/7)"

"The solutions now are not very individualized. What you learn is not very specific ... teachers are expensive and you have to find a match"

"I don't trust chatbot's results."

"I need an instant opportunity to check where the result came from ... if it is accurate... if native speakers use it that way... I want to see the back-end"

I think it is useful to "see how words are written ... shape content to things that are relevant to my own life"

"I'm not afraid but I am conscious about my mistakes."

## Think

Had difficulty talking in English during college.

Her writing is much better than her speaking.

Individualized learning is important but it could be hard to find a teacher that's a good match.

Things about learning technology that are important to her: 1) accuracy 2) just-in-time help 3) task-relevant 4) less time consuming (ranked in order of importance )

She doesn't like making the same mistakes. It is important for her to double check English uses to prevent making new mistakes.

Using multiple modalities and having context are important in language learning.

It is not scary to talk to people in English.

## Do

Always try to avoid learning the wrong things and double check using different sources to prevent mistakes.

Use Google to search English phrases and over time learned to use the number of search results from Google and Google book to tell accurate uses from misleading uses.

Use Google book to check Grammar.

Showed disbelief when talking about current solution in language learning.

## Feel

Feeling cautious when learning new English phrases.

Feeling annoyed about misleading uses that's available online and the possibility of learning the wrong things.

Hate making the same mistakes and developing

Feeling distrust about technology.

## Say

"I thought it [Spanish] might be practical to know; it is also a popular language to learn in High school. I didn't know anyone who speaks Chinese and French. I don't have people to speak them but I can talk to friends in Spanish. I don't know what's the point of learning if I don't use it"

"I was pretty good at it, but I don't use it anymore ... It should be easy to pick it up and learn ... it's intuitive"

"It's [spanish] Latin based root and feels it's similar to English. I can predict the meaning by the sound of the words. Verse Chinese, I have no ideas because there is no correlation ..."

"I like the online pinyin table ... It makes it easier for an English speaker to understand the scope of the sounds, to pronounce words and recognize what's Chinese"

"I can just open the app and decide I want to learn about the weather today"

## Do

Spoke to Mexicans in San Diego in Spanish. "They laughed but I didn't care because I think I understand it. I don't need someone to tell me I'm good or not, unless I know I'm struggling with it."

Spoke in Spanish and imitated how his teacher gave instructions in their Spanish class to show me his Spanish level and how he learned Spanish in class.

Acknowledged that his Chinses level is "ultra-beginner"

Acknowledged that he is learning Chinese for a girl that he met and for preventing Alzheimer's as he've heard learning another language is a prevention.

Showed confusion when talking about Chinese sentence structures. Tried to make up a Chinese sentence and expected me to correct him and show him the right way to say it.

Spoke a few Chinese words to give me some examples of words that cannot be translated into English.

## Think

Language learning takes both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. His motivations are all for practical reasons.

Having someone to practice a language is essential in learning the language.

Prior knowledge of English helped him learn Spanish. It should be easy for him to pick up Spanish again.

Language one speaks shape how one thinks.

Learning different Spanish tenses is difficult.

It's challenging to grasp Chinese sentence structures.

The Chinese learning app made learning more accessible - reduce mental effort, motivational and psychological barriers.

## Feel

Feeling confident in his Spanish and metacognition (i.e., awareness of his Spanish skill).

Feeling confident about his Spanish speaking.

Feels it's okay that his is a beginner now, and there is nothing to be ashamed of.

Feeling confident that he can improve his Chinese.

Feeling it's okay to acknolwedge his highly practical reasons for learning new languages.

Feeling confused about Chinese sentence structure but showing interests in learning it.

Feeling confused about some Chinese words but trying to make sense of them.

# Insights, Contradictions, Surprises

- Need for a strong purpose to successfully learn a language, but intrinsic and extrinsic motivators can both be effective
  - For learning English, extrinsic
  - For learning non-English (native English speaker), intrinsic
- Language as a potential source of shame: failing to speak a heritage language well, not being able to communicate in a foreign language
  - “I don’t feel like my grandparents really know who I am” -- Anna
  - “I feel a lot of shame about only speaking one language” -- Clint
- Can be embarrassing to make mistakes or fail in communicating (especially speaking), so may avoid opportunities despite interest
- Desire to be able to speak a language but not putting in efforts to learn
- Different self-presentation depending on the language, able to explore different facets of self