

RESEARCHING EARLY FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

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OUTLINE

- ❑ Research on early language learning in Europe
 - ❑ Current patterns of provision
 - ❑ A brief historical perspective of research
 - ❑ 21st century research in ELL
- ❑ Mixed Methods research in early language learning
- ❑ Participatory research: bridging theory and practice

CURRENT PATTERNS OF PROVISION IN EUROPE

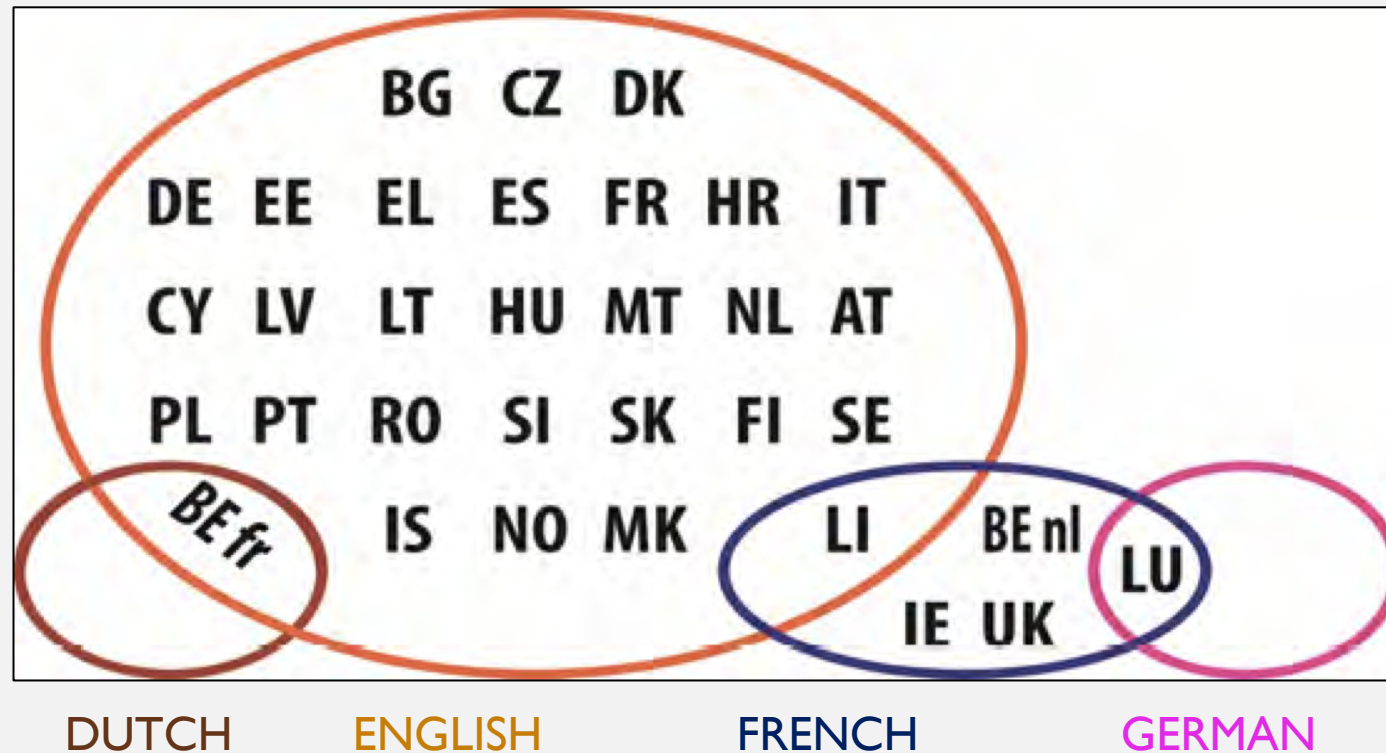
CURRENT PATTERNS OF ELL PROVISION IN EUROPE

- 83% of all primary pupils in Europe learn at least one FL
- In 12 countries – compulsory from 6-7 years
- Represents a 67% increase since 2005
- Provision in Nordic countries:
 - Norway – 6 yrs.
 - Denmark – 7 yrs.
 - Latvia – 7 yrs.
 - Lithuania - 8 yrs.
 - Estonia, Finland – 7-9 yrs. (school decides)
 - Sweden – 7-10 yrs. (school decides)

(European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017, p.152)

FOREIGN LANGUAGES LEARNT BY MOST STUDENTS IN EUROPEAN PRIMARY/SECONDARY SCHOOLS

English is the
Most studied
FL in Europe



(European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017, p.71)

A BRIEF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF RESEARCH

WHAT KEY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ASKED RELATED TO ELL? A BRIEF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The influence of psycholinguistics

1970s in Europe: focus mainly at micro level of the learner and linguistic outcomes

Burstall, Jamieson, Cohen, & Hargreaves (1974) – findings suggested an early start (at 10 yrs.) resulted in no advantage. Findings ignored the lack of teacher expertise for this young age group.

Vilke (1993) – referred to early 1970s studies in Croatia which focused on phonetics, pronunciation and intonation, comparing outcomes between younger and older learners – findings were generally positive.

Burstall et al (1974) – findings resulted in closure of many ELL projects across Europe in 1970s

21ST CENTURY RESEARCH IN ELL

21ST CENTURY RESEARCH FOCUS IN ELL

The social turn

In addition to the linguistic focus, broader questions are posed - increasingly influenced by socio-historical / sociocultural / cultural-historical theories

- The individual learner in a situated social context
- Interaction and mediation
- The classroom / school / wider community as context
- The role of the teacher / Primary language teacher education
- Cross-curricular / bilingual / CLIL approaches at primary level
- Medium of Instruction policy at primary level
- Global forces

Drawing on ideas of 'language...as a tool which humans use to mediate their interactions' (Toohey, 2003, p.125).

MANY GAPS IN OUR KNOWLEDGE STILL REMAIN!

21ST CENTURY RESEARCH: 2 EXAMPLES OF LARGE SCALE STUDIES

I. ELLiE. Early Language Learning in Europe (2006-2010)

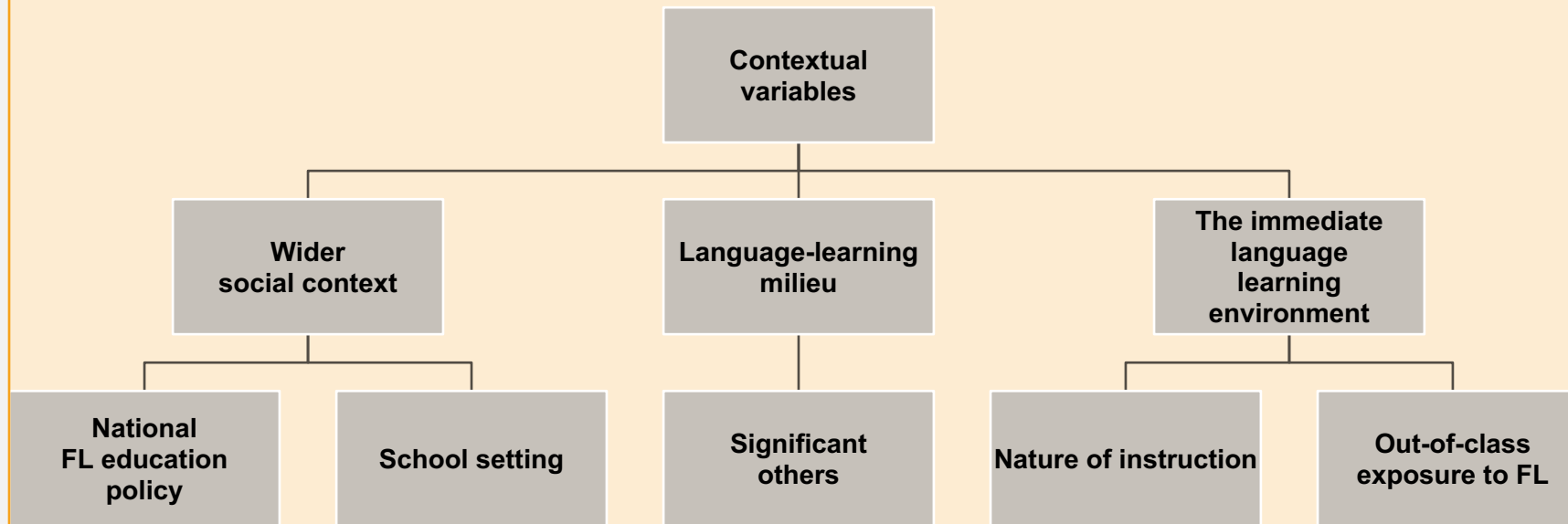
Longitudinal study of 1400 learners across seven European countries over four years

Findings included:

- primary FL teachers need a high level of FL proficiency / age-appropriate teaching skills
 - Learner attitudes and motivation fluctuate over time
 - Whole school and home support can make a substantial difference to learner engagement
 - good teachers create a positive and safe environment for children to experience success in early FLL
 - Out-of-school exposure to the FL can have a major impact
 - Substantial investment is needed at national level, with commitments to
 - on-going support
 - All learners achieved approximately an A1 level on the CEFR
- (Enever, 2011)

SCHOOL: THE INTERPLAY OF CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES

Summary of research framework



(Enever, 2011)

PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM ORGANISATION – 1860s

**Have
classrooms
changed?**









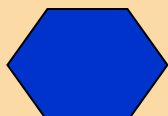
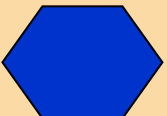







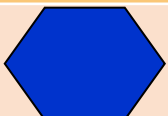
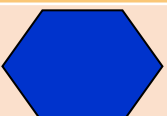






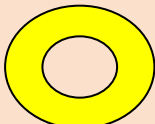
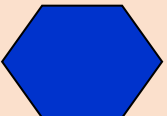
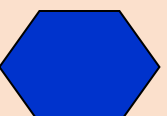







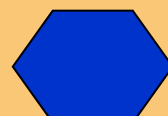
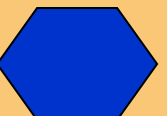
PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM ORGANISATION – 2010

**Have
classrooms
changed?**



CLASSROOM SEATING ARRANGEMENTS – ELLiE STUDY

Often, the more varied classroom arrangements were found where generalist class teachers also taught the FL.

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Croatia |       |
| England |    |
| Italy |       |
| Netherlands |   |
| Poland |       |
| Spain |           |
| Sweden |   |

(Enever, 2011)

ELLiE CHILDREN'S PREFERRED ORGANISATION

Traditional classroom (most popular)

- I prefer it when we're all facing the teacher and I don't have my back to her.
- It's easier to concentrate.
- The teacher explains everything on the blackboard. If you don't understand something you can see it on the blackboard.

Group work classroom (1st choice for some)

- You can speak the FL more when you sit together in groups.
- In a group we can help each other and discuss.
- When I work in a group I do it better.

21ST CENTURY RESEARCH: LARGE-SCALE STUDIES

2. An Evaluation of English Impact: Madrid bilingual schools (2016/17)

A study of 1774 15 yr. olds, from 170 government-funded schools, who began learning English at 6yrs. (45 bilingual / 125 non-bilingual schools)

Findings included:

- Students from bilingual schools performed better than those from non-bilingual schools across all skills
- 34% achieved B2 or C levels; 38.5% achieved B1 level
- Motivation clearly related to proficiency; confidence in language learning related to achievement
- Students reporting lower socio-economic status showed significantly lower reported levels of motivation on all scales
- Girls performed better than boys and boys generally reported lower levels of motivation

CHALLENGES FOR MADRID PRIMARY TEACHERS

‘It's a really hard step for the children – moving from isolated words to more complex sentences and structures. (...) **I'm very concerned with the cognitive processes** related to what young children need to know in Science and what kind of discourse is needed in relation to that and how to move away from just matching (...)’ (Carmen).

Enever, 2018, p.44

CHALLENGES FOR MADRID PRIMARY TEACHERS

When I'm in the sixth grade it gets harder and harder and when you have to explain difficult things, its hard. You have to have the vocabulary, the skills, [and] its really difficult to explain things. (Anna)

(Enever, 2018, p.46)

CONTEMPORARY THEMES FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Amongst others...

Multilingual European primary classrooms – see Ibrahim (2016);
Conteh & Meier (2014) (Eds.)

Classroom Interaction – see Garcia Mayo & Imaz Agirre (2017)

Mediation – see Llinares (2017)

19 Scales for mediation

Mediating texts
Mediating concepts
Mediating communication
Mediation strategies

REVISIONS TO THE CEFR: NEW SCALES FOR INTERACTION

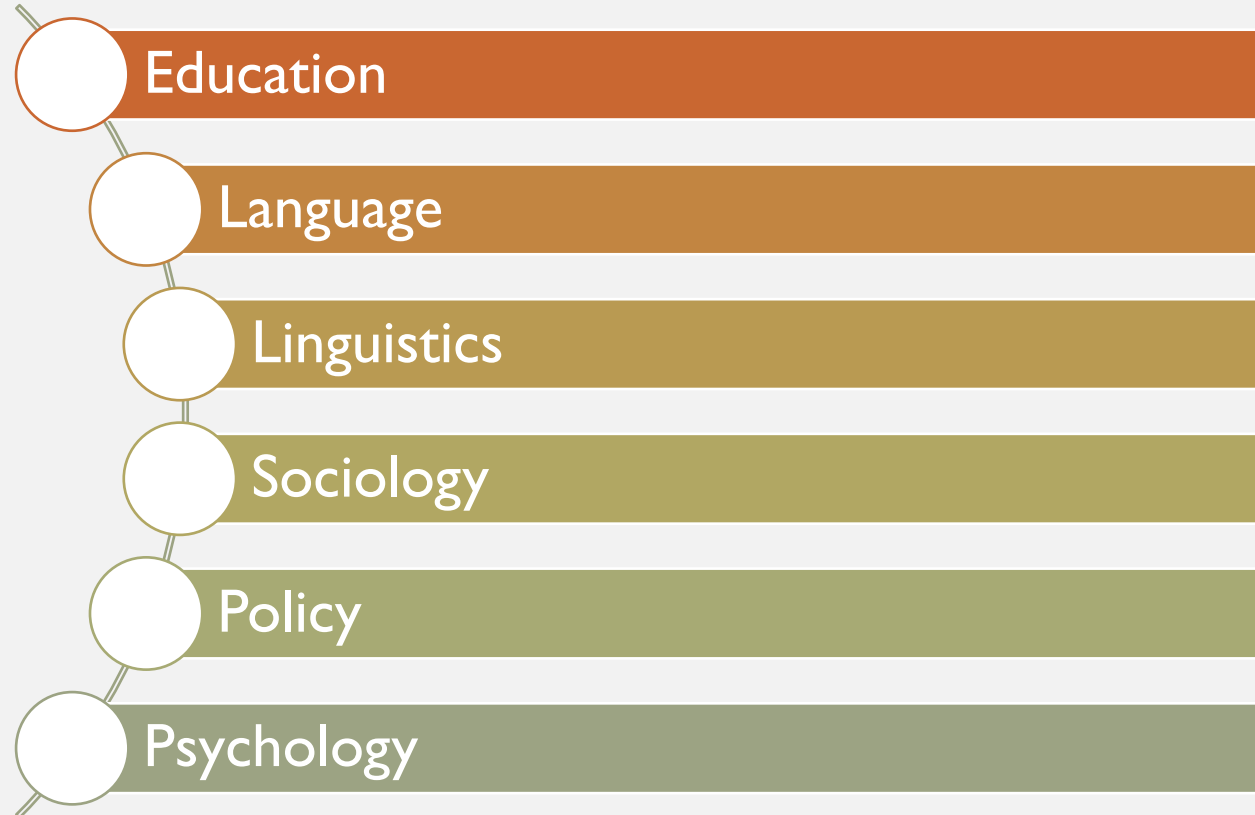
Development of existing scale for Cooperating Strategies

Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers

Collaborative construction of meaning

Encouraging conceptual talk

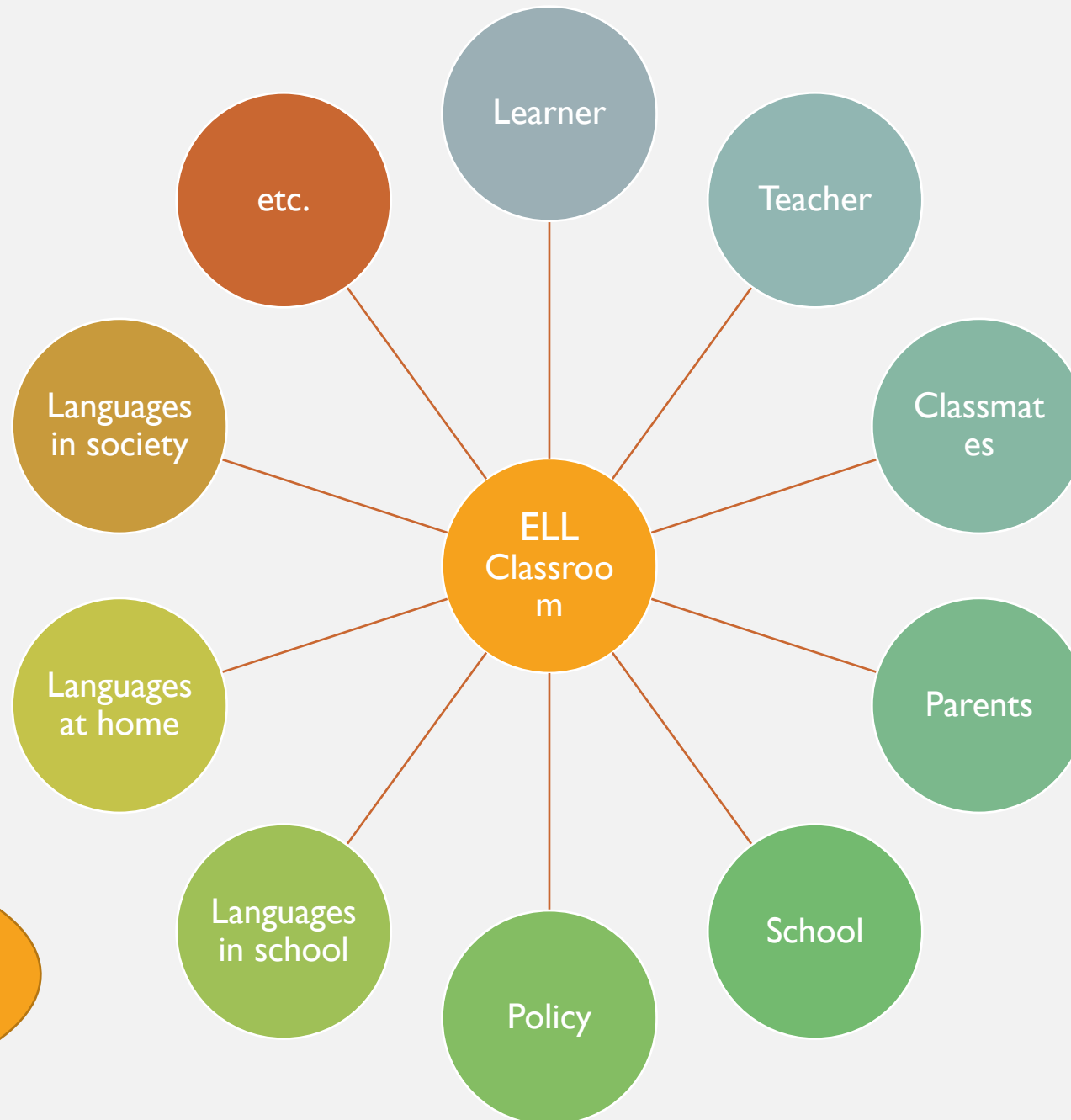
ELL LEARNING AND TEACHING RESEARCH: MULTIDISCIPLINARY



NARROW OR WIDE FOCUS? WITHIN OR ACROSS DISCIPLINES?

The purpose of the research

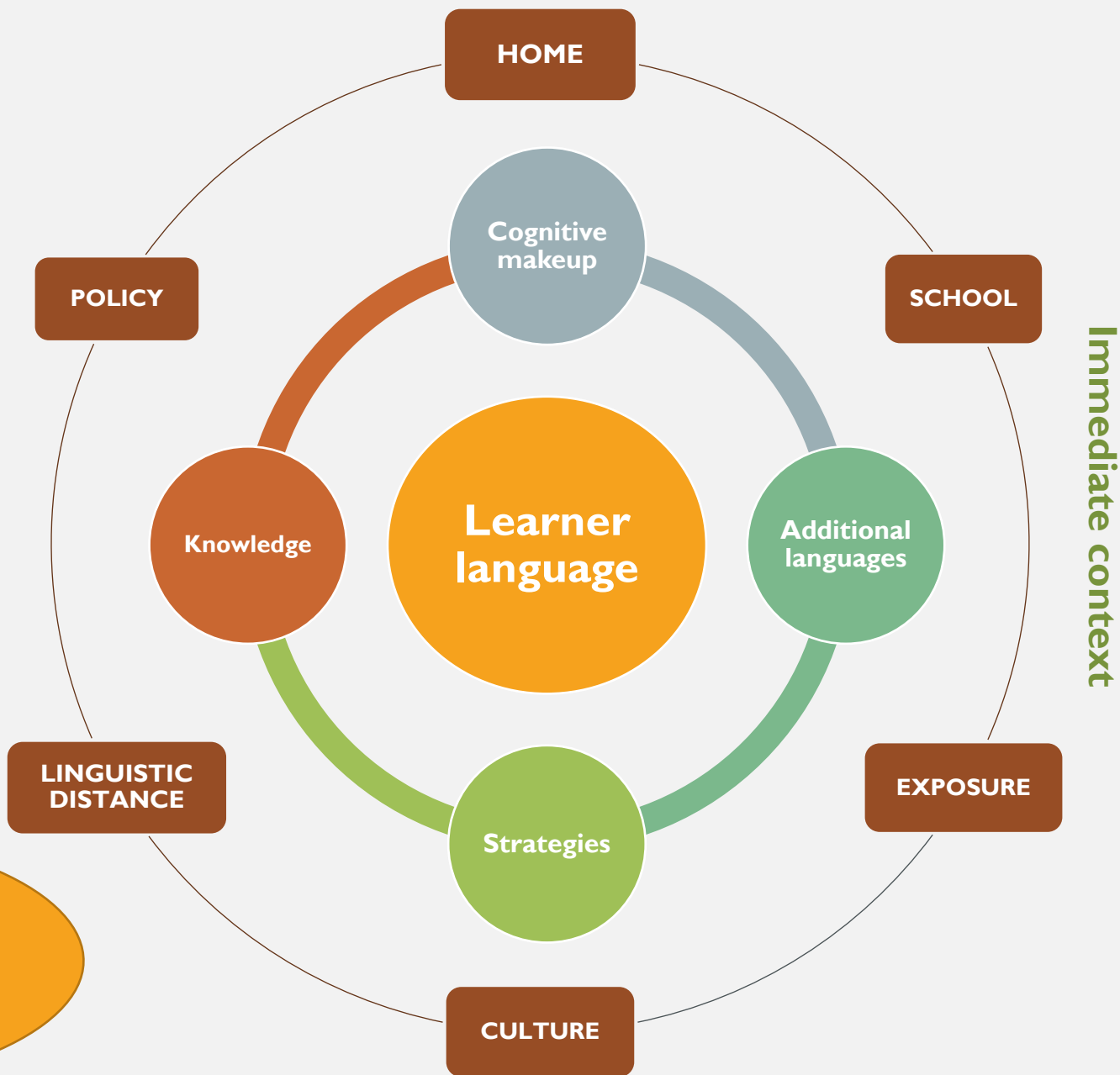
EXAMPLE: FOCUS
ON THE ELL
CLASSROOM



The more aspects, the more likely to move across disciplines and use different methods

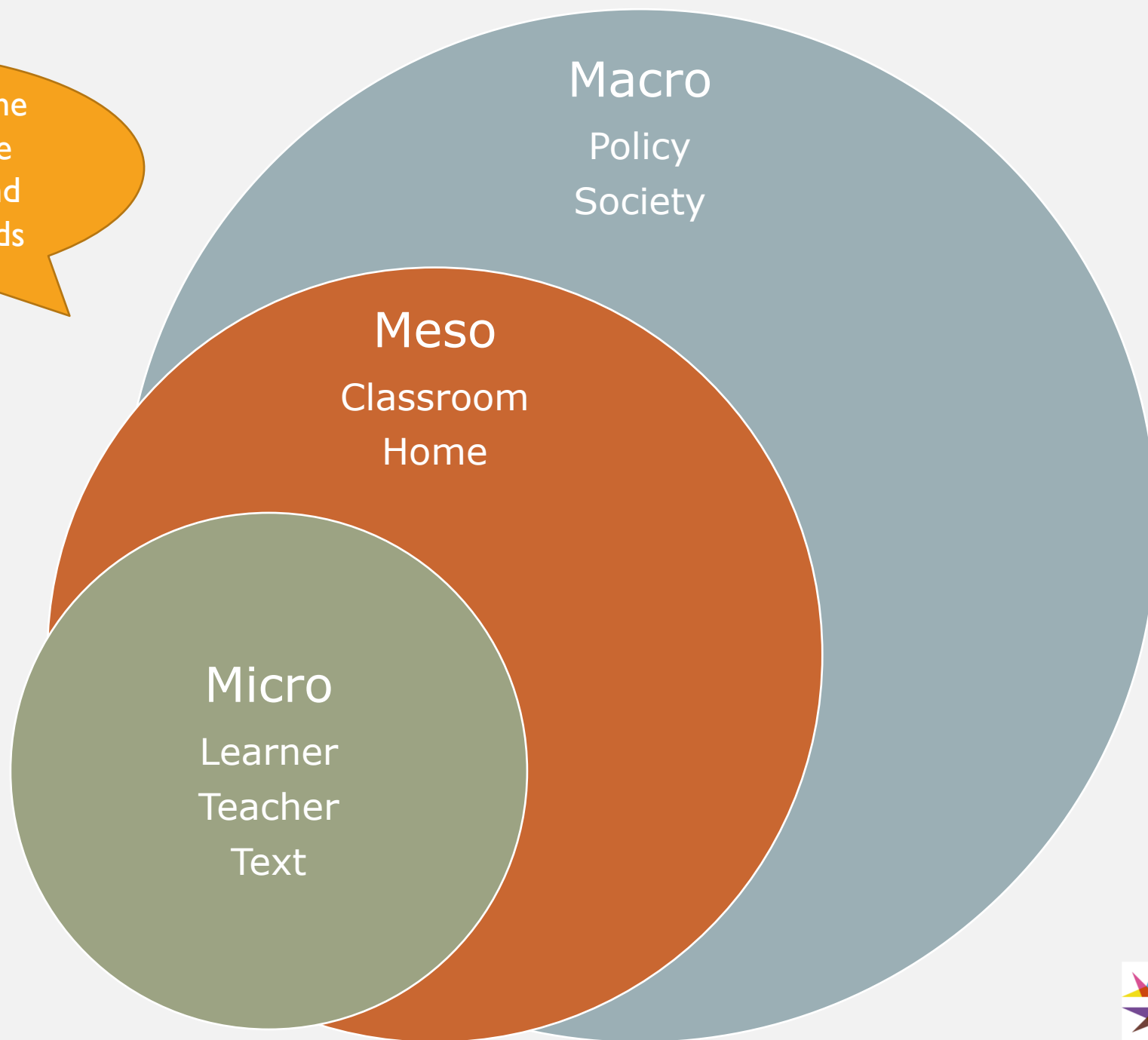
EXAMPLE: FOCUS
ON LEARNERS'
LANGUAGE
DEVELOPMENT

Wider context



The more aspects, the
more likely to move
across disciplines and
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MIXED METHODS

Embracing complexity

“whatever philosophical and/or methodological approach works for the particular research problem under study” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; 5)

MIXED METHODS

- Two types of research questions (with qualitative and quantitative approaches)
- The manner in which the research questions are developed (participatory vs. preplanned)
- Two types of data collection procedures (e.g., focus groups and surveys)
- Two types of data (e.g., numerical and textual)
- Two types of data analysis (statistical and thematic)
- Two types of conclusions (emic and etic)

(selection from Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007: 4)

MIXED METHODS

ADVANTAGES

- Increase validity
 - Triangulation
 - Complementarity provides a deeper understanding
 - Development of study: interview to develop questionnaire
- Increase depth and scope
 - pursue the discovery of paradox and contradiction,
 - assess different elements within the same study

(Greene, Caracelli and Graham, 1989)

CRITIQUE

- Paradigms are incompatible
- Use of different paradigms possible, but should be acknowledged individually
- It's not new at all

MIXED METHODS

- Increase depth and scope
 - Mixed-methods
 - Other approaches: dynamic systems, rhizomatic analysis etc
- Increase validity (that the research is capturing what it is intended to capture)
 - Mixed methods
 - Participatory research, citizen science (ecologic validity)
 - Moving from research 'in' or 'on' to 'WITH'

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH IN THE ELL CLASSROOM

Bridging theory and practice

Prepositions in practice: from 'in' and 'on' to 'with'

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

”Many of the methods used in participatory research are drawn from mainstream disciplines and conventional research itself involves varying degrees of participation. The key difference between participatory and conventional methodologies lies in the location of power in the research process”

(Cornwall & Jewkes, 2010: 1667)

LEADING THE WAY FROM 'IN/ON' TO 'WITH' SINCE 2001: INDIGENOUS RESEARCH ETHICS AND METHODS

The Indigenous Research Reform Agenda (IRRA)

- involvement of Aboriginal communities in the design, execution and evaluation of research
- processes to determine research priorities and benefit to the Indigenous communities involved
- transformation of research practices from 'investigator-driven' to an adoption of a needsbased approach to research
- the adoption of effective mechanisms for the dissemination and transfer of research findings

<http://www.lowitja.org.au/indigenous-research-reform-agenda>

FOLLOWING...

- Policy and vision on national and global levels
- Discussion, implementation and definitions at the same time
- Work it out as we go along!
 - Research councils for educational research
 - E.g. The Swedish Institute for Educational Research, Government organisation
 - The EU and Horizon 2020
 - Citizen science; Responsible research (co-creation, communication, ethics etc.)

PURPOSE OF PARTICIPATION

- Shifting power
- Being responsible
- Engage
- Enhance understanding of science
- Policy-making
- But also to move research forward

RESEARCHING 'WITH' MEANS...

- Collaboration throughout the process
 - Defining the problem
 - Developing research questions
 - Developing methodology
 - Doing the intervention
 - Analysing data
 - Publish
 - See Cummins et al (2015) for a good example

SETTING UP AN INTERVENTION WITH A SCHOOL OR A COMMUNITY

- Contact a researcher, a school, teachers or a community who wants to collaborate around your specific area
- Discuss what works in the classroom and what challenges there are
- Define a topic for the project
- Then consider some fundamentals together

FUNDAMENTALS I: WORLDVIEWS

- Worldviews
- What is knowledge and how can we capture what goes on in the classroom?

FUNDAMENTALS II: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

- Why are we doing this research?
 - To move research forward?
 - To improve practice?...or both?
- Who benefits from it?
 - Researchers? How?
 - Schools: teachers, children?...or both? How?
- On what grounds should it be developed?
 - Research?
 - Practice?...or both

FUNDAMENTALS III: **OBJECT** FOR STUDY

- The teacher
 - Improve students' learning through teachers
 - Work directly with teachers
- The students
 - Improve students' learning through specific method
 - Work directly with students, or via teachers
- Other

FUNDAMENTALS IV: **AIM** OF STUDY

- Improve/enhance learning
 - Study the learning outcome of the intervention
 - Eg. pre/post tests, questionnaire, interview, text analysis
- Understanding how learning is enhanced
 - Study the learning process during intervention
 - Observations and interviews
- Understanding why it worked or not
 - Study the learning process during intervention
 - Observations, interviews etc.



Mixed methods!

THEN...

- Start developing the (mixed) methods together
- Design instruments
- Assign tasks
- Interpret results together
- Write up the paper together
- And so on and so forth

FINALLY

- Research WITH means
 - A different mind-set (for some researchers!)
 - Respect for different competencies
 - Teachers as co-creators in research processes; bridge between research and practice
 - That it probably needs more time than you think
 - Stepping down from the ivory tower (Myhill, 2017)

Thank you! Tack!

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