

Task-Based Learning Remastered

ETAS Conference, January 2019

Neil McCutcheon, Fluency First ELT



“Some experienced teachers are used to.... controlling learner language in order to avoid mistakes. TBLT requires a willingness to surrender some of that control.” (Dave Willis)



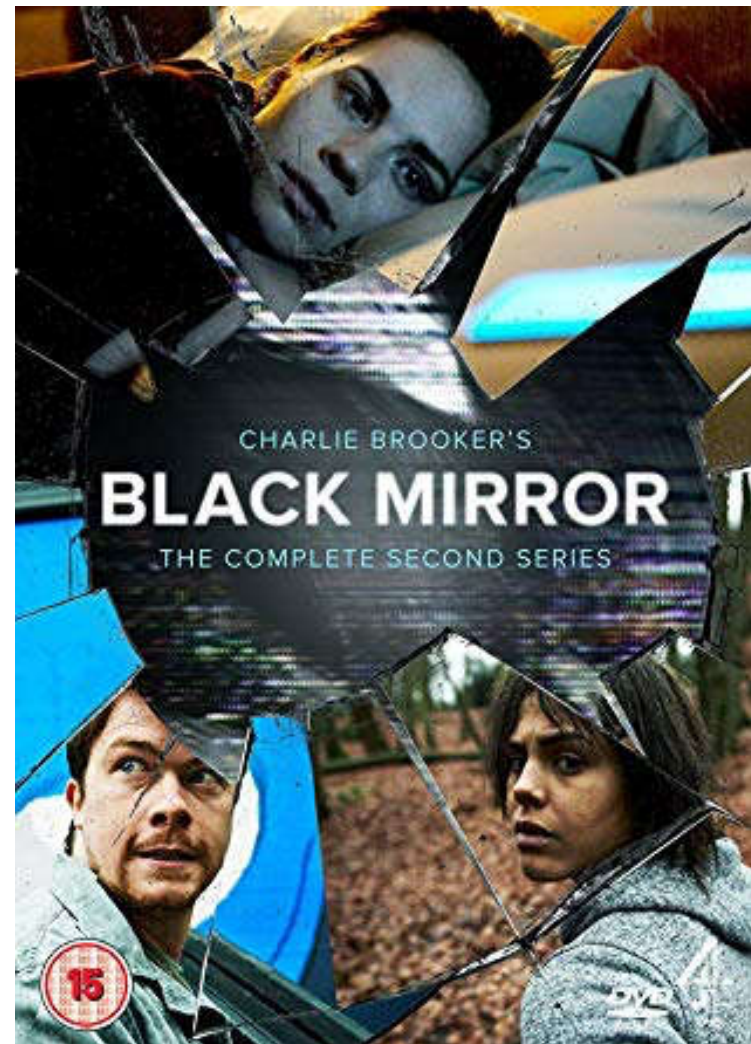
Teaching does not cause learning

- Interlanguage (Selinker, 1972)
- Acquisition order / “natural order”
- The role of implicit learning, the “default mechanism” (Long, 2015)



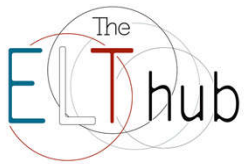
Task 1

Black Mirror

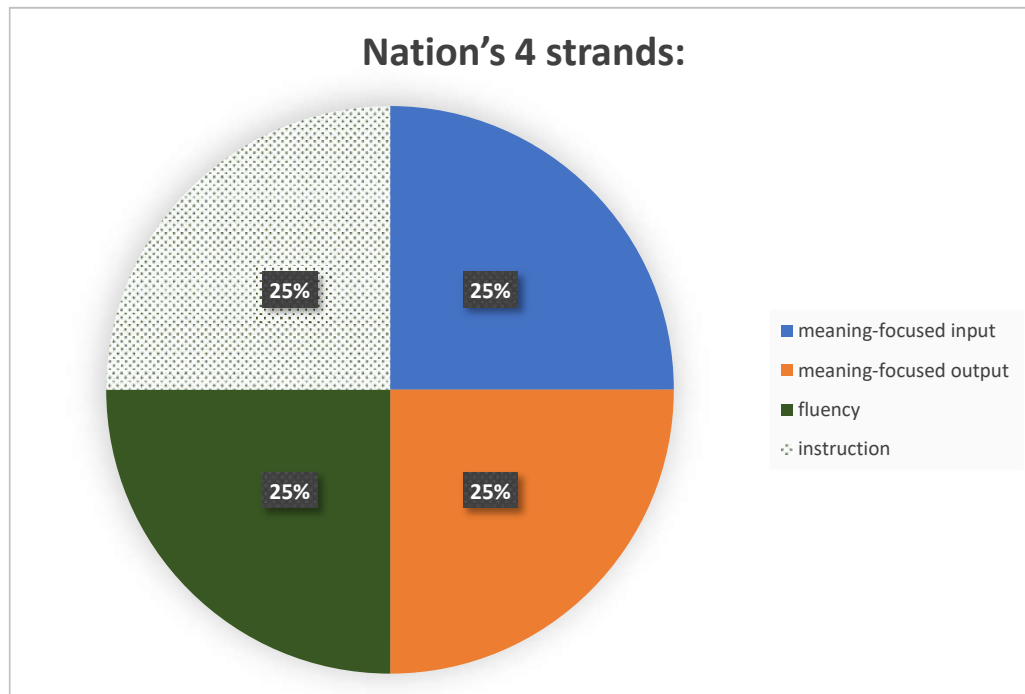


Some important things

- Motivation
- Meaning first
- Communicative use
- Exposure to a range of language
- Lexical chunks
- Instruction (clarification, FonF)



Nation's prescription:

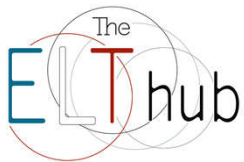


1. meaning-focused input 25%
2. meaning-focused output 25%
3. fluency 25% ...

4. ... and instruction! 25%
(I.S.P. Nation, 2013)

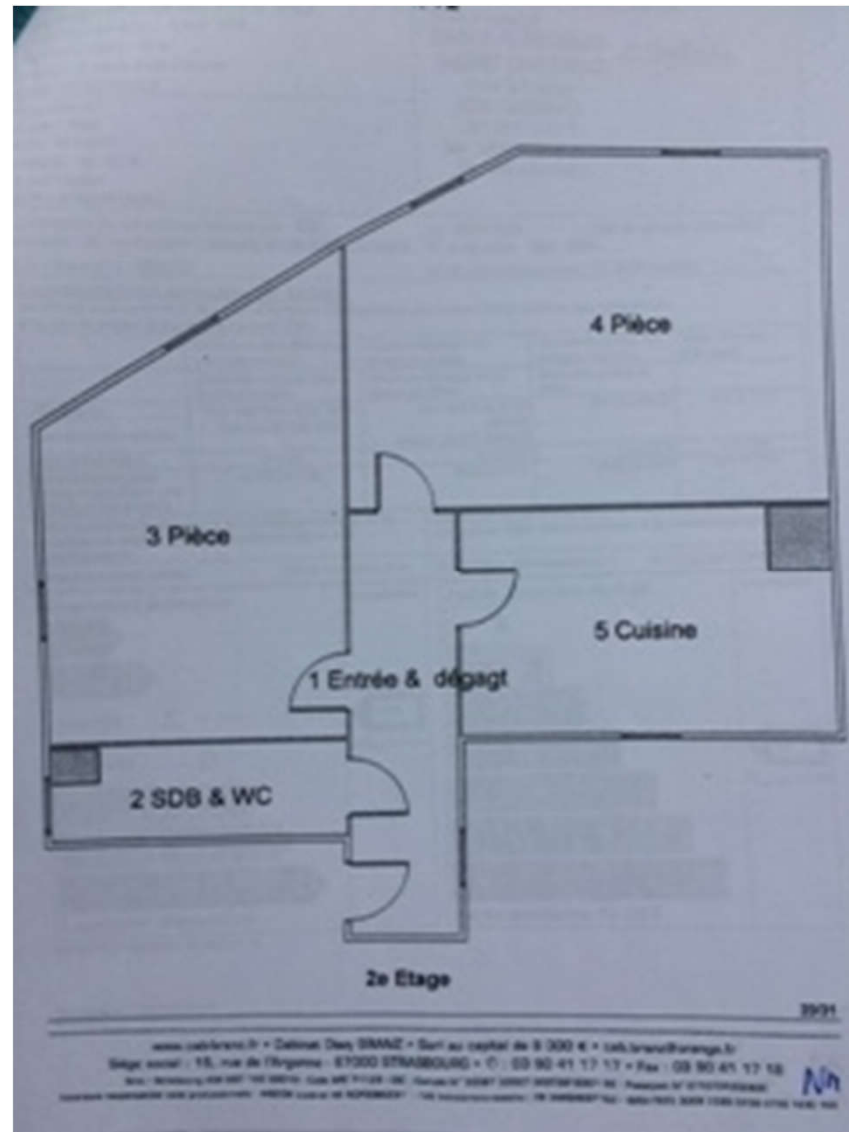
What's wrong with “present > practise”?

- Emphasis on explicit instruction: *learning* language in order to *use* it
- It promotes conformity in the classroom
- There's not enough communication (accuracy first)
- Grammar McNuggets
- Can be demotivating



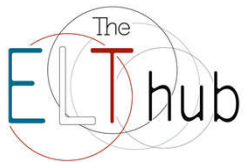
Task 2

Home exchange



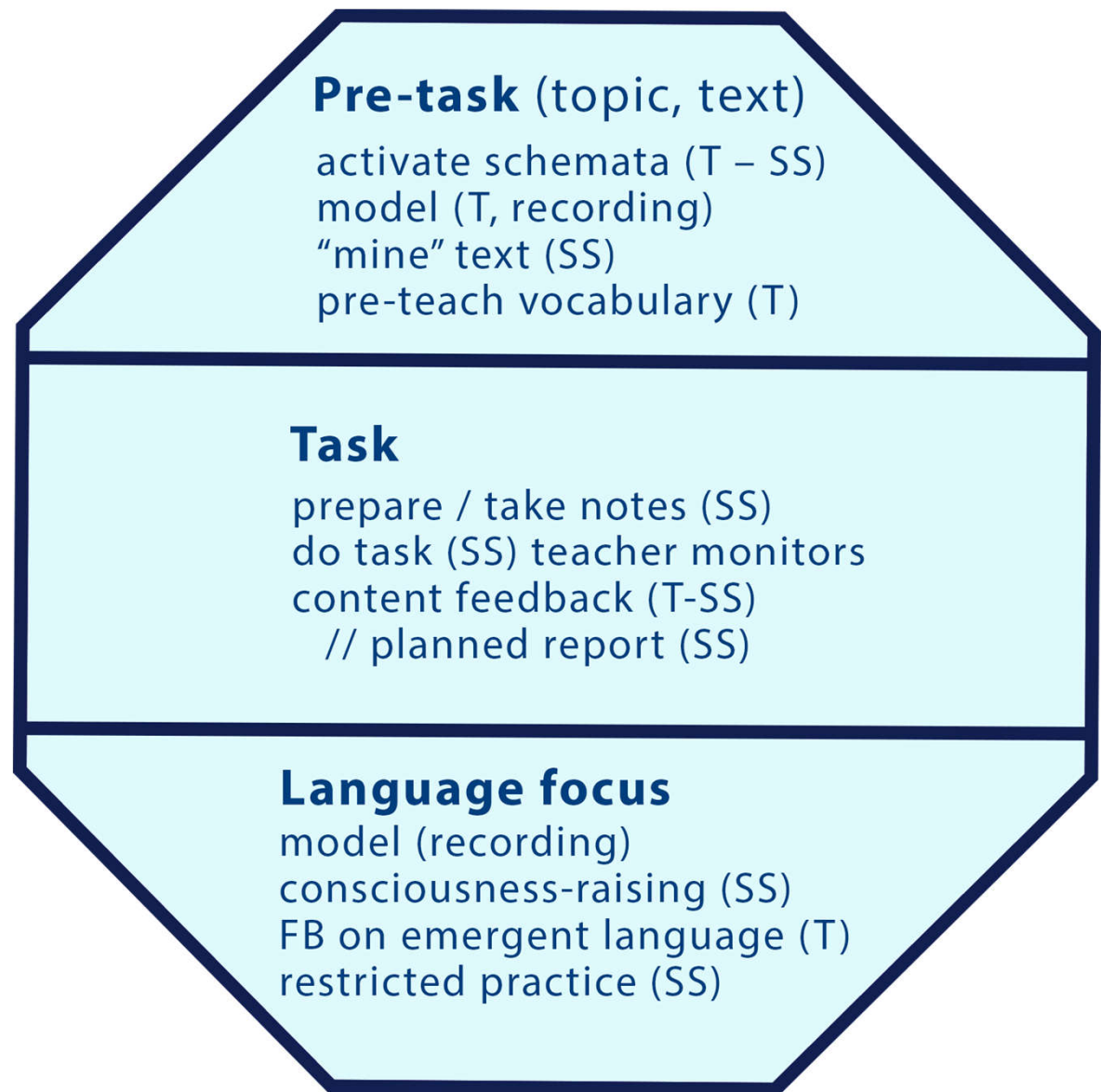
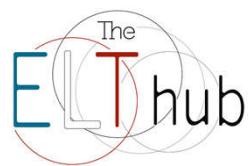
When did you have the chance to:

- express your own meanings?
- negotiate meaning?
- learn incidentally?
- focus on the language you wanted?
- focus on form explicitly?



Stage by stage: what happens?

- Pre-task stage (priming)
- During the task
- Preparing the “report”
- Post-task
- Task Repetition



First steps



- YOU are (almost certainly) already doing some TBLT
- Teachers adapt to their own circumstances / Needs Analysis
- Skills lessons

Create a task

- “So if you wanted to practise present perfect, ask ss individually to think, and write down 5 things they've done this week, as a list. Then with partner, ask Qs to find things you've done that they haven't...”

(from a Twitter post on favourite speaking activities)



Introducing the Band

- MTV-style interviews
- Put the band together
- “Bands” and interviewers prepare key details: how they met, tours, releases, plans
- Run (and record) the interviews



Which language items would you focus on?

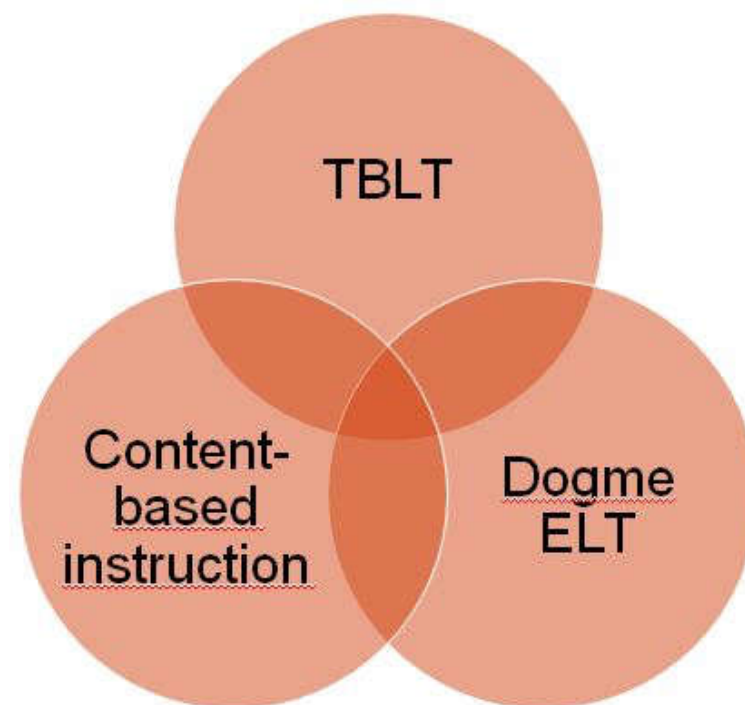
- present perfect and progressive tenses, contrasted with the past
- Time adverbials
- *for & since*
- Question forms, and short answers (ellipsis)
- Spoken discourse: “Seriously?” “How cool is that?”

(task repetition: interviewing a babysitter, a house-sitter, a new flatmate for a shared house)



TBLT and DOGME

- Fluency first / conversation-driven
- Focus on “emergent” language
- TBLT makes more use of texts
- TBLT adds the “architecture”
- “focused tasks” to align with the syllabus



Activities for Task-Based Learning (Delta Publishing / Klett)
by Neil Anderson and Neil McCutcheon (2019)

Fluency First website: www.fluencyfirstelt.com

neil.mccutcheon@theelthub.com

@NeilJMcCutcheon (Twitter)