The road less travelled by

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THE ROAD AHEAD
TOGETHER

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As we emerge from the pandemic and face the road ahead, you may – like me – feel we have been forced to take a long and often unpredictable detour along the path of online teaching. And you may be enjoying – or looking forward to – a return to the well-trodden road of face-to-face teaching. In this talk, I want to extend this metaphor and explore some other 'less-travelled' roads we might have taken, or might yet take, and the kinds of choices we are faced with, as language educators, as we stand at the fork in the road.

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

[Robert Frost]

[After taking the register the teacher starts chatting to students]

T: well then, Jorge . . . did you have a good weekend?
S: yes
T: what did you do?
S: I got married.
T: [smiling] you got married. (0.7) you certainly had a good weekend then. (5.0) [laughter and buzz of conversation]
T: now turn to page 56 in your books. (1.6) you remember last time we were talking about biographies . . . [T checks book and lesson plan while other students talk to Jorge in Spanish about his nuptials.]

Cadorath, J. and Harris, S. (1998). Unplanned classroom language and teacher training. *ELT Journal,* 52, 188-196.

'It is likely that every teacher has had the experience of having something unexpected occur during a lesson. Whether it leads to derailment of the lesson or a contribution to learning is often largely a matter of how the teacher reacts to the unexpected, and the extent to which the co-production is encouraged or stifled.'

Allwright, D. & Bailey, K. M. (1991). *Focus on the language classroom.* Cambridge University Press. (p. 25).

The well-trodden path, in which education is:

1. transmissive
2. exclusively cognitive
3. granular
4. market-driven
5. outcomes-oriented

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A banking model of education:

'...in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat.'

Freire, P. (1970, 1993). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 53.

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'Second language acquisition is first and foremost a mental process [...] Cognition and cognitive factors, therefore, are central to any account of how and why SLA works, or so often fails.'

Long, M.H. & Richards, J.C. (2001). Series editors' preface. In P. Robinson (Ed.) *Cognition and second language instruction* (p. vii). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p vii.

"Essentially, we can think of language use and language acquisition as constrained by the operations of a limited capacity information processing system".

Skehan, P. (1998) *A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 86.

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'Language learning ..., so the conventional view would have it, entails the successive mastery of steadily accumulating structural entities and language teaching brings the entities to the learner's attention.'

Rutherford, W.E. (1987). *Second Language Grammar: Learning and Teaching.* Harlow: Longman, p. 4.

'Since grammatical constructs are manipulable items, they can easily be ordered, grouped, combined, tabulated, indexed, etc., for putting a grammatical stamp on a set of learning materials. Grammatical content in this sense is thus the point of departure for syllabus compilation, as well as its dénouement.'
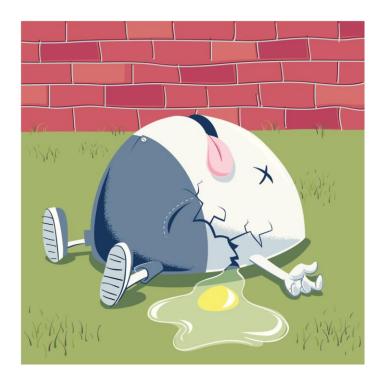
Rutherford, op cit., p. 157

"Publishers need to be looking at producing *granular* content … no longer in the form of a big-package textbook, but broken down into small chunks that teachers, students, administrators can choose to use in combination or in a blend with any other content that they choose to use."

'**The Humpty Dumpty effect**: ... It is easier to break a language apart than to put it together again.'

Stern, H.H. (1992) *Issues and options in language teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, p- 179.

"Grammar instruction has been relatively unaltered by research findings. It remains traditional for the most part, with grammar teaching centred on accuracy of form and rule learning, and with mechanical exercises seen as the way to bring about the learning of grammar."

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2015) 'Research into practice: grammar learning and teaching.' *Language Teaching, 48,* 363-280, p. 263.

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'The shift in higher education to market-based values has been accompanied by a similar shift in educational philosophies in which cooperative social ethics have been replaced by individualist, competitive business models.'

Litzenberg, J. (2020) '"If I don't do it somebody else will": covert neoliberal policy discourses in the decision-making processes of an intensive English programme .' TESOL Quarterly, 54/4, p. 832

'Language teaching is increasingly prepackaged and delivered as if it were a standardised, marketable product [...] This commodifying ideology of language teaching and learning has gradually penetrated into school practices, turning teachers into "service providers"'.

Lin, A. (2013). 'Toward paradigmatic change in TESOL methodologies: building plurilingual pedagogies from the ground up.' *TESOL Quarterly*, 47/3, p. 525.

'What one finds is the continuous deskilling of teachers as so much of what they have to do is decided well in advance by examinations boards and inspectors who come to inspections with a clear profile of what constitutes good teaching.'

Gray, J. & Block, D. (2012) 'The marketization of language teacher education and neoliberalism: characteristics, consequences and future prospects.' In Block, D., Gray, J .& Holborrow, M. (eds) *Neoliberalism and applied linguistics*. Routledge. (p. 128)

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'In many education systems the key question for students, teachers, parents, school administrators, and even inspectors is not, 'Are students gaining in communicative competence?' but, 'Are they on course for the examination?'

Johnson, R. K. (1989). A decision-making framework for the coherent language curriculum.' In Johnson, R. K. (ed.) *The second language curriculum*. Cambridge , p. 6.

The roads less travelled by:

1. experiential learning
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3. critical pedagogy
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5. the ecological turn
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"We may learn the tokens of language formally, but we learn the system by *using* it through reading or writing, or conversing."

Brumfit, C. (2001) *Individual Freedom in Language Teaching.* Oxford University Press, p.12, emphasis added.

"A curriculum that promotes only segmented, isolated, and elemental learning tasks reduces the student's degree of learning (including incidental learning) and also their preparedness for future learning'.
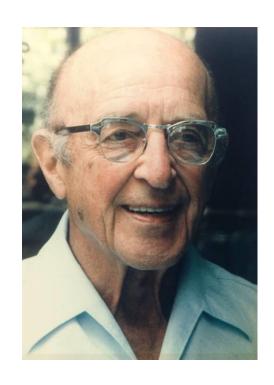
McNaughton, S. (2002). *Meeting of minds.* Wellington, NZ: Learning Media, p. 42.

'Usage-based approaches emphasize how language is learned from participatory experience of processing language during embodied interaction in social and cultural contexts.'

Ellis, N. (2015) 'Cognitive and social aspects of learning from usage.' In Cadierno, T. & Eskildsen, S.W. (eds.) *Usage-based perspectives on second language learning.* Mouton: de Gruyter, p. 61)

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'Each year I become more pessimistic about what is going on in educational institutions. They have focused so intently on the cognitive and have limited themselves so completely to "education from the neck up", that this narrowness is resulting in serious social consequences ... As a consequence of this overstress on the cognitive, and of the avoidance of any feeling connected with it, most of the excitement has gone out of education.'

Carl Rogers (1975), quoted in Moskowitz, G. (1978). *Caring and sharing in the foreign language class.* Newbury House, p. 8.

"Success depends less on materials, techniques, and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom."

Stevick, E.W. (1980) *Teaching languages: A way and ways.* Rowley, MA: Newbury House, p 4.

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'The dialogue in which students and teachers are to participate together is always grounded in the realities of the lived relations within which the participants find themselves.'

Simon, R. (1992) *Teaching against the grain,* Greenwood, p. 96.

"A dialogic pedagogy is unlike traditional pedagogy... it sets new goals for teachers - poetic, psychological, political goals that ... do not constitute any easy-to-follow method. .. Such a pedagogy should better be described, not as a blueprint for how to *teach* foreign languages, but as another way of *being* a language teacher."

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and Culture in Language teaching,* Oxford University Press, p. 31.

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Social strategies	Cognitive strategies
S-1 Join a group and act as if you understand what's going on, even if you don't.	C-1 Assume what people are saying is relevant to the situation at hand. Meta-strategy—guess.
S-2 Give the impression, with a few well-chosen words, that you speak the language.	C-2 Get some expressions you understand, and start talking.
S-3 Count on your friends for help.	C-3 Look for recurring parts in the formulas you know.
	C-4 Make the most of what you've got.
	C-5 Work on the big things first: save the details for later.

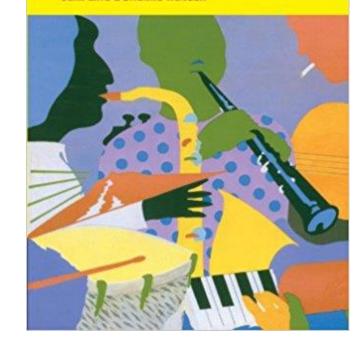Table 1.1 Social and cognitive strategies used by five child L2 learners

after Wong Fillmore, L. (1979) 'Individual differences in second language acquisition,' in Fillmore, C., Kempler, D., & Wang, W. (eds) *Individual Differences in Language Ability and Language Behavior,* New York: Academic Press.

'In contrast with learning as internalisation, learning as increasing participation in communities of practice concerns the whole person acting in the world.'

Lave, J. & Wenger, E 1991. *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 49.

"Brains are in bodies, bodies are in the world, and meaningful action in these worlds is in large part socially constructed and conducted."

Churchill, E., Okada, H., Nishino, T., and Atkinson, D. (2010) 'Symbiotic gesture and the sociocognitive visibility of grammar in second language acquisition'. *The Modern Language Journal,* 94, p. 237.

'Language is activity, not object. As a result, it is in the world rather than in the head.'

van Lier, L. (2004). *The Ecology and Semiotics of Language Learning: A Sociocultural Perspective.* Dordrecht: Kluwer, (p. 19)

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'An ecological approach sees the learner as a whole person, not a grammar production unit. It involves having meaningful things to do and say, being taken seriously, being given responsibility, and being encouraged to tackle challenging projects, to think critically, and to take control of one's own learning...'

van Lier, L. (2004). *The Ecology and Semiotics of Language Learning: A Sociocultural Perspective.* Dordrecht: Kluwer, (pp. 223-224)

"An important implication of my study is that the second language teacher needs to help learners claim the right to speak outside the classroom. To this end, the lived experiences and social identities of language learners need to be incorporated into the formal second language curriculum."

Peirce, B. N. (1995) Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly,* 29, 9-31. (p. 26)

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'The translingual language practices of metrolingualism, polylingual languaging, or plurilanguaging are not the occasional language uses of exceptional communities but rather the everyday language practices of the majority world.'

Pennycook, A. (2010). *Language as a Local Practice.* London: Routledge, p. 133.

'There is… a growing body of research showing that approaches to L2 instruction which incorporate learners' L1 have a positive impact on their multilingual identities and contribute to improved cognitive and linguistic development.'

Lightbown , P. M & Spada, N. (2020). 'Teaching and learning L2 in the classroom: it's about time.' *Language teaching,* 53/4. p. 426.

'We have repertoires of linguistic resources which we use locally [...] Our goal as language educators might be better understood as developing resourceful speakers rather than some vague notion of native competence.'

Pennycook, A. (2012) *Language and Mobility: Unexpected Places,* Bristol: Multilingual Matters, p. 100, 170.
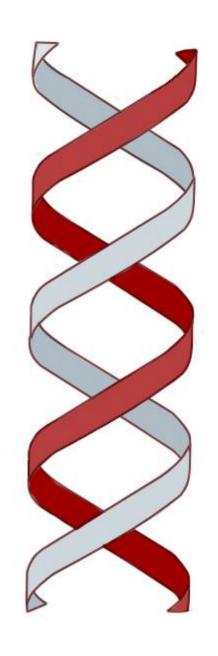
cognitive — social

atomistic — holistic

deductive — experiential

transmissive — dialogic

product-oriented — process-oriented
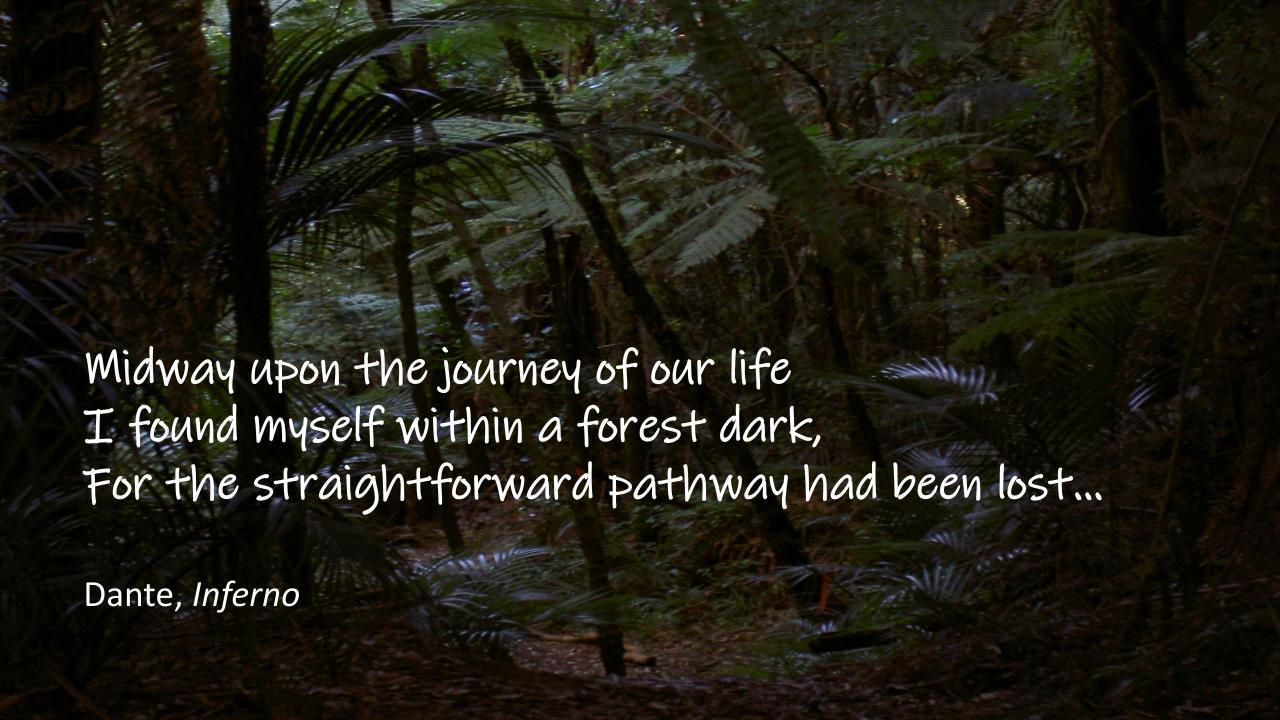
monolingual — multilingual

'It is possible that L2 learners might be better served by a combination of implicit and explicit instruction. For instance, because the development of implicit knowledge is so time consuming, it may be a more efficient use of instructional time to provide explicit instruction.'
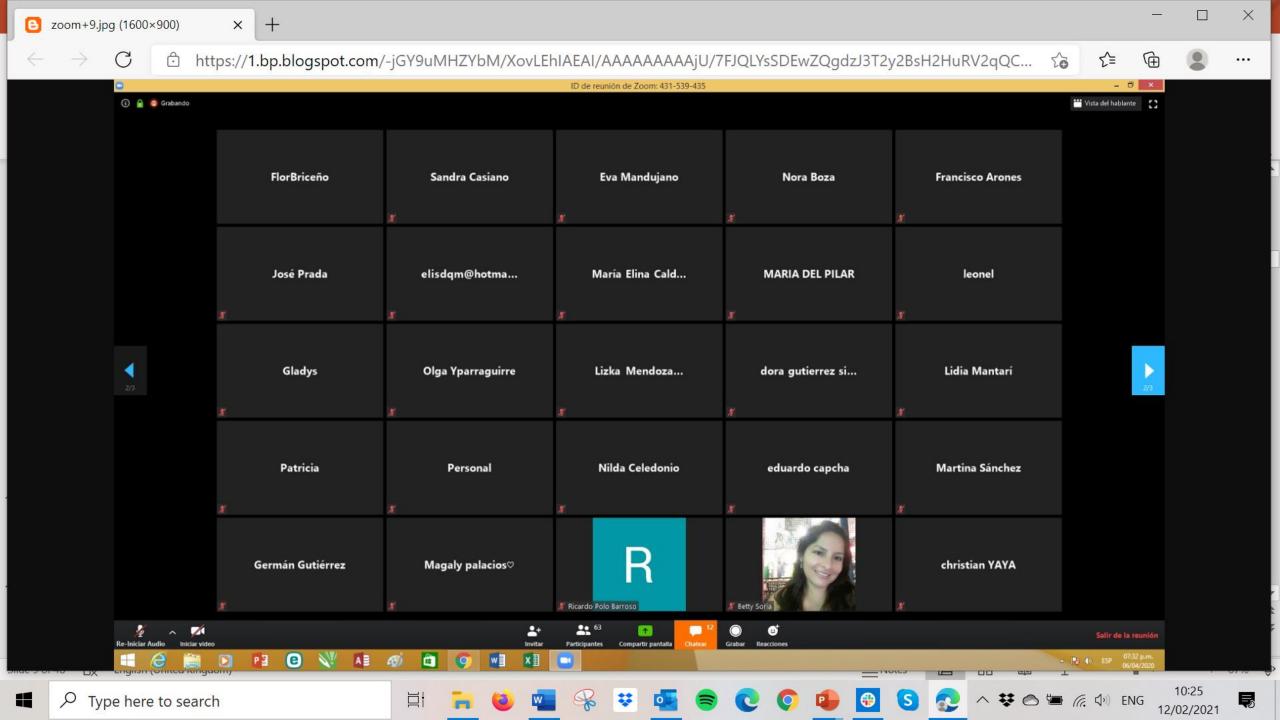
Loewen, S. (2015). *Introduction to instructed second language acquisition.* London: Routledge, p. 26.

Had we but world enough and time
This coyness, lady, were no crime...

But at my back I always hear
Times wingéd chariot hurrying near.

Andrew Marvell, *To his coy mistress*.

Midway upon the journey of our life
I found myself within a forest dark,
For the straightforward pathway had been lost...
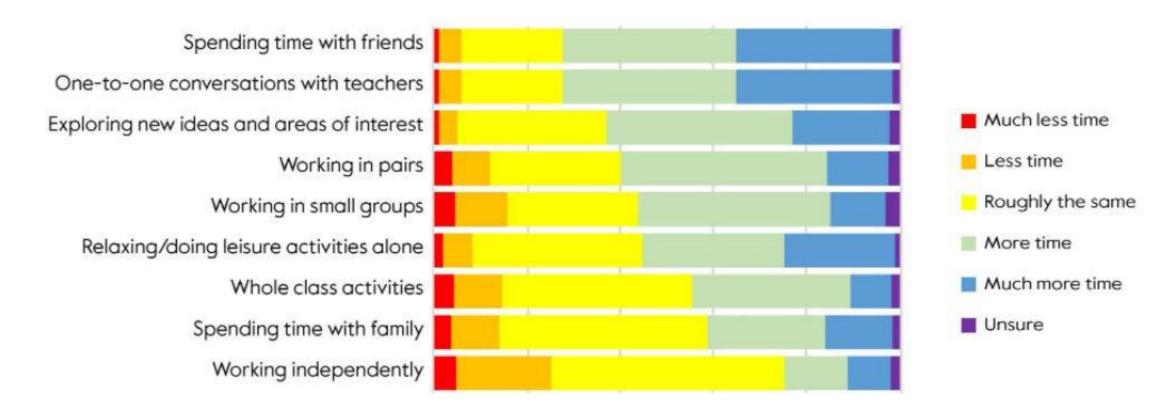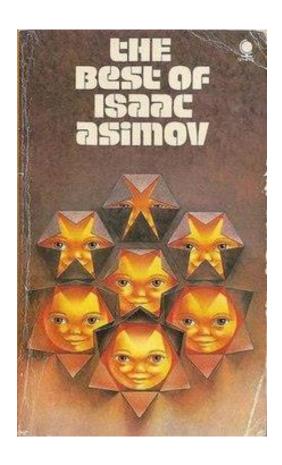
Dante, *Inferno*

'So almost everything that made teaching pleasurable is gone, as far as I'm concerned... It got me out of the house, forced me to be somewhat sociable, gave me loads of exercise ...and very often the feeling that I'd been useful and appreciated. The improvisations and changes of direction that kept me quick-witted are much more difficult to execute [online]. I cannot privately approach an individual who's floundering, or even see if anyone is. Now we sit at home in front of a computer and conduct séance after séance with students who are talking heads in two-inch squares on a screen. Does anyone really enjoy this or think it a reasonable swap for human contact?'

[lathophobic aphasia: The Loneliness of the Long Distance Teacher (giaklamata.blogspot.com)](giaklamata.blogspot.com)

What do students say they need post lockdown?

'...Margie was thinking about how the kids must have loved it in the old days. She was thinking about the fun they had.'

Asimov, I. (1951) 'The fun they had'. Reprinted in *The Best of Isaac Asimov* (1973, Doubleday).

My ties and ballasts leave me—I travel, I sail,
my elbows rest in the sea-gaps,
I skirt the sierras, my palms cover continents,
I am afoot with my vision.

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

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