

# Incorporating Action Research in the Classroom with low language and literacy learners



We acknowledge that we meet and work on the land of the Wurundjeri people and that sovereignty of the land of the Kulin Nation were never ceded.

We pay respect to their Elders, past and present, and acknowledge the pivotal role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play within the Australian and education community.





# Action Research

**vicTESOL**

Supporting English language teaching,  
learning and multicultural education

The logo for Carrington Adult Education, featuring a stylized graphic of a path made of colorful circles (blue, red, orange, yellow, green) leading towards the text.

**Carrington**  
Adult Education

# Aim of today

By the end of the session, you will:

- Hear how we implemented our action research plan.
- Identify the benefits of action research and how it will help improve your teaching practice.
- Identify a challenging area in your classroom and develop an action research plan to address it.



# Today's agenda

- Carringbush's context
- What is action research (AR)?
- Sharing the three issues we explored through the Action Research Cycle
- Small group discussion about AR and questions

# Carringbush Adult Education

- Richmond and Collingwood (9 sites in total)
- Teach SEE, AMEP and Skills First in Initial Course to Cert III
- Majority of students from Vietnam, China and Horn of Africa
- Histories of disrupted schooling
- Inconsistent attendance
- Many students not progressing





# Sustained team teaching

## Why?

- Innovative lessons
- Collaboration
- Flexibility in grouping students
- Share ideas and reflect



# VicTESOL research grant

- Working with teacher educators from Melbourne University, Dr. Julie Choi and Dr. Yvette Slaughter.
- Exploring how we can *meaningfully* teach literacy and language to low language and literacy adult learners.



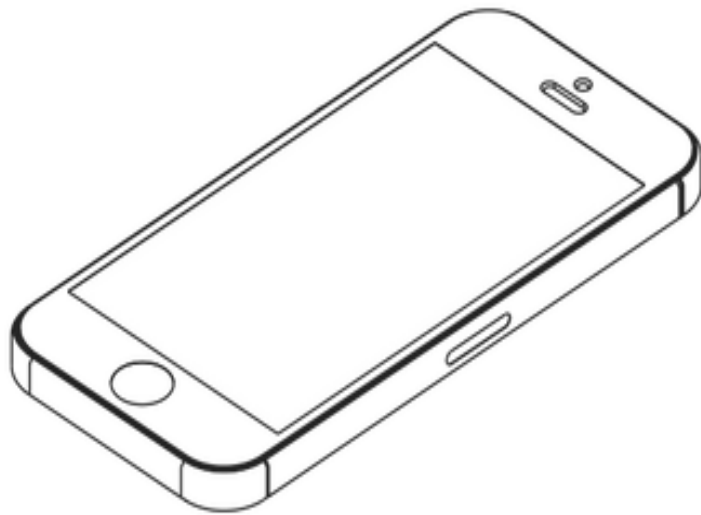


# Pedagogical underpinnings

- Providing relevance
- Incorporating life experiences
- Encouraging learner autonomy
- Promoting collaborative learning.

# What is Action Research?

Go to **www.menti.com** and use the code **41 04 57**



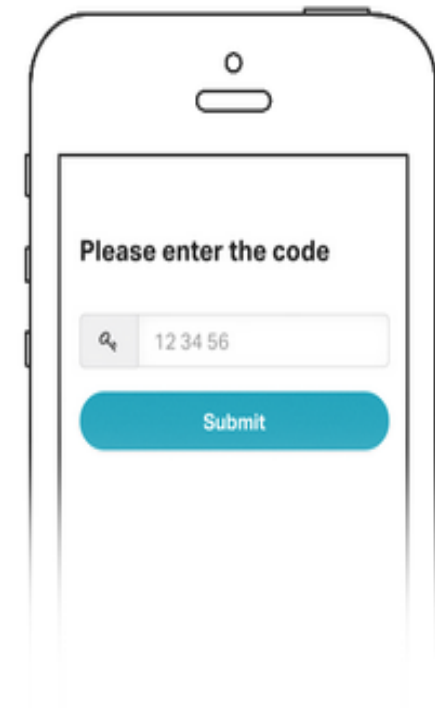
1

Grab your phone

www.menti.com

2

Go to **www.menti.com**



3

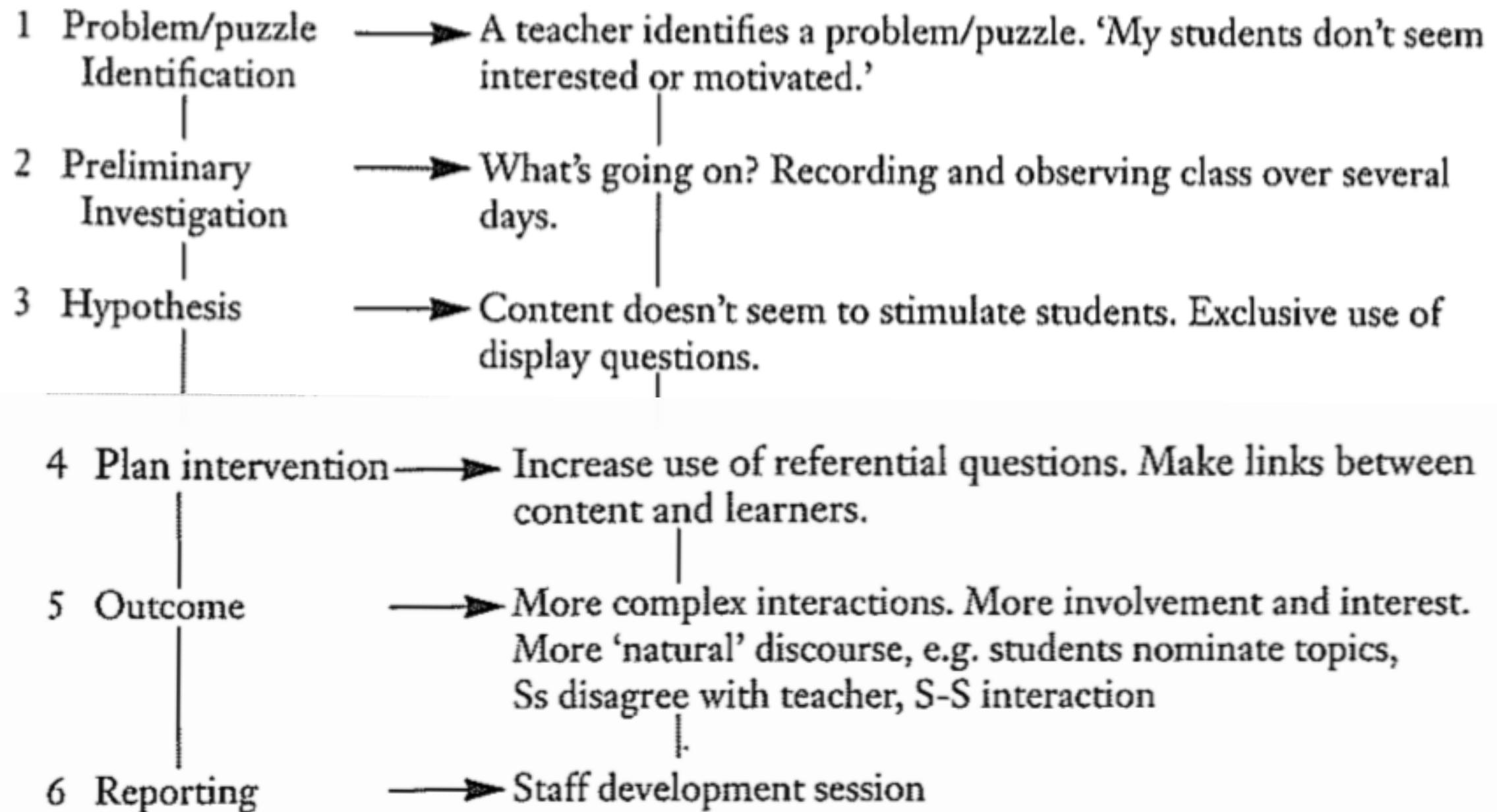
Enter the code **41 04 57** and vote!



# Action Research

- Asking questions sense of the data. → collecting data → interpreting the data → making
- **AR is under the control of the teacher.**
- The teacher decides what it is they want to investigate, how to go about investigating the issue, what changes they might or might not want to make to their practice, and how to share what they have found
- The aim of AR is to improve teaching and learning in a local context.

Table 1: The Action Research Cycle: An ESL Example



Nunan, D. Action Research in Language Education (1993). In Julian Edge and Keith Richards (Eds), *Papers on classroom research and teacher development*, Hienmann, UK.

# Problem Identification

To what extent have students understood the instructions and purpose of the lesson.



# Preliminary Investigation

- Filming
- Peer observation
- Through L1 observers, they identified the extent to which students weren't understanding.



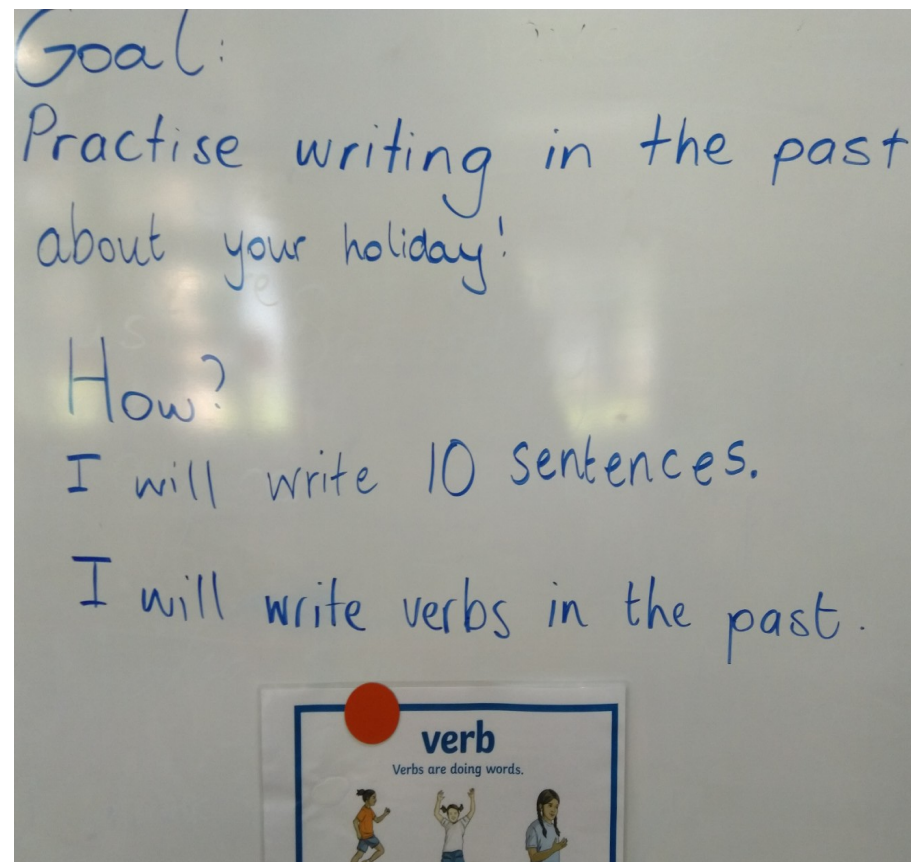


# Hypothesis formation

My teaching will improve if I...

- Provide clear and simple steps that are written on the board, translated if necessary.
- Take the time to ensure every student knows the purpose and requirement of the task.

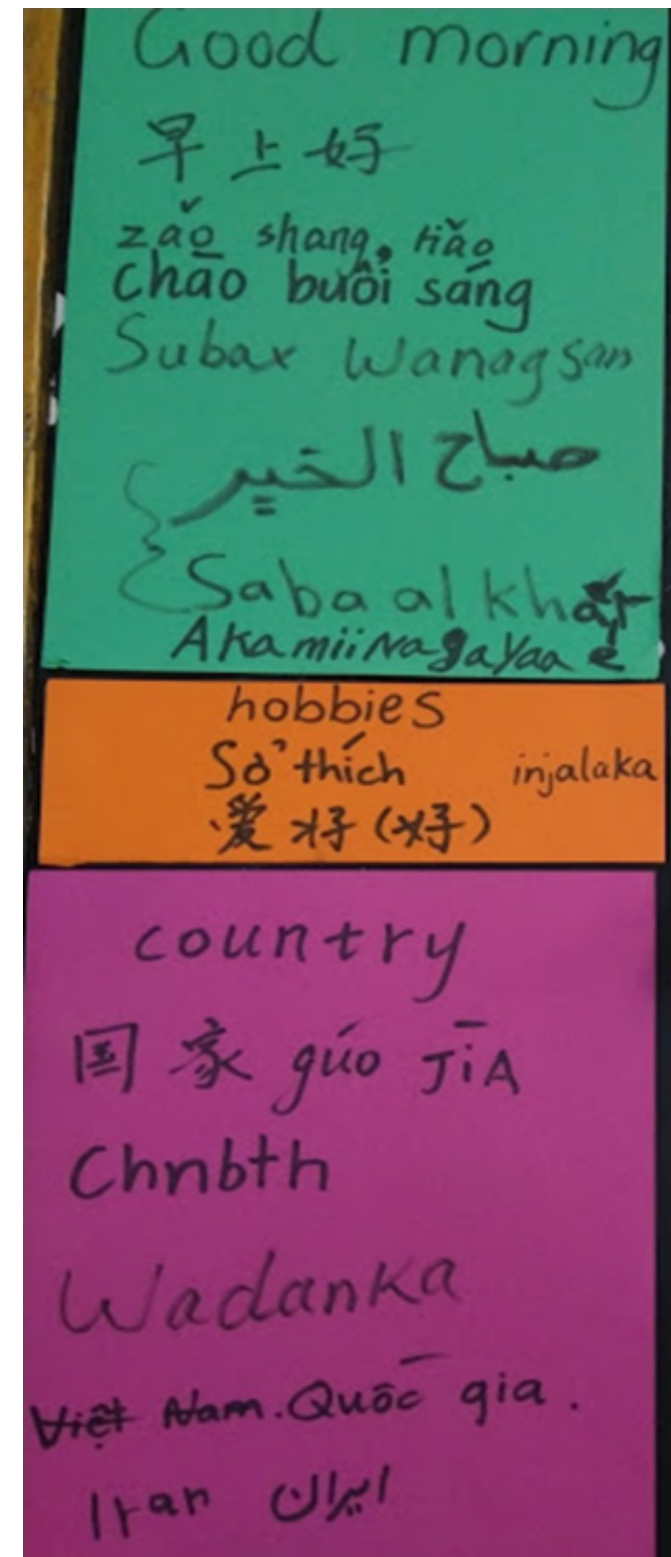
# The innovation



- Learning objectives and success criteria are written on the board and said orally.
- Constantly clarify and provide clear steps written on the board. Teacher takes away step 1, asks what is it?
- It's OK to go slow, stop and re-explain, rather than continuing.

# The innovation

- Translate key words and make into posters, ultimately creating a multi-lingual wall.
- Create a poster about language to use when students don't understand in both students' L1 and English.





What do I do when  
I need help?

- + phone điện thoại 电话
- + teacher giáo viên 老师
- + Dictionary từ điển 字典
- + friend bạn bè 朋友
- + Classroom lớp học 教室
- + Group nhóm 组

Can you speak slower please?  
chậm hơn.

mày có thể nói chậm hơn, làm ơn!

請你說慢點。

louder

How do you spell \_\_\_\_?

你怎么拼写 \_\_\_\_?

bạn đánh vần như thế nào?



# Teacher Training Videos



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<https://www.carringbush.org.au/resources>



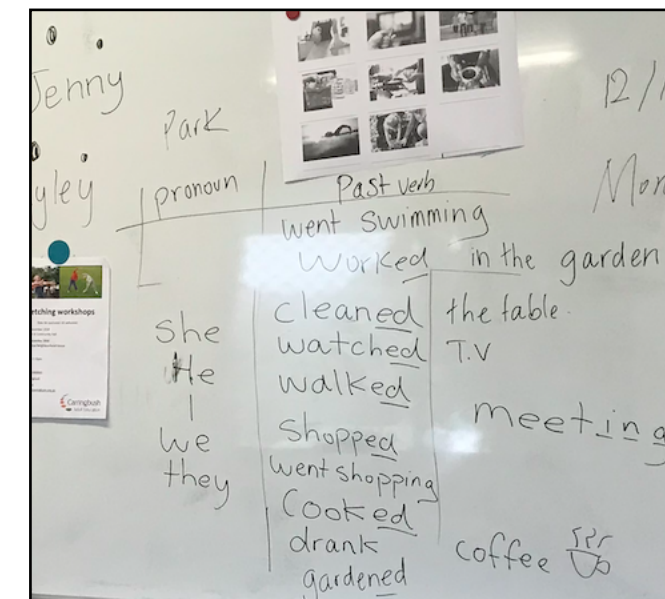
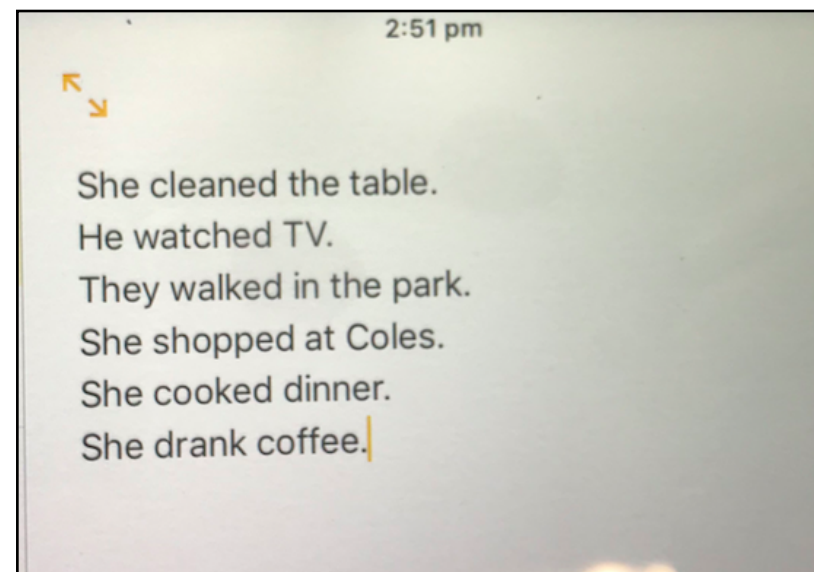
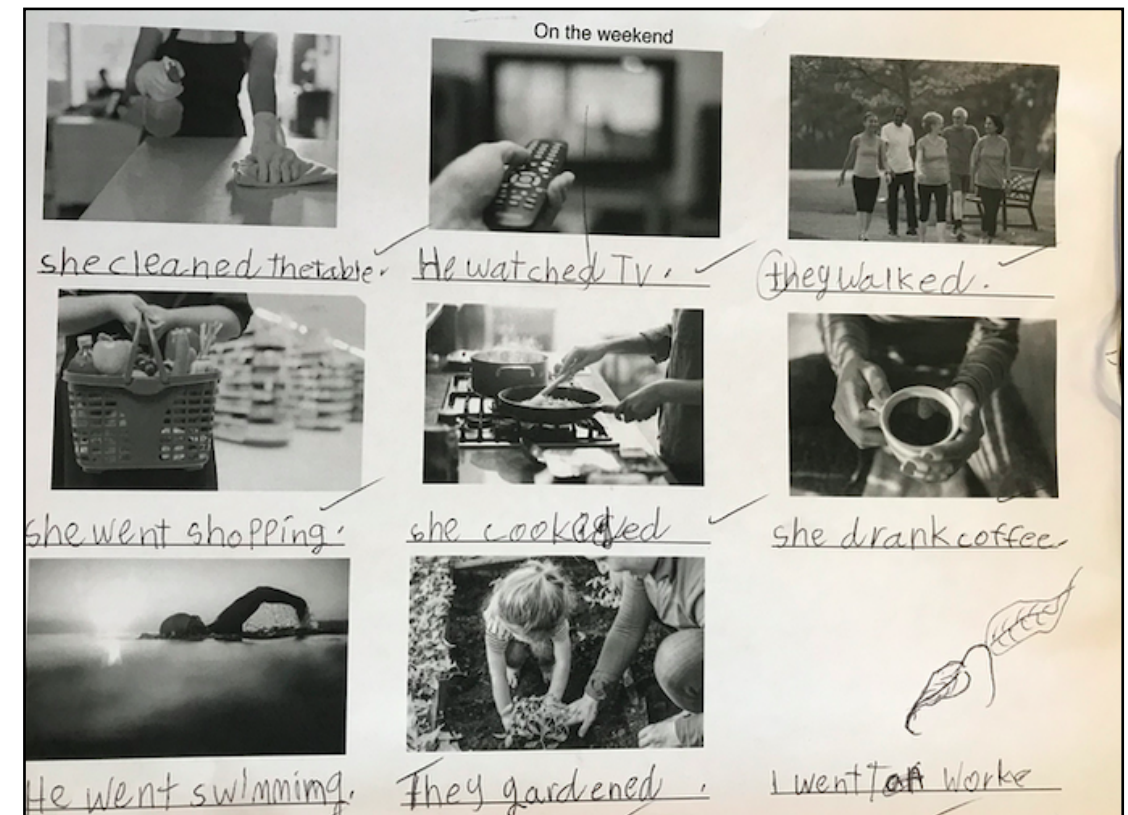
# Outcomes

- Students are more engaged and active.
- Less teacher talk.
- More reflection time.
- Students are helping each other more.
- I am using students' first language where possible to have clearer instructions.



# Problem identification

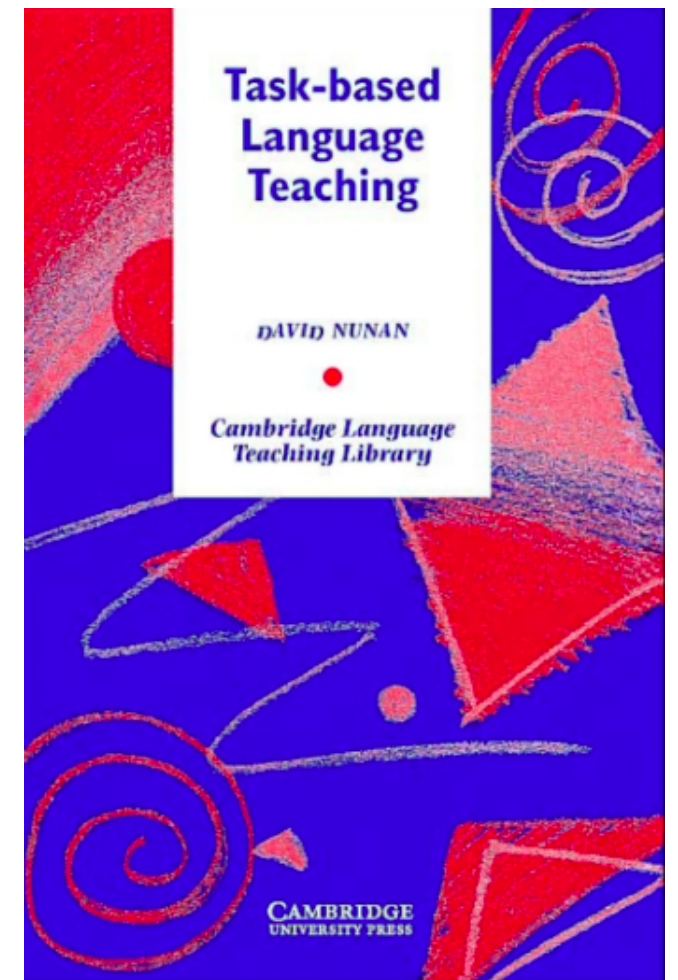
- The pedagogical space I have created through task design and modelling is too restrictive.
- Students don't have opportunities to bring in their lived experiences and linguistic resources.
- How can I get to know my learners?



# Hypothesis formation

Multimodal, student-centred tasks and careful modelling will:

- Open up opportunities for students to bring in their identities and lived experiences into the classroom.
- Allow me to find out what learners can and can't do.





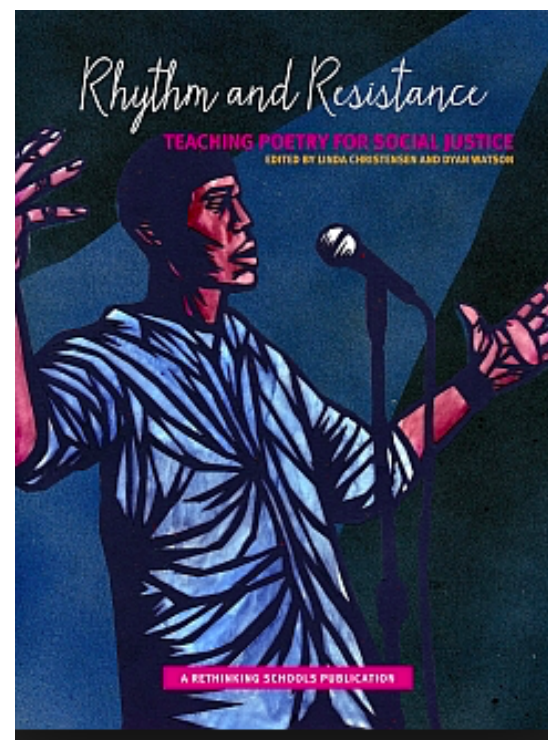
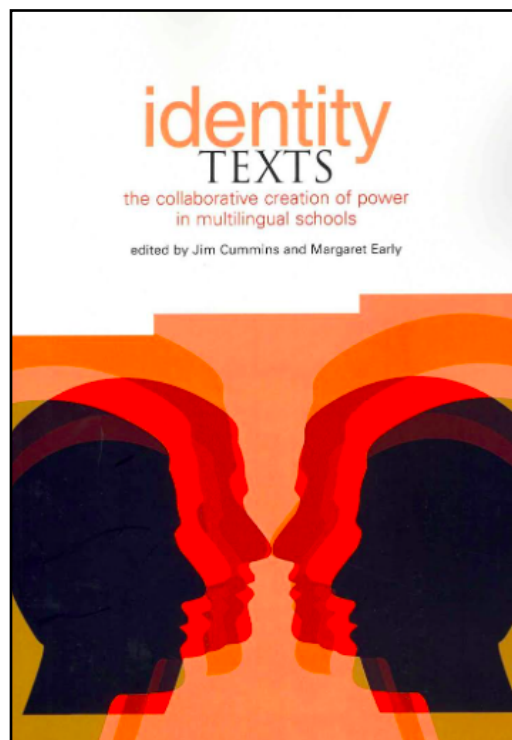
# Multimodal tasks

Multimodal tasks use different modes for meaning making.

They are multi-dimensional, student-centred and interactive.

They are an opportunity to:

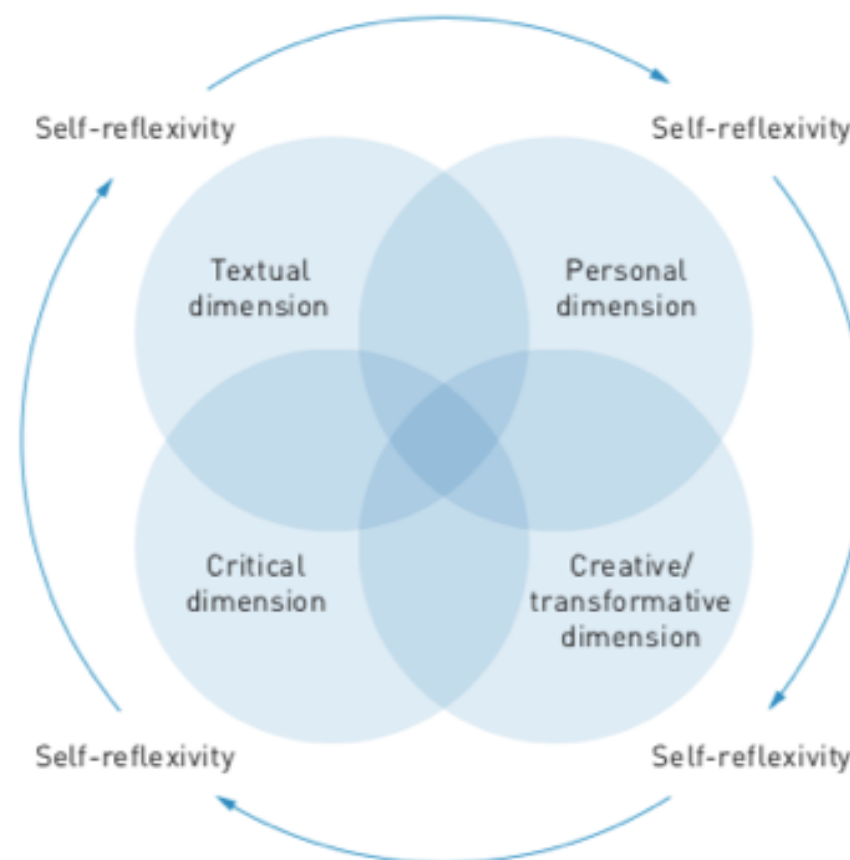
- Help teachers get to know their learners
- Allow learners to show what they can and can't do
- Draw on student's use of language and the role language plays in their lives



# The innovation

The innovation involved using multimodal, student centred tasks and making adjustments to how I modelled those tasks.

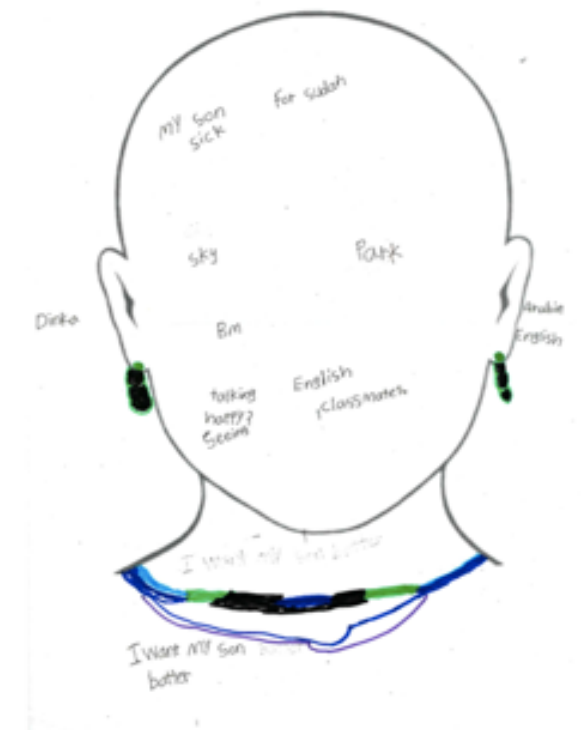
**Figure 14.2** Lau's (2013) integrated critical literacy instructional model



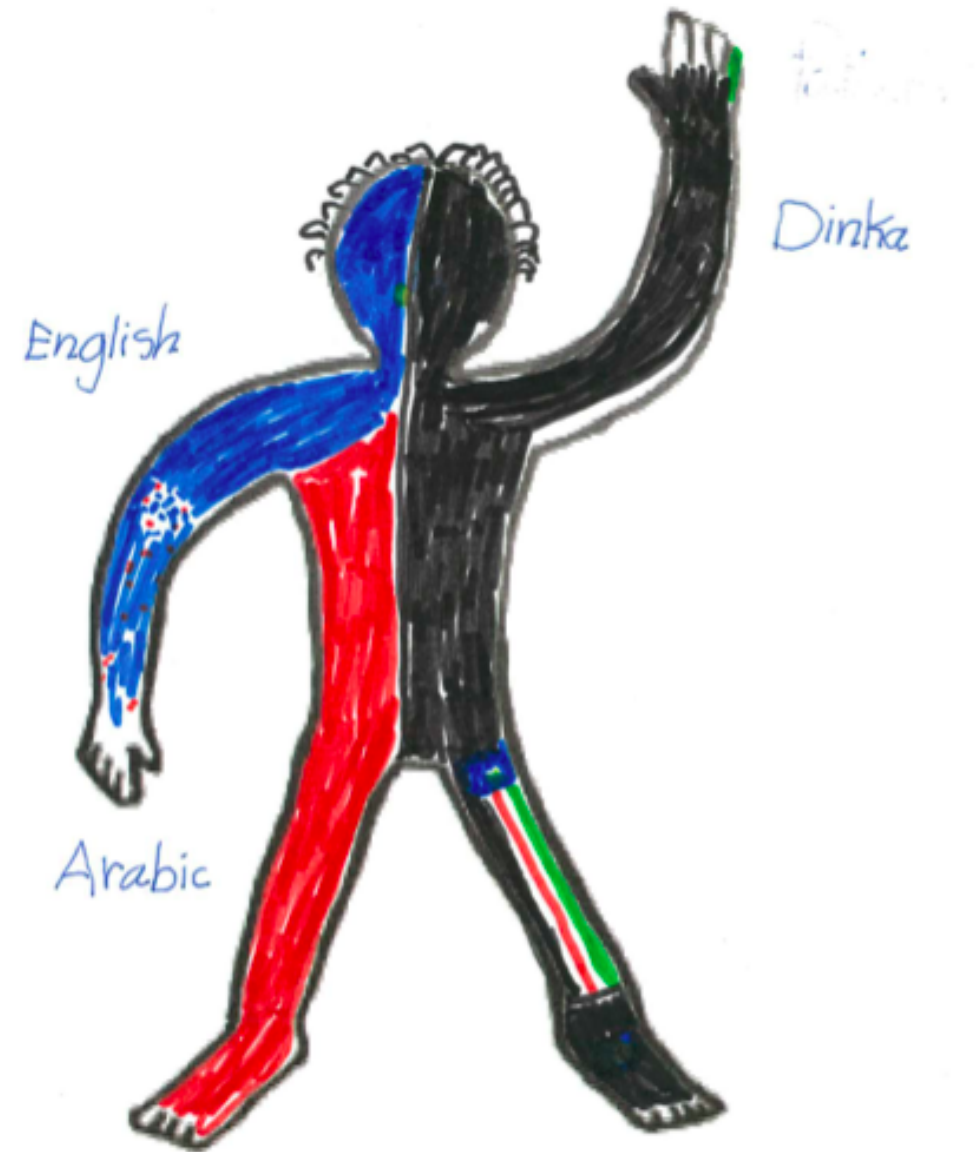
# The data

- Videos
- Students' work
- My reflections

I came from Sudan  
I have been here in Australia  
16 Years  
and I proud. To come to  
class to learn English.  
it is important to help my family.  
and I hope to go visit  
my country this year.



# Language portraits





# Language portraits

**Benefits:** Draw out the multilingual language practices that students are involved in.

**Limitations:** Too much emphasis placed on colours. It did not prompt deeper discussion of students' language identities

**Possible reasons:** Pedagogy- I made it one dimensional





# Language portraits

■ Hakka  
■ Mandarin  
■ English



| Language Portraits |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Name               | Stories  |
| [Redacted]         | Vietnamese<br>orange v country<br>chao shou<br>yellow: mandarin<br>cambodia<br>blue              |
| [Redacted]         | English Australia<br>purple<br>cantonese mam country<br>green                                    |
| [Redacted]         | Dinka: black family home<br>Arabic: so country South Sudan<br>Red<br>English: Australia<br>green |
| [Redacted]         | green: my country language<br>Red: English shopping<br>black: Arabic language                    |

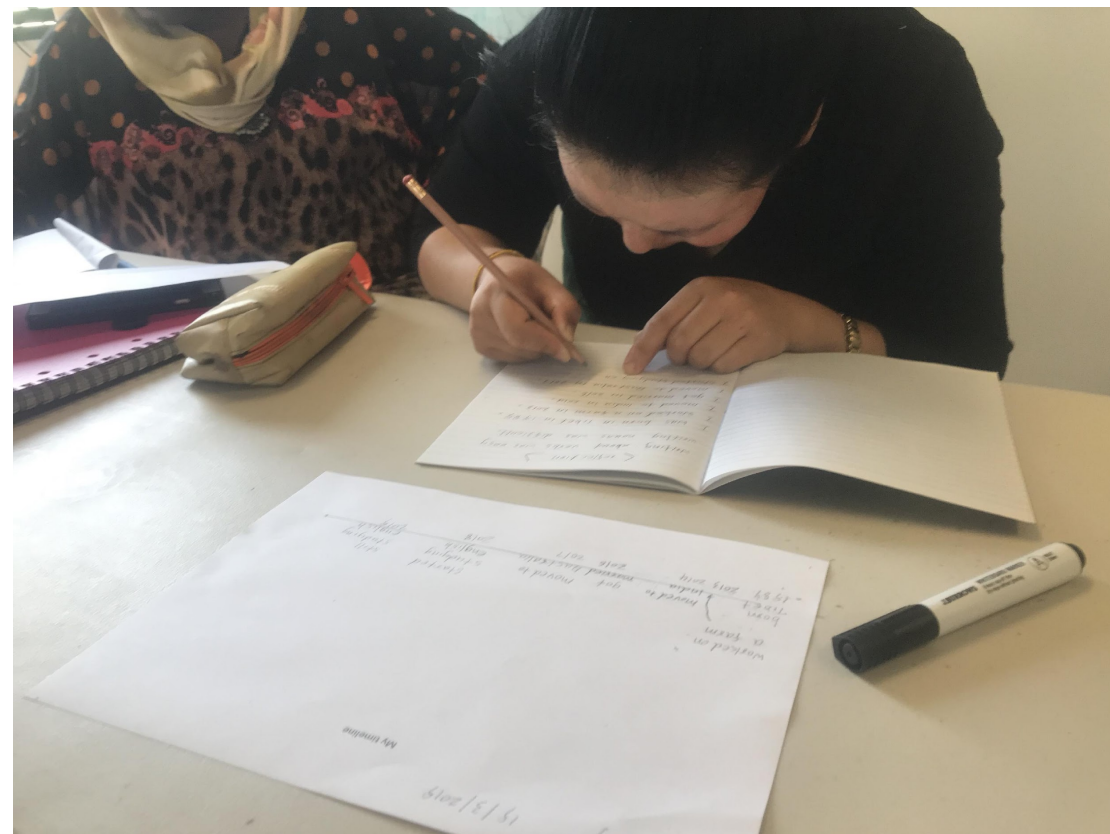
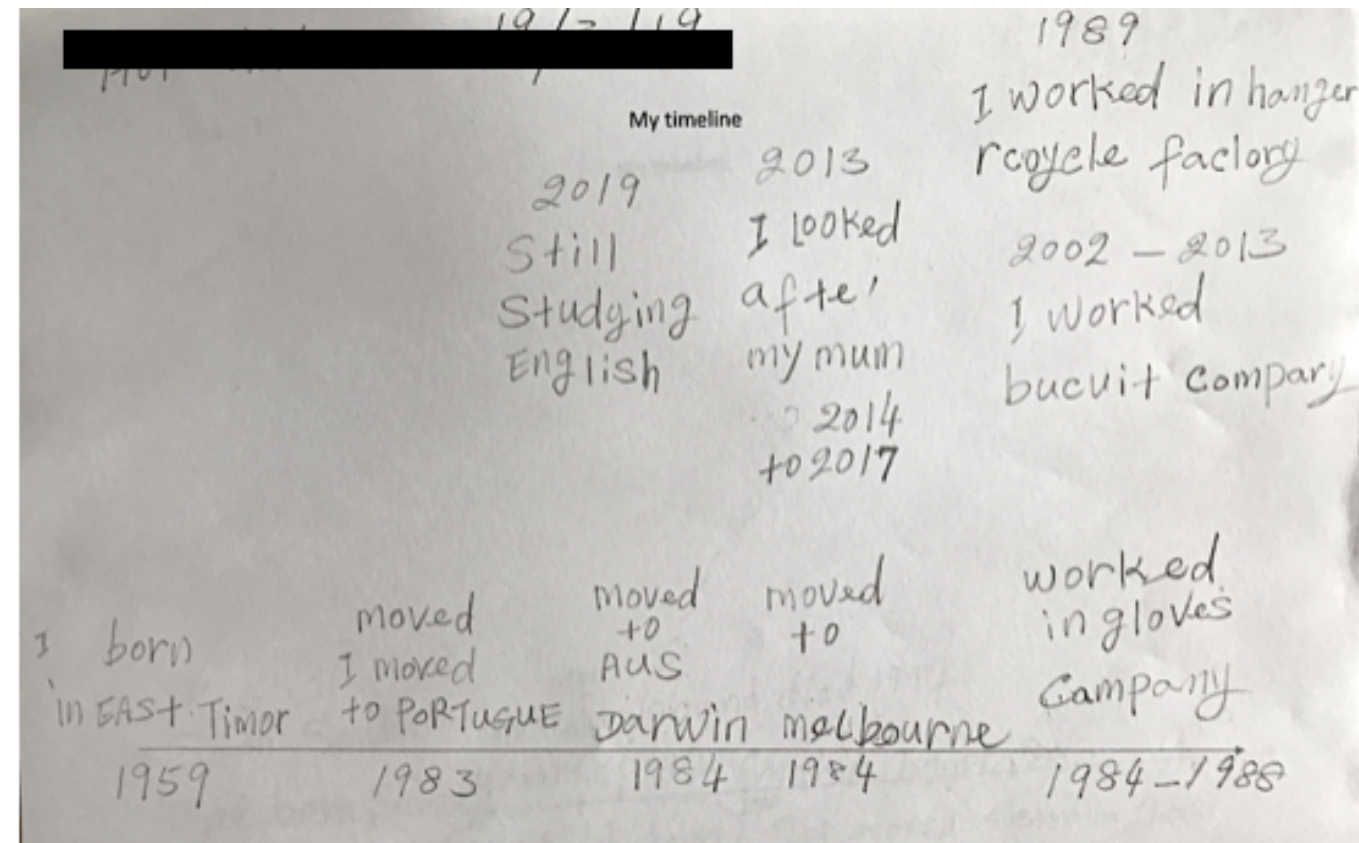
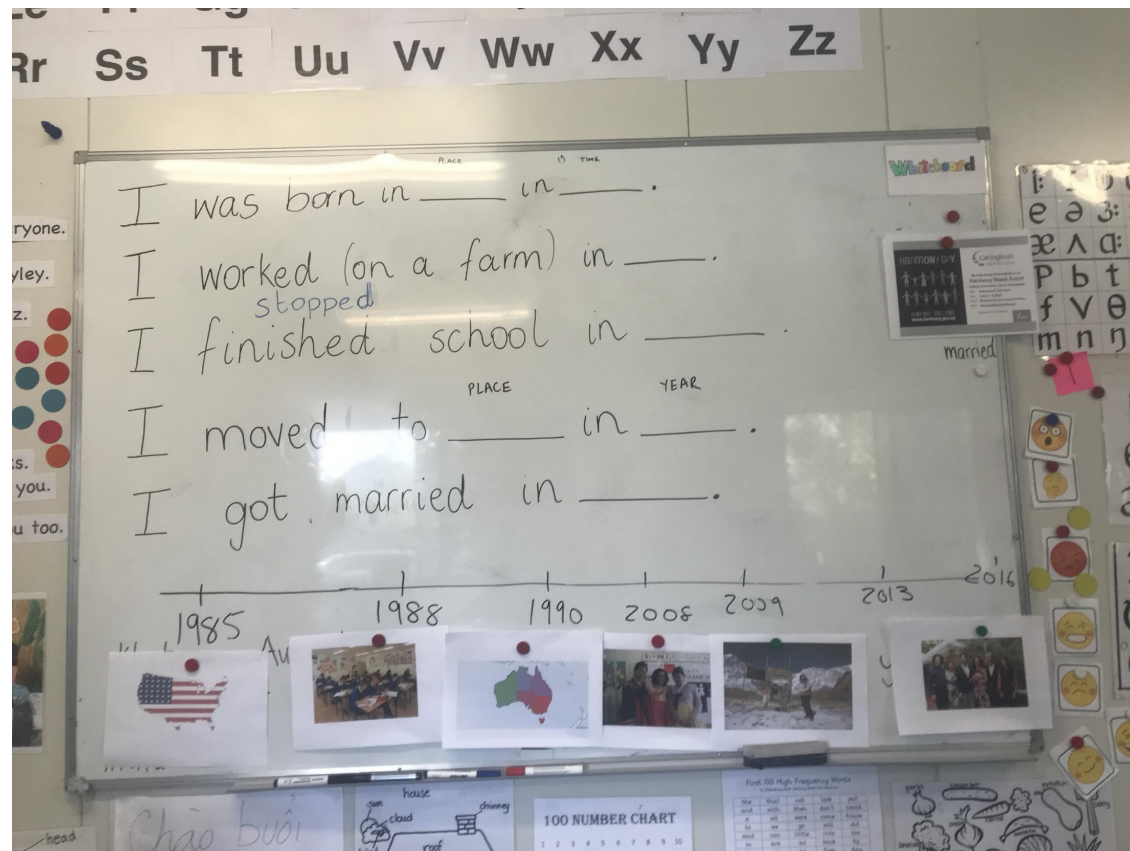
I speak Hakka, Mandarin and a little bit English.

I learn English in the Belgium Avenue.

My friend speak Hakka and Portuguese.

I learn English for me hard.

# Timeline





# Language diaries

de Bres, J., & Franziskus, A. (2013)

|                  | Where? What? With who?   | Reading and writing?<br>In what language? | Speaking and listening?<br>In what language? |
|------------------|--|---|--|
| Day of the week? | Monday   |   |  |
| Morning          | 5am Pray Dinka<br>nad Arabic                                   | looking<br>Phone news<br>Dinka            | 930 School<br><br>Music Dinka                |
| Afternoon        | cooking for son<br>talk my daughter<br>and children<br>Adelaid |   |  |
| Evening          |  |   |  |

# Language diaries

**Benefits:** Captured some of the variation inherent in 'authentic' language use

**Limitations:** Although students were responsible for selecting what is relevant, students copied examples taught in class

**Possible reasons:** Teachers instruction may be too restrictive

(Tên )  
What do you do? In what language?  
(Bạn làm gì, bằng ngôn ngữ nào, vào lúc nào, với ai, ở đâu ...)

Morning  
(Vào buổi sáng)

I talk with my daughter in Khmer, Vietnamese and Chinese.  
I wake up my daughter in Khmer, Vietnamese and Chinese.

Afternoon  
(Vào buổi trưa)

I go to school talking with my teacher and friends in English.

Evening  
(Vào buổi tối)

I watch T.V. News in English.

I cooking dinner, Khmer, Chinese, and Vietnamese.  
I write diary in Khmer.  
I read book in Khmer.  
I sing songs in Khmer.  
I message on phone in English.

Morning Your language English

I wake up at 7.30 I drink coffee  
I watch The NEWS I walk to School

Afternoon

I go home I clean my home has house cleaning

Evening

I cook dinner. I watch TV.

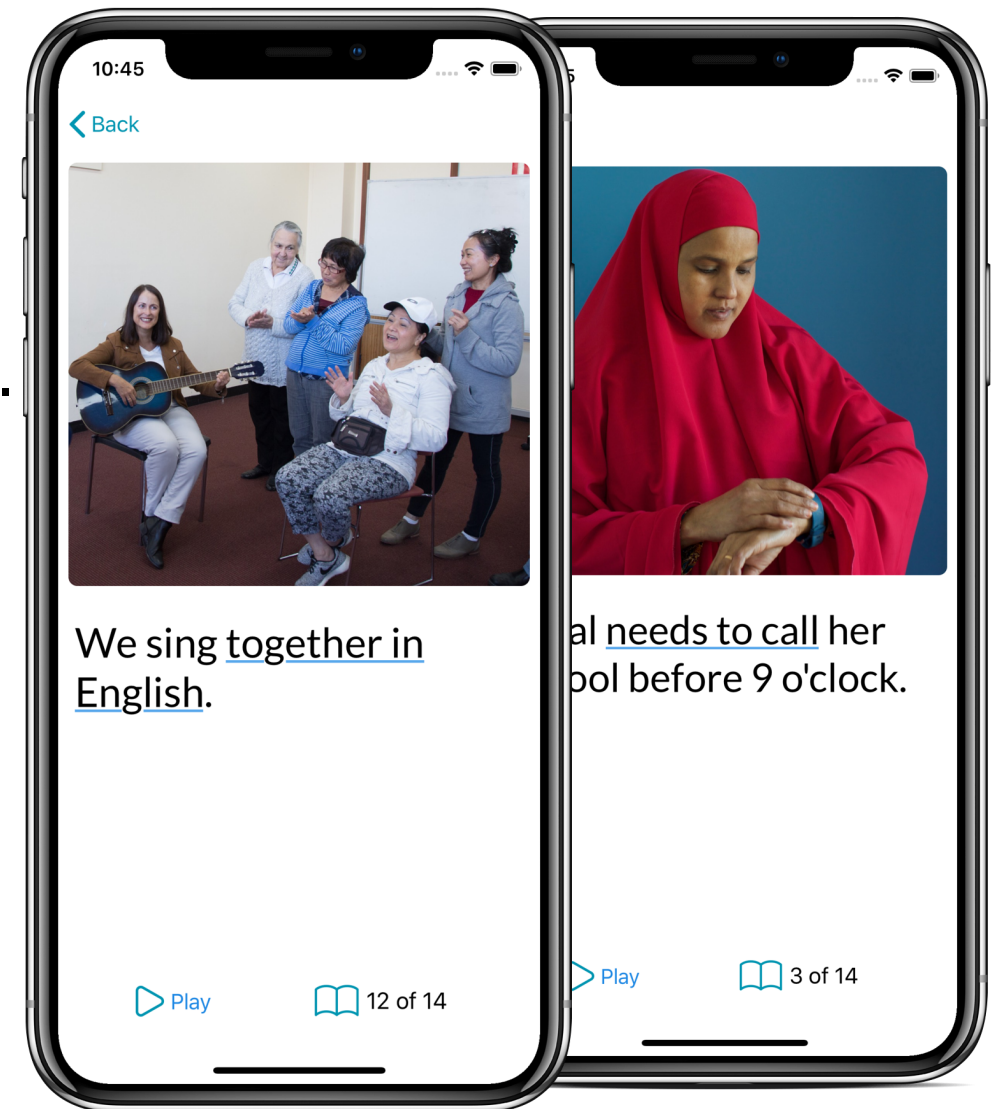
I go to sleep

dinner  
buy dinner

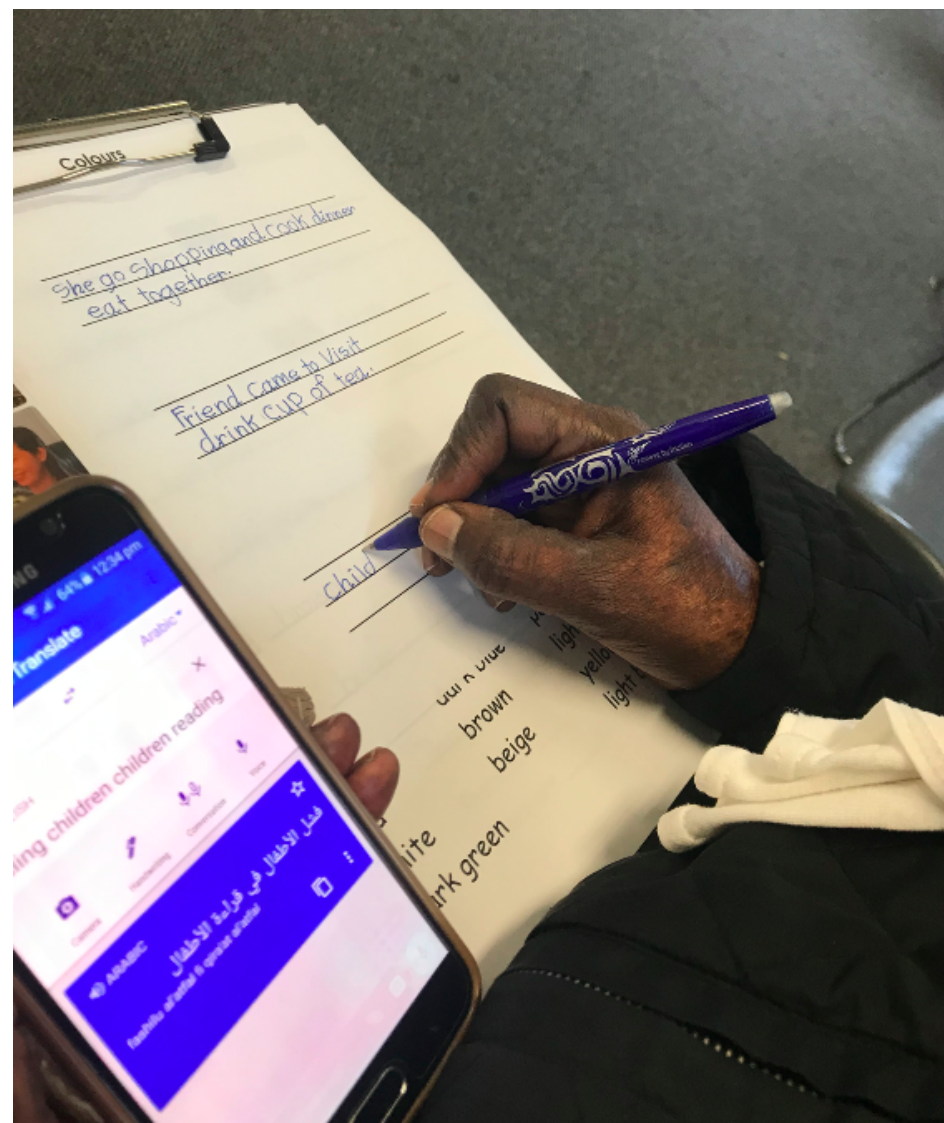
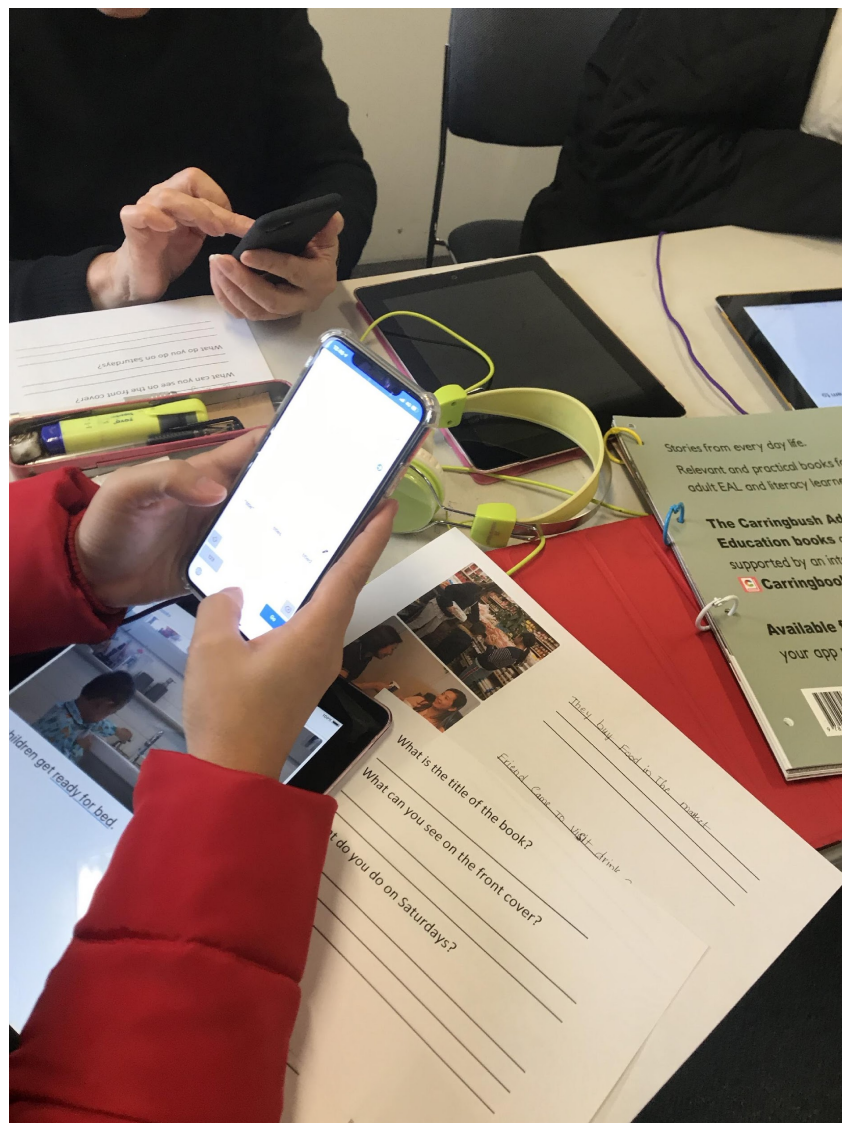
# Carringbooks



- Stories that are contextualised and relevant to the learners' lives.
- Reading resources that use language appropriate to beginner level adult learners.
- Provide authentic models of spoken English.
- Search “Carringbooks” in Apple App Store







What is the title of the book?  
A busy Saturday

What can you see on the front cover?  
A mother and her childrens cooked the food.

What do you do on Saturdays?  
On Saturday, I cooked lunch and dinner. I read some books and listened some music.

- Text features
- Characters
- Setting
- Grammar- verbs, nouns, pronouns
- Prompt for discussion of students' lives



# Outcome

My action research goal was to:

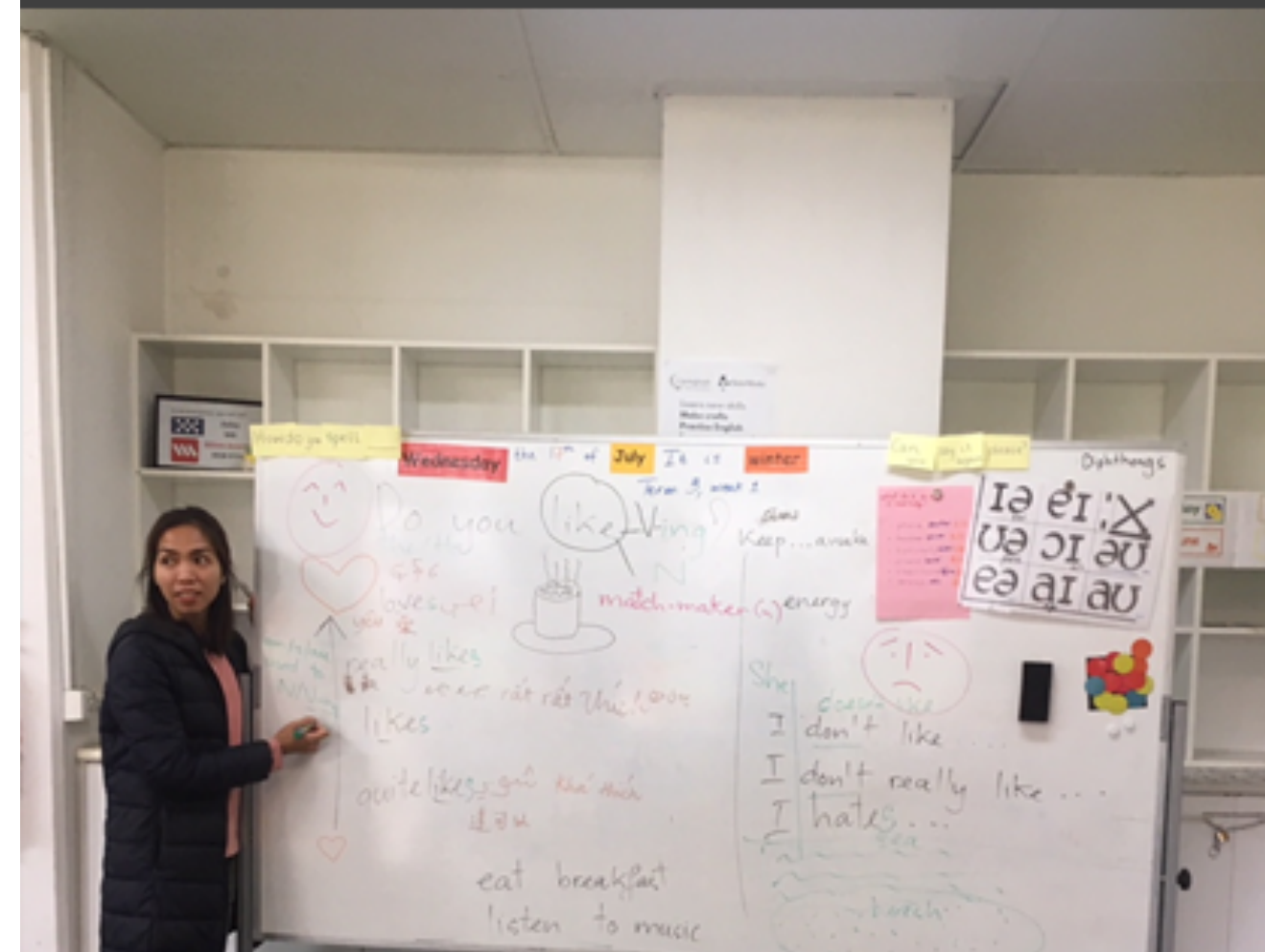
- Use multimodal, student centred tasks
- Think more carefully about modelling those tasks
- Enable students to bring in their lived experiences and resources
- The open tasks enabled students to produce richer texts.
- Participatory
- Dynamic- stories were prompted by dialogic interactions
- A significant increase in the sharing of lived experiences and linguistic resources.



I proud of my self to learn English at my age , becawes  
is hard I still like come every weekes.

# Problem identification

- “How and when can I use L1 resourcefully to help students learn English?”



# Hypothesis formation

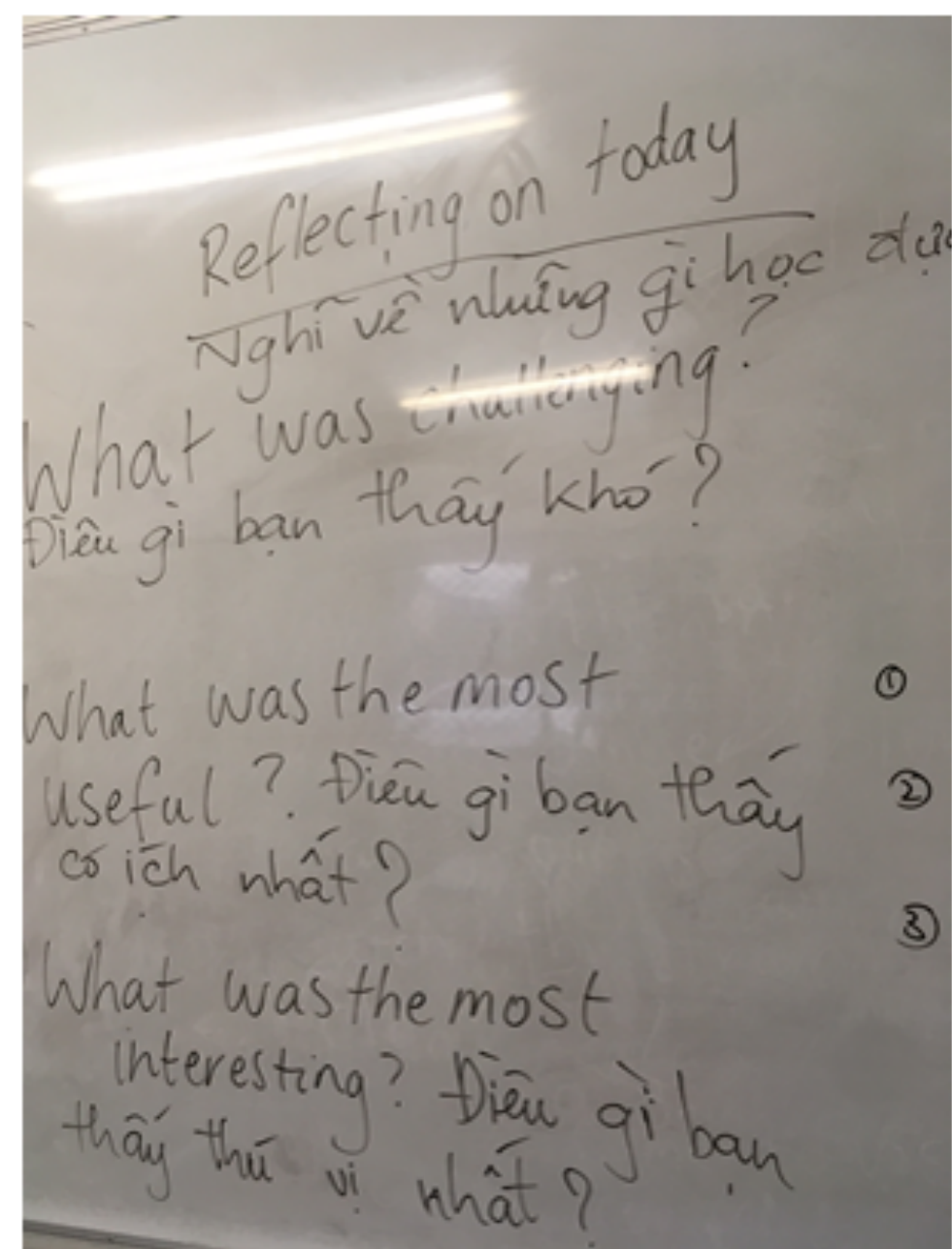
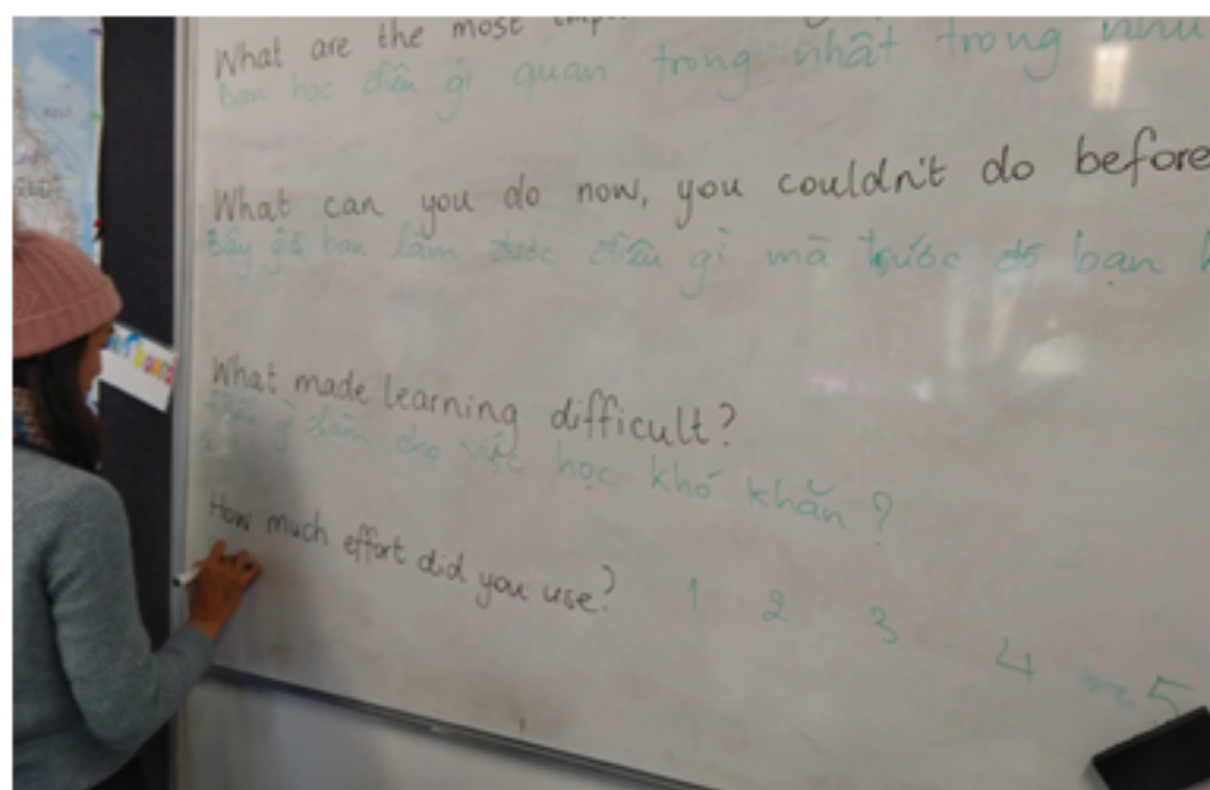
Students will engage more actively in thinking about language structures if I use their L1s in my instructions and interactions.

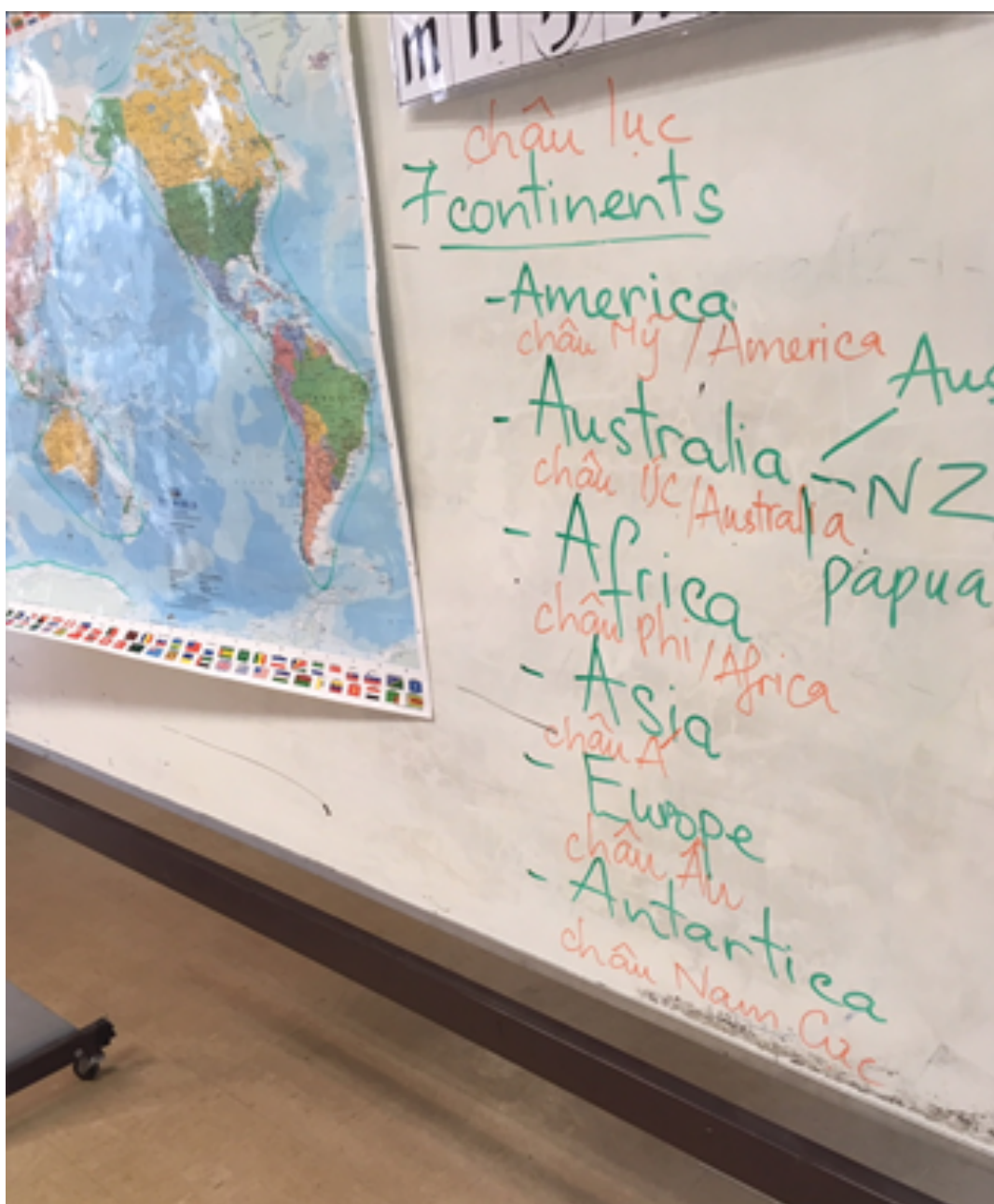


# The innovation

**In the form of questions in L1**

# Ask Ss more reflective questions on learning in L1



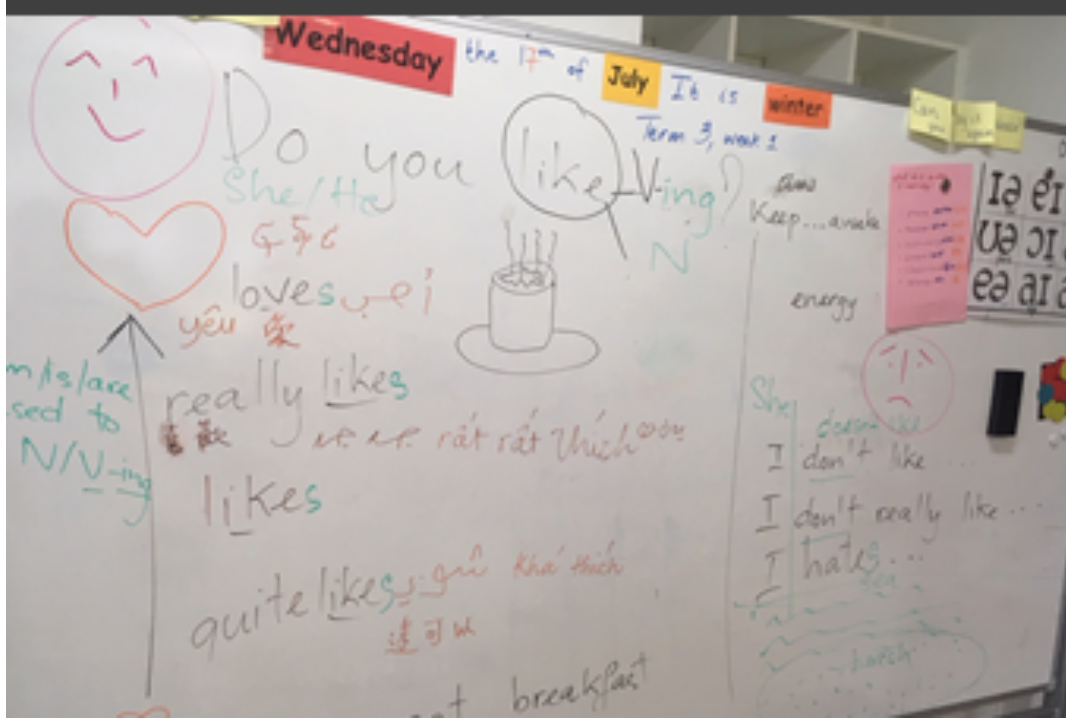


Step 1: Write where you lived and your age  
Viết nơi bạn từng sống và tuổi

Step 2: Dot your emotion  
Chấm vào cảm xúc của bạn

Step 3: Write words to show why you felt that way  
Viết vài từ giải thích tại sao bạn cảm thấy như vậy

Step 4: Join the dots  
Nối các dấu chấm lại với nhau



Adding Vietnamese in the instructions on worksheets/

# Data

- Worksheets, video recordings



# Outcomes

- Students gave deeper and more authentic answers to my reflective questions
- Students gave deeper and more authentic answers to my reflective questions
- Students talked about language structures in L2

# Students give more genuine & focused answers in sentences

Hoa Nguyen

(Your name) (Language day)

(What do you do in your language?)  
(Bạn làm gì, bằng ngôn ngữ nào, ở đâu, với ai, ở đâu...)

(Where)  
(Ở đâu)

Bài sáng mình nói chuyện với con bằng ngôn ngữ Vietnamese với con trai và con gái.  
I speak Vietnamese with my son and my daughter every morning at home.

(Where)  
(Ở đâu)

Quê mình nói chuyện bằng ngôn ngữ tiếng Anh với cô giáo và thầy giáo với bạn học lớp.  
I speak English with my teacher and speak Vietnamese with my friend at class.

(Where)  
(Ở đâu)

Bài tối mình nói chuyện bằng ngôn ngữ tiếng Việt ở quê, lúc đi học thì nói tiếng Anh.  
I teach my son and my daughter do homework at home & every night.

1. I lived in Vietnam happy because my family.
2. I came happy, go to school English, good teacher was friend.
3. I was sad because no family.
4. I no job, no money no shopping.
5. I live in Australia, I am lucky, I am happy.
6. I have healthy, go work cooking important to me, have money, have family, have friends.
7. I hope with my family, my son, my daughter, grandchild, grand son, I'm very happy live here.



Students remember English sounds better and are able to produce the sounds better with L1 reference

|     |   |     |    |    |    |    |   |
|-----|---|-----|----|----|----|----|---|
| ɪ   | I | U   | u: | Iə | eI | !  | X |
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| m   | n | ŋ   | h  | l  | r  | w  | j |
|     |   | ng  |    |    |    | qu | d |



# Your turn!

- Identify a problem area in your classroom and develop an action research plan to address it.

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Problem identification    |  |
| Preliminary investigation |  |
| Hypothesis formation      |  |
| The innovation            |  |
| The data                  |  |
| The outcome               |  |

# Takeaways

- Action research does not have to be formal
- Action research is in control of the teacher
- Action research is a valuable professional development tool
- If possible, consider team teaching and collaborating

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