


# Unleashing ULTRA

A Theory to Supercharge ER

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## Sometimes We...

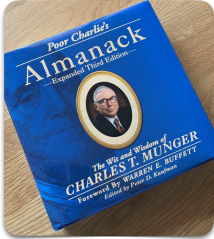
- Don't know what direction we should take.
- What and how to teach
  - What activities to do
  - Trial and error.



# What can be done?


## Get Theory

- I had found that theory-structure was a superpower in helping one get what one wanted... [At school] I had excelled without labor, guided by theory, while many others, without mastery of theory, failed despite monstrous effort.
- (Munger, 2023, p. 311).




## Good Theory

- Shines light on a clear,, practical, actionable way.



## Good Theory

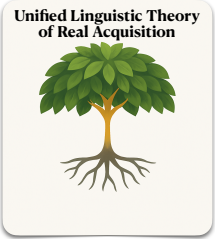
- Supercharges research and teaching.




# ULTRA


## ULTRA

- Unify complementary and competing theories.
- Add essential novel elements.
- One theory for teaching (with ER).



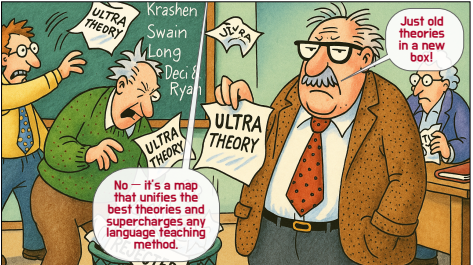
## Why ULTRA?

- ER = input, but what about
  - Retention, fluency, interaction, output, motivation?
  - Make ER integrative, generative, dynamic.

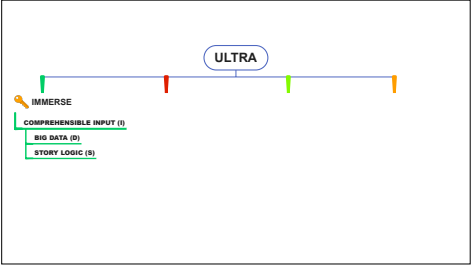


We acquire language by getting rich input (I), drawing from Big Linguistic Data (D), animated by Story Logic (S)...

We are energized by Addictive Learning (A) and Motivational Zeal (Z). We thus engage and rewire through Output (O), Interactive Negotiation (N), Feedback (K), and Conscious Noticing (C), forming iterative loops of learning (\*). We refine skills by polishing Fluency (F), fine-tuning Language Forms (L), and fortifying memory through Retrieval (R), Mixing (M), Spaced Practice (P), Generation (G), and Elaboration (E). Throughout the process, we activate Agency, shape Identity, and we thrive in Social Flow (AIS).





# ULTRA ZONES



## ULTRA Clarifies What Matters

- ULTRA focuses on the best methods that work.
- Adds new elements, merges competing ones.
- Helps us balance ER.



# Immersion Zone

## Meaningful Input (I)

- We acquire languages by understanding messages.
- (Krashen, 2013).



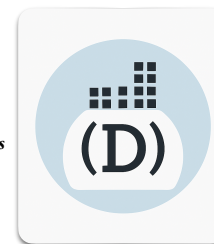
## Meaningful Input (I)

- Krashen's central idea.  $(i + 1)$
- Flood the brain with meaningful messages, not rules.
- (I) is foundational theory for ER.



## Big Linguistic Data (D)

- We acquire language mastery as we process big linguistic data — engaging massively with patterns, frequencies, and regularities in input and output.
- (Seidenberg, 2017)
- Quantity of Input.



## Big Linguistic Data (D)

- "Becoming a skilled reader is Big Data for people... Our learning mechanisms are similar to some computational algorithms used in analyzing Big Data."
- (Seidenberg, 2017, Location 104)

## Big Linguistic Data (D)

- Big data ER boosts a learner's capacity to **acquire patterns**.
- Patterns of phonology, morphology, lexis, collocations...
  - ... word order, complex syntax, social register, pragmatic patterns, rhetorical styles, and discourse coherence

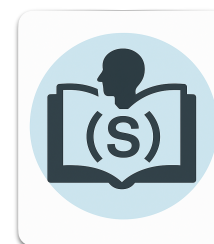
## Big Linguistic Data (D)

- Big Data Thresholds
- 300,000 words, stop translating, confidence, TOEIC Boost
- 2,000,000 words = 1 year study abroad (TOEIC measure)
- Nishizawa (2018)



## Story-Logic (S)

- We acquire language by understanding and recounting messages infused with story-logic.
- (Poulshock et al., 2023)
- Quality of Input.



## Story-Logic (S)

- Weave story-style, story-structure, story-logic into fictional and factual content.
- (S) = We meet a character who wants something, who must undergo and overcome conflict to get it.



## Applying Input (I) Big Data (D) Story-Logic (S)

- Do extensive reading!
- Give learners comprehensible input
- Helping them get big linguistic data...
  - infused with compelling story-logic.



# Motivation Zone

## Addictive Learning (A)

- We boost language learning by making it game-like, flow-producing, and rewarding of effort.
- (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Gee, 2003)



## Addictive Learning (A)

- Game-like: clear goals, feedback loops, progressive challenge, visible metrics, streaks, word counts, badges, rewards
- Flow: challenge meets skill, immersion, time distortion
- Rewarding of effort: progress, mastery, enjoyment (intrinsic) + recognition, praise, tangible rewards (extrinsic)

## Addictive Learning (A) -- Skill Tree



- Choose a Story: Grow with one branch, or level up with three!
- Level 1: Questioner: Write questions. Ask a partner.
- Level 2: Summarizer: Write a 3-4 sentence summary. Share.
- Level 3: Thinker: Share what's interesting/important.
  - Replay with a new story. Each time, your English grows.

## Game Play Mechanics (Gee, 2005)



- Choice (pick your story).
- Progression (levels 1-3)
- Replayability (do it again with a new story).
- Social play (ask and share with a partner).
- Identity (you become a Questioner, Summarizer, Thinker).



### Motivational Zeal (Z)

- We build motivational zeal by chasing goals, feeling progress, and drawing strength from others.
- (See Dörnyei, 2005; Dweck, 2006; Deci & Ryan, 1985.)



### Motivational Zeal (Z)

- Set word targets.
- With weekly word targets, students read more, gain confidence, and read beyond requirements (McLean & Poulshock, 2018).
- Share progress weekly with a buddy or group.
- Track word count, reading rings (streaks), stories read, etc.



## Interaction Zone

### Output (O)

- We acquire language as we push output, building fluency, prompting noticing, and testing knowledge with feedback
- (Swain, 1985)



### Output (O)



- Retell stories.
- React in writing.
- Respond by doing problem solvers.

### Output (O) Problem solver example.



- Your students read story about popular jobs.
- Problem: What job should I do in the future?
- Suggest 5 good future jobs for your classmates.
- Suggest, Choose, Rank (Nation, 2013)

### Feedback (K)

- We acquire language more effectively when we receive timely, clear, and actionable feedback on our output.



### Feedback (K)



- Recasts: Repeat what the student says. But without the error.
- "I afraid snakes. Recast: I am afraid of snakes.
- More natural: "Oh, I see you're afraid of snakes."
- Group work version. Teacher roams. Notes mistakes in groups. Recasts them on the board.

### Conscious Noticing (C)

- We acquire language as we consciously notice linguistic forms in meaningful input.
- (Schmidt, 2010)



### Conscious Noticing (C)



- Pop-up grammar
- Textual enhancement -- bolded patterns, noticing in context
- Speed up Read Aloud in pairs with feedback

Communicate in Story Style - Short Selection - Story Activity - Speed Up Read Aloud

**PAIRED READING FOR FLUENCY**

When we practice fluency we use language that we already know.

1. In pairs, Partner A reads out loud from "X" for 60 seconds. Partner B listens; then gives feedback.
2. When you hear the alarm, stop reading. Mark the place where you stop!
3. Partner A, repeat steps 1-2. How many MORE words did you read the second time? Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Partner B do steps 1-3.

**WORD FOCUS: LIST NEW OR HARD WORDS**

Story title	
Framework	
Inspiration	
Sally, All	

HeadStart  
FLUENCY

### Interactive Negotiation (N)

- We acquire language as we interact with others and negotiate the meaning of their messages.
- (Long, 1996)



### Interactive Negotiation (N)



- Running Dictation or Messenger and the Scribe
- Negotiation Power Questions
- What was that? Could you say that again?
- What did you get for number X?
- How do you spell that?
- What does X mean?

## Refinement Zone

### Fluency (F)

- We acquire linguistic fluency through repeated, timed practice using meaningful language we already know.



### Fluency (F)



- 4/3/2 -- summarize a story
- Do a speed reading course.
- Speed up listening activity: slow, medium, and fast speeds
- Speed up read aloud

## Language Focus (L)

- We acquire accuracy, balancing focus on form: grammar, pronunciation, morphology, syntax in real communication.



## Language Focus (L)

- Grammar: Pop-up grammar, transform sentences, recasts
- Pronunciation: say phrases; repeat with rhythm or stress
- Discourse: What does "They" or "it" refer to in this story.



## Retrieval (R)

- We make language stick by receptively grasping words and meanings in input, and by productively wrestling them from memory in output — speech or writing.



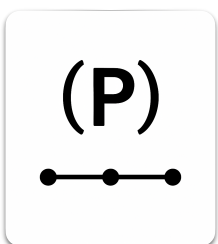
## Retrieval (R)

- Retell a story after reading it.
- Make word cards from stories for new words.
- Draw a picture of a key fact or event in a story.



## Spaced Practice (P)

- We acquire lasting linguistic knowledge by spreading practice over time.



## Spaced Practice (P)

- Revisit a story later — retell it from memory.
- Students make word cards from readings. In pairs, they quiz each other on from the cards.
- In pairs, students take turns summarizing old stories — no notes allowed.



## Mixing (M) -- Interleaving

- We boost linguistic knowledge by mixing (interleaving) different topics or concepts in study sessions, an effortful process that helps us distinguish and remember nuances.



## Mixing (M)

- Mix your review of stories or topics.
- Use retrieval while mixing topics, stories, or units.
- Shuffle comprehension questions from multiple stories and match them to the right text.



## Generation (G)

- We acquire language by generating answers, testing ideas, and learning through trial and error.



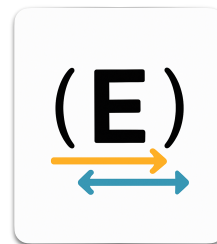
## Generation (G)

- After reading the title or the first sentences, students guess key points and the conclusion.
- When students meet an unknown word, they guess the meaning *before* looking it up.
- If the text has comprehension questions, students try to answer them before reading.



## Elaboration (E)

- We acquire language by linking new knowledge to what we already know.

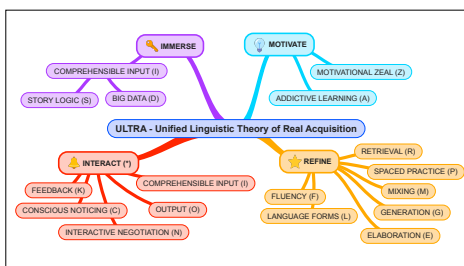


## Elaboration (E)

- Elaboration Prompts (after reading):
- What does this story remind you of?
- What do you agree or disagree with? Why?
- How can this story help you live better?



# In Short



## In conclusion

- ULTRA guides how...
- We choose texts
- Learners respond and learn from texts.
- We manage and motivate the learning process.

Interact	Motivate
Input (I)	Addictive Learning (A)
Output (O)	Motivational Zeal (Z)
Feedback (R)	Retrieval (R)
Conscious Noticing (C)	Spaced Practice (P)
Interactive Negotiation (N)	Mixing (M)
Iterate (*)	Generation (G)
	Elaboration (E)

## ULTRA is

- **Powerful: unifying best theories for real language acquisition.**

**ULTRA is**

**•Practical: guiding effective activities  
for language learning.**

**In Short -- ULTRA is**

**•Elegant: a simple design turning  
complex theory into daily practice.**

**Thank You**

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