

A Blended Learning Solution For Developing Communicative Competence

Simon Buckland
Director of Curriculum Development
Wall Street Institute International

TESOL France annual colloquium:
Paris, November 7-8, 2008



Wall Street INSTITUTE
SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

Overview

1. **Wall Street Institute: company and student profile**
2. **An introduction to Blended Learning**
3. **The Wall Street Institute approach to Blended Learning**
4. **Some methodological considerations**
5. **Conclusions and discussion points**

WSI Student and Company Profile

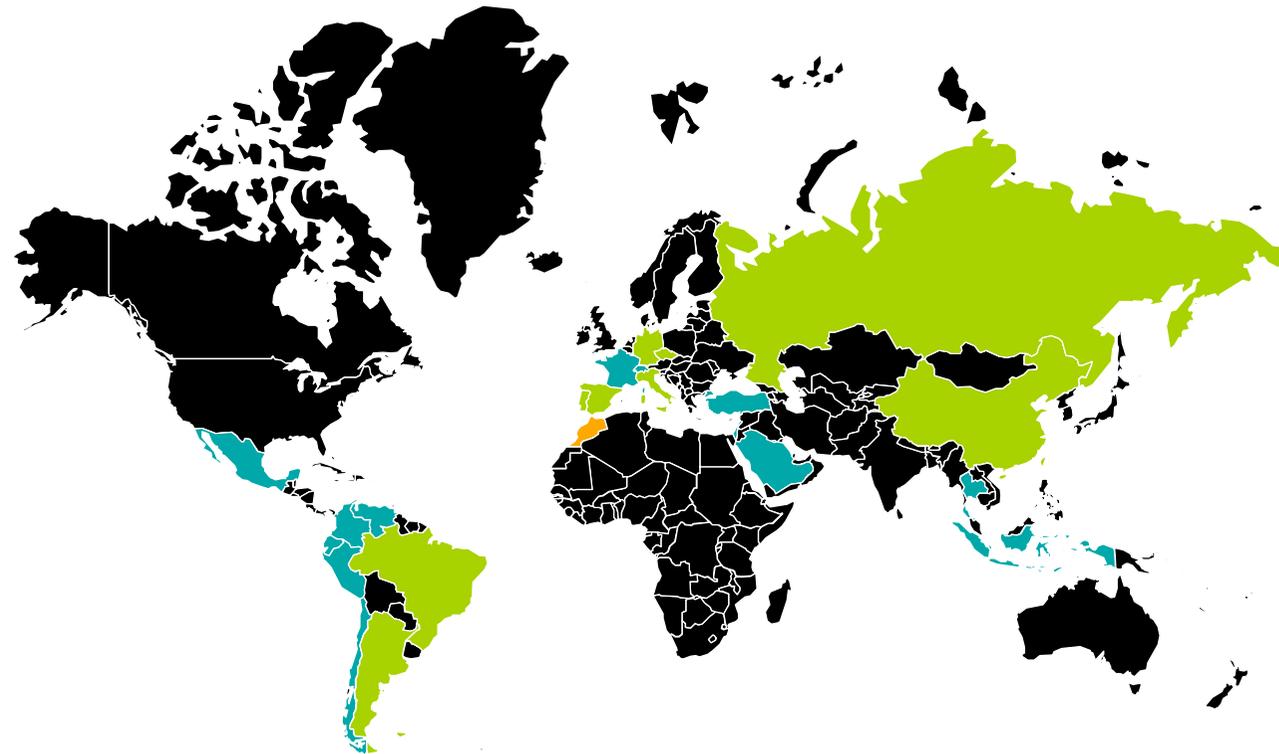
WSI Students

- In non-English-speaking countries
- Adult, mostly professional (aged 25-35)
- Studied English at school
- “Sub-functional” at communicating in spoken English
- Typically Lower Elementary-Lower Intermediate
- English for career/professional purposes
- Busy, other commitments (time-poor)

WSI Numbers

- **160,000+ students**
- **28 countries/territories**
- **402 centers (schools) – 62 in France**
- **Founded in 1972**
- **Blended learning method since 1981**
- **(Partially) computer-based learning since 1992**

WSI around the world



- Company Owned Locations
- Franchised Locations
- Launch Pending –Morocco

What WSI students are looking for

- **Spoken English**
- **Business/professional focus**
- **Significant boost to ability to communicate in English**
- **Contact with English speakers and English-speaking environment**
- **Flexible timetable**
- **Time-efficient and cost-effective**

An introduction to Blended Learning

An introduction to Blended Learning

Two views from training experts

- ... the use of two or more distinct methods ... blending classroom instruction with online instruction, access to a coach, simulations, on-the-job training, informal sessions ...
(Eliot Masie)
- Blended learning seems to mean ... some e-learning and some classroom learning. No one wants to spend that much on e-learning and people ... want to preserve what they have, so they have made up this nice name for not changing much ...
(Roger Schank)

An introduction to Blended Learning

Waves of technology in learning

- Writing (manuscripts/scrolls)
- Printing (textbooks)
- Broadcast media (distance learning)
- Consumer storage media (home learning)
- PC and CD-ROM (published e-learning)
- Internet (two-way, community e-learning)

An introduction to Blended Learning

Higher education – the first example

- **Self-instruction**
 - library
 - textbook
 - online
- **Classes with teachers**
 - lectures
 - tutorials
 - online (distance degrees)
- **Modular/credit system**
 - flexibility
 - variable length of course
 - distance degrees

An introduction to Blended Learning

Origins of Blended Learning

- **PC/CD-ROM:**
 - Back-up/practice/information on CD-ROM
 - Instructor-led sessions for assessment/trouble-shooting/activation + motivation
- **Internet:**
 - Same, plus creation of learner communities
 - User-created and -rated learning content
 - Online instructor sessions?

An introduction to Blended Learning

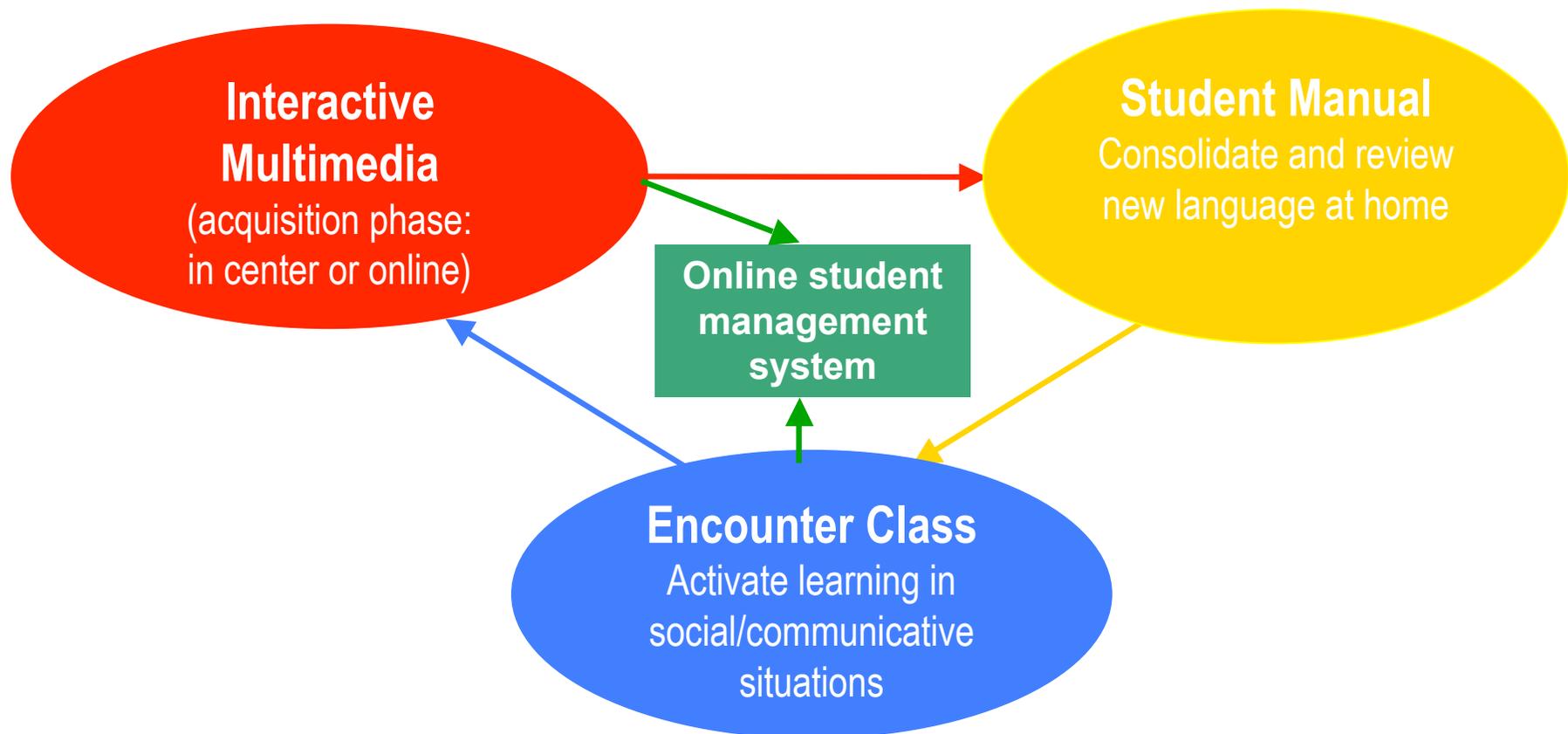
Benefits of Blended Learning

- **Efficient use of limited resources**
 - Routine practice, exploration, information acquisition in self-access
 - Instructor sessions for activation, feedback, assessment
 - Enable student to follow optimum learning path without training/preparation
- **Leverage technology**
 - Instruction, practice, simulation in online mode
 - Collaborative learning, learning communities
 - Track and monitor learner progress
 - Provide data-based performance tracking
- **Maintain the human and social dimension**
 - Pure e-learning becomes mechanical, disconnected, not “convivial”
 - Face-to-face social contact reinforces community, motivation (online?)
 - Instructor/learner contact identifies problems, disaffection

The Wall Street Institute approach to Blended Learning

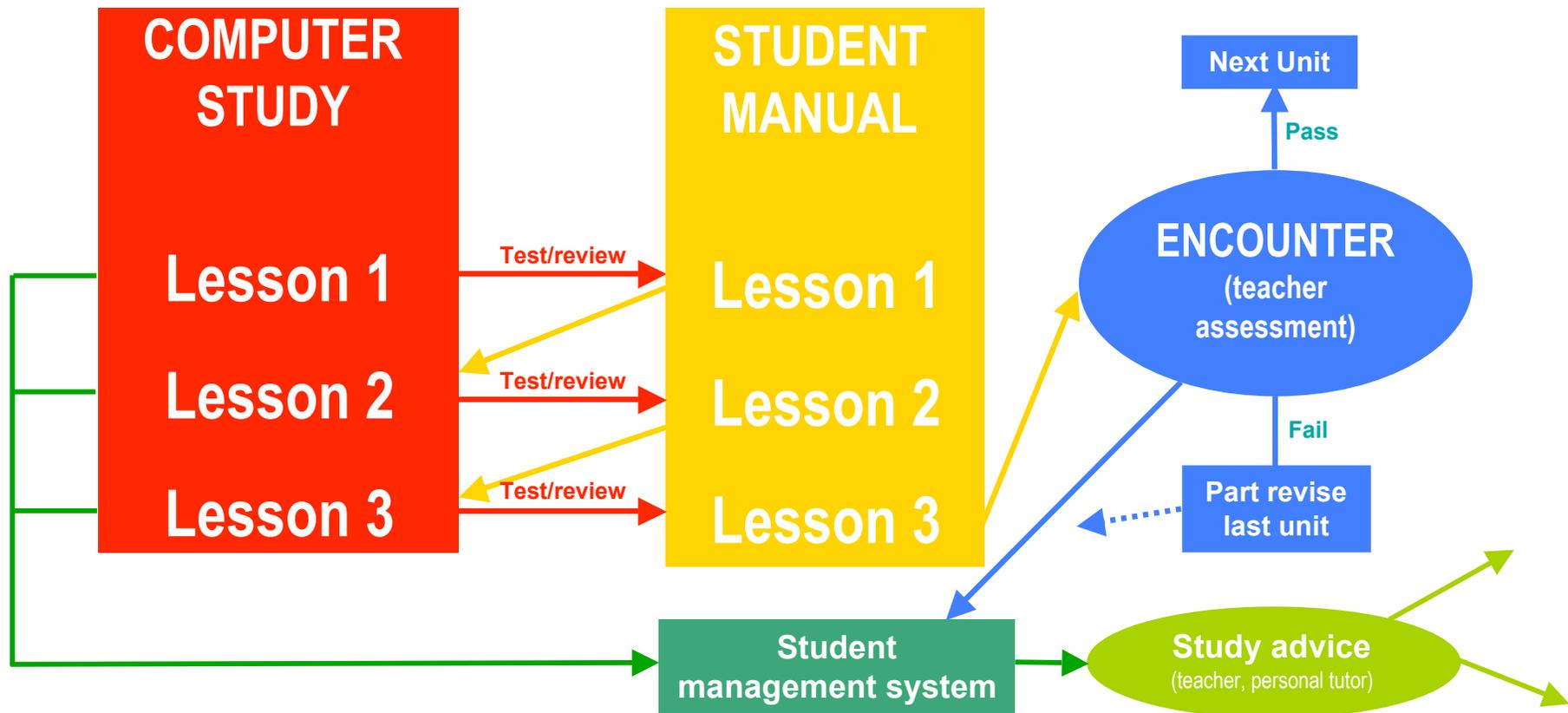
The WSI approach to Blended Learning

The Basic Formula



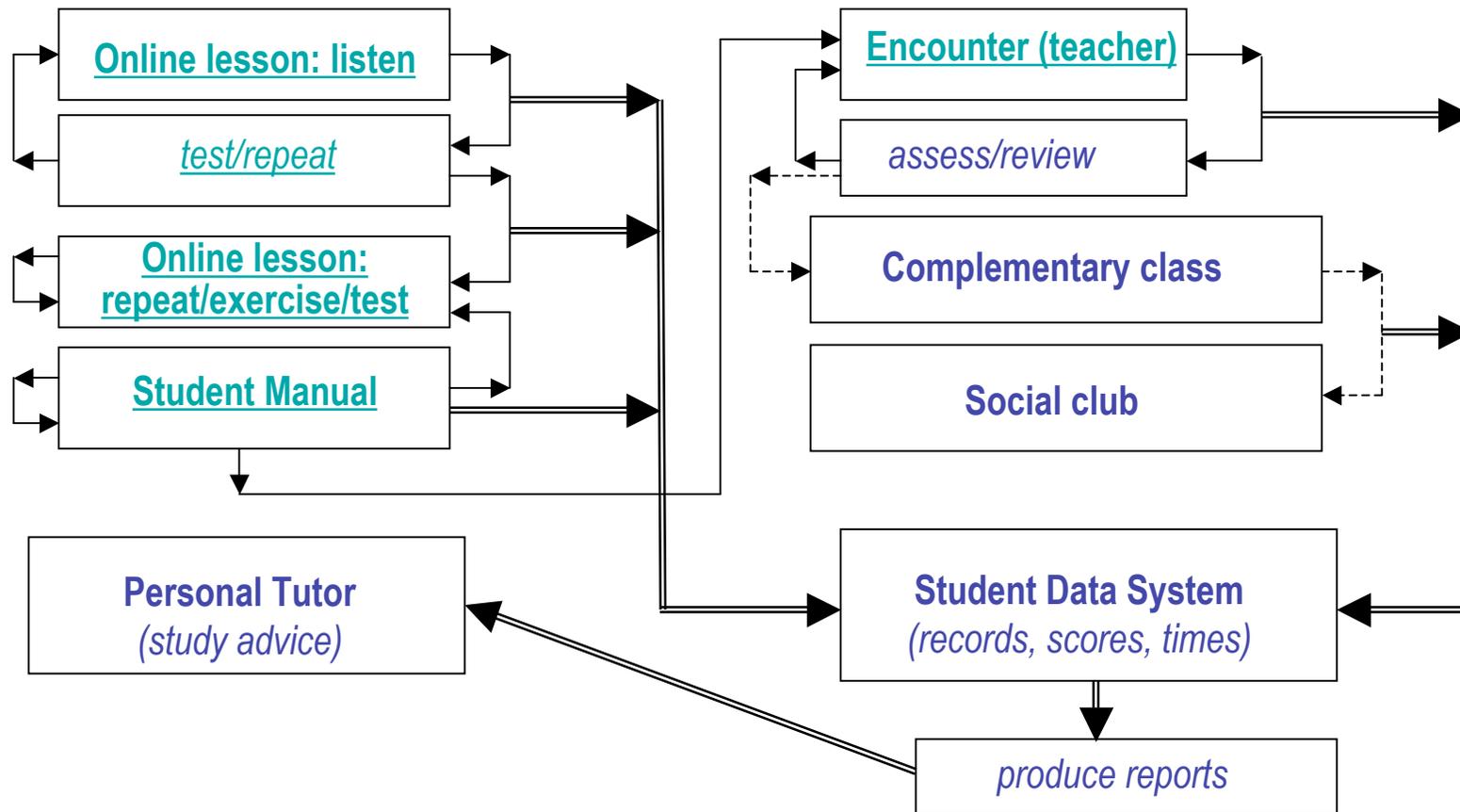
The WSI approach to Blended Learning

Integrated curriculum and assessment system



The WSI approach to Blended Learning

“Under the hood”



Theory and Methodology

Theory and methodology

*From Ellis: Principles of Instructed Language Learning
(Elsevier, 2004)*

- **If SLA is to offer teachers guidance there is a need to bite the bullet and proffer advice**
- **... [I present] my own provisional specifications in the form of principles.**
- **I hope ... that they will provide a basis for argument and for reflection.**

Theory and methodology

Ellis's "10 principles"

#1: ... formulaic expressions and rule-based competence

#2: ... focus predominantly on meaning

#3: ... also focus on form

#4: ... predominantly directed at ... implicit knowledge of the L2 while not neglecting explicit knowledge

#5: ... the learner's 'built-in syllabus'

#6: ... extensive L2 input

#7: ... opportunities for output

#8: ... opportunity to interact in the L2

#9: ... individual differences in learners

#10: In assessing ... examine free as well as controlled production

Theory and methodology

Methodological requirements

Formulaic expressions plus rule-based competence

Focus predominantly on meaning

Focus on form

Extensive input

Output + interaction

Cater for individual differences in learners

Opportunities to produce and correct output

Interaction and negotiation of meaning

Examine free as well as controlled production

Blended learning system

By-rote repetition + cognitively-oriented exercises

Online dramas, task-based teacher lessons

Cognitively-oriented exercises, printed manuals

50%+ listening in self-access

Small-group classes

Modular, learner-paced system

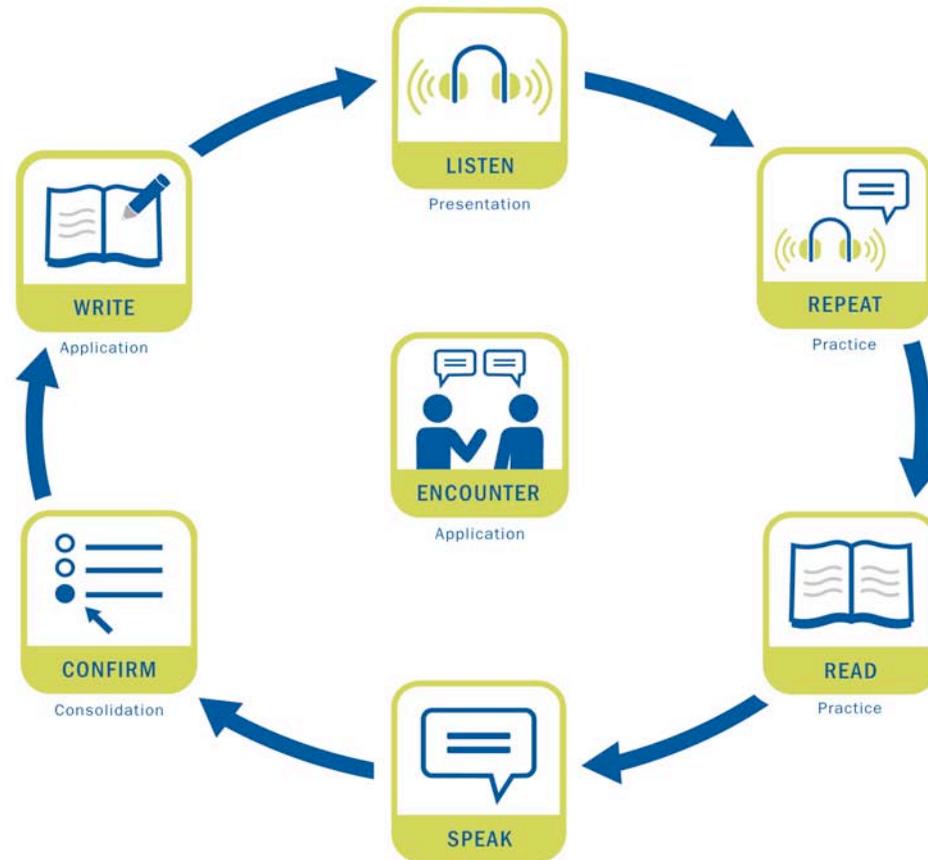
Variety of teacher-led classes

Online “role plays” and communicative activities in class

“Blended” assessment

Theory and Methodology

The WSI “Acquisition Cycle”



Conclusions and Discussion Points

Conclusions and Discussion Points

- You don't need €1 million
- Blended = integrated
- Enable learners to work away from the classroom
- Printed element is optional (though nice)
- Internet provides the best way in
- Develop learning community (online + offline)

Thank
you