361-105

Understanding Learning & Teaching

May 1st - May 5th

Aren Tyr

61503641027

Organisation / Table of Contents

- The various tasks have been colour coded and organised by a tab down the left-hand part of the slide as follows. Each section is also individually numbered.
- Click on the section links below to jump straight to the corresponding slide when in slide-show mode:

Task	Section	Slide Number	Colour
1	Your beliefs	3	
2	Teaching-Learning Propositions	25	
3	Language Acquisition (An Integrated View of SLA)	40	
4	Error – Windows on Learning	50	
5	Video Observation 1: Teacher Focus – Trinity	68	
6	Action Research	74	
7	Lesson Reflection	84	
8a	'The Chairy Tale'	95	
8b	Video Observation 2: Student Focus – CELTA	99	
9	DIY Video Observation (Student Focus)	106	
-	Action Reflection/Self Reflection	117	

Task 1 – Stating your beliefs

- Questions:
  - 1. What are your beliefs, specifically for you?
  - 2. What are the top 5?
  - 3. What are the key problems?
  - 4. What can you do about these?

1. What are your beliefs, specifically for you?

In a very real sense, I believe that no one can 'teach' us anything: we can only 'teach' ourselves. Knowledge, let alone wisdom, can only be acquired through one's own labour; it is only by thinking and reflecting deeply upon something can you come to a truly meaningful understanding about something.

Does this mean that I believe that the act of 'teaching' itself is a failed enterprise from the outset? Not at all.

The teacher is the facilitator; to use an undoubtedly clichéd metaphor, the teacher is rather like a mountain guide that offers to lead and direct you up the mountainside. However, each step in this learning journey must be put in by the individual. This imagery, or variations therefore, I believe, is fairly commonplace in Chinese proverbs and Eastern philosophical and spiritual systems.

More pragmatically speaking, you can only really 'learn' something by integrating it into your own existing knowledge, and by relating it your own personal experiences. Without this step, whatever is retained remains purely abstract at best, and is likely to be forgotten fairly easily. The metaphor is also useful, in my opinion, for highlighting the fact that learning is a *process* rather than simply a 'destination' or end-point. Without

debating cosmology, the universe (or multi-verse) is effectively infinite in scale, and therefore it follows that potential knowledge is also effectively infinite. Any current understanding is therefore necessarily incomplete. When you arrive at the mountaintop, instead of arriving at the peak, you realise you have simply arrived a plateau, and in the distance you can now see some further higher peaks.

Everything you hold true should be amenable to revision in light of superior understanding. This is not making a case for relativism; simply to enshrine one principle, if we enshrine any at all, namely, 'avoid dogmatism'. Keep an open mind.

2. What are the top 5?

a) Excessive standardisation is a liability as much as a benefit

All reasonably developed countries across the world have pushed towards the development of a their own respective mass standardised education systems with a common model (or set of models) covering the curriculum and assessment of set subjects. Accordingly there has also been a drive to begin to standardise education globally; this has already been achieved to some extent in the realms of higher education, with degrees and various post-graduate qualifications being broadly equivalent. Such standardisation is useful in terms of acting as a generalised yardstick for establishing a person's general level of educational achievement, and more tentatively, some reflection of their overall cognitive ability. In effect, it gives us a common platform.

However, the 'mass production' of education has the same weaknesses as mass-produced consumer goods: there is limited scope for individuation, and unlike a consumer product, an enforced regime of standardisation means that all those who do not fit into mainstream education (for whatever reason; there are far too many possible reasons to detail here, they would furnish material for a book in itself!) are effectively excluded. Gravely, in a world where critical thinking, *innovation*, and ingenuity are in short supply (especially relative to the global problems we face), by excluding 'outliers' we are likely excluding many individuals who could well have the potential solutions were they given an opportunity to develop and present their views. Whether they now go on to utilise their innate potential is now firmly left to their own enterprise. A more flexible and fluid model of education would perhaps hold the key to retaining and maximising such intellectual talent.

b) Critical thinking is the most vital *need* that education must address

There is a huge amount of material on "21st Century Skills", but I really believe that almost all of it can be condensed down to one overriding concern: the need for critical thinking, directed inwards as much as outwards. Essentially, critical thinking is the engine behind all other skills/knowledge acquisition. Critical thinking concerns a threefold question: What do I need to know, how do I go about knowing it, and how do I know that I do in fact know it?

Essentially, one can describe critical thinking as a 'meta-cognitive' skill, Most importantly of all, it is one of the only defences we have to avoid fundamentalism and dogmatism.

Critical thinking is of equal value to a would-be political rights activist as it is a prospective motorbike mechanic. If Sally wants to become a motorbike mechanic, critical thinking skills will enable her to:

a) Research what the professional/industrial requirements that need to be met in her country in terms of either training of qualifications
b) Determine where, how, and who with that she can be trained
c) Determine what expenditure, time requirement, and other life commitments are likely to be required
d) Accelerate her learning by familiarising herself with technical literature
e) Safeguard her future by being able to continuously develop (e.g. For when combustion engines get replaced with electrical motors with different servicing requirements, or batteries get replaced with salt-ion cells, etc.)

Meanwhile, for Jack the would-be political rights activist, he will have many cognitive decisions right at the outset.

a) In which field or topic do they want to want to pursue their political activism?
b) Which organisation, business, charity, or community will provide them with the necessary platform?
c) How will they go about generating interest in their cause?
d) What material will they construct and propagate, and via what means?

If Jack is to become a responsible activist (which is what we would hope for!), that brings many other second order requirements, all of which place huge demands on critical thinking skills. Just about every single controversial topic often has many complex dimensions. These multifaceted arguments all need to be sifted through, their cogency and evidence evaluated, and some operative conclusions drawn. Policies that are crafted then need deep consideration in order to ensure that they actually will help achieve the intended goals. There then needs to be extensive thought given to how these complex issues can be meaningfully communicated to the public at large.

And so on. All of the steps described above could be expanded with at least one hundred further sub-steps. The general point I am making is that an individual who can critically think is permanently adaptable, and has the capacity to constantly evaluate new information and adjust their decisions accordingly. All of us should be students for life; there is always more to be learned. If you have the capacity for critical thinking, you have the capacity to learn, to teach yourself, to revise your thoughts and opinions in the light of new knowledge and experience, and in your encounters with others.

But the very first step on that process is to teach people *how to think for themselves.* Education **must** teach people *how* to **think** above and beyond all else.

c) Education suffers from a testing tyranny

This general point is intimately related to **a)**, on the mass enforced standardisation of education. In a nutshell: we live in a culture obsessed with testing and assessing rather than teaching. The dangerous precedent this sets is that all learning becomes entirely exam or test-orientated, with material only learned to the extent that it can be programmatically deployed to suitable effect in the exam situation, rather than being learned for the intrinsic value or meaning that the subject matter should contain. In its most insidious form, this leads to an extremely superficial, shallow, 'rote' form of learning where material can be regurgitated in a formulaic manner that is appropriate the highly specific test conditions, but is of absolutely no use in the wider context of the real world and is not reflected with any real deep understanding of the subject matter (or indeed anything!) in question.

Many critics would rightly object that such a regime also tends to enforce conformity and a dangerous lack of depth to one's own learning. As the proverb goes, a small amount of knowledge can be dangerous...

On an emotional level, it can destroy the love of learning, of new knowledge, of development, and leave individuals jaded, where even the sight of a book repels them as they simply associate it with a set of exams and profound boredom. Boredom is the inevitable result when learning becomes divorced from one's inner core, and simply becomes mindless memorisation.

d) Literacy is the key to solving many problems in the world today

This phrase sounds hackneyed and cheap, but the fact of the matter is that it is largely true. Without literacy, a person's options are severely limited in the modern world as it will effect nearly every dimension of their life. Very few people live a nomadic life or live in a completely isolated manner free from technology today, even in relatively poor countries. By the term 'literacy' here, I therefore include numeracy and basic IT skills as well as language.

Literacy is a 'gateway' or foundation requirement for the vast majority of other higher-order skills. So if we can teach people to become highly literate, their prospects will be better. Literacy is arguably highly intertwined with critical thinking, and many philosophical positions argue for a fundamental identity between language and thinking.

As a teacher, then, we are in a position where we have a great deal of responsibility towards our students. Though they are independent learners, nevertheless, the quality with which we teach could potentially have a drastic effect on the outcomes in their life – hopefully positive if we teach well!

e) Teaching-learning is a bi-directional dynamic

Only a poor teacher stands at the front of the class, lecturing in a totally unresponsive didactic manner to the class. The point here is not that there is anything *automatically* wrong *per se* with the traditional model of a teacher lecturing at the front of the room – in some circumstances it may work well – but rather that they exist in a dynamic with the students, and that this is not a static frozen scenario. So, one needs to be aware and respond to the dynamic accordingly. If a teacher is lecturing with extended talk time and an observation around the room reveals that the vast majority of students are not engaged or paying attention, then some "thinking on your feet" needs to be made. A change in strategy or approach is required. It could be as simple as inviting or directing some questions out to students and eliciting some responses; alternatively, a change in tone, style, topic, or presentation. There are countless options, all of which could still be compatible with the overall lesson plan or syllabus.

Teaching and learning is bidirectional in the true sense that a good teacher should be learning from their students too. Do the questions students ask reveal that I haven't taught the material effectively, or sufficiently, or are they missing critical gaps that I need to fill in first? Perhaps their questions reveal that I do not understand the material quite as well as I thought I did; did their question reveal a true deficiency or weakness in the material? This actually presents an opportunity for a new joint venture of learning!

Appendix 1: A short commentary on my beliefs regarding language teaching specifically

The communicative method responded to the fact that instinctually we tend to acquire our L1 despite very limited formal grammar instruction, and generally speaking, manage to acquire it with a relatively high degree of grammatical accuracy[1] . Certainly in the context of day-to-day interaction, with language used in primarily a mundane functional manner, native speakers to all intents and purposes use their language almost perfectly. Given this fact, it was therefore natural to try an approach that tended to limit the use of formal grammar instruction for L2, certainly compared to the past, with the hope that students would automatically acquire knowledge of the grammar primarily through induction.

All movements have a counter-movement, and in the context of the modern 'testing regime' ,a focus on a classical or traditional grammar-orientated syllabus has re-emerged in the teaching of many second languages across the world.

I personally believe that though grammar is essential, to teach it in an essentially abstract and context-free manner is a large mistake and unlikely to be successful with the vast majority of individuals. Rote-memorisation of

[1] Admittedly this statement is less true if we consider the application of language in more formal or demanding contexts, such as written essays, dissertations, articles, and similar. But my general point is sustained.

vast series of complex explicit grammatical structures does not seem like an efficient methodology for acquiring a language. Language is fundamentally acquired through use. This does not mean we cannot exploit adult learner's conceptual understanding of their own native language grammar to good effect, where appropriate; simply that this should be used as an accessory or complementary strategy, an aide-memoire in effect.

Reflecting on my own personal comprehension of English, like most people of my age/generation, I had limited explicit grammar instruction throughout school. Consequently, when passing my TEFL certification I effectively had to 're-learn' all of the explicit English grammar that I was/am able to use internally with no difficulty. So I should like to think that my employment of English language was 'expert' or C2 standard; yet had I been tasked with certain multiple-choice tests on the subject in a formal setting, I may well have not scored particularly well when tasked with explicitly stating certain grammatical constructs in an 'extrinsic' manner.

This reflects the fact that, in my view, progressing to an expert or advanced level within a language is increasingly driven by *reading* once a certain threshold level has been reached. The relationship between quantity and quality of reading and all other language skills is extremely strong; hence why we associate 'bookish' people with being a clichéd 'intellectual' or 'learned' individual. A formal grammar specification of the entire English language in use, even if possible (and such a specification is likely not),

would at minimum be in the order of many hundreds of pages. Almost no native language speakers would be able to formally regurgitate it, though countless numbers of people could and do use it with almost perfect precision every day.

So my trenchant belief is that we must be especially careful with how we situate the tuition of formal grammar, keep it comparatively limited, and above all, always make it context appropriate. More widely, it needs to be within a cotext based on *practical* use. Our focus should instead be on developing the skills by practice and use for real world tasks.

Reading requires practically no resources (a book, a PC, a phone), and is available for continual practice. A strong push should be on getting students to read engaging native *authentic* texts of quality (rather than just ESL tailored material) that interests them; their language development will then begin on a self-propelling trajectory. If someone has an intrinsic *want* to learn a language for their own interest, that will drive their progress far faster than any other 'sticks' or 'carrots' that the teacher can deploy. This relates to cotext; no one wants to learn a language just to read 'language learning' materials; you want to learn a language so you can engage with the native culture and its products directly.

Appendix 2: A short commentary on my beliefs regarding learning styles specifically

Various misconceptions and misinterpretations are prevalent in education regarding Gardner's 'Multiple Intelligences' theory. As per the YouTube videos, though there is little to no evidence that people have one specific 'learning style', as such, and that to further compound matters, that their pre-conceived self-selected 'style' is actually not more effective, the theory is nevertheless useful when considering the design and selection of materials.

If memory and learning is most stimulated by making *meaningful connections* and by finding *relevance*, then by 'triangulating' difficult material through presenting it different forms, you can facilitate individual learners comprehension. The organisation and delivery of the material could also take into account Bloom's conceptual taxonomy, so the overall structure within which material is leveraged should also be considered. Where possible and suitable, material should have both visual and textual components; if you can add in audio-visual material too, all the better. The adage of a picture is worth a 1000 words holds true. Many academic papers contain a number of diagrams and images to reinforce difficult concepts in the text. Not only does variety minimise the risk of boredom in the classroom, delivering lessons predominantly around individual long-format text reading (for example), is arguably a poor use of lesson time. What value are you adding to the material? If a text is suitable for reading by a student, they can (and should) study it in their own time. Lessons instead could be devoted to various activities extrapolating from material contained in the text.

Lesson time should therefore be spent presenting and organising tasks that make maximal use of the unique classroom resources during that time-window: i.e. The interaction possibilities that the teacher and fellow students offer. In the specific example of a text, for example, if you wanted to directly incorporate that into a lesson, you could choose a small segment or paragraph, get students to read and write notes, then discuss in a group or set-up a debate, etc.

I do think that education still does a comparatively poor job in terms of 'learning skills'. Specifically, there is often an implicit assumption that everyone knows 'how' to take notes. The controversial research on handwritten notes versus computer written notes, for me, is somewhat of a misnomer, because it entirely bypasses what is critically important: *how* to take notes. Instead, the issue is that traditional linear notes (usually coupled with extensive highlighting of a text-book), which is what most people prototypically tend to create, is actually a very poor model. The structure of the notes does not bear any relationship to your *understanding* of the material; instead it just creates a linear-chronological reflection. Yet the purpose of notes is not just to *replicate* the content of the original material in a condensed form; the purpose of notes is to consolidate your understanding and help you memorise all of the critical features. There are many superior methods to do so, but in particular a mind-map, or concept-map, is by far one of the most effective methods. Not only does it allow you to capture the material, it allows you to capture your *understanding of the relationships* existing within the material in a way that is contextually and meaningfully specific *to you*.

On the following slides is my mind-map for this module (in actuality I have more than one for this module, but this is the main one) as an illustrative example. Because the map is so large and zoomed out (to 10%!), you cannot read the text, so I have also shown two small sections at 100% zoom too. The map is perhaps or indeed probably of limited use to anyone except me, but this is actually a strength rather than weakness: the 'notes' are specific to me, and my understanding of the material.

In my view, such visual-associative note-taking is far more effective than linear notes (not to mention far more fun and enjoyable!), and additionally this is where a computer has some real advantages over pen and paper for a technically proficient user. You can make your concept map as large as you want; you make your nodes on your concept map link to any other concept map, creating a web of concept maps; nodes on the concept map can link to individual files or documents on your computer (i.e. papers, e-books, whatever), or be hyperlinks to web material; you can insert images and audio clips into nodes; nodes themselves can contain extensive HTML formatted text. You can easily search for specific nodes or information; you can copy/paste the nodes, or export them into an outline format for editing in a word processor (this is how I write essays/papers). You can even create scriptable actions, or put mathematical calculations directly embedded into the map. Tools exist to extract annotations and highlights from a PDF paper/e-book which you can then insert into the map. Etc. There are an incredible number of options. (I use Freeplane, which is free GPL licensed software, so no cost attached).

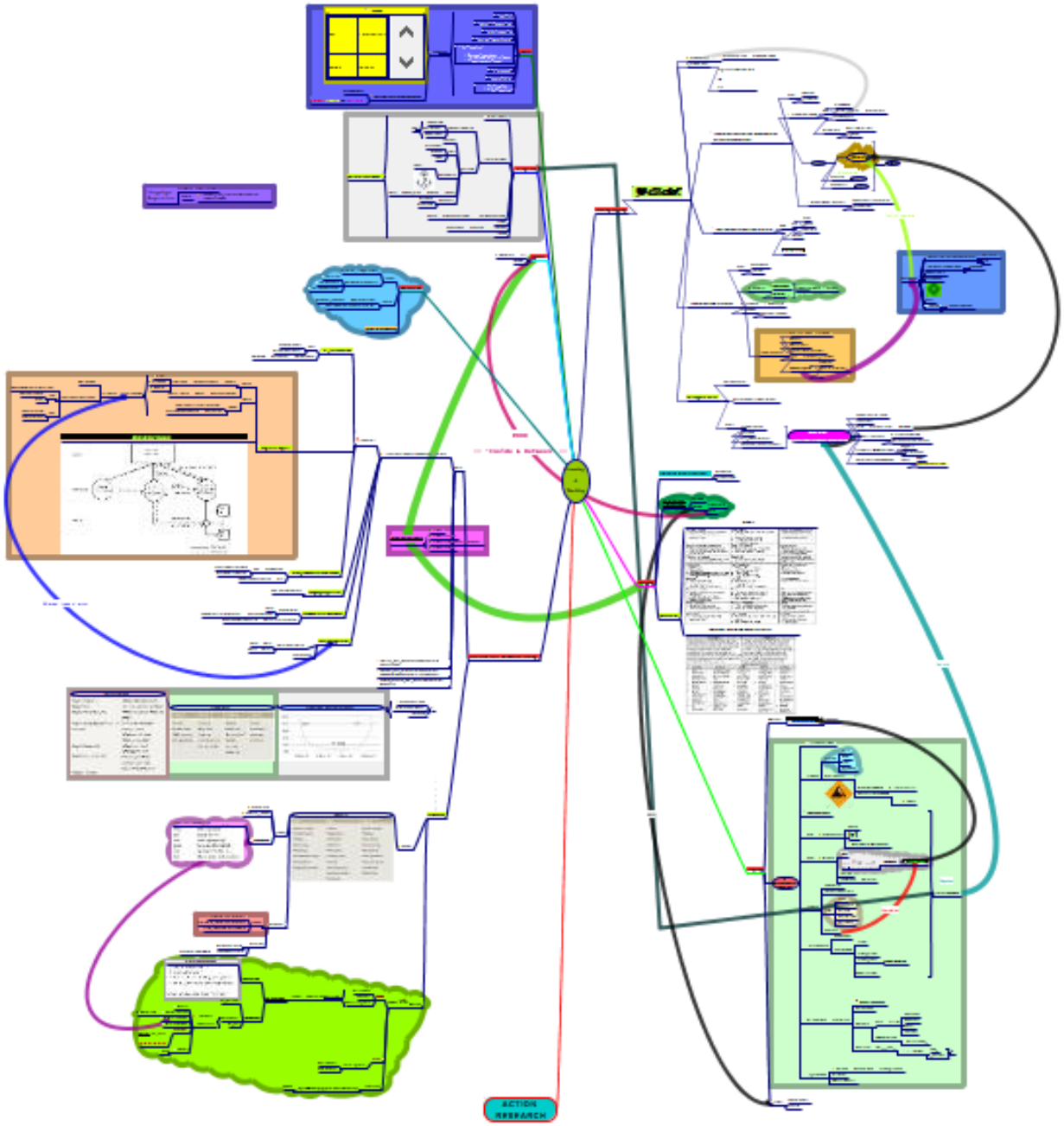
So yes, it may be the case that handwritten notes facilitate memory better than the same plain notes written in Microsoft Word; however, I would argue that both are not taking advantage of the unique possibilities that the 21st century offers in terms of superior cognitive tools on your computer/tablet.

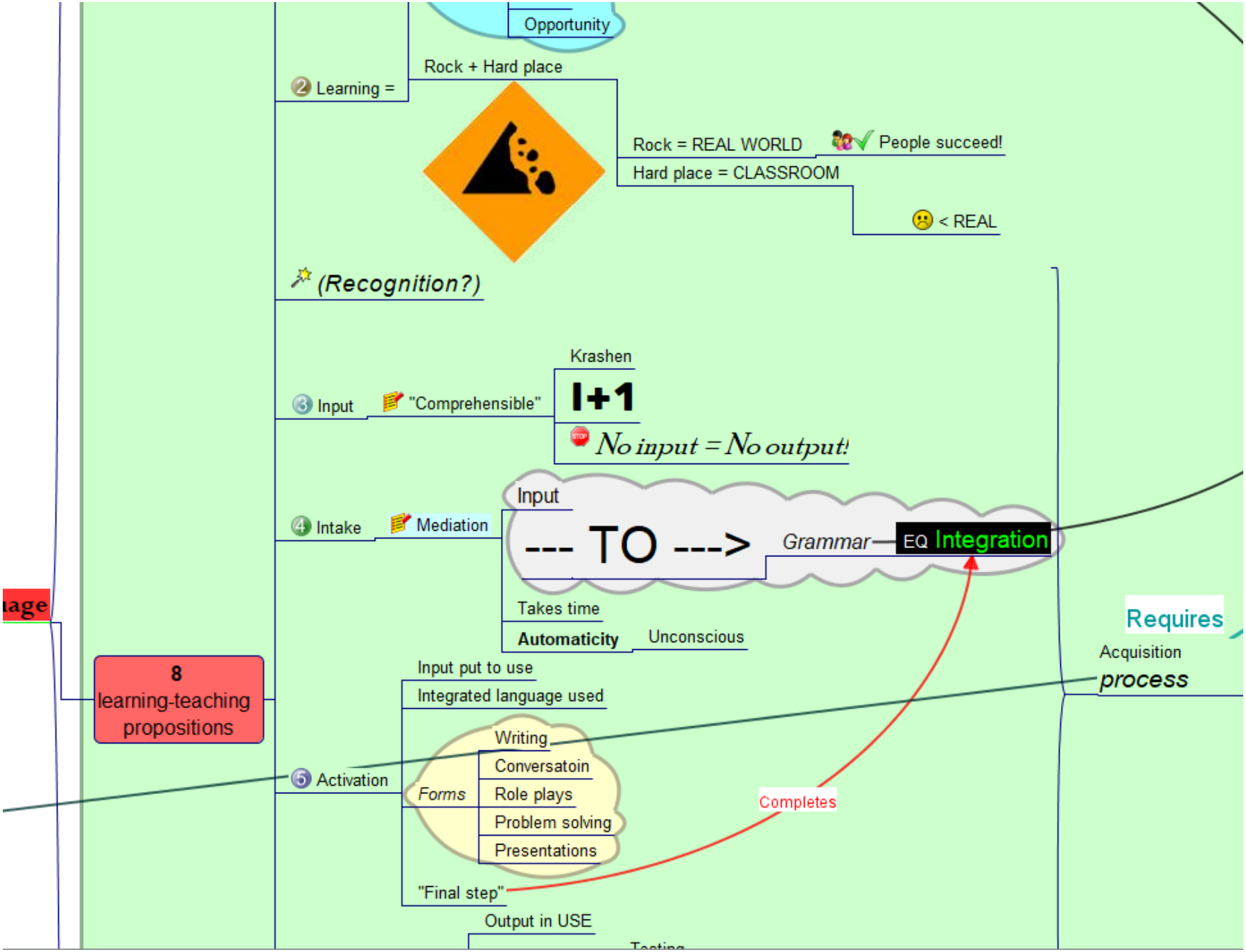
Meanwhile, countless other software tools exist to create argument maps and visualise data and information in all sorts of useful and powerful ways; we need to give students a skill-set to take advantage of some of these tools and find what works for them, rather than just basic 'office' software alone. Some students may find that the minimalist setup of a pen and notepad is still their preferred choice; in which case there are still dozens of options in terms of how you capture the material; your use of diagrams, drawings, arrows, colours, and other ways of note-taking rather than just rewriting chunks of the original material verbatim.

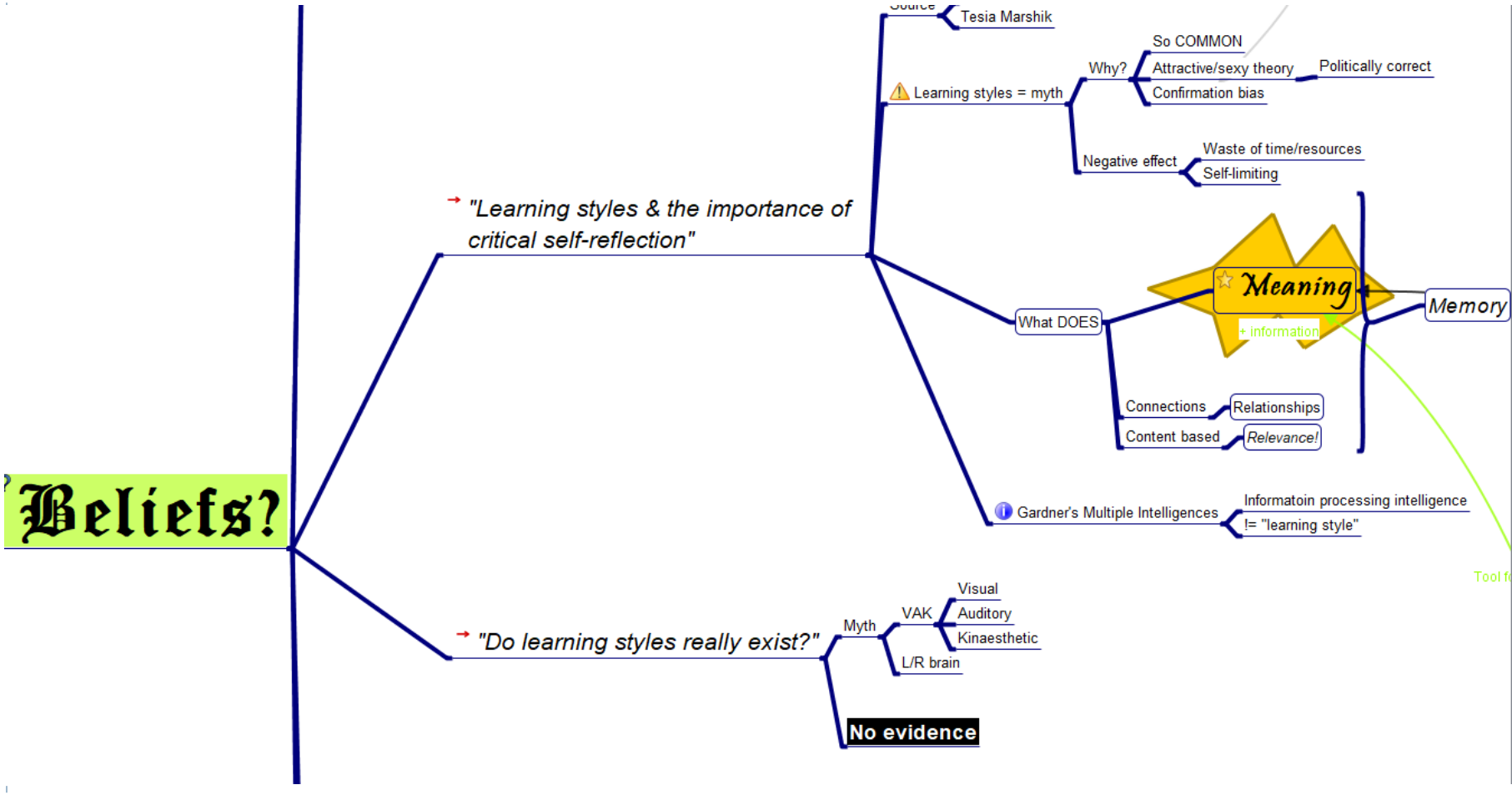
Finally, pen & paper and computers are not mutually exclusive; it is now very easy to combine both into one integrated note-taking system, and in fact there are many bespoke tools on the market that allow you to digitise handwritten notes. Otherwise, anyone with a reasonable camera on their phone can easily do so, combined with various software.

The point I am making is that I feel that research and proactive intervention into the key skill-set of 'learning *how* to learn' together with the use of software tools to augment learning has in my opinion received still scant attention in most schools and education systems, Yet it should be one of the first areas we teach students, and keep revisiting as their cognitive and critical thinking skills develop.

Meanwhile, I am a conducting my own piece of subjective 'action reflection'. I am about to start three weeks of intensive Thai lessons (4 hours per day), and I am going to see whether extensively mind-mapping everything on a daily basis as part of the learning process is specifically effective for second language learning, particularly in terms of *memorising* the hundreds (or indeed thousands) of words required for language acquisition. I have never tried this explicitly before...




Opportunity
2 Learning =
Rock + Hard place
Rock = REAL WORLD
People succeed!
Hard place = CLASSROOM
< REAL
(Recognition?)
Krashen
3 Input
"Comprehensible"
I+1
No input = No output!
Input
4 Intake
Mediation
--- TO --->
Grammar
EQ Integration
Takes time
Automaticity
Unconscious
Requires
Acquisition
process
8
learning-teaching
propositions
Input put to use
Integrated language used
5 Activation
Forms
Writing
Conversatoin
Role plays
Problem solving
Presentations
Completes
"Final step"
Output in USE


Beliefs?
"Learning styles & the importance of critical self-reflection"
Tesia Marshik
Learning styles = myth
Why?
So COMMON
Attractive/sexy theory
Politically correct
Confirmation bias
Negative effect
Waste of time/resources
Self-limiting
What DOES
Meaning
+ information
Memory
Connections
Relationships
Content based
Relevance!
Gardner's Multiple Intelligences
Informatoin processing intelligence
!= "learning style"
"Do learning styles really exist?"
Myth
VAK
Visual
Auditory
Kinaesthetic
L/R brain
No evidence

3. What are the key problems?

A lot of the key problems with education are intimately tied into our political-social-economic system, so addressing them is far from straightforward as it requires a concerted effort on a number of fronts that is likely to be a generational battle.

Where education and financial interests inevitably intersect, separating education from some of the toxic effects of these vested financial interests is likely to prove exceptionally difficult; e.g. The excessive testing regime that afflicts virtually all modern education systems is intimately tied into the profitability that the entire 'testing industry' yields; test providers, with official licenses for textbooks, previous test papers and example questions, training centres for invigilators and trainers, private language schools, profits related to testing centres and premises, tuition and teaching fees, the list goes on…

We need to task learners with taking a more proactive approach to their own learning. As teachers, we can provide a learning situation and supply appropriate materials, in other words setup the facilitation of learning. But the actual learning requires the individual to empower themselves to find ways to actually learn what is being taught. We therefore need to address learning skills more directly as a prerequisite, in my view. This perhaps brings a conflict with the standardisation problem of education, where its

excessive preponderance with prescription can be a big problem. The difficulty is with finding an appropriate balance between learner-led learning, this bottom-up constructivism, with the needs to present material in a more didactic top-down manner according to a set syllabus.

I do not have enough classroom (i.e. any!) experience to comment on my specific experience of language teaching within a classroom, but the basic problem of a poverty of input seems to be a difficult one to overcome. If a student is only receiving 2-3 hours of English lessons per week, and if they are only actually exposed to English language for, say, 70% of that actual lesson time, then in effect they are only receiving two hours of language input per week, plus whatever they might choose to do at home. Contrast this with someone born in an English language country; by the age of 5 they will have been exposed to tens of thousands of hours of input. Even if a large proportion of this is not 'comprehensible', it is likely they will still have received many thousands of hours that *is* comprehensible. This alone accounts for the apparent massive discrepancy in second language learners making what seems to be 'slow' progress: learning a language requires a lot of time, input, and effort (both reception **and** production). Most second language learners, English or otherwise, simply do not receive enough to get to a high level of proficiency.

4. What can you do about these?

What we can do, then, is maximise students exposure to English language within the classroom in the time that we have, and try as best as we can to encourage them to receive as much exposure to level-appropriate material outside the classroom in their own time.

In terms of standardisation and the testing obsession, this needs to develop in sync with changes at a socio-economic and cultural level. In more practical terms, we can always try to keep learners engaged with the material and try not to let the testing regime 'kill off' their innate learning desire and motivation for self-improvement.

Task 2 – Teaching-Learning Propositions

- A commentary on 8 Teaching-Learning Propositions:

1. Teaching does not cause learning
2. Learning is the result of natural curiosity
3. Comprehensible input
4. Input to *intake*
5. Activation – Integration (G&S)
6. Socialization & Scaffolding
7. Teaching-Learning: A slippery slope
8. The connection between Teaching and Learning

1. Teaching does not cause learning

"Whether and to what extent our students see the tasks we set for them as opportunities for learning and use them accordingly is beyond our control... we know that teaching does not cause learning, but we must act as if it does." (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

This whole passage to me seems to be too defeatist. Whilst it is true that we cannot control the agency of the learner, and that they are an autonomous individual, we can nevertheless help them to see *why* the tasks we set them *might* be useful to *them* as opportunities for learning.

Someone is unlikely to be motivated to learn something if they cannot see the purpose of learning it. The teacher, then, needs to ensure that whenever they present new material, they also take pains to explain *why* we are presenting and teaching it, and for what use it will be to the students. Everything should have a context, and this context should be seated within a larger cotext that is comprehensible to the student.

There may be occasions, unfortunately, where the apparent use or purpose of particular material is for no real use *other* than simply that it is required for an exam or is for whatever reason a non-negotiable component of the syllabus, but is otherwise of limited value and/or interest. If that is the case, honesty is the best policy: explain that students will still need to learn this because it will come up in the exam. Explaining that this is unfortunately the pragmatic reality of

the 'real' world may also help, in some instances. Sometimes life presents us with essentially bureaucratic requirements that are unavoidable. Such is life.

Again, whilst it is true we cannot *force* students to use the learning opportunities we present (*a la* the 'chairy tale'), we surely must have some influence of how well we can *motivate* them to use them. Or are we powerless and impotent as teachers in this learning-teaching relationship?

Anecdotal experience and 'evidence' suggests otherwise. Almost everyone can remember at least one teacher in school they thought was brilliant, who single-handedly made a difference in terms of making a subject they initially thought to be boring and dull come 'alive'. Conversely, the same subject, different year and teacher, and once again they were struggling with motivation and interest.

Learning and teaching is an interplay of these two factors, and to suggest that the teacher has no real meaningful input on the learning side of the equation is almost to suggest that teaching is an entirely failed enterprise from the start. The teacher most certainly can have an *affect* on the learning outcome; and this component *is* within *our* control. If the student chooses ultimately to squander or not make use of it, that, at the end of the day, is entirely their right and prerogative as a human being free to make their own choices and decisions in life.

Essentially, each classroom of teacher and students is unique, and that relationship is a new one that must be *built* and *developed* from scratch over the length of the course, semester, or year. The teacher must be proactive in this.

"...we have pointed to the fact that there are many miles to be travelled between the input the learner receives and what the learner produces. We cannot assume that with the mere presentation of language information, whether implicitly or explicitly, learners will necessarily convert it to output." (Gass & Selinker, 2001).

This statement is almost certainly overwhelmingly true. What is the best testimony to this? The fact that almost all of us can cite an example (typically a native English language speaker) who has lived abroad in a non-English language country for many years, sometimes even decades, and yet still cannot barely speak a sentence in the native language.

Yet is almost impossible that they were not 'presented' with a significant amount of language; it is likely they were being exposed to the native language on a daily basis, even if they chose to live in an small English diaspora/enclave.

The other rather mundane testimony to the truism of this statement is the fact that if mere *presentation* were sufficient, then almost all English language learners would have a good degree of proficiency by the time they leave school. Given the amount of English language tuition across education systems throughout the world, there should be very considerably more reasonably proficient English language speakers than there actually are. So mere presentation is never enough; unless someone engages with the material, any memorisation that does occur will be shallow rote-learning at best, quickly to be discarded and forgotten by your brain's internal heuristics as useless information of no practicable value or interest to you once the exam has passed (assuming you did even pass it in the first place!).

2. Learning is the result of natural curiosity

How shall we describe curiosity? On one level, we could cite it as an innate human drive; all children are naturally curious, as any parent knows all too well having discovered that the child has eaten/destroyed/drawn upon or otherwise conducted some type of natural experiment on whatever substance or object in question. On another, we could describe it in terms of wants and needs, or in a negative sense, in terms of addressing their *lacks* and the opportunities that are presented to them.

Need and want should really be distinguished; a *want* almost certainly implies some degree of *intrinsic* motivation; someone wants to learn something because, for whatever reason, they ascribe some real value to its acquisition. This does not necessarily mean that in practice they put in the *application* and effort necessary; I have a *want* to learn to play an instrument, but in reality the want is insufficiently strong to keep me persisting with sustained practice. A need is more vital, and usually implies a lack of choice. Whether or not a 'need' is *sufficient* to make up for a lack of intrinsic motivation is debateable; it probably depends on the personality of the individual. Many people certainly successfully learn something to the extent and purpose for which they *need* it; e.g. they may develop English language skills sufficiently within a specific context of passing an IELTS or whatever. Wants and intrinsic motivation combine in *curiosity*; if that is then coupled with a real need, then there is a strong platform to maximise the chance of successful learning.

Curiosity is certainly an enabler for learning. I think the missing elements are effort and direction. Effort is an internal commitment to oneself to persevere through difficulty and complete what needs to be done. Since people are curious towards what naturally interests them, sometimes a lot of the 'effort' will be minimised. Sooner or later though, specific 'effort' will be required as it is unlikely that someone is 100% interested in *every single specific facet* of whatever it is they are concerned with. Direction is required in order to channel that curiosity and effort, else the learning that occurs is so diffuse that it may be difficult to apply or relate it to anything. Curiosity *alone* is probably insufficient.

If someone has no *want* or desire to learn a language, there is little we can except to try to stimulate their interest. If they *need* to learn a language, we have something to work with; in which case as teachers we need to ensure that the context and focus for our teaching is relevant to their needs. Hopefully though, they will want to learn a language and will have at least some intrinsic motivation to do so. We need to tap into that curiosity and navigate the treacherous seas between the 'rock' – namely that people can and do successfully learn languages without formal instruction – and the 'hard place', that our classroom is always limited by comparison with the real world environment in which the language is used. This navigation requires that we are attentive to their needs as learners, whilst also making the classroom replicate the real-world use of the target language as closely as

possible. When we say 'teach English', the immediate question should be, 'which English?'. The 'English' required for working at a hotel reception counter is rather different from that required to write academic essays on Marine Biology. Given that we already have limited time constraints (we don't have 10,000 hours available to teach them all aspects of English language exhaustively), it is therefore crucial to adapt our tuition as best as we can given our classroom and syllabus constraints to make it useful and above all as meaningful as we can for *them*.

3. Learning is the result of comprehensible input

If we state that the learner's level of language acquisition is *I*, then according to Krashen, the maximum level of 'comprehensible' input can be loosely described as *I+1* where the +1 reflects the fact that it is one level above their current level. How well this maps onto models such as the CEFR framework in practice I leave as an open question. Nevertheless, the basic principle is fairly straightforward: expose the students to a level of language that is always just slightly above their current level. This principle is effectively the equivalent of the physical training principle known as the principle of 'overload'; to get stronger, we subject our muscles to a manageable 'overload'; a load that can lift, but only just. Then, given sufficient recovery and adaptation time, the muscles and organs get stronger. Here, given an 'overload' input of slightly more difficult language, the learner can intuit the

and deduce the meaning of a lot of the unknown words based on the defined context and supporting cues, together with their growing awareness of the language's grammar. Explicit learning of unknown vocabulary can 'fill' in those gaps, and meanwhile the new or more advanced grammatical structures they are struggling with will slowly become more comprehensible with exposure.

We can say that in order to write better, one should not just write more, but also read more, particularly texts of increasing linguistic complexity; exposure to the manifest means of constructing sentences, together with almost guaranteed deluge of new words will help to improve both the structure and content of your own writing.

In short, the language input needs to be *challenging*. Not so challenging that they are faced with what is to all intents and purposes a wall of impenetrable written or spoken hieroglyphics with the occasional familiar word; but rather, *mostly* familiar words and structures with just certain structures and words that give them pause for thought and require some real effort and learning to fully understand. In short they need to actually *apply* the following transformation:

$$\mathbf{I_1 = I_0 + 1}$$

where $\mathbf{I_0}$ represents their *current* level of language ability, and $\mathbf{I_1}$ is their *new* resultant level of language ability after the input (**+1**) has been completely processed and *learned*.

A continuous series of relatively small +1 steps should eventually over time lead to a big improvement.

4. *Intake is a necessary condition for learning to become useful*

"Intake refers to the mental activity that mediates between input and grammar and is different from apperception and comprehension as the latter two do not necessarily lead to grammar formation." (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

We know that mere 'input' is not enough, that simply 'presenting' language information does not automatically result in it being learned. We also know that the new 'input' should ideally be at the appropriate level of difficulty, just above their current level but still 'comprehensible'. The conversion process wherein new input is received, understood, and internalised is what happens when we refer to 'intake'. Language becomes intake when the input has been successfully incorporated into the learner's own internal heuristic model of the language they are learning. In simple terms, the input has become something *meaningful* to them, rather than just a set of new abstract symbols.

Intake is a prerequisite for automaticity. Once a language construct has been fully learned it can be deployed without apparent conscious effort; a native English speaker does not have to pause and think deliberatively before every utterance, because they have automaticity over virtually all of the language constructs they need for day to day speech. Such a deliberation would only be necessary for a native language speaker if one was required to deliver an utterance requiring either extreme conceptual difficulty and/or precision, and by this point we are well into the murky philosophical ground regarding the interface between language use and thinking itself (a fascinating digression I shall not explore here). In normal speech, the words are delivered virtually instantaneously, with no conscious awareness of any time 'lag' on the part of either the speaker or listener.

Without intake, then, we have no automaticity. Even where the time lag is not a critical factor (i.e. composing written text), if intake has not occurred the language constructs effectively have no internalised model within the learners brain; they are then simply stuck at the level of replicating the set input examples (i.e. regurgitate the page in the textbook with it to hand), having not sufficiently incorporated it into their own language model in order to be able to use it to produce new, novel sentences or utterances.

5. *Activation* is a necessary component of effective learning

Without *activation,* all the language learning taking place thus far has been passive. There has been no production of language. Activation, then, it the litmus test for whether the language has been learned to the extent that it can be used. It is normal and natural for there to be an asymmetry between receptive and productive skills; many native language speakers will have a much higher receptive skill than they do productive. Many, if not most, well educated English language speakers can come to understand Shakespeare or Dickens; that does not mean that many such people can produce language to the same level (and in fact, very few can, subjective considerations aside).

Notwithstanding this asymmetry, nevertheless, we expect that in order to complete the learning 'cycle' a language learner can use the new construct to produce their own utterances. Certainly, when learning basic language features, there should ideally almost be a one-to-one mapping of input to output, such that having been taught how

read sentences that correspond to the English grammatical form 'past continuous interrupted', and understand what they mean ("I was lying in bed when my alarm clock went off") they can not merely replicate the examples given but produce new utterances that demonstrate understanding of the form ("I was travelling home on the BTS when my mobile phone started ringing"). In doing so, they effectively convert what would otherwise be dry 'abstract' formal understanding into actual concrete language forms that they can then use in day-to-day life.

Without activation, the teacher has almost no way to assess what the learner has actually learnt. Since there always seems to be a time-lag in any learning process (presumably whilst the brain architecture is remodelling neuronal connections or something along those lines), the activation stage may not fully represent the totality of the learner's ability at the time. Nevertheless, it offers a window into the absorption of the language features in terms of the particular individual's own productive language facilities in this new language; for the purposes of testing and assessing, this is what we will have to use as our metric.

It is highly unlikely that this model operates in simple linear model, rather like a pipe, of input to output. Instead, the productive output (particularly in terms of the production of inter-language) serves as fresh material for input, in a form of a autobiographical reflectivity. I make an utterance, as best I can, with my communicative intention; I hear , or indeed know, that it sounds or *is* wrong; I therefore try to make corrections and amendments to my internalised model of the language (this corresponds to the dotted lines between knowledge and output in the Bialysok model of language acquisition). External corrections further reinforce this process.

6. *Social interaction is a critical part of the learning process*

When we encounter language in its social aspect, we are effectively placed in a position where both reception and production are required. One can read or listen privately; in a social interaction, you will almost certainly be required to produce language as well, in order to create conversation or dialogue, or submit written responses or contributions. It is therefore the true test of *activation*, in that rather than an artificial language test, it is language put to use for its intended purpose of communication between human beings.

Such interaction gives you almost instant feedback, particularly in a face to face conversation. The learner will know immediately whether their language production is fit for the task, judging by how well the native language speaker can actually understand them.

In such a interactions scaffolding can occur, even if it is between two language learners. One does not need to produce perfect language to be intelligible; indeed, well before mastery of a language, a learner will produce many degrees of inter-language, yet nevertheless they can still be understood, by and large. The other learners, or even better, teacher/native language speaker, can provide a 'scaffolding' or structure upon which they can help convey their meaning and gently nudge them towards better language production.

1: We go film watch.
2: You would like to go to the cinema and watch a film?
1: Yes watch film at cinema.
2: OK, we will go and watch a film this evening at the cinema.

7. *Teaching-Learning is a slippery slope*

The 'slippery slope' really refers to appropriately selecting the 'size' of the +1 input identified above in 3.), comprehensible input.

There is essentially an ever present trade off: we want to teach *new* language, but in order for us to be understood, we need to use language that is *known* by the students. Therefore one needs to be extremely careful with the amount of *new* language that can be introduced at once, in a given context, yet for it still to remain with the bounds of 'comprehensibility'. The phenomenon of 'undershoot' is when a teacher presents too little new language – in extreme cases, no new language at all – so the learners have no new input to develop from. This obvious seduction of undershooting is that it is superficially satisfying; instead of blank faces of confusion and a room of silence, you have students vigorously participating and offering contributions. So the skill requirement is that we want to present new language, but do so within the bounds of realistic comprehensibility (i.e. presumably we want students to be able to understand the new language by next week, next month, or within the context of the course; not in five years time of practice when we will probably not be tutoring them, and unable to offer any constructive help with their progress) such that they will be subsequently able to *activate* it and give us some material with which to assess their progress so we can adapt our own teaching accordingly.

Given the time lag, discussed above, between the presentation of new language and its eventual activation and output, we therefore need to remain conscious of this delay (so we do not permanently undershoot; learners may well be *comprehending*, but *evidence* (i.e. output) of this comprehension needs time to emerge[1]) and plan lessons appropriately based on our intended performance outcomes – what is it we want students to *do*? And make it specific, so we can assess whether they *can*. So, not just 'be able to read', but, 'be able to read the short extract and answer the following three questions with grammatically correct answers', for example. Overall, it is not so much a matter of having faith, but rather of following an appropriately structured lesson regime with correctly defined outcomes and teaching delivered in accordance with those outcomes.

[1]This was a point I was always at pains to reiterate to clients when I worked as a personal trainer. Clients would often start training with a common expectation of, quite reasonably, to 'lose weight' – by which what they *actually* meant, technically speaking, was 'improve my body composition by shedding excess body fat'. Following my training regime and dietary guidelines, I knew this would in fact occur; but *not* immediately. In the first month of training, clients would often, in fact, *gain* overall weight, or see no real change; far from being a negative effect, this was due to the positive effect of them gaining lean muscle tissue as a result of all the training, which is denser than body fat. It was only in months 2-3 that the real evidence of their hard work would start to show, as the scales showed a downward trend, and they discovered they could once again fit into a pair of jeans they hadn't been able to wear for a decade. There is always a time lag during any 'remodelling' process, whether that is learning a language, getting fitter, or becoming an expert pottery maker. I knew however that they were progressing overall, all along, as my *performance outcomes* here included a whole host of other fitness metrics that I was tracking, in terms of what there were able to *do:* i..e what times they were rowing 500m, their deadlifting strength, how long it was taking them to visibly recover after each jogging interval, etc., etc. I knew here the scales would eventually offer a true reflection of their progress, since body composition is a natural bi-product of fitness + diet.

8. The connection between *Teaching and Learning*

Precisely how can we identify are effectiveness as teachers?

Hitherto, we have no empirical evidence to show any real connection between the two processes. We have the results of the students, on the one hand; we have all of the teachers materials, processes, and actual teaching on the other hand; yet what evidence do we have that shows the effect of one on the other of these two variables?

Whether or not the dynamical situation of teaching and learning can ever be reduced into a quantifiable 'science' (and also whether or not it is actually desirable to do so, given the perils of an over-valuation of quantifiable 'data' for something riddled with hundreds if not thousands of qualitative factors) I shall leave as open questions, but what it worthwhile is acknowledging the very real point that Donald Freeman makes when he states that there is no database showing the connection between 'teaching' and 'learning'; instead, at best, all we traditionally have are inferences by implication or suppositions.

In light of this, Freeman suggests the inauguration of all teachers to become teacher-researchers, and in as objective and precise manner as is feasible, to collect data that presents evidence of the relationship between their teaching 'inputs' and the learning 'outputs' of students in order to improve the quality of teaching. At the very least this gives us some basis to evaluate whether or not our teaching practices are likely to have successful learning outcomes. This relationship will be explored in more detail for Task 6.

Task 3 – An Integrated View of SLA

- A commentary on **Gass & Selinker's 5-step model of SLA**
  - [Step 0: Recognition] (?)
  1. Step 1: Apperceived input
  2. Step 2: Comprehended input
  3. Step 3: Intake
  4. Step 4: Integration
  5. Step 5: Output

Step 0: Recognition(?)

We can tentatively suggest that the Gass & Selinker model may benefit from the addition of a 'recognition' step, or pre-step. Before something can be an object of our experiences, or an object upon which we can perform cognitive operations, we must convert a raw sense-data input into some piece of recognisable 'information'.

Our terminology here is necessarily imprecise as it reflects limitations in i) our knowledge of neuroscience, ii) more seriously, our limited notion of our phenomenological relationship with the world, the 'head-world' interface. Leaving aside these difficulties, we can simply state that a sound datum must first be received by the ear drum and processed into a something that corresponds into a lexical 'token'; similarly, for written language, an input of differences in the visual electromagnetic spectrum between black ink and paper (or whatever text colour and background) must be received, and this raw visual data processed such that we realise we are reading some sort of 'text'.

Step 1: Apperceived input

Once step 0 above has been accomplished by physical mechanisms still poorly and incompletely understood, we arrive at 'apperceived' input. We recognise from the input of text or the sound of a token that it corresponds to a word or lexical unit that we have some sort of prior understanding of. We perceive the presence of the raw lexical unit as something that can be subjected to further 'processing' and analysis.

What factors affect this apperception?

a) Frequency; if you continually hear a particular sound token over and over in a foreign language, you can soon deduce that it corresponds to a word in its own right.
b) Our level of attention. If we are scrutinising a pattern (and language consists of many such patterns), we are highly alert to changes within a pattern. Therefore if we have knowledge of one particular pattern, we can spot it, and not only that, we can spot when we hear a similar but not identical pattern; these small variances acts as cues to apperceptive input.
c) Prior knowledge. Our recognition of patterns rests on our prior knowledge of our corpus of linguistic constructs. These constructs provide an anchoring mechanism for new patterns. This is perhaps what makes the initial stages of learning a completely new language so hard; we have no foundation whatsoever to start of with, so we must 'build' a base by covering the most basic words relating to every day common objects (man, dog, woman, house, car, phone, cat, tree, etc.).
d) Language affect. Our disposition towards language features and learning. How motivated are we? How much do we want or need to learn this language? Are we proactively trying to listen for the new language 'cues' or are we just 'switched off', allowing the language 'soup' to simply wash off us.

Step 2: Comprehended input

An internal transmission/conversion process of sorts occurs between the recognition of some type of meaningful input (apperception) and this as meaningful 'data' to 'process' upon.

A teacher or source of appropriate level material acts to supply 'comprehensible' input, they are the input 'provider'; this becomes comprehended input when the linguistic feature is identified by the language learner as corresponding to something they recognise and can 'do' something with, conceptually speaking.

As with any one of these steps, multiple levels of analysis is possible, depending on the level of reductionism we wish to pursue. The comprehended input can be 'processed' on various levels such as 'phonology' (do I recognise this sound feature of the language?), structural analysis (do I recognise this particular grammatical form?), pragmatics (do I recognise the purpose of this communicative exchange?), and semantics (do I understand what this actually *means*?).

If apperception is the priming 'material', comprehended input is when that material is then developed into terms subject to analysis. To use a computer science analogy regarding text file processing, apperception is when the initial file is read from the disk into memory; comprehended input is when the data-stream is converted into ASCII characters, which are then 'string tokenized' into individual tokens (i.e. words).

Before a compiler can build executable code, it must first read the file into memory and 'parse' the raw data in order to have 'source code' items with which to perform a lexical analysis. This file input and parsing stage broadly correspond analogically to these two stages of the Gass & Selinker model.

Side note:

The impression I get is that the Gass & Selinker model draws heavily on information theory and computational theories of language, in a vein somewhat similar to Chomsky's Universal Grammar, regardless of their methodological differences. This is unsurprising as the gradual shift towards a paradigm of information theory merging with complexity (chaos) theory is very much the predominant paradigm of our times. I have numerous issues with this general approach as model for human language acquisition, but discussing these is outside of the scope of this assignment; It is nevertheless a very fruitful avenue for building computer natural language processing systems, so no doubt we will continue to see gradual improvements in Google Translate and the like in coming years. An interesting juncture will be with the mainstream arrival of 'Turing complete' quantum computers, as they will make possible parallel processing on a scale that makes existing systems look febrile! (Not to mention completely disintegrate the current 256bit SSL security architecture that underpins all security and financial transactions on the internet, but that is another issue...).

Step 3: Intake

So we have our 'comprehensible' input. Our biological systems have recognised a set of lexical features that we can now 'convert' into something meaningful. Intake here refers to this mediating process whereby the source input is accommodated into our grammatical system. Here 'grammatical system' is used in its widest sense of describing our internal logical system of language as a whole. This perceptual or 'psycholinguistic' processing accommodates the new input into the scaffolding of existing language knowledge. Where meaningful connections can be made, there is now potential for building permanent long-term memories of the associated grammatical features; these memories and context and use-specific; abstractions are .

built 'on top' of these raw memories. This can be problematical, as it can lead to over-generalisations, whereby a class of grammatical structures that is applicable to a learners L1 can be used as a reference point for building an equivalent generalisation in L2. Unfortunately these generalisations may well not occur in L2 (i.e. they are a subset of the structural features found in L1). This is an example of 'interference', where a learners native L1 language knowledge can actually interfere with their successful acquisition of L2.

If a set of errors tends to perpetuate itself in the leaner even despite their exposure to correct language instances that should lead the learner to self-correct, this process is caused 'fossilisation' and is another problem associated with the development of language at the 'intake' stage. It refers to the classic problem whereby unlearning a bad habit is a lot harder than learning a new habit...

The input-to-intake mediation stage is where a large part of linguistic theory concerns itself. Chomsky's Universal Grammar was proposed as a response to the 'poverty of input' paradox, whereby children seem to develop grammar and language ability both at a rate and degree which seems in complete discord to any explicit instruction or tuition. They seemingly automatically infer a lot of the correct 'rules'. Chomsky proposed that this is because there is a native language learning 'module' in all human beings (in terms of the overall biophysical processing system, rather than a particular biological piece of language 'hardware' or physical organ/section of the brain), and that all languages have an underlying structural equivalence despite their apparent external differences, and that it is this structural system that the human brain is uniquely adapted and evolutionarily adapted to 'decode'.

In the same manner that children can be said to be 'natural scientists' (e.g. they push the object off the table surface to observe its deformation characteristics, they smell and place it in their mouth to test its organic composition, etc.), this 'intake' process uses a 'hypothesis formulation and testing' framework. We try to abstract (by induction) general properties of the grammar from particular limited examples, and use this to formulate an initial hypothesis; this is then tested, and accordingly rejected, modified, and eventually confirmed in the light of countless other 'comprehensible input' examples), by which point we 'know' those linguistic structures.

Step 4: Integration

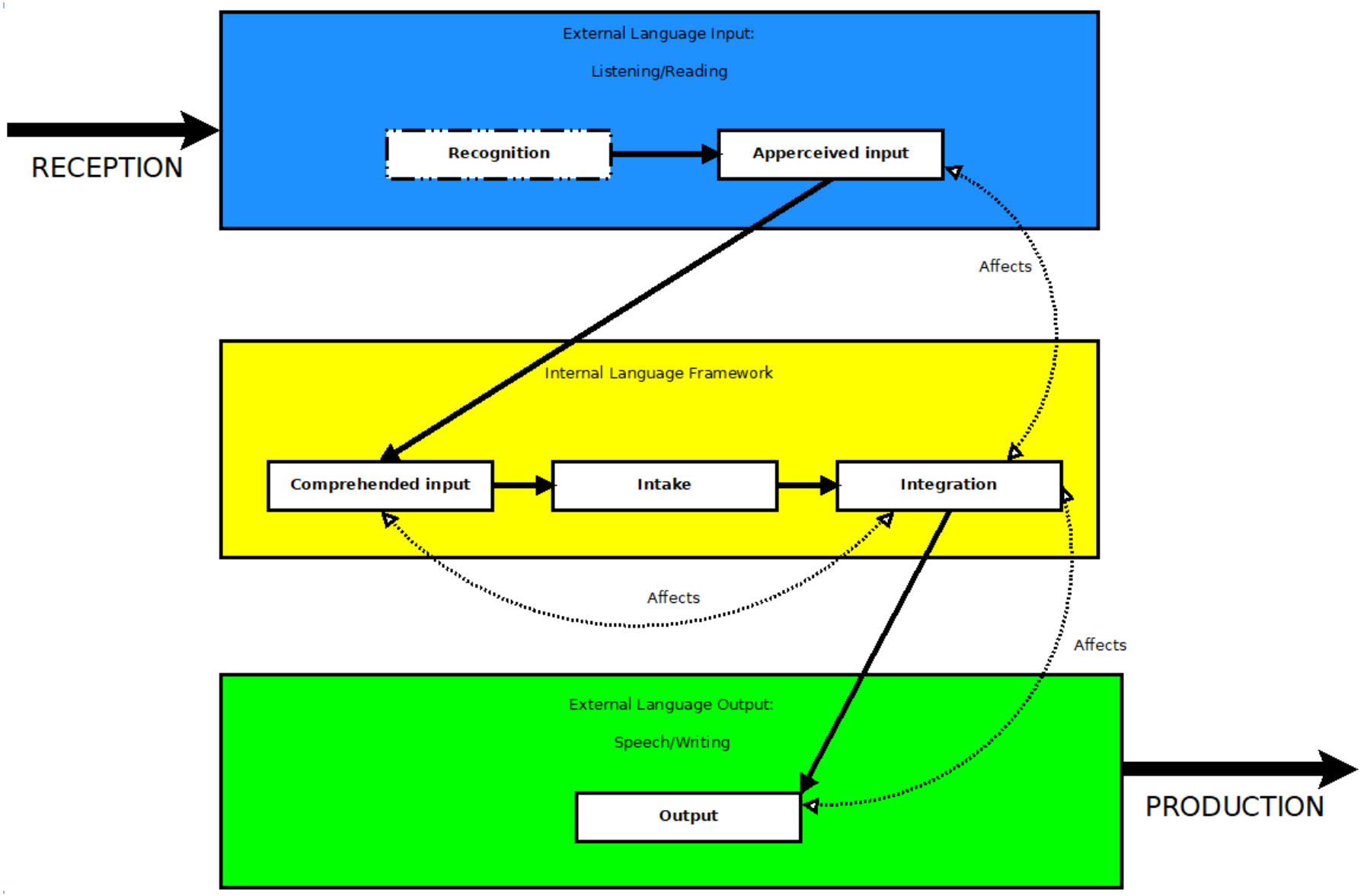
Integration describes the gradual process by which linguistic input data that is analysed at the 'intake' level is eventually assimilated into the learner's own internal 'language model' (i.e. Chomsky's 'I-language'). It is what happens as a result of the hypothesis formulating and testing in step 3. Four broad possibilities can be described:

i) Hypothesis confirmation or rejection: If a hypothesis is deemed to be successful and of general applicability, it is adopted and incorporated into the language model; if it is rejected, that too is useful since it serves to delimit what *cannot* be performed in the language according to its 'grammatical conventions' or 'rules in use'
ii) Invisible use: Information or pre-existing knowledge at the intake level was already present, so the new input merely serves to solidify this knowledge
iii) Stored/belayed: A lack of 'global' knowledge of how to incorporate the new 'local' knowledge/input was not present, so the information was retained but not yet integrated into the internal language model. Rather like an 'unsorted' folder or 'to-do' list on your desk.
iv) Unused/Non-use: Though the input might have been 'comprehensible' in the sense that it could be intelligibly received by the language learner, if it can not be associated in any meaningful or above all *useful* way to the leaner, it will not progress beyond intake and become 'integrated' into the internal language model.

Integration is 'reiterative' in the sense that it is both nonlinear and a-cyclical. New language is not simply assimilated in a strictly linear pipe from step 1 through to output (step 5). As the language that is 'integrated' grows, it causes feedback into the 'apperceived input' and 'comprehended input', as the learner begins to recognise sounds that they were previously cognitively 'deaf' too, and also begins to be able to attach primitive meaning to them too; meanwhile the attempted production of language as 'output' causes a feedback loop as the learner self-corrects. Therefore these feedback processes are bi-directional and occur 'iteratively' as thousands of progressive input to output 'loops' are completed as the learner grows in comprehension.

The diagram I have created below is my attempt to represent the main features of this process in a simplified manner according to my understanding of the Gass & Selinker SLA model. The bold arrows represent the 'direct' path; the dotted arrows represent processes of feedback and remodelling. I have broadly divided the model into three stages, according to the initial 'reception' of 'external' language stimuli (whether that be through listening to spoken language or reading text), the 'internal' language framework, and finally 'production' of 'external' language output, where the learner either speaks or writes with the new language.

The diagram is necessarily incomplete and simplistic with regard to language acquisition as a whole (which is infinitely more complex in reality), but it does, I hope, at least broadly present the salient features of the Gass & Selinker model and aid in its comprehensibility. The G&S model is aimed less at explanatory completeness and more as offering a particular paradigm that is useful for theorising about some of the processes and stages related to language acquisition.


RECEPTION
External Language Input:
Listening/Reading
Recognition
Apperceived input
Affects
Internal Language Framework
Comprehended input
Intake
Integration
Affects
Affects
External Language Output:
Speech/Writing
Output
PRODUCTION

Step 5: Output

Output then, as the diagram above illustrates, closes the cycle and is where the learner attempts to actually produce language.

The attempt to produce language forces the process whereby language must be rendered into a 'syntactically' correct manner, not merely an internal 'semantic' model; i.e. This accounts for the difficulty that learners often describe, where they state that they 'know' in their 'head' what they should be saying, but when they actually speak their is an apparent discrepancy or mismatch between their output and their *intended* output. This reflects a disparity between their level of syntactic and semantic comprehension; i.e. they may have a superior grasp of meaning relative to plain syntax. This would seem to be a naturally true and indeed common phenomenon; it is often the case that someone will understand something, yet struggle to produce the words in order to accurately reflect that understanding to an external audience.

Particularly in the case of SLA, the output of L2 will not necessarily mirror correct L2 grammar; interference from L1 is quite common, such that language is rendered in a syntactically incorrect but semantically correct manner, as they unconsciously use models involved in their production of L2 when attempting to produce L2.

Task 4 – Error: Windows on Learning

Errors & Mistakes and their relationship with language acquisition

- 1: The language learning journey
- 2: Errors vs. mistakes
- 3: The language learning curve & inter-language
- 4: Learning stages/Categories
- 5: Mediating factors between 'input' to 'output'
- 6: Order of Acquisition
- 7: Correcting inter-language mistakes: Recasting
- 8: A commentary on correcting in general

1: The language learning journey

If language acquisition is viewed as a journey, where the start of the journey is the prospective language learner who faces a 'wall' of completely unintelligible sounds and written symbols, and the end of the journey is someone who reads and speaks with such fluency that they are effectively now 'native' with regards to the language, this journey inevitably consists of many tens of thousands of incorrect utterances, faulty written text, and the production of a huge amount of 'inter-language'.

If this is a necessary and unavoidable part of the language journey, the question is how can we differentiate the various types of incorrect production, in order to provide the correct remedial input the learner needs in order to help them overcome their difficulty?

Referring once more to the Gass & Selinker quote:

"*...there are many miles to be travelled between the input that the learner receives and what the learner produces. We cannot assume that with the mere presentation of the language information, whether implicitly or explicitly, learners will necessarily convert it to output.*" (Gass & Selinker, 2001).

This journey is the 'bridge' between mapping correct output to input. In short, what we need are appropriate strategies for intervention based upon correctly diagnosing the root cause of the language learners problem. The first step in this process is to differential between learner 'errors' vs. 'mistakes'.

2: Errors vs. mistakes

If a language student speaks or writes in a grammatically incorrect manner, is that due to ignorance (i.e. they are either not *aware* that it is incorrect, **or** they entirely *lack* the requisite knowledge to produce it in any other manner), or is it due to an unintended slip (i.e. If their attention is drawn to it, they can self-correct and modify their output)?

This distinction is what separates an **error** (they have no possibility to self-correct) from a **mistake** (they can potentially self-correct). Separating these two types of incorrect language use is important since both require different remedial strategies from the teacher.

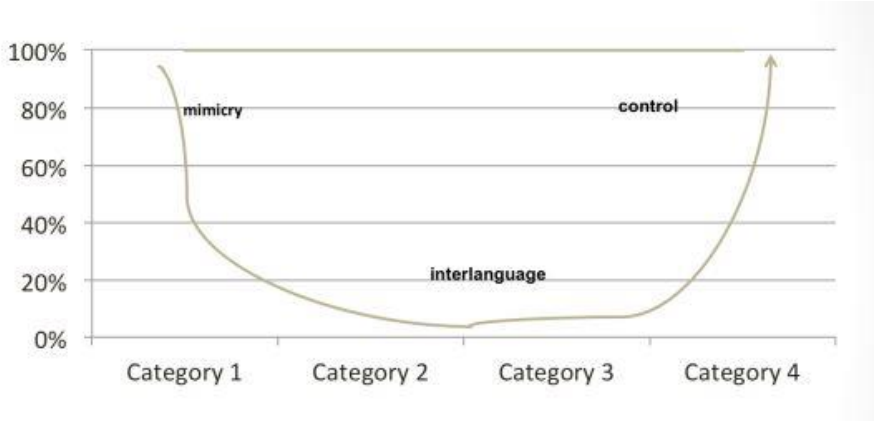
In an idealised scenario, the resultant 'inter-language' that is a characteristic of learners who produce errors and mistakes would not occur; we would instead simply progress from 1.) Comprehensible input, to 2.) Reinforcement & Practice, to 3.) Functionality (i.e. Output) in a linear manner of increasing complexity. Rather like progressing from start to finish of a language textbook, we would start on page 1 and then simply work through page after page, unproblematically, until we reach the end of the book (or series of books) having mastered the language. Unfortunately this almost never occurs (if someone could progress in such a manner, we would probably consider them a savant, or a linguistic genius).

3: The language learning curve & inter-language

Instead, what we have is a 'learning curve', where learners progress from blind mimicry (rather like a parrot that can repeat certain words, but with little to no comprehension of their meaning), to the increasing production of 'inter-language',

which consists of various correct features of the target language mixed in with a host of incorrect features. Such inter-language may still be comprehensible to the native speaker depending on the severity and type of errors encountered; e.g. Minor or even moderately severe syntactic errors can often still yield meaningful output in terms of conveying the basic meaning or intention behind the utterance, yet even extremely minor errors in vocabulary could render the fundamental message completely unintelligible[1].

So we can state that most of the language learning process consists of a long period of the production of an inter-language. Lightbowen & Spada represent this learning process diagrammatically with an accuracy curve of language use plotted against four 'markers' or leaning stages that all learners progress through in sequence:



[1]This happened to me whilst attempting to buy washing up liquid in Big C; though the context of being in a shop, in the relevant household section, meant that it was fairly obvious as to the fact I trying to purchase a domestic cleaning product, so no real functional language production was even required, my complete ignorance of the Thai expression for 'washing up liquid' (for dishes and plates) meant that I had to go through a series of unsuccessful mimes, Google Translate attempts, and Google Image searches on my phone before I eventually communicated my intention accurately. So here we have an example of how *one* word can have a crippling effect on intelligibility, long before we consider the complexities of language in use as a *grammar*.

4: Learning stages/Categories

So what can we state in general terms about these categories? We can see an immediate relationship between the four categories and the schema of Gass & Selinker's SLA model. Recall that the integration process was iterative, and that with progressive iterations of exposure to comprehensible input that is successfully taken in ('intake') the language that has been 'integrated' steadily grows. This integration expansion broadly shifts stepwise through the four categories.

Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
•Mimicry	•Chunking	•Linking	•Control
•No real comp	•Wkg Mem +	•Structure+	•Generative
•Q&A memorize	•Routines	•Emergentism*	•Automatic
•Non generative	•Contextual trees	•Context	•Confident
	•Vocab stockpile	switching	
		•detouring	

Category 1 is our 'parrot' stage: With no real comprehension, we can simply replicate the sounds, or scrawl the exact same shapes (I could easily copy some Japanese Kanji in a pictorial manner without having the slightest comprehension at to what I had written), or memorise rote-formulas. A lot of travellers use this approach with some success to memorise the sounds of straightforward unambiguous set expressions ("Please bring me the bill"). Ironically, because there is no real 'generative' production, the accuracy can be quite high, as we are simply copying the sound or symbol-image literally.

Category 2 is our 'beginner' stage: Small chunks of lexical terms start to have some meaning in highly constrained contexts; we can assemble extremely rudimentary sentences which express basic concepts, frequently using inter-language constructs:

"Man reading book" = A man is reading a book.
"Me ticket buy Liverpool" = I would like to buy a ticket to Liverpool.

Here the level of generation is essentially limited, with a small stockpile of names and actions that can be associated to communicate basic intentions or ideas. Nevertheless, with creative augmentation tactics to communication (i.e. Miming, gestures, use of mobile phone, etc.) a learner can nevertheless achieve more (in a functional context) than perhaps they would give themselves credit for.

Category 3 is our 'intermediate' stage: Here, vocabulary acquisitions and knowledge of grammatical structures is beginning to reach a level where the internal model starts to become increasingly 'self-propelling'. The learner can navigate between a wide variety of contexts, link word-concepts in increasingly complex networks, and begin to map the language grammar to an increasingly sophisticated internal language model. They have reached the stage where inquiry within the language itself is possible, such they do not need to keep 'exiting' the language with recourse back to L1 to try to further their comprehension. At earlier stages, if one adheres to the communicative methodology, that necessarily means that certain language constructs are entirely unavailable without language 'exit'; e.g. one could not practically explain the distinction between 'determinism' and 'free will' to beginner learners via a 100% pure communicative method. They would need to be at a higher level. A grammar translation method may yield some results with beginners, though the value of such

an exercise would be highly debateable given their pressing requirements for more basic, frequently occurring, and useful language terms first.

Category 4 is characterised by fluent 'automaticity'; the person has relatively effortless control over language, reflected in no sense of nervousness or 'self-consciousness' in regard to the actual production of language. They are able to generate language constructs on demand for more or less any conceivable real life communicative situation, and are able to listen, speak, read and write all material typically representative of the general public. Note that someone could be 'category 4' – as are just about all native speakers who have received an education – yet that does not mean to imply their language use is 'perfect'; many people's native language written skills, for example, are often far from 'perfect', yet they are sufficiently advanced as to be to still be constitutive of category 4 , as they can generally avoid producing any 'inter-language'.

5: Mediating factors between 'input' to 'output'

There are many dozens of factors that influence the language acquisition process. We can broadly divide these into three components; input related, filter related, and output related.

Input related factors relate to how initial potential language information is received. I say 'potential' because unless certain pre-requisite abilities/cognitive skills related to the internal language model have been sufficiently developed, such input may not yield 'comprehensible' input. These include factors such as being able to recognise the phonological features of the language (e.g. can you actually consciously *hear* the five different tones in Thai?), to recognising the written symbols as letters, to whether or not you can detect grammatical structures that could provide a 'scaffolding' for comprehension of unknown terms, to whether or not the inputs occur in some sort of framed or confined context. Language is often used in such a way that the meaning is only clear when considered in the context in which is occurs, or sometimes even the wider cotext. All of this material needs to be suitably 'networked' together into some type of meaningful internal model, so that you can relate language items against concepts and terms that have meaning to you.

Filters are the larger 'extrinsic' factors that have a significant influence on the development of your language model. Are you motivated and concentrating? Are you attempting to apply yourself so you learn? Are you receiving material in different forms to assist with making it memorable? Does it create some sort of emotional engagement? (If there is no emotional component, there is likely to be no motivation. A person cannot really be 'forced' to learn something. The brain's internal heuristics tend to aggressively 'prune' and discard information/memories it considers as useless – why bother retaining memories if you are likely never to need them again?).

Output factors relate to the actual production and feedback processes involved in your language model. As soon as you have to speak (high time pressure) or write (lesser time pressure), there is a requirement that all of the information contained in the model is then actually *applied* to create some generative output. This is where the language 'data' gets 'routed' through the 'network' in order to yield an output. Certain 'routes', which routinely get used, may be relatively stronger, so output of these types of language structure are comparatively easier; developing our computer network analogy further, we can say this is rather like the routing of network IP packets over the TCP/IP protocol that underpins the internet, whereby two computers will gradually find the most efficient network 'path' to send their data packets, which normally means in practice that a file download rate should gradually increase in speed before stabilising at a relatively constant rate. Here the 'packets' are words or small groups of words and particular sentence structures, which with repeated use become established as a familiar 'template' from which to build an infinite variety of new, unique sentences.

Finally, rather like listening or reading has a direct physical action as a prerequisite, here the output depends on physical motor actions that either control the vocal cords to produce the correct sounds in order, or on the hands to scribe the correct shapes or type appropriate symbols into a computer in the target language.

6: Order of Acquisition

Despite the apparent gross differences between languages, generally speaking, there is a fairly prototypical sequence which learners progress through when learning a language. I have inserted a 'Stage 0', as though we take the token 'car' to refer to a single 'unit', in reality it is itself an aggregate of 'c', 'a', and 'r', three sounds that though intrinsically meaningless in themselves nevertheless acquire meaning when considered as structural components within an alphabet. The stages below are detailed with reference primarily to English, but it is possible in principle to abstract the stages to other languages through use of appropriate equivalent language specific structures:

Stage 0 – Individual 'atoms' (i.e. The individual characters of the alphabet or symbol system). The learner begins to associate basic patterns for aggregating these into words.

Stage 1 – Individual units (i.e. words or root lexical items). Often naming words, i.e. nouns. Stage 0 & 1 are effectively one stage, as a learner can often typically work on both simultaneously in lockstep; even young children can understand that a 'name', 'token' or 'word' consists of several sounds represented by letters, all of which combine to create an individual semantic link or unit (i.e. to mean or refer to something).

Stage 2 – By stage 2 the learner starts to have an awareness of the different functional properties of the units and how they can be contained combinatorially in order to satisfy the conventions established by the language's grammar. In English, the basic structure is SVO (like Thai); other languages may reverse or combine the elements in an entirely different order.

Stage 3 – Learners start to associate the different patterns required in order to satisfy the relationship between questions and imperatives. E.g. In English, they start to learn to 'WH' front questions, so instead of statements like 'you live where?' they learn to re-order into 'Where you live?'.

Stage 4 – Learners start to develop a more complete syntactical knowledge of language structures, and start to appropriately re-order components according to the transformational rules present in the grammar. E.g. In English, they start to acquire an understanding of the appropriate markers corresponding to states of being or possession/ownership, such that "Is you tired?" might transform into "Have you tired?". The complex and messy verb 'to be' coupled with the auxiliaries 'do' and 'have' start to become re-ordered and subject to appropriate transformations and substitutions. 'Have are you going?'; 'Where you are going?'; 'Where are you going'?

Stage 5 – By this stage learners can start to re-arrange the full apparatus into nearly correct sentences. The 'do' auxiliary combines with 'WH' fronting so we get nearly correct questions such as 'What do you have?' mixed in with correct utterances.

Stage 6 – At stage 6 the negative form appears more frequently, though sometimes incorrectly 'fronted', and interrogatives related to 'possibility' emerge more frequently, such as 'can'. 'Can you visit cinema with me?'

Stage 7 – Full clauses and simpler sentences should now be possible to build with some accuracy. From here it is simply a matter of practice to develop the construction and combination of clauses with increasing sophistication and nuance.

7: Correcting inter-language mistakes

We have discussed above how inter-language is the production of incorrect linguistic forms that nevertheless exhibit meaningful features of the target language, and that this inter-language state is where a leaner will spend the vast majority of their time before perhaps, or hopefully, reaching mastery.

Inter-language may be due to insufficient knowledge, or it may be related to insufficient capacity to *apply* the knowledge:

"I can hear in my head how I should sound when I talk, but it never comes out that way" (Gass & Selinker)

The solution is clearly more appropriate structured practice with suitable remedial input from a tutor where necessary. It is important to isolate whether the learner is producing errors or mistakes. If they are producing errors, they need more tuition, i.e. appropriate comprehensible input so they get suitable 'intake' which hopefully then causes remodelling associated with the 'integration' stage (see above section 3). If they are producing *mistakes*, then the solution is suitable remedial input from the teacher, which may involve deliberate correction to draw their conscious awareness to their mistake (a rather brutal method that can be discouraging and demotivating), or better, by recasting their language so they are given an opportunity to self-correct. If the extent of the *error* is not too large, recasting may work here too, provided the teacher or environment provides sufficient modelling or scaffolding for them to inductively build the new language knowledge 'on the fly'.

7: Correcting inter-language mistakes: Recasting

1 – "I had great time cycling. It was funny."
2 – "Yes, we did have a great time cycling. It was fun."
1 – "Very funny."
2 – "Well, when you fell off the bicycle into those muddy leaves that was funny. The riding in general was fun. It was fun day out cycling."
1 – "Yes, was a lot of fun".

This example is an imaginary scenario of mine involving *recasting*, but based on a real-world inter-language mistake involving the use of the noun *fun* that I have observed among Thai speakers of English. 'Fun' can mean either something that was enjoyable, or something that caused amusement. In its adjectival form, only the second of these two meanings carries over. This is just one of the multitudes of vagaries of the English language. Here speaker 2 is trying to correct 1's mistake by repeated recasting rather than explicitly informing them of their mistake, especially given that their mistake is actually the result of consistent and appropriate inferences from English language 'rules', so they are actually thinking and using language well. Since English grammar is a set of conventions rather than rules, this is why there are countless exceptions…

Recasting can be challenging as it is of no value simply to keep repeating the same 'recast' back if on each occasion the learner does not recognise which particular cue you are trying to correct. Instead, approaching the problem obliquely by 'reframing' the incorrect utterance may be enough to generate the necessarily self-correcting process. Since each learner's internal model is unique, different approaches may need to be attempted to slowly focus in on the mistake. Here by involving humour, the teacher is attempting to provide a corrective cue in a manner that is won't discourage the learner.

Original Recasting Attempt	Recasting – Alternative Attempt
Alex: I ain't got no pen **Teacher:** I don't have a pen **Alex:** Ain't you got a pen? **Teacher:** Don't you have a pen? **Alex:** No. I ain't got no pen. **Teacher:** They don't have a pen. **Alex:** A'int nobody got no pen?	**Alex:** I ain't got no pen **Teacher:** I don't have a pen **Alex:** Ain't you got a pen? **Teacher:** Did you have a pen this morning? **Alex:** Yes **Teacher:** So you *did* have a pen, but now you don't have a pen? **Alex:** Yes. I don't got a pen. **Teacher:** Here, borrow mine. {hands pen over}. Now *I* don't have a pen... {class laughs}

Another example. In this example, instead of offering 'recasted fragments' that simply lead to more misunderstanding, the teacher disguises their remodelling of the students mistake by framing it within a question thrown back at the student, giving a much more positive feel to the correction.

Original Recasting Attempt	Recasting – Alternative Attempt
Anna: When the house built... **Teacher:** When was... **Anna:** When was? **Teacher:** When was. When was. **Anna:** When was what?. **Teacher:** The house built. **Anna:** That's what I ask. When the house built?	**Anna:** When the house built... **Teacher:** OK. So you are asking when the house was built? **Anna:** Yes. When the house built? **Teacher:** When do you think it was built? So try and guess... When was the house built? **Anna**: Maybe 1960? **Teacher:** Close. So can you ask me the question again and I can tell you the answer? **Anna:** When was the house built? **Teacher:** Excellent. Well, the house was built in the 1950s.

Some example errors/mistakes and possible resolutions. Errors may occasionally require a direct, explicit approach; tone and manner in which it is delivered can make a difference. If it is a new language construct the explicit correct should hopefully not seem 'threatening', particularly if we are not using the inappropriate teaching strategy of trying to introduce too much new material all in one go. Here the resolutions are oblique and indirect prompts that remodel the error into correct language..

Error/mistake	Resolution
1. He go to home.	• Where is he going? • Is he going home?
2. Where is book?	• The book is on *the* table.
3. He came here since yesterday.	• He came here ~~since~~ yesterday.
4. What do you like to do today?	• I'm not sure. What *would you* like to do today?
5. Tell me what you doing?	• I am studying for driving test. What are you doing?
6. Do you still in Saudi?	• Yes, I still live in Saudi. Do you still live in Bangkok?
7. Where are you exercise?	• I am going to exercise in the gym tonight. • Are you going to exercise this evening?
8. What you favourite desert?	• Is your favourite desert ice-cream? • I love chocolate and mint. What is your favourite?

8: A commentary on correcting in general

"Even if correcting the student's every error were pedagogically feasible, socially acceptable, not demoralising to learners, and did not lead to their undue dependence upon the teacher, it still would not be psychologically sound practice. Pervasive correction ignores such important psychological limitations as memory capacity and attention span. Negative feedback, therefore, has to be judicious to be effective. However, selectivity is not sufficient in and of itself." (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

Larsen-Freeman highlight the unavoidable fragmentary nature of human memory and learning. Human memory is not like a computer, where there is a perfect storage of material provided it is input into in a correct format. Instead, even when the 'comprehensible input' is provided in the correct 'format', the retention will necessarily be imperfect and inputs will need repeated exposure to be consolidated. On the other hand, the more diffuse nature of human memory means that often a learner will actually know more than they are aware of or can credit themselves for; just because someone cannot explicitly recall something does not *automatically* mean they either do not know or have forgotten. Given what we can describe as the 'emergent' properties of language acquisition (and indeed memory and consciousness in general), some language features may simply be 'dormant' but nevertheless remodelling is occurring below the [self-]conscious threshold of the learner. What evidence do we have that suggests the presence of this phenomena?

The fact that someone, apparently not progressing at all, can suddenly make great progress. Human learning (whether learning language or how to play tennis) very rarely corresponds to a linear pattern. Instead it is bitty, fissiparous, and dynamic; sometimes it can superficially appear to stall, then suddenly a huge rate of progress can occur. Given this backdrop, the provisos in Larsen-Freeman are apt.

Above all, we have to exercise caution with correction, ensuring that it is of the right *quality* as well as appropriate in *volume* (i.e. amount). It is a balancing act. Too little correction and we are not providing sufficient feedback for students to improve. This is characterised by the common criticism of providing insufficient rigor. Conversely, too much rigor by employing excessive correction is demoralising. It tends to lead to a brutal winner-takes-all environment, which will suit only a small minority of learners who do indeed thrive, but most of whom will be left languishing discouraged and annoyed. So strictness must be balanced against inclusiveness when correcting.

The psychological state of the learner is critical for learning. If the language classroom becomes intimidating and unpleasant rather than enriching and fun, the balance is off; instead of excellent results you'll end up with dejection and disgust, a state entirely counterproductive to successful language acquisition.

Task 5 – Video Observation 1: Teacher Focus - Trinity

- 1. Lesson plan review
- 2. Video observation guide
- 3. Overall lesson review

Note:

I have based my teacher observation on the original Trinity College CELTA video that we watched in class but which is now offline.

1: Lesson plan review

The biggest strength of the lesson plan is its overall structural clarity. A great deal of thought has been put into the overall flow, with all the phases of the lesson very clearly signalled.

Less thought has been put into the core heart of the lesson, namely the method by which the meaning of the phrasal verbs will be conveyed. Some of the verbs could surely be conveyed with simpler or clearer material.

The explanation of 'mess up', for example, is very unclear. Why not simply show/describe someone flinging clothes out of their wardrobe everywhere, for example?
Meanwhile, some of the questions, particularly in the earlier stages of the lesson, seem to be too vague to be useful to students (i.e. "what is the story about?").

It is clear that so much attention has been put into the structure that insufficient thought has been put into the material and use of resources available in the classroom. Rather than play a sound clip of a bomb exploding to convey 'blow up', why not simply play some video clips showing things *actually* blowing up (e.g. an actual building demolition, Hollywood style explosions, etc., etc.). Sometimes we have to teach in a classroom with almost no modern resources available (perhaps even no electricity!), but if these tools do exist and can assist in teaching, it makes sense to make best use of them.

In terms of grading, I would place it somewhere between a **pass** and **weak pass**. The lack of consideration given to the most critical part of the lesson is disappointing; on the other hand the completeness of it in other respects shows a very solid understanding of teaching methodology. In summary, with some small amendments this could actually be turned into a strong pass. It is a case of missing the 'wood for the trees', to use a colloquialism.

2: Video observation guide – Teacher focus

My video/teacher observation guide consists of two parts; the first, a summary checklist based on four key areas, with a series of checkpoints, the second a table of positive & negative aspects and finally summary comments. In the checklist table, a '+' means the point was addressed satisfactorily or well; a '-' means that there are issues that need resolving. A '*' could be inserted for something that was exemplary. The checklist table should hopefully be relatively self-explanatory. I have filled it in based on my observation of the Trinity College video.

a) Video Observation - Summary Checklist:

Teacher talk:		**Teacher-Student interaction:**	
Appropriate language grading:	+	Adequate monitoring of students (individual and group work)	+
Appropriate context & material	-	Appropriate feedback	+
Balanced ratio of teacher talk time	-	Appropriate teacher led discovery	+
Teacher choice of activities		**Teacher classroom management:**	
Appropriate level of activities	+	Detection of potential disengagement	-
Appropriate variety & selection of activities	+	Use of movement/physical arrangement of classroom	-
Appropriate balance of individual, pair, small group, and whole classroom activities	+	Elicitation from quiet students; moderation of over-eager students	+
Appropriate use of available resources	-	Time management	+

2: Video observation guide – teacher focus

Positive aspects:	Negative Aspects:
• Clear and well thought out overall lesson structure • Good balance of activities/skills • Good overall management of class • Excellent engagement from students in latter stages of class during group activities	• A lack of focus in clarifying the target language accurately/clearly • Occasionally vague instructions when trying to elicit responses from students • Excessive teacher talk time/stasis during first half of lesson; excessive formal presentation of new language • Insufficient/inadequate exploitation of available classroom resource (i.e. the huge computer display screen)

Summary:

Wong has designed a delivered a well structured lesson that reflects a strong understanding of teaching methodology, that is ultimately let down with a few specific issues. As is a quite common mistake, there is an excessive overall amount of teacher talk time in the first half of the lesson, with an unnecessarily protracted presentation of the new target language structures rather than simply allowing the students to familiarise themselves through use in activities; student led discovery is usually a more powerful aid to memory and comprehension. Additional presentation/clarification could be added afterward based on anything the students are actually struggling with.

Some of the clarification and eliciting of the target language could be improved, particularly by making much greater use of the available big screen resource in this very well equipped classroom.

The first half the lesson was a relatively flat experience due to the excessive presentation/TTT, so it is questionable whether the students were well engaged. There was little proactive attempt to vary either tone, pace or presentation style in order to keep students alert. The second half of the lesson was far stronger, once students actually got to interact and use the new language, with a noticeable change in energy and engagement from students. Slightly less attention to structure, with more attention to detail and overall class dynamics would yield a far better overall lesson.

3: Overall lesson review 1/2

Strengths

- Clear and coherent overall lesson structure/plan
- Good control and knowledge of the target content
- Excellent classroom dynamic in latter stages of lesson

Improvements

- Reduce the balance of explicit technical/formal presentation of language and increase exposure to target language in use/in context/in activities
- Be alert to asking imprecise eliciting questions. Be alert to overly technical presentation of formal language features that would cause difficulty even for a native language speaker.
- Become more alert to student engagement and be prepared to alter style, approach, tone/pace or content in order to re-engage students. Ask questions to draw students back in
- Reduce overall balance of didactic teacher talk time and seek to draw students into the classroom dynamic

3: Overall lesson review 2/2

Lesson plan grade: Pass

Good overall structure, but let down by lack of attention to well thought out explanations/examples of the target phrasal verbs and some imprecise eliciting language. See above.

Teaching grade: Weak pass

Flat and static first half of lesson with a monotone didactic style. Limited use of the excellent available classroom resources. The imprecision regarding the exposition of the target phrasal verbs, a deficiency evident in the lesson plan, directly carried over into the lesson.

In short, the fundamental structure and elements required of a strong lesson are here, but there are few critical features and details that need to be addressed. This is mostly a case of more diligent consideration of these specifics together with a rebalancing of the overall presentation style of the lesson.

Task 6 – Action Research

What is Action Research?

- An Introduction to Action Research

1. What is Action Research?
2. Rationale
3. Shortcomings
4. Action Research as a logical methodology

- Freeman's 5 Propositions on Action Research

1. *"To make research a central part of teaching, we must redefine research"*
2. *"Research can be defined as an orientation towards one's practice..."*
3. *"There is, as yet, no publically recognised 'discipline' of teaching..."*
4. *"Inquiry – and not procedure – is the basis of teacher-research."*
5. *"Creating a discipline of teaching requires making public one's findings..."*

An Introduction to Action Research

1: What *is* Action Research?

Action Research is an attempt to begin to address Donald Freeman's observation that there is no 'database' of information, or indeed any real evidence, connecting the process of teaching with students learning. Action Research is systematic research 'in the field' that attempts to address this shortfall. If we consider the twin roles of, one the on hand, the teacher, and on the other, the researcher, it aims to relocate the teacher 'into' this hyphen of teacher-researcher. In short, to take on both roles simultaneously.

The notion is that one reflects upon one's own teaching and gathers evidence of learning in relation to planned learning outcomes. The objective is that through analysis of the relationship between actual teaching practices and the demonstrable evidence of learning from students, one can then glean insights into what practices actually result in learning. This process should be conducted in as systematic and precise way as is possible or feasible.

Action Research, then, is self-descriptive: it combines 'research' in the traditional sense of the word, with 'action' that fundamentally describes the highly proactive nature of the researcher in this case, who is the one *generating*, *compiling*, and *analysing* the 'data' in regard to the planning, implementation, and collection of learning evidence as a result of their teaching practice.

2: Rationale

The relationship between a teacher and their learners is essentially collaborative, co-operative, and bi-directional in nature. The teacher does not simply didactically 'give' learning to students; instead they provide a series of structured inputs according to planned performance outcomes, set up a learning 'environment' and, then by delivering the lesson, the students then hopefully 'learn' in accordance to the material under investigation.

The objective is that by scrutinising the exact relationship of the results of one's teaching (obtained through suitably collected evidence of learning in its various manifest forms), with the 'inputs' one provided based on one's intended learning objectives, one can as a result modify and improve the effectiveness of one's teaching practice.

This does not imply some radical new departure into some esoteric or leftfield realms of teaching methodology. Instead, by carefully assessing the relationship of teaching and learning as it normally or generally occurs in the classroom, we should be able to deduce useful insights into what actually works, and what doesn't. Action Research is therefore intended to be eminently practical, and not just a theoretical exerise. Action Research should lead to better teaching, since it will allow us to identify what types of activity, technique, or practice results in improvements in terms of actual learning.

3: Shortcomings

A significant problem exists in terms of assigning causality to a dynamical process as complex as the classroom environment. Within the course of typical one hour lesson, the teacher will be providing dozens of 'inputs', and the students will be doing any number of different things, only some of which may result in 'evidence' of learning. Since learning, strictly defined, is exclusively a cognitive activity, without some type of privileged access to a learner's brain one can only make deductions based on second-order 'evidence' in terms of some of the outputs the student physically produces based on the tasks and activities you set.

As explained above, the process is not linear with the teacher 'producing' information or knowledge and the students 'receiving' such information or knowledge; instead, at every step, their is a dynamic where the teacher and students are continually responding to each other. The students, meanwhile, also exist in the same collective dynamic with each other, so the student-student interactions are also of great importance. Therefore, when one considers the sheer number of potential 'variables' in this classroom 'equation', clearly, we need to be realistic and cautious as to how much we can successfully generalise and infer from what is undoubtedly always a highly localised and specific situation on a per class, per teacher basis. Even the exact same class and teacher will vary on a day to day basis. Human beings are not automatons.

4: Action Research as a logical methodology

Despite the limitations mentioned above, this does not mean that Action Research is a hopeless enterprise. Though elevating it to the status of an 'empirical science' seems exceptionally unlikely if not downright impossible, given the infeasibility of successfully controlling all factors based on the extreme variability of the classroom environment and human agency, we can nevertheless still gain important insights into the approaches and techniques that are more *likely* to be successful in delivering learning. Through building up a large corpus of evidence that suggests what works from thousands of classrooms, we can arrive at conclusions we can at least hold true to some degree. In this sense, Action Research can collectively elevate teaching much closer to a true 'discipline'.

It attempts to rationalise the process as much as is feasible, and inculcates a mindset based on gathering evidence as to what actually works in terms of learning outcomes, and from that inform one's beliefs about how one should approach teaching.

It may not be perfect, but it is an attempt to systematise the teaching process rather than just blindly stumbling through the dark based on nothing more than your own gut instincts and unsupported suppositions. Scrutinise what you are doing, how well it is actually working, and therefore how you might do it better; put the amended version into practice and again observe the results to complete the cycle; that is the *modus operandi* of action research.

Freeman's 5 Propositions on Action Research

1. "To make research a central part of teaching, we must redefine research"

'Research' is typically taken to describe a largely or almost entirely theoretical process, where a particular topic is studied abstractly. Usually the researcher will only be gathering data regarding their topic of research, and not be a proactive element of the actual process under research.

Teachers traditionally simply *apply* knowledge in their teaching practice – i.e. the fruits of other individuals prior research – rather than take any role of in the *generation* of *new* research.

Freeman here is proposing we alter this model, so the teacher becomes a 'person-process', both teacher and researcher combined. The teacher now must take ownership for researching the effectiveness of what they are doing with a view to how they might do it better.

2. "Research can be defined as an orientation towards one's practice. It is a questioning attitude... Leading to ***inquiry*** *conducted within a* ***disciplined framework****."*

Analogically with regard to the empirical sciences, by repositioning the practice of teaching within a 'disciplined framework' this means that not only must the teacher collect data in a systematic manner, but that they must also record the process by which the data was produced and collected, with a view to replicability of their classroom 'experiment' in teaching.

Freeman here intends the word 'inquiry' in the sense of an investigation into classroom processes and actions based on the measurable data that results. The fundamental principle is to avoid using action research as a strategy for justifying pre-determined intuitive conclusions; i.e. the avoidance of confirmation bias as much as is humanly possible. This demand places a large premium on self-awareness and self-reflectiveness so that one becomes conscious of any assumptions one might be lapsing into.

3. "There is, as yet, no publically recognised 'discipline' of teaching. Teachers do not think of themselves as producing knowledge; they think of themselves as using it."

Despite all the standardisation and 'mass production' of education, teaching nevertheless remains a comparatively individualistic affair, with each teacher relying on their own 'style' and own unique set of techniques and strategies, reflecting a combination of their own experience and the theoretical knowledge they have chosen to incorporate.

Freeman here is suggesting a paradigm shift such that teachers being to contribute to the 'discipline' by publicising research based on insights they have gained from their unique position by adopting a more standardised and 'scientific' framework of analysis when compiling data on teaching and learning. Since they are in an environment where they have some degree of control over the learning environment (i.e. classroom), by proceeding in a more systematic manner the insights they gain may prove to be generalisable and applicable to teaching practices as whole.

4. "Inquiry – and not procedure – is the basis of teacher-research."

A teacher simply following the 'procedure' of teaching is not enough if we wish to advance the state of teaching and gain a greater understanding of the relationship between teaching and learning.

Freeman's demand is that teacher-researcher is someone who is also aware of *what* is happening in the classroom, and therefore how it can be improved. Delivering the teaching is only half of the process; collecting and collating data that investigates how the different elements of this teaching affects learning is the other halp. In other words, Freeman is asking teachers to *optimise* their teaching through careful analysis.

5. "Creating a discipline of teaching requires making public one's findings. To do so teacher-researchers need to explore new and different ways of telling what has been learned through their inquiries."

If the teacher-researcher is to 'close' the loop and provide benefit to other teacher-researchers – in short, to turn action research *into* a discipline – then that requires that they publish and present their findings. Only by doing so will they contribute to the growing body of knowledge and help to build a 'database' that at least suggests correlations between particular teaching 'inputs' and learning 'outputs'.

The results of the inquiry need to be made public, so that they can be developed and explored further by other teacher-researchers, thus advancing the state of play in teaching as a whole. In essence, it is turning what could simply end up being an autobiographical process into one that is potentially collaborative or communal.

Task 7 – Action Research: Lesson Reflection

Lesson reflection for a **hypothetical** class

- 1. Class profile
- 2. Apparent objectives
- 3. Evidence of learning
- 4. Improvements
- 5. Data collected & reliability
- 6. Lesson performance criteria

Lesson topic/overview/context

The lesson is a based around the theme of Eskimos living in a cold tundra environment. This theme will be used to introduce a variety of basic words and make use of English to describe this traditional way of life.

- 1. Class profile

Hypothetical class	
Age:	15-16
CEFR level:	B1
Gender:	Mixed, M & F
Number of students:	18
Class schedule:	3 x 1 hour per week (M/W/F afternoon)

2. Apparent objectives & 3. Evidence of learning

For clarity, I have chosen to present **[3]** the planned performance outcomes and **[4]** corresponding evidence of learning for each lesson stage **[1]**/activity **[2]** all in the same table below for easy cross-referencing/comparison. The table reflects the overall chronological order of the hypothetical lesson.

[1] Lesson stage	[2] Activity/Description	[2] Planned performance outcomes	[4] Evidence of learning
Warmer/ Lead in	Students check answers to their completed homework sheet to introduce theme/vocabulary by marking each other's work	• Students will be able to check their fellow student's answers to the gap-fill homework sheet by **listening** to the teacher's answers and **appropriately ticking** or **correcting** it on the homework sheet	• The students initial gap-fill answers that they have **written** on their homework sheet • The marking done by the fellow student (also recorded/named) who has **ticked** or **written** in the correct answer.

Task 7: Lesson Reflection 5/11

[1] Lesson stage	[2] Activity/Description	[3] Planned performance outcomes	[4] Evidence of learning
Context and modelling	Initial basic vocabulary related to cold environments and element of the nomadic lifestyle introduced. Vocabulary drilling then basic Q&A.	• Students will be able to pronounce out loud basic vocabulary terms • Students will be able to **answer** questions related to the specific vocabulary item by **identifying and speaking out loud** with the **correct** word	• The students successfully **repeat** the vocabulary words by **correctly pronouncing them out loud** • The students successfully provide the **correct** answer to the question by **speaking out loud** with the correct word.
Controlled practice	Students ask and answer in pairs in a very basic role-play based on speaking aloud from the set dialogue script (each person will have the script for their particular person).	• Students will be able to identify the correct response/next dialogue line in the script of target language and **role-play/speak it out loud**	• Students will successfully complete the **role-play** by completing the **dialogue in sequence by reading aloud**

Task 7: Lesson Reflection 6/11

[1] Lesson stage	[2] Activity/Description	[3] Planned performance outcomes	[4] Evidence of learning
Vocabulary expansion	Students will combine some set sentence structures and flashcard prompts to build new sentences	• Students will be able to **write 5-10 new sentences** using the sentence fragment and flashcard prompts	• Students will **have written at least 5 new sentences** based on the sentence fragments and supporting flashcards
Listening activity	Students will listen to an audio clip and circle the correct responses to a series of questions.	• Students will be able to answer some basic yes/no questions by **circling the correct answer**.	• Students will have indicated yes/no to each question by **circling the correct answer**
Reading activity	Students will form groups of 4. Each student has their own information card with a few basic sentences that they keep hidden. The remaining three students have to ask simple questions to find set information to complete their worksheet which the student will have to answer with correct sentences. This process cycles through the remaining students in the group.	• Students will be able to **ask questions** in the correct form by **speaking aloud** • Students will be able to **answer questions** in the correct form by **speaking aloud** • Students will be able to **listen** to the answers and **write** the information **on the worksheet**	• Students will have **spoken aloud** with a correctly formed sentence that their **peer will be able to answer** • Students will have **spoken aloud** with a correctly formed sentence that their peers **will be able to understand** in order to determine the correct information • Students will be able to **listen** to answers and **write** the **correct** information **on the worksheet**

Task 7: Lesson Reflection 7/11

[1] Lesson stage	[2] Activity/Description	[3] Planned performance outcomes	[4] Evidence of learning
Communicative activity	Students will mingle in three groups of six and role-play based on the roles/information contained in the previous activity; e.g. *What do I do?* I'm a fisherman. *Where do I live?* In a small hut by the lake. Interesting fact? *I race sled dogs at weekends*.	• Students will be able to **role-play** using the target language to elicit information from their peers	• Students will **be able to answer questions when prompted** regarding the roles /information that their peers have just performed

4. Improvements

- Some students had not completed the homework assignment so this had a knock-on effect on fellow students who had nothing to mark. Rather than get them to answer with the person next to them, I could have told them to mark half and half.
- Lesson time limitations meant that during the context & modelling phase some students did not get a chance to speak. Consideration needs to be made as to how I could restructure this part to not unintentionally discriminate the level of learning/practice that some students get.
- Not all students participated equally during the controlled practice speaking/role-play, with some just half-heartedly mimicking their peer rather than attempt to read and speak for themselves. Perhaps this would work better by having a series of scripts so that students are not all reading the exact same one?
- The yes/no questions on the listening activity could be more imaginative and include some gap-fill or information gathering questions too. Some students tended to just copy the person sitting nearby.
- The reading activity was a bit too easy judging by the accuracy rate of papers/worksheets I received back. Adding a couple of more advanced questions may stimulate learning more effectively.
- The group mingle activity was enjoyed by all but suffered from a bit too much looseness and lack of structure. Next time I will need to be a bit more pro-active in redirecting students back onto task. There were also too many instances of reverting back to L1 which I need to be a little stricter in discouraging.

5. Data collected & reliability

Data	Reliability
Teacher observations and notes **Student-Student interactions**	Reliable, but necessarily incomplete. Impossible to witness all interactions simultaneously.
Peer observations – marking sheet	Mostly reliable, though some students may have deliberately helped friends by filling in answers before 'marking'
Homework worksheet & reading worksheet	Homework worksheet: reasonable. No way of determining external help at home. Reading worksheet: reasonable. Filled in during class. Peer scaffolding in effect.
Listening activity questions	Reasonable, but of a fairly crude metric being simple yes/no.
Peer observations – role-plays and final mingle activity	Reasonable, time pressure forces responses and role-play depends on previous dialogue to continue

My lesson would probably benefit from a bit more attention given to delivering data with a greater degree of reliability regarding individual learning. It is stronger when considering the overall group/social scaffolding effect of language learning.

6. Learner performance criteria

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
• little or no observable evidence of learning from lesson inputs • lack of interest • lack of collaboration with peers • minimal participation • no questioning	• speaking/writing shows evidence of learning from input • some interest in classroom activities • participates • cooperates passively with peers • minimal focus • seldom if ever questions	• speaking and writing performance about right for level • engaged in classroom activities • collaborates actively with classmates • occasionally asks questions	• speaking and writing above expectations for level • strong engagement in classroom activities • frequently asks questions • sometimes a lead in collaborative activities	• exceptional level of spoken and written performance • a first responder to elicitation and participation in classroom activities • actively questions • highly focus

The table below gives a hypothetical grading based on the learner performance criteria above. The students seemed to find the role-play script and listening yes/no questions quite dull, engagement was a bit limited so learning was not optimised. They seemed to enjoy the freedom of the sentence building, which was challenging but manageable, with good input and proactive querying to me as to new possible constructions. The group activities were well received with a good overall level of participation.

Activity	Rating
Homework marking	3
Context & Modelling: Drills	3
Context & Modelling: Q&A	4
Controlled Practice: Role-play script	2
Vocabulary expansion: sentence building	5
Listening activity: Yes/No	2
Reading activity: Small groups	4
Communicative activity: Group mingle	4

Task 8a – 'A chairy tale'

- Questions:
  - 1. What is the problem?
  - 2. What were the alternative solutions?
  - 3. What is **the** solution?
  - 4. What is to be learned?

1. What is the problem?

I will first address this from a strictly literal perspective, before discussing the metaphor in my answer to 4.) below, in regard to the solution.

The man in this video was struggling with an uncooperative chair, which through apparently supernatural means is possessed of its own agency: it is wilful and reactive to the man.

This self-animated chair persistently rejected the man's attempts to sit on it, and in a game of cat-and-mouse kept evading and disrupting his every attempt to successfully seat himself down upon it.

2. What were the alternative solutions?

The man adopted a series of tactics, rejecting each one in turn after repeated attempts revealed the particular tactic to be unsuccessful. What the tactics all had in common were an attempt to co-opt or coerce the chair into subservience to this demands. This was the sequence of tactics, broadly speaking:

1. Physically overpower the chair. Deploying 'hard' power is the most natural and base human inclination to most problems. He attempted to

use brute physical power, strength and speed to capture the chair. Every attempt failed.

2. Stealth. When crude force failed, his next tactic was to use stealth. His logic was that by approaching in a stealthy manner he may be able to capture the chair unaware, rather like hunting prey. This too failed.

3. Deception. When both force and stealth failed, his final failed coercive tactic was deception: by employing trickery, he hoped to fool the chair, and by lulling it into a false sense of security, capture it by surprise.

3. What is **the** solution?

To adopt a ecological metaphor, the solution was to be found in adapting *to* the environment rather than trying to adapt the environment to *you*.

Realising all his attempts to sit on the chair had failed, the solution was found in an accommodation: he became the chair, who then sat on him. A mutual reciprocity was therefore established.

Having established a rapport with the chair, and ceased to attempt to simply impose upon the chair, the chair was consequently perfectly amenable to then return the favour and allow him to sit upon in this new environment of co-operation. His solution was therefore the gesture of co-operation and establish the all important requirement of *trust*.

4. What is to be learned?

The three tactics the man initially employed all shared the same common strategy and principle: his attempt to capture the chair by imposing his will in a coercive manner.

One of the most obvious lessons to be learned is that repeated use of the same flawed strategy, even with variance of tactics, is likely doomed to failure. The solution is found by looking for an entirely new strategy or approach, rather than simply a variation on the same failed approach. For example, repeatedly explaining a concept in essentially the same manner to an uncomprehending student will typically lead to frustration from both parties. Finding a new alternative approach may yield comprehension first time. This is what is called lateral thinking.

Secondly, no venture in life can be successful without the requisite level of trust established between all parties involved. This is a prerequisite for co-operation. In order for students to carry out your tasks and activities, in order that they hopefully learn according to your planned outcomes, you must first establish the necessary rapport and trust with them. A lot of work therefore first needs to go into establishing this initial 'groundwork' of a suitable learning environment, and your overall interpersonal relationship with your students.

Task 8b –Student Video Observation (CELTA)

- Questions:
  - 1. What are the students doing?
  - 2. What are the students learning, and how?
  - 3. Review video and describe

1. What are the students doing?

a) **A student observation timeline with & interactions notes**

Time Index (m:s)	Interaction	Student actions and notes on student behaviour
00:00	Passive	Students talking amongst themselves. Jovial atmosphere.
03:40	Passive	Looking at picture on board
03:50	Class-Teacher	Allocated into groups
04:20	Student-Student Group-Teacher	Small group discussions
05:30	Group-Teacher	Responding to questions
05:55	Group-Class	Student groups/whole class discussion
06:30	Student-Teacher	Suggesting answers to questions. Speaking aloud.
06:45	Whole class	Appear to be looking at selection of pictures
07:50	Student-Teacher	Responding/confirming task requirements.
08:00	Group-work	Pairs/small groups Q&A
08:10	Group-Teacher	Groups offering answers. Student dialogue with teacher.
08:15	Student	Student reviewing notes/writing in exercise book.

Task 8b:Video Observation 2 3/7

Time Index (m:s)	Interaction	Student actions and notes on student behaviour
08:45	Groups	Discussing in pairs/small groups
09:00	Whole class	Appear to be watching teacher model
09:10	Whole class	Appear to be listening/observing teacher
09:35		Apparently observing teacher reviewing from board
10:30	Class-Teacher	Individual students responding to teacher eliciting answers. Student nearest camera moves around a lot; seems to be excess energy rather than lack of engagement. Rocking in chair, fidgeting.
11:30	Class-Teacher	Laughter; suggests comprehension of subject matter.
11:35	Student-Teacher	Student speaking with teacher, humour
12:10	Student-Teacher	Reading aloud from board
14:00	Whole class	Students appear to be listening to an audio clip
15:30	Student	Near-camera student restless/fidgeting again
16:05	Whole class	Students listening to task instructions

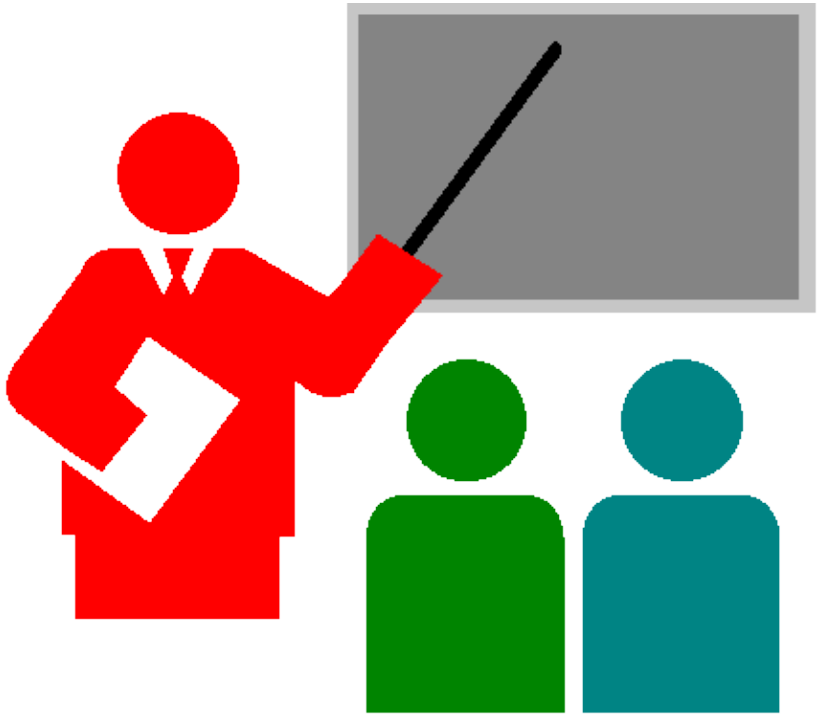
Task 8b:Video Observation 2 4/7

Time Index (m:s)	Interaction	Student actions and notes on student behaviour
16:20	Group-work	Students discussing audio clip in small groups. Upbeat and engaged atmosphere.
17:20	Class-Teacher	Students offering responses to teachers questions
19:15	Group-work	Students change seating positions. Groups change.
19:45	Individual student Small groups?	Students apparently working on a gap-fill activity on modal verbs. Groups of two or three?
20:50	Group-Teacher Student-Student	Individual students observing other's work, and listening to their questions. Peer learning.
24:00	Whole class	Students listening to audio clip again. Appear to be intensively listening. Student body language: playing with ring on finger. Unclear whether habit or drift in attention. Overall atmosphere seems focused.
26:00	Student-Student	Students continuing to work on the worksheet. Students comparing answers with each other.

Task 8b:Video Observation 2 5/7

Time Index (m:s)	Interaction	Student actions and notes on student behaviour
27:00	Student-Teacher Group-Class	Students speaking aloud. Apparently checking answers against the board. Students offering verbal contributions. Groups suggesting answers.
28:00	Class-Teacher	Students offering responses to teachers questions
29:00	Whole class	Appear to be listening to teacher's instructions
31:00	Whole class	Appear to be watching teacher's board work
32:00	Individual students	Near silence as students all appear to be working studiously on the sheet/activity
36:00	Student-Teacher	Individual students questioning teacher, clarifying information
37:00	Pair-work Student-Student	Students sharing work in pairs. Speaking from student to student. Appear to be focused on task and there is a general buzz/energy in classroom.
40:00	Group-work	Students stand up and gather for worksheet speaking activity: scrutinising worksheets, lots of student-student talking, positive/jovial atmosphere with humour, multiple interactions. Students mingling and roaming with what seems a high overall level of participation on task.

Time Index (m:s)	Interaction	Student actions and notes on student behaviour
44:00	Group-work Student-Student	Students animated/vocal (in positive sense).
46:00	Student-Teacher	Students speaking one-to-one with teacher to check/clarify. Appear to be on task.



2. What are the students learning, and how?

What are the students learning?	How are the students learning? (Activities and exercises)
• Topic is "teenagers and their problems" • Hypothesising about what the pictured students (of almost identical age) might be discussing in the photos • Learning about modal verbs • Learning how to describe family members/friends	• Discussions in pairs/small groups in the target language • Directly responding to the teacher's questions with responses/suggestions • Answering questions on being a teenager ("What do you have to do?/What can't you do?/What are you not allowed to do?") by extensive discussion in pairs/small groups (all in target language) • Speaking individually to the class in response to the questions • Gap fill activity worksheet in pairs • Individually suggesting answers to the gap-fill activity to the class • Completing a table on family members and friends using the selection of phrases • Discussing the completed table in pairs • Asking questions about family based on information/prompts on a worksheet

What evidence of student learning is there that you can see or hear?

- Talking in pairs about what they think the people in the picture on the screen are discussing
- Answering questions (speaking directly to the teacher) regarding the teenagers in the picture
- Speaking directly to the teacher. Student-Student listening/peer based learning
- Responding to direct questions from the teacher by providing suggested answers
- Completing the gap-fill worksheet, discussing the correct potential answers in pairs
- Apparently listening to audio clip in relation to the gap-fill worksheet
- Providing answers (speaking aloud) to the gap-fill activity worksheet on modal verbs
- Asking specific questions to the teacher to clarify language features
- Completing (writing) in the table on family members and friends. Some student-to-student suggestions.
- Speaking to other students based on the information they have written in the table
- Checking with the teacher about particular items/information they have written in the table
- Reading from the worksheet and using Q&A with other students

Task 9 – DIY Video & Student Observation Guide

- Questions:
  - 1. Choose your own video
  - 2. Design an observation guide
  - 3. Observation & notes
  - 4. Video review & analysis

1. Choose your own video

The video I used for my observation is here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Niel3vqgwrU

2. Design and observation guide

My observation guide comprises two parts, which are below:

a) **Student observation timeline with & interactions notes**

b) **Student observation summary guide**

3. Observation and notes

a) Student observation timeline with interactions & notes.

Time Index (h:m:s)	Interaction	Student actions and notes on student behaviour
0:00:00	Passive	Looking at whiteboard
0:00:30	Class-Teacher	Answering questions
0:01:30	Pair-work	Answering two questions in response to whiteboard image: *i) What has just happened* *ii) What are they talking/thinking about?* Discussing in pairs. Writing answers.

Task 9: DIY Video Observation 3/11

Time Index (h:m:s)	Interaction	Student actions and notes on student behaviour
0:03:40	Student-Teacher	Responding individually to the teacher's questions.
0:04:30	Student-Teacher	More extended dialogue, Q&As.
0:05:30	Whole class	Answering vocabulary questions.
0:05:54	Whole class	Students speaking/repetition drill.
0:06:25	Class-Teacher	Individual responses to elicited questions.
0:06:55	Whole class	All students look attentive and focused on task.
0:07:30	Class-Teacher	More dialogue, Q&A responses.
0:08:30	Whole class Individual students	Speaking drill. Students drilling/repeating as a whole class then as individuals when asked.

Task 9: DIY Video Observation 4/11

Time Index (h:m:s)	Interaction	Student actions and notes on student behaviour
0:09:00	Whole class	Appear to all be looking attentively at board.
0:10:30	Class-Teacher	Offering answers
0:12:00	Whole class	Appear to be writing pertinent notes on material.
0:13:00	Whole class	Appear to be listening attentively to the audio clip. Some note-taking.
0:14:20	Pair-work	Students appear to be discussing in pairs the content of the audio clip.
0:15:30	Class-Teacher Student-Student	Students suggesting responses to teacher's questions. Students appear to be listening to other student's suggestions.
0:16:50	Student-Teacher	Individual students offering further responses/information to the teacher.
0:17:50	Whole class	Students listening to audio clip again. Appear to be studying the pictures on the board in the context of the listening activity. Appear highly focused once more.

Task 9: DIY Video Observation 5/11

Time Index (h:m:s)	Interaction	Student actions and notes on student behaviour
0:19:15	Pair-work	Discussing in pairs. Student questioning instructions from teacher – seeking clarification.
0:20:15	Class-Teacher	Offering answers
0:21:15	Class-Teacher	Students voting responses to teacher's yes/no questions by raising their hand.
0:22:00	Class-Teacher	Students offering responses. Some extended dialogue from individual students.
0:25:15	Whole class	Speaking aloud. All students drilling.
0:26:20	Class-Teacher	Students apparently studying the board. Offering individual responses.
0:30:30	Whole class	Whole class speaking. Responding to flashcard prompts.
0:32:00	Whole class	All students appear engaged. Lots of energy and engagement, Humour/laughter.

Task 9: DIY Video Observation 6/11

Time Index (h:m:s)	Interaction	Student actions and notes on student behaviour
0:32:25	Student-Teacher	Individual students speaking.
0:33:20	Whole class	Students offering answers
0:34:20	Pair-work	Students discussing answers in pairs. Appear to be constructing sentences for activity.
0:35:40	Student-Class	Individual students speaking. Other students apparently listening and attentive.
0:37:10	Class-Teacher	Students responding to board questions.
0:37:30	Individual	Students apparently working individually on a worksheet.
0:39:30	Pair-work	Students apparently consulting with each other on worksheet. Discussing/comparing answers.
0:39:50	Student-Class	Students speaking aloud. Responding to teacher's concept checking questions.

Task 9: DIY Video Observation 7/11

Time Index (h:m:s)	Interaction	Student actions and notes on student behaviour
0:41:40	Student-Teacher	Student volunteering/offering input. Highly positive engagement.
0:42:00	Pair-work	Students speaking in pairs. Engaged and on-task. General buzz in class room. Positive.
0:44:00	Pair-work	Students self-correcting. Responding to remedial input from teacher.
0:45:00	Student-Teacher	Individual students checking answers with teacher.
0:45:45	Student-Class	Students individually speaking to class. Responding to Q&A dialogue from teacher.
0:47:30	Class-Teacher	Students responding to board questions. Looking up and appear attentive.
0:48:00	Class-Teacher	Student offering input/suggestion/clarification to teacher.
0:49:50	Whole class	Students changing physical positions. Reorganising themselves into groups of four under direction.

Task 9: DIY Video Observation 8/11

Time Index (h:m:s)	Interaction	Student actions and notes on student behaviour
0:50:15	Whole class	Whole class studying prompt cards/responding to questions from teacher.
0:50:45	Group-work Student-Student	Students working in groups of 4. Speaking aloud to each other. Communicating and hypothesising possible answers with each other.
0:52:50	Whole class	Speaking aloud/drilling/pronunciation responses to teacher's input.
0:53:15	Whole class	Appear to be carefully listening to instructions
0:54:15	Group-work Student-Student	Students speaking in their groups. Emotionally engaged and apparently enjoying it.
0:55:20	Group-work Student-Student	Free-flowing and unforced speaking between students.
0:56:40	Group-work Student-Student	Detailed communication between students. Appear to be intensely concentrating on task.

Task 9: DIY Video Observation 9/11

Time Index (h:m:s)	Interaction	Student actions and notes on student behaviour
0:59:20	Group-work Student-Student	5 minutes of sustained group-work, student-student interaction, and speaking from students.
0:59:30	Student-Teacher	Individual student responses to teacher's questions/prompts.
1:00:30	Student-Teacher	Extended individual student response.
1:01:05	Whole class	Students appear to studying board/listening to teacher.
1:02:00	Class-Teacher	Students offering input to teacher's board notes.
1:03:20	Class-Teacher	Students confirming/clarifying instructions.

b) Student observation summary guide (1/2)

Student engagement:	Student activities:
• Students seem to be highly focused throughout lesson • Most (and indeed quite possibly all) students appear to be enjoying the lesson • All students appear to be getting involved without resistance in the activities	• Studying photo and discussing in pairs as to 'what are they thinking about' • Responding to teachers specific questions for the photo reflection activity • Speaking aloud in whole class pronunciation activity/drill. Responding to realia item the teacher is presenting (leather wallet). • Listening to audio clip regarding what to do with some money that they unexpected found/gained. • Building sentences from basic fragment of "If I found some money I'd...<student input>" • Reviewing grammar on board, suggesting correct forms • Filling in worksheet regarding correct verb placement/participle • Modifying worksheet to reflect information about oneself • Speaking aloud regarding partners information in regard to worksheet • Working in groups to put verbs into correct form on flashcards

b) Student observation summary guide (2/2)

Evidence of learning:	Overall review/analysis – student perspective:
• Writing down answers to photo reflection. Discussing in pairs/small groups with peers. • Speaking aloud with their answers to the photo reflection • Speaking aloud/responding to elicited questions • Discussing in pairs answers to audio clip. • Giving specific answers in response to audio clip. • Building sentences according to fragment/structure. • Speaking aloud based on sentence formula. • Completing worksheet with correct verb forms. • Students discussing worksheet. Repeating aloud. • Checking their prospective answers with teacher. Clarifying correct grammar form with teacher. • Tentatively speaking aloud/formulating answer then checking their result on rear of flashcard.	• Students appeared to be exceptionally focused and on-task throughout the entire lesson. • Students had a significant amount of time working with the target language structures. • 'Passive' learning was comparatively limited and kept to small chunks. Probably 75% of the lesson time was 'active' student-led learning based on the input/direction from the teacher. • Students spent the majority of the lesson discussing and formulating task-specific questions in pairs/small groups. • Students were producing a large amount of potential 'output' evidence that could be collected to judge the extent of learning.

On the basis of this video this appears – as best as one can infer indirectly at a remove – like an extremely successful lesson from a student learning perspective.

Action reflection/Self reflection

What I thought I did well:

I think my sections on 'beliefs' and Gass & Selinker's second language acquisition model are perhaps some of my strongest areas; this perhaps reflects my particular interest in the philosophical dimension of subjects (in general).

Areas of improvement:

The principal improvement I would like to make is to improve my workflow. Given the time context we had, I spent too much time deliberating over theory which meant that I have had a very heavy workload this week finishing all the slides on time. Starting earlier would have made this process easier; on the other hand, the thought process first meant that I was pretty clear in my mind as to what I wanted to present in the slides.

What I found particularly difficult:

The 'practical' sections on the hypothetical class were the most challenging for me, since I do not have a repository of prior teaching experiences to draw upon, so have had to go on accounts from fellow students and based on my own inferences.