

*Working
Responsively:
Emergent Language
in ESOL
Classrooms*

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The Problems with ESOL

The “Targets” Problem

Language acquisition is unpredictable and individual

The “3rd Person Present Simple Singular” Problem

You can follow “best practice” with spaced learning, interleaving and so on, and target language *still* doesn’t stick until the learner is ready.

The “Dimples, Bangles and Polo Shirts” Problem

Students *do* remember language you weren’t expecting, and you can’t always predict what they might need.

The Spiky Profile Problem

Every level is “mixed” - from people who have just started a given level to those who are almost ready to move on.



"From", "Between" & "With"

Three Core Ideas

“From”: Emergence

“Unplanned language that is needed or produced by learners during meaning focused interactions [which] is then explored through reformulation, clarification and support from the teacher.”

(Chinn & Norrington-Davies, 2023)

“If learners are supplied with optimal conditions for language use and are motivated to take advantage of these opportunities, their inherent learning capacities will be activated, and language - rather than being acquired - will *emerge*.”

(Meddings & Thornbury, 2009)

"Between:" Interaction

"Students achieve facility in *using* a language when their attention is focused on conveying and receiving authentic messages...not just the expression of one's own ideas but comprehension of those of others."

(Rivers, 1987)

"During interaction, learners may realise what they do not know how to say or notice a mismatch between their utterance and the target language... processes which are thought to sensitise learners to the occurrence of those particular forms."

(Henshaw & Hawkins, 2023)

“With:” Participation

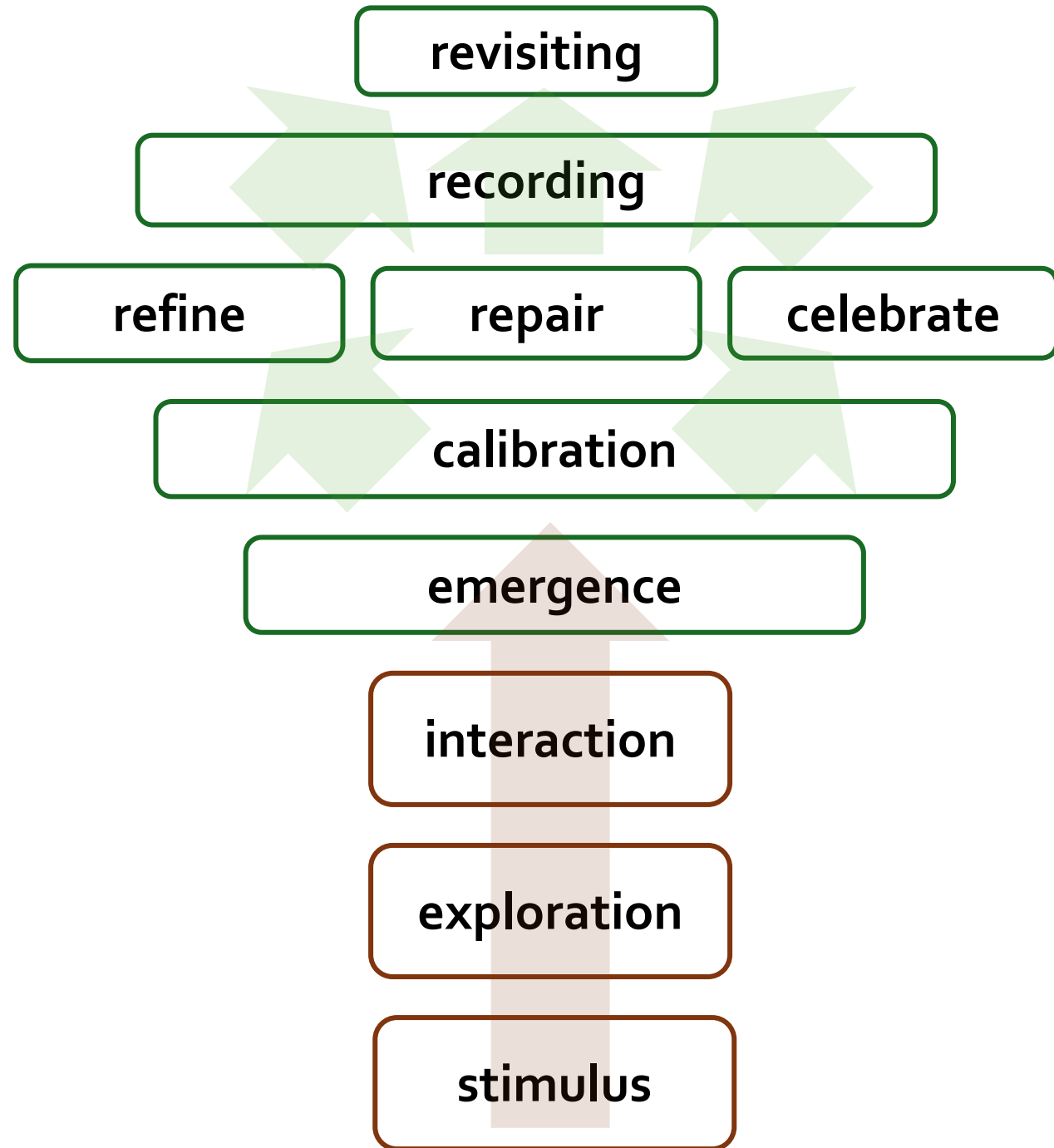
“The concerns and issues which affect students in their daily lives should be the driving force behind the curriculum.”

(Bryers, Winstanley & Cooke, 2012)

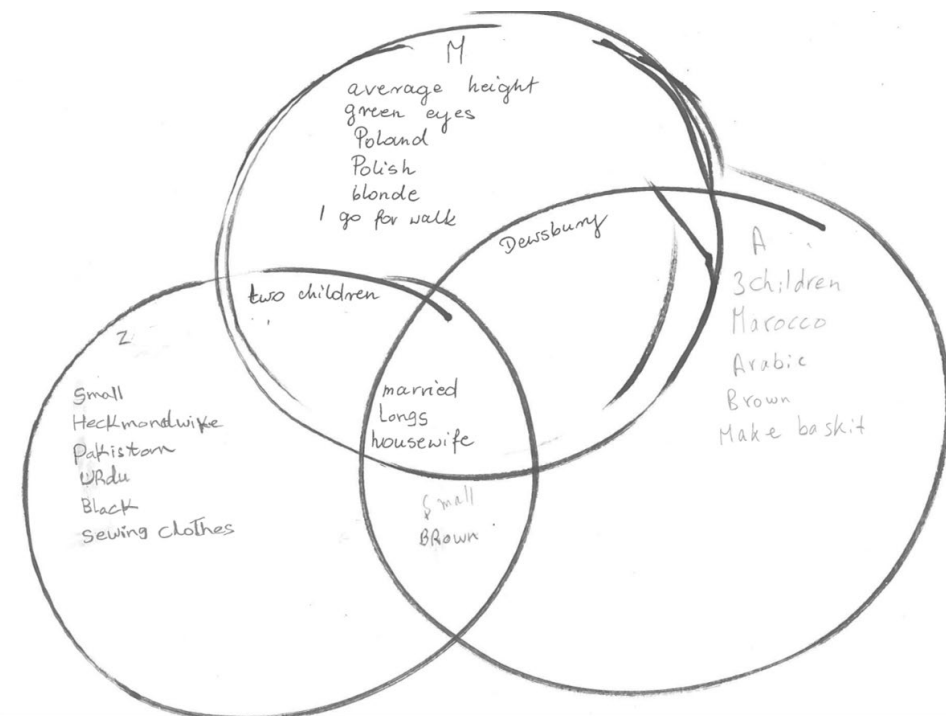
“Dialogue as a teaching method returns us to the root of human talk, our desire to learn about, talk about and act upon the world we are in, together. This is a mutual inquiry, not a one-way didactic lecture by the teacher to the students.”

(Shor, 1987)

In practice...



Stimuli to explore



Police pass course on farming vehicles

Specialists to help combat agricultural machinery thefts

ROADS policing officers, who completed a specialist two-day course on plant and agricultural vehicle theft identification, were presented with their qualification at the Royal Highland Show.

Police Scotland now has 12 qualified specialist roads policing officers who can appear in court as expert witnesses in the identification of stolen agricultural vehicles and plant.

The two-day course was funded by NFU Mutual, a key partner in the Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC).

The 12 officers are accredited agricultural vehicle examiners

ager, NFU Mutual Insurance, said: "Vehicle or machinery theft can cause considerable disruption to businesses and NFU Mutual is pleased to support this training."

Allan Bowie, NFU Scotland president, said: "It is encouraging to see work like this being done by Police Scotland. Anything which safeguards our members' property and makes it less attractive to criminals is a positive thing."

Sarah-Jane Laing, director of policy and parliamentary affairs at Scottish Land & Estates, said: "Rural crime has gained prominence in recent years and it is pleasing that organisations



"My children are looking after my brother."



From emergence to learning

1. **Listen** to the meaning-focused interactions
2. **Capture** it and focus on language
 - immediate focus
 - delayed focus
3. **Calibrate** the language
 - repair – correct errors & fill the gaps (including direct requests for help)
 - refine – “You could say it like that, but this is a better way of saying it.”
 - celebrate interesting / novel language
4. **Record & Revisit**



Let me show you what I mean...

Lubna: *I supposed to go to Pakistan.*

Lubna: *communicates meaning*

Sam: *"was supposed"*

Sam: *corrects error*

Marta: *Is this like 'cope'?*

Marta: *notices meaning, compares and analyses the language*

Sam: *No, no, what did Lubna say?
What was her message?*

Sam: *clarifies the communicative meaning*

Marta: *Oh like she planned but she
couldn't?*

Marta: *lightbulb!*

Lubna: *Yes!*

Lubna: *confirms*

"Calibrate" the language – What would you do?

The TV is on the corner.

He teaches me too many things.

Like a sponge they absorb.

I don't drink cola. Last time I was drunk, I went to hospital.

I was fighting with my friends at work.

It was proper *panga*.

Our languages are language
chutney.

"That's all very well, but what about..."

But the paperwork...

From....

- learning outcomes
- covering language
- predicting the unpredictable
- imposed
- delivered

To...

- learning opportunities
- uncovering language
- embracing the unpredictable
- responsive
- enabled

But beginners...

14th March

Ramadan

* Fast

a n
b o
c p
d q
e r
f s
g t
h u
i v
j w
k x
l y
m z

put on make up

put on clothes

take off

wake up early

make chapati

make roti

make samosa

eat fruit

drink tea

* read the Qu'ran

* pray

In Ramadan, we _____.

But exams...

- Most exams test whole language use, rather than specific language items
- Devise exam format “SPaG” type questions based on emergent language
- Look at the reading questions in exams and develop similar tasks for emergent / developing texts
- Restricted writing to order: 10 minute / two sentence / one paragraph writing
- “Lightning talks” - short focused presentations
- Question and answer activities based on nn

A Final Observation

None of this is "new" or even "innovative"

Good teachers do this *all the time*.

But can we accept that language "outcomes" like this could be the *whole* lesson...

...or even the whole course?

Thank you.

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Things worth reading!

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