Creating motivation in language classrooms: How can we put practice into theory?

Alastair Henry
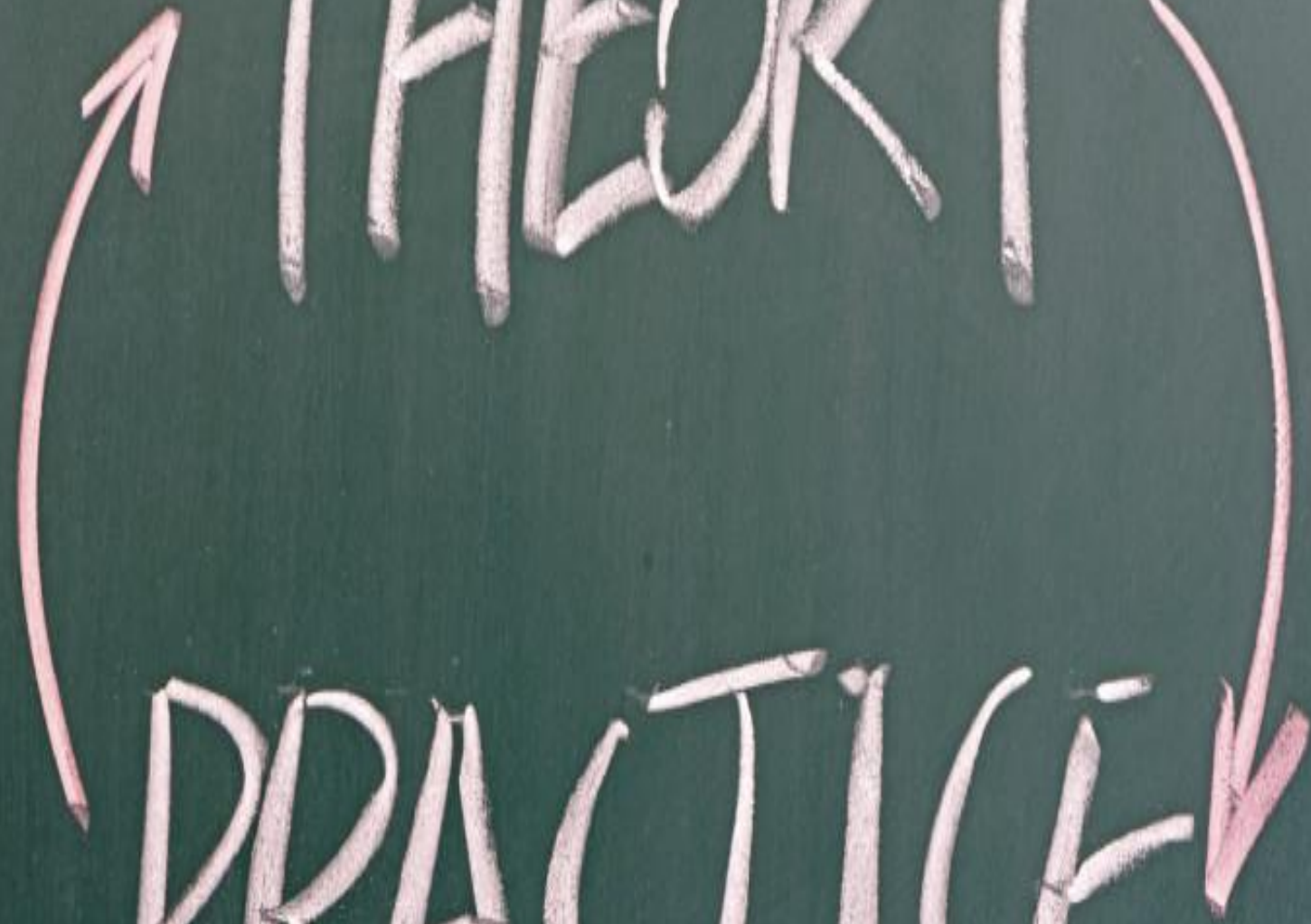
SKÄL

October 4, 2024

Overview
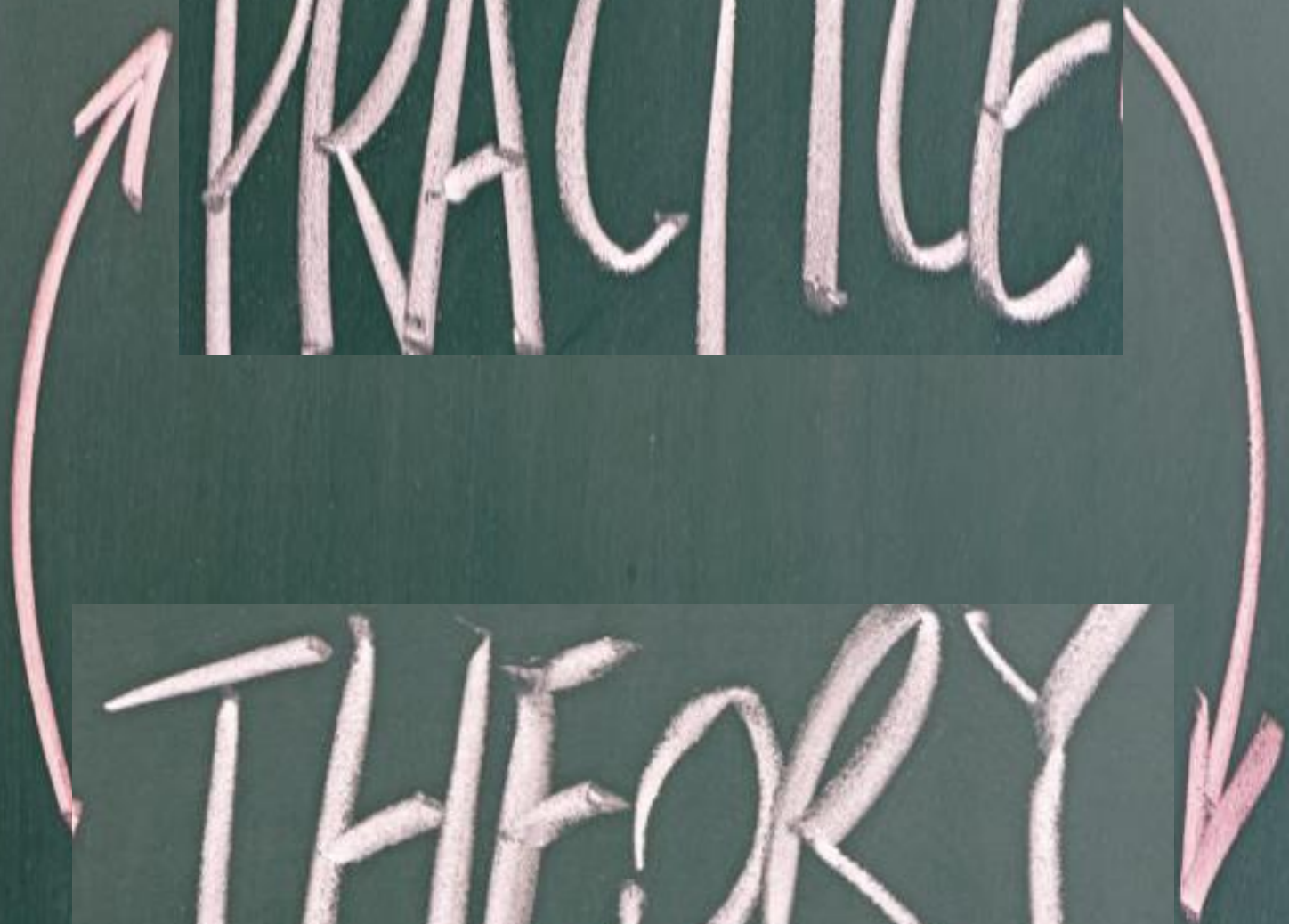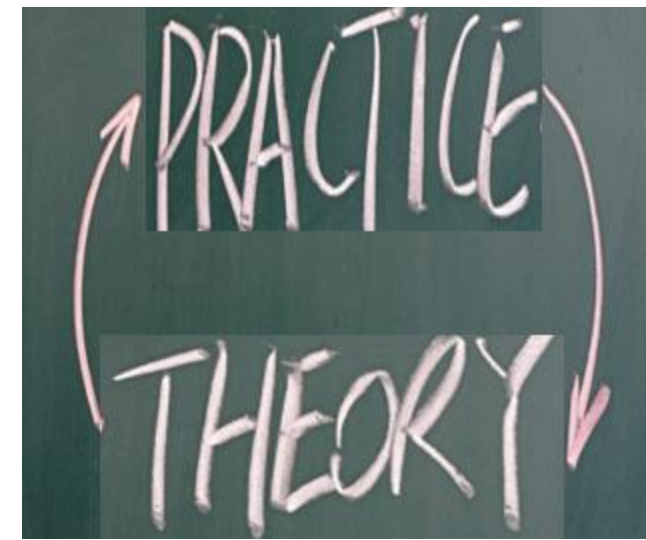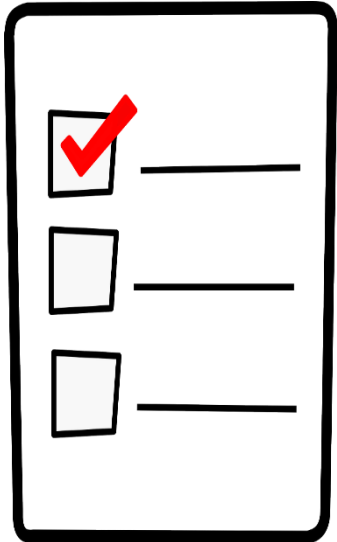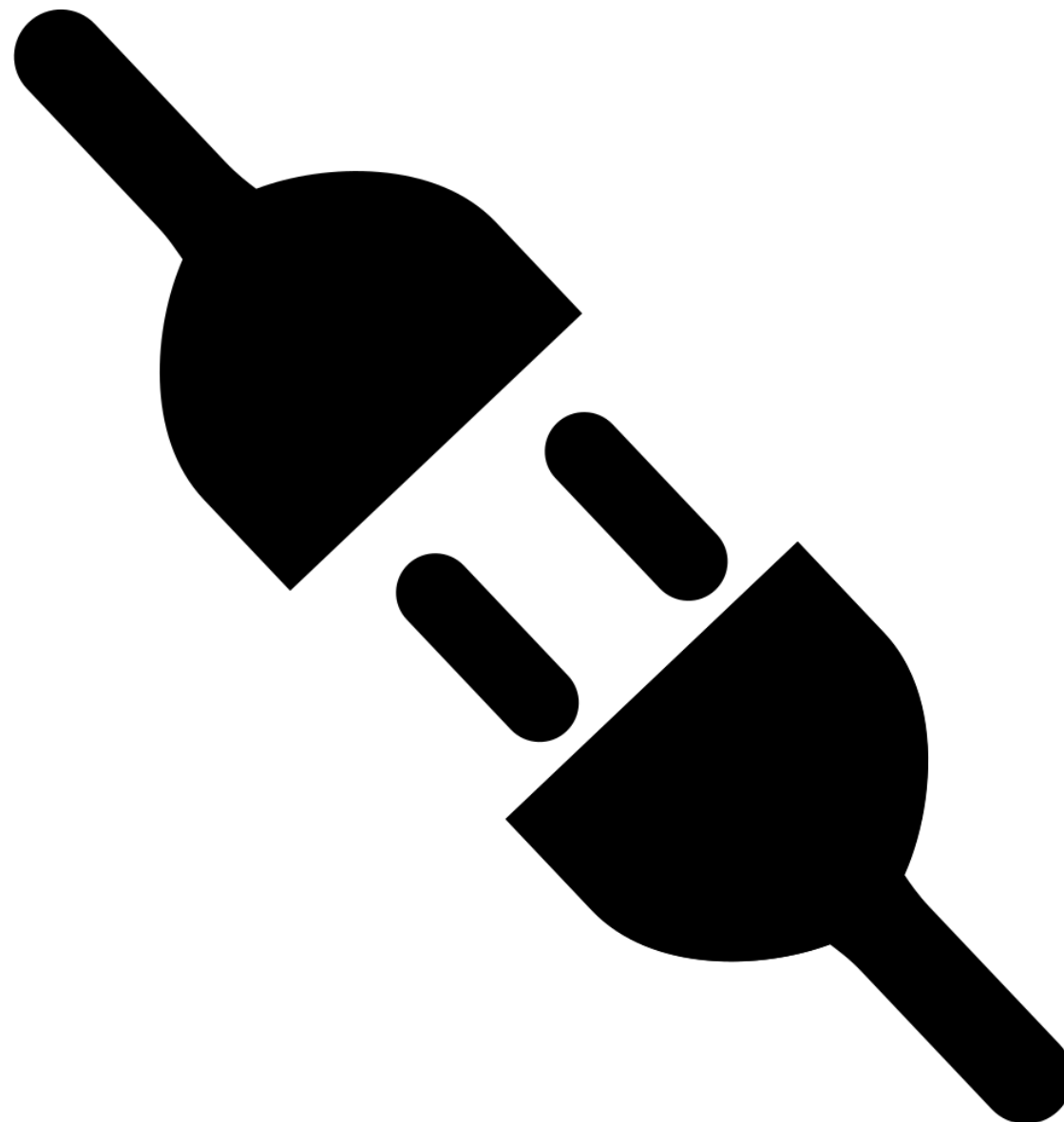

- In L2 Motivation research, 3 disconnects that (i) diminish the potential of research, and (ii) can leave practice unsupported

- Ways in which **Practice** and **Theory** can be more productively aligned

Disconnect #1: Different interests

"[T]he language teaching and research professions seem to have rather **different interests** when it comes to the topic of motivation. For the language teaching profession, motivation is of interest because it is usually a *practical problem* in the classroom, where teachers are often faced with the challenge of motivating students and keeping them motivated. For SLA researchers, in contrast, motivation is of interest not because it presents a problem, but rather because it is one of the *variables* that can help explain why some language learners are more successful than others."

(Ushioda, 2020, p xi)

# Avi Kaplan (Professor of Ed Psy, Temple University)
A cautionary tale…..

"This budding researcher conducted a narrative interview study with 10 undergraduate students, aiming to understand **the processes that led them to adopt different achievement goal orientations towards their studies** in college. To his surprise, when asked about their experiences, choices, and engagement in college, the students spoke relatively little about the characteristics of the learning environment, their self-efficacy, or their attributions for success and failure. Instead, they elaborated on growing up in their hometown, their high school experiences, their dilemmas concerning careers and relationships, their family, ethnicity, friends, and the peer groups they belonged to or wanted to belong to. These students mentioned schoolwork specifically when the material seemed to be relevant to who they thought they were and who they considered or wanted to be."

(Kaplan & Flum, 2009, p. 73)
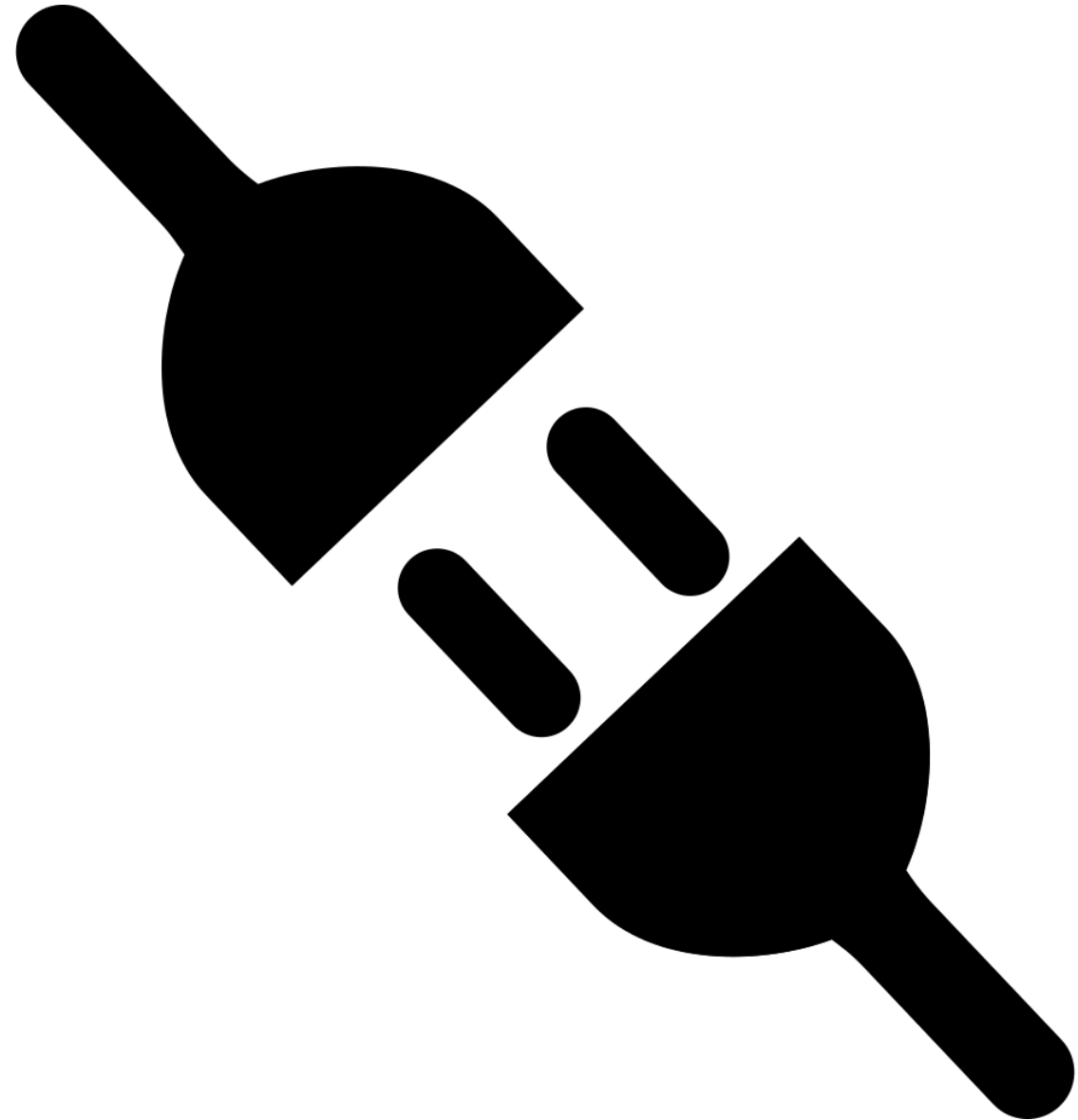
Relationships and effects

- **Alrabai, F. (2022).** Modeling the relationship between classroom emotions, motivation, and learner willingness to communicate in EFL: applying a holistic approach of positive psychology in SLA research. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 1-19.

- **Zhou, S. A., & Hiver, P. (2022).** The effect of self-regulated writing strategies on students' L2 writing engagement and disengagement behaviors. *System, 106*, 102768.

- **Jiang, C., & Papi, M. (2022).** The motivation-anxiety interface in language learning: A regulatory focus perspective. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 32*(1), 25-40.

- **Lou, N. M., Chaffee, K. E., & Noels, K. A. (2022)**. Growth, fixed, and mixed mindsets: Mindset system profiles in foreign language learners and their role in engagement and achievement. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 1-26.

Implications

Alarabi (2022) The model in this study substantiates the crucial role of learner emotions and motivation in defining L2WTC. It therefore falls to the teacher to regulate learner emotions by adopting a nuanced emotion-regulation approach that focuses on promoting learners' positive emotions and affect and reducing the lingering effects of negative emotions.

Zho & Hiver (2022) The important role that L2 engagement plays in mediating the relationship between SRL strategies and writing procrastination should be acknowledged in classroom practice. As this study shows, promoting active student engagement with L2 writing tasks is an essential objective in helping to reduce L2 writers' procrastination

Jiang & Papi (2022) The mutually inhibitory nature of the promotion and prevention focus can be of great value to L2 teachers. Activating the promotion system, therefore, can override the prevention system that results in the increase of L2 anxiety. There are different ways of activating the promotion system…..

Lou et al. (2022) Our findings provide important educational implications. First, language educators should avoid categorizing all learners as either fixed or growth mindset learners. We observed that the largest proportion of FL learners held mixed mindsets. These learners may present performance goals and anxiety in the classrooms similar to students with fixed mindsets.

THEORY

PRACTICE

The Identity Crisis in Language Motivation Research

Ali H. Al-Hoorie[1] (iD), Phil Hiver[2] (iD),
Tae-Young Kim[3], and Peter I. De Costa[4]

"The implicit assumption in the whole LM literature is that researchers have a **doctor–patient relationship** with language teachers, though in reality if the whole LM literature were to suddenly disappear, this would har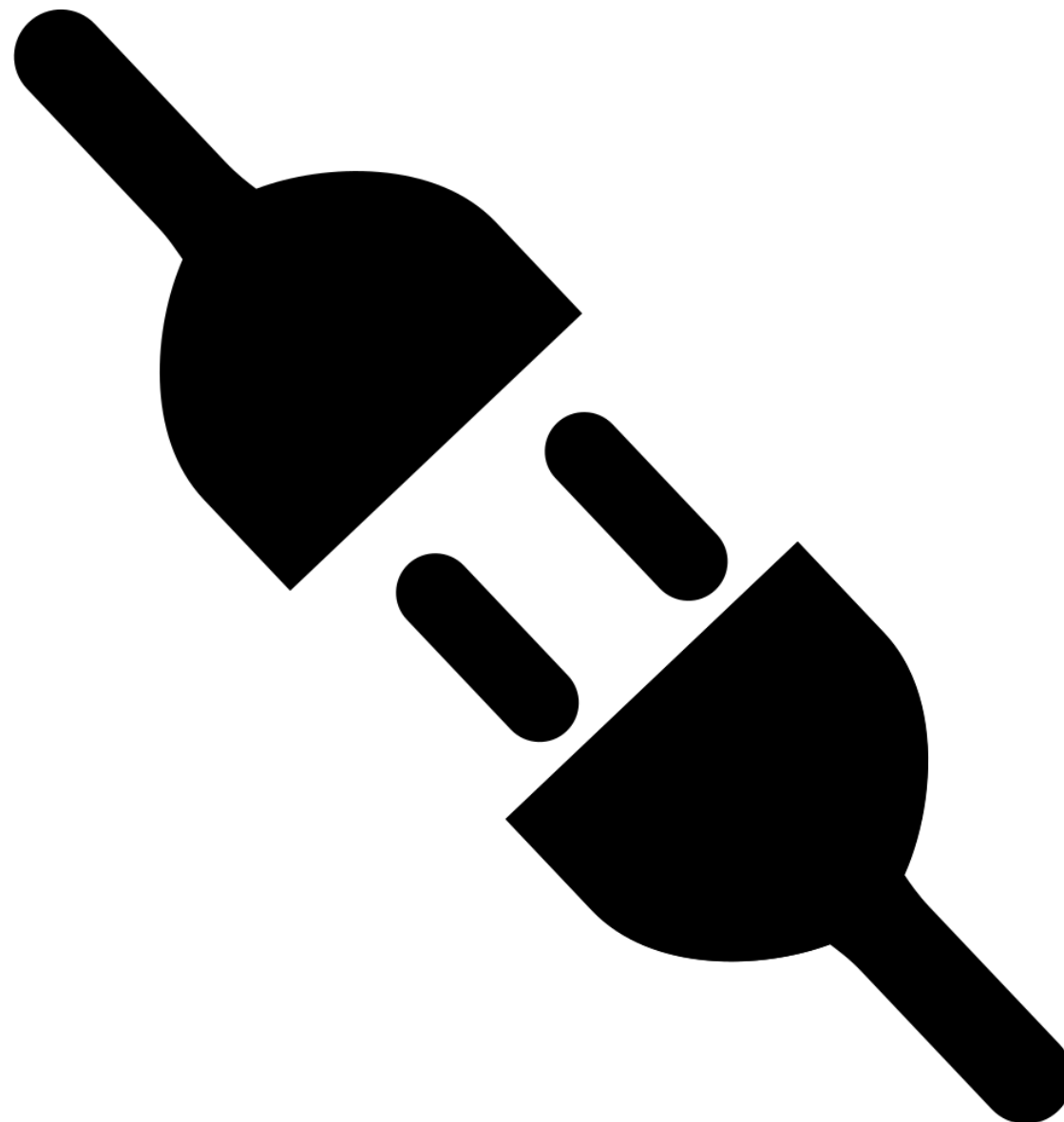dly make a dent in everyday teaching practice. /../ To date, probably the best advice to give to a novice teacher is not to bury themselves in recently-published LM research, but to simply rely on experience and trial and error, and perhaps a good mentor." (p. 147)

Disconnect #3: Teacher Education

Subject Courses

Eng Lit

Eng Ling

Language Education

VFU

Subject Courses
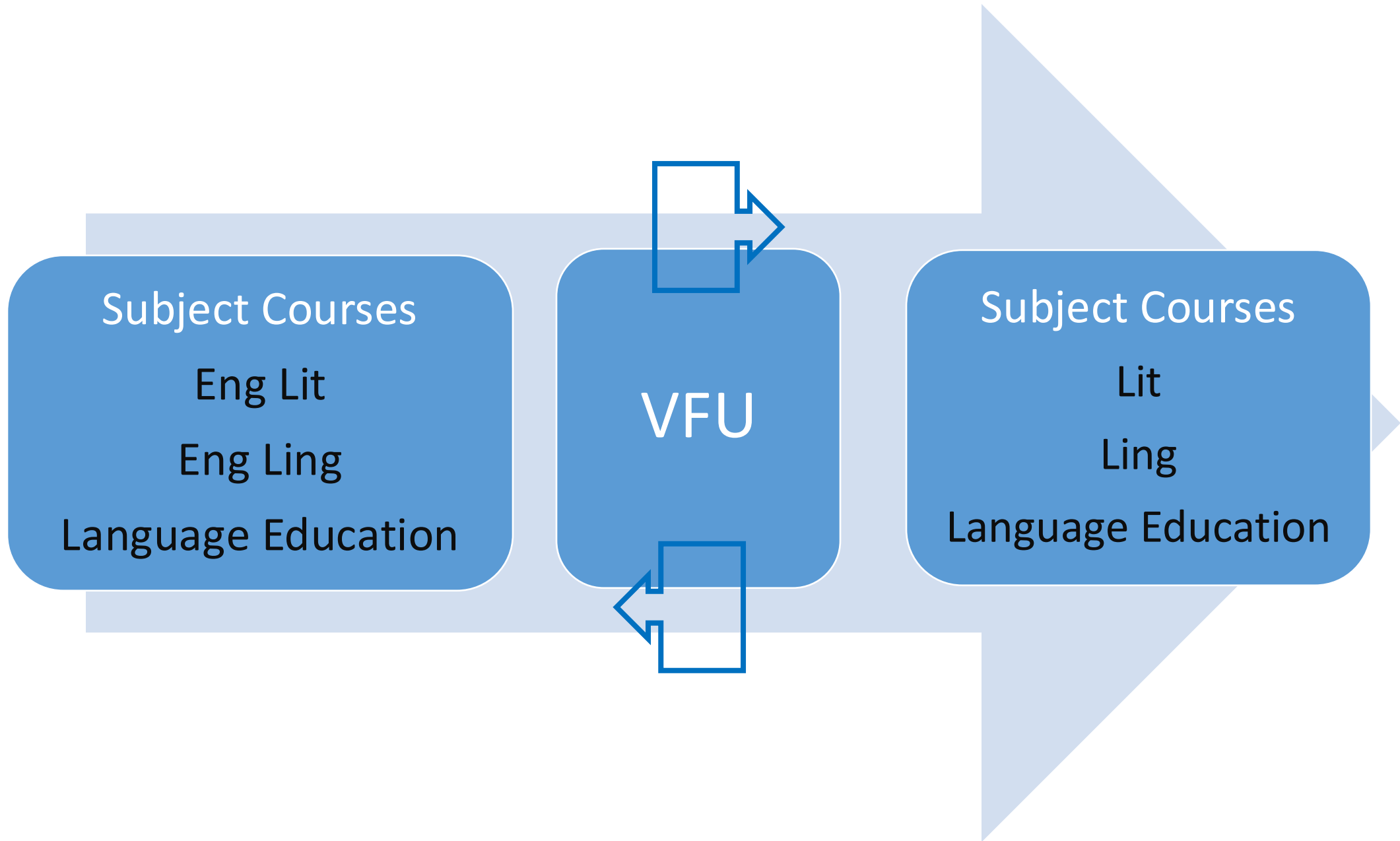
Lit

Ling

Language Education

Second language acquisition, teacher education and language pedagogy

Rod Ellis University of Auckland, New Zealand
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11 principles (selectively used!)

PRINCIPLE 1: The overall goal of an L2 Teacher Education program should be to contribute to teacher-learning by assisting Ss to develop/modify their ***own*** theory of how learners learn an L2 in an instructional setting

- Motivation is a powerful 'lay' concept
- Teacher education students have robust ideas about motivation…
- These need to be our starting points when we explore practice….

  - Exploration (of problem areas)
  - Identification (of causes/symptoms)
  - Application (of theory)
  - Appraisal (of useability)
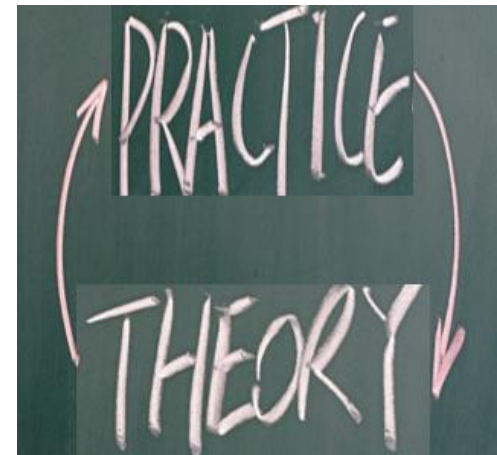
PRINCIPLE 3: The topics covered in L2 TE should consist of '**ideas**' rather than 'models'

- To introduce students to L2 Motivation theory, we need to begin with 'problems' (e.g., case studies of demotivational profiles)

- By first exploring the 'problems', students can then be introduced to theories that – potentially – can offer a 'solution'

- Moreover, case methodologies are:

    - Memorable
    - Generative
    - Demand engagement
    - Require negotiation
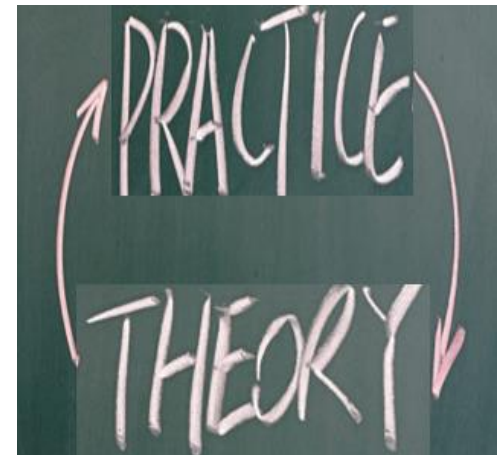
PRINCIPLE 6: Any proposals emanating from the SLA 'ideas' examined in the course, or from the pedagogical implications of research articles, should be viewed as '**provisional**'. They need to be evaluated in the light of teaching practice and experiences of L2 learning and L2 teaching

- In Lang Teacher Education, practice (VFU) and Lang Ed need to be integrated…

- When curricula/organizational circumstances create constraints, we need to find ways of creating connections:

    - Field studies
    - Critical incidents
    - Practitioner-led seminars
    - On-site workshops
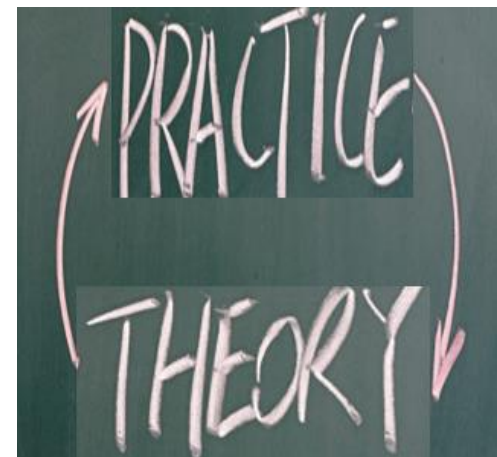
PRINCIPLE 8: **Awareness-raising tasks** based on L2 input can be used to encourage teachers to evaluate the relevancy of specific 'ideas'

- Working with L2 Motivation involves developing an awareness of **affordances**
    - in the selection of texts
    - in the creation of activities

- A focus on motivation AND on language….

- A teacher workshop carried out on 30th March 2022
  (ULF-project: *From 'deliverer to designer': Developing language awareness in practice*)
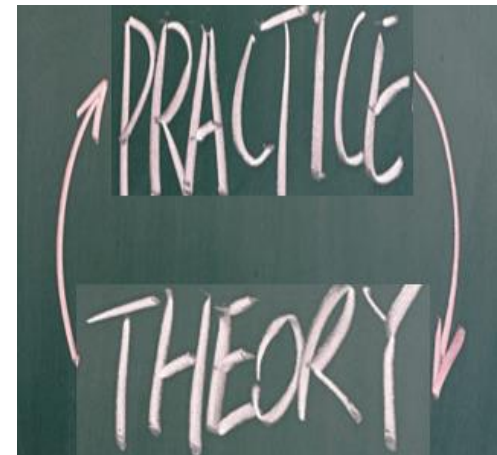
Violence in all of its forms is poisonous and destructive. My behavior at last night's Academy Awards was unacceptable and inexcusable. Jokes at my expense are a part of the job, but a joke about Jada's medical condition was too much for me to bear and I reacted emotionally.

I would like to publicly apologize to you, Chris. I was out of line and I was wrong. I am embarrassed and my actions were not indicative of the man I want to be. There is no place for violence in a world of love and kindness.

I would also like to apologize to the Academy, the producers of the show, all the attendees and everyone watching around the world. I would like to apologize to the Williams Family and my King Richard Family. I deeply regret that my behavior has stained what has been an otherwise gorgeous journey for all of us.

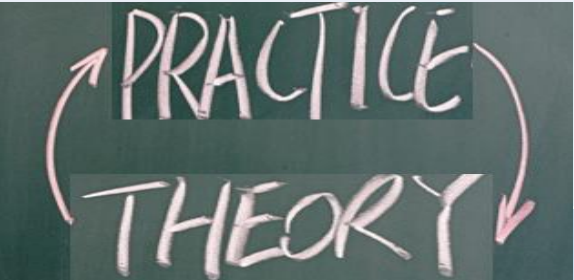I am a work in progress.

Sincerely,

Will

Linguistic affordances	Noticing activities
Capitalization Academy Awards; Williams Family; King Richard Family	Why are the initial letters capitalized?
Shifting verb tenses My behavior…was unacceptable and inexcusable; jokes…are a part of the job; a joke about Jada's medical condition was too much for me to bear and I reacted emotionally. I was out of line and I was wrong. I am embarrassed and my actions were not indicative of the man I want to be. There is no place for violence in a world of love and kindness. I am a work in progress.	Why are there shifts in tenses both between and within sentences? 'I am embarrassed and my actions were not indicative of the man I want to be'
Conditionals I would like to publicly apologize to you, Chris; I would also like to apologize to the Academy; I would like to apologize to the Williams Family	Why does Smith say 'I would like to' rather than simple present tense 'I want to'? Is there a difference in meaning?
Form and function of adverbs I would like to publicly apologize; I deeply regret; I reacted emotionally; Sincerely; a joke … was too much for me to bear	Why is the adverb placed before the verb in 'I deeply regret', and after the verb in 'I reacted emotionally'? Adverbs not ending in -ly?

Linguistic affordances	Noticing activities
Genitive forms last <u>night's</u> Academy Awards <u>Jada's</u> medical condition	Why is the apostrophe genitive used for 'last night's Academy Awards' (unmarked usage involves a person possessing something)?
Form and function of prepositional phrases Jokes <u>at</u> my expense are a part <u>of</u> the job, but a joke <u>about</u> Jada's medical condition	Prepositions as parts of set phrases/chunks
Personal idioms I was <u>out of line</u> I am <u>a work in progress</u>	Phrases whose meaning go beyond the linguistic/literal meaning: How can we understand idioms?
Affixes and vocabulary building My behav<u>ior</u> … was <u>un</u>accept<u>able</u> and <u>in</u>excus<u>able</u> attend<u>ee</u>s	Words formed through affixes: How can words be split into different parts? How can new words be formed by adding these affixes? e.g. 'interviewee' and 'employee' How does the grammatical form (word class) change? 'behavior' vs. 'behave', 'accept' vs. 'acceptable' Why do the similarly formed words 'unacceptable' and 'inexcusable' have different prefixes 'un' and 'in'?

Motivational affordances	Motivational activities
"Violence in all of its forms is poisonous and destructive" **Theory**: International posture and intercultural awareness (e.g., Yashima, 2013)	Smith begins his post with these words. Why do you think Smith started the post in this way? Are there other events, beyond Hollywood, that might have motivated this choice of opening? • Elicit students' opinions
"I would like to publicly apologize" **Theory**: Relevance (e.g., Stevick, 1980; Dörnyei, 2001)	The Instagram post is an apology, and an acceptance of personal responsibility. Why do you think Smith apologized? Did he have to? What might have happened if he didn't? • Working in groups students share situations when an apology has been necessary, but difficult, or when an apology had been necessary, but was never made.
Justification? **Theory**: Creativity, personal expression, transportable identities (e.g., Ushioda, 2009)	Was Smith right to apologize? If you had been a friend, or maybe Smith's agent or lawyer, what would you have advised? • Write an email to Smith providing advice.
Accepting the apology? **Theory**: Creativity, personal expression, transportable identities (e.g., Ushioda, 2009)	Should the apology be the end of the matter? If you had been the victim, how would you have responded? • Imagine you are Chris. Write an Instagram post with your response.
"I am a work in progress" **Theory**: Ideal L2 Self (e.g., Dörnyei, 2009; Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013)	What does Smith mean? • Write a letter to your future self. You can describe your hopes for the future, your fears, the person that you are now, and the person that you hope to become.

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In L2 TE we need to:

➢ Shift our departure points...

➢ Work with cases/CIs to develop a solution-based focus

➢ Use theory to develop insights into why initiatives 'work' / 'don't work'

➢ Make better use of the benefits of Educational Partnerships

Thank you for listening!

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