

**PEDAGOGIA FREINET: IMPACTOS DE UMA CARREIRA INDIVIDUAL*****PEDAGOGÍA FREINET: LOS RESULTADOS DE UNA CARRERA INDIVIDUAL******FREINET PEDAGOGY: ENDURING IMPACT OVER AN INDIVIDUAL CAREER***John SIVELL<sup>1</sup>

**RESUMO:** Este artigo apresenta uma perspectiva individual sobre o impacto da Pedagogia Freinet através da carreira de um professor de língua inglesa e educador de professores. Com especial atenção à instrução de língua, vou destacar um número de dimensões Freinet constantemente importantes que gradualmente veio a minha atenção ao longo dos anos. Minha admiração pela Pedagogia Freinet surgiu pela primeira vez em relação a duas técnicas muito práticas: escrita livre e impressão em sala de aula. Mais tarde, o meu interesse tomou um rumo mais teórico, através do reconhecimento de consistências esclarecedoras entre a Pedagogia Freinet e outros dois desenvolvimentos mais recentes: amplamente, a perspectiva ecológica influente de Van Lier (2004) sobre a aprendizagem de línguas pode ser tomada como pano de fundo para destacar a coerência Da Pedagogia de Freinet tanto com o estilo flexível de planejamento baseado no sistema agora defendido por tais autoridades como Reason (2008) e com a atual abordagem psicológica conexionista às oportunidades de ensino e aprendizagem de línguas que tem sido metaforicamente representada em back- O-poço (Sivell & Sivell, 2012).

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Freinet. Pedagogia. Educação.

**RESUMEN:** *Este artículo presenta una perspectiva individual sobre el impacto de la Pedagogía Freinet a través de la carrera de un profesor de inglés y un educador de maestros. Con especial atención a la enseñanza de la lengua, destacaré un número de dimensiones Freinet de importancia perenne que gradualmente llegué a mi atención a lo largo de los años. Mi admiración por la Pedagogía Freinet surgió por primera vez en relación con dos técnicas muy prácticas: la escritura libre y la impresión en el aula. Posteriormente, mi interés tomó un giro más teórico, a través del reconocimiento de las consistencias iluminadoras entre Freinet Pedagogy y otros dos desarrollos más recientes: ampliamente, la perspectiva ecológica influyente de van Lier (2004) sobre el aprendizaje de idiomas puede ser tomada como telón de fondo para destacar la coherencia De la pedagogía de Freinet, tanto con el estilo de planificación flexiblemente basado en el sistema, ahora defendido por autoridades tales como Reason*

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(2008), como con el enfoque psicológico conexionista actual a las oportunidades de enseñanza y aprendizaje de las lenguas que ha sido representado metafóricamente en el back- Los términos bien (Sivell & Sivell, 2012).

**PALAVRAS CLAVE:** Freinet. Pedagogía. Educación.

**ABSTRACT:** *This article presents an individual perspective on the impact of Freinet Pedagogy across the career of one English language teacher and teacher educator. With special attention to language instruction, I will highlight a number perennially important Freinet dimensions that gradually came to my attention over the years. My admiration for Freinet Pedagogy first arose in relation to two very hands-on techniques: free writing and classroom printing. Later, my interest took a more theoretical turn, through recognition of illuminating consistencies between Freinet Pedagogy and two other more recent developments: broadly, van Lier's (2004) influential ecological perspective on language learning may be taken as a backdrop against which to highlight the coherence of Freinet Pedagogy both with the flexibly system-based style of planning now advocated by such authorities as Reason (2008), and with the present-day connectionist psychological approach to opportunities for language teaching and learning that has been metaphorically represented in back-to-the-well terms (Sivell & Sivell, 2012).*

**KEYWORDS:** Freinet. Pedagogy. Education.

## Background

*Our educational movement does not cling to a few techniques, no matter how excellent they may be. Our ambition is not limited to the affirmation of a single method, nor the distribution of one set of materials, no matter how perfect. Our goal is to renew and modernize everyday schooling as a whole. (Trans. from E. Freinet's preface to C. Freinet (1969), Pour l'École du Peuple, p. 6)*

My earliest encounter with Freinet Pedagogy (aka Modern School Pedagogy) was through the pages of *Pour l'École du Peuple*, which I discovered near the end of the 1973-4 academic year. At that time, I was teaching part-time at a grammar school in Britain while completing my PhD. My chief responsibility was preparation of about 15 upper-year students for the famous A-Level English examination. I had been advised that about half of the class was already expected to fail, which may well have been why I – a novice teacher with little experience and no formal training – was judged qualified for the assignment! In any case, I struggled desperately to find whatever combination of

tasks, modeling and activities might inform, embolden and motivate my students in the face of the terrifying challenge before them. To my relief, all but one classmate somehow passed the examination, but even so I strongly suspected that I (and they) had been more lucky than skilful. Frankly, I had no clear idea of what I or they had done to bring about that happy result. Still, even though Freinet's exciting manifesto came to my attention very late in the school year, it encouraged me to believe that ambitious, flexible and practical help might well be available at least for future reference. Of course, the Modern School's principle focus was then, would remain, education for young children, but Freinet promised a refreshingly broad horizon because the very first of his educational "constants" (trans from Freinet, 1969, p. 138) affirmed provocatively that "the child is of the same nature as the adult" (p. 139). That principle encouraged me to explore thoughtful transfers to my own target population of older learners.

A month or so later I stopped in Paris on the way to my very first full-time position, which was to be at Jundi Shapur University in Iran. Enthusiastically, I combed the second-hand bookstores for every Freinet title I could find. Not long afterwards, that initiative turned out to have been unexpectedly fortunate. I soon discovered that my most pressing duty in Iran, which I had anticipated would be lecturing on English Literature, turned out to be instruction in English reading and writing skills for Iranian students who, despite being admirably ambitious and alert, entered their freshman year woefully ill-equipped to tackle the Anglophone classics. Although it would be an exaggeration to say that Freinet Pedagogy became my one and only guide, it was certainly true that a number of Modern School techniques proved remarkably adaptable from their original primary-school context to university-level classes in intermediate-to-advanced English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Two of the most valuable were free writing and classroom printing.

### **Hands-on Strategies: Free Writing and Classroom Printing**

*Free writing has to be really free. In other words, they write when they have something to say, when they feel a need to express... whatever is boiling up inside them. That way, we can be sure that the texts that they produce ... are those that most profoundly interest them, which in turn will be those that offer the greatest educational value. (Trans. from Freinet, 1960b, Le Texte Libre, p. 13).*

*This way, our problem is no longer how to organize our teaching so that learners are forced, willy-nilly, to read and write, but how to*

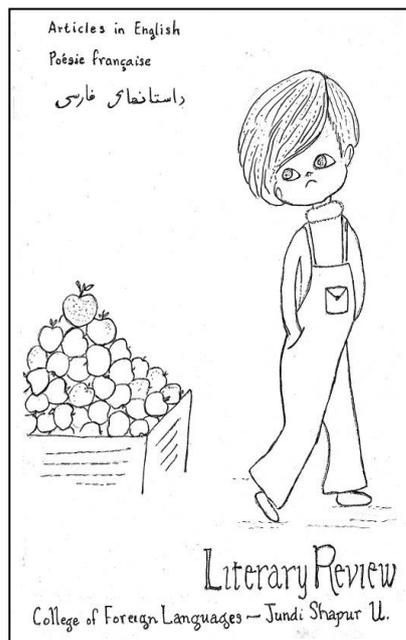


Figure 1

benefit from learners' lively need to express themselves and to work... [But] if we overlook the motivation offered by printing, stencilling, school magazines, and interschool correspondence, there is a serious risk that free writing will be no more than a mere flash in the pan. (pp. 14-15).

Already in *Pour l'École du Peuple* I had noted Freinet's advice that a show-of-hands vote among class members could be employed to select learners' compositions for group editing in view of printing and distribution in the school magazine; his goal was to encourage "free and spontaneous composition" that was "motivated by printing, the school magazine and inter-school exchanges" (trans. from Freinet, 1969, p. 88). Thus, I pounced upon *Le*

*Texte Libre* (1960b) and *Le Journal Scolaire* (1967a) when I came across them in Paris. Of course, as the Institut Coopératif de l'École Moderne (ICEM) website now observes, "The school magazine has evolved over the years. Computers, desktop publishing programs, and digital cameras have gradually replaced the classroom press, scissors and glue. Sometimes the hard-copy magazine has become an electronic publication or a website. Such developments, facilitated by present-day means of information-sharing and by advanced technology, do not belie the fundamental principles of the journal as envisioned by Freinet" (<http://www.icem-pedagogie-freinet.org/node/1166>). Moreover, one key feature of the classroom publishing process that I found to be highly transferrable not only across times and technologies, but also across age groups, was the requirement already noted above that student writers must be permitted to compose freely. With my university students in Iran, that meant nurturing the inherent wish to explore – and then to share in writing – topics of genuine interest that were first chosen by the individual author and, after that, further selected for inclusion in a collaboratively-produced classroom publication: in our case, this was the *Literary Review* (Figure 1 displays the cover of the May, 1978 issue). The language-skills section of the university syllabus was sequenced mainly in the freshman and sophomore years, but plainly there was considerable room for learners to continue improving in their final two years as well. Therefore, I proposed the possibility of a collaborative publication as a supplementary, out-of-class writing forum especially for students in the

upper years, printed in sufficient numbers for the magazine to be distributed (gratis) for reading by peers in all years. As time went on, the publication grew to be distributed through English departments at other universities in the country and also it invited contributions from students elsewhere as well.

Having Freinet's well-documented authority for such an endeavour was especially valuable because in Iran any kind of student publication was somewhat controversial at that time. Print censorship was strict, which meant not only that the magazine was under scrutiny but also that even getting access to university mimeograph services would have been impossible without a credible pedagogical justification. In those circumstances, Freinet's socialist sensibilities obviously could not foregrounded but – presented in what I concede were somewhat artificially depoliticized terms – the practical advice in *Le Texte Libre* (1960) and *Le Journal Scolaire* (1967a) convincingly supported the initiative. In passing, it should be noted that the uncertain political environment did not seem to deter students from submitting signed work; however, it doubtless did explain why, although I myself was listed as Textual Editor, the student editorial team that made all substantive decisions about content was never comfortable with being credited. Despite those constraints, great praise must go to enlightened administrators who helped make the College of Foreign Languages receptive to this innovation.

The first issue of the *Literary Review* appeared in May, 1975; thereafter, December and May issues were produced from December, 1975 to May, 1978. The table of contents for the May, 1978 issue announced creative and scholarly writing contributed by students from both the English and the French streams, and from student authors at both Jundi Shapur University and Kerman University:

Page 1	Yeats' Internal Migration to the World of Art
Page 4	Pluralization in Farsi
Page 6	Time and a Flower [prose poem]
Page 7	English Poems by Students at Kerman University
Page 8	De nos jours [poem in French]
Page 9	The Shining Red Apple [Farsi translation of the Callaghan short story]
Page 14	Shakespeare and Company [Farsi translation from Hemingway's <i>Moveable Feast</i> ]

Material for each issue of the magazine was selected by a group of student

editors, who also determined the lay-out and choose a student-created cover design. The revolution that deposed Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi quite rapidly changed university management and curricula in the nation; consequently, my own time in Iran regretfully came to an end as well. However, by that time my students and I had had ample experience to indicate that, even at the university level, Freinet's model of free writing and classroom printing could not only foster intellectual enthusiasm but also facilitate enriched language learning.

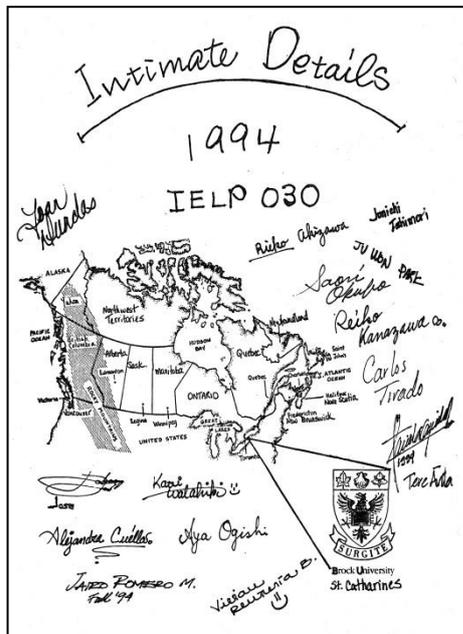


Figure 2

Then, several years later, I once more found myself in a setting that favoured a return to free writing and classroom printing. First as an instructor in, and then as director of the Intensive English Language Program (IELP) at Brock University – over the period of 1983 to 1989 – I was able to promote those Modern School techniques again. As in Iran, my immediate concern was with adjunct reading and writing opportunities for young adult language learners.

Such openings appeared throughout the school year, although the Summer Language Bursary Program (still in existence, but now reformulated as Explore: <http://www.myexplore.ca/en/>) seemed most promising because its ethos and timing permitted students to engage in sharing not only written work but also entire parcels including local products and artifacts (in keeping with Freinet practice: Freinet, 1982, pp. 23-4): for example, post cards, class photos, a small bottle of maple syrup, and even a box of wine, and of course all of this was accompanied by enthusiastic and often voluminous written commentary in English. Each summer, the magazine continued through the years under various titles, such as *Intimate Details* in 1994 (Figure 2). Moreover, during the fall, winter, and spring terms, students could also contribute to *The ESL Student Reporter*, which began with an approximately once-per-month publication schedule and long continued at various intervals under that and other titles as determined by the constituency. In Sivell (1987) I outlined ongoing exchanges of hard-copy student magazines within Canada among the IELP, the ESL Program at the Niagara Folk Arts Council (in the same city), and the Academic Preparation course at Humber College (located in Toronto – half ESL, half native speakers). Far more

ambitiously, Cummins and Sayers (1995) depicted extensive use of the Internet for exchanges among classrooms in the USA and in Latin America, associating that innovation with the practice of interclass correspondence initiated by Freinet in 1924 (p. 123).

Sivell and Kirkland (1988) discussed the fruitful linkage between theory and practice that was made possible through student printing: “When an editorial team of students takes responsibility for the complete process of creating, editing, technical production and distribution, considerable target language negotiation of problems and procedures is assured, and valuable life skills are practised” (p. 150). As a result, we argued, “teachers and textbooks are no longer the only sources of authority” (p. 154). However, actually achieving such outcomes required significant practical preparation. A good example of that demand related to the physical means of production. Although very user-friendly word-processors are of course readily obtainable today, such was far less the case when *The ESL Student Reporter* was initiated. To provide contributors with software that featured not only simplified formatting commands but also built-in grammatical and rhetorical prompts – and which could be used equally well when writing academic assignments – a customized word-processor was installed in ESL student computer labs. The now-discontinued *PC-Write* package was chosen because of its open-source design, which conveniently welcomed purpose-specific modification through the use of macro-commands. As explained in Sivell (1990), the strategy was to re-name and re-purpose many of the software’s original functions and help-screens with new elements directed towards the needs of EFL learners: for instance, a menu of rhetorical alternatives for expressing key logical relationships such as comparison/contrast or cause/effect, or a crib-sheet with succinct grammatical rules and examples. Overall, the purpose was to achieve the “improved attitude and productivity” that had already been reported when ESL-appropriate online help was made available (p. 153).

### **More Theoretical Aspects: Links with System-based Management, and Back to the Well**

*A new form of school organization implies first of all a new arrangement, a different way of using space... [Overall,] the key thing is to fill our school with our new conception of the educational process. (C. Freinet, 1960a, trans. 1994, Education through work, p.*

369).

*We set our pupils down... in the shade of the tree and we place there...fruit that we have chosen and picked for them... And we are all surprised when ... [they] turn up their noses at those appetizing baskets and stretch out their hands ... toward the tree where they would like to pick... the precious fruits of understanding that nourish only insofar as they are not arbitrarily plucked from the tree in advance? (C. Freinet, 1967b, trans. 1990, The wisdom of Matthew, pp. 40-41).*

William Lee, a long-term research colleague and friend, characterized Freinet as “the French Dewey” (1977, p. 422). By that he meant above all that Dewey and Freinet shared “striking similarities of educational doctrine” (p. 422). However, in my mind there is another important similarity: a deep interest not only in practice but also in theory. Freinet of course had his independent school at le Pioulier, in some respects parallel to Dewey’s laboratory school in Chicago, and yet both also developed impressive bodies of theoretical work. Although neither figure could be fully captured through reference to only two strands in their complex thought, for brevity I will take the risk of attempting just that for Freinet. By doing so, my intention is to illustrate the fertile longevity of Modern School themes, from even the most time-honoured of which one can trace provocative connections with current preoccupations. As a background against which to delineate such relationships, I will selectively explore van Lier’s (2004) persuasive ecological perspective on language learning, particularly for its capacity to validate two modern-day concerns where we will see that major themes from Freinet also resurface: Reason’s (2008) advocacy of an adaptively system-based viewpoint regarding effective management, and the connectionist psychological stance towards learning experiences that Chirawibha Sivell and I have termed going back to the well (Sivell & Sivell, 2012).

A cornerstone of van Lier’s theory is his reliance on insights available through “rich description” as a means for “understanding[,] ... describing and modeling” learning contexts (2004, pp. 215, 218). He notes that a major benefit of this outlook is its acceptance of “chaos/complexity science” as a basis for revitalizing systems theory as “an approach to social-scientific research that escapes the straitjacket of linear causality”, so as to accommodate the intricacies of entire “educational settings” in which “processes are controlled by a number of different, often competing or conflicting agents and events” (p. 214). That way of thinking resonates with Freinet Pedagogy’s cautious awareness of real-life complexity, as highlighted in Élise Freinet’s

approving citation of Alain: “Real genius means questioning what seems certain rather than just what is plainly doubtful” (trans. from introduction to C. Freinet, 1969, p. 5). Such resistance to gasping at illusory certainty put Freinet Pedagogy ahead of its time; only more recently have most theorists rejected the exaggeratedly simplicity of cause and effect associations postulated by earlier educational technologists (e.g. Skinner, 1968) in favour of a teaching and learning model that van Lier characterizes as “dynamic rather than static”, which is crucial for avoiding “the danger ... that we overlook things that may be important” (van Lier, 2014, pp. 8, 10).

In this connection, it can be informative to step back and consider educational phenomena within a broader context: James Reason – a giant in the domain of high-stakes error management – parallels van Lier’s recommendation of systematic analysis that is subtle enough to fathom desirable or undesirable outcomes in real life. Like van Lier, he accentuates the need to move from “simple-minded” earlier models, with their reassuringly effortless but ultimately misleading “reliance on [linear] cause-and-effect chaining,” towards a subtler model of human behaviour that can “more truly reflect the complex and combinatorial nature of ... events” (2008, p. 95). To be sure, Reason’s focus is on the “high-risk systems” that characterize such newsworthy fields as “railways, aviation, marine transport, nuclear power generation and health care” – not education, where the potential for error might seem less catastrophic – but it is thought-provoking to consider that the “accidents” he aims to minimize could readily also take the form of unsatisfactory learning outcomes, which of course have a cost of their own (pp. 3, 127, 4). Moreover, perhaps especially because of his interest in high-stakes processes, it is enlightening to note Reason’s assertion that effective planners and administrators must avoid the temptation to “blame people rather than situations” (p. 74). He stresses that, although a person – rather than a system – perspective might seem “legally and managerially convenient because it uncouples ... responsibility ... from the organization at large”, practical progress will be achieved only through identifying and remedying “error-provoking [situational] factors” for which, ultimately, “designers and high-level ... decision makers” are in large measure accountable (pp. 252, 203).

Remarkably, Freinet Pedagogy endorses a very similar view. While deeply respecting the professional autonomy of excellent teachers, Freinet also stressed the need to establish a “primary organization” that could enable them to perform at their best (Freinet, 1960a, trans. 1993, p. 371). This viewpoint makes room for two complementary imperatives: a global strategy to provide a broadly favourable

educational environment, along with wise tactical decisions by instructors who can be trusted to select on-the-ground options that encourage individual engagement. The interplay between those two elements permits systematic planning to be at once principled but also flexible. The key is to recognize that teachers' "solid and enthusiastic competence" can be fully enacted only when planners "bring all the parts together" (p. 405). Very explicitly, Freinet emphasizes that even for "devoted and good teachers", desirable outcomes may be unattainable – indeed perhaps unimaginable – if they find themselves overwhelmed by "the anarchy and the futility of a school without resources" (p. 422). Thus, Freinet's systematic goal is quite the opposite of a naïve attempt to impose stifling uniformity. It aims to promote context-appropriate diversity through avoidance of "relying unreasonably on the special powers of teachers" without making the essential resources available to them (p. 422). And that double focus is evident in the Modern School's proposal for the ideal restructuring of classrooms and of the entire school site, which links practical arrangements with the intellectual possibilities that "will follow naturally" (p. 423). For Freinet,

*The top priority [must be] ... the preparation of a building adapted to the new work, the organization of our workshops, the development and – if necessary – the manufacture of the indispensable tools, the detailed study of the conditions required for collaboration, and the task of getting this mechanism, once prepared, up and running with a minimum of resistance. (1960a, trans. 1993, p. 423).*

From such reforms can arise "an environment" that promotes "natural order, shared effort, and a state of affectionate collaboration" that benefits learners and teachers alike (1960a, trans. 1993, p. 422). The goal is systematically to guarantee a rich panoply of activities and resources apt to create a complex and multi-faceted "world that is really adapted to children, evolving at their pace, meeting their needs, ... and meeting in the highest degree the natural and functional aspirations of their being", and where likewise teachers will be free to exercise their "understanding, ... creative genius, and ... humanity" (pp. 294, 337). Freinet's proposed "new form of school organization" therefore emphasizes methodical preparation that is specifically designed *not* to impose rigid, centrally controlled standardization. However, he was confident that by systematically altering "the appearance and form of the school", teachers could finally assure that "one day the school itself will change" (1960a, trans. 1993, p. 422).

On one of my visits to the original school at Le Pioulier, which interestingly is still functioning today, I made detailed notes on the physical layout and classroom

routines (Sivell, 1994, esp. pp. 130-135); in fact, my record was closely concordant with Freinet's own extensive specifications (1960a, trans. 1993, pp. 378-386). Everything that Freinet recommended seemed to be present in the school: from the collection of learner-printed magazines and reports, to the classroom printing press, to the flexible arrangement of pupil seating and the lack of a designated teacher's desk, to numerous and bright windows, and even to the surrounding student-tended garden space and many other long-established elements. However, observation of day-to-day teaching and learning in that model environment amply demonstrated that adoption of an overall design that was also consistent with other Freinet-tradition schools led to lively independence rather than docile conformism. Strong evidence of autonomy – for the teacher and for the learners alike – was for example apparent in the well-known “work plans” (Sivell, 1994, p. 142) that individual pupils devised for themselves within a context of learner-teacher negotiation, with eventual fulfillment left very largely to each student's personal responsibility. As Freinet commented, freedom in an educational setting refers to individual “opportunities to satisfy our essential needs, to increase our power, to improve ourselves, and to triumph”; thus, the objective of large-scale planning must be to facilitate circumstances in which teachers can promote such opportunities on a student-by-student basis, without having “to push, to manipulate and to explain” at every turn (1960a, trans. 1993, pp. 336, 339).

A second contemporary theme is quite closely coherent with the first. It materializes in van Lier's focus on the need to awaken learners' awareness of what he identifies as the “affordances” of their environment, which are “relationships that provide a ‘match’ between something in the environment... and the learner” (2004, p. 96). The environment will often be “full of meaning potential, especially it has a rich semiotic budget”; realistically, of course, such richness “may not be true of all classrooms, textbooks, or pedagogical interactions” but, when available, stimulating affordances can “yield opportunities for engagement and participation” (pp. 96, 81). Unsurprisingly, the ideal of Modern School teachers is also an educational setting with abundant affordances. And in connection with affordances, van Lier's related emphasis on the principle of “emergence” is also noteworthy (p. 82). As already noted with different implications, here he once more underlines the advantage of escaping from the oversimplified limits of linear causal thinking. Van Lier comments that modern models of “language learning (and learning in general)” represent the processing of affordances as typically very complex, which accounts for the fact that “the result of events or

activities may be [so] dramatically different from the initial inputs” that there can be “apparent disconnections between cause and effect” (pp. 83, 82). In fact, such causal relationships commonly display “lower-level elements... [that] cannot explain the higher-level ones” (p. 82). Moreover, given that the best progress tends to be achieved in settings where “a variety of ... processes that instigate learning” can function in parallel (p. 156), it transpires that “the results of education” may well “only appear at a distant time” and in a form that “cannot even be linked to specific teaching events” (p. 12). In sum, “linear causality can never be more than a minor... part of complex processes” like language learning (p. 199).

This portrayal dovetails convincingly with the connectionist view of language learning, which replaces a basically linear metaphor for developing proficiency with a network-like one. A central implication is that language learning must be understood as a “dynamic and nimble process” during which “emerging patterns” contribute to the creation of “long-term networks of information” (Grabe, 2009, pp. 80, 66). Through a cyclical and creative process, learners actually profit from the effect of “downward causation” through which more recent components in the developing network of understanding can retroactively influence earlier elements, too (Hollich et al, 2000, p. 12). Consequently, ostensibly simple and speedy movement towards an immediate outcome may diminish the impact of language learning experiences by reducing openings for downward causation, which requires time for reviewing and reflecting. A possible response to this risk is the back-to-the well approach to language teaching (Sivell & Sivell, 2012). Reflecting the old proverb that “When your thirst is satisfied, you turn your back on the well”, it has been suggested that “gradual, repeated, and thorough” opportunities to revisit texts and tasks can provide students with chances to go “back to the well, to drink again and again” as a way to foster the “interest and satisfaction of mulling over meaningful language features in numerous different ways” (Sivell & Sivell, 2012, pp. 11, 17, 11). An adult English language student put it succinctly: confident progress requires “less biting off and more digesting”, which echoed her instructor’s observation that students’ “schemata don’t simply get bigger, they also sometimes get better” after back-to-the-well encounters (Morrissey & Sivell, 2015, p. 19, 18).

It is appropriate in this context to recall Freinet’s anecdote (above) regarding children who reject a basket of fruit that has been carefully “chosen and picked for them” and instead want to make their own harvest (Freinet, 1967b, trans. 1990, p. 40).

This episode vividly evokes what Freinet calls “exploratory trial and error”, which affords students the potential to engage in “exploring and digging, inquiring and comparing, sifting through books and documents, and diving inquisitively into the contradictory depths of knowledge” (pp. 85, 161). At first glance such a process may seem so uncontrolled and unpredictable as to be “illogical”, but in fact it allows education to “recapture the energy, the vigor, the passionate desire that are so natural to our kind” (p. 110). The connection with van Lier’s concern for encouraging learners to delve into the affordances of their environment is clear; for example Monot, a more recent supporter of the Freinet tradition, emphasizes that “It is not enough to assign pupils work to do. It is necessary to give them the time to learn, and to provide them with assistance that will allow them to invest themselves... fully” (trans. from 2008, §4). Therefore, a superficially efficient-looking rapid presentation of new material is unlikely to promote the real goal, which is “highly personalized ownership of stress-free learning experiences” (§7). And from this belief it is an easy step to Freinet’s signature emphasis on the central importance of “work” in the school context (Freinet, 1960, trans.1993, p. 300); above all, he stressed the value of “work-play”, which he saw as creative and enjoyable “work that meets the natural need of the individual and by this means procures a satisfaction that is its own justification” (pp. 325, 324). Of course, there can be limits on students’ ability to engage directly in real-life work, which may require adult capacities, but even in such circumstances there can still be “play-work” that is not an actual work activity like building, harvesting, or harnessing the power of flowing water, but nevertheless includes games that “deep down possess the basic characteristics of genuine work but which ... are adapted to children’s needs, thinking, and pace of life” (pp. 207, 212). Thus, such activities entail the normal satisfaction of our most powerful natural needs: intelligence, deep unity with nature;... the feeling of power, of creation, and control; immediately visible practical outcomes; obvious familial and social utility; and a wide range of emotions. (pp. 206)

Classroom printing may be taken as a cardinal example of energizing play-work because – perhaps especially in the case of adult learners – it can closely approximate the creative joy of work-play.

Thus, the coherence of Freinet’s overall educational vision is very plain. His insistence on systematic but adaptable planning in support of individual and contextual appropriateness stems from essentially the same understanding of complex causality as does his strong reliance on experimental trial and error that can best be realized when a

gradual, back-to-the-well learning pace is fostered.

## In Retrospect

A century after the year of their births, *Le Monde de l'Éducation* published Helfter's (1996) admiring identification of Freinet and Piaget as the two great founders of twentieth-century Francophone educational theory and practice. More recently still, I myself have written about the enduring impact of Freinet Pedagogy (Sivell, 2010). That earlier chapter differed from the present account especially because it focused on education for children rather than adults. However, then as now the goal was to demonstrate how the Freinet tradition still “has much to offer and certainly continues to deserve attention” (p. 18). A good example of such impact – especially in light of plausible inferences from child to adult education – can be seen in the formative influence Freinet exercised on the thinking and practice of celebrated Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (McLaren, 1997, p. 149); as Freire himself asserted, “Freinet’s dreams are also my dreams” (Trans. from Régnier & Goupil, 2006, p. 26, reporting an undated conference presentation by Freire).

Accordingly, although limited to just a few specific themes – free writing, classroom printing, flexibly systematic planning, and attention to exploratory trial and error – this overview has attempted to illustrate the admirable consistency of theory and practice within Freinet’s work, as well as its continuing relevance to psychologists and educators even today. As a language instructor and also a lecturer in applied linguistics, my own experience exemplifies the kind of multiple and perennial contributions that Modern School Pedagogy can make. There is little doubt that many present-day teachers and teacher educators benefit from Freinet’s guidance in ways that give them much to celebrate on this fiftieth anniversary of his passing; likewise, there is reason to believe that others will continue to look back with gratitude, respect and affection after another five decades.

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