Bridge over troubled mortars

exploring interdiscipinary problems and possibilities in english language teaching

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Outline

* Why encourage interdisciplinary work?

* Some distinctive characteristics of English Language Teaching

* Possibilities associated with interdisciplinary work

* Problems associated with interdisciplinary work

Some distinctive characteristics of language teaching

- Language is more dynamic than other subjects and has more practical relevance to real life

- Scope & complexity extends beyond teaching grammar, vocabulary & the 4 skills to a wide range of other issues (culture, communication skills, learning skills, etc.)

- Methodology aims at creating contexts for communication & maximizing student involvement: transmission model of teaching inappropriate (Borg 2006: 23)

SHARED INTELLECTUAL SPACES
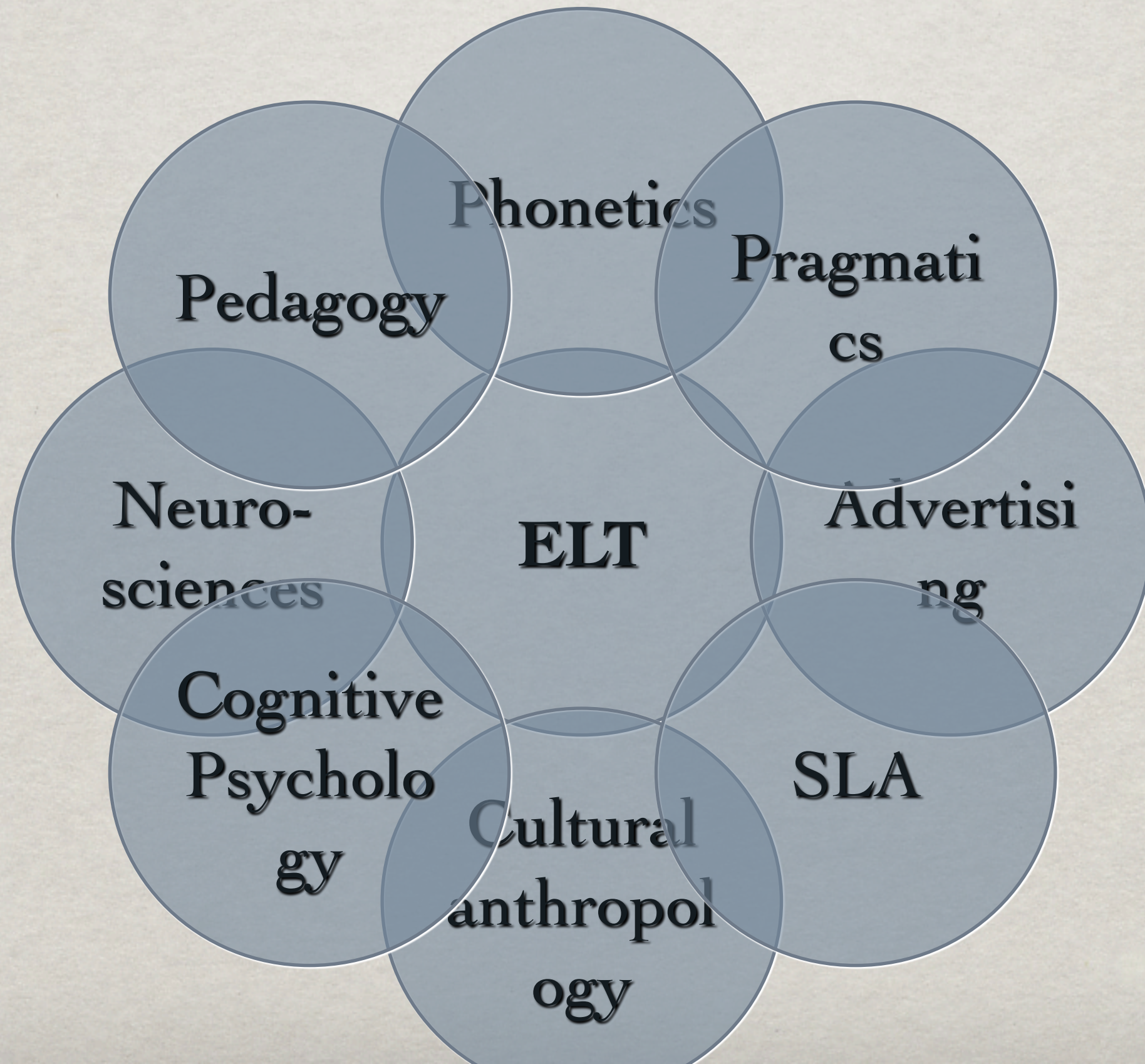
THE NEUROSCIENCES & ELT

* "Thirty years of investigation into the neural effects of differential environments... has demonstrated that the brains of animals that have received training, consistently show enhanced dendritic growth... and synaptic functioning. In other words, the surface area of the 'enriched' neuron increases, with a concomitant increase in the neuron's potential computational ability." (Jacobs & Schumann 1992: 288)

THE NEUROSCIENCES & ELT
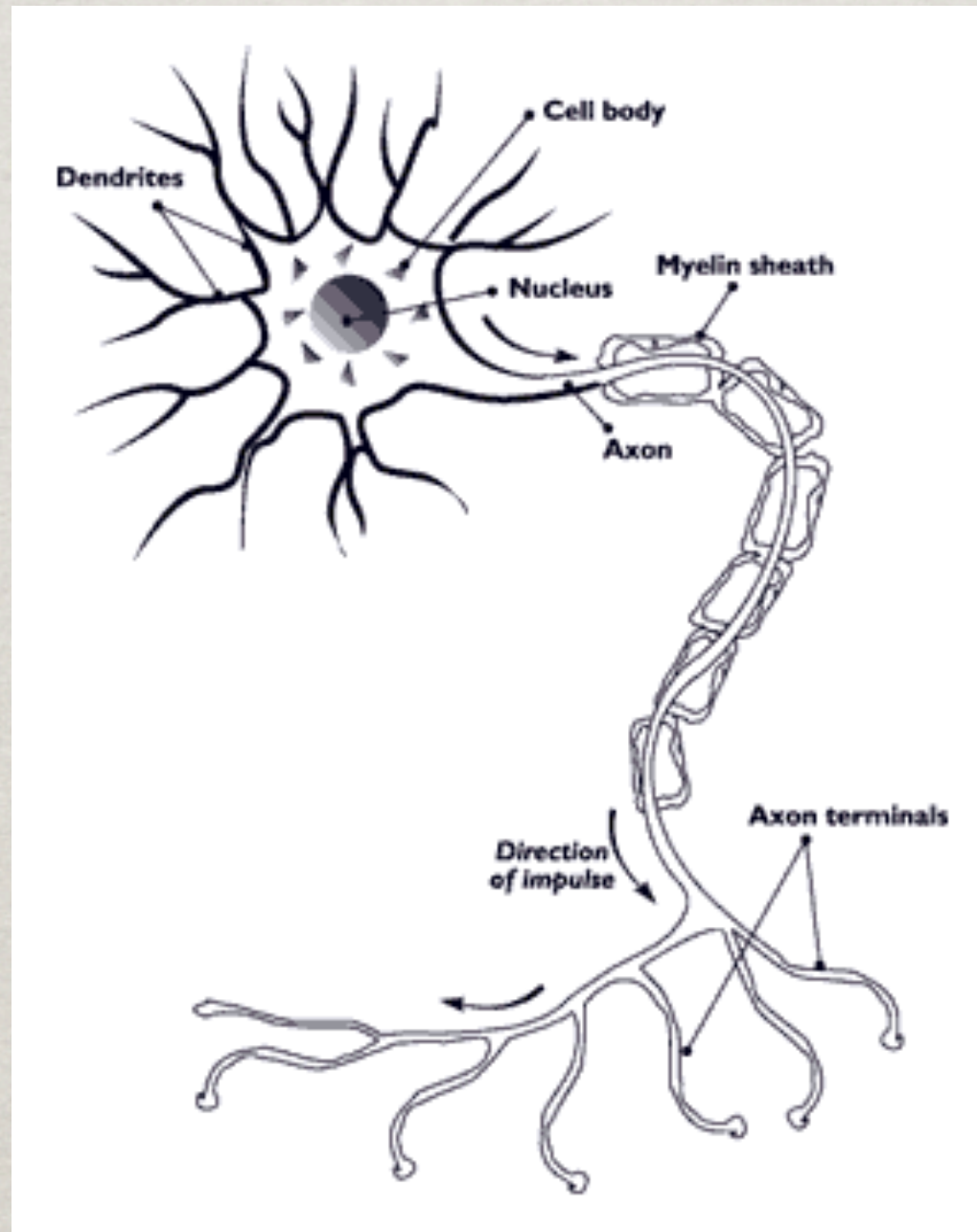
THE NEUROSCIENCES & ELT

"[...] given that the cerebral cortex prefers novel stimuli and that neurons tend to habituate (i.e. cease responding) to repetitive and/or non-meaningful stimuli, one could have questioned in advance on neurobiological grounds the ultimate effectiveness of methods such as Audio-lingualism, which emphasized parrot-like repetition of chained phrases relatively devoid of communicative meaning." (Jacobs & Schumann 1992: 291)

Audio lingual method

* Teacher: There's a book on the table... repeat

* Students: There's a book on the table

* Teacher: Good... pen

* Students: There's a pen on the table

* Teacher: Good... apple

THE NEUROSCIENCES & ELT

"[...] when one examines the brain, it is clear that emotion and cognition are intimately intertwined... The brain evaluates a stimulus according to its novelty, pleasantness, and the degree to which it is compatible with the organism's goals, needs, coping mechanisms, and self image. The brain is bombarded with stimuli and the evaluation process is necessary in order to decide which stimuli to attend to and to remember." (Jacobs & Schumann 1992: 294)
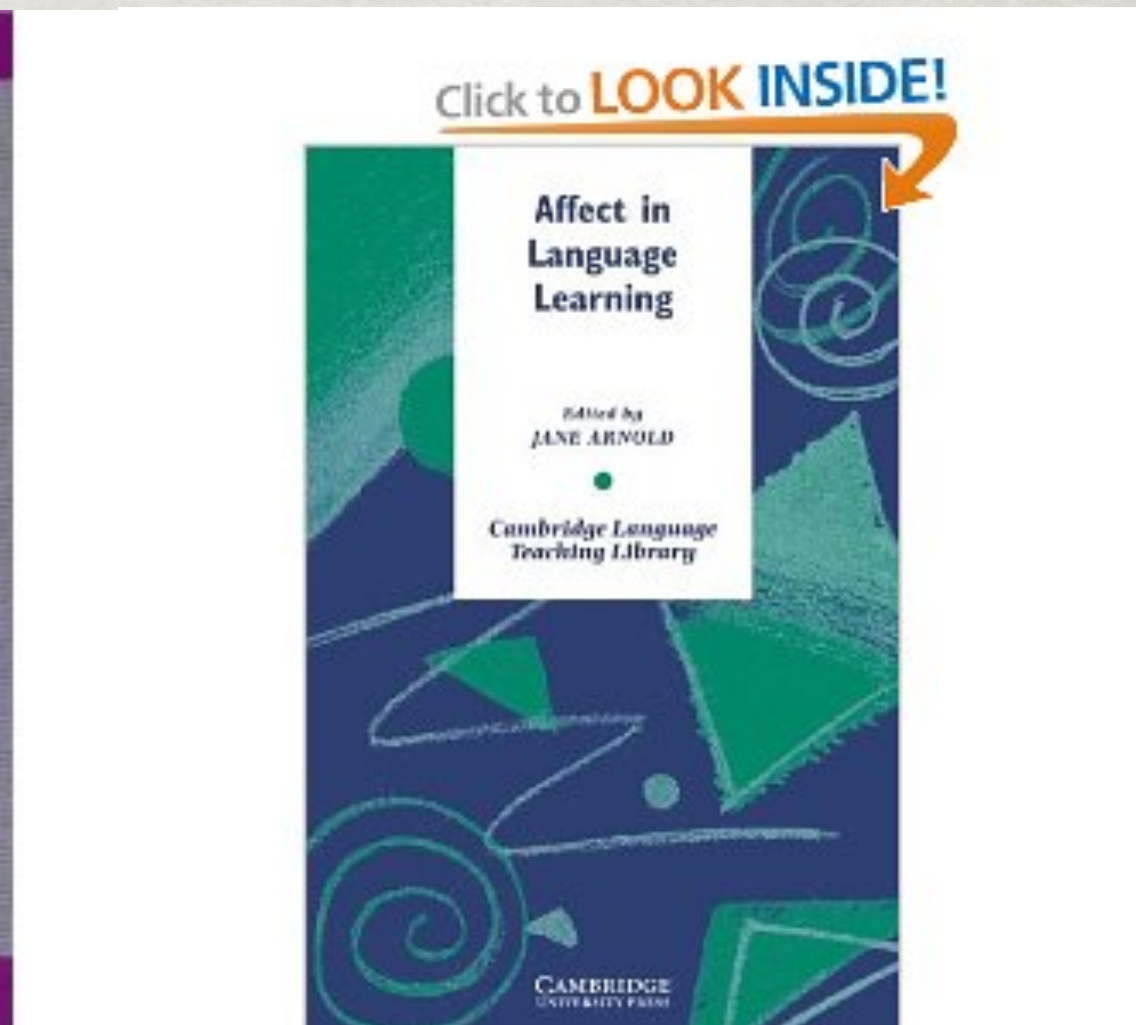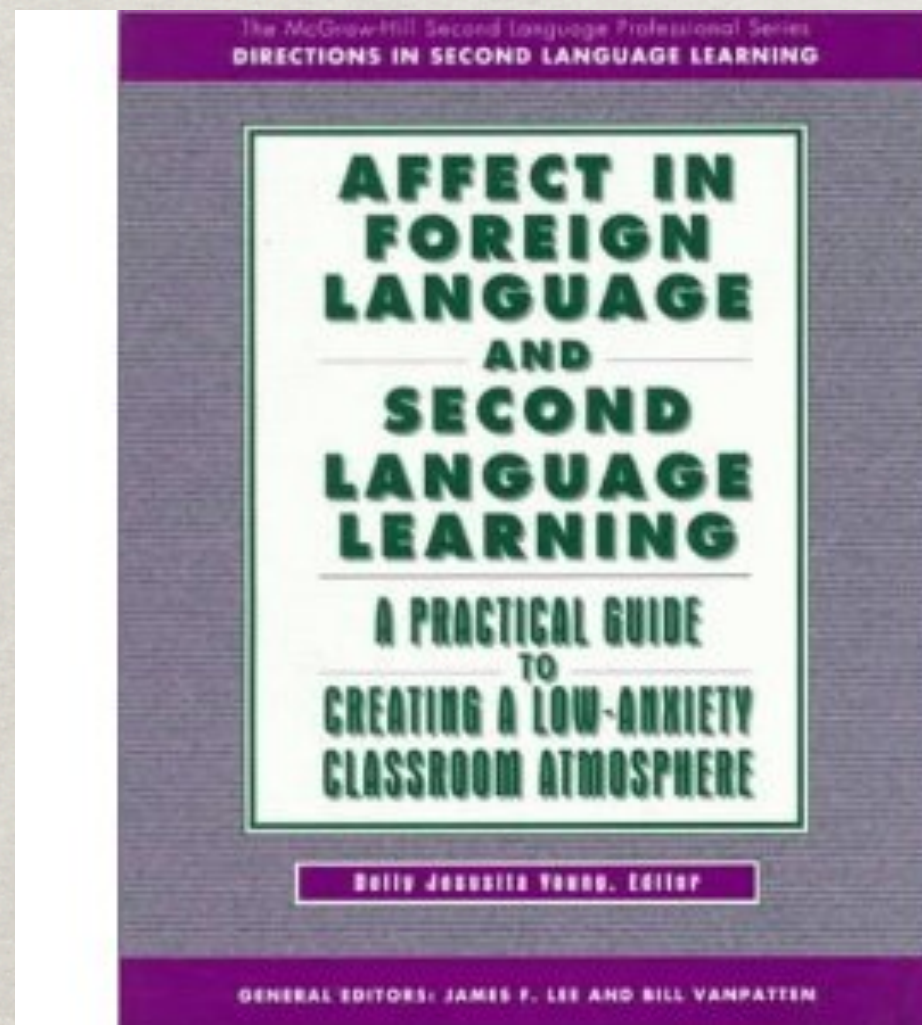
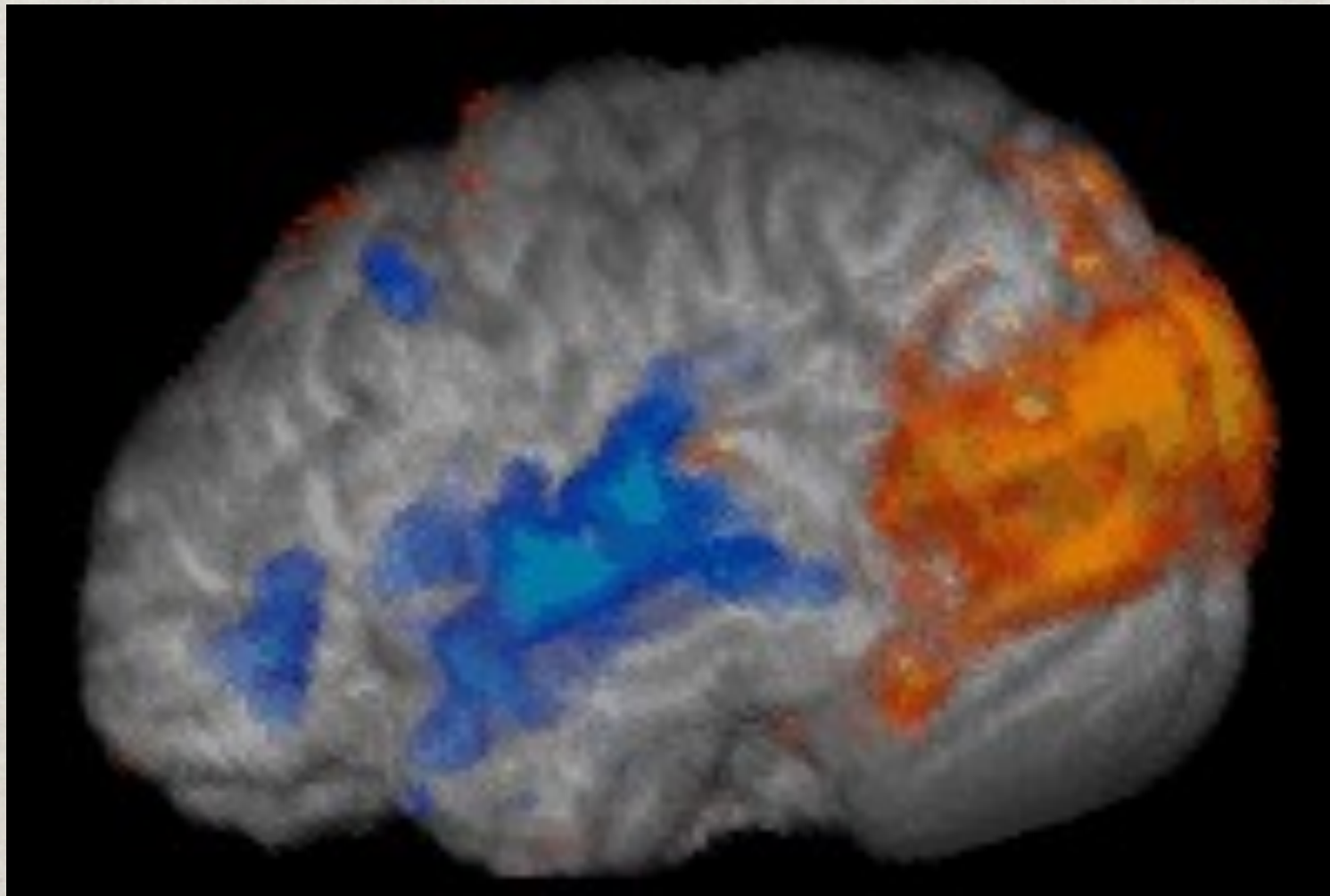# The amydala: evaluates sensory stimuli and is part of an important neural circuit responsible for memory
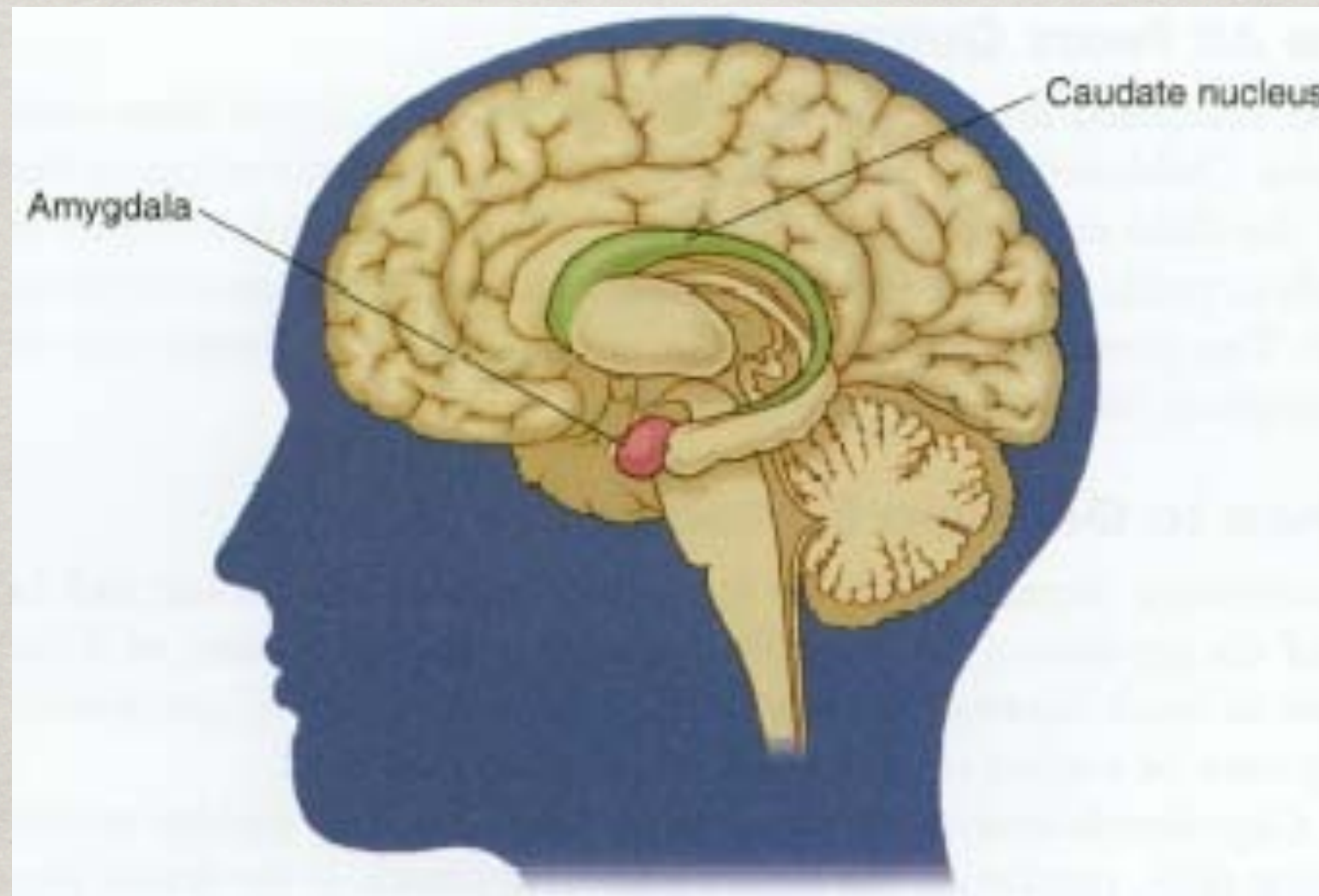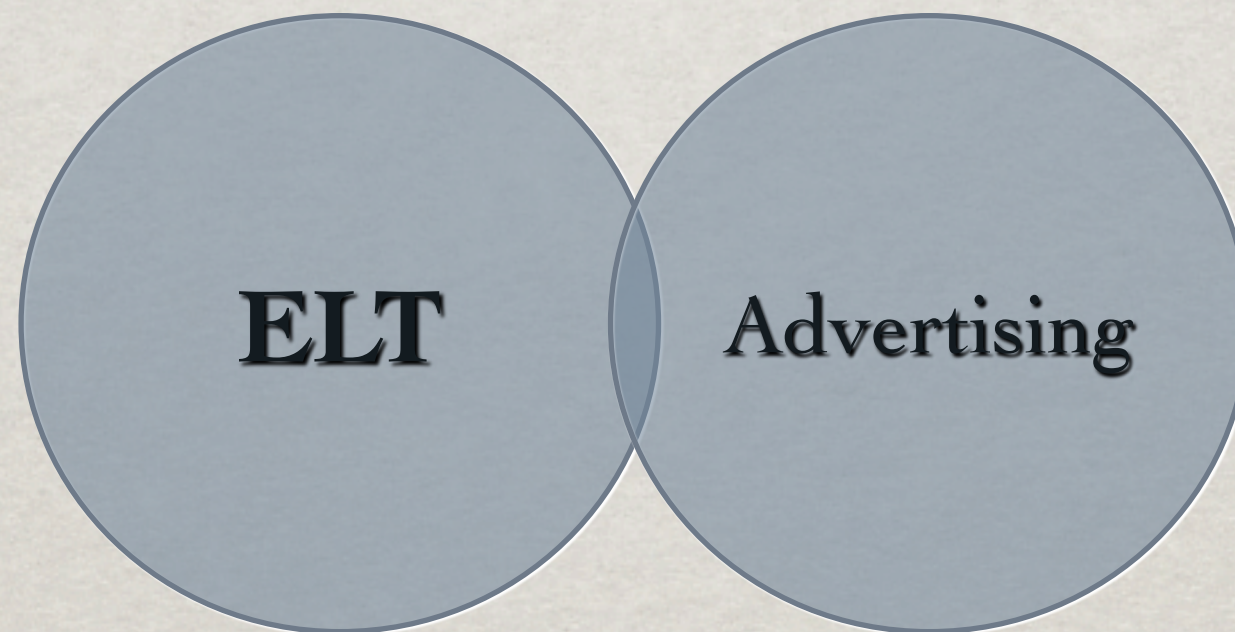
Affect in language learning

Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI)

Advertising & ELT

Advertising & theories of 'noticing' in ELT

* "SLA is largely driven by what learners pay attention to and notice in the target language input and what they understand the significance of noticed input to be." (Schmidt 2001: 3-4)

* "no noticing, no acquisition." (Ellis 1995: 89)

Major goals of advertising psycholgy

- Capture attention

- Arouse & hold interest

- Make a useful lasting impression
  (http://www.slideshare.net/precioussa/advertising-psychology-1684533)

Sci-art: Cloaca, by artist Win Delvoye, replicates the digestive process
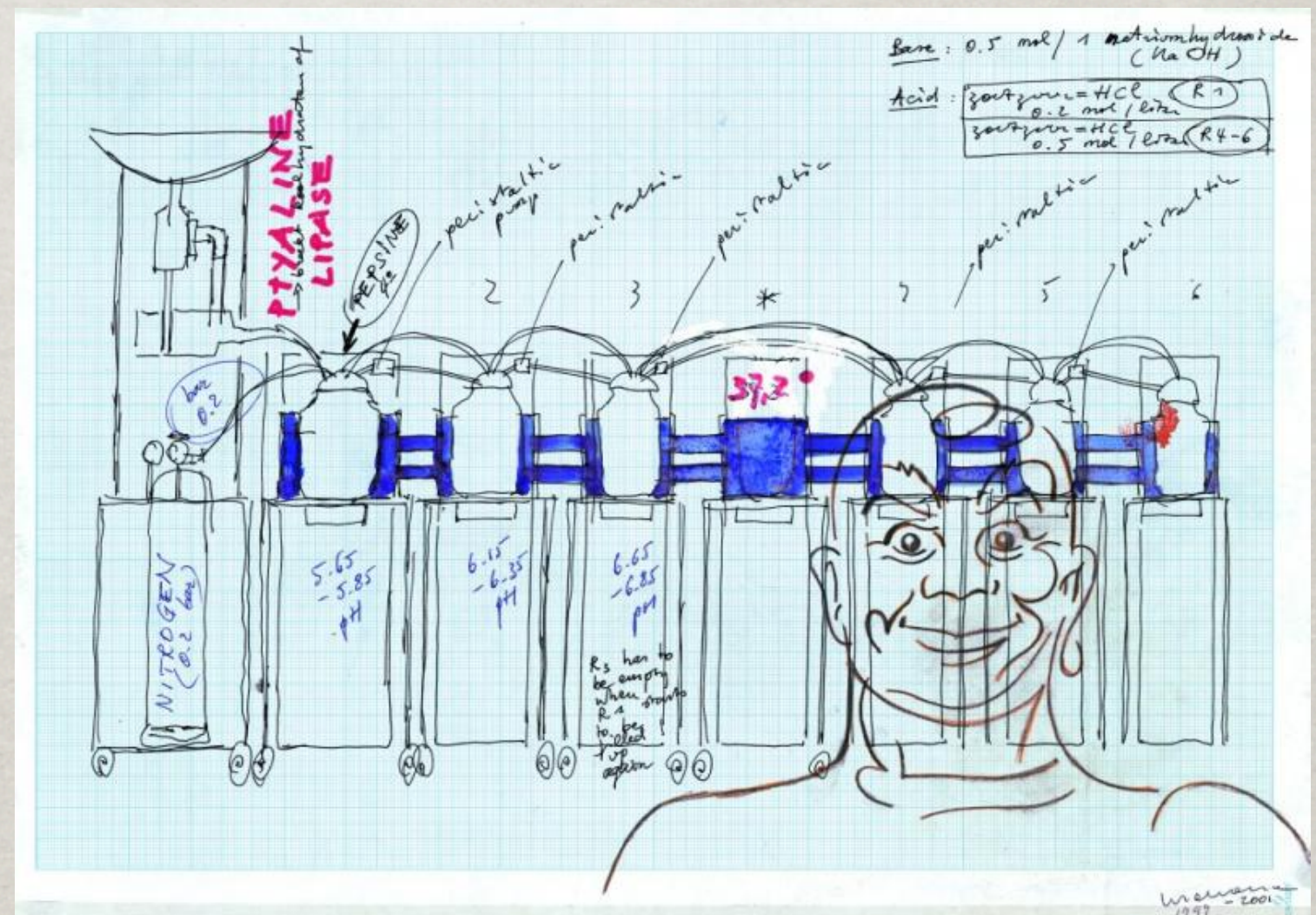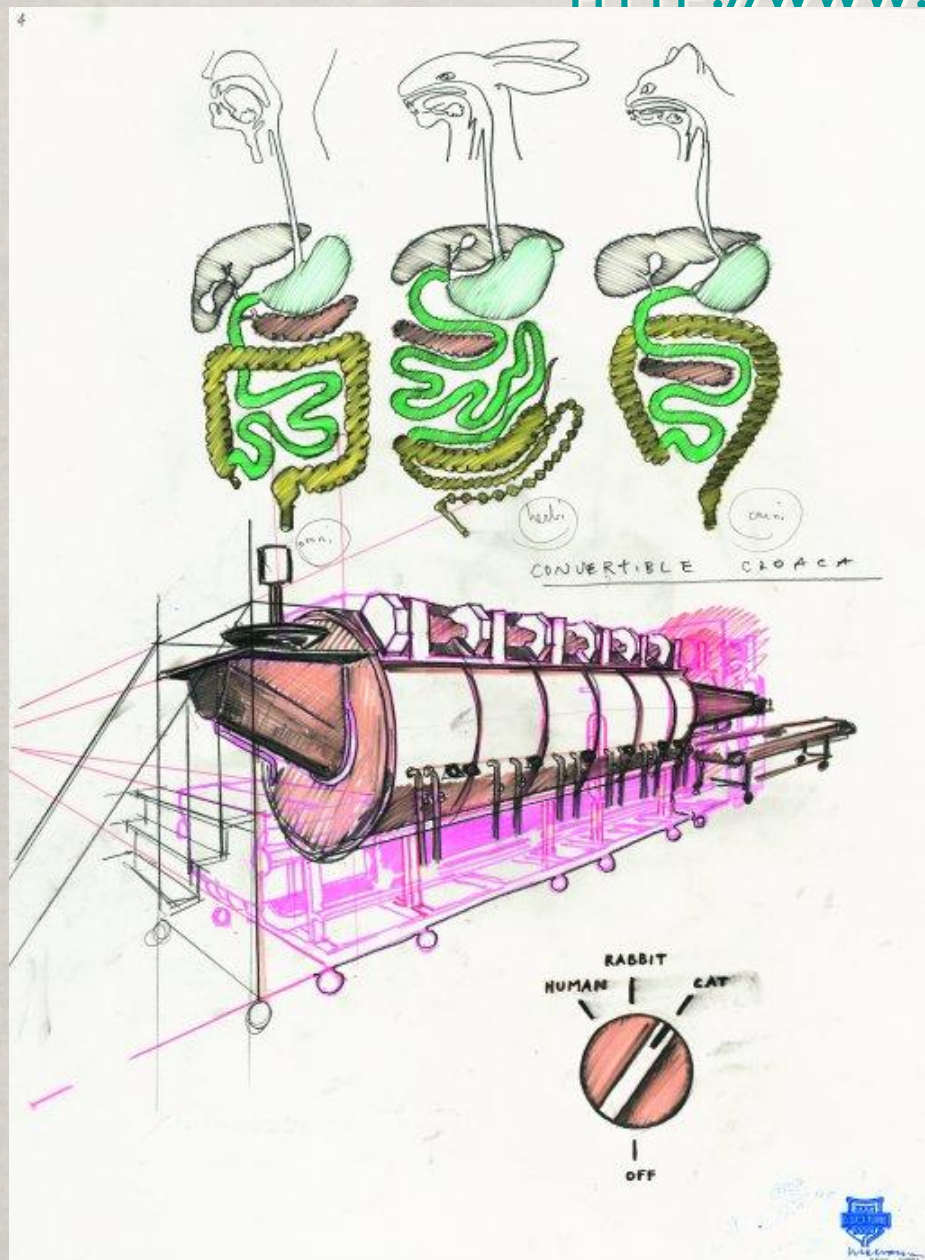
The digital society & interdisciplinary work

* "[...] the nature of information exchange in our digital society has lowered interdisciplinary barriers."
(*NewScientist* 8 May 2010)

Example: Copyright Laws

* How do copyright laws affect use of film in the classroom?

* Dr Estelle Derclaye, Associate Professor in Intellectual Property Law, Nottingham University, UK

* Dr Eric Faden, Associate Professor of English & Film/Media Studies, Bucknell University, USA: A Fair(y) Use Tale, 2007

Problems with interdisciplinary work

* Specialization leads to isolation

* Communicating across discourse communities

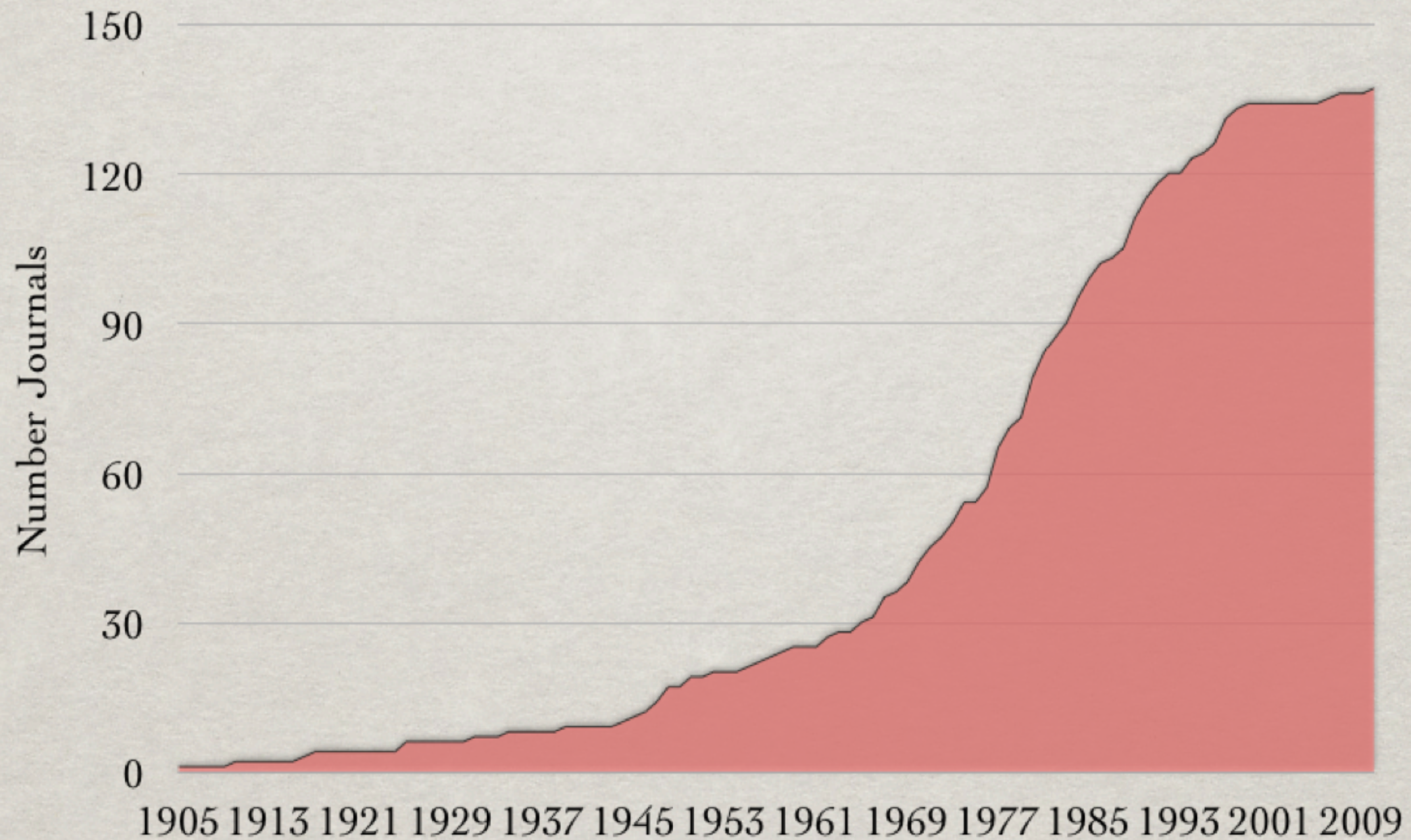* Resistance to change

* Information overload

* Political issues

The growth of linguistic journals

* "The amount of research in applied linguistics pouring off the presses today is staggering." (Perry 2005: 3)

The growth of linguistic journals

Specialization leads to isolation

- "[…] textbooks merely grow from and imitate other textbooks and do not admit the winds of change from research, methodological experimentation, or classroom feedback" (Sheldon 1988: 239)

- "The division of applied linguists and language practitioners into two distinct, and at times hostile, bodies… leads to what Clarke (1994) calls a 'dysfunctional discourse'." (Gilmore 2007: 112)

- "How many good ideas 'linger' in journals because of a lack of communication between specialists?" (Kormos 2006: xviii)

Communicating across discourse communities

* The expansion of research in SLA has also resulted in a parallel increase in specialised terminology." (Piske & Young-Sholten 2009: 2)

* "Participants in the discussion referred frequently to a distinction between university-based academics (who are the main authors of the literature of teacher education) and 'chalk-face' practitioners... many in the profession feel that there is more than one discourse community within the world of teacher education." (Kerr 2005: 151)

Military Jargon

| AFG20060914I1428 | | RC SOUTH | 32.01453018 | | 64.83011627 |

Date	Type	Category	Affiliation	Detained
2006-09-14 10:10	Enemy Action	Indirect Fire	ENEMY	0

	Enemy	Friend	Civilian	Host nation
Killed in action	80	0	0	0
Wounded in action	0	0	0	0

At 141000Z Sep 06 FOB ROBINSON (HELMAND Province) was engaged with 1x mtr. The ANA reported 80x TB in nearby waddi and AH were tasked. At 1107Z it was reported that 80x TB pax walking down road 611 wearing green and black, it is possible these were the pax seen in the waddi. All FF in COP and accounted for. NFTR. TIC ongoing. UPDATE: At 141000Z TB sighted 400m W of ANA compound and 400 N of compound. FF eng with 105mm, GPMG, SAF, .50cal and SPG 9. All TB in wadi reported KIA by ANA. 80x TB then reported on road 611 (W of compound) by ANA. TB were neutralized by AH. A vehicle and motorcycle were seen moving to the N. Vehicle pushed through ANA vehicle check point. ANA engaged with SAF but vehicle escaped. TIC closed at 1200Z. (Number of TB KIA is unconfirmed)

Report key: F81F4E48-1718-4B07-AB75-89AB8E878BA0
Tracking number: 2007-033-005257-0297
Attack on: ENEMY
Complex atack: FALSE
Reporting unit: 205th RCAG
Unit name: 205th RCAG
Type of unit: Coalition
Originator group: UNKNOWN
Updated by group: UNKNOWN
MGRS: 41SPR7285043510
CCIR:
Sigact:
DColor: RED

WikiLeaks

Browse by Type

Browse by Category

Browse by Region

Browse by Affiliation

Browse by Date

Browse by Severity

Community resources

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Military Jargon

- At 141000z Sep 06 FOB ROBINSON (Helmand Province) was engaged with 1x mtr. The ANA reported 80x TB in nearby waddi (sic) and AH were tasked. At 1107z it was reported that 80x TB pax walking down road 611 wearing green and black, it is possible these were the pax seen in the waddi (sic). All FF in COP and accounted for NFTR

Afghan War Diary

- 141000z Sep 06: 14th September 2006, 10:00 am Zulu time (Greenwich Mean Time)

- FOB: Forward Operating Base

- ANA: Afghan National Army

- Wadi: a valley, gully or stream bed that remains dry for much of the year

- AH were tasked: Apache Helicopters were sent

- TB pax: Taliban personnel

- FF in COP: friendly forces in the compound

- NFTR: Nothing further to report

Applied Linguistics Jargon (Source: Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics)

- **Error:** the use of a linguistic item by a learner showing faulty or incomplete learning

- **Mistake:** caused by lack of attention, fatigue or carelessness

- **Usage:** the function of a linguistic item as an element in a linguistic system (grammatical perspective)

- **Use:** how a linguistic item is actually used in discourse to perform a communicative act

Information Overload

- Term first popularized by the sociologist Alvin Toffler in his book 'Future Shock' in 1970

- "Information overload is when you are trying to deal with more information than you are able to process to make sensible decisions"(www.infogineering.net)
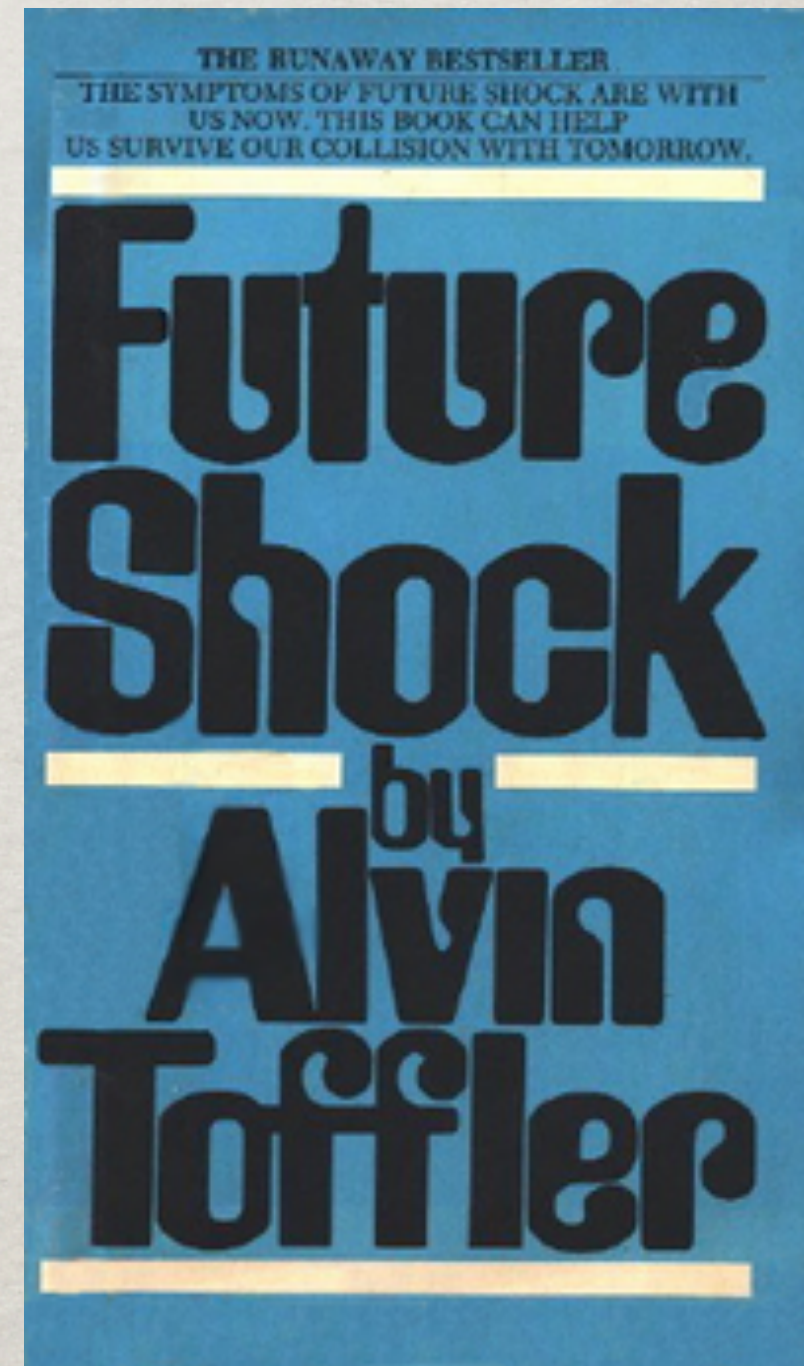
Avoiding Information Overload

- Spend less time on gaining information that is *nice to know* and more time on things that we *need to know*

- Focus on *quality of information,* rather than quantity

- Learn how to create better information

- Keep the mind focused on one issue at a time (www.infogineering.net)

Politics: Defending your 'patch'

* "[...] writers are always complicit with their own ideologies and beliefs - albeit unwittingly - and will resist any effort to tamper with them." (Wala in Tomlinson 2003: 154)
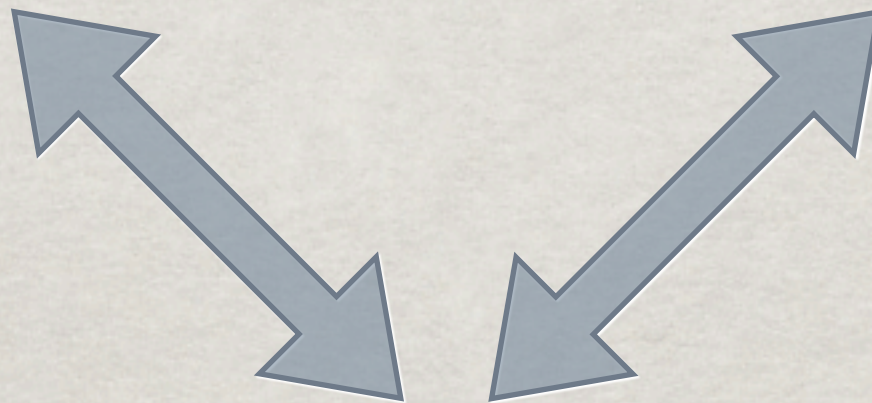
Political issues

Applied Linguistics researchers

English Literature researchers

Language teachers

Project management

* "On a project… it is the project manager's job to get *many different* specialist groups to cooperate with each other. Perhaps there may be conflicts between the departments the staff come from, perhaps there may be discussions regarding competence between the various specialist groups, perhaps some staff will have been 'exiled' to the project against their will… the project manager must get them all to cooperate, create team spirit, even though it will be for a limited time, and even though he or she has no formal authority worth mentioning." (Kousholt 2007: 78)

Conclusions

* Interdisciplinary collaboration in ELT (as well as other fields) has great potential to produce new insights **if**...

* We can identify disciplines with shared intellectual spaces

* We are willing to make the effort to reach out to other disciplines and find a language of communication which is mutually comprehensible

* We can manage the 'project' effectively and deal with the risks of information overload

Thank you

References

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