

Higher Level Passages and Lower Level Skills:

Memorizing more vocab is not the way to get there

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER



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Abstract Text: Higher Level Passages and Lower Level Skills

*As the DLPT approaches and they memorize as much vocab as possible, students experience **growing test anxiety, stress and exhaustion**—seriously degrading their ability to think clearly on the higher level DLPT passages.*

*A professional ‘terp and FL teacher, SrA X, failed the DLPT—partly because for 2 months before the test she couldn’t sleep—but also, as she said, “on the job, you have to know every word.” **Yes, but not on the test...***

The DLPT requires a lot of vocab “bottom up” to pass the lower levels; but for the higher levels, it requires “top down” recognition of contexts and “patterns of speech”. **Students and linguists who have to translate every word do not do as well on the test as those who understand contextually.** This paper looks at (1) student cases, and (2) texts and patterns of speech up the ILR levels to 3&4.

Case Studies: (1)SrA X (2)SGT S, "It wasn't the TL; it was the test." (3) AIC M & AIC D

Text: “The Treasure”;

Resources: (1) Pre- and Post-DLPT Questionnaires (2) The “Dirty Dozen of Skills and Strategies”



SrA X, Post-DLPT Questionnaire

Did you have high test anxiety with the DLPT?

1-strongly disagree 2-disagree 3-neutral 4-agree **5-strongly agree**

Any Comments? **It's mostly test anxiety because the thought of 1 test determining your hard work of 64 weeks seems rather unfair.**

Were you aware of being stressed?

1-strongly disagree 2-disagree 3-neutral 4-agree **5-strongly agree**

Any Comments? **I live in a constant state of stress at all times regarding all things**

Did your teachers tell you that you were trying too hard?

1-strongly disagree 2-disagree 3-neutral 4-agree **5-strongly agree**

Any Comments? They were always telling me not to stress out

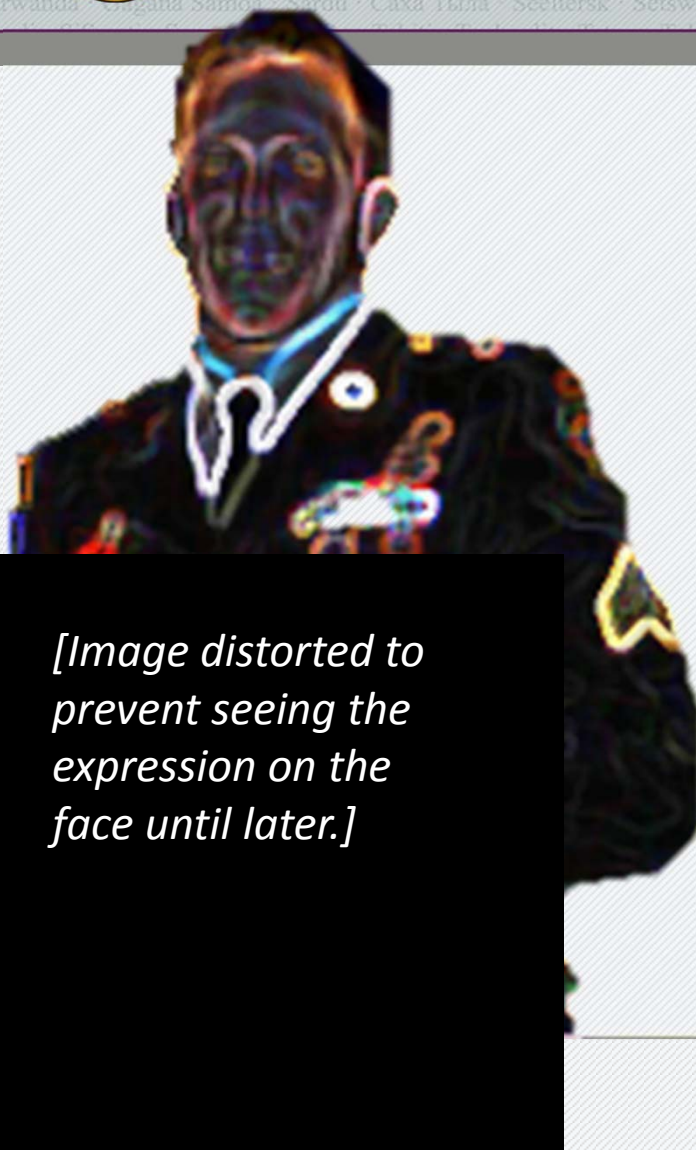
Are you exhausted?

1-strongly disagree 2-disagree 3-neutral 4-agree **5-strongly agree**

Were you so stressed that you couldn't get a good, restful night's sleep?

1-strongly disagree 2-disagree 3-neutral 4-agree **5-strongly agree**

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[Image distorted to prevent seeing the expression on the face until later.]

“...before the final [DLPT], Seymour [3.9 GPA] took a mock French proficiency test. To his dismay, he received a [1+/1+]... ‘I was scared, and thought, “How is this possible?” I understood everything they said and all the questions.’”

--Natela Cutter in “The Globe”, Winter 2011 issue, p. 21

We hear this all the time—how is it there is such a mis-match between test scores and the [actual] skill-level of the linguist? The old answer from Test Development is, “They didn’t understand the language as well as they thought they did.”

Uh-huh.

With DLPT 5, that answer is now a little OBE.

It turns out, it was more a matter that he didn’t know what they were looking for on the test—at different levels—and where to look for it.



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Link: “The Treasure”, 1995 New Yorker cover by artist Peter de Sève. 2+ Level. Interpreted in words by A.D., 2008/11.

A New York City open-air flea market booth-keeper sits surrounded by his wares. He is a massive, impassive man with a flowing white beard, wearing a ball-cap, smoking a cigar. He looks like Fidel Castro, but on a vaster scale. He holds a styro coffee cup in one hand. Interestingly, he also strongly favors the self-portrait of Leonardo Da Vinci, visible in the opened book at his elbow. The book is the original handwritten notebook of Da Vinci; the painting hanging on the screen behind him is Leonardo’s “Mona Lisa.” Like the notebook, it is not a copy.

Other items for sale surround him: there is the Shroud of Turin, an original cartoon of Mickey Mouse, a three foot tall Ming vase, the “Winged Victory” statue (with an “As Is” tag, because it is missing the head), a cage with a live Dodo bird inside, a unicorn’s horn, an old violin (a Stradivarius, of course)...

In the foreground of the picture, walking away from the booth with their purchase in hand, is a delighted couple. They are lost in admiration of their snow-globe, one of the millions of globes mass-produced throughout the 20th century. They are grinning as broadly as the snowman inside the globe.

What items in the cover picture do you recognize?

What is the picture’s point? [SGT Seymour wasn’t sure where to start.]

What is the picture’s tone?

How many of the details do you need to get the point?



**Google Images
Link: “The
Treasure”, Peter
de Sève, The New
Yorker.**



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“The Treasure”, artist Peter de Sève

In general, what kind of items do you see in the NYC flea-market operator’s booth?

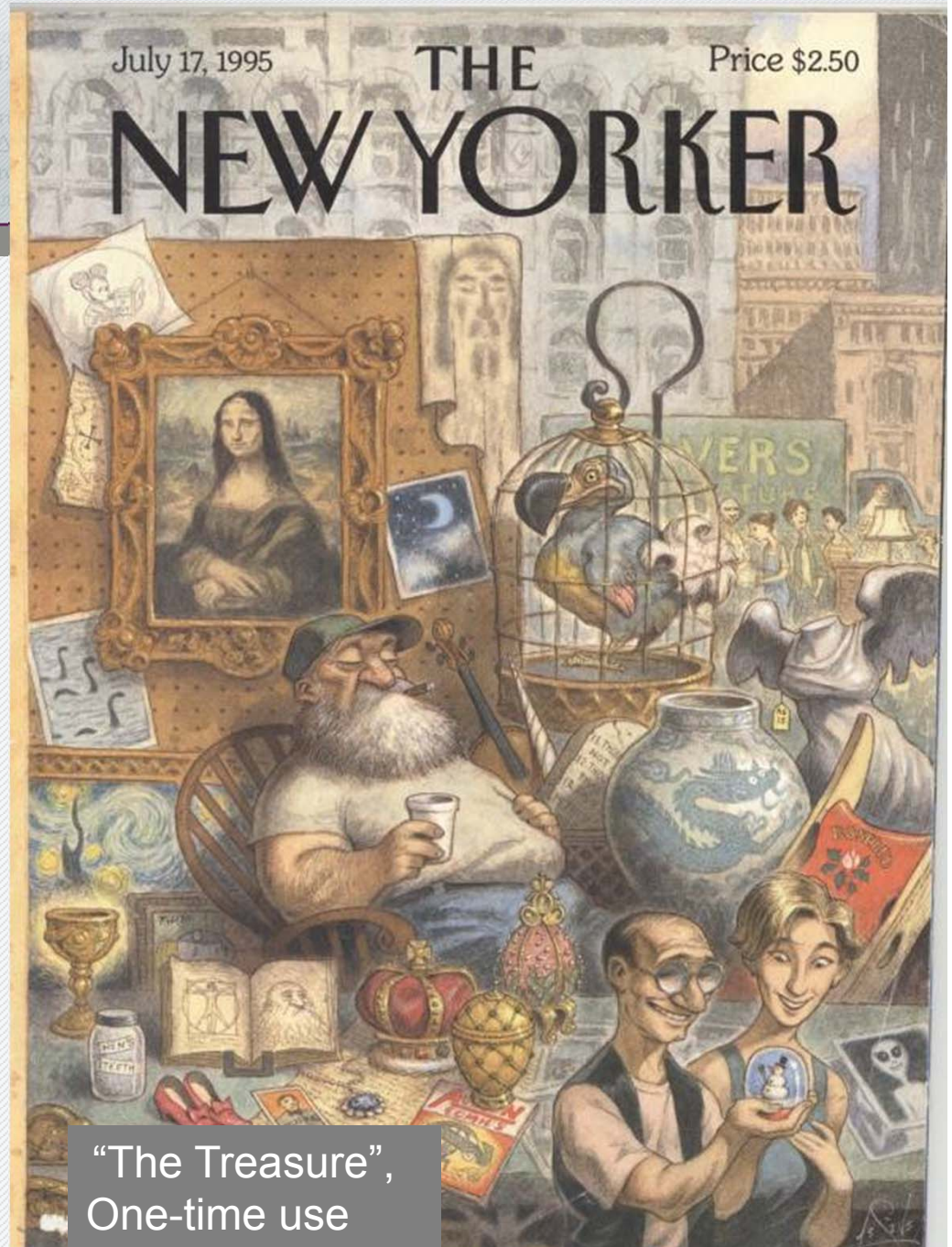
- A. *Imaginary, mythical items*
- B. *Old junk antiques*
- C. *Incredibly rare, valuable items*
- D. *A mélange of cultural artifacts*

What old saying would express the picture’s point?

- A. *To buy or not to buy, that is the question*
- B. *There is no accounting for taste*
- C. *One man’s trash is another man’s treasure*
- D. *People will buy anything*

What is the tone?

- A. *Sarcastic*
- B. *Ambiguous*
- C. *Ironic*
- D. *Whimsical*



“The Treasure”,
One-time use



“Last Paragraph First” / Top Down



Sgt. Joshua Seymour receives his diploma from DLIFLC Commandant Col. Daniel D. Pick. Photo by Natela Cutter

DLIFLC student credits
Student Learning Center for top-notch
French scores

By Natela Cutter, Strategic Communications

SGT Seymour went from 1+/1+ to 3/3/2+ on the DLPT and OPI in a little more than a month, by adopting different strategies appropriate to different ILR levels.

When he dropped by the office to tell us about it, he was walking on air.

We couldn't ask him about anything specific on the test, but we could ask legitimately how his mind was working; how he approached the test...



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Linguist Can Say/Listen to/ Read:

Each level subsumes all of the language skills of the levels below...The 4 Level is the sum of its parts, plus

Moscow 1901

Linguist Can:

4

QB Panacea

- Project

- Almost any text
 - Read between the lines
- "Professional"**

Editorial Opinion Emotion
 Argumentation Commentary
 Analysis Societal Hypothesis

- Analyze

"ganada a pulso"

3

Yiaros

Islamic Rep

- Simple material within a familiar context
- "Storyteller"**

Facts Reports
 News

"The Treasure"

- Apply
- Comprehend

Boots

Carol Yager

2

"Cuaternario"

- Simple and highly predictable
 - Satisfy immediate survival needs
- "Survivor"**

Simple Sentence
 Forms Lists

"The cells which protect"

- Recognize
- Understand

"Ur sightseeing needs."

1

"You may not..., but..."

- Recognize some words

Schedule
 Menu
 Signs

- Memorize

"Parrot"

0+

**ILR
 Proficiency
 Levels**



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Freely-paraphrased excerpt of 2 Level news story, “El Zaragoza pulveriza al Chelsea”

OPPOSITION or Antithesis



“En una noche de goles y desequilibrio,

It was a wild and soccer night, with scoring and disorder in the stands from the British soccer hooligans. Zaragoza triumphed and is on its way to the World Cup. It beat Chelsea, 3-0, with an ease that could only be explained by the difference in quality of the players. Un equipo vive instalado en la modernidad y otro en el cuaternario. (One team lives firmly in the modern era, and the other in the cuaternario.) ...”

Question: what is the “cuaternario”?



2 level news story from German,
freely adapted for training purposes:

Ms. J was the schwerste woman in the world; what was she?

What was the stahlverstärkten Krankenbett?

Flint. ... Carol Jaeger, die schwerste Frau der Welt, ist gestorben...

Flint...Carol Jaeger, the schwerste woman in the world, has just died. She was *krank*, sick, so they took her to the *Krankenhaus*. They carried her in a *Krankenwagen*; she was lying on a *Krankenbett*... It was a *stahlverstärkten Krankenbett*...

„*Schwerste*“ has to be what sort of thing?



2+ Level Interview of a French Canadienne Wheelchair Athlete



[To be read aloud] In a statement given to an interviewer by the famous wheelchair athlete Chantal Petitclerc, she said, “Now is the hour of ‘petites’ acrobaties, which is a perilous maneuver. I have never had an accident in competition, but I’ve given myself a lot of bleus *[what would that be?]* changing from the seat of one exercise machine to another.”

With the statement beginning, “Now is the hour of petites acrobaties...”, what is Ms. Petitclerc thinking of?

- A. Small acrobatic maneuvers
- B. Calisthenics
- C. Changing machines
- D. Light athletics (track and field rather than full body contact sports)



**2 or 2+ level ad: “Benny Goodman: à la recherche de la perfection” [in search of perfection],
1957 Lockheed ad in French, paraphrase excerpt**



The text of the ad in French begins by telling us that Goodman has been a professional jazzman since the age of 14, recognized as the “King of Swing” since the ‘30s...But he does not rest on his lauriers, daily spending hours practicing, working on his technique ...Recently, he has even started playing classical music, Mozart, appearing as a soloist with symphony orchestras everywhere...

Already, you can see 2 or 3 good detail questions:

What is Benny Goodman?

What does it mean that he “does not rest on his lauriers”?

Then the text transitions from speaking of Goodman to “When Goodman travels, quite naturally he chooses the best there is: the comfort of the aircraft of Lockheed Airlines...”

Why does Benny Goodman fly Lockheed? [main idea question]

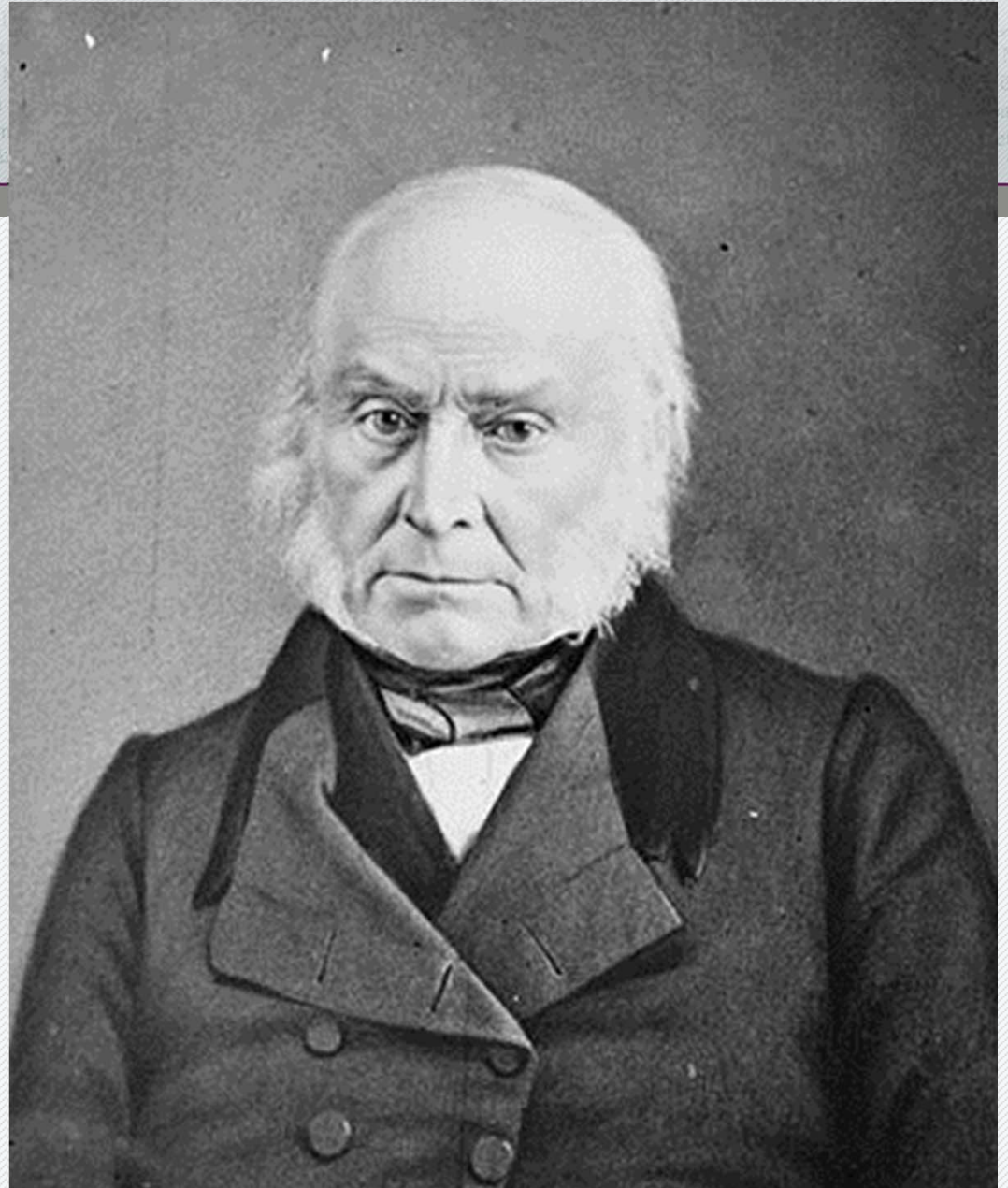
As if the passage were 2 level: bottom up: Specific answer, _____

As if the passage were 2+ level: Top down: General answer: _____

What is the overview given by the caption of this advertisement? _____



3 Level:
***“reading
between the
lines”-- simile
and metaphor***





Schemata

This is the schematic diagram of an electrical circuit. Current can only flow in certain paths. As with electrical current, language flows in regular schemata, or “patterns of speech”. If you identify the schemata / patterns of speech at the lower ILR levels, you will be prepared to see them in more complex form at the higher levels.





Language Schema: APPOSITION





Language Schema: OPPOSITION / Antithesis





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Parallel Structure

In Morocco, they fill the samovar with water and chai in the morning, and it cooks all day. There is an old saying about that:

*“The first cup is as sweet as life,
the second as strong as love,
and the third as bitter as death.”*





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English DLPT-Compatible Test for Diagnostic Purposes (Validation Edition, Version B, Jul 2014)

- This diagnostic test uses English renderings of FL sample texts found in the DLPT “Familiarization Guides” provided online by DLI Test Development. The “renderings” may seem like awkward translations of the FL passages—they have been left close to the syntax of the original FL intentionally—for the way that they would feel on the test to a student. It is for the purpose of familiarizing students in all languages with typical DLPT texts at different levels of difficulty, some typical English questions and answers corresponding to those texts, ***and the usual places test-takers go wrong with the English Q&A (the diagnostic). In the follow-on workshop, strategies for getting it right are discussed.*** [Caveat: we may not directly discuss the DLPT, but we can analyze the sample materials.]
- ***Level 1:*** Personal notes, simple messages, bulletin board information, travel brochures, announcements of public events, simple descriptions of people and things, classified and other advertisements, etc. These passages are not linguistically complex and deal with common, everyday situations requiring reading skill. The passages generally contain very basic vocabulary.

--DLPT5, General Test Specifications, Revision: February 9, 2006



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English DLPT-Compatible Test for Diagnostic Purposes

(Validation Edition, Version B, Jul 2014)

Hebrew, Level 1. From a classified ad

A magnificent hotel in Tel – Aviv: Jobs for young people cleaning guest rooms and banquet halls. Previous experience desirable but not mandatory.

Minimal knowledge of English a plus. Comfortable shift work including Saturdays and holidays. Shuttles will be available for work and meals.

Interviews will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday morning at the hotel. For more information please call Danny: 03-540-9911

1. Who might respond to this ad?

- (A) Someone interested in learning English.
- (B) A person in need of an experienced housekeeper.
- (C) Someone seeking accommodations in Tel Aviv.
- (D) A person looking for employment.

*SPC A***, went for answer choice “A”, “Someone interested in learning English.” He reasoned that if they had minimal English, they would be interested in the job to improve it. Possible, but what’s wrong with that approach?*



The Diagnostic English Test:

Level 2. From a letter to the editor about urban safety in Paraguay

La semana pasada escribí sobre la agresividad creciente que se percibe en muchas esquinas de la ciudad a causa de la presencia de los "limpiavidrios", desvalidas personas que ofrecen sus servicios en las calles de la ciudad, estampando esponjas cargadas de agua sucia con jabón sobre el vidrio, a cambio de propinas...

Last week I wrote about the growing aggressiveness which can be seen in many corners of the city because of the presence of the "limpiavidrios", homeless people who offer their services in the streets of the city, plopping sponges full of dirty water and soap on the windshield in exchange for handouts ("propinas"). Just yesterday, in broad daylight, at the corner of Mariscal Lopez and San Martin, a driver did not accept the offer of cleaning his windshield by a woman who had already started washing it. She, in a fit of rage at the refusal, hit the roof of his car with her squeegee and scratched the paint. The man got out in order to see what the damage was, and the woman bashed him on the head. Instantly, others came running to her aid, who not only _____ ("propinaron") a beating to the man, but one of them even pulled a knife and stabbed him. They left him more dead than alive, lying in the street.

2. What recurring issue is the writer denouncing in the letter?

- (A) Road rage is becoming a serious problem in the city.
- (B) The large number of peddlers creates traffic problems.
- (C) Homeless people continue to break into cars.
- (D) Street people keep forcing their services on motorists.





The Diagnostic English Test

3 Level Text from Spanish

The recent events connected with the conflict in Chiapas underline the necessity for a profound revision of the educational policy of the country on an issue heretofore avoided: the racism of our society. The presence of these indigenous peoples on the national scene, ganada a pulso, with no support, begins to make us conscious of the implications of the multiethnic character of the country for different groups of Mexicans living side-by-side, and therefore also for education.

In the first paragraph, the expression *ganada a pulso* means:

- A. Achieved through one's own effort.
- B. Done out of sheer impulse.
- C. Obtained despite the odds.
- D. Earned after years of suffering.



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3 Level Text (“Diagnostic English Test”, p. 15): *The recent events connected with the conflict in Chiapas underline the necessity for a profound revision of the educational policy of the country on an issue heretofore avoided: the racism of our society. The presence of these indigenous peoples on the national scene, ganada a pulso, with no support, begins to make us conscious of the implications of the multiethnic character of the country for different groups of Mexicans living side-by-side, and therefore also for education.*



In the first paragraph, the expression *ganada a pulso* means:

- A. Achieved through one’s own effort.**
- B. Done out of sheer impulse.**
- C. Obtained despite the odds.**
- D. Earned after years of suffering.**



Unexplained Cultural References:

3 level “letter to the editor” from Greek,
paraphrased excerpt (p.16 in the “English Diagnostic Test”)



*The text is an excerpt of a discussion on how to handle **the “sites of torments”**.
[We do not know the cultural reference, but there is a question about it, so we wait for more information.]*

*In the middle of the piece, the writer makes the argument that these sites should be left as they are, untouched, because they are “historical sites” on the order of **Marathon, Waterloo, or the Nazi death camps**.*

*In the last paragraph, he states, “I heard recently, that they plan to “preserve” **Yiaros** and its impressive building. In the name of God, don’t do that! It was built by the prisoners themselves during **the Civil War** years and later on became a “reforming place”. I was among the “lucky ones” to have visited it, as one in need of political reformation, an ex-resistance fighter. Leave Yiaros as it is, don’t change anything. No historical place should be turned into **Disneyland**.”*

What does the author suggest should be done, and for what reason?

What is the tone of the piece?

The “sites of torments” were “historical sites”; what were they specifically?

[Strategy: at 2+/3 level, read intro and conclusion together.]



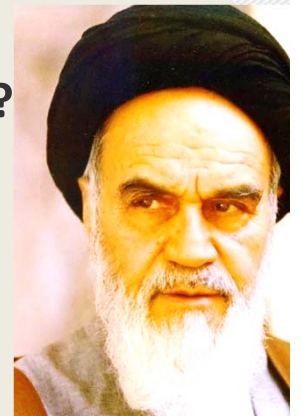
***Diagnostic English Test, Persian Farsi, Level 3:
passage from a political talk show on the radio.***

--In your opinion, why at this stage has republicanism become one of the most central debate topics of the opposition?

--I think this is quite natural. The main demand of the people at the present time is this: they do not want a monarchy, because it was destroyed as an institution in Iran some twenty years ago. And in my opinion, that action is irreversible. On the other hand, the people have experienced the Islamic Republic in the past twenty-five years as well. Therefore, they want a republic, no more, no less. Another aspect of the issue is this: since the Iranian Revolution is now going through its democratic phase, it resembles republicanism. And of course, from the beginning of the Revolution, when the people overthrew the monarchy, they wanted a republic. Then the clerics came along, and rode this wave and turned Iran into an Islamic Republic. And imposed their laws, whose main objective is to rule by jurisconsult. And as I said, since Iranian society is not currently ready for socialism, republicanism is a substitute, a phase that will provide freedom and democracy and conditions that can move toward socialism—if the progressive forces can really capitalize on them.

4. What is one thing the guest speaker implies about the Islamic Republic?

- (A) It is a natural result of the Revolution.
- (B) It is an irreversible form of government.
- (C) It lacks the support of the people.
- (D) It stands in the way of social reform





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***Dr. Nabih Kanbar, Project Manager
for the development of the DLPT 5
in AP, MSA, AE, DG, FR...***

in a briefing to faculty 5 or 6 years ago, he stated, “Sometimes the DLPT item writers will have a good 3-level passage, and write bona fide 3-level English questions and answers for it—and 90% of the 1-level students will answer the question correctly. We don’t know what is going on.”



Diagnostic English Test, Spanish Level 4: An excerpt from an essay on the anthropology of medicine

La ciencia médica, en cuanto trato terapéutico con el hombre enfermo, está siempre afectada en su proceder por una dualidad...

La conquista del espacio y del tiempo para el pensamiento médico tenía las mejores posibilidades de ser la panacea del futuro. A lo largo de esas dos direcciones fundamentales de progreso se construyeron los más imponentes monumentos de la ciencia médica....

The conquest of space and time by medical thought offers the best possibilities of being the panacea of the future. Along these two fundamental directions of progress the most imposing monuments of medical science will be constructed....

8. In the last ¶ (“The conquest...”), what is implied about medical science?

- (A) It has not yet achieved its goals despite its advances.
- (B) It has failed to apply modern research findings.
- (C) It has ignored relevant science from other fields.
- (D) It has not integrated its discoveries into a cohesive whole.



Captions, Titles, Headlines, Frames:



تهدير / خطر (Caption or Heading)

“Benny Goodman: à la recherche de la perfection”

(Ad)

مجلس الأمن يقرر عقوبات على إيران اليوم (Caption)

“There are 2 views...” (Framing Statement)

“Though the dog barks, the parade moves on”

(Link): “When a XXL Kitty Cat Comes to Call”

“They Drew Fire” (with subcaption...?)



(Case of the Arabic student who had a headache)

The Carmel Pine Cone

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YOUR SOURCE FOR LOCAL NEWS, ARTS AND OPINION SINCE 1915

When an XXL kitty-cat comes to call

By CHRIS COUNTS

REPORTS OF mountain lions in parks, along roads and in neighborhoods around the Monterey Peninsula have become pretty common.

But for all the sightings in recent years, very few photographs have been produced to verify them.

This week, a series of beautiful images, captured by Gerda Michaylov of Carmel Valley, present a remarkably clear picture of an animal that inspires fascination and fear.

"I was lying in bed Friday morning when I looked out the window and saw the lion," recalled Dr. Lubo Michaylov, Gerda's husband. "I saw this big animal walking around. It was not a deer, but something else. I told my wife about it, and she got her camera."

At some point in the encounter, while Gerda's camera was trained on the lion, her husband tapped the window.

"The lion detected the noise," said Michaylov,

See LION page 294



In a series of photos that wouldn't be out of place on the pages of National Geographic, Gerda Michaylov of Carmel Valley captured the beauty, the gracefulness and the haughty attitude of a lion that visited her yard last week.

Water about lot wo

CALIFORNIA / draft cease and desist pelling the company River by a staggering Tuesday, the State ed down the propose Cal Am to severely n cent within six years weeks.

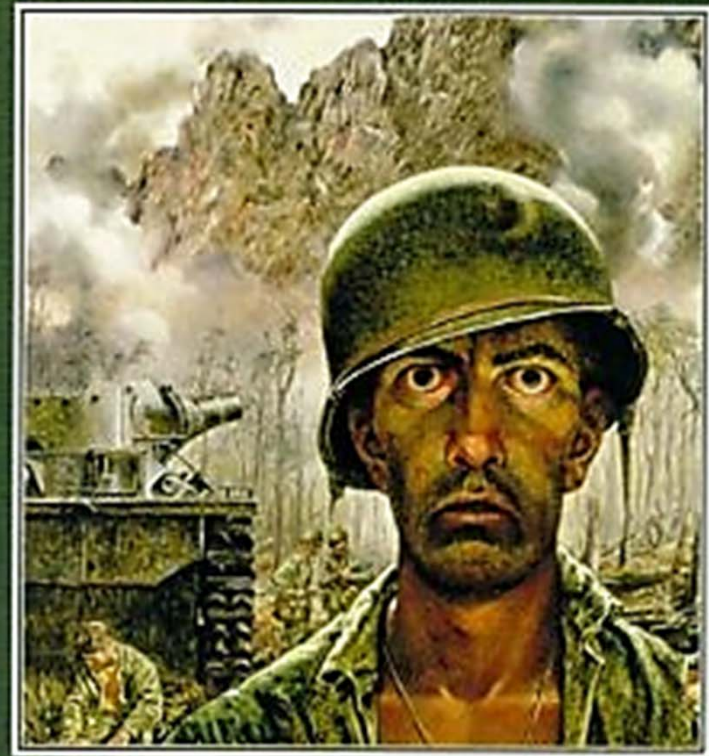
"Saving the first said Cal Am spokess the 35 to 50 percent

CHS sa camoufi

By THE ELECTRO School's neighbors b ed and camouflaged brightly lit, red scrol On Monday nigh

THEY DREW FIRE

Combat Artists of World War II



Brian Lanker and Nicole Newnham



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- (1) *What does it mean?*,
- (2) *What is the tone?*

*Though the dog barks,
The parade moves on!*



*You just forgot a clignotant,
He's just a little mort.*

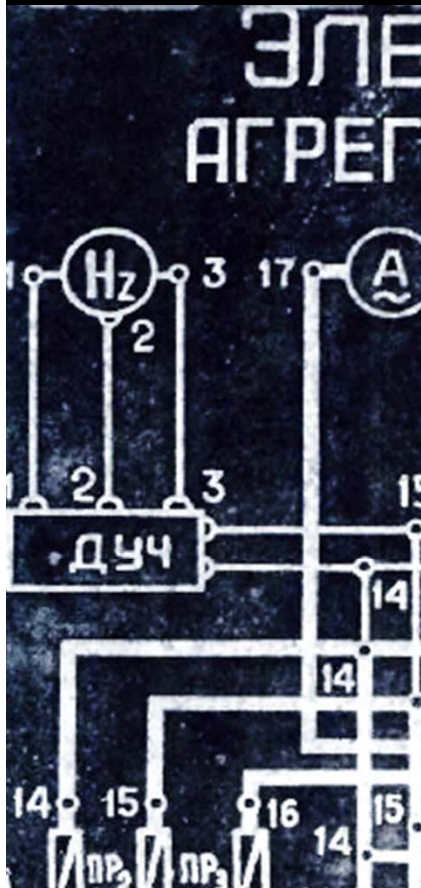


Teaching Point: *reading implications / inferences and tone are considered higher-level skills, and though they exist at all levels, questions cannot be asked about them on the DLPT until the higher levels. But we can use passages like this early on to begin training to the higher levels.*



Schemata

This is the schematic diagram of an electrical circuit. Current can only flow in certain paths. As with electrical current, language flows in regular schemata, or “patterns of speech”. If you identify the schemata / patterns of speech at the lower ILR levels, you will be prepared to see them in more complex form at the higher levels.



Common Language Schemata:

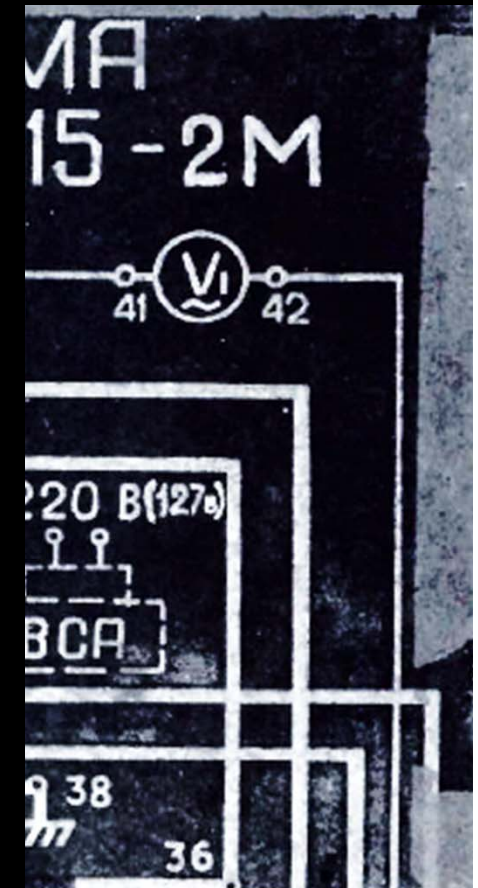
“A... , A’....”: statement, then restatement for clarification: the **apposition** schema.

“A..., however B...”: the schema of **antithesis / opposition**.

“A, A1, A2, A3...”: **parallel structure**.

“If... →then...”: the **cause and effect** schema.

Metaphor / Simile / Analogy





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DIFFERENT SKILLS ARE TESTED AT DIFFERENT LEVELS



Cultural References

Metaphor & Simile

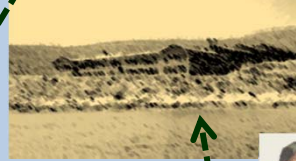
Tone

Implications

5

4

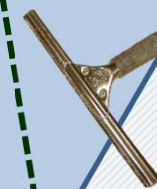
3



2+



2



Metaphor, Simile

Memorized Vocab, Grammar, Translation

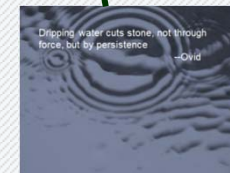
1+



Metaphor ≠



Tone



Impl.

1

0+



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Linguist Can Say/Listen to/ Read:

- Unexplained commentary
"M.A. and post-" (not M.S.)

- Almost any text
- Read between the lines
"Professional"

- Simple material
within a familiar context
"Storyteller"

- Simple and highly predictable
- Satisfy immediate survival needs
"Survivor"

The red line represents the amount of memorized vocab, level by level. It is an arithmetic function. The triangle represents the needed increase of skills— a geometric progression.

4

Editorial
Argumentation
Analysis
Opinion
Societal
Hypothesis
Emotion
Commentary

3

Facts
Reports
News

2

Simple Sentences
Forms
Lists

1

Schedule
Menu
Signs

0+

Linguist Can:

- Project ["A word to the wise is sufficient"]

- Analyze

- Apply
- Comprehend

- Recognize
- Understand

- Memorize

Each level subsumes all of the language skills of the levels below... The 4 Level is the sum of its parts— and then some.

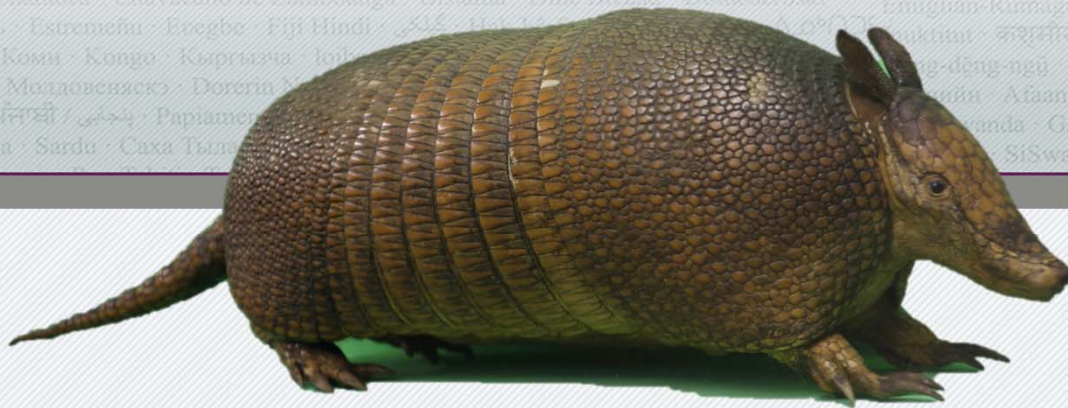


SUMMARY

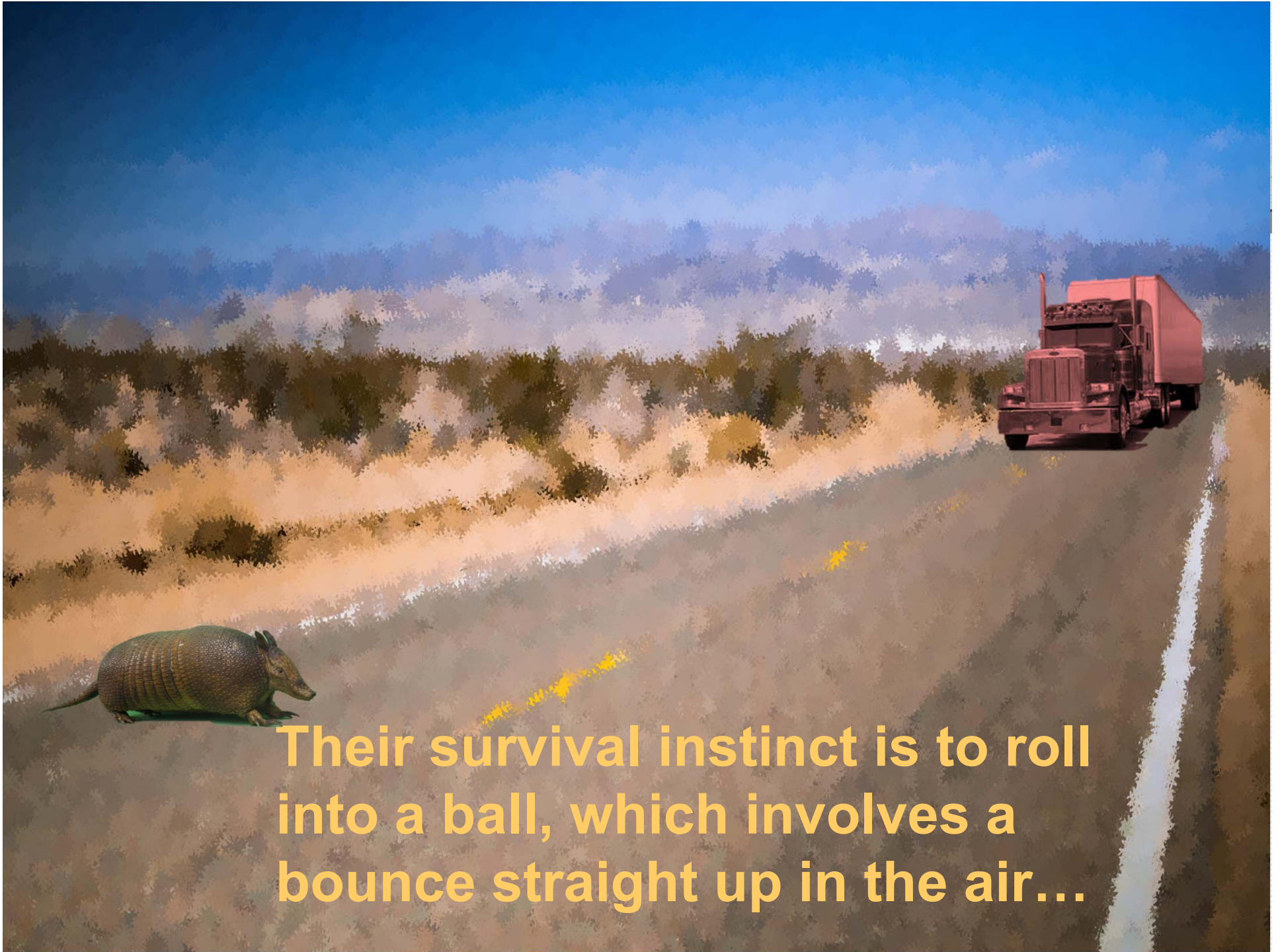
*As the DLPT approaches and they memorize as much vocab as possible, students experience **growing test anxiety, stress and exhaustion**—seriously degrading their ability to think clearly on the higher level DLPT passages.*

*A professional ‘terp and FL teacher, SrA X, failed the DLPT—partly because for 2 months before the test she couldn’t sleep—but also, as she said, “**on the job, you have to know every word.**” **Yes, but not on the test...***

The DLPT requires a lot of vocab “bottom up” to pass the lower levels; but for the higher levels, it requires “top down” recognition of contexts and “patterns of speech”. **Students and linguists who have to translate every word do not do as well on the test as those who understand contextually.**



The survival instinct of the armadillo is to roll into a ball, which involves a bounce straight up in the air... This has worked for millions of years.



Their survival instinct is to roll into a ball, which involves a bounce straight up in the air...

“The Armadillo Line” on the DLPT:

*Using strategies which worked on the first half of the test
...may turn you into roadkill on the second half.*

3 Ques will be on what was meant—read betw lines.

Strategy: watch for comparison / contrast , e.g.
a debate—language at this level is in “evaluative mode”.

2+ Strategy: read the questions slowly, carefully.

Strategy: not transl, but big picture first—it organizes the details.

Strategy: skim and scan for “key statement” (paragraph).

Questions will be on what was said—no reading between lines.

Strategy: don’t go with your first impression—wait for it.

2 Strategy: figuring out unknowns from context.

Strategy: skim and scan for “key statement” (sentence).

1+ Strategy: go with your first answer choice, don’t over-think.

Strategy: recognizing the words, understanding by translation.

1 Strategy: read the Q&A quickly to get right into the passage.





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