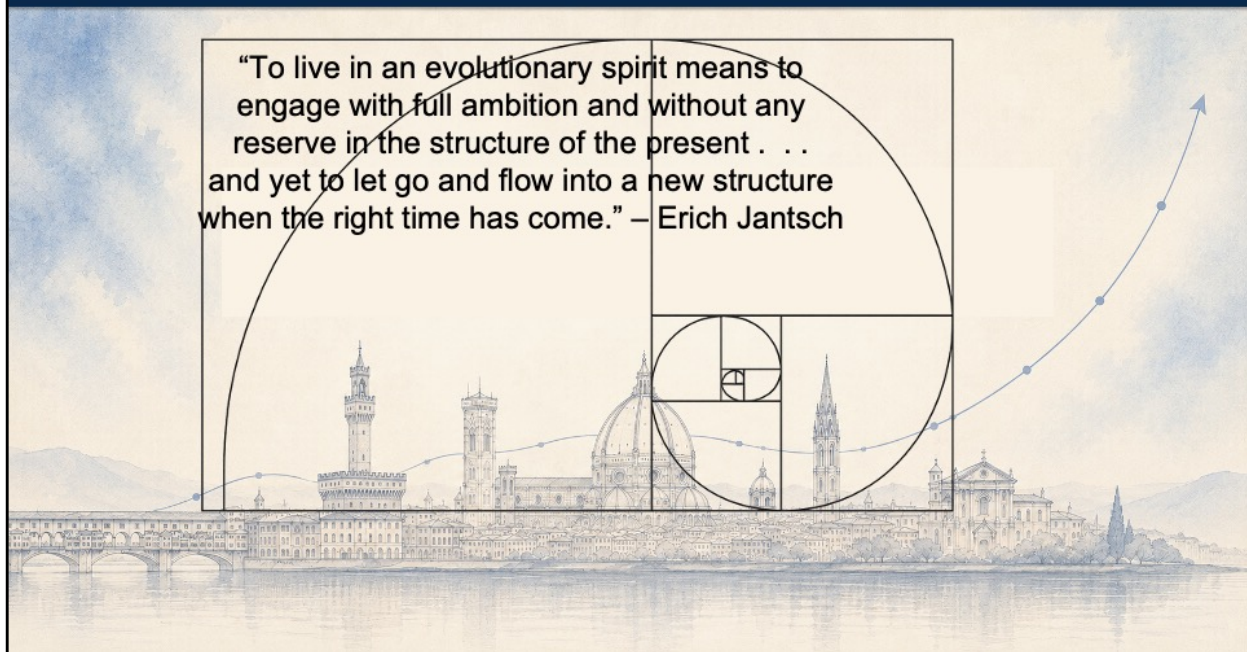


The challenge is designing a system that better reflects what we now understand about learning itself.



Today I want to explore whether education may be approaching one of those moments.

Most proposals for the future of education focus on



- ✓ Better instruction
- ✓ Better engagement
- ✓ Better assessment
- ✓ Better technology
- ✓ More personalization



What if the problem isn't the quality of the parts?

- What if the problem isn't the quality of the parts?
- What if the problem is the design of the system?

What if the Future of Education
cannot emerge from the structures of the past?



This is the central question Can a fundamentally different future emerge from structures designed for very different circumstances?

We often try to innovate while preserving assumptions about time, grouping, pacing, curriculum, and assessment that originated in a very different era.

The question isn't whether those structures were wrong. The question is whether they remain necessary.

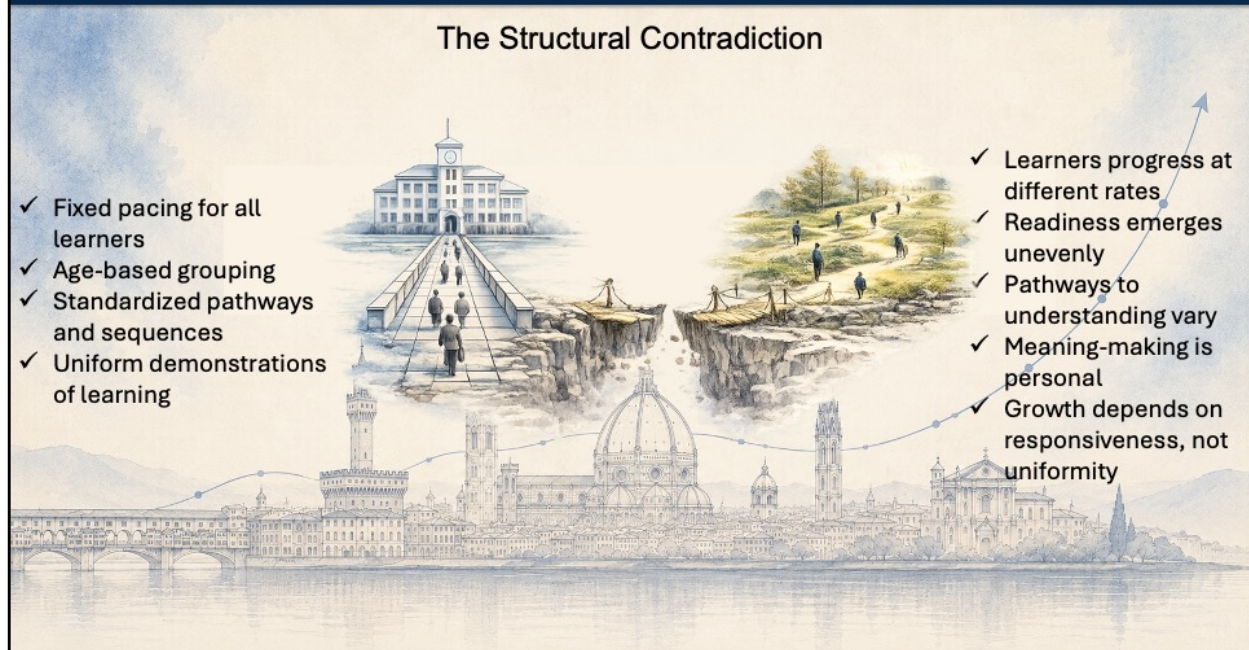
What Research Has Shown



- ✓ Learners vary
- ✓ Readiness varies
- ✓ Pathways vary
- ✓ Meaning making is personal

Human variation is not a problem to solve.
It is a reality we can design for.

In my paper you'll find the research that supports these concepts.
Yet most educational structures still assume far more uniformity than the research suggests.



The contradictions between these factors is increasingly difficult to ignore.

Placing the Learner at the Center



The learner is not a variable in the system
The learner is the reason for the system

This may be the most important element.
Many structures operate as though preserving the system is the primary goal
and accommodating learners is secondary.
What changes if we reverse that relationship?

What Becomes Possible?



- ✓ The world has changed
- ✓ Knowledge is expanding
- ✓ Learners need more than a system built for a different era
- ✓ The old model cannot deliver the future
- ✓ We must redesign for what's possible

From critique to design

One possibility is shifting more meaningful decisions to learners.
Not total freedom.

Not chaos.

Structured agency. As Daniel Pink noted in his book "Drive: The Surprising Truth about what motivates us.

Agency over time.

Agency over team.

Agency over task.

Agency over technique.

The role of the educator becomes helping learners make increasingly effective decisions.

A Different Organizing Logic



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The Teacher's Role Evolves



To: Designer of conditions for individual success
From: Deliverer of instruction

Use the morphing feature here

The teacher's work actually becomes more important, not less (address the fears of teachers being replaced with computers)

Transparency Creates Agency



Be sure to add Ali's work on Goal setting here

Agency requires visibility.

Learners cannot navigate pathways they cannot see.

One reason I continue to value the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and Can-Do Statements is that they make growth visible.

They create transparency.

Transparency allows planning.

Planning allows ownership.

Ownership supports agency.

Facilitated Interdependent Learning



A structure designed to honor variation at scale

FILL is not primarily a language program.

It is a structural response to variation.

It assumes that learners may pursue different pathways while still benefiting from community, facilitation, transparency, and shared accountability.

The goal is not individualization alone.

The goal is honoring variation at scale.



Click on the blank slide first then the picture so that the new Act III template is showing

- No common textbook.
- No common pacing guide.
- No common unit sequence.
- Many educators assumed it could not work.
- The results surprised us.

Learner agency through choice of individual pathways to proficiency



What emerged was not randomness.

What emerged was ownership.

Students selected pathways connected to their interests.

Proficiency remained the goal and focus

WHAT EMERGED

- EXTERNAL VALIDATION**
Learners earned recognition for real world use of language and meaningful products.
- OWNERSHIP**
Learners made choices, set goals, and took charge of their learning journey.
- ACCESS**
All learners, regardless of their starting point, could participate and succeed.
- PERSISTENCE**
Purpose and relevance fueled motivation and kept learners engaged.
- PROFICIENCY GROWTH**
Learners made measurable progress toward higher levels of proficiency.

Je peux communiquer avec confiance sur des sujets qui comptent pour moi.

- ✓ External Validation
- ✓ Ownership
- ✓ Access
- ✓ Persistence
- ✓ Proficiency Growth

The most striking result may have been that learners often worked harder, not less, when the learning belonged to them.



This may be the most important lesson Delmar taught us.
Proficiency belongs to learners.
Not courses.
Not grade levels.
Not teachers.
Learners own their growth.
Teachers support that growth.
But proficiency itself resides in the learner.
That distinction changes everything.



At this point the question shifts.

If this can work in language learning...

Why not elsewhere?

What assumptions are specific to world languages?

And what assumptions are actually about learning itself?



BEYOND LANGUAGE LEARNING
THE FILL APPROACH WITH FIL SCALES ACROSS DISCIPLINES AND CONTEXTS

ONE APPROACH. MANY CONTEXTS. LIMITLESS POTENTIAL.

This is where Facilitated Interdependent Learning becomes FIL.
The same design principles can support science.
The organizing principle is not the discipline.
The organizing principle is the learner.



For most of history, uniform schooling solved a practical problem.
Information was scarce.
Expertise was scarce.
Access was scarce.
AI changes those conditions.
It does not solve every problem.
But it removes many of the constraints that once made standardization necessary.
What was once necessary may now be optional.



The Future of Education

I don't believe the future of education is simply better instruction.

I believe it is a better system for learners.

A system built on respect for the individual.

Transparency.

Agency.

Connection.

Purpose.

Human variation has always existed.

What is changing is our ability to design for it.



For most of my career, educational improvement has meant making existing systems work better.

- Better curriculum.
- Better assessment.
- Better technology.
- Better instruction.

But this image reminds me that there is a difference between improving a solution and redesigning a system.

At some point, transportation stopped asking how to build a better horse and buggy.

It began asking a different question.

I believe education may be approaching a similar moment.



The future isn't something we discover.
It's something we design.
And design begins with assumptions.
If we assume learners are fundamentally different from one another, then
our systems should reflect that reality.
The question is no longer whether human variation exists.
The question is whether we're willing to build for it.



How Might the Spiral Continue?

(60-90 seconds)

I don't think the future of education will be created by one organization.

Or one researcher.

Or one ministry.

Or one teacher.

It will emerge through thousands of conversations, experiments, and design decisions.

So rather than ending with a conclusion, I'd like to end with an invitation.

We've spent the last twenty minutes exploring one possible path.

Now I'd like to hear from you.

How might the spiral continue?

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION



Scan the QR code for:



CONFERENCE PAPER



PRESENTATION SLIDES



FACILITATED INTERDEPENDENT LEARNING (FILL)



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



CONTACT INFORMATION



*The future of education will not be delivered to us.
We must participate in creating it.*

Tom Welch

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