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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS  
IN THE GREEK SECONDARY SCHOOL:  
A STUDY OF THEIR CLASSROOM PRACTICES  
AND THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS  
METHODOLOGICAL AND MATERIALS INNOVATION**

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## Abstract

The study set out to investigate the degree of implementation of a communicative learner-centred curriculum and textbooks in the Greek secondary school English language classroom. The aims of the research were: a) to investigate the Greek English language teachers' actual teaching practices and the degree to which they are in accordance with the philosophy and principles of the curriculum, and b) to examine the extent to which certain factors (i.e. teachers' understanding of, and attitudes towards, the communicative learner-centred approach, teachers' non-involvement in the innovation process, teachers' opinions of the textbooks, lack of systematic teacher training) may be associated with the teachers' classroom behaviour.

For the first part of the research, classroom observations of 14 Greek English language teachers, working in schools within and around the Athens area, were carried out. An observation scheme was developed focusing on the teachers' implementation of activities. The aim of the scheme is to describe the roles the teachers adopt in the classroom. Teacher roles were also investigated through an analysis of the teachers' linguistic behaviour. Transcripts of the 14 observed lessons were analysed in terms of teachers' error correcting practices (amount and types of learner errors corrected by teachers and the error treatments used) and their questioning practices (amount and types of questions asked by the teachers). For this latter focus a question typology derived from the data was developed.

Teachers' attitudes towards, and understanding of, the communicative learner-centred approach were investigated via a Likert type attitude scale developed for the purposes of this study and a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 28 closed-type items eliciting teachers' opinions of the textbooks and the teachers' guides, and reports of their teaching practices. The questionnaire and attitude scale was completed by an additional 87 teachers working in public secondary schools within and around the Athens area. Finally, as a means of achieving methodological triangulation, interviews with the observed teachers were carried out. The interviews focused on the teachers' knowledge of, and attitudes towards, the approach they have been asked to use.

The thesis is divided into 10 chapters. Chapter 1 sets the context of the study, its main objectives and research questions. Chapters 2 and 3 contain reviews of the literature relevant to the communicative approach and the implementation of curriculum innovations. The research questions, model of the study and a detailed account of the development of the research instruments employed in the study are provided in chapter 4. Chapters 5 to 9 deal with the implementation of the research instruments and the results of the data analysis. More specifically, chapter 5 deals with the analysis and findings of the teachers' error correcting practices, and chapter 6 with the findings of teachers' questioning practices. The results of the observation scheme analysis are dealt with in chapter 7. Chapter 8 focuses on the results of the attitude scale and questionnaire completed by the 14 teachers and chapter 9 on the results of the interviews. A summary of the study's main results, a critique of the various research methods employed in the study, as well as implications of the study's findings for practice are presented in chapter 10.

The findings of the classroom observations revealed a disparity between the principles of the curriculum and textbooks and their implementation in the classroom. The teachers tended to front the classroom and perform a restricted range of roles, overwhelmingly favouring the roles of transmitter, controller of students' language and evaluator. The analysis of teachers' linguistic behaviour corroborated these findings. The results of the attitude scale, questionnaire and interviews revealed that teachers, due to their lack of training, had a very limited understanding of the main principles of the approach they had been asked to implement. The teachers tended to translate innovatory concepts to conform to their existing theories of language and language teaching/learning.

The study has aimed to contribute to two areas where language teaching research is largely lacking: a) classroom implementation of a communicative approach in a foreign language teaching context and b) the investigation of language teachers' attitudes and their importance in understanding language teachers' classroom behaviour. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations for would-be curriculum developers working in contexts similar to the Greek one are provided in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

**To my loving husband George  
and my wonderful parents Nikos and Mary.**



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## CHAPTER 1

### *Setting The Scene*

#### 1: Introduction.

Since the beginning of this century a range of methods and approaches have paraded on the language teaching scene claiming to hold the key to the door of effective language learning and teaching. For the past two decades the star of this scene bears the name "communicative approach". Within a relatively short period of time, the communicative language teaching (henceforth CLT) movement has expanded and flourished, offering the language teaching profession answers to many of its problems. One need only look at the plethora of books and articles dedicated to promulgating CLT and defending its principal tenets or at the array of language textbooks organised and developed around its principles, to witness the impact of CLT. One need only look at the curriculum innovation projects set up in almost all countries where English is taught adopting and acknowledging this approach, to evidence that CLT is here to stay.

The value of any approach, however, can only be tested and asserted within the classroom. Books, articles and innovation projects, although essential for spreading the popularity of a new approach and theoretically exemplifying its benefits, do very little in guaranteeing its implementation. The proliferation of work on the theoretical principles of CLT has, unfortunately, not been matched by research into how these principles are actually manifested in classrooms claiming to be following a communicative approach (Brumfit & Mitchell 1988, Richards & Rodgers 1986, Spada 1987). The few small-scale studies (e.g. Burns 1990, Guthrie 1984, Long & Sato 1983, Nunan 1987a) that have been carried out, seem to suggest that communicative classrooms are rare, with most teachers

professing to be using a communicative approach but, in actual fact, following more traditional approaches. Research into why this disparity between theory and practice exists, why teachers who claim to be using a communicative approach or profess commitment to communicative principles, actually engage in practices more akin to structural approaches, has been virtually non-existent (Wagner 1991).

This study represents an attempt to contribute to the area where CLT is most lacking, i.e. research into classroom implementation of CLT. Set within the Greek secondary school English language teaching context, this study aims at describing and assessing the extent to which Greek English language teachers have come to terms with, and are implementing a curriculum and within that a series of textbooks based on principles of a communicative learner-centred approach, in their classrooms.

### **1.1.: The context, purpose of and motivation for the study.**

The value and benefits of foreign language learning have long been acknowledged by the Greek people. In the 1820's Latin and French were introduced as compulsory subjects in secondary schools. French continued to be the predominant foreign language of study until the 1950's when English started to gain ground and deprive French of its monopoly. Since the middle of the 20th century and until this day, English has received unprecedented popularity, constituting a second language in circles of tourism, commerce and science and being acknowledged as a *sine qua non* of a Greek person's educational armoury (Triantafillou 1986).

The accession of Greece in the EEC in 1981, naturally led to an increased demand for English. This demand was met by private language schools ("frontistiria") which have been flourishing during the past two decades. To date, there are approximately 4000 private language institutes throughout Greece

(2.500 located within and around the Athens area), attended by 900,000 students of English (Box & Peponi 1992). This incredibly high enrolment of English language learners (one should note that Greece has a population of approximately 10,000,000) is not due to the absence of E.L.T in public secondary schools. It is rather a reflection of the dissatisfaction and lack of faith in the quality (and quantity) of English language tuition provided in state schools (Chryshochoos 1990). The lack of resources, time constraints, large classes of mixed-ability students<sup>1</sup>, and absence of a recognised certificate of English present in public secondary schools, can only lead to an expansion of the private language institutes where all the aforementioned constraining factors do not exist.

In the state school sector, English is taught in 70% of secondary schools by 4.270 teachers who teach 660.000 students from 11-18 years old (Chryshochoos *ibid*). English is a compulsory subject taught for three hours a week in the first three years of the secondary school ("Gymnasium"), and the first year of the second level of the secondary school ("Lyceum"), and reduced to two hours a week in the second and third year of the Lyceum. Until the first half of the 1980's, the English language curriculum was structurally oriented, and teachers used a variety of English language textbooks, all published by foreign publishing companies. Each year the Ministry of Education would distribute a list of approved foreign language textbooks and reference books, from which the teachers could choose depending on their preferences and their students' needs. This practice often had the adverse effect of teachers getting accustomed to a particular textbook series and using it (and imposing it on students) year after year. Moreover, the fact that students were obliged to buy the English language textbooks went against one of the basic principles of the Greek Constitution which advocates free education for all and the distribution of textbooks to all Greek public school students free of charge.

In 1983, responding to the goals of the Council of Europe for cross-cultural communication and understanding and to the necessity of providing free textbooks to Greek foreign language learners, a group of experts consisting of University lecturers and foreign language teaching specialists was formed, after the initiative of the Vice-president of the Centre for Educational Research and In-service Teacher Training of the Ministry of Education (KEME), with the responsibility of:

- a) innovating the ELT curriculum for the secondary level of education,
- b) drawing up new guidelines for in-service teacher training,
- c) developing new testing and exam specifications, and
- d) producing a series of English language textbooks for the first three years of the secondary school.

The curriculum developed and put into effect in 1985, and in line with the Council of Europe's Project No 12 guidelines (Van Ek 1986), is based upon a functional-communicative approach to language teaching. A teacher training handbook (Dendrinis 1983) was developed for use in the only public in-service teacher training school in Greece (SELME), while the ELT Guide (Dendrinis 1985b) was also developed and distributed free to all state school teachers of English (see chapter 3, section 3.3.).

The textbooks for the first three years of secondary education were developed after three years of research and experimentation. The ELT committee, following the reconstructionist approach to curriculum innovation (and the one advocated by the Council of Europe, see Clark 1987), began with an investigation, identification and analysis of Greek language learners' communicative needs, proceeded to the construction of appropriate materials in

which 18 state school teachers were involved, and subsequently trialled the materials on 100 schools in various parts of Greece. Feedback obtained from the experimentation phase of the project, was used in the development of the final version of the textbooks called Taskway English 1,2,3. The Taskway series was distributed for implementation on a national level in 1987. The textbooks in line with the curriculum specifications, have been based upon principles of a communicative learner-centred approach. Their ultimate aim is the development of students' communicative competence and the promotion of students' intellectual and social development through the process of foreign language learning. The presence of the teacher in the capacity of "facilitator" and the affective and cognitive involvement of learners in the language learning process, are some of the basic features of the new textbooks (for a more detailed discussion of the nature/content of the textbooks and the process of their development and implementation see chapter 2 section 2.8. and chapter 3 section 3.3., respectively).

Prior to and after the implementation of the Taskway series no in-service teacher training, dealing specifically with the requirements and demands of the textbooks, was provided. Apart from occasional local workshops organised by foreign language advisors and an annual or bi-annual conference dealing with theoretical aspects of the communicative approach (in all of which attendance is optional), systematic in-service training was largely non-existent.

The new English language curriculum and accompanying textbooks for the Gymnasium, undoubtedly, brought about a challenging and significant change in the Greek secondary school ELT scene. The success of this project, or any innovation for that matter, ultimately depends on its users, i.e. the teachers and their ability to adjust to the new thinking and what it involves in practical terms (Dubin & Olshtain 1986). Effective implementation of this project, or of a communicative learner-centred approach in general, does not come about solely

as a result of use of communicative activities or "communicative" textbooks in the classroom, for teachers may mechanically implement an innovatory project without having any understanding of, or being committed to its underlying principles (Legutke & Thomas 1991). Teachers' positive attitudes to, and understanding of the underlying principles of an innovation, determine to a large extent its success and effective implementation (Fullan & Pomfret 1977, Kennedy 1987, Markee 1993, Trim 1985). Teachers' attitudes to the teaching/learning process, however, do not appear in a vacuum; they are ultimately context specific and influenced by the values and philosophy of the wider educational context of which they are a part (Barnes 1975, Freeman & Richards 1993, Kennedy *ibid*). Taking into account the fact that the Greek educational context is essentially teacher centred in which teachers are regarded as transmitters of knowledge and students as passive receivers (Gerou 1990a,b, Karastathi-Panagioti 1987), the "clash" between the values of the broader curriculum and those advocated by the new English language curriculum becomes evident. In such cases many authors (Breen 1983, Hutchinson & Klepac 1982, Tudor 1992, Widdowson 1990) have doubted whether the implementation of a communicative approach which favours learner autonomy and active student participation, is at all feasible and wise.

Leaving this apparent "curriculum clash" aside for a moment, questions as to the potential successful implementation of a communicative approach within the Greek secondary school context also arise when one takes into account the lack of large scale systematic in-service training before and after the implementation of the curriculum and textbooks. If intensive and on-going teacher development is regarded as a most effective means of ensuring success and continuity of an innovation by acquainting teachers with the meanings of the innovation and by minimising incompatibilities between the teachers' educational values and those advocated by the innovation (Brindley & Hood 1990, Brown 1980, White

1993), its lack in the Greek case, obviously creates more obstacles for effective implementation of a communicative learner-centred approach. Furthermore, the fact that the curriculum package (ELT curriculum and textbook series) was externally produced by a group of experts and imposed on teachers for implementation can only reduce the chances of the project's success. When teachers are not directly or indirectly involved in the process of decision-making or development of a curriculum, feelings of alienation, hostility and a lack of commitment towards the project are usually developed; the effects of these feelings are reflected in teachers' actual teaching practices (Clark 1987, Kennedy 1988, Widdowson 1993).

This brief look at the nature and process by which the Greek ELT curriculum package was introduced and implemented has highlighted the potential obstacles of its effective implementation; namely, a) the conflict of values between the wider educational context and the ELT curriculum, b) the minimal opportunities provided for teachers to come to terms with the underlying principles and practical implications of a communicative learner-centred approach and c) the teachers' lack of commitment that may ensue as a result of their non-involvement in the innovation process. Have these obstacles had their impact in the Greek English language classroom, or have the Greek English language teachers managed to overcome them and apply the principles of a communicative approach in their classroom practices? Questions such as these have provided the initial impetus for this study and have given rise to the study's research questions.

The aim of this study is to investigate the extent to which the Greek secondary school English language teachers are using the textbooks and applying the principles of a communicative learner-centred approach (as intended and advocated by the textbook developers) in their classroom practices. Classroom observations, therefore, constitute the backbone of this research. In order to

achieve this aim, three features of teachers' classroom behaviour were chosen as foci of observation and analysis: the teachers' role(s) in the classroom, teachers' error correcting practices and teachers' questioning behaviour (research questions 1a,b,c). In addition to this, acknowledging the vital importance of teachers' attitudes to, and understanding of, the principles of the curriculum for its effective implementation, the investigation of teachers' attitudes towards the communicative learner-centred approach and knowledge of its principles were chosen as a secondary focus of analysis. This focus was investigated via an attitude scale developed by myself for the purposes of this study and a questionnaire. The attitude scale and questionnaire were completed by the observed teachers and by 87 secondary school English language teachers teaching within the Athens area. Interviews were also carried out with the observed teachers, eliciting reports of their classroom practices and their opinions of the textbooks they are using and their philosophy (research questions 2a,b,c,d).

The specific research questions this study serves to answer are:

- 1) a) Have the teachers managed to develop and perform roles in the classroom consistent with those required for a communicative approach?
  - b) Are teachers' attitudes towards learner errors and their correction compatible with the principles of a communicative approach? Do teachers show priority in correcting those errors which impede communication, leaving the correction of formal errors (those that impede on the formal properties of the language) for those stages of the lesson which call for accurate reproduction of language? What roles do teachers' error correcting practices reflect?
  - c) Does the teachers' talk emphasise the promotion of students' communicative ability? Does the teachers' use of questions restrict/inhibit or promote the flow of genuine interaction in the classroom and the negotiation of meaning? What roles do teachers' questioning practices reflect?
- 2) a) What are the teachers' attitudes towards the communicative learner-centred approach?



- b) What are the teachers' opinions of the process of innovation and its end product (the textbook)?
- c) What are the teachers' opinions of the quality and quantity of their training?
- d) Do the teachers feel that the educational context inhibits them from using a communicative learner-centred approach?

The classroom observations involved 14 teachers teaching at various schools within the Athens area. The results of the observations have indicated that teachers' classroom practices are more compatible with audiolingual and grammar-translation approaches than communicative ones. The findings have revealed that the majority of teachers performed a restricted range of roles in the classroom; the roles of transmitter, language expert and evaluator being most dominant. Teachers tended to regard learner errors as impediments to effective language learning and were the dominant conversational partners in the classroom, overwhelmingly favouring questions whose answers were known beforehand by them. The attitude scale, questionnaires and especially the interviews proved essential in understanding the teachers' classroom behaviour. The results of these instruments revealed that teachers' knowledge of the communicative approach on a theoretical and practical level is incomplete. The Greek English language teachers have been asked (or forced) to implement an approach without possessing the necessary skills, attitudes and knowledge for its effective implementation.

### **1.2.: The structure of the thesis.**

The study is divided into 10 chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 contain reviews of the literature relevant to the communicative approach and implementation of curriculum innovations. More specifically, in chapter 2, a brief overview of the main changes the communicative learner-centred approach has brought to the sphere of language teaching and the main principles of the Greek EFL project is

given; the development and introduction of a range of new activities, the altered conception of the role of the teacher, the nature of learner error and approaches to its correction and the significance of providing opportunities for meaningful negotiated interaction in the classroom, are highlighted. This chapter concludes with a description of the nature and main principles of the Greek English language syllabus and textbooks. In chapter 3 the focus is on the discrepancy of CLT in theory and practice. The chapter draws on the literature on implementation of curriculum innovations to highlight those factors that have been proved (or suggested) to inhibit or promote the implementation of a new teaching approach in the classroom; a description of the process by which the Greek English language textbooks were developed and implemented closes this chapter. In chapter 4, the research questions, model of the study, justification of the research methods employed and a detailed account of the development of the various instruments used in the study, are provided. Chapters 5 to 9 deal with the implementation of the research instruments and the results of the data analysis. In particular, chapter 5 deals with the analysis and description of the 14 teachers' error correcting practices, while in chapter 6 a justification and explanation of the question typology developed for the purposes of this study is provided together with an account of teachers' questioning strategies and tendencies. The results of the observation scheme designed for this study and their implications for teacher roles are dealt with in chapter 7. Chapter 8 focuses on the implementation and analysis of the attitude scale and questionnaire data; the results of these two instruments are compared with the classrooms observation findings. Data analysis and results of the interviews with the observed teachers are given in chapter 9. Within this chapter, the interview results are also compared with the findings of the other research instruments of the study. Finally, in chapter 10, the concluding chapter, a critique of the exploratory and descriptive powers of the study's various research instruments and research foci is provided. Also, in this chapter, drawing on the results of the

questionnaire given to a larger sample of Greek teachers, a summary of the main findings of the thesis and their implications for curriculum innovation projects advocating a communicative approach are presented.

### **1.3.: Significance of the study.**

This study is not an evaluation of the Greek EFL project or teachers' classroom practices. Its character is primarily descriptive, exploratory and explanatory. The process of describing teachers' classroom practices will however, at times, involve certain evaluative comments. This is inevitable since teachers' practices are described in terms of their compatibility with the curriculum specifications and principles. Incompatibility, however, should not be interpreted as a sign of teacher incompetence or conservatism. Causes of this incompatibility lie not with the teachers as will be exemplified in this study.

Apart from providing a fairly representative picture of the English language teaching situation in Greece and the problems and constraints facing English language teachers in the Greek secondary school context, the study purports to contribute to the two areas of language teaching where research has been minimal, namely, classroom implementation of the communicative approach and the exploration and significance of language teachers' attitudes.

The study serves to provide further evidence of the gap that exists between the writings of academics and aspirations of curriculum developers, and classroom reality. The findings of the attitude scale, questionnaire and interviews have highlighted the possible causes of this gap as well as the factors which to a great extent determine the successful implementation of a communicative learner-centred approach; factors that should be seriously taken into account by innovators contemplating introducing a communicative approach in a context similar to the Greek one. In addition, the implementation of a variety of research instruments employed in the study has revealed the limitations and advantages of

each, as well as the significance of employing a multi research method approach in any investigation of language teachers and their practices.

It is believed (and hoped) that the findings of this research have served to exemplify the at times overwhelming demands the communicative approach makes on teachers, to question the wisdom of expecting teachers to jump on the bandwagon called communicative approach, and to emphasise the importance of looking at teachers educational beliefs in understanding classroom processes. Above all, what this research has shown is that no matter how carefully curricula are developed or thoroughly materials are designed, it is the teacher and how she/he chooses to exploit materials and use language in the classroom that determines whether a curriculum or a course is communicative.

#### **NOTE:**

1) The wide range of levels present in all secondary school Greek English language classrooms is due to the fact that the majority of Greek students begin learning English at much younger ages at various frontistiria. Since English language tuition, until recently, was not provided at the primary level, when students entered the secondary school some were already fluent in the target language while other students were complete beginners. In 1987, however, English was introduced experimentally (in 80 schools) in the last three years of primary education. By 1992, English language tuition in primary schools was introduced on a national level. It is believed that in the long term this practice will help minimise the problem of mixed-ability classes at the secondary school level.

## CHAPTER 2

### *The Communicative Learner-Centred Approach to Language Teaching: Basic Principles*

#### 2.1.: The Communicative Approach: Problems of definition

Writing a review of the basic principles and features of the communicative learner-centred approach is certainly not a straightforward task. To be more realistic, it is an impossible task (at least within the word limits of a chapter). Any attempt to define CLT would suffer the same imprecision or difficulties as would definitions of concepts such as "democracy" or "freedom". Despite the fact that some authors (e.g. Howatt 1984, with his "weak" and "strong" version of the communicative approach, or Das 1985, with his "language for communication" and "language through communication" versions of the communicative approach) have tried through their dichotomies to compartmentalise CLT and present it as a more or less uniform method, the reality is that no such neat distinctions exist (Johnson 1988, Richards & Rodgers 1986, Rodgers 1984). Although on the level of theory all versions of the communicative approach seem to share a common view of language, language learning and, to a certain extent, the ultimate objective of language learning (Brumfit 1988, Richards & Rodgers op.cit.), it has been on the level of syllabus design that communicative approaches seem to exhibit tremendous variation (Rodgers 1984, Johnson 1988, also see Yalden 1983, for a description of seven alternatives to syllabus design within the CLT movement).

In view of the difficulty of concisely describing the communicative approach, this chapter will focus on those features that are common to most versions of CLT and indeed to the version of the communicative approach

advocated by the authors of the Greek English language textbooks. As far as syllabus design is concerned, the type of syllabus employed for the Taskway English series will be the one receiving attention. It is acknowledged that the account of the main tenets of CLT provided in this chapter is far from exhaustive, focusing on those dimensions of CLT that have been highlighted as most prominent in the Greek EFL project rationale, and, thus, on those dimensions which have constituted the research foci of this study. This selective account was not due to lack of academic study but rather due to the need to keep the thesis within the prescribed word limits of a PhD thesis.

## **2.2.: The Communicative Learner-Centred Approach to Language**

### **Teaching: A brief overview.**

Like many other language teaching movements in the past, CLT arose in response to a dissatisfaction with existing state of affairs (Howatt 1984). The Grammar-Translation approach and, subsequently, Situational language teaching which prevailed in Britain until the 1960's and Audiolingualism in America, all of which were based on a structural view of language, were called into question after Chomsky's (1965) attack on structural linguistic theory as being unable to account for the uniqueness and creativity of individual utterances. Chomsky's work gave rise to a reconceptualisation of language and language behaviour, and stimulated the development of richer theories of language by sociolinguists, ethnographers and speech act theorists from both sides of the Atlantic (see Brumfit & Johnson 1979, Stern 1983 for a review of the work of discourse analysts and speech act theorists and their influence on CLT). In 1972, Hymes' notion of communicative competence (which is essentially a description of what a native speaker of a language ought to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community) prompted applied linguists to look at the importance of the sociolinguistic dimensions of language and, more specifically, the relation of language to the situations it is used. British scholars advocated that

the communicative potential of language, which had been completely ignored in current approaches to language teaching, should be the main focus of language teaching, while its aim should be the development of communicative proficiency and not only the repetition of and mastery of language structures (see Allwright 1979, Richards & Rodgers 1986).

After Hymes' almost revolutionary concept was developed, scholars set out to identify the competence(s) of native speakers and specify them in such a way that they could be incorporated into ELT syllabus design. Redefinitions and refinements of Hymes' original construct continued in an effort to make it instructionally tangible and relevant to language teaching. Canale & Swain (1980) in an effort to identify the dimensions of communicative competence, i.e. the competencies needed by the learner in order to be able to function appropriately, fluently and accurately in a language, divided the construct into 4 components: a) grammatical competence, b) discourse competence, c) sociolinguistic competence and d) strategic competence, i.e. the verbal and non-verbal strategies needed to compensate and overcome communication breakdown ( a similar classification has been proposed by Littlewood 1981, and Van Ek 1986). In sum, communicative competence became the motto and main objective of CLT, and, as Howatt (1988, p.19) asserts, "...arguably it gave CLT its name".

Scholars from the Council of Europe were of the first to take up these new theories of language and translate them in terms of syllabus design (Brumfit 1988). In an attempt to teach adults the major European languages, Wilkins (1972) advocated a functional view of language that could be used as a basis for syllabus design. He identified two types of meaning, notions and functions, and made these the basic organising principle of his notional syllabus. Structures were not neglected in the notional syllabus; structures were taught and learned insofar as they realised particular functions in particular situations. In sum, the

notional syllabus was concerned with meaningfulness, where "...language as a means of getting things done is given priority over linguistic knowledge itself" (Breen 1987a, p.89). Later on the Council of Europe used Wilkins' notional/functional categories to develop a first level communicative language teaching syllabus called the Threshold Level (Van Ek 1975). The Threshold syllabus attempted to translate the "buzz words" of the time (Howatt 1988, p.22), such as communicative competence, functions and notions, into a straightforward and concrete list of potential teaching points. Despite their limitations (see Breen 1987a, Candlin & Breen 1979, Widdowson 1980 for criticisms of the notional syllabus), ever since the notional and Threshold level syllabi numerous syllabi have been developed utilising functions as their organising principle and substituting drills and pattern practice with more meaningful communication activities (Howatt op. cit.).

Having been convinced of the need to focus on function as well as form with the ultimate aim of developing students' communicative competence, the language teaching profession gradually withdrew from its preoccupation with syllabus design and exhibited a renewed interest in language teaching procedures, in classroom methodology. This shift of attention was triggered by research on learner characteristics and learning styles (e.g. Naiman et al 1978), by developments in second language acquisition and interlanguage theory (see Krashen 1981, Richards 1974) and by the impact of humanistic psychology and humanistic approaches in language teaching. The language teaching profession rapidly became aware of the pivotal importance and role of the learner in the learning process; learners were seen as active creators and not passive recipients of the learning process, as contributors to the learning process (Allwright 1984a) who learn a language by being exposed to authentic language situations and by forming, testing and revising hypotheses concerning the workings of the language. Learners were found to follow their own internal syllabus and



"superimpose their own learning strategies and preferred ways of working upon classroom methodology"(Breen 1987a, p. 159, also see Allwright 1984b). According to Morley (1987, p.16) this shift of attention to the learner and the learning process constitutes "... the cornerstone, the single most fundamental change in perspectives on the nature of language and language learning in recent years"

This new orientation was also compounded by the concerns of humanistic psychology (Maslow 1970) and the teachings of humanistic education (Rogers 1983). Humanistic educators were concerned with the education of the whole individual "whose cognitive and affective parts are equally important...what educators using this approach have increasingly been paying attention to is the relationship between the teacher and the student, involving both content and process, thinking and feeling" (Yoshikawa 1982, p.392). These ideas soon had an impact on the language teaching profession and a number of humanistic approaches in language teaching were developed in the mid-70's mainly in the U.S. (see Legutke & Thomas 1991, Parkinson & Maher 1988, Richards & Rodgers 1986, for a discussion of these approaches and Maley 1984, for a critique).

Many humanistic principles have trickled down and become incorporated as pivotal features of communicative approaches. In brief, these are:

a) the creation of an unthreatening learning climate in which the learner is granted "space" (Allwright 1984a) to explore concepts and express his/her ideas, feelings and opinions (Legutke & Thomas 1991),

b) the need to break down the traditional authority structure of teacher/student relations and create a relationship of (relative) equality in the classroom with the teacher in the role of "facilitator" and the student in the role of active contributor to the learning process (Rivers 1983),

c) increasing the range of students' choice and decision-making (Allwright 1981, 1984a); students are encouraged to initiate communication and initiate and choose activities (Dubin & Olshtain 1986, Littlewood 1992, Taylor 1987),

d) creating activities which promote students' intellectual and emotional involvement and development (Breen & Candlin 1980, Medgyes 1986).

These principles, which have been responsible for creating a "learner-centred" dimension in CLT<sup>1</sup>, initially influenced methodologists from the Council of Europe who were the first to incorporate them within a communicative framework (see Legutke & Thomas 1991, Nunan 1988, Savignon 1991). Methodologists such as Dolle-Willemsen et al (1983), Dolle & Willems (1984), Edelhoff (1985a, 1986), Sheils (1988), Trim (1985), Van Ek (1985), Wilkins (1983), have been preoccupied with enhancing the centrality of the learner in the learning process and with the need to create responsible and autonomous language learners. Their ideas have found expression in the Council of Europe's Project No 12 (Van Ek 1986) document which has influenced many language teaching innovation projects in Europe and indeed the Greek one. The main aim of the project is to have students learn more than how to use a foreign language; the ultimate objective is to develop learners' awareness of what learning is and train them in how to go about learning a language (Van Ek 1985).

Clearly, since the early 1970's, the CLT movement has gone from strength to strength, bringing about a "paradigm shift" (Breen 1987a, Legutke & Thomas 1991) within the sphere of foreign language teaching and learning; it has not only brought about a shift of concerns but also a rethinking of the goals of foreign language instruction, the process of language teaching/learning, and the role of the teacher and learner within that process. Deriving from the work of many disciplines (sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, linguistics, philosophy and educational research), CLT has primarily been concerned with "the development

of functional language ability through learner participation in communicative events" (Savignon 1991, p.266).

The description of the evolution of CLT presented in this section has only managed to pay lipservice to the sources which have influenced, directly or indirectly, its development. The impact of the ESP movement (Munby 1978) or the contribution of Halliday's (1973) work in developing a functional description of language have gone unmentioned, while the work of sociolinguists, philosophers of language and psycholinguists and the ways in which they have contributed to the evolution and moulding of CLT has only been superficially treated. This ellipsis was not due to a lack of appreciation of the works of these influential figures, but to the impossibility of confining the major sources of such a significant pedagogical movement within the limits of one chapter. Indeed an in-depth description of CLT's development would deserve a thesis in its own right. A further description and survey of the main tenets of the communicative approach and the changes it has brought about in the language teaching scene can be found in the works of Brumfit 1988, Howatt 1984,1988, Johnson 1988, Legutke & Thomas 1991, Maley 1986, Morley 1987, Nattinger 1984, Richards & Rodgers 1986 and Quinn 1984.

The following sections of this chapter will focus on the main principles of the CLT movement, namely, the place of grammar in the communicative classroom, the nature of activities in CLT, the role of the teacher and learner in the classroom, the nature of learner errors and their correction and the importance of communication. These features selected for presentation do not of course constitute the totality of changes the communicative approach has brought to the language teaching scene; they were selected, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, on the basis of their prominence in the Greek EFL curriculum and their relevance to the purposes and research foci of this study.

### 2.3.: Form vs Meaning in Communicative Language Teaching:

In line with a communicative view of language, in which language is a system for the expression of meaning used primarily for the purpose of communication and interaction (see Richards & Rodgers 1986), CLT is rooted in the belief that genuine language use through the medium of the target language should be the primary focus of language teaching (Brumfit 1986). The stress is therefore on developing students' capacity to interact, interpret, express and negotiate meanings rather than on students' ability to memorise and practise forms in isolation (Dolle & Willems 1984, Kamaradivelu 1993). The dangers involved in a preoccupation with form and with accuracy are clearly spelled out by Brumfit (1979, p. 187) who argues : "To insist on a model of accuracy ...entails taking a number of risks: that inflexibility will be trained through too close a reference to a descriptive model, that adaptability and the ability to improvise will be neglected, that written forms will tend to dominate spoken forms and so on". According to Brumfit (ibid) a learner-centred approach would be attainable insofar as language teaching focused on fluency.

This shift of emphasis from form to meaning and real communication had created the impression that explicit or implicit focus on form in the classroom went against the very grain of CLT. As Savignon (1991, p.268) states, "discussions of CLT not infrequently lead to questions of grammatical or formal accuracy. The perceived displacement of attention to morphosyntactic features in learner expression in favour of a focus on meaning has led in some cases to the impression that grammar is not important, or that proponents of CLT favour learner self-expression without regard for form". Indeed this impression was well-founded and derived mainly from the work of two influential writers: Krashen (1982) and Prabhu (1987) both of whom advanced the theory that "acquisition" is fostered (for Krashen) or L2 knowledge is best learnt (for

Prabhu) when the learner is required to focus on meaning in the process of using language for communication. Both writers believed that no attempts should be made to control the forms students learn or to focus explicitly on grammar; grammar would be learnt automatically when the learner is engaged in communication. Although the ideas of Krashen and Prabhu were not empirically validated, they nevertheless did have an impact on the language teaching profession and resulted in grammar getting a "bad press" in the 1980's (Ellis 1993).

In recent years, however, there has been an increasing awareness of the need to teach grammar and of the importance of grammar in the development of communicative ability (see Brumfit & Mitchell 1988, Ellis 1993, Nunan 1989, Savignon 1991). This come-back of grammar has been facilitated by the findings of studies in the Canadian immersion context (see Lightbown & Spada 1990, White et al 1991) and other contexts (see for example Montgomery & Eisenstein 1985) as well as the results of various SLA studies (see Ellis 1988). In general, findings seem to suggest that knowledge of grammar, being an indispensable part of communicative competence, is essential for communication. Communication cannot exist without structure and therefore within the communicative classroom a balance between form and meaning focused activities should be strived for (Green & Hecht 1992, McDonough & Shaw 1993, Spada 1987, Spada & Lightbown 1993). If grammar is to return to the communicative classroom, it should not come however in the form of drills and pattern practice that were in vogue before the 70's. Writers (Ellis 1993, Harmer 1983, Littlewood 1981, Savignon 1991) have stressed the importance of providing learners with contextualised, imaginative and motivating grammar practice which relates to the students' needs and experiences. Others (Breen 1987a, Breen & Candlin 1980, Ellis 1993) have proposed the need to develop activities which focus on metacommunication, on talking about language and on

raising students' awareness of the workings of the language system and how they may be best learnt.

Grammar, therefore, is an important component of the communicative framework, insofar as it is perceived and taught as a means to an end and not an end in itself. The primary emphasis of language teaching is still on meaning (Allwright 1979), while the ultimate goal of CLT (and indeed of the Greek English language textbooks) still remains the development of students' ability to communicate and interact fluently and appropriately.

#### **2.4.: Types and features of activities in Communicative Language Teaching.**

The shift of emphasis from form to meaning brought about by CLT was accompanied naturally by the development of materials and activities that reflected and realised this shift. In order to achieve the goal of real-world language use, of negotiation of meaning and interaction, a vast range of activities have been developed incorporating characteristics considered essential in real communication.

The value and advantages of communicative activities, as seen by Littlewood (1981, p. 17-18), are: a) their capacity to provide whole-task practice, or "combinatorial" practice as Johnson (1988) terms it, whereby skills are practised in combination, b) their potential for motivating students and engaging their interests, c) their ability to allow natural language learning processes to take place, and d) their potential for improving personal relationships in the classroom and creating a supportive learning environment.

For activities to qualify as communicative, the following conditions must be met: a) the activity must provide students with a desire and need to communicate, b) the activity should provide students with a communicative purpose, i.e. an objective that should be achieved, c) the focus of the activity

must be on the message, on the content that is being communicated and not the form, d) the activity should not exert control over the language to be used, i.e. students' language output should be uncontrolled and not predetermined. (For a discussion of the requirements of communicative activities see Clark 1981, Clarke 1989, Ellis 1988, Harmer 1982,1983)

Other essential features communicative activities should encompass are:

a) Information gap: This has been characterised as a fundamental and central element in CLT theory (Clarke 1989, Morley 1987) and a prerequisite for real communication to take place (Ellis 1988, Harmer 1983, Johnson 1982). An information gap exists when one "conversation partner ...has knowledge relevant to the situation they are discussing which is unknown to the other partner" (Legutke & Thomas 1991, p. 96). In order to bridge the information gap, the two interactants must communicate and acquire the necessary information. Apart from encouraging the flow of genuine interaction in the classroom, information gap tasks create a condition of unpredictability (Johnson 1982), can be carried out independently of the teacher (Legutke & Thomas 1991) and provide the learner with the opportunity to practise and experiment with the language without worrying unduly about accuracy.

b) Task-dependency: A task encompassing this principle would necessitate the utilisation of information from another task for its execution (Johnson 1982). This principle is not a feature of isolated tasks but rather of the relationship between tasks which "simulates the kind of "accountability" required of the real-world language user" (Clarke 1989,p.77)

c) Authenticity: Authentic materials and activities have been regarded as the sine qua non of the language classroom (Clarke 1989). The principle of authenticity, it has been argued, should be applied to both materials and activities (i.e. language input and what the learner is asked to do with that input). Authentic materials have been defined as texts taken outside the arena of

language teaching, texts designed originally for native speakers (Harmer 1983) which have not been especially contrived or written for language learners (non-authentic) or slightly adapted or simplified lexically or syntactically in order to be accessible to language learners (semi-authentic). Authentic activities or "real-life" activities (Nunan 1989) ask the learners to perform behaviours that would be required of them in the real world. The main argument has been that authentic materials and activities have an intrinsic motivational value, acquaint students with the types of task and input they will be confronted with in the real world, create an aura of reality in the classroom and, ultimately, lead to more effective language learning.

Responding to the need to increase learner participation and involvement, to promote interaction and decrease teacher control and intervention, CLT has placed great emphasis on the use of pair/group work activities. Although not without their (managerial) constraints (see Harmer 1983), the attractions and potential value of pair/group work activities supersede the obstacles of their implementation. Apart from allowing more student participation than any teacher-fronted activity could ever hope to achieve (Wilkins 1983), pair/group work activities generate a significant amount of interaction among students (see Doughty & Pica 1986), encourage negotiation and cooperation between students and facilitate the creation of a supportive classroom atmosphere (Harmer 1983, also see Long & Porter 1985 for a pedagogical and psycholinguistic rationalisation of pair/group work). Since work is carried out to a large extent independently of the teacher, pair and small group work activities promote the development of accountability, autonomy and self-direction (Legutke & Thomas 1991, Van Ek 1986). Types of activity particularly suited for pair/group classroom organisation, constituting staple diets for communicative language learners, are role-plays and problem-solving activities (see Harmer 1983, Littlewood 1981, for a discussion of the types of role-play activities and their



implementation, and Legutke & Thomas 1991 for a discussion of problem-solving activities and their language learning benefits).

Unfortunately, limitations of space do not allow a full description of the types and features of activities compatible with communicative learner-centred objectives. Suffice it to say that the communicative approach has been responsible for the development of activities which aim, apart from encouraging communication and negotiated interaction among learners, to involve learners on a personal, emotional and intellectual level necessitating the use of students' personal experience and knowledge of the world. The practice of developing meaningful activities which aim to affectively involve students is seen as essential, since, as Breen & Candlin (1980, p. 91) assert, "affective involvement is both the driving force of learning and also the motivation behind much everyday communication".

#### **2.5.: The roles of the teacher and learner within a Communicative Approach.**

If one of the main goals of CLT is to create competent and fluent users of the language, students who can stand on their own two feet and participate, assert and express themselves within communicative situations, then communicative activities and materials are not enough. The classroom atmosphere and relationship between the teacher and students is the single most important variable in successfully implementing a communicative learner-centred approach (Dolle-Willemsen et al 1983, Edelhoff 1985a, Littlewood 1992, Parkinson & Maher 1988, Taylor 1987). In order for activities and materials to become communicative, in order for the objectives of the communicative learner-centred approach to be achieved, a restructuring of the traditional relationship between teacher and student, a redefinition of teacher/learner roles in the classroom is required. If the requirements of CLT are to be met, then the teacher "...will have to resign his position as the all-knowing, all directing guru outside and above the

group" (Dolle-Willemsen et al 1983); the teacher as instructor and authority, as repository of truth and wisdom is no longer adequate to describe the function and role of the teacher in the communicative classroom (Littlewood 1981, McDonough & Shaw 1993, Medgyes 1986). Within a communicative framework the teacher is expected to perform a variety of roles separately and simultaneously (only one of which is that of "instructor") depending on the students' needs, on the nature of the activity, its objectives and the stage of the lesson (Harmer 1983, Littlewood 1981,1982, Nunan 1989, Wright 1987).

Perhaps, the overriding and most essential function the teacher is to fulfil within the classroom is that of facilitator of learning and guide of the learning process (see Allwright 1984a, Breen & Candlin 1980, Dubin & Olshtain 1986, Edelhoff 1985a, Legutke & Thomas 1991, Littlewood 1981, 1982, Sheils 1988, Underhill 1989, Van Ek 1986, Willems 1984, Wright 1987). Within this role the teacher helps the students understand what learning entails, how to participate and be a member of a group. The teacher as facilitator encourages and helps learners to articulate their needs, feelings and desires (Legutke & Thomas 1991), encourages learners to take initiatives, to reflect on, become aware of and actively participate in the learning process. If the goals of CLT (as conceptualised by the Council of Europe) are to bring learners to the point where they can steer their own progress, find their own learning goals, assess their performance and ultimately become autonomous and responsible language learners (Edelhoff 1985a, Sheils 1988, Trim 1985), then this can only be done in a climate where the learner, his views and feelings, are respected and valued, where learners feel free to experiment with the language and where the teacher is open and willing to learn from his/her learners; in a climate where the teacher acts as a facilitator between the learners, their tasks and the input they are exposed to.

The teacher is also required to act as manager and organiser of the learning process (Breen & Candlin op.cit., Cranmer 1991, Legutke & Thomas op.cit., Littlewood op.cit., Richards & Rodgers 1986, Sheils op.cit.) As manager/organiser the teacher is responsible for choosing and sequencing activities which will progressively lead to the development of students' communicative competence, for selecting activities compatible with the learners' needs and interests which, at the same time, are manageable, meaningful and worthwhile to students. In his/her managerial role the teacher must also ensure that conditions for activity implementation (e.g. group work, pair work) have been met and that students have fully understood activity instructions (Harmer 1983).

Other roles the teacher must perform within a communicative learner-centred framework are mostly dependent on the type and objectives of the particular activity being carried out. As Nunan (1989,p.86) argues "...tasks can be analysed in terms of power and control. Drills and the like vest power in the teacher while communicative tasks such as role-plays, problem-solving tasks and simulations give much more control to the learner". As a result, during the execution of tasks in which particular grammatical forms are practised or presented, the teacher is expected to act as instructor, as language expert, controller, informant and corrector. With more open-ended tasks, however, where communication, expression and negotiation of meaning is the aim, the teacher's roles are radically altered. The teacher should initially act as "animateur" (Littlewood 1982), as organiser and motivator, creating the enabling conditions for the activity to take place, giving concise instructions and ensuring that students are fully aware of what they are expected to do and raising students' interest and curiosity. While the activity gets under way, the teacher is to step back, observe, monitor the students' strengths and weaknesses, diagnose the students' areas of difficulty and subsequently create remedial activities to overcome them. The teacher

should also act as a guide, supporter and advisor; "his presence in this capacity may be an important psychological support for many learners, especially for those who are slow to develop independence" (Littlewood 1981, p.19). Depending on the type of activity the teacher may also wish to take the role of co-communicator participating in the activity as learner. After the activity is over, the teacher should function as a feedback provider, discussing with students their performance on the task and eliciting students' opinions of it.

The demands placed on teachers seeking to achieve communicative objectives are undoubtedly great. CLT requires a teacher of great sophistication, a "chameleon" who knows when it is time to intervene and control and when to step back, be unobtrusive and let learning take place. Breaking down the traditional authority structure in the classroom, giving students more active roles and allowing them to take part in the decision-making, does not however imply that teachers abdicate their authority, responsibilities and control in the classroom. Learner-centred teaching does not mean that the teacher becomes less authoritative; she/he still has to create the conditions for learning to take place, manage activities and guide practice. As Widdowson (1987, p. 87) states "the learner...really exercises autonomy only within the limits set by the teacher. The learner is never really independent". The role of the teacher is as essential now as it has always been. "Communicative teachers", as Medgyes (1986, p.110) vividly describes, "are like supporting actors in a play, who have hardly any words to say, yet are the most crucial figures on whom the whole drama hinges".

## **2.6.: The nature and correction of learner error in CLT.**

One of the most significant changes accompanying the advent of CLT has been a change in our perceptions of the nature of learner error and its correction. In contrast with the Audiolingual approach which (based on the contrastive analysis hypothesis) regarded learner errors as signs of imperfect learning and

teaching, features which needed to be rectified the moment they occurred, CLT, theoretically underpinned by the error analysis hypothesis and the concept of interlanguage, has adopted a radically different stance toward learner error and its correction. (For a discussion of error analysis and interlanguage theory see Courchene 1980, Ellis 1990, Richards 1974).

According to this view of learner language, learner errors are natural and inevitable aspects of the learning process, signs of the learner's struggle to internalise the language (Corder 1974); as such, they should be expected, tolerated and welcomed. As far as correction of learner error is concerned, although "there is no definitive study showing that error treatment promotes acquisition" (Ellis 1990, p.73, also see Pica 1991, VanPatten 1988), the general contention seems to be that learner errors should be judiciously and selectively reacted to (Burt & Kiparsky 1974, Cohen 1975, Hendrickson 1987, Holley & King 1974, Hughes & Lascaratou 1982, Krahnke & Christison 1983), the reason being, as Chaudron (1987, p. 19-20) argues, that "the information available in feedback allows learners to confirm, disconfirm and possibly modify the hypothetical "transitional" rules of their developing grammar".

CLT has embraced the assertions of interlanguage theory and has advocated a sophisticated approach towards the treatment of error. Without abandoning the correction of errors completely, communicative language teachers are asked to correct errors during the phases of the lesson when linguistic input is manipulated, discussed and practised. During the execution of fluency based activities, error correction should, to a great extent, be avoided, and errors should be noted for future reference. Failure to do so would distract the learners from the purpose and completion of the task, would inhibit students' future attempts at communication and would create a sense of hopelessness and inadequacy amongst learners (Andrews 1983, Dolle-Willemsen et al 1983, Hendrickson 1987, Littlewood 1981,1992, Murphy 1986, Norrish 1983,

Willems 1984). Rivers (1983, p.52) sums up the teacher's stance towards error correction by saying: "it is during production (or pseudo-communication) practice that immediate corrections should be made. It is then that we should make students conscious of possible errors and so familiarise them with acceptable sequence that they are able to monitor their own production and work towards its improvement in spontaneous interaction. In interaction practice we are trying to develop an attitude of innovation and experimentation with the new language. Nothing is more dampening of enthusiasm and effort than constant correction when students are trying to express their own ideas within the limitations of newly acquired knowledge of the language" .

Avoiding error correction during the phases of the lesson that focus on communication does not however mean that the teacher refrains from error correction and lets the learners do the talking "come what may". Many authors have stressed the need to rectify those errors that impede intelligibility and may lead to communication breakdown. Burt & Kiparsky (1974) have suggested that most probable candidates for communication breakdown are "global" errors which affect sentence organisation and render it incomprehensible (e.g. inadequate lexical knowledge, wrong word order, misplaced and wrong connectors). Global errors as opposed to "local" errors (errors affecting single elements in a sentence, e.g. lack of subject verb agreement, misuse of pronouns etc.) should be the ones for which correction may be needed during communication activities (also see Chaudron 1987, 1988, Cohen 1975, Ellis 1990, Hendrickson 1987).

Questions in communicative methodology have also concerned whether responsibility for correction should always lie within the realm of the teacher. Results from studies in second language classrooms (see Allwright & Bailey 1991, Chaudron *op.cit.*, Cohen *op.cit.*, Hendrickson *op.cit.* for reviews) have shown that learners are equally effective, if not more so, in correcting themselves

and their peers. Bruton & Samuda's (1980) study, for example, showed that during unsupervised group work, learners were able to correct their classmates, did not miscorrect in the majority of cases, and tended to employ strategies of correction similar to those used by teachers. It has been proposed therefore (Horner 1988, Murphy 1986), that teacher initiated correction should be the last resort and be used only in the case where learners are unable to provide the correction. By sharing the responsibility for correction with the learner, apart from its language learning benefits i.e. avoiding, as Horner (1988,p.216) terms the "in-the-ear-and-out-the-mouth-without-anything-in-between-effect" (also see Krahnke & Christison 1983, and Long 1977, for the adverse effects of teacher correction) and apart from its resemblance to correction (or repair) in natural conversations (see Van Lier 1988), also allows for a more learner-centred classroom. As Ellis (1988,p. 214) argues, the provision of feedback is closely related to role choice; by giving the opportunity for learners to correct, the teachers does not act as a "knower", as a "language expert", but rather treats the learners as equal conversational partners and ultimately develops the learners' ability to monitor their own learning process and become responsible and independent ( see also Allwright 1981, Horner op.cit., Murphy op.cit.).

### **2.7.: Communication in the classroom and ways of promoting it.**

Genuine communication and meaningful interaction are the lifeblood of CLT. It is only when learners are given extensive opportunities to engage in realistic communication, that is contextually rich and meaningful to them, that the objectives of language teaching (the development of communicative competence) may have chances to be achieved. Bringing the characteristics of genuine communication into the classroom is not a simple feat. Communication involves the exchange of unknown information, negotiation of meaning, topic nomination by more than one speaker and the right of the participant to decide whether to contribute or not in the interaction (Nunan 1987a). It involves, above

all, an information gap and a genuine need and purpose to communicate. Since foreign language classrooms are contrived contexts where participants gather for another purpose, to learn the foreign language, real communicative intentions do not naturally arise; it therefore depends on the imagination, ingenuity and willingness of the teacher to create a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to communication, to create a context where students feel free to take communicative initiatives and experiment with the language and are motivated to do so (Dolle & Willems 1984, Littlewood 1992, Medgyes 1986, Taylor 1987, Wilkins 1983). As Dolle & Willems (ibid, p. 147) put it : "if a foreign language teacher is unwilling to invest himself in real communication with his learners he can never hope to be a successful "communicative" teacher".

One of the most powerful tools for obtaining new unknown information, for initiating and sustaining conversation has been the use of questions. Even in conversations between native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS), questions were found to facilitate, compel and sustain participation of NNS (Long 1981). Despite the potential communicative usefulness of questions, research in second language classrooms has shown that the majority of questions asked in classrooms do not serve the same purpose as those asked in normal discourse (Long & Sato 1983, Nunan 1987a, Pica & Long 1986, White & Lightbown 1984). Second language teachers seem to rely almost exclusively on the use of so-called "display" questions to elicit contributions from their students. As their name implies, display questions require the students to display their knowledge by providing information already known to the teacher. Such questions are excellent devices for testing students' knowledge and for controlling the topic and content of the discourse but by definition make impossible the exchange of new unknown (to both participants) information and the negotiation of meaning since the teacher knows beforehand what the student is going to say (Long & Crookes 1987). Thus, if creating opportunities for real



communication to arise is the aim, the "function of teachers' questions..should be to imitate communication and to inspire and support the learners to make use of their interlanguage systems in various communicative situations. The questions should trigger a creative production of utterances..." (Hakansson & Lindberg 1988, p.74). Questions which resemble those asked in normal discourse (outside the classroom) and which allow for the exchange of new unknown information have been termed "referential" (Long & Sato 1983). Referential questions not only allow for more meaningful interaction between the teacher and students since, when asked, the teacher does not know the answer beforehand (i.e. there is a genuine information gap), but, perhaps most importantly, have been found to promote greater learner output. Brock (1986) found that the use of referential questions elicited student responses that were twice as long and syntactically more complex than their responses to display questions; students also took a greater number of speaking turns when responding to referential questions. It appears thus, that the use of referential questions within the classroom would allow for greater student verbal production and would promote uncontrolled authentic language use making the classroom more realistic and conducive to communication.

Other types of questions that give rise to meaningful negotiated interaction and assist in learners' comprehension of input and production of language, have been various types of echoic questions firstly identified by Long & Sato (1983), namely, comprehension checks, confirmation checks and clarification requests (see chapter 6, section 6.2.b. for a definition and discussion of these question types). The use of such questions serve to modify the interactional structure of the discourse thereby facilitating both participants' attempts to reach a mutual understanding. In conversations between NS and NNS, the use of restructuring moves on the part of the NNS was found to assist the learners' understanding of linguistic material not within their L2 repertoire, while their use by NS was

found to lead to greater production of language on the part of learners in their attempt to make their unclear utterances more meaningful to their interlocutors (see Long & Sato 1983, Pica 1987, Pica et al 1987, Pica & Long 1986). Conversational adjustments in the classroom would provide evidence of a two-way flow of information (between the teacher and students and between students) where both teacher and learner have unknown information to exchange and strive to understand each other and be understood, thus promoting communicative language use in the classroom (Kamaradivelu 1993).

However, the use of referential questions and restructuring moves in the classroom is to a great extent dependent on the role the teacher wishes to adopt and the type of relationship that exists between teacher and students. As Pica (1987, p.17) points out, "the unequal status relationship between teacher and students which shapes and is shaped by most classroom activities provides minimal opportunity for the restructuring of social interaction claimed to be necessary for SLA". When the teacher chooses to act as "transmitter", as language expert, as evaluator, the questions asked will mainly serve to evaluate students and provide controlled practice in language production. Since answers to these questions are predetermined by the teacher, no need arises for the use of interactional modifications since the teacher always knows what the student is going or trying to say (Pica & Long 1986). Moreover, an unequal status relationship in the classroom where the teacher is seen as authority and the student is reduced to a passive client role, makes almost impossible the use of interactional moves on part of the learner; such a tactic may be perceived as a challenge to the teacher's authority (Pica op.cit.).

It is clear that the use of referential questions and restructuring moves in the classroom necessitates a realignment of the traditional roles of teacher and student, a relationship in which teacher and student are seen as equal conversational partners who are genuinely interested in what each has to say,

and a classroom context which encourages student initiative and oral-interaction between participants. Within such a context, asking questions does not become the teacher's sole prerogative, but is a practice taken up by all participants in their attempt to clarify and confirm meaning (Pica et al 1987).

## **2.8.: The Greek English Language textbooks; objectives and design.**

The revision of the Greek English language curriculum (which took place in 1985) and the development of a series of textbooks for the first three years of secondary education (completed and distributed on a national level in 1987), was triggered, *inter alia* (see chapter 3, section 3.2.), by the need to achieve the objectives and goals of the Council of Europe for cross-cultural understanding and international communication. Based on a two-year research project to determine the needs of the students and teachers in the school setting and the terminal needs of the Greek EFL learner, culturally appropriate materials were developed to meet those needs. In line with the guidelines of the Council of Europe Project No 12 (Van Ek 1986), the overriding goal of the curriculum and materials is the development of the students' communicative competence and their intellectual and social development through the process of language learning (Dendrinos 1985a).

The curriculum and materials advocate a communicative learner-centred approach which is both ends and means focused. The learner is expected to develop his linguistic repertoire, sociolinguistic skills, and interactive strategies in order to express the meanings he wishes to share. There is also, however, a concern for the process of learning itself; as the leader of the project asserts, the materials "aim at positive human relationships, cooperation, empathy and understanding among people of different age, sex, socioeconomic, educational and ethnic background" (Dendrinos 1988, p.3). The textbooks also strive to have students discover knowledge, make choices and actively participate in the learning process rather than passively accepting and digesting new information.

Within the teacher's guides (Dendrinos 1985b, 1987) teachers are urged to make learners the centre of attention by encouraging them to take initiatives, providing opportunities for learners to practise authentic spontaneous communication in authentic contexts and actively involving them in the learning process. The teachers are advised to be "facilitators, helpers, organisers, managers and supporters; the position of teacher as authority in the classroom must be abandoned" (Dendrinos 1985b, p.11).

According to the authors of the textbooks, the materials aim to exploit the potential of a task-based approach to foreign language teaching (Dendrinos 1988, p.2). Although there have been many interpretations of task-based approaches (Breen 1987a, Long 1985, Long & Crookes 1992, Nunan 1991a, Prabhu 1987), the materials do seem to share some of the characteristics underlying this approach (as advocated by Long & Crookes *op.cit.*). The point from which the Greek ELT materials diverge from the task-based approach is in terms of syllabus design and organisation. Within a task-based syllabus, it is the task and not some linguistic unit that constitutes the basic unit of analysis of the syllabus (see Long *op.cit.*, Long & Crookes *op.cit.* for an extensive discussion of the structure of a task-based syllabus). In the Greek materials project, however, although the textbook units are composed of a series of tasks, the syllabus has been graded and organised in terms of structures (primarily) and functions. Within the Taskway series, therefore, it is the particular linguistic or functional unit that gives rise to the various tasks and not vice versa. The areas in which the materials do resemble a task-based approach are:

- 1) In a task-based approach there is a balance between form-focused or "language learning" (Breen 1987a) activities and communication activities. Form and the provision of opportunities for students to focus on the language are considered essential aspects in learning a language. The Greek materials have tried to achieve this balance (form-focused activities do however outnumber

more meaning focused ones). Although grammar is not explicitly presented ( i.e. in the form of table or language summaries), it is (implicitly) presented and practised through activities which are mainly cognitively focused and require the learners to perform some task (i.e. listen to a piece of information and fill in a table, fill in a questionnaire etc.). Opportunities for explicit grammar practice and metacommunication are provided at the end of each unit through a series of exercises consolidating the main points and/or functions covered in the unit.

2) The tasks within the three textbooks, in their majority, encompass a variety of communicative features. The principles of information gap, information transfer and task dependency are the most recurring features of tasks. Most tasks in the units do make necessary the students' imagination, prior knowledge and personal experiences for their execution. The materials also exhibit a concern for collaborative work and negotiation between learners; pair/group work activities are a recurring feature of all three textbooks, constituting a staple diet for third year learners (on average 8 pair work activities per unit). Role plays are also common, occurring with the same frequency throughout the three textbooks (on average 1-2 per unit); although the social parameters of the situation are usually given in detail, role plays in the series do tend to become quite controlled judging from the explicit cues given to students. As far as authenticity is concerned, the authenticity of the materials (texts-input) is quite dubious. Texts are in their majority semi-authentic, although efforts have been made to present texts within an authentic context. Activities that provide opportunities for uncontrolled communication are unfortunately not abundant in the materials. The majority of tasks in the units are relatively open-ended exerting a certain amount of linguistic control over students' output (i.e.. "focused communication" tasks, see Nobuyoshi & Ellis 1993). Group work activities (which appear more frequently as the level of students increases, i.e. from an average of 1-2 per unit in the first year textbook to an average of 4 in the third

year textbook) are the most promising in terms of unpredictable and uncontrolled student output. The themes and topics around which tasks revolve, have, according to the authors of the textbook, been derived from the results of the experimental implementation of the materials. The topics of the first year textbook concern issues readily identified with learners of that age (e.g. family, people at work, food, preferences and habits), the themes of the second year textbook concern issues of wider social concern (e.g. war and peace, historic events, future people and society), while in the third year textbook, topics concern mainly social incidents (e.g. dining out, finding a job, education and schooling, ecological problems). Another feature of the materials worth mentioning is the regular occurrence of so-called EXTRA activities in the units. These activities have been included as a means of promoting autonomy in the classrooms and catering for the diversity of student levels within each class. EXTRA activities are designed for the slower and the more advanced learner by being of two kinds: communicatively easy and communicatively difficult. The former provide extended practice in new language features while the latter provide additional opportunities for more advanced communicative practice. EXTRA tasks, as mentioned in the teachers' guide, are not compulsory. The decision to use them or not depends on the judgement of the teacher and the composition of the class.

The materials, in general, do succeed in encompassing many of the objectives of the Greek ELT curriculum. The majority of tasks are designed in such a way as to stimulate students' interest and involve them at an emotional and intellectual level. Although opportunities for uncontrolled, unpredictable student production are not as many as one would expect, the regular occurrence of pair/group work activities can be seen as a kind of compensation for this lack. The materials, therefore, appear to be potentially communicative. Whether they will be used

communicatively is another matter; this will depend on the teacher (and learners) and how she/he chooses to exploit them in the classroom.

#### NOTE:

1) As is the case with many aspects of CLT, the notion of learner-centredness has been open to many interpretations (see Tudor 1993 for a discussion and Prabhu 1985). The perspective adopted here has been the one advocated by the Council of Europe (Van Ek 1986, Girard & Trim 1988), where learner autonomy and self direction together with the need to develop and involve learners' affective and intellectual resources in the process of learning is viewed as one of the most important objectives of language learning. Another well known interpretation of learner-centredness has been the one advocated primarily by Nunan (1987b, 1988, also see Tudor 1992, and Parkinson & O'Sullivan 1990, for an example of such an approach in the Australian context), in which the process of curriculum design is seen as a negotiated operation between teacher and students; the basic assumption behind this perspective is that since it is impossible to teach learners everything they need to know in class, given the time constraints, it would be much more effective and pedagogically useful to teach learners those aspects of the language which they see as most relevant and urgently required (Nunan 1988). Thus, decisions regarding the content, activities and methodology of a specific course are arrived at via consultation between teacher and learners.

## CHAPTER 3

### *Factors Affecting Classroom Implementation of Innovation Projects*

#### **3.1: The teacher: the link between theory and practice.**

This chapter focuses on the teacher (the reasons for this focus can be found in the methodology chapter, section 4.2) and why and how innovatory proposals or teaching approaches are implemented (or not) in the classroom. The literature review thus relates to those factors that have been suggested to influence the teachers' implementation or rejection of an innovation. These factors have constituted the secondary research foci of this study and have been incorporated for investigation in the research instruments of the study (attitude scale, questionnaire and interview schedule).

As was argued in the previous chapter the "new" English language teaching materials (Taskway English 1, 2, 3), having been structured around the principles of the communicative learner-centred approach, attempt to encourage learners in the expression, interpretation and negotiation of their own meanings. The activities, focusing either on formal properties of the language or on communicative functions, ultimately aim (in the words of the authors) to develop students' communicative competence. Communicative materials, however, do not invariably give rise to communicative language teaching. As Andrews (1983, p.132) points out, materials can only be labelled "potentially communicative" since it is the teachers' use of them in the classroom that determines whether materials are communicative or not. Therefore, whatever the merits of the materials or a syllabus, it is only in the classroom and depending on what teachers do with these materials that their effectiveness can be tested and proved (Allwright 1981, Clark 1987, Dubin & Olshtain 1986). As Stenhouse (1980,



p.41) asserts, "curricula are hypothetical procedures testable only in classrooms".

What actually happens in classrooms where teachers are using communicative materials or profess to be using a communicative approach? The very little research that has been done in this area suggests that despite materials and the use of communicative activities (pair/group work, information gap activities etc.) and teachers' professed commitment to the communicative approach, evidence of using the foreign language for communicative purposes in classrooms is virtually non-existent. According to Kamaradivelu (1993) communicative classrooms are rare; the reason for this, as Wagner (1991, p.289) asserts, is that "teachers do not follow well defined methods but use a variety of teaching techniques", while according to Burns (1990) the gap between theory and practice is due to teachers' lack of, or incomplete understanding of the nature of communication and the principles of the communicative approach.

The gap between theory and practice or evidence of the misapplication of communicative activities and materials can be found in a number of studies. Burns (1990), for instance, by analysing the patterns of classroom interaction of a teacher committed to a communicative approach, found that "it is she who is in control of the classroom input"(p.45) while the interaction as a whole consisted of successive I-R-F (see Sinclair & Coulthard 1975) exchanges (similar results are reported in Dinsmore 1985, Nunan 1987a). Mitchell (1988a) investigated a large number of French language teachers in Scottish secondary schools, all professing a commitment to a communicative approach. After interviewing them, Mitchell (ibid.) found that the teachers had very confused and restricted notions of basic principles of the communicative approach and that in reality many still adhered to traditional language learning beliefs. Observations of the teachers' implementation of activities and analysis of their language use, revealed that communicative foreign language use was not a core element of their teaching

practices. A similar conclusion was reached by Walz (1989) after observing a group of student teachers using a textbook containing form-focused and communicative activities. As he says (*ibid.* p.163), "the teachers consistently spent their time (after grammar discussions) on the mechanical and meaningful ones [drills] with no time left for communication". Aziz (1987) investigated the implementation of a curriculum innovation program for the primary level of education in Southeast Asia, whose primary objective was to encourage active pupil participation in the activities. After analysing lesson transcripts before and after the implementation of the program, Aziz (*ibid.* p.72) observed that "...there were substantially no differences to the kinds and selection of strategies of communication in the classroom used in both sets of data". Finally, Beretta (1990) in his retrospective investigation of the implementation of the communicational teaching (Bangalore) project in India, found that it was the non-regular, highly qualified teachers (and indeed those teachers who were involved in the creation and development of the project) who were implementing the innovation comfortably, following its principles. The regular teachers (who are in fact representative of the typical teachers in South Indian schools), despite using the activities advocated by the Bangalore project, exhibited low levels of implementation and had difficulty in coming to terms with the demands and principles of this fluency based innovation.

It becomes quite clear from the research available, that the communicative approach has brought innovation more on the level of theory rather than on the level of teachers' actual classroom practices. As Wagner (1991, p.290) explains, "language teaching traditions in schools tend to be extremely inert... this appears to be due to strong resistance to innovation". In order to understand why teachers adhere to traditional classroom practices, why teachers are slow and reluctant to change well-established classroom routines and techniques, even when using communicatively oriented materials (or professing favourable

attitudes towards the communicative approach), it is necessary to turn to the literature of curriculum innovations, understand the complex nature of innovations and assess the various factors that have been suggested to influence the impact of curriculum innovations and their acceptance in classrooms.

### **3.2.: Key factors influencing teachers' classroom practices (with specific reference to curriculum innovation projects).**

Curriculum innovations do not appear in a vacuum. They are brought about in response to strong pressures from society for reform (Brindley & Hood 1990, Kelly 1980). Innovations may also arise in response to needs within schools, i.e. large numbers of unmotivated and underachieving students, dissatisfied and unmotivated teachers, out-of-date materials (White 1987). The new ELT curriculum and materials in Greece were deemed necessary for two quite distinct reasons; the first was the Ministry of Education's financial concern that an enormous amount of currency was spent each year importing language teaching materials from abroad, and pupils had to pay for these materials although materials for all other school subjects are distributed free. The second was a more pedagogical concern felt by the authors of the textbooks, i.e. "the perceived need for teaching materials that respond to the needs and interests of Greek state secondary school pupils studying a foreign language" (Dendrinos, 1985a, p. 37). Although both concerns were valid and real, they were not, however, expressed by the teachers themselves; a fact which may have considerable consequences on the acceptance of an innovation. As White (1987, p. 212) claims, "in general, innovations which are identified by members of an institution and arise within it stand more chance of success than those which are imported or imposed". The impetus for change, the initial dissatisfaction with the state of affairs will have to come from the teachers, if innovations are to be regarded favourably (Kelly 1980, Kennedy 1988, Macdonald & Rudduck 1971).

Being favourably disposed towards an innovation does not, however, guarantee that the innovation will have an immediate impact in the classroom. As Fullan & Pomfret (1977) argue, an attitude of acceptance or even decision to use an innovation (termed adoption) does not lead to actual use of the innovation (called implementation). The literature abounds in examples of innovative programs that were discontinued (see Parish & Arrends 1983); innovations in which teachers exhibited a "token adoption" (Hurst, 1983<sup>1</sup>), i.e. by professing to have changed their practices but in reality carrying on as before (for example, Morris' (1985) study of the implementation of a curriculum emphasising a heuristic style of learning and active pupil involvement in Hong Kong schools, also see Olson 1981, for his study of the use of the English Schools Council Integrated Science Project, and Brown & McIntyre 1978, for their investigation into the implementation of four innovations in Scottish secondary schools); or by instances of innovation projects that were wholly or partly resisted or rejected (for example Brindley and Hood's 1990, account of the implementation of the AMEP project in Australia; also see Fullan and Pomfret 1977, for a review of the results of curriculum implementation studies in Canada, the US and the UK, Holliday 1992 for a review of ESP curriculum innovation projects and their implementation, and Marsh 1986, for a review of curriculum implementation studies in Australian schools). Thus, it appears to be the case, as Brown (1980, p. 32) argues, that "the efforts that have been made over the last two decades to introduce innovations into classrooms have effected far less change in patterns of teaching than many of their proponents had hoped for".

In their attempt to explain the failure of innovative curricula, and justify themselves, many curriculum developers have blamed the teacher (Doyle & Ponder 1977, Gleeson 1979). Although teachers are the ultimate judges of an innovation's success or failure, in the event of its rejection, the teachers' obstinacy or conservatism is certainly not to blame. Indeed, there are a number

of factors that impinge on successful implementation, and must be taken into account by anyone contemplating introducing a new theory, teaching method or materials to an educational context. Certainly one of the inevitable characteristics of bringing about educational change is that it is a long, complex and difficult operation (Brindley & Hood 1990); "implementation is a process not an event" (Fullan & Park 1981, p.24). As Takala (1984, p. 33) realistically points out, "...it requires about 10 years of systematic hard work to introduce any new idea in education. In some cases, even that estimate may be optimistic". In this long and arduous journey, the teacher's role and contribution is essential; teachers are the instruments of change and without their willingness, participation and cooperation there can be no change (Brown 1980, Trim 1985, White 1988).

### **3.2.a.: Teachers' attitudes and beliefs.**

One of the most significant (potential) obstacles in any educational innovation (and an obstacle which curriculum developers must take measures to overcome) are teachers' educational attitudes and beliefs. Teachers' learning and teaching theories, although implicitly and in many cases unconsciously held, have an effect on their classroom behaviour and are a potent determinant of teachers' teaching style (Bennet 1976, Brophy & Good 1974, Clark & Peterson 1986, Clark & Yinger 1979, Gayle 1979, McNergney & Carrier 1981, Nunan 1990, Stern & Keislar 1977). As Burns (1990, p. 42) clearly points out, "... no teaching can claim to be free of implicitly held theories". More specific to the context of communicative language teaching, teachers' positive attitudes towards language, language teaching and learning are seen as a vital and indispensable element for the effective implementation of the communicative approach (Andrews 1983, Edelhoff 1985a, 1985b, Roberts 1983, Trim 1985). As Guthrie (1984, p. 50), through her analysis of foreign language teachers' classroom interaction, reveals: "the quality of classroom interaction ...is closely linked to our most basic attitudes about the learning process, about communication itself

and about our role as teachers. These attitudes have a profound effect on the amount and degree of communication that can be achieved in our classrooms".

Teachers' attitudes and beliefs, however, do not develop in a vacuum nor are teachers atheoretical beings before the introduction of a new program (Wright 1990). Teachers' attitudes are context-specific and influenced by the values and philosophy of the educational system of which the teacher is a part. This point is made clear by Kennedy (1987, p.166) who writes: "views held on theories of language teaching and learning and views on the educational process and what happens or should happen in classrooms between teacher and students are ultimately context specific and derived from the culture of the society in which the learning takes place". A similar conclusion was reached by Butcher (1965) in his study of the educational attitudes of experienced teachers and teachers in training. Taking this feature into account, it seems rather likely, as Trim (1985, p.24) points out, "as a result of their education and training and the characteristics of the societies in which they were brought up, many teachers still believe in the authoritarian role of the teacher with the pupil or student as a passive recipient". In such a case the introduction of a communicative learner-centred approach will be in direct conflict with teachers' attitudes and beliefs and will, understandably, result in teachers' resistance to change. Breen (1983) has cautioned against the dangers of implementing a communicative approach within a teacher-centred educational context; as he explains, "in many countries it would be foolish to attempt such an approach because the new role required of the teacher would conflict with his role as laid down by political, social or educational norms"(p.143). Conflicts of this kind and incompatibilities between the innovation's and teachers' values are a feature of many innovatory projects especially those advocating change in teachers' classroom practices. Steps therefore must be taken by curriculum developers and related authorities to alleviate conflicts and minimise incompatibilities (Brown 1980, Brown &

McIntyre 1978, Fergusson 1983, Fullan & Pomfret 1977, Stern & Keislar 1977, Waugh & Punch 1987), since it has become an almost undeniable fact that curriculum change cannot take place without a corresponding attitude change on part of the teacher (Early & Bolitho 1982, Fullan & Park 1981, Markee 1993).

### **3.2.b.: Teachers' understanding of the innovation.**

Positive attitudes of teachers are certainly a vital step towards ensuring success of an educational innovation but not the only one. If teachers are to successfully apply a teaching theory in their classroom, they must fully and clearly understand the basic principles and features of that theory in both theoretical and practical terms (Fergusson 1983, White 1987). Knowledge of the meanings of an innovation is an essential ingredient for successful curriculum implementation, since teachers' misunderstanding of the conceptions and intentions of curriculum developers has often been cited as a source of rejection or non-implementation of innovatory programs (Brindley & Hood 1990).

The importance of understanding the meanings of innovations, and the potential drawbacks resulting from lack of it, is argued by Waugh & Punch (1987, p. 245) who say: "In educational change lack of knowledge is likely to be related to the extent of uncertainty and hence receptivity to change...lack of clarity or abstractness of the change proposal is often quoted as a barrier to change both in single case studies of change and in a number of reviews".

The devastating effect of the failure of curriculum developers to specify and clarify the meanings of an innovation is seen in the unsuccessful implementation of four educational innovations in Scottish secondary schools (Brown 1980, Brown & McIntyre 1978). After investigating Scottish teachers' understandings of the innovations, Brown & McIntyre (ibid, p. 19) conclude: "where planners have not made their interpretations explicit and have not developed their concepts there is danger that either teachers will have no idea what was intended

and ignore some aspects of the innovation, or they may misunderstand their intentions and react with disfavour...explicit detailed descriptions are not enough; the curriculum planner must further negotiate the meanings ensuring that teachers both attend to and understand them". A similar conclusion was reached by Olson (1981) in his curriculum implementation study.

As far as the application of a communicative approach is concerned, many authors (Andrews 1983, Edelhoff 1985a, 1985b, De Jong 1989, Roberts 1983, Trim 1985) have stressed the importance of teachers' in-depth knowledge and understanding of the nature of language and communication, the nature of language teaching and learning, for successful communicative language teaching. As Edelhoff (1985a, p. 39) states, "attitudes alone do not do the teaching. A lot of knowledge and skills are required...the first insights the teachers should acquire are those into the nature of learning, more specifically the nature of language learning, the learners themselves and their environment and conditioning, both their mother tongue and the target language and socio-cultural connotations".

Although knowledge and understanding of the principles of an innovation at the theoretical level is indeed essential for teachers to understand the "why" of the innovation, it is not sufficient on its own for teachers to understand the "how" of the innovation, i.e. its practical implications. This is an element frequently neglected by curriculum developers in their belief "that teachers are trained professionals and will, therefore, have acquired any skills that might be called for" (Brown 1980, p.36). Teachers must be given direct and explicit guidance, in simple non-technical terms (Doyle & Ponder 1977, Macdonald & Rudduck 1971, Olson 1981), on what the innovative principles entail in practical terms (White 1987), i.e. right down to the level of actual classroom practices, implementation of activities, student assessment and classroom management processes. As Fullan & Park (1981, p.15) point out, "...we do know that lack of



clarity about what teachers would actually do when implementing a guideline or policy frequently discourages them from using new curricula". More specific to the context of language teaching innovation, Wagner (1991, p. 305) states: "new methods have to define their conception of teaching right down to the level of task giving, if they intend to be more than purely ideological". Consequently, for the implementation of a communicative approach, teachers must be given explicit guidance and information in developing communicative learning objectives and activities appropriate to their learners, in distributing whole class, group work and autonomous teaching practices, and in coping with the managerial constraints of each, in ways of assessing students during and after activities, and in using different media in order to make language learning more effective and successful (Edelhoff 1985a, 1985b, Trim 1985).

### **3.2.c.: The role and significance of teacher training.**

But where, when and how will these awareness raising and attitude refinement processes come about? Obviously and naturally, through systematic and organised in-service teacher training. As Stenhouse (1980) justly points out, there can be no curriculum development without teacher development, while for Fullan & Park (1981, p. 44) "effective professional development is synonymous with effective implementation". A similar conclusion is reached by Andrews (1983, p. 139), who after recounting the demands communicative methodology places on teachers, says: "...the necessary changes in attitude and performance will only be achieved by means of systematic in-service training and very gradual adjustments and accommodations made by practising teachers in the light of their own experience". Teacher training will enable teachers to see the benefits of a particular language teaching theory and will convince them of its rewards. Thus, Breen (1991, p.232) believes that "curriculum change and the teachers' own development both require accommodation of new elements within

a personal implicit theory. If a teacher appreciates that particular action in the classroom can be less readily justified, an opportunity for adoption arises”.

Although knowledge of the principles of a language teaching theory are relatively simple to transmit, attitudes and implicit theories are extremely difficult to change or revise, as Roberts (1983, p. 148) makes clear: "when talking of role revision and revision of teachers' own theory, it is important to recognise that these theories are stable, slow to change and inseparable from teachers' whole value system and view of themselves". Edelhoff (1985b) also acknowledging the difficulty of changing teacher attitudes and the impossibility of teaching them directly, proposes that training courses will be effective in refining teachers' attitudes insofar as they elicit an awareness and confront teachers with their own fears, conceptions of their role and their situational constraints and try to work through and with them rather than against them.

The difficulty and importance of teacher attitude refinement is often downplayed by curriculum planners who believe that one-off unsystematic training sessions will be sufficient in equipping teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes for successful implementation of an innovation. The inadequacy and danger of such training schemes has been stressed by many authors (Fergusson 1983, Fullan & Pomfret 1977, Parish & Arrends 1983, Stern & Keislar 1977) and has been viewed as a potent source for curriculum non-implementation. More relevant to language teaching innovations, Brindley & Hood (1990) strongly caution against the ineffectiveness of one-off training sessions. As they point out: "If teachers are being asked to change some aspect of their classroom behaviour they need professional development activities which enable them at the same time to use an innovation and to work through the implications of the change with colleagues. This requires an ongoing program in which teachers commit themselves to classroom action followed by reflection and theory as necessary". While according to Henderson (1975), only part-time

ongoing in-service training courses are likely to result in sustained attitude change for teachers in-service.

### **3.2.d.: Teachers' judgements of the feasibility and practicality of the innovation.**

Although favourable and compatible attitudes and values with those of an innovation are a key element towards successful implementation of innovatory programs, and although systematic in-service development certainly helps towards this direction, unfortunately it is not always enough. Teachers do not passively accept innovative ideas once they have been informed about them and are convinced of their effectiveness. Teachers accept, misimplement or reject innovations also in terms of their compatibility with existing classroom contingencies and constraints (see Doyle & Ponder 1977, for a discussion). Morris (1985,p15) provides an example of teachers rejecting an innovation despite expressing favourable attitudes towards it because "... its operational results were judged to be in contradiction with the realities of the context within which teachers worked ...teachers perceived the new approach to be wholly dysfunctional because it necessitated them to ignore the expectations of their pupils, principals and colleagues". Another example comes from Sawwan's (1984) study of the implementation of a communicative language teaching course in Kuwait secondary schools. The author found that teachers did not implement the program as such because many of its features were judged incompatible with the characteristics and needs of Arab secondary school students.

According to many authors (Brown & McIntyre 1978, Doyle & Ponder 1977, Fergusson 1983, Fullan & Park 1981, Kelly 1980, Kennedy 1988, Waugh & Punch 1987) if innovations are to be accepted they must be judged by teachers as being practical/feasible in terms of time resources and organisational constraints, relevant in terms of teachers' perceptions of the needs of their

students and acceptable in terms of their own teaching style. If incompatibility exists in any one of these three spheres, then levels of implementation become reduced. It is thus imperative that innovators take into account, cater for and mould innovatory projects to the teaching conditions, resource constraints of an institution as well as to the immediate concerns of the teachers (Parish & Arrends 1983, Wagner 1991). Failure to do so, will result in teachers judging the personal costs of an innovation (changes in patterns of teaching, increased workload, student dissatisfaction, time, energy, difficulty involved in learning new teaching skills, potential conflict with colleagues) much higher than the rewards (economic and professional rewards, intellectual and affective satisfaction, job security)(see Brindley & Hood 1990, Brown 1980, Fullan & Pomfret 1977, Kennedy 1988, Waugh & Punch 1987), and in deciding that the innovation is simply not worth their time and energy.

### **3.2.e.: Factors determining teachers' involvement in the innovation.**

Another factor which has been found to determine the establishment of an innovation, is the degree to which teachers have participated in its development and feel a sense of belonging to the innovation project ( Fullan & Pomfret 1977, Kennedy 1988). The reasons for involving teachers in the innovation process are explained by Kouraogo (1987, p. 171): "Participation is thought to prevent resistance to innovations and allow a smoother negotiation of the gap between- on the one hand- idealisation of the syllabus, and- on the other hand- the methodology used by the teachers to materialise it in the classroom"; while the harmful effects of teachers' non-involvement on the life-span of an innovation are given by Clark (1987, p. 47-48): "...it is rare for teachers to feel much commitment to any curriculum in whose making they have not been involved. The reconstructionist 'top-down' approach does not normally provide teachers with a sense of belonging to what is done. This lack of commitment is reflected in the classroom."

It is important to note, that teacher participation will prove fruitful if teachers contribute to all the stages of the innovation project substantially, since as Gleeson (1979, p.196) points out, in most cases teacher participation "...is often of a token nature and is ultimately insignificant in decision-making". However, a word of caution should be given as to the potential effects of teacher involvement in curriculum development. Although certain studies have proved the feasibility, effectiveness and benefits of teacher participation (see Clark 1987, Kouraogo 1987, Tomlinson 1990), authors have also noted the potential adverse effect of teacher involvement in decision-making and curriculum innovation. Teachers' participation may have a potential "boomerang" effect on the innovation. As Fullan & Pomfret (1977, p. 379) caution, "under other conditions (e.g. conflicting values, scarce resources) participation at the initiation stage may lead to rejection of the innovation or to acceptance by one segment over another and hence may exacerbate conflict and lessen commitment and affect implementation".

However, the decision of whether to participate or not in curriculum development is not always left to the teachers and is not always the teachers' prerogative; the opportunity for teachers to cooperate in decision-making and curriculum planning depends much on the educational ideology upon which the curriculum is based, on the curriculum renewal model which is adopted and on the managerial strategy which has been followed. In general, there have been three main educational ideologies, three roughly corresponding models (i.e. The RD&D, problem-solving and social-interaction models) of innovation and three managerial strategies (i.e. power-coercive, rational-empirical and normative re-educative strategies) that have been proposed by various educationists and curriculum developers. Due to limitations of space, the model and managerial strategy of innovation followed in the Greek English language curriculum renewal project will be the one dealt with here. (see Clark 1987, and Skilbeck

1982, for a discussion of the main principles of educational ideologies; Clark 1987, and White 1988 for a discussion of the models of innovation and Dalin 1982, Kennedy 1987, and White 1988 for a discussion and critique of the three main managerial strategies of innovation).

The most widely followed model of innovation is the "Research, Development and Diffusion" or RD&D model. This model coincides with the reconstructionist ideology, which in the context of foreign language learning, places emphasis on the ability to communicate in order to achieve a better understanding among social groups and nations. The reconstructionist curriculum is objectives driven (i.e. behavioural outcomes are specified in advance and are to be worked towards) and one upon which the functional-notional approach proposed by the Council of Europe is based (see Clark 1987). The corresponding RD&D approach to innovation is clearly a top-down approach to curriculum renewal initiated by forces outside the school. This approach involves three basic steps: Initially a committee of "experts" is set up to carry out research into what is needed (i.e. in the Council of Europe's case, identify and analyse the learners' communicative needs). The committee produces experimental materials, trials the materials with a certain number of teachers in pilot areas and obtains feedback from them. On the basis of the feedback the committee revises and refines the materials and distributes them to the wider population for implementation. Evidently, in such a model, as White (1988, p. 122) argues, "the consumer role is a passive one; it is assumed that because the user will be motivated by enlightened self-interest the innovation...will be adopted with alacrity". The type of teacher training associated with the RD&D approach "...tends to be a top-down affair in which teachers are informed about a new innovation and trained to adopt it. It is the common fate of externally imposed curriculum packages, however, that various internal constraints are allowed to reduce their effectiveness"(Clark 1987, p. 47).

The use of a particular strategy of innovation depends much on the nature of the educational system in which the innovation evolves. Each strategy is based on particular assumptions of the nature and needs of people and how they act and react. The one followed by the Greek curriculum developers is the so-called rational-empirical strategy. This strategy is based on the assumption that people are rational beings and will adopt change once they have been convinced of its benefits and rewards to them. Usually, an outside group or individual, which know of a situation which will benefit individuals, propose the change. This strategy relies on information and persuasion as sufficient for effecting change. However, the difficulty with this strategy, as Kennedy (1987, p. 164) notes "...lies in demonstrating gains simply by informing people about them". Moreover, as White (1988) points out, this strategy fails to take into account the user's perception of things, assumes the user as a passive recipient and ignores potential role conflicts and communication difficulties.

### **3.2.f.: Feedback mechanisms and support for implementing the innovation.**

The factors mentioned thus far have been the ones most frequently cited as barriers to implementation or prerequisites for effective and efficient use of innovations by teachers. Some authors (Brindley & Hood 1990, Fergusson 1983, Fullan & Park 1981, Fullan & Pomfret 1977, Stern & Keislar 1977, Waugh & Punch 1987, White 1988) however, have also stressed the potential benefiting effect of two factors for innovation uptake, namely: good communications and flow of feedback during the process of implementation, and school support for the innovation. As to the first factor, Fullan & Pomfret (1977) stress the pivotal importance of feedback mechanisms between managers and users and between users in working through and eliminating the problems and difficulties of implementation. White (1988) also argues that a key element in the

managing process of an innovation is communication. As he states: "All the research evidence on the managing of innovation emphasises that communication at all stages of an innovatory process is vital in achieving successful outcomes"(p. 213)

Finally, school support for the innovation, both administrative and peer support, is believed to seriously affect teachers' decision to use an innovation in the classroom. As Gleeson (1979, p.197) reminds us "...it is a misconception that schools do automatically adopt or passively respond to the engineered input of knowledge even in circumstances where teachers support the general aims of curriculum projects". It, therefore, seems quite likely that the adoption of an innovation is facilitated when there exists "an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding on the part of the school, such that teachers feel free to express their own doubts and concerns..."(Stern & Keislar 1977, p. 74). The importance of an accepting and supportive environment is also stressed by Waugh & Punch (1987) based on their review of implementation studies.

To conclude, it becomes quite evident that the teachers' decision to accept and use, adopt or reject an innovatory program depends on a number of factors which anyone introducing an innovation must be aware of and must take into serious account. The innovation process is a long, complex and arduous operation which requires time, patience, energy, personal interactions, systematic in-service training, cooperation and support from all those involved. If one thing stands out from the literature review of curriculum implementation studies, it must be that the teacher's role in determining the success of an innovation is central and that no innovation, be it in terms of teaching method, teaching theory or materials, can hope achieve its objectives without the willingness and full-hearted support of teachers.



### 3.3.: Innovating the Greek EFL curriculum and materials.<sup>2</sup>

In response to the goals of the Council of Europe for cross-cultural and international communication and understanding and in response to the need for foreign language innovation in Greece, the new ELT curriculum and materials were developed in line with the RD&D model of innovation.

The initiative for innovation came from the vice-president of the Centre for Educational Research and In-Service Teacher Training (KEME) in 1983, Professor I. Kakridis. An "expert" foreign language teaching committee (6 members), composed of university scholars and foreign language teaching specialists working at KEME, was appointed by the Ministry of Education with the responsibility of:

- a) innovating the ELT curriculum; and of developing
- b) new testing and exam specifications,
- c) new guidelines for in-service training
- d) new language teaching materials for the first secondary school level, the gymnasium (Dendrinis, 1985a)

The committee first approached their formidable task by identifying and analysing the terminal needs of EFL learners via a questionnaire distributed to employees of public and private organisations. The data obtained by the questionnaires guided the ELT committee in devising and reforming the ELT curriculum (Government Gazette, No 158, 19 September 1985). In order to assist teachers in the implementation of the new curriculum, two steps were taken: a) a Teacher Training Handbook (Dendrinis 1983) was developed for use in the in-service teacher training institute in Greece (SELME). The purpose of the handbook was to sensitise trainees to the ideology and principles of the communicative learner-centred approach the new curriculum was based upon, and also to train teachers in the development of activities according to

communicative objectives and relevant to the needs of the learners, and b) recognising the fact that SEIME (public teacher training school) can accommodate no more than 40 trainees a year, the ELT Guide (Dendrinos 1985b) was produced and written in Greek and distributed free to all state teachers of English. The guide provided teachers with information on the theoretical and practical implications underlying the new curriculum as well as with samples of activities, authentic materials and tests.

In June 1984, the committee embarked on the development of learning materials for the first three years of secondary education. A circular was sent to all state EFL teachers and invited those interested to take part in an "experimental materials design project". The turnout was rather disappointing; 18 volunteers were accepted as project participants. In July 1984 the volunteers underwent a 40hour intensive teacher training course. The aim of the course was to sensitise trainees to the underpinnings of the communicative approach and to train them in the production of materials and activities (trainees used the Teacher Training Handbook and were asked to read J. Harmer's (1983) The Practice of ELT). In September 1984, the volunteers were divided into 3 groups; each group was responsible for the construction of materials and activities for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year of the gymnasium respectively and was supervised by a group leader. Each group took about two weeks to construct one unit after which they went back to their schools and trialled the materials (the teachers worked at KEME for 2 days a week, and taught in their schools for 3 days a week). While testing each unit in schools, the teachers completed evaluation forms reporting their own and their students' reactions to the materials. The teachers and learners' responses to the materials of each unit were recorded and used as a basis for the revision of the materials. The revision took place immediately after classes were over (i.e. Summer 1985). For the production of revised materials and teachers' manuals, six of the initial 18 volunteers were chosen to work with the committee; the

revisions were completed by September 1985 and led to the development of English 1,2,3 Experimental Language Teaching Materials.

In this second phase of the project, the revised pilot edition of the materials were sent to and tried out by 120 teachers in 100 schools in various parts of Greece. These teachers were not provided with any kind of training, apart from a 3-day seminar which informed teachers of the overall aims, objectives and content of the materials. It was thought essential by the committee not to provide any sort of formal training, since the majority of Greek EFL teachers are poorly trained, and thus the 120 teachers' use of the materials would determine the problems the typical EFL teacher would confront.

After the seminar the teachers were asked to try out the materials and fill in, after the end of each unit, an evaluation form recording their reaction, feelings and assessments of the materials as well as their students' responses to them. The teachers' responses were analysed by the 6 volunteer teachers involved in the production of the initial materials. The data obtained from the evaluation forms were used for the revision of the experimental materials which ultimately led to the development of Taskway English series. The new English Language teaching materials were distributed to teachers nationally during the academic year 1987-88.

The process by which the innovation was developed and carried out is a clear and true example of the RD&D approach. The initiative for innovation came from a body outside the school; a group of experts were appointed to conduct research, develop a curriculum and materials, test their suitability on a number of representative schools, and finally, based on their observations and data, construct the final version of the materials and disseminate them to the wider audience. Although a small number of teachers were involved in the development and construction of the materials, their participation was more of a

"token" nature; they did not co-decide the innovation with the committee nor did they have any role in decision-making (as established in the interview with one of the teachers involved in the first phase of the project); they functioned, if anything, as research tools.

The strategy of innovation followed, roughly corresponds to the rational-empirical strategy. The underlying assumption of this strategy, that people (teachers) are rational self-interested beings and the implementation will occur "through the actions of people and that people will innovate as soon as their basic understanding is altered" (Dalin 1982. p.131), is expressed in the committee's reactions to the (120) teachers' evaluation of the experimental materials (Teachers' Guide 1987, Taskway English 1, pp.286-295). In this brief account of learners' and teachers' response to the experimental materials, it is clear that the majority of Greek English language teachers were not in favour of the materials, and questioned the utility of many of their basic features (i.e. the changed role of the teacher, the lack of emphasis on formal properties of the language, the open-endedness of many activities). Despite these disheartening results, the committee end their account on an optimistic note: The training of teachers to come to terms with the demands of the materials and change their attitudes will not come as a result of seminars but rather as a "natural consequence" (ibid. p. 295) of the use of the materials in class. The committee, therefore, relies on the belief that teachers will be convinced of the benefits of the communicative learner-centred approach and the materials by gradually using the textbooks in the classroom.

### **3.4.: Training the teachers.<sup>3</sup>**

In line with the top-down approach to curriculum innovation, the Greek state EFL teachers were informed about and (ineffectively) trained in the innovation prior to its implementation. It should be noted that in-service training of teachers

(on the general principles and practical implications of the communicative approach) has been minimal while training specific to the use of the Taskway series had been virtually non-existent. These findings have been corroborated by the observations of the Council of Europe in their report of the progress of innovatory curricula in various member states (Council of Europe 1988). In their assessment of the state of teacher training in Greece (*ibid*, p.28), they conclude that in-service training of teachers has been largely insufficient and unsystematic, while in pre-service training practical training of teachers is largely lacking.

The opportunities offered to Greek state EFL teachers for training are:

a) Pre-service training: BA degree at the Universities of Athens and Thessaloniki: This is a four-year course consisting of eight semesters; each semester four subjects are to be studied. The programme of studies almost exclusively focuses on English language and literature. Applied linguistics is taught in the sixth semester for 6 hours, while methodology of teaching English as a foreign language is left to the 8th semester and is taught for 6 hours (Chryshochoos 1990). The pedagogical- professional component is theoretical in nature while "the amount of time devoted to practical training is minimal" (Kazamias, 1985, p.129). Graduates from the department of English Language and Literature are automatically eligible for employment in Greek public secondary schools; having obtained their degree, they simply need to add their names to a waiting list kept by the Ministry of Education and wait for a number of years in order to get appointed. There are no training or refresher courses when graduate teachers become employed (Chryshochoos & Chryshochoos 1991).

Opportunities for in-service training:

b) SELME: (Athens and Thessaloniki) SELME is the only public teacher training school for secondary school teachers in Greece. Under the supervision

of the Pedagogical Institute and in cooperation with the British Council, SELME offer one-year full time teacher training courses to 40 teachers (out of a total of more than 4000 Greek State EFL teachers, see Chryshochoos 1990) per year. Interested teachers, who have between 5 and 25 years of experience and who have not received any form of extensive teacher training (Government Gazette No 70, June 7 1983), are asked to fill in application forms by the end of August of each year. The 40 lucky ones are chosen by ballot and released for one year from their teaching duties. The courses include both Greek and English subjects. English subjects include: English grammar (60 hours), English history and culture (60 hours), English literature (90 hours). There is also provision for Applied Linguistics (45 hours) and practical training opportunities (120 hours) (State Gazette No 70, article 8, 1983) provided by British Council tutors. No training is provided focusing specifically on the demands of the Taskway series.

c) Short-term in-service training: The foreign language advisors in cooperation with the Ministry of Education also run in-service seminars for secondary school teachers throughout the year. There is an annual two-day conference held usually at the University of Athens with the contributions of British and Greek speakers, as well as half-day or day workshops and seminars organised on a regional or local basis. The foreign language advisors also set up demonstration lessons on a local basis and invite teachers from nearby schools to attend and discuss their problems. Only these demonstration lessons focus on the use of the Taskway series in the classroom. However, all these training opportunities are optional and no incentives are offered with the result that only a few willing, enthusiastic and dedicated teachers attend (Chryshochoos 1990).

c) PEKADE (Panhellenic Association of State School Teachers of English), with over 1000 members, has also run seminars and workshops since 1990 for teachers within the Athens area; places however are extremely limited. In addition to this, the association is responsible for the publication of a quarterly

journal (ASPECTS) which covers a wide range of the professional and pedagogical interests of the state EFL teacher.

### 3.5.: The nature and philosophy of the Greek educational system.

In order to provide a clearer picture of the professional, organisational and ideological context within which the ELT innovation in Greece is to be implemented, and in order to provide some insights into the potential problems, difficulties and value conflicts the Greek English language teachers may have to face (or indeed are facing) in trying to implement a communicative learner-centred approach in their everyday classroom practices, it was thought essential to provide a brief account of the framework and theoretical underpinnings of the Greek educational system. The account is by no means in-depth, incisive, or authoritative; I claim no expertise on the subject of educational philosophy. It is solely based on the writings of leading Greek educationists and is corroborated by my experience as a secondary and tertiary level student in the Greek educational system.

The defining characteristics of the Greek educational system are:

- a) asphyxiating centralisation,
- b) structure and directives which give overwhelming emphasis on general education
- c) conservative ideological context
- d) gap between school and life (Iliou 1990, p. 179)

Many of the shortcomings of the educational system and indeed its failure to bring about effective long-term reform, has been due to its highly centralised and hierarchical structure, with the Ministry of Education at the top of the pyramid (Andreou & Papakonstantinou 1990, Kakridis 1991, Maddock 1983). By way of this tightly controlled administrative structure, the government achieves two aims:

- a) to control and legalise the ideological function of education so as to achieve the objectives of the dominant social forces, and
- b) to standardise and predetermine the behaviour, attitude and role of teachers and learners (Andreou & Papakonstantinou 1990, p. 83)

As a consequence of its highly centralised and bureaucratic character, the educational system defines and predetermines what is to be taught by employing exogenous criteria, how it is to be taught, the role of teachers and learners, as well as the intended outcomes of the educational process; its character being such, the Greek educational system is impervious to influences and initiatives from teachers, parents and students alike (Polychronopoulos 1980).

Many epithets have been used to characterise the philosophy of the Greek educational system, all of them quite distinct from a progressivist learner-centred ideology. Greek education has been characterised as undemocratic (Gerou 1990b), teacher-centred and authoritarian (Karastathi-Panagioti 1987), "all-levelling" and uniform (Christidis 1991) and highly competitive (Gerou 1990a). According to Gerou (1990a) Greek educational practice faithfully follows the principles of Freire's (1975) "banking concept of education" (a direct opposite of problem-solving learner-centred education, see Freire *ibid*). As Gerou (*ibid*, p. 335) explains, the "banking concept is applied in all levels of our school reality...this method is well known to us. The role of the teacher is to "deposit" in the "bank" (the students). The students' role is to save the "deposits" the teacher makes, memorise them and repeat them...the teacher is the source of knowledge and the student is the ignorant unknowledgeable vessel". Karastathi-Panagioti (1987) in her analysis of the Greek educational context and investigation of Greek teachers' educational attitudes, maintains that the highly structured nature of the Greek educational system prevents teachers from participating in decision-making, fosters authoritarian attitudes, and reduces teachers to passive instruments. In a few words, the Greek educational system, as Gerou (1990b, p.



22) argues, "is undemocratic, suppresses the spontaneity and creative abilities of the student, it overcharges his memory and blunts his critical ability".

This review does not purport to assert that all Greek teachers and students have, without objection, accepted a passive role in the educational process and behave according to its principles. Indeed this would be a rigid and naive overgeneralisation and an insult to the members of the Greek educational system and indeed to myself as a former member of that system. The purpose of this review was to reveal the potential and possible obstacles that the nature of the Greek educational system may pose to teachers attempting to apply communicative learner-centred principles in their classrooms.

Quite evidently, there appears to be a clash between the principles of the Greek educational system and the theoretical underpinnings and objectives of the new ELT curriculum. If teachers' attitudes and roles are context-specific and culturally derived and influenced, then conflict seems inevitable. Taking into account the Greek English language teachers' unsystematic and insufficient training, their non-involvement in the innovation (and indeed the fact that the need for innovation did not spring from them), it becomes obvious that the teachers are faced with a formidable challenge. How have the Greek EFL teachers coped with this challenge? Have they been convinced of the "benefits" of the communicative learner-centred approach and managed to "work around the system" and apply the approach in their everyday classroom practices? The following chapters will (hopefully) provide some answers to these questions.

#### NOTES:

1) This term ("token-adoption") coined by Hurst (1983) is found in Wagner 1991 ( p.292).

2) This account has been based on the official report of the EFL committee's leader (B. Dendrinos 1985a) and on information derived from interviews with two of the committee's members and a teacher involved in the first phase of the project.

3) The teacher training opportunities described in this section were the ones provided to Greek teachers at the time the field research was carried out and until 1992. During the academic year 1992-1993 a dramatic and much needed change in the teacher training scene in Greece took place. Instead of SEJ.ME (the only existing public teacher training school), local training centres (called PEK) were set up which offer three month intensive teacher training courses and are compulsory for all pre-service and in-service primary and secondary school Greek teachers. Pre-service teachers who fail to attend these courses are not eligible for employment in the public school sector. In-service teachers are selected to attend these courses on the basis of their experience (they must have 5 to 25 years of teaching experience) and the particular needs of schools. Apart from the theoretical courses offered (educational psychology, educational theory, methodology, structure of educational systems), teachers are also provided with opportunities for extensive teaching practice (64 hours) (Government Gazette , No 138, August 10, 1992).

## CHAPTER 4

### *Research Methodology of the Study*

#### 4.1: The model, research questions and research methods of the study.

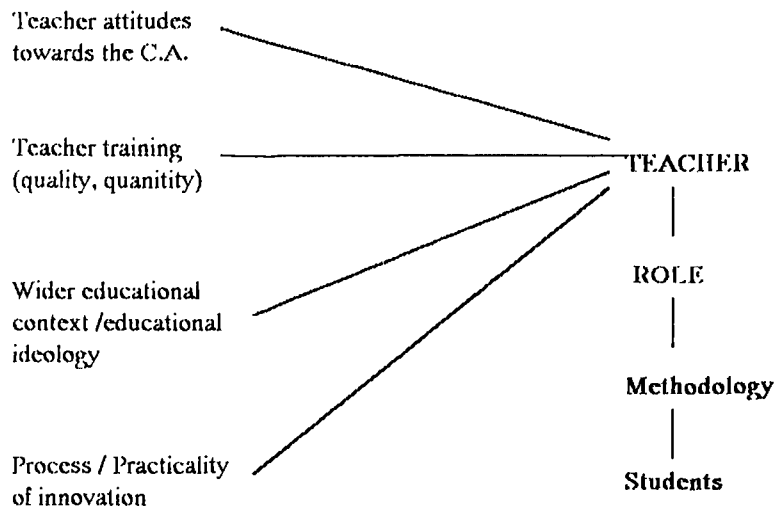
The previous chapter provided insights into the factors that have been suggested to affect teachers' implementation of innovative methods or curricula.

In sum, these are:

- a) teachers' attitudes towards the philosophy underpinning the innovation project
- b) teachers' understanding of the theoretical principles and practical implications of an innovative programme
- c) the quality and quantity of training received in relation to the innovation project
- d) the practicality, congruence and costs (or rewards) of the innovation as perceived by the teachers
- e) teachers' involvement in the innovation process
- f) school and administrative support for the innovation, and
- g) the degree to which the philosophy of the wider educational context is congruent with the principles of the innovation.

These factors have been taken into account in the development of the model upon which this study is based (see Figure 4.1). According to the model, for the implementation of the Greek English language curriculum, the teacher, upon whom successful classroom implementation largely depends, may be influenced by a number of variables: a) his/her attitudes towards the underlying philosophy of the curriculum (the communicative learner-centred approach), b) the quality and quantity of his/her training, c) the constraints posed by the organisational context and the values of the Greek educational system and d) the way the

project was set up and introduced to the teacher and the practicality of the innovation as perceived by the teacher. These variables will influence the teacher's classroom practices and the role he/she chooses to adopt in the classroom, which in turn will influence the students' performance and the degree to which they accept their central role in the learning process.



*Figure 4.1.: The model of the study.*

The model does not purport to be exhaustive and all-embracing. Indeed, there are other variables that may influence teachers' practices, i.e. teachers' personalities, active support of principles, (high) morale, ((in)adequate) provision of resources, time and materials, perceived costs and rewards. I have chosen however not to include the investigation of these variables in the study, firstly because the main focus and weight of my research falls upon the investigation of teachers' classroom practices, making, thus, the study of all potential influencing factors an unrealistic aim in view of the time and word limit of a PhD thesis, and secondly, because some of the variables (teachers' personality, morale, perceived costs and rewards) are methodologically very

difficult to investigate (unless controlled experiments are carried out). The factors that were included in the model were the ones perceived as most pertinent taking into account the nature of the Greek educational system, the scarcity of systematic teacher training and the process (top-down approach) of the English language curriculum innovation.

The aims of the research which follow the layout of the model are:

a) To investigate the extent to which the Greek English language teachers are using the communicative learner-centred approach in their classrooms as advocated by the Greek English language curriculum and textbooks,

b) To investigate whether certain factors (teachers' attitudes to the communicative learner-centred approach, teachers' opinions of their training, of the process and end product of the innovation and the wider educational context) have a bearing on and/or are compatible with their classroom practices.

As has been previously mentioned (see Chapter 1, section 1.1.) the particular research questions that set out to achieve the aims of the study are:

- 1) a) Have the teachers' managed to develop and perform roles in the classroom consistent with those required for a communicative approach?
  - b) Are teachers' attitudes towards learner errors and their correction compatible with the principles of a communicative approach? Do teachers show priority in correcting those errors which impede communication, leaving the correction of formal errors (those that impede on the formal properties of the language) for those stages of the lesson which call for accurate reproduction of language? What roles do teachers' error correcting practices reflect?
  - c) Does the teachers' talk emphasise the promotion of students' communicative ability? Does the teachers' use of questions restrict/inhibit or promote the flow of genuine interaction in the classroom and the negotiation of meaning? What roles do teachers' questioning practices reflect?
- 2) a) What are the teachers' attitudes towards the communicative learner-centred approach?

- b) What are the teachers' opinions of the process of innovation and its end product (the textbook)?
- c) What are the teachers' opinions of the quality and quantity of their training?
- d) Do the teachers feel that the educational context inhibits them from using a communicative learner-centred approach?

A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods was used to investigate the study's research questions. In particular, for question 1 classroom observations were carried out (live observations (1a) and analysis of lesson transcripts (1b,c)), for question 2a an attitude scale and for questions 2b,c,d a questionnaire was used. Interviews were also carried out in order to further investigate certain aspects of teachers' classroom practices and variables that may influence their practices.

This combination of research methods, or "methodological triangulation" (Cohen & Manion 1989), was considered necessary because of the diversity of phenomena the study sets out to investigate and the inevitable limitations that a strict adherence to a single approach entails (see Burgess 1982). Apart from its potential for providing the researcher with a fuller understanding of the aspects under study, a multimethod approach can yield data that may be used to crossvalidate the various instruments employed in the study and strengthen the validity of the results (see Sieber 1982, for the benefits of triangulation in crossvalidating research instruments and data).

#### **4.2.: The focus of the study: The teacher.**

Although this study revolves around the learner-centred approach and its application, the study itself is teacher-centred. This "contradictory" focus does not in any way imply that learners are passive recipients of innovative methods or curricula. My decision, however, to focus on the teacher has been based on a number of reasons:

Firstly, students' effective adaptation to their new central roles depends on the teacher and the degree to which the teacher can provide the content or create the conditions for the type of language learning required by a communicative curriculum. As Trim (1985, p. 23) puts it, "the initial inexperienced beginning student is in no position to undertake this new role...the responsibility for creating favourable conditions for managing the learning process lies upon the teacher". The creation of appropriate conditions, in turn, depends on whether the teacher has internalised the beliefs underlying the new curriculum and whether his/her classroom practices are in accordance with these beliefs.

Moreover, taking into account the fact that the vast majority of Greek students attend private language institutes apart from their compulsory English classes at school (Chryshochoos 1990, also see chapter 1), any focus on learners would yield invalid results, since the students' attitudes and performance in class will be influenced by their learning experiences from the private language institutes they attend.

Furthermore, in the last two decades there has been a paucity of research on teachers (Dingwall 1985). Research in applied linguistics has almost exclusively focused on learners, their styles and strategies for learning and the types of methods and activities that promote acquisition to the exclusion of what teachers actually do in the classroom when using a method or when professing to be using a method ( Richards & Rodgers 1986, Savignon 1991). Research into how teachers, when using the communicative approach, actually reflect the objectives and the nature of language and language learning underlying the approach in their classroom practices has been scarce (Burns 1990, Mitchell 1988a, Mitchell & Johnstone 1989, Nunan 1987a, Swaffar, Arens & Morgan 1982). As Mitchell (1988b, p.119), in her review of research into communicative language teaching, concludes, " we still have much to learn about the attitudes and social relations of

teachers and learners in communicative classrooms as well about their learning theories and learning styles..." .

#### **4.3.: The purposes of, and approaches to classroom observation.**

Although classroom observation methods are *not* without their critics and without their limitations (expensive and time-consuming, unfeasible when large samples are involved, impact of the observer on the performance of the observed, "Observer paradox"<sup>1</sup>), they have nevertheless come to be recognised as an essential and key component in understanding classroom processes and in unravelling their complexities.

Having been used to investigate a plethora of features of the classroom context<sup>2</sup>, it is especially in curriculum implementation studies that classroom observation constitutes a *sine qua non* of the research design. Many authors (Fullan & Pomfret 1977, Shaver 1983) have regarded the use of classroom observation as the most appropriate research method for checking on the implementation of a specific teaching approach; other alternatives (informal observation, reported use of a method, interviews), according to Shaver (*ibid*) are inadequate substitutes for systematic observation, since "none can provide as specific information about classroom behaviours"(p.4).

Classroom observation, however, is not a uniform and straightforward method used in the same way, albeit for different purposes, among researchers. In fact, there are many ways in which researchers approach and use classroom observation and indeed a variety of perceptions of what classroom observation actually entails. Although all classroom observers share a commitment to the value of empirical enquiry within classrooms, the most common differentiation has been between those researchers ascribing to the systematic quantitative tradition (see Croll 1986, McIntyre 1980, for an extensive discussion), and those ascribing to an ethnographic qualitative one (see Delamont & Hamilton 1986,



Hammersley 1990, Van Lier 1988). Researchers ascribing to each of these traditions have been in constant battle trying to defend the merits of their approach by exaggerating the disadvantages of the other (see Hammersley 1986, for a collection of articles dealing with each approach and its criticisms).

Many of the criticisms of each approach are undoubtedly valid and well-founded and prove to show that there is no "best" way of approaching and describing classroom phenomena. Although many researchers regard these approaches as mutually exclusive, joining one or the other side and subscribing to it almost slavishly, there is no reason why both approaches cannot be combined in one research project utilising the best aspects of each (Allwright & Bailey 1991, Van Lier 1988). In line with this argument, I have tried to combine aspects of both approaches in my classroom observations and data analysis. This was done in the belief that such a combination would yield more reliable, valid and representative findings, than would a strict adherence to one approach over another. Thus, for the investigation and description of the extent to which the Greek teachers of English are following the communicative learner-centred approach as advocated by the new curriculum, I a) observed lessons via an observation scheme and b) recorded the lessons and analysed them in terms of two aspects of teachers' linguistic behaviour, their error correcting strategies and their questioning behaviour. Although the analysis of the lesson transcripts involved quantification, this was, in turn, used to complement and substantiate a qualitative analysis of teachers' classroom practices.

#### **4.4.: The study's observation scheme.**

Since the 1950's, hundreds of observation instruments have been developed for use in content and second language classrooms, focusing on almost every aspect of classroom interaction<sup>3</sup>. This proliferation of observation schemes has come about as a result of the differing purposes researchers have in using them.

Although there have been studies that have made use of existing observation schemes in order to further investigate a particular phenomenon or to replicate previous research in classrooms, there are situations in which the nature of the research question necessitates the development of a new instrument. This has been the case in this study, since no existing observation instrument, at least to my knowledge, has been developed for use in language classrooms in order to investigate the particular aspect of teachers' classroom behaviour which is the focus of this study.

#### **4.4.a.: The focus of the observation scheme: the teacher's role.**

Among the many changes the communicative approach has brought to the teaching profession, the redefinition and expansion of teacher roles has probably been the most significant and challenging one. Many authors (Andrews 1983, Ellis 1988, Legutke & Thomas 1991, Parkinson & Maher 1988) have pointed out that the essence of CLT lies in the alteration of teacher role; the value of communicative objectives, materials and activities can be lost if the teacher fails to alter his/her traditional role in the classroom.

It follows, thus, that the types of role the teacher adopts in the classroom are powerful indicators of the implementation (or not) of a communicative learner-centred approach. Yet, despite their immediate relevance and importance for CLT, teacher roles have not been investigated by any observation scheme designed specifically for use in communicative language classes.

Apart from being a key concept of CLT, the decision to observe teacher roles in the classroom was due to a number of other reasons:

Fullan & Pomfret (1977) in their review of 15 program implementation studies assert that curriculum innovations that involve changes in the role relationship between teachers and learners are the most difficult to implement

because many institutional constraints interfere with the development of role. Hence, the observation of teachers' role(s) in English language classrooms in Greece will give an indication as to the feasibility and practicality of implementing a communicative learner-centred approach within an essentially teacher-centred context (see chapter 3).

Secondly, the investigation of roles addresses issues relating to classroom behaviour and underlying values and attitudes of teachers (Legutke & Thomas 1991, Wright 1987, Wright 1990, Wright personal communication). Hence, the roles the teacher adopts in the classroom will be influenced by his/her attitudes towards the teaching/learning process. As has been mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, part of this study involves the construction and use of an attitude scale which aims at measuring teachers' attitudes towards the communicative learner-centred approach. The observations of teacher role can thus be crossvalidated with data obtained by the rating scale, and the findings may serve to indicate whether roles are indeed influenced by, or compatible with educational attitudes.

#### **4.4.b.: Structure of the observation scheme.**

The observation of teacher role is certainly not a simple and straightforward focus of empirical enquiry. A teacher's role cannot be judged on the occurrence of a single behavioural act. It is what researchers would call a "high-inference" phenomenon, a phenomenon that can only be inferred on the basis of a number of teacher behaviours both verbal and non-verbal.

The nature of teacher role being such, I decided that the observation scheme should consist of two parts. In the first part of the observation sheet, similar to systematic observation instruments, there would be a number of operationally defined low-inference categories that relate and give rise to various teacher roles, while in the second, more "ethnographic" in character, I would describe in as

much detail as possible the teacher's verbal and non-verbal behaviour taking into account contextual features such as classroom atmosphere, and student participation.

#### **4.4.c.: The unit of analysis of the observation scheme.**

The unit of analysis is probably the most crucial aspect of an observation scheme because it involves assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning. Three main units of analysis have been employed in various observation schemes, namely temporal units, analytical units and phenomenal units (see Dunkin & Biddle 1974 for a discussion). For the purposes of this study it was decided that the observation scheme would employ a phenomenal unit, that of pedagogical activity, as its basic unit of analysis. The reasons for this decision are:

1) The use of activity as a unit of analysis has been used by a number of studies investigating classroom implementation of the communicative approach (Frohlich, Spada & Allen 1985, Mitchell et al 1981).

2) The unit of analysis, activity, is easily comprehensible by teachers and corresponds to the teachers' conceptualisation of lessons. Teachers make sense of their lessons in terms of the activities they carry out and not in terms of theories and methods (Allen, Frohlich & Spada 1984, Nunan 1989,1990, Swaffar, Arens & Morgan 1982). The division of lessons into activities, being consistent with the division made by teachers, makes activity a valid unit of analysis (McIntyre 1980).

3) Most importantly, the roles the teacher should adopt in a communicative approach are dependent on the type of activity being carried out. Different activities have a cluster of different roles associated with them (see Harmer 1983, Littlewood 1981). Moreover, the various roles a teacher must perform in relation

to an activity are implicit in the rubrics of the activity itself (Nunan 1989, Wright 1987).

4) Finally, the boundaries between activities are easily recognisable since teachers tend to use framing moves (e.g. "right", "now", "OK") at the beginning or end of an activity, and focusing moves which help sum up a completed activity or indicate the beginning of a new activity or topic. Mitchell et al (1981) have found that such moves to signal changes in lesson activity are used with considerable consistency by teachers.

For the purposes of the study, activity is defined as any language teaching/learning endeavour which has a particular objective(s), focus, topic, a specified working procedure and involves the teacher and learner in a distinctive configuration of roles. This definition of activity has combined features of Mitchell's et al (1981) unit of analysis (i.e. segment) and Breen's (1987b) definition of "task".

#### **4.4.d.: The categories of the observation scheme.**

The categories used in the observation scheme have been influenced by the first part of the COLT observation scheme developed by Allen, Frohlich & Spada (1984), to measure differences in the communicative orientation of second language classrooms in the Canadian immersion context, and by the low-inference section of the TALOS observation scheme developed by Ullman & Geva (1984) for the purpose of evaluating an elementary ESL programme. These categories, apart from their relevance to the description of teacher role, were employed in the observation scheme in the belief that any new observation scheme should employ categories used in well-established schedules (see Croll 1986). The categories used in the observation scheme for the description of teacher role(s) are:

1) Activity: type of activity being carried out (e.g. drill, problem solving, role play etc.)

2) Participant organisation: a) teacher/student, b) teacher/students (whole class), c) students working in pairs, d), students working in groups, e) individual (each student working on individual work). This category was employed because of its immediate relevance to teacher role. For example, a group work activity would require completely different teacher roles from a whole class activity. As Nunan (1989, p. 91) argues, "the classroom arrangements specified or implied in the task, will be an important factor influencing roles and relationships".

3) Activity focus: this category was divided into: 1)Form: a)sound (pronunciation work), b)word (vocabulary work), c)grammar (explicit grammatical focus). 2) Function: e.g. giving directions, apologising. 3) Sociolinguistic: explicit focus on sociolinguistic norms and conventions. 4)Free: This subcategory was included since many of the activities in the textbook were specifically designed for free communication. These activities are usually towards the end of units.

Again, the focus that an activity has, will give rise to different teacher roles. For example, if the focus of an activity is on form (accuracy) one would expect the teacher to act as instructor and intervene to correct errors. In communication activities, however, where the focus is on the negotiation of meaning "...he (the teacher) will not intervene after initiating the proceedings but will let learning take place..."(Littlewood 1981,p. 92).

4) Topic: (e.g. pollution, sports, habits). Although the topic of an activity may not be a significant determinant of teacher role, the relevance of a topic to the students' interests determines to a great extent their degree of involvement

and participation in an activity. Therefore, if such is the case, the teacher will need to make efforts to choose motivating and interesting topics so as to ensure students' participation.

5) Skill focus: a) listening, b) reading, c) writing, d) speaking. Once more, the teacher's role is dependent on the skill focus/foci of an activity. "The teacher as controller is useful during an accurate reproduction stage...during communicative activities or the practice of receptive skills, the teacher as controller is wholly inappropriate"(Harmer 1983, p.201).

6) Teaching medium: a) textbook, b) supplementary authentic, c) supplementary, d) audio, e) visual. One of the prerequisites of the communicative approach is that the teacher responds to the students' emerging needs. A textbook alone is never able to cater for the needs of all students. Therefore, the teacher who supplements textbook activities with other materials (ideally authentic) showing sensitivity to the needs and interests of the students, does indeed prove that he/she is a facilitator of the learning process.

7) Communicative features of the activity: This feature has not been employed in any observation scheme developed specifically for communicative classrooms<sup>4</sup>. This seems surprising since these features (listed below) are essential indicators of the degree of "communicativeness" of an activity and also determinants of the quality and quantity of students' output (Doughty & Pica 1986). The more communicative features a task embodies, the less central the teacher's role is expected to become. The communicative features of the activity, which have been adopted from Harmer (1983), Johnson (1982) and Nunan (1989), are:

a) Information gap: which involves the transfer of information from one person to another.

b) Information transfer: which involves the transfer of information from one form to another.

c) Authenticity: the degree to which an activity is authentic, i.e. simulates a task which the students would be expected to carry out outside the classroom.

d) Personal involvement: the degree to which the activity requires learners to utilise their personal experience and knowledge of the world in order to carry out the task.

e) Prediction: whether the activity allows the students to predict what will follow or happen next.

f) Task dependency: the extent to which a task, in order to be carried out, requires the use of information supplied in a previous task.

g) Opportunity for genuine interaction: the extent to which a task allows students to negotiate meanings with unpredictable outcomes.

8) Language control (by the teacher): a) high, b) medium, c) low, d) unpredictable. This is probably the only "high-inference" category in the scheme. It refers to the extent to which the teacher allows students to communicate. It will be rated at the end of the activity depending on the amount of teacher intervention and student output observed during the activity.

These eight categories are ticked as each activity is carried out. The categories take up the first part of the observation scheme. The second part of the observation scheme was used for a description of how the activity was carried out. The description included a detailed account of the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the teacher during the activity (e.g. where the teacher stood, the teacher's use of realia and praise, whether he/she interrupted or reprimanded students). The description also included other features of the classroom context, i.e. size of class, number of students, classroom atmosphere, students' involvement and participation.

#### 4.5.: Pilot study of the observation scheme.

The observation scheme was tested twice in October 1991 in England. I used the scheme to observe two experienced language tutors teaching English to overseas adult students following a one-year intensive English course at the



University of Warwick. The first lesson I observed was grammar focused, and the second, vocabulary focused. This testing procedure did in fact prove that the scheme could reflect differences in teacher roles. Boundaries between activities were easily identifiable; as activities became more communicative and uncontrolled, the less central and directing the teacher would be. The lessons contained a range of activities involving a variety of classroom arrangements (pair work, group work, individual). As the lessons progressed, the activities exhibited more communicative features and the teachers' role changed accordingly.

This testing process and a subsequent discussion with lecturers from the Centre for English Language Teaching of the University of Warwick on the format and content of the observation scheme, made necessary certain modifications and additions:

1) Since the observation scheme did not cater for the situation in which students in groups were working on different activities, it was decided that a category "parallel activities" should be included.

2) In the "communicative features" category, the subcategory "authenticity" was divided into "authentic input" and "authentic purpose"; the former refers to the degree to which materials are authentic and offer students authentic language to work on, while the latter refers to the degree to which the activity the learner is to carry out is similar to tasks he/she would perform outside the class.

3) In the "language control" category, the subcategories were expanded into +high, -high, +medium, -medium, +low, -low, because it was thought that the initial distinction was "rough" and by inserting (+) and (-) to each subcategory the observer could more easily code the degree of language control.

The modified (and final) version of the observation scheme can be found in Appendix 1.

The modified observation scheme was also tested once in Greece (November 1991), where I observed a teacher at a private language institute teaching English to young students (8-13 years old) at the elementary level. This test was particularly useful for two reasons. Firstly, it provided an opportunity to observe a Greek teacher teaching young Greek students; thus, this observation was more representative of the lessons which would be observed in the research study. Secondly, the Greek teacher was not trained in the communicative approach, nor made any pretence to be; the lesson was teacher-centred, activities were traditional, drill-like, form-focused activities, exhibited no communicative features and learners' output was extremely limited. Thus, the lesson I observed in Greece was quite different from the first I observed in which teachers were experienced communicative teachers. A comparison of the two observations (in England and in Greece) made evident the differences in the roles of "traditional" and "communicative" teachers.

#### **4.6.: Reliability and validity of the observation scheme.**

The goal of any observation scheme is to produce findings that are real and meaningful for teachers and their learners. The extent to which findings are meaningful is dependent on the reliability and validity of the observation instrument. Although there are various techniques that can be used to assess reliability and validity (see Chaudron 1988, 1991, Frick & Semmel 1978, Hoge 1985), the developers of various observation instruments have rarely reported reliability and validity estimates. The reason for this is that both are extremely difficult to achieve, especially when findings are based on interpretation or inference.

Since in this study I was the only user of the observation scheme, the establishment of interobserver reliability was not necessary; intraobserver reliability, however, was. Intraobserver reliability refers to the extent to which an observer is consistent within himself and can be measured by applying the coding scheme a few times to the same sample of classroom interaction and comparing the results of each attempt. This type of reliability, although not measured in the aforementioned way, may be considered fairly established since the categories of the scheme have been defined in operational terms by myself, and from the fact that during the pilot testing of the scheme no difficulties were presented in the coding of the various categories. However, the reliability of the second part of the scheme is extremely difficult to establish because of its inherently "subjective" nature. It is believed that the analysis of the lesson transcripts, which were carried out on the same lessons after the completion of the live observations, may assist in the determination of the scheme's reliability.

The validity of an observation instrument refers to the extent to which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure. The construct validity of the scheme (which involves the determination of whether the underlying concept of the instrument, i.e. "role", has some psychological reality and can be captured through the various measurement procedures) has been fairly established since the scheme has used categories employed in validated observation schemes developed for the purpose of measuring different communicative aspects of second language classrooms. Moreover, based on the literature of CLT, it has been argued by various methodologists that the roles a teacher should adopt are dependent on the type of activity being carried out. Consequently, the concept of "role" is directly related to "activity" and the various manifestations of "role" are dependent on the particular features of the activity. The criterion validity of the observation scheme (which is usually measured by comparing the results of the scheme with the results of another instrument measuring the same trait as that of

the scheme) was assessed by comparing the findings of the observation schedule with the results of the rating scale and the data obtained through the interviews.

#### **4.7.: Analysis of lesson transcripts.**

As has been mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the observed lessons were also recorded. The decision to record and transcribe the lessons was made in the belief that the analysis of lesson transcripts would provide further, complementary evidence of the roles the teachers adopt in the classroom and could be used to validate the data obtained from the observation scheme. The analysis of lesson transcripts focused on two features of teachers' verbal interaction:

a) the types of error the teacher corrects and the strategies he/she uses in correcting them. The analysis of teachers' treatment of learner errors was used to determine whether the way the teacher treats errors and the types of errors he/she corrects during various activities is indicative of a communicative learner-centred approach. The aim of the analysis is to show whether the Greek teachers have revised their attitudes to errors by correcting mainly those that impair communication (and in such a way that communication and motivation is not impaired) and ignoring other errors that are trivial for the achievement of the activity's objective. The analysis entailed the identification and classification of all learner errors, a quantification of the types of errors teachers corrected and ignored and an examination of the strategies the teachers employed for the correction of learner errors. The aim of the latter examination is to reveal whether teachers inhibit learners' attempts at communication by constantly intervening and "overtly" correcting, and whether teachers allow learners to self-correct. For this analysis Chaudron's (1977a) typology of teacher error corrective reactions was used.

b) classification and quantification of teacher questions. The aim of this analysis is to reveal whether teachers have relinquished their control over the discourse by allowing for student initiative and the flow of genuine interaction in the classroom. The findings of this analysis will help exemplify whether the Greek English language teachers have, in fact, adopted to their new roles as co-communicator and user of language and whether they have trained learners to become active in the classroom interaction process.

#### **4.8.: Interviews: content and purpose.**

Apart from the classroom observations, interviews were carried out with the observed teachers. The purpose of the interviews is to provide a more in-depth understanding of teachers' classroom practices, by probing further into issues of teacher role, teachers' understanding of the communicative approach and the constraints and difficulties teachers face in the implementation of the communicative learner-centred approach. Data obtained from the interviews, apart from providing a rich source of qualitative data from the teachers' perspective, were also used in crossvalidating the findings of the other methods used in the study.

The interviews were "focused" (Moser & Kalton 1971) and consisted of a series of open-ended factual and opinion questions. In the construction of the interview schedule special attention was paid to the wording of the questions; conscious attempts were made to avoid the use of linguistic terminology which the teachers may not be acquainted with, thus minimising the possibility of intimidating teachers. Also, efforts were made to avoid using leading questions portraying my point of view on an issue; questions were worded as "neutrally" as possible.

The group of factual questions asked teachers about their involvement (if any) in the project, their teacher training experiences, their relation with the educational supervisor, whether the teachers use the communicative approach in their classes and which features of the approach they find most applicable, and what students' reactions were in relation to the textbooks. The rest of the questions deal with teachers' opinions of the communicative approach and the learner-centred philosophy, how teachers see their role in the classroom, whether the teachers find it feasible to use the communicative approach in Greek secondary schools, teachers' opinions of the teachers' guides, and the problems teachers face concerning the teaching of English in Greek secondary schools (see Appendix 2, for the interview schedule).

#### **4.9: The study's questionnaire.**

Questionnaires have been used extensively in educational research for a variety of purposes. As far as curriculum implementation studies are concerned, questionnaires have been regarded as an invaluable and indispensable tool for grasping teachers' understanding of, and attitudes to an innovation project since exclusive focus on teachers' classroom practices may reveal that teachers exhibit "desirable" behaviours but by no means proves that teachers understand the principles underlying them (Fullan & Pomfret 1977).

This study's questionnaire, which will be used in conjunction with the classroom observations and interviews, purports to gather information on those factors that have been suggested (or proved) to affect teachers' implementation of innovation projects (see chapter 3). The study's questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first consists of an attitude scale designed to describe and measure teachers' attitudes towards the communicative learner-centred approach, placing teachers on a continuum ranging from traditional teacher-centred to communicative learner-centred. The second part consists of a series of 28

closed-type questions concerning teachers' opinions of the process and product of the innovation and reports of their classroom practices.

#### **4.10: Part 1: Attitude scale.**

##### **4.10.a: Why study attitudes?**

The importance of teacher attitudes and their influence on teacher behaviour and the learning process has been recognised by a number of teacher educators and educational researchers (see Breen 1991, Burns 1990, Clark & Yinger 1979, De Garcia & Reynolds 1977, Dunkin & Biddle 1974, Gayle 1979, Grotjahn 1991, Guthrie 1984, Nunan 1990, Shavelson & Stern 1981, Wright 1990). It is probably, however, in curriculum innovations where teachers' attitudes play a most crucial role determining to a large extent the success or failure of innovation projects (see chapter 3). It follows, thus, that an investigation into teachers' attitudes towards the philosophy of the innovation, can provide the researcher with a means of understanding the difficulties teachers face in implementing curriculum innovations (Dingwall 1985). It is believed that by uncovering the kind of knowledge and beliefs Greek English language teachers hold concerning the teaching/learning process, a more in-depth understanding of their classroom practices and the roles they adopt in the classroom can be obtained. Such an investigation may also help teachers themselves, by forcing them (via the questionnaire) to clarify their opinions and beliefs about the educational process (De Garcia & Reynolds 1977).

##### **4.10.b.: Studying teachers' attitudes; but how?**

There have been a variety of methods employed in educational research for the study of teachers' attitudes and beliefs, i.e. interviews (Mitchell 1988a), variations of Kelly's grid technique (Munby 1982, Olson 1981), stimulated recall methods (Mitchell & Marland 1989), and to a greater extent, questionnaires

consisting of open-ended (and closed) items (Bennet 1976, Brown & McIntyre 1978). Although such methods can obtain fairly reliable indications of teacher attitudes, they cannot, and should not, make any pretence to measure attitudes in the strict sense. Interviews and grid techniques, apart from being time consuming and impossible to carry out with more than a handful of respondents, can only provide a description of teacher attitudes. Open-ended questionnaires, on the other hand, can only count how many people choose to express certain views. "To go further than this, to try and combine the answers a respondent gives to the various questions into a measurement of the extremity and intensity of his overall attitude requires a different analytical approach; and this is where scaling devices find their place"(Moser & Kalton 1971,p.350).

A considerable number of rating scales have been developed by educational researchers in order to measure teachers' attitudes towards various educational issues (see Shaw & Wright 1967, for an anthology of attitude scales). Despite the abundance of rating scales for use with teachers of content classrooms, in the language teaching field, the development of attitude scales has been scarce. Swaffar et al (1982) developed an attitude scale in order to measure teachers' attitudes towards empiricist and rationalist approaches to language teaching. Within the field of teacher education, De Garcia & Reynolds (1977) constructed a scale measuring teachers' attitudes towards traditional, audiolingual and communicative approaches to language teaching. This scale, however, was developed with the purpose of helping student teachers clarify their values and as a starting point for group discussion in teacher training courses; no estimates of reliability or validity are provided.

Unfortunately, a rating scale aimed at measuring language teachers' attitudes towards the communicative learner-centred approach has not been developed, at least to my knowledge. Although some social psychologists (Shaw & Wright 1967) urge researchers to use well-established rating scales with high reliability



and validity, rather than attempt to construct a new one (because of the considerable amount of work and the many pitfalls such a venture entails), the absence of a scale designed specifically to measure attitudes towards the communicative learner-centred approach, necessitated the development of such a scale for the purposes of this study.

#### **4.10.c: The concept of attitude and its relation to behaviour.**

For the purposes of this study, attitudes are defined as "a set of affective reactions towards the attitude object, derived from the concepts or beliefs that the individual has concerning the object and predisposing the individual to behave in a certain manner towards the attitude object" (Shaw & Wright 1967, p.13). In other words, attitudes are viewed as a person's disposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to a given object. This definition apart from its being in line with the more popular and recent view of attitudes held by social psychologists (see Edwards 1957, Fishbein & Ajzen 1975, Oskamp 1977), relates directly to the main function that attitude scales fulfil, i.e. the measurement of the strength or intensity of one's favourableness or unfavourableness (affective reactions) towards a particular attitude object.

Although the purpose of this study's attitude scale is not to infer or predict teachers' classroom practices (since teachers will be observed), but rather to understand teachers' classroom behaviour and assess whether it can be (partly) due to their attitudes towards the communicative learner-centred approach, it was felt that a carefully constructed attitude scale may assist in the achievement of this aim. Social psychologists (Bentler & Speckhart 1981, Fishbein & Ajzen 1975, Sjoberg 1982, Weigel & Newman 1976), compelled by the faults of previous attitude scales, have proposed a number of methodological refinements so as to ensure a closer relation between attitudes and behaviour. In brief these are:

a) evidence should be provided of the internal consistency of the attitude measure (i.e. the scale) and the measure's validity derived from an independent sample (Weigel & Newman 1976),

b) The attitude and corresponding behaviour should be at the same level of specificity when investigated (Deaux & Wrightsman 1984),

c) "attitude and behaviour inquiries should refer to behavioural events or objects with which the subjects are well-acquainted"(Bentler & Speckhart 1981, p.229 ),

d) the use of a multi-item scale is more effective than measurement by a single-item and the use of a behavioural criterion scale made up of several actions instead of just one (Oskamp 1977).

Thus, in the construction of the attitude scale, the methodological suggestions made by social psychologists were taken into account: the scale was tested for reliability and validity, attitude statements were at the same level of specificity as the behaviours I observed (e.g. statements involved issues of teacher roles, teachers' use of activities, teachers' error correcting strategies; these behaviours were also the focus of the classroom observations), attitude statements avoided the use of specialist terminology and referred to concepts with which the teachers were acquainted, and, finally, the attitude scale consisted of a range of items covering the most important aspects of the communicative learner-centred approach.

#### **4.10.d: The study's attitude scale: Content and process of construction.**

Attitude scales are crude measuring devices. As Oppenheim (1966, p.121) states, "their chief function is to divide people roughly into number of broad groups with regard to a particular attitude. Such scales cannot by themselves be

expected to provide us with subtle insights in an individual case". The most frequently used methods of measuring attitudes (Thurstone, Guttman, Likert techniques<sup>5</sup>) require respondents to indicate their agreement or disagreement with a set of statements about the attitude object. The attitude is inferred from the way in which statements are endorsed by the respondents.

The rating scale constructed for this study followed the Likert technique of scale construction. The Likert type scale (or method of summated ratings) is the most widely used method of scale construction because of its relative ease of construction, its use of fewer statistical assumptions (in contrast to Guttman scales) and the fact that no judges are required (as in Thurstone scaling). Although this method is not without its disadvantages (lack of reproducibility, i.e. the same score may be obtained in different ways; lack of a neutral point, i.e. scores in the middle region could be due to lack of knowledge or to the presence of strongly positive and strongly negative responses), the decision to use this technique was based on several reasons:

1) Reliability of Likert scales tends to be very good and often higher than that of corresponding Thurstone scales (Oppenheim 1966).

2) The procedures of item analysis (process of judging which items are the most suitable) employed in Likert scales, "purifies" the scale (Oskamp 1977) and enables it to achieve the principle of unidimensionality; it ensures that ambiguous items as well as items that elicit responses based on factors other than the attitude under consideration are eliminated (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975).

c) Likert scales provide more precise information about a respondent's degree of agreement or disagreement (in contrast to both Thurstone and Guttman scales) and respondents prefer this to a simple agree/disagree option (Oppenheim 1966).

As is common to all methods of scale construction, the first step in the process is to compose a series of statements that cover all the aspects of the attitude under study (i.e. the communicative learner-centred approach) and in such a way that statements can distinguish between those holding favourable and those holding unfavourable attitudes (i.e. neutral or extreme statements should be avoided). The attitude statements for this study's attitude scale were composed on the basis of an extensive review of the communicative approach and the reports of the Council of Europe. Since the communicative approach is not a uniform method and many versions have been developed, conscious efforts were made to develop statements that referred to the version of the communicative approach adopted by the Greek English language curriculum and textbooks. Thus, the teachers' guides to the textbooks and the project's rationale (Dendrinis 1985b, 1988) proved invaluable guiding forces in the construction of the statements. Many statements were taken verbatim from the teachers' guides and from various authors writing for the Council of Europe (Edelhoff 1985a, Sheils 1988, Trim 1985, Van Ek 1985, 1986). Other statements were composed based on the writings of various communicative methodologists (Andrews 1983, Harmer 1983, Littlewood 1981, Nunan 1988, Richards & Rodgers 1986). In general, efforts were made to ensure that the statements fell within the teachers' frame of reference, that they were not ambiguous or extreme and did not contain technical terminology.

The statements covered the main aspects of the communicative learner-centred approach; namely, group work, error correction, place and importance of grammar, needs of students, the role of the teachers, and the importance of skills. The initial pool of items consisted of 85 statements (40 favourable and 45 unfavourable). Many statements overlapped in content but differed in wording; this was done in order to determine which wording was best. The items were placed in random order and next to the items was a grid consisting of five

columns: strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, strongly disagree; each column had a particular value, i.e. 5,4,3,2,1 respectively. Respondents were asked to tick the appropriate box representing their degree of favourableness or unfavourableness with each item. It was decided that a high score on the scale would imply a favourable attitude. Thus, favourable statements would be scored 5 for "strongly agree" down to 1 for "strongly disagree"; for the scoring of unfavourable items the scoring was reversed (unfavourable items scored 1 for "strongly agree" up to 5 for "strongly disagree"). The total score is obtained by adding up the item scores. The possible range of scores on this initial pool of items was from 85 to 425.

The next step in the construction of a Likert scale is to determine which statements are the most representative and successful in measuring the attitude in question. An item analysis is carried out in order to determine the internal consistency of the scale. This is done by giving the initial pool of items to a representative sample of the target population and then determining which items have the highest correlations by correlating each respondent's score on each item with his/her total score minus the score for the item in question. Thus, after compiling the items and being checked by my supervisor, the scale was given to a sample of non-native English language teachers. The scale was initially given to 33 MA students who had completed their MA degree in English Language Teaching at Warwick (September 1991); 16 questionnaires were returned. At the beginning of October 1991, the attitude scale was given to 27 students who had arrived for their MA course in English Language Teaching at the University of Warwick; 25 questionnaires were returned. Another 24 questionnaires were given to students beginning their MA course in ELT at the University of Birmingham; 10 were returned. Finally, another 10 questionnaires were given to students beginning their Diploma degree in ELT at the University of Warwick; 9 were returned.

The respondents to whom the attitude scale was given were considered "representative" of the Greek English language teachers, in that the vast majority were experienced non-native teachers of English and had not received much training in the communicative approach (apart from the initial sample).

In total 60 respondents returned their questionnaires. With this sample the item analysis was carried out; the correlations were computed using a calculator especially designed for statistical computations. Each correlation was checked (computed) twice. The items with the strongest correlations ( $r > 0.30$ ) were then selected. From this analysis, 18 favourable statements and 34 unfavourable items had correlations over 0.30. The larger number of unfavourable items with strong correlations was due to the fact that some were extremely worded. Such items made respondents answer in the same way regardless of their attitude; consequently, these items were rejected. Since the favourable items were less in number, the selection process for the final version of the scale was based upon them. The favourable items fell into 6 thematic groups: 1) group/pair work, 2) nature and correction of errors, 3) roles of learners and teacher, 4) place/importance of grammar, 5) attention to students' needs, 6) philosophy of the communicative learner-centred approach. Unfavourable items with strong correlations that fell into these categories were then selected, rendering a scale that consisted of 24 statements (12 favourable and 12 unfavourable). Each category consisted of 4 statements (2 favourable and 2 unfavourable).

#### **4.10.e.: Pilot study-reliability-validity of the study's attitude scale.**

The split-half method was used to determine the reliability of the study's attitude scale. This is the most widely used method and measures reliability by dividing the scale into two matched halves and correlating the scores of each half. The correlation coefficient obtained from this relates to half of the test's full length and has to be corrected to give the "stepped up" reliability of the test as a

whole. The Spearman Brown Prophecy Formula<sup>6</sup> is used to estimate the reliability of the scale as a whole.

In order to test the scale's reliability, the 24 statements were divided into two parts (each part consisting of 12 statements, 6 favourable and 6 unfavourable and each part covering all six thematic groups). The initial sample's (60 respondents) responses in each part were correlated. The split-half reliability coefficient was  $r = 0.68$ ; the corrected split-half reliability coefficient, using the Spearman Brown formula, was  $r_w = 0.75$ . The questionnaire was then given to 13 BEd in TESOL students at the University of Warwick and the split-half method was applied in the same way to their responses. The corrected split-half reliability coefficient was  $r_w = 0.55$ . This disappointing result was probably due to the students' inconsistency in responding (certain favourable and unfavourable statements were answered in the same manner). Their answers were examined more closely to determine whether the wording of the statements was confusing. After this examination certain statements were rejected and were substituted by others similar in content but slightly different in wording, but all with strong correlations ( $r =$  or  $> 0.30$ ). In addition, two more statements were added, rendering 26 statements in all. The thematic categories changed slightly as well; i.e. a) group/pair work (4 statements), b) nature/correction of errors (4 statements), c) teacher/learner roles (6 statements) and d) general features of the communicative approach (12 statements). Each category had an equal amount of favourable and unfavourable statements. These 26 statements were again divided into two parts (each part consisting of 13 statements and covering all four thematic categories). The initial sample's responses on each of these parts was correlated; this time the corrected split-half reliability coefficient was  $r_w = 0.82$  (a much more confident and higher level of reliability).

An interview with lecturers from the Centre for English Language Teaching at the University of Warwick followed to discuss the content and construction

process of the attitude scale. The lecturers found the wording of the statements unambiguous and straightforward but expressed their reservations about two antithetical statements concerning teacher/learner roles, namely. 1) the teacher and learner in the language classroom should be seen as equal partners in a cooperative relationship, and 2) the relationship between the teacher and the student is a relationship between a child who needs direction, control and guidance and a teacher who is an expert in providing direction, control and guidance. The lecturers found that both statements could be agreed to by a teacher without his/her being inconsistent, since the teacher could answer the first having adults in mind and the second having children in mind.

Thus, after the interview, the initial sample's answers on these two items were correlated. A low correlation coefficient was found ( $r=0.31$ ) proving the point made by the lecturers. These two statements were then rejected from the scale. The remaining 24 statements were once more tested using the split-half method (again the 24 statements were divided into two parts, each part covering all categories and consisting of an equal amount of favourable and unfavourable items). This time the corrected split-half reliability coefficient was  $r_w=0.81$ .

During the interview with the lecturers it was also felt that before using the scale on the target sample, it would be wise to get the opinion of an expert on attitude scale construction. I visited two lecturers, one on social research methodology from the Dept. of Politics and a Professor of social psychology (both at the University of Warwick) and explained in detail the procedures I had followed in the construction of the scale. Both found the procedures sound and in order, but suggested that I retest the final scale for reliability on a sample of Greek English language teachers. The Professor of social psychology also suggested that it would be wise to use the test-retest method of assessing reliability on the initial sample, since this method corresponds more closely to



the conceptual notion of "reliability". However, this proved impossible since the questionnaires given to the initial sample were all anonymous.

Thus, upon my arrival in Greece, following the suggestions made by the two lecturers, I distributed the attitude scale to 40 Greek English language teachers teaching English at private language institutes within the Athens area. 37 questionnaires were returned and the split-half method was applied to their responses. The correlation between the two parts was  $r=0.78$ , while the corrected split-half reliability was  $r_w=0.88$ . This coefficient proved that the scale had a high level of internal consistency, since as Oppenheim (1966) points out, most Likert scales achieve a reliability of 0.85. After this reliability check, I had discussions with the Greek English language teachers who had completed the attitude scale concerning the wording of the statements. All teachers found the statements straightforward and clear; none had caused them any problems of comprehension. Thus, these 24 statements constituted the final version of the scale.

The procedures until now have proved the scale's reliability but not its validity. "By validity is meant the success of a scale in measuring what it sets out to measure, so that differences between individual scores can be taken as representing true differences in the characteristic under study" (Moser & Kalton 1971, p. 355). The assessment of a scale's content validity, i.e. that all items of the scale cover the full range of the attitude in a balanced way and that each item contains a common thread of the attitude under study, is primarily a matter of judgement. The content validity of the scale was established in two ways:

a) by an extensive review of the literature of the communicative approach and by incorporating in the scale the most pertinent aspects of the communicative learner-centred approach as identified by methodologists in the field.

b) through an interview with lecturers at the Centre for ELT; all lecturers found that the scale covered in a balanced way the most important features of the communicative learner-centred approach.

The concurrent validity of the scale (which is assessed by comparing the results of the scale with some relevant observable criterion) was assessed during the field study where teachers were observed in their classrooms and given the scale. The classroom observations focused on the same aspects of the communicative approach as those referred to in the attitude statements. It is believed that a congruence between teachers' classroom practices and their scores in the attitude scale will provide indications of the scale's validity.

#### **4.11.: The purpose, content and pilot study of the study's questionnaire.**

The purpose of the questionnaire is to attempt to assess the teachers' beliefs and opinions on certain aspects of the communicative learner-centred approach and teachers' "behavioural intentions" (what teachers say they do in the classroom). Moreover, the questionnaire aims to assess whether other factors that have been suggested to affect classroom implementation of innovation (the influence of the educational context, teachers' non-involvement in the innovation process, teachers' opinions of the practicality of the innovation and teachers' opinions as to the adequacy of their training) actually affect the Greek teachers' efforts in implementing the communicative approach in their classrooms.

Since the attitude scale would be attached to the questionnaire, it was felt that the latter should be relatively short, straightforward and easy to answer. Therefore, all questions were of the closed type (yes/no and multiple choice). Although closed type questions have several disadvantages (loss of spontaneity, they force the respondent to choose between alternatives), they are, nevertheless,

easier and quicker to answer since they require no writing and their quantification is more straightforward and more reliable than open-ended questions (Oppenheim 1966). Moreover, it was felt that if open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire its completion would be time-consuming and this might affect the response rate.

In the wording of the questions the suggestions made by experts in the field of questionnaire construction (Moser & Kalton 1971, Oppenheim *ibid.*, Sudman & Bradburn 1982) were taken into account. Thus, conscious efforts were made to avoid using leading words, terminology, embarrassing or threatening questions and multiple concepts within a single question. Also, as far as multiple choice questions were concerned, attempts were made to include all the possible alternatives (this was also helped by the pilot-testing of the questionnaire). Furthermore, in the sequencing of the questions the "funnel" approach was followed; i.e. the general questions were asked first and the more specific questions followed. This type of question sequence was applied because it has been proposed (Moser & Kalton *ibid.*, Sudman & Bradburn *ibid.*) that if respondents answer specific questions first they may feel they are repeating themselves if they take the answer to the more specific question into consideration. This may in turn affect the respondents' willingness to continue the completion of the questionnaire.

The questions (27 in total) fell into the following thematic groups: The first group of questions dealt with teachers' opinions of the communicative approach, its feasibility of use with Greek secondary school students, teachers' understanding of the learner-centred philosophy and the feasibility of its application in Greek secondary schools. The second group dealt with teachers' opinions of the textbooks, their disadvantages if any, how teachers felt about their non-involvement in the project, how teachers found the textbooks in relation to students' needs. The third group of questions dealt specifically with

teachers' classroom practices, i.e. whether teachers follow the sequence of the textbook, their use of pair/group work activities, which types of errors they correct and when, whether they allow for student initiative in the classroom. This group of questions was considered particularly insightful in assessing whether there are any inconsistencies between what teachers say they do and what they actually do in the classroom. The next group related to teachers' opinions of the teachers' guide and the adequacy of their training. Finally, the last two questions in the questionnaire referred to the teachers' teaching experience. These two questions were included in order to examine whether there were any differences in opinions and attitudes between experienced and inexperienced teachers.

Upon my arrival in Greece, the questionnaire was pilot-tested on a group of 15 secondary school Greek English language teachers beginning a one-year training course at SELME. The questionnaire was given to the teachers at the end of a lesson, during which I explained the purpose of the research and asked them to complete the questionnaire feeling free to make any comments or criticisms as to the wording and content of the questions. Based on the teachers' written and oral comments certain adjustments were made. Specifically, question 9 of the initial questionnaire "Do you believe that the textbook would have been better if Greek teachers had taken part in its production?" and question 10, "Would you have liked to have taken part in the production of the textbook?" were changed into "Have you taken part in the production of the textbook?" and "If no, would you have liked to have taken part?". This was done because a few secondary teachers were in fact involved in the process of producing the materials. Question 13, which asked teachers about the features of the textbook that needed to be changed or improved was supplemented with another alternative (i.e. a workbook is needed). Moreover, another question was added to the questionnaire after carrying out informal interviews with the project's leader (B. Dendrinos) and a teacher who was involved in the initial stages of the

textbooks' production. Both informed me that initially the aim of the team of authors was not to create a series of textbooks but folders containing a series of tasks (graded in terms of their difficulty) which the teacher could use supplementing them with his/her own. However, as the project developed, it was felt that the Greek English language teachers may not be able to cope with such an approach (due mainly to their lack of training). As a result the initial idea was abandoned. This information, however, led to the development of a new question which asked teachers whether they would have preferred a folder of activities rather than a self-contained textbook.

Apart from these changes and additions, all the initial items of the questionnaire were retained since they presented no problems (either in terms of wording or content) to the student teachers and they covered all the issues the study set out to investigate. (The final version of the attitude scale and the questionnaire can be found in the Appendix 3).

#### **4.12: The sample and setting of the study.**

The study involved only Greek English language teachers teaching at public secondary schools. Although private school language teachers are more accessible (no formal permission of access is needed from the Ministry of Education to carry out research in these schools), they were not included in the research since private schools use a variety of textbooks (apart from the textbooks which are the focus of this study) and follow their own syllabi.

Furthermore, the study took place within the Athens area; although this limits the degree to which the results could be generalised to apply to the whole population of Greek English language teachers, practical and financial limitations made impossible the extension of the field research to other areas in Greece.

The field research progressed in two stages: During the first stage, classroom observations were carried out, and the questionnaire was completed by the observed teachers. These teachers were also interviewed. For the selection of the particular schools that were involved in this stage, one criterion was employed; the socio-economic background of the students attending them. This criterion was employed in order to assess whether the type and status of the school influences the teachers' attitudes, way of thinking and performance in class (Morrison & McIntyre 1973).

During the second stage, the questionnaires were distributed to a wider sample of the wider population (87 teachers). Again, this sample involved only Greek English language teachers teaching at public secondary schools. The distribution of the questionnaire to the larger sample was done in order to assess how typical the initial sample of teachers was of the wider population. Although data obtained from this larger sample will not in itself yield substantial evidence regarding teachers' actual classroom practices, it will, nevertheless, provide insights to them and to the importance of the factors that may influence classroom implementation of CLT. Unfortunately, limitations of space did not allow a detailed presentation of the larger sample's questionnaire results. The most significant findings have been presented in the concluding chapter, while the complete results can be found in Appendix 4.

#### **4.13.: The limitations of the study.**

Before proceeding to the following chapters where the implementation and findings of the research instruments will be described, an acknowledgement of the weaknesses of the study is in order, so as to inform the reader of the limits within which the results should be interpreted. It should be noted that the limitations of the study were due more to financial and time constraints rather than carelessness or deliberate lack of scientific rigour.

As far as the research instruments are concerned, the observation scheme has not been tested as rigorously as is required for the determination of its reliability. Although the scheme was pilot-tested three times, intraobserver reliability has not been sufficiently (i.e. statistically) assessed. It is believed that the rigorous and in-depth analysis of the lesson transcripts may give an indication of the scheme's reliability.

Moreover, although the study's attitude scale has been carefully planned and designed (and its reliability and content validity established), it may not be appropriate for all language teaching contexts. As has been explained in the previous sections, the rating scale was designed having the Greek English language curriculum in mind and its application to other contexts where teachers are accustomed to "stronger" versions of CLT, may severely limit the scale's discriminatory "powers".

Another limitation of the study relates to the sampling of the teachers involved in the first stage of the research. Since the selection of the particular schools was not made by myself but by the Greek educational authorities, no pretence can be made about the "randomness" of the sample. (However, it should be noted that the teachers were not selected on the basis of their classroom performance but in terms of the socio-economic background of the schools in which they taught). A further weakness relates to the number of teachers involved. Because of the inherent nature of classroom observations and financial and time constraints, no more than 14 teachers took part in the first stage of the field research. Even though the data obtained from these teachers were analysed in depth, the results and their implications cannot, obviously, be generalised to the wider population.

However, despite these limitations it is believed that the results of the observations coupled with the data obtained from the questionnaire (given to the

observed teachers and to a larger sample of the teacher population) provided a fairly reliable picture of how the Greek English language teachers have responded to the curriculum innovation and provided insights into the difficulties teachers face in implementing the curriculum in their everyday classroom practices.

#### NOTES:

1) For a discussion of the "observer paradox" see Labov (1972) (who coined the term), Saville & Troike (1989) and Allwright & Bailey (1991).

2) See Allwright (1983) for a brief historical overview of classroom observation, and Allwright (1988) for an authoritative and detailed review of the history and present state and foci of classroom observation methods.

3) See Galton (1978) and Dunkin & Biddle (1974) for a collection of observation instruments developed for use in content classrooms, and Chaudron (1988) for a list of observation schemes developed for research in second language classrooms.

4) Only the COLT observation scheme employs one communicative feature of activity (information gap). Although the second part of COLT is titled "Communicative features", these refer to the communicative features of students' utterances (e.g. length and complexity of utterance) rather than to the communicative features of the activity per se.

5) A description of all three methods of attitude scale construction can be found in Moser & Kalton (1971), Nisbet & Entwistle (1970), Oppenheim (1966), Oskamp (1977). For the construction of the study's attitude scale according to the Likert technique, Oppenheim (ibid) and Moser & Kalton (ibid) proved the most accessible and invaluable sources of information.

6) The Spearman Brown Prophecy Formula is cited and explained in Moser & Kalton (ibid).



## CHAPTER 5

### *Teachers' Error Correcting Practices*

#### 5.1: Analysis of lesson transcriptions; the transcription process.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the schools, in which the study was carried out, were selected by the Pedagogic Institute of Greece on the basis of the students' socio-economic background. I was granted permission to visit six schools: two schools outside Athens attended by "lower" economic class students, two schools in the centre of Athens attended by "working-class" students, and two schools situated in a "wealthy" northern suburb of Athens<sup>1</sup>. Schools OA1 and OA2 had two teachers respectively for the secondary level. However, only three took part in the study because the fourth teacher in addition to her teaching post also held the post of headmistress and was very reluctant to take part in the research since (in her words) she was extremely busy and had no time for extracurricular activities. Schools CA1 and CA2 had three and two teachers respectively; all five took part in the research. Finally, in schools NA1 and NA2 there were five teachers of English (three and two respectively) but only four took part in the study (one teacher from CA2 declined at the last minute because she was preparing for retirement and was very busy at the time).

Apart from these six schools, for which I had received formal permission of access from the Ministry of Education, I also had the opportunity to visit the school (NA3) which I attended as a student and for which no formal permission was needed. Two teachers from this school (which is situated in a northern suburb of Athens) took part in the research. In sum, thus, 14 teachers from seven schools in Athens took part in the study. From these fourteen teachers, four taught first year classes, six taught second year classes, and four taught third

year classes. The field research, in whole, lasted for three months (7 November 1991 - 30 January 1992). The fourteen teachers were all non-native speakers of English and all held a degree of English Language and Literature from the University of Athens. Only one teacher (K3) (incidentally, the only male teacher who participated in the study), held a postgraduate degree in Linguistics from a University in England. As far as teacher training is concerned, only two teachers (A1, I.2) had completed a one-year teacher training course at the only public teacher training school in Greece (SELMF). The other eleven teachers had only (some almost never) attended two-day training conferences held annually at the University of Athens, or had observed "model" lessons performed by "outstanding" teachers or by educational supervisors in various schools. The teachers' age ranged from 28 to 65 years old; the majority of teachers were in their late 30's to early 50's.

The classroom observations took place after arrangements had been made with the teacher. During the observations conscious attempts were made to select an inconspicuous place (usually the back corners of the classroom) from which to observe and audiotape the class. For the audio-recordings a Sony walkman with recording facilities (microphone extension) was used. The recording started the moment the teacher spoke and ended the moment the teacher assigned homework and the students started to leave their desks. The duration of lessons ranged from 20' minutes (for two lessons) to 50' minutes. The average duration of lessons was 40' minutes.

Transcriptions of the classroom data began after the end of the field research and upon my arrival in England (i.e. February 1992). The transcription process lasted for two months. All 14 recorded lessons were transcribed verbatim and hand-written, rendering 431 A4 pages of classroom data.

For the data transcription some of the conventions mentioned in Allwright & Bailey (1991, Appendix II pp. 222-223) were employed. Thus:

a) Symbols used to identify the speaker are:

T for the teacher

S for the unidentified student

and the first letter of the name of the student when she/he was identified.

Ss for two or more students speaking in unison

T+S when teacher and student spoke at the same time.

b) Symbols used for the text:

( ): parentheses are used for commentary of any kind (e.g. T nods, Ss laugh)

[ ]: brackets are used for translations into English

/ /: slant lines are used either to make evident a student's pronunciation error, or when teacher's pronunciation is deviant

(?): parentheses with a question mark are used for uncertain transcription

X: is used for an incomprehensible item, usually one word

XXX: more than one X is used for incomprehensible items of phrase length

...: dots are used to indicate pauses. For long pauses three dots and pause in parentheses is used, i.e. ...(pause)

" ": quotation marks are used for anything read rather than spoken (i.e. a dialogue from the textbook or a task instruction)

When an utterance is interrupted, this is indicated with a hyphen (-) at the point of the word or phrase when the interruption took place. When words or phrases are uttered with emphasis, these are then underlined. Punctuation marks are also used. In general, efforts were made to present the transcripts as scripts of a play. No complex phonetic conventions or symbols were employed since they did not pertain to the purposes of the research.

## 5.2.: First focus of analysis: 'Teachers' error correcting behaviour.

Teacher error correcting behaviour has been one of the most (if not the most) extensively investigated areas of classroom interaction, probably because of its inevitability in classroom discourse (be it in content or second language classrooms, the teacher is the only source learners have of receiving feedback of their verbal and non-verbal behaviour) and its unusualness as compared to "natural" conversations (Chaudron 1987, 1988).

However, the reason that teacher error correcting behaviour was chosen as a focus of analysis was not due to the plethora of research findings nor to the abundance of research instruments developed for similar analyses, but rather as a means of complementing and substantiating the observation scheme data on teacher roles. Undoubtedly, the roles the teacher adopts in the classroom are not readily observable acts, yet they can be described on the basis of teachers' verbal and non-verbal behaviour. The opportunities the teacher gives to the students to express themselves and use language creatively, and the amount and frequency of feedback the teacher provides, can all give indications of the teacher's attitude towards language learning and the roles he/she adopts in the classroom. This last feature of classroom interaction (feedback) and its relation to teacher attitudes and role has been noted by Coulthard (1977) who argues "...the occurrence and nature of feedback items in a classroom can tell us a lot about how a teacher views language learning" (p.56).

The investigation of teachers' error correcting behaviour as a means of determining whether teachers are subscribing to cognitive or audiolingual approaches and to infer teachers' "teaching style", is not unique to this study. Indeed, since the advent of communicative approaches to language teaching, many researchers have used teacher error correcting behaviour (i.e. amount of teacher correction, teacher correction of errors of form or content, the types of

correction the teacher provides) as an index of teachers' adherence (or not) to this approach (Beretta 1989, Chaudron 1977b, Courchene 1980, Nystrom 1983). Moreover, Nystrom (*ibid.*) has also attempted on the basis of teachers' error correction style to determine teachers' views towards language teaching and learning.

It should be noted that error correction is not regarded as an "undesirable behaviour" in the communicative classroom, nor does this study in any way imply this. In fact, in recent studies error correction has been shown to assist in developing students' accuracy in the target language (Lightbown & Spada 1990, Spada & Lightbown 1993, White et al 1991). There is, thus, a place for error correction in the communicative classroom. Its place, however, can become unjustified and even harmful to language learning if teachers overcorrect (Holley & King 1974), and intervene constantly at the occurrence of every error (Long 1977, Murphy 1986), are inconsistent in their corrections (Allwright & Bailey 1991, Chaudron 1988, Ellis 1990, Fanselow 1977, Long 1977), and, finally, if teachers overtly correct (Krahnke & Christison 1983, Lightbown 1985). Moreover, the place of overt correction becomes even more unjustified during communicative tasks when fluency and "uncontrolled" communication is the aim (Harmer 1983, Littlewood 1992, Norrish 1983, also see chapter 2, section 2.6.)

It is evident that a "communicative teacher" must be very prudent in his/her provision of feedback and be able to correct only when the objective of a task calls for it. A teacher who views his/her role in the classroom as language expert, as instructor and sole possessor of the right to correct, will, obviously, not be able to adapt to the "teacher" requirements of a communicative approach.

A further reason why teacher error correction was selected as a focus of analysis was that teachers' attitudes towards errors are explicitly dealt with in the teachers' guides to the textbooks. Page 12 of the teachers' guide (Dendrinos

1985b) clearly points out that "...the teacher must not intervene constantly at every error...the teacher's attitude must change. First of all, grammatical-syntactical errors which do not impede communication must not concern him/her (teacher) to the degree that they concerned him/her until now. His/her main aim is to ensure that the student understands the necessary expressions and can express the ones he/she wants"(translation from Greek). Moreover, the teachers' guides for the first and second year textbooks, give explicit guidelines to the teachers concerning the type of feedback each and every task in the book calls for. It was thus felt that the investigation of this issue, for which the teachers have been given clear guidance and information, would provide a reliable indication of whether the teachers are using the textbooks as intended by their authors.

The questions which the investigation of teacher error correcting behaviour seeks to answer are:

1) Are the Greek English language teachers selective in their correction of learner errors? Do they tend to correct those errors that impede communication, being tolerant of errors concerning the grammatical-syntactical accuracy of students' speech?

2) How is the teachers' error correcting behaviour manifested in the types of corrective reactions they use? Do teachers provide opportunities to learners to self-correct? How frequently, if at all, do teachers interrupt students' attempts at communication for the sake of error correction? What roles does the teachers' error correcting behaviour reflect?

### **5.3.: Definition of error, error correction and error types employed in the study.**

#### **5.3.a: Definition of error and error correction.**

Like many other well-investigated features of classroom interaction, with the seemingly unambiguous concept of learner error, there seems to be great variation among authors in their definition of error. In fact, even among native speakers, be they language teachers or not, the identification of error is not a clear-cut phenomenon (Davies 1983, Hughes & Lascaratou 1982, see also Ludwig 1982 for a review).

As far as second language researchers are concerned, the clear-cut (and uniform) definition of learner error appears to be problematic. Thus, some researchers (e.g. Lennon 1991) define error as any learner utterance that deviates from target language norms (this definition, however, bears the problem of viewpoint, i.e. whose target language norms, the teacher's or the researcher's?<sup>2</sup> and also precludes the possibility of identifying those errors which are specific to the rules of classroom discourse). Other researchers (e.g. Nystrom 1983) limit their definition of error to those instances of learner utterances which the teacher disapprovingly refers to or treats as incorrect. This definition, on the other hand, precludes the possibility of identifying the types and amount of errors the teachers, deliberately or unconsciously, ignore. In contrast, other researchers of teacher error correcting behaviour (Beretta 1989, Courchene 1980, Naiman et al 1978) choose to avoid this ambiguous area and fail to provide any definition of learner error altogether.

In order to avoid the limitations of a narrowly defined concept of error, a much broader definition was employed for this study. A similar definition has been adopted by Chaudron(1977b), Long(1977), and implicitly by

Fanselow(1977). Thus, for the purposes of this study, a learner error is any grammatical, phonological, syntactic or lexical deviation from the norms of a standard variety of English objectively identified in the speech of learners, any evident misconstrual of factual information, any violation of the rules of classroom discourse or behaviour, and any verbal or non-verbal behaviour that the teacher reacts to negatively or indicates that an improvement of student verbal or other behaviour is required<sup>3</sup>.

This "broad" definition of error was selected in an attempt to classify all learner errors whether linguistic, content or behavioural and whether or not they were reacted to by the teacher. This would allow for the examination of the percentage and types of errors teachers ignore, and the investigation of those student utterances and behaviour to which the teacher reacts negatively, yet are not in any way inappropriate or inaccurate (Fanselow 1977, Nystrom 1983, Walmsley 1980,1982). However, even with this seemingly straightforward definition of error it is acknowledged that for the identification of any error, the context of the utterance and the intent of the teacher is absolutely essential (Chaudron 1977b).

It should be noted at this point, that no distinction is made in the analysis between errors (due to learners' developing and faulty interlanguage) and mistakes (errors of performance due to lack of attention, tiredness etc.) (Corder 1974).

Operational definitions of "correction" suffer from the same inadequacies as those employed for "learner error". Thus, Long (1977), distinguishing between "feedback" and "correction", regards the former as any information supplied by the teacher concerning the "correctness" of learner productions and the latter as the hoped for result of feedback. However, it is virtually impossible to identify corrections in Long's sense within any period of instruction; any researcher



would need to engage in longitudinal research to examine how much "feedback" actually resulted in "correction". Unfortunately, no such study has been undertaken to date (Chaudron 1988). Other conceptions of error correction range from "those treatments which result in establishing learners' consistent (correct) performance", to more narrow definitions of correction as positive or negative reinforcement (see Chaudron 1977a,1987,1988 for a brief review). For this study Chaudron's (1977b) (and most commonly employed by researchers) definition will be used: "a corrective reaction is any reaction by the teacher which transforms, disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of a student's behaviour or utterance"(p.24). This conception encompasses those instances in which the teacher simply informs the learner of the fact of error (without pursuing correction further and by providing the correction him/herself) and those in which the teacher explicitly attempts to elicit a correct student response.

### **5.3.b.: Definition of error types employed in the study.**

Although researchers have investigated similar types of error in their analysis of classroom interaction, many of them (Beretta 1989, Courchene 1980, Fanselow 1977, Nystrom 1983) have not provided explicit criteria for the identification of each error type. Only Chaudron (1977b) has accomplished this. The criteria for the identification of error types listed below have been adapted from Chaudron (1977b pp. 28-28). The examples for each error type have been taken from the data.

Types of error identified in the data are:

#### **1) Pronunciation errors:**

The identification of students' pronunciation errors is a problem-ridden task especially if students are taught by non-native teachers whose own

pronunciation, in some cases, deviates from standard English "norms". In such a situation, one can never be certain whether students' pronunciation errors that were ignored were deliberately done so by the teacher, or whether errors were ignored simply because the teacher did not perceive any pronunciation problem. What is peculiar is that researchers (e.g. Beretta 1989, Courchene 1980) who have dealt with non-native teacher error correcting behaviour seem to ignore this problem. In Beretta's (ibid) study, from a total of 926 errors identified in his data, only 4(!) were classified as phonological. What is more surprising, however, is that these four errors were classified as phonological on the basis of the teachers' failure to understand the students' utterances. The employment of this criterion for the classification of phonological errors contradicts Beretta's claim that all errors, whether treated by the teacher or not, were identified in his data. In Courchene's (1980) study, from the 110 phonological errors that were identified by the author, the majority (i.e. 65) were not treated by the teachers. Could this have been because the two non-native teachers in his study did not perceive many pronunciation errors as such due to their non-native pronunciation? Maybe; but Courchene does not concern himself with this question .

The difficulties in identifying pronunciation errors in non-native teachers' lessons are also implicit in Chaudron's (1977b) definition of phonological errors. In his study, only those pronunciation errors due to "clear interference from English, for example, the use of /u/ for the French /y/"(ibid, p.25) were classified as such. Although this is a valid criterion, it, nevertheless, limits the possibility of identifying those errors which are due to the students' inaccurate knowledge of the phonological rules of French. Furthermore, this criterion makes uncertain Chaudron's treatment of those instances in which the teachers corrected pronunciation errors other than those due to "interference".

In view of these difficulties, the identification and classification of pronunciation errors was carried out selectively. Pronunciation errors that were reacted to by the teachers were, obviously, counted as such. From the pronunciation errors that were ignored by teachers, only those errors which impeded the intelligibility of a word or phrase were added to the pronunciation error category. For example, an error such as:

1) (Teacher K2)

S: eh..they /w ɔ: r/ eh.. very brave soldiers

although ignored by the teacher, was classified as a pronunciation error. In cases of poor sound quality of the students' utterances in the recordings, only those pronunciation errors reacted to by the teacher were quantified.

However, it is acknowledged that even these seemingly straightforward criteria used for the identification of pronunciation errors do not overcome the problem of defining "target" pronunciation within a non-native context. The identification of norms for accurate language use is a relatively unproblematic undertaking; one need only employ a prescriptive grammar as a guide. In a sentence like "The girl are\* going to the supermarket", one would without hesitation identify a grammatical error; but would one judge the pronunciation of "girl" as /gerl/ as a pronunciation error? Indeed, it would be an almost impossible task for accomplished phonologists and phoneticians to define pronunciation norms even within a native context. One need only listen to a speaker from Scotland and a speaker from the south of England to appreciate the fact that standard British pronunciation does not, in reality, exist.

For the purposes of this study pronunciation errors include errors of pronunciation, intonation and stress. More specifically:

a) incorrect pronunciation of vowels or consonants. Many student pronunciation errors identified in the data were to due to direct transfer of the students' mother tongue vowel pronunciation. The five basic vowel sounds in Greek are: /æ /, /i:/, /ɒ/, /e/, and /u:/; therefore sounds like /a:/, /ɔ:/, /ɜ:/, /ɪ/, /ʌ/, /ʊ/, and /ə/ present problems to the students due to their absence in the Greek language. For example,

S: eh./ æ zi:æ /

T(Λ2): Asia , yes, yes.

b) instances in which students have stressed a word on the wrong syllable have been classified as pronunciation errors. E.g.,

(Teacher A1)

(A student is reading his part in a dialogue)

S: "There bathroom..I 'understand

c) instances in which a student has mistakenly intonated a word(s) in a sentence have been classified as pronunciation errors:

(A student is reading aloud a "speech" bubble in a photograph. The photograph depicts a woman, who is a journalist, talking on the phone to her editor)

S: Yes eh.. "What I'm going to write on? Well..-

T(C2): "What I'm going to write on?" Repeat.

d) Finally, inability of a student to pronounce a word (i.e. when a student hesitates in pronouncing a word) was also counted as a pronunciation error since the teachers in such instances immediately perceived the student's difficulty and reacted to it by providing the correct pronunciation. E.g.,

S: He was the king of...of...

T(K2): /Mi:ki:ne/....number?-

2) Grammar errors: These include omission or incorrect use of articles or prepositions, incorrect omission or addition of bound morphemes, incorrect or omission of inflection for number or gender.

E.g. S: First of all, its the producer who eh... has the idea and eh... the money are\* given

or S: People was interviewed eh..\*

T(KO2): [yes]

S: by reporter\*

3) Syntactic errors: These are errors of word order.

E.g. S: We are going to learn about the danger hide the sea\*

4) Lexical errors: These errors include student utterances in which an inappropriate word was provided or those instances in which the student has failed to remember the appropriate English word.

E.g. T(A1): What's this (showing the picture of a bookcase)

S: Library

or (the teacher C2 has asked a student to translate the word "check-out" into Greek)

S: [choose]

5) Content errors: Those student utterances which show incomplete or incorrect knowledge of the concepts relevant to the subject (e.g. incorrect classification of words into grammatical categories, incorrect expression of a grammatical rule). Also, in this category, those student answers which are inappropriate in relation to the information expected in the teacher's question, are included.

E.g.(Teacher L3 has asked students of examples of adjectives ending in -less)

S: [miss](raising hand) ... uncareless\*

or T(C2): Where is the information paragraph?

S: eh...it's about..

At times it was extremely difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between content and lexical errors. When difficulties arose, the context of the learner's utterance and the teachers' subsequent reaction to it, were the most potent determiners in classifying the student's utterance into one or the other category.

6) Discourse errors: This category of errors was first used by Mehan(1974) and has not been included in many investigations (e.g. Beretta 1989, Courchene 1980), probably because such errors can only be orally manifested and are, by nature, procedural referring to the rules of interaction rather than to lack of linguistic or subject matter knowledge. Errors in this category include the use of L1 translations by the student, failure of the student to speak loudly enough, taking up a response or a question out of its order, speaking without recognition (i.e. without having been nominated a turn by the teacher) and use of incomplete but semantically clear phrases. Also, in the data instances in which students hesitated to reply to teachers' questions were classified as discourse errors, since in these instances the students' inability to respond immediately was negatively reacted to by the teachers, probably as a means of eliminating the possibility of students losing attention or diverting from the topic at hand. Since these errors are related to the rules of classroom interaction, it was felt that a quantification of these errors and the percentage of teachers' reactions to them would give an indication of the degree to which teachers value rigid and consistent classroom procedures.

E.g.: (student reads out the headings of a task)

S: [professional conversation]

T(C2): In English please.

or S: He was convinced that ch.. x(inaudible)

T(P3): he was convinced?

S: that he is going to win

T: he was? ... a bit louder

7) Behavioural errors: The majority of these errors in the data are due to lack of "discipline": e.g. students not paying attention, talking amongst themselves, laughing when other students are speaking, not participating or in general doing something different from what the teacher expects them to do. In this category there are also errors resulting from students' lack of concentration (e.g. when a student misreads a word in a text when reading aloud or when she/he answers a question that has already been answered). Although this category has not been included in any investigation of teacher error correcting behaviour (see Chaudron 1987,1988 for a review), possibly because students were well-disciplined or because students were adults and such behaviour was not expected of them, the decision to incorporate these errors in the analysis was due to the frequency of teachers' reactions to them and their "expected" occurrence in a classroom of 12 to 14 year olds. In addition to this, it was felt that the frequency with which teachers reacted to students' "misbehaviour" would reveal much about their roles in the classroom, and whether they (highly) valued discipline, orderliness and "proper" student behaviour. It should be noted that a fair amount of these errors were identified on the basis of teachers' reactions since many of them were not immediately apparent to the researcher.

E.g. (A student is reading aloud from the textbook)

S: "people punishment-

T(T2): [it says people?]

S: "pupil..

or (Teacher KO2 is asking comprehension questions on a text)

T: Did you know your granddaughter was going out? (teachers spots a student not paying attention) Sofia you're sleeping, aren't you?

8) Non-acceptance errors: These errors (which in reality are non-errors) manifest themselves in those instances in which the teacher reacts to a student utterance not because the student has violated some rule of grammar, syntax, vocabulary, phonology or discourse, but because the student's response was not the one expected by the teacher. There is nothing apparently wrong with these "errors"; all of them appear to be appropriate and accurate answers to the teacher's question. Yet, the teacher reacts to them, demanding an improved student response, simply because they did not conform to his/her preconceived appropriate response. The occurrence of such irrational errors has been observed by other researchers (Allwright & Bailey 1991, Fanselow 1977, Nystrom 1983) and are the cause of making the classroom appear as a "cloud-cuckoo-land"(Walmsley 1980). The majority of these errors result from teachers' requiring students to speak in complete sentences. Similar to some behavioural errors, non-acceptance errors could be identified only on the basis of teachers' reactions to them.

E.g. : T (C2): How many times xx does eh.. embarkation card appear in this unit?

S: eh..twice

T: It appears...

S: It appears twice

T: ...how many times x does an eh... extract from a tourist guide appear in this unit?

S: Only once-

T: It...

or: (Teacher P3 has asked students to give examples using the verb convince)



S: He convinced me that he was there

T: That's not a good example. You can say he convinced me that he was telling the truth..eh?

The classification and quantification of the various types of errors in the data was initially carried out in April 1992. As a means of establishing the reliability of the classification, errors were classified and quantified for a second time in September 1992. The correlation coefficient between the two sets of results was  $r=0.99$ .

**5.4.: Analysis of data - Presentation of results: Quantification of error types; percentages of errors corrected/ignored by teachers.**

The error counts shown in Table 5.1 represent the total number of instances of error in the 14 classrooms. An error which the student repeats after an attempted teacher correction is counted as two errors; similarly, if an error appears twice in the same student utterance, two errors are counted. Errors which the student manages to self-correct within the same turn are not counted as errors.

ERROR TYPE	FREQUENCY	%
Grammar	197	26.55
Pronunciation	103	13.88
Syntactical	10	1.35
Discourse	153	20.62
Lexical	45	6.06
Content	142	19.14
Behavioural	74	9.97
Non-acceptance	18	2.43
TOTAL.	742	100

*Table 5.1.: Frequency of 8 types of error identified in the 14 language classrooms*

The total number of errors identified in the data is 742 ( $M=53$  per lesson,  $SD=19.7$ ). Errors appeared with differing frequencies in the 14 teachers' lessons; errors ranged from as low as 17 in C1's class to as high as 83 in KO2's class

(see Table 5.3). The most frequent type of error students made were grammatical errors (n=197), constituting 26.5% of the total number of errors, followed by discourse errors (20.6%) and content errors (19%). Pronunciation errors also figured frequently in student's speech (n=103, 13.8%), while syntactical errors were quite irregular (n=10). This low occurrence of syntactical errors may be attributed to the very few opportunities students were given to produce complete sentences. Indeed, as will be shown in the following chapter, students' output was on the whole extremely limited; the majority of students' utterances consisted of a few words, rarely making up a whole sentence (which is the minimum requirement for syntactical errors to appear). Behavioural errors were quite frequent (n=74, 10% of total errors), exemplifying the fact that teachers do not tolerate "improper" student behaviour. Non-acceptance errors, on the other hand, were infrequent (n=18), being absent from some teachers' classes.

	FREQUENCY	%
Errors Corrected	578	77.89%
Errors Transferred	78	10.51%
Errors Ignored	86	11.59%
TOTAL	742	100

*Table 5.2.: Frequency of errors corrected, transferred and ignored by the teachers in the data.*

Table 5.2 shows the frequency with which errors were corrected, transferred (i.e. teacher transferred correction of a student's error to other students), and ignored by teachers. From a total of 742 errors, 578 were corrected (77.8%). Since the errors that a teacher transfers for correction to other students are also errors that have been reacted to (albeit in a different, more "indirect" way), we observe that the teachers actually reacted to 88.4% (n=656) of the total student errors, ignoring only 11.5% (n=86) of errors. These results

demonstrate the fact that teachers seem to favour and follow audiolingual approaches to error correction, in which errors are considered impediments to the learning process and must at all costs be eliminated (see Corder 1974, Courchene 1980, Hendrickson 1987 for a review of the contrastive analysis approach to errors and their correction). The low percentage of errors that were ignored are similar to percentages of ignored errors found in grammar-based programmes (see Chaudron 1988, for a review of eight studies on teacher error correction). These results seem particularly significant when one takes into account the fact that the textbooks the teachers are using are aimed at developing students' communicative competence and the teachers' guide to the textbook specifically points out that "where speech production is concerned, ...the criterion of appropriacy of language used in particular situations is just as important, if not more sometimes, than linguistic accuracy"(Teachers' Guide 1987, p.16)

The error correcting (and non-correcting) behaviour of the 14 teachers who participated in this study is shown in Table 5.3. It becomes evident from the table that all the teachers had the tendency to correct at least two thirds of their students' errors (Teacher K3, L3 and L2 correcting the least, 71%, 62.5% and 78% of the time respectively). Teacher P3 and C2 and G1 exhibit very high levels of correction, correcting almost all their students' errors (98%, 97% and 98% of student errors respectively). Teachers do seem to adjust the frequency of their corrections to the level of their students: thus, first year teachers tend to correct the most (91.5% on average) followed by second year teachers (89.6% on average) and third year teachers (81.9% on average)

	<i>1st year Teachers</i>				<i>2nd year Teachers</i>						<i>3rd year Teachers</i>			
	A1	C1	D1	G1	A2	C2	K2	KO2	I.2	T2	K3	I.3	P3	S3
No. of errors	74	17	75	48	37	70	57	83	77	32	28	48	46	50
No. of err. corr.*	63	14	72	47	33	68	52	79	60	27	20	30	45	46
% of err. corr.	85	82	96	98	89	97	91	95	78	84	71	62	98	92
No. of err. ignored	11	3	3	1	4	2	5	4	17	5	8	18	1	4
% of err. ignored	15	18	4	2	11	3	9	5	22	16	29	38	2	8

\* These figures include the number of errors corrected and transferred.

NB: Percentages have been rounded.

*Table 5.3.: Frequency and percentages of errors corrected and ignored by the 14 teachers in the study.*

Teachers seem to differ greatly in the frequency with which they ignore errors: Half the teachers (D1, G1, C2, K2, KO2, P3 and S3) tend to ignore less than 10% of their student errors, while teachers K3 and L3 choose to ignore almost 1/3 of their students' errors.

The frequency with which teachers reacted (or not) to the various types of error identified in the data is shown in Table 5.4. Teachers do not seem to have specific priorities when correcting student errors; grammar, discourse, lexical, content and behavioural errors are corrected with similar frequencies (ranging from 84% for grammar errors to 99% for discourse and behavioural). It is evident that teachers do not seem to favour "content" over "form"; their main tactic appears to be "when an error is made, correct it". Although there is a slight tendency for teachers to ignore more grammar errors (16%) than content errors (5%), this difference (11%) becomes insignificant in view of the fact that teachers are (supposed to be) working with communicative materials in which "communication" errors are considered much more serious than linguistic ones.

Moreover, Chaudron's (1988) conclusion, based on his review of five error correction studies, that "where the more a type of error is made, the less likely the teacher appears to be inclined to correct it" (p.140), does not seem to apply to the 14 Greek English language teachers in this study. Teachers seem to see their

roles in the classroom as evaluators who see to it that learners produce "correct" utterances in terms of both form and content.

<u>Error Type</u>	<u>Total No.</u>	<u>*No. Correct.</u>	<u>*% Corrected</u>	<u>No. Ignored</u>	<u>% Ignored</u>
Pronounc.	103	68	66	35	34
Grammar	197	166	84	31	16
Syntax	10	5	50	5	50
Discourse	153	151	99	2	1
Lexical	45	40	89	5	11
Content	142	135	95	7	5
Behaviour.	74	73	99	1	1
Non Accep.	18	18	100		

\*\*: In these two columns the number and percentage of errors corrected and transferred are included

*Table 5.4.: Frequency of correction (and non-correction) of 8 types of error.*

Furthermore, taking into account the fact that the majority of student utterances were in response to teachers' evaluative questions (this will be shown in chapter 6), which by nature encourage limited student output and the answers to which are known to the teacher beforehand, it is evident that teachers did not react to student erroneous responses in terms of their unintelligibility but in terms of their formal inaccuracy. This result is similar to Hughes and Lascaratou's (1982) study where Greek English language teachers were found to be the harshest judges of students' mistakes (in comparison to native teachers of English and native speakers), having as a main criterion in judging the seriousness of an error the "basicness" of the rule infringed.

In addition to this point, if "global" errors (Burt & Kiparsky 1974, for a definition see chapter 2) are the ones most affecting intelligibility, presenting the most serious barriers to communication, and if rectification of these errors should be the main goal of the language teacher (Chaudron 1987, 1988, Hendrickson 1987), it becomes clear that the teachers did not have many such errors to treat due to their overreliance on evaluative questions. Since global errors are realised from and above the sentence level involving mistakes in

connectors, distinctions between relative and co-ordinate clauses, tense continuity across clauses, obviously, the students did not have many opportunities in making such errors due to the lack of opportunities given to them to produce extended discourse. Consequently, the corrections of various error types presented in Table 5.4 are mainly corrections of "local" errors.

Moreover, the high frequency with which teachers corrected discourse and behavioural errors (i.e. 99%), reveals their concern with "appropriate" student behaviour both verbal and non-verbal. Since both these types of error relate to "rules" of classroom life (the former to the rules of classroom interaction, the latter to rules of "proper" student behaviour i.e. attentiveness, participation etc.), it seems that teachers tend to regard orderliness and quietness as prerequisites of well-executed lessons. Any student deviations from these "rules" result in immediate teacher reaction and, subsequently, immediate student improvement.

Teachers' reactions to other types of student error also reveal some interesting points. Pronunciation errors do not seem to be high in the list of teacher priorities when correcting; teachers, in general, ignored a fair amount of pronunciation errors (i.e. 34%) probably due to their knowledge of the students' mother tongue. The teachers may have understood the sources of students' pronunciation errors and may not have regarded them as obstacles to comprehension. Being non-native speakers themselves, their criteria for correct pronunciation may be less rigid than their criteria for accurate language use. Syntax errors, on the other hand, in spite of their being a major obstacle to incomprehensibility (Ludwig 1982) do not seem to be overly reacted to by teachers. In fact, only half of the total of syntax errors were corrected by teachers which seems surprising since from all other error types very few errors actually went untreated.

The only reason that can be offered for this high percentage of "ignored" syntax errors derives from the syntax structure of the students' and teachers' mother tongue. Since the majority of students' syntactical errors were due to direct transfer of the highly flexible syntax rules of Greek, teachers may not have regarded them as completely erroneous since they understood what their students were trying to say. This, however, is a very tentative suggestion and does not explain why teachers corrected the other half of students' syntax errors. The teachers error correcting behaviour as far as syntactical errors are concerned may just be another verification of the fact that teachers tend to be inconsistent in their treatment of student errors (Allwright 1975, Allwright & Bailey 1991, Chaudron 1988, Fanselow 1977).

Although Table 5.4 serves to provide a general, "rough" picture of teachers' error correcting priorities, it (possibly) unjustly presents all teachers as "correction automatons". There are, however, some differences among the error correcting behaviour of the 14 teachers. These differences are shown in Table 5.5.

	A1	C1	D1	G1	A2	C2	K2	KO2	I.2	T2	K3	I.3	P3	S3
No Pron. Error	6	0	5	3	4	8	12	8	24	4	0	15	9	5
No. Corrected.	2	0	4	3	4	7	8	4	13	3	0	8	9	3
% Corrected.	33	0	80	100	100	88	67	50	54	75	0	53	100	60
No. Ignored	4	0	1	0	0	1	4	4	11	1	0	7	0	2
% Ignored	66	0	20	0	0	12	33	50	46	25	0	47	0	40
No. Gram. Err.	20	5	19	13	9	10	14	30	19	6	7	5	20	20
No. Corrected	16	4	18	12	7	9	14	30	14	3	1	0	19	19
% Corrected	80	80	95	92	78	90	100	100	74	50	14	0	95	95
No. Ignored	4	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	5	3	6	5	1	1
% Ignored	20	20	5	8	22	10	0	0	26	50	86	100	5	5
No. Syntax Err.	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	2	1	1	1	1	0	0
No. Corrected	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
% Corrected	0	100	50	0	0	100	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. Ignored	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
% Ignored	0	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	100	100	100	100	0	0
No. Disc. Error	12	0	17	17	8	22	13	16	11	8	8	6	6	9
No. Corrected	12	0	17	17	8	22	13	16	11	8	8	4	6	9
% Corrected	100	0	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	67	100	100
No. Ignored	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
% Ignored	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	0	0
No. Lex. Error	8	5	4	1	2	2	1	2	6	3	2	4	5	0
No. Corrected	7	4	4	1	2	2	1	2	6	3	1	2	5	0
% Corrected	88	80	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	50	50	100	0
No. Ignored	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0
% Ignored	22	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	50	0	0
No. Cont. Err.	16	4	19	9	12	12	14	14	5	0	10	14	4	9
No. Corrected	15	3	19	9	10	12	13	14	5	0	10	13	4	8
% Corrected	94	75	100	100	83	100	93	100	100	0	100	93	100	89
No. Ignored	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
% Ignored	6	25	0	0	17	0	7	0	0	0	0	7	0	11
No. Beh. Error	11	2	9	3	2	5	3	10	11	10	0	3	0	5
No. Corrected	10	2	9	3	2	5	3	10	11	10	0	3	0	5
% Corrected	91	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	0	100	0	100
No. Ignored	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
% Ignored	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No. N.A. Error	1	0	0	2	0	10	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	2
No. Corrected	1	0	0	2	0	10	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	2
% Corrected	100	0	0	100	0	100	0	100	0	0	0	0	100	100
No. Ignored	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
% Ignored	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

NB: Percentages have been rounded

*Table 5.5.: Types, frequencies and percentages of errors corrected and ignored by the 14 teachers in the study.*

From this table it can be observed that teachers are not always uniform in their error correcting practices. As far as pronunciation errors are concerned, when these do occur, half of the teachers prefer to correct almost all of them (D1, G1,



A2, C2, T2, P3, S3), while the other half tend to be selective. Moreover, this variation in the correction of pronunciation errors seems to apply between 1st, 2nd and 3rd year teachers but also between teachers of the same year (compare teacher A2 and I.2 for example).

A similar variation exists with the correction of syntax errors. From eight classes in which syntax errors occurred, four teachers preferred to correct these errors while the other four preferred to ignore them.

Where teachers appear to be relatively uniform in their practices, is with the correction of grammar, discourse, lexical, content and behavioural errors (with very few exceptions). When grammar errors occur, the overwhelming majority of teachers (with the exception of teacher K3 and L3) allow very few to go untreated.

Although 1st and 2nd year teachers exhibit similar frequencies with which they correct grammar errors, 3rd year teachers tend to be extremely varied; thus, teachers K3 and L3 tend to completely ignore grammar errors, while teachers P3 and S3 ignored only 1 of the total of 20 grammar errors made in their classes.

In the correction of all other types of error (i.e. discourse, lexical, content and behavioural) all teachers seem to follow the same practices. No differences appear either between teachers of different years or between teachers of the same year. Finally, with the category of non-acceptance errors, it is interesting to note that these did not appear frequently in teachers' lessons and that they tended to appear in the lessons of teachers who exhibited high levels of correction.

#### **5.5.: Teacher error correction strategies. Types of teacher corrections identified in the data.**

For the investigation and classification of the types of feedback provided by teachers numerous "systems" have been developed. For this study, an adaptation

of Chaudron's (1977a) categories for the corrective treatment of learner errors was employed. The decision to employ Chaudron's typology was initially mentioned in chapter 4 (research methodology of the study), without any justification however of how I arrived at this decision. The selection of Chaudron's model was due to its ease of application to the data, and, most importantly, due to the theoretical and practical shortcomings evident in various other classification systems used for the description of teachers' error correcting behaviour. Although the nature of these shortcomings were mainly methodological, their description may have been most appropriate in chapter 4. It was felt however that this approach would have unnecessarily taken up a lot of space and would have tired and diverted the reader. Their description at this point of the thesis was felt to be more justified, being relevant to the content of this chapter and facilitating the presentation of the results of teachers' error correcting strategies. An account of the three most well-known (and widely used) typologies will therefore follow, (hopefully) justifying my decision to employ Chaudron's(1977a) model for the purposes of this study.

To begin with, Allwright's (1975) typology of teacher error treatments is quite limited and the various types of treatments included, are theoretically vague. The system is tentative, as acknowledged by Allwright, and concrete criteria and examples for the identification of each treatment type are not provided. Thus, for instance, it is difficult to determine whether "model provided" actually means that the teacher provides the correct answer or a "model" sentence which serves to indicate to the student what the correct response should be. Similarly, does "improvement indicated" mean that the teacher signals to the student that improvement of his/her response is expected, that the teacher improves the student's utterance him/herself, or that the teacher specifies what kind of improvement is needed? If the last interpretation is correct, then what is the difference between "improvement indicated" and

"remedy indicated"? Moreover, the majority of treatment types proposed by Allwright (ibid.) are teacher "indications" (i.e. location indicated, error type indicated, blame indicated) which bears the problem of deciphering teachers' implicit and explicit corrections (i.e. how is the treatment of a particular error indicated, overtly or covertly?). This point has also been taken up by Chaudron (1988) who argues that the identification of implicit and explicit corrections "require high-level inferences about the interactants' intentions and knowledge to be derived from the discourse structures and the context or from independent inquiries"(p.145). Since the main reason for undertaking the analysis of teacher error correcting behaviour was to provide an "objective" depiction of teacher roles in the classroom, it was felt that any analysis requiring high-level inferences should be avoided. A further limitation of Allwright's (1975) typology, is that the identified treatment types are general descriptors and are not specified in terms of the forms (e.g. question, repetition, expansion) they may take, which makes it especially difficult for the inexperienced researcher to confidently apply this system to the data.

Fanselow (1977) developed a system of 16 types of teacher error treatment for the study of ESL teachers' error correcting behaviour (Fanselow's categories were also employed in Courchene's (1980) study). The problems inherent in this typology are of a practical and theoretical nature. From the practical side, this system can only be adopted to videotaped data since some categories of teacher error correction take the form of gestures (e.g. teacher indicates "no" with a gesture, teacher gestures and says "no" and "uh-uh"). From a theoretical viewpoint, many categories are vaguely termed; for instance, the difference of "teacher gives information" from "teacher gives indirect information" is left to the researcher to decide, since what the researcher perceives as "indirect" may, in fact, for the teacher be "direct". Thus, high-level inferences, like in Allwright's (1975) system, are required by the researcher for the application of Fanselow's

categories to the data. Moreover, Fanselow's categories fail to include very common corrective reactions used by teachers such as, teacher asks for repetition of student's utterance or teacher repeats student utterance changing the erroneous part.

Finally, Naiman et al (1978) developed several categories of teacher corrective reactions for their real-time observation of teacher-student interaction in the classroom. Apart from the fact that categories are to be ticked as lessons are observed (and not applied to transcribed data), the various types of corrections include the implicit-explicit descriptors, which again bears the problem of inference. Furthermore, the categories are not operationally defined and are used in conjunction with other features of classroom interaction (e.g. questions).

Chaudron's (1977a) system, although not completely flawless, overcomes many of the problems of the various typologies examined. His system (based on Sinclair & Coulthard's 1975, model of discourse) does not focus on isolated teacher corrections like many of the systems described thus far, but on exchanges between teacher and learner(s). Although his system incorporates some options proposed by Allwright (1975), it is much more detailed and explicit. The categories, thus, developed by Chaudron require less inference and fewer assumptions about speaker intent. Apart from this advantage, the categories accommodated almost all teacher corrective reactions in the data were applied with relative ease. From the 30 treatment types identified by Chaudron, 23 were employed in this study, with certain modifications, and two further types were added to accommodate the data. These are: (examples for each treatment type are taken from the data)

- 1) Ignore: Teacher ignores student error and goes on to other topics.

E.g. S: He is safely\*, but the army helicopter and the Mercedes destroyed the x

T(K3): OK. yes. The last was a ...a very interesting accident which unfortunately , it hasn't happened.

2) Acceptance: Teacher says a simple or approving word as reception of student's utterance but may go on to correct.

E.g.: S: People was\* interviewed eh..

T(KO2): [yes]

S: by reporter\*

T: [ yes, em... one minute, is "people" many or a few?]

3) Acceptance\*: Teacher shows approval of learner utterance and then repeats the error confirming that it is correct.

E.g. : S: The young woman's in black and white sweater words are\*

T(C2): words are, yes

4) Negation: Teacher shows rejection of part or all of student's utterance.

E.g.: T(C2): ...can you spell December?

S: yes, ...D-e-s-e-\*

T: not s-e

5) Provide: Teacher provides the correct answer when student has been unable or no response is offered from other students.

E.g.: T(KO2):...[how will we say he went there s t a g g e r i n g?]

Ss: [what's that?]

T: (provides)

6) Supplies correct: This category was added to differentiate from "provide" where the student(s) is unable to provide the correct answer (i.e. does not have the linguistic resources or knowledge) and thus as a last resort the teacher is

required to provide the correct answer. In this category, the teacher supplies the correct answer immediately after the student makes the error. The teacher does not determine whether the student is able or not to provide the correction him/herself.

E.g.: T(C2): ...What have you got to put in the box?

S: we've got to put a hyphen

T: A cross, a cross, a cross. Put a cross in the box.

7) Repetition no change: Teacher repeats student's utterance with no change or omission of error.

E.g.: S: In my hometown the school is next, the school is next to the ...the hill

T(G1): the school is next to the hill (the teacher nominates another student for the correct answer which is, "the school is on top of the hill")

8) Repetition no change and emphasis: Teacher repeats student utterance with no change but the emphasis (which can be marked by stress or question intonation) indicates fact or location of error.

E.g.: T(A1): (students have a plan of a house in their book)...tell us how many bedrooms there are in this house

S: five

T: five? (three is the correct answer)

9) Repetition with change: Teacher repeats student utterance simply adding the correction.

E.g.: S: /nemfs/, /ni:mfs/

T(K2): nymphs..

10) Repetition with change and emphasis: Teacher repeats student utterance adding the correction and emphasising it.

E.g. : S: the scenes are eh..shoot\* eh..-

T(P3): shot, the scenes are shot

11) Reduction no change: The teacher simply repeats the erroneous part of the student's utterance without providing the correct answer.

E.g.: S: He was one of the biggest\* explorers of the world

T(I.2): biggest..(teacher nominates another student)

S: greatest

12) Reduction no change and emphasis: Teacher repeats only the erroneous part of the student's utterance emphasising it to indicate fact of error.

E.g.: S: They are in\* a plane

T(C2): in?

13) Reduction with change(+ - emphasis): Teacher employs only part of the student's utterance adding the correction (and emphasising it).

E.g.: S: The actors eh... are helped to play about\* eh..-

T(P3): to play out their parts... by?(reduction with change and emphasis)

or S: somebody special he admires...is Bob Geldoff, the man who helped to raise a lot of money for /fu:main/\* relief

T(G1): for famine relief, for famine relief...(reduction with change)

14) Explanation: Teacher provides information as to the cause of error possibly including a generalisation of the type of error.

E.g.: S: The scriptwriter are\* eh..-

T(P3): the scriptwriters x ..., if you have two or three then we got it in the plural form . The scriptwriters...

15) Repeat: Teacher requests repetition of student's utterance in order to have the student self-correct or due to lack of clarity or certainty about its form.

E.g.: S: some books are ..is eh.. on the desk

Ss: are, are

T(A1): [repeat it ]

or (teacher has asked students of examples of adjectives ending in -ive)

S: Palmolive\*

T: what?

16) Prompt: Teacher uses a lead-in cue to get student to repeat utterance possibly at point of error, possibly with rising intonation.

E.g.: (teacher P3 has asked students to list any of Shakespeare's play they happen to know)

S: Othello,..Henry Five\*

T: Henry?

17) Clue: Teacher reaction provides students with isolation of the type of error or the nature of its immediate correction without providing correction.

E.g.: T(P3): ...what is done by the cameraman..Nick?

N: eh..the eh...the cameraman is-

T: what, the question is what is done by the cameraman

18) Original question: Teacher repeats the original question that led to the response.

E.g.: T (G1): ...what year are you in? what year are you in?

S: eh....in..eh-

T: yes, come on, what year are you in?

19) Altered question: Teacher alters the original question syntactically but not semantically.

E.g.: T(A2):... this is something that the babysitter should know OK? A  
babysitter is always interested in this OK? Yes



S: where are you going?

T: we are talking about the next question not the question that starts with "where"

S: ah..[yes]

T: but the question that starts with "when"

S: where are..

T: what should a babysitter know?

20) Question(s): Numerous ways of asking for a new response. A new line of questioning may be taken up.

E.g.: (Teacher A2 has asked students for the meaning of "centre of culture". Students seem to confuse this with tourist resorts. After a few unsuccessful attempts, teacher changes the line of questioning to direct the learners towards the answer) [original question: What is centre of culture? Other line of questioning: What helps us educate ourselves? You get higher education how?

21) Transfer: Teacher asks another student or group of students to provide correction.

E.g.: N: These disasters continued eh..right up eh..to the present time

T(I.2): Do you agree?(to Ss)..these disasters continued\* right up to the present time..do you all agree? (transfer, nominates another student)

S: have continued

T: have continued. You are right

22) Reprimands: This category was added to account for teachers' reactions to students' behavioural errors. This reaction can take the form of imperatives or attitudinal questions (see next chapter, section 6.3., for a definition).

E.g.: (students are talking amongst themselves while the teacher is talking)

T(G1): stop it! or I'll take your names down.

23) Attention: Expressions like "Be careful", "Watch out!"

E.g.: (Students have to find the correct sequence of two stories; their information has been mixed up)

S: eh.."the pub owner Mr. Elliot-

T(KO2): [Be careful, be careful. Do we go there? Hm?]

24) Expansion: Teacher adds linguistically to the student's utterance making more complete.

E.g.: (teacher C2 has asked a student what they are about to do in an activity)

S: we're going to check-out eh.. communication points-

T: the communication points.

25) Interrupt: Teacher interrupts student utterance following error or before student has completed. This is indicated by a hyphen at the point of student utterance where the interruption occurred (see previous example).

**5.5.a.: Problems with the quantification of treatment types employed by teachers.**

After having identified the various error correction strategies employed by the teachers in the data, the next step was to quantify them so as to obtain an overall picture of teachers' error correcting behaviour and the error correction tactics they favoured most. Problems, however, arose when the quantification process began, due to the tendency of the teachers to use more than one treatment type for the correction of single errors. At times teachers would employ three or four different treatments (all in one turn) for the correction of a single error. At first, the uncertainty was how treatment types should be counted. Should all treatment types be counted regardless of whether they occurred alone or in conjunction with others? If so, what would the results reveal? For instance, in the following example,

S: ...are chosen by the producer who has the more\* responsibility-

T(P3): not the more, ...who has the major responsibility

the teacher firstly interrupts, then uses negation and then reduction change and emphasis.

However, with the following grammatical error, the teacher uses only one correction strategy (prompt)

G: It appears only once\* time

T(C2): It appears...?

If the treatments employed for the correction of these two errors were quantified, the results would fail to reveal that some were used in combination and others were not, and they would also fail to reveal to which types of error a single treatment was preferred and to which multiple treatments. For the sake of curiosity, a quantification of all teacher treatments for the correction of linguistic errors (i.e. grammar, pronunciation, syntax) and content errors (i.e. lexical, content, discourse) for six lessons in the data was undertaken. The only result that this analysis revealed was that teachers used almost all treatment types with differing frequencies for both general types of error. It was not apparent, however, how the percentages could be translated into meaningful "implications" for teachers' roles. A more meaningful process of analysis had to be found...

In order to address my uncertainty an examination of other research in teacher error correcting behaviour was undertaken to see how other researchers tackled this problem. The examination, unfortunately, was fruitless. Although researchers have acknowledged this problem (Beretta 1989, Chaudron 1977a, Courchene 1980, Fanselow 1977), when it comes to the presentation of their results, this "problem" seems to disappear (tables and frequencies are "neat" and add up to 100)

For instance, Fanselow (1977) has counted all treatment types found in his data (regardless of whether they occurred in combination or not), has calculated their percentages but has failed to provide the total number of errors for which these treatment types were used. The only feature that his analysis reveals is that teachers employed a variety of treatments, favouring the tactic of giving the correct response. It is impossible, however, to determine to which types of error which types of treatment were preferred. Similarly, Courchene (1980), who employed Fanselow's categories for his study of teacher error correcting behaviour, although he acknowledges (*ibid.*, p.15) that "some discrepancies may arise between the number of errors and the number of treatments", the degree of discrepancy is nowhere to be found. For his quantification of error treatment types, he presents the five most frequently employed correctional strategies used by each teacher; no indication is given to which types of error the five most frequently employed strategies were used nor how many treatment types were actually used by teachers.

Beretta (1989) on the other hand, who has employed Chaudron's (1977a) typology, before presenting his results explicitly points out (p.288) "...most of the error treatments require multiple coding. Thus, one treatment might be associated with more than one category. Whenever multiple coding was applicable, every possible categorisation was counted; this procedure explains why there are many more treatments than errors". However, a close examination of his tables reveals that there is a perfect match between the number of linguistic/content errors and the types of treatment that were used for their correction. How this match resulted is left to the reader to explain.

Finally, Chaudron(1977a), after his presentation of the types of teacher corrective reactions, attempts a quantification of the various types of "repetition" treatments in order to determine which form(s) results in successful correction

(i.e. which type of repetition resulted in the incorporation of the correction in the next student utterance). His analysis, however, gives no indication of the amount of errors for which repetitions were used, neither does it reveal whether repetitions occurred in combination with other treatment types. This last point may be essential for the effectiveness of repetitions.

Although the examination of teacher error correction research did not provide any insights for a quantification of error treatment types, a review of the error correction literature did. It has been observed that one of the most important goals of language instruction is to improve learners' ability to monitor their own speech (Chaudron 1987,1988). Indeed, as Allwright & Bailey (1991, p.107) point out "more actual learning may ensue if the learners accomplish a substantial proportion of the corrective task themselves". It has also been shown that if learners are not able to self-correct, then peers may be very effective in providing the correction (Cohen 1975, Hendrickson 1987). In fact, there is proof that learners in group work activities are able to correct each other successfully and tend to employ a variety of treatment types, many resembling those used by teachers. Moreover, what is surprising (and a relief for teachers to know) is that learners almost never miscorrect (Bruton & Samuda 1980). The provision of opportunities to the learner to self-correct, apart from its resemblance to error correction in natural conversations where there is a strong tendency to allow speakers to correct themselves (see Van Lier 1988), may actually be the only effective means of ensuring that learners internalise correct forms (Fanselow 1977). The provision of the correct form by the teacher does not in any way guarantee that learners have understood the error and will avoid repeating it in the future. Indirect methods of error improvement may indeed be much more effective (result in student uptake, i.e. the inclusion of the correction in the student's utterance) than direct ones (i.e. identification or provision of correction by a simple repetition or modelling of the correct form)(Allwright & Bailey

1991, Corder 1974, Krahnke & Christison 1983). Moreover, sharing the responsibility of correction with students also allows for a more learner-centred classroom, where the teacher acts as a co-communicator (rather than an authority and language expert) and appreciates that the students possess the skills and knowledge to correct their own errors (see chapter 2, section 2.6.). However, one of the essential enabling conditions for learner self-correction is the provision of sufficient time (after an error has been made) for the learner to process output (Allwright & Bailey 1991, Fanselow 1977). Holley & King (1974) found that a 5 to 10 second wait-time increased students' attempts at self-correction significantly. For over 50% of the time teacher intervention was not necessary.

Based on this brief review of literature, it was decided to differentiate between those corrective reactions in which teachers (one way or another) provided the correct response depriving students from the ability to correct their erroneous utterances, and those which gave the opportunity to the students to (self) correct. The former group of corrective reactions was termed "Direct corrections", while the latter "Indirect corrections". Under the direct correction group the following corrective reactions were included: 1) supplies correct, 2) provides, 3) repetition/reduction change +,- emphasis, 4) expansion, 5) reprimands, 6) explanation. The corrective reactions included in the indirect correction group were: 1) prompt, 2) clue, 3) question (which includes original question, altered question, question(s)), 4) transfer, 5) repetition/reduction no change +-emphasis, 6) attention, 7) negation, 8) explanation+<sup>4</sup>, and 9) repeat.

If for any one error the teacher provided more than one treatment type, one of which was from the direct correction group, then only the type belonging to the direct correction group was counted. If "supplies correct" or "provides" occurred with any other treatment type in the direct and indirect group, then only these two treatments were counted. If "attention" and "negation" occurred in

conjunction with some other treatment type within the indirect correction group, then only the other treatment type was counted. "Attention" and "negation" (in the indirect group) were counted only when they occurred alone. If "transfer" occurred in combination with any other treatment of the indirect correction group, then only "transfer" was counted. Finally, interruptions were counted separately in order to determine the amount of teacher intervention.

**5.5.b.: Types of corrective reactions employed by the 14 teachers in the study.**

The results of the frequency of direct and indirect corrections are presented in Table 5.6.

Total No. of errors: 742			
Total No. of errors corrected: 656*			
Total No. of error correction treatments: 647			
<b>DIRECT</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>INDIRECT</b>	<b>%</b>
Supplies correct	20.8	Prompt	6.8
Provides	2.9	Clue	6.6
Repet. Change	6.1	Question(s)	9.6
Reduct. Change	6.9	Repeat/Loop	7.8
Reprimand	8.8	Transfer	11.1
Explanation	5	Rep./red. no change	1.8
Expansion	1.3	Negation	1.8
		Explanation+	1.8
		Attention	0.6
<b>TOTAL.</b>	<b>51.8</b>		<b>47.9</b>
<b>INTERRUPT:</b>	<b>33.1</b>		

\*see note 5

*Table 5.6: Frequency of direct / indirect error correction types in the 14 classrooms.*

The total number of errors corrected was 656, while the total number of error correction types quantified in the aforementioned way was 647<sup>5</sup>. As far as direct/indirect corrections are concerned, teachers seem to employ them with equal frequency; direct corrections appear to be slightly more frequent (51.8%) than indirect corrections (47.9%). However, a glance at the frequencies of each correction type reveals that by far the most favoured treatment is of the "supplies correct" type (20.8%); all other treatment types were employed far less

frequently (transfer was the second most frequent treatment type occurring 11.1% of the time).

From the remaining treatment types of the direct correction group, reprimand (8.8%) followed by repetition/reduction change (6.1% and 6.9% respectively), were the ones most frequently used. The high frequency of reprimand was due to the regular occurrence of behavioural errors, being the only way teachers chose to react to them. As for repetitions (including reductions), although they have been found to be of the most common types of feedback teachers use, their effectiveness is questionable (Chaudron 1977a, 1988, Fanselow 1977). A repetition of a student's utterance with a modification of the erroneous part may be perceived by the learner as an alternative to his/her utterance, or the modification may not be perceived at all simply because the learner's interlanguage does not encompass the specific target language rule. A verification of the effectiveness of repetition/reduction and change is beyond the scope of this study. If it were not, however, it would have been impossible to determine the effectiveness of these two treatments since when used by the teachers no opportunity was given to the students to incorporate (or not) the correction in their interlanguage; once the teacher used these treatments (or any other one from the direct correction group) she/he immediately continued with another topic or question. From the remaining three treatment types of this group, explanations were commonly employed (5%). However, the effectiveness of explanations which do not give the learner the opportunity to self-correct, is also questionable.

From the indirect group, the most frequently employed corrective reaction was transfer (11.1%), followed by various types of questions (9.6%). Prompts, clues and repeats were also favoured by teachers (6.8%, 6.6%, 7.8% respectively), while all other treatment types of this group were only used sporadically.



Although the relatively high frequency of indirect corrections used by teachers is commendable, in that it reveals that teachers have, to some degree, faith in the learners' ability to correct their own or other learners' errors, the high percentage of interruptions that occurred reveals that teachers were more interested in getting the errors corrected immediately after their production rather than allowing the learners to realise their errors and complete what they had to say. From the 656 errors that were corrected by teachers, 33.1% of those errors were accompanied by teacher interruptions.

There is great variation among the 14 teachers in the frequency with which the various types of error treatment were used in their classrooms. The individual differences among teachers are presented in Table 5.7.

	A1	C1	D1	G1	A2	C2	K2	KO2	L2	T2	K3	L3	P3	S3
No. of errors corrected	63	14	72	47	33	68	52	79	60	27	20	30	45	46
No. of error corrections	63	14	72	46	33	66	51	76	60	27	20	30	45	44
% of interruptions	20	0	25	37	33	51	35	35.5	37	37	26	31	58	39
% of Direct Correction	47.5	86	50	37	39	52	53	34	48	74	26	62	80	32
% Supplies Correct	13	71	11	24	9	25	16	22	13	18.5	10.5	9	40	9
% Provides	1.5	0	3	0	3	9	8	4	0	0	0	10	0	2
% Repetition change	6	0	8	0	15	3	6	3	3	0	5	14	18	4.5
% Reduction change	3	0	3	0	0	6	8	0	12	15	0	17	18	14
% Reprimand	13	14	14	6.5	3	6	2	1	20	37	5	0	0	2
% Explanation	11	0	10	6.5	6	0	8	4	0	4	5	14	2	0
% Expansion	0	0	1	0	6	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
% Indirect Corrections	52	14	49.5	63	60	47	47	65	51	26	73.5	38	20	68
% Prompt	3	0	8	9	6	12	6	5	7	7	16	0	7	9
% Clue	14	0	4	11	18	6	8	13	3	4	0	3	2	7
% Question(s)	6	0	7	4	12	19	20	17	20	0	26	0	2	2
% Repeat	6	0	4	6.5	12	1	6	6.5	3	4	21	21	7	11
% Negation	5	0	3	2	0	4	0	3	0	0	0	3	0	4.5
% Red./repet. no ch.	3	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	7	7	0	0	0	2
% Explanation	3	0	3	0	3	0	2	1	0	4	0	7	0	2
% Transfer	11	14	19	28	9	3	4	13	12	0	11	3	2	27
% Attention	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6.5	0	0	0	0	0	2

NB: Percentages have been rounded.

*Table 5.7.: Frequency of error treatment types used by the 14 teachers in the study.*

As can be seen from the table, teacher interruptions to correct learner errors tend to occur quite frequently in all 13 lessons (with the exception of teacher C1 who did not interrupt). All teachers regardless of student level tend to interrupt their students from 20% of the time (A1) up to 58% of the time (P3). As far as direct corrections are concerned, these are used by all teachers but with differing frequencies. The lowest percentage of direct corrections occurred in K3's class (26%), while the highest in C1's class (86%). First year teachers on average tend to make the most use of direct corrections (M=55%) while second and third year teachers tend to use direct corrections with almost equal frequency (M=50%). Within the direct correction group, the "supplies correct" treatment type seems to be quite popular with lower level students. First year teachers tend to use this type the most (M=30%), while the remaining teachers use this type much less frequently (M=17%). Another very commonly used treatment type within this group is "reprimand", which is particularly favoured by second year teachers, while avoided by third year teachers. Repetitions and reductions with change seem to be a favourite with third year teachers, while from the first year teachers only half seem to use them, and even those quite infrequently. As far as indirect corrections are concerned, second and third year teachers seem to employ this method of correction slightly more frequently (M=50%) than first year teachers (M=45%), which is quite natural since the more proficient the learner the more apt he/she is to notice errors and provide the correction him/herself. Teachers seem to use five treatment types from this group with some regularity (i.e. prompt, clue, question(s), repeat and transfer). First year teachers tend to prefer giving other students the opportunity to correct (M=36%) much more than all other teachers (M=7% for second year teachers and M=11% for third year teachers). The favoured indirect treatment type of second year teachers appears to be the use of questions (M=15% as compared to 4% for first year teachers and 7.5% for third year teachers), and the use of clues to get students to correct

(M=9% as compared to 7% and 3% for first year and third year teachers respectively). Finally, third year teachers tend to use "repeat" most frequently than any other indirect treatment type (M=15%), while its use in first and second year classes is quite infrequent (M=4% for first year classes and 5% for third year classes). The remaining treatment types of this group were only occasionally used by few teachers. No tendencies seem to appear between teachers of different years in their use of these treatment types.

#### **5.6.: Summary of findings on teacher error correcting behaviour.**

The creation of a classroom atmosphere which is conducive to communication, in which learners feel free to experiment and explore the language, is an achievable, yet not simple task. The creation of such an atmosphere requires a supportive emotional and social climate in which learners feel sufficiently secure to tackle and overcome the "frustrations of non-communication"(Stern 1983, p.398); Errors are an inevitable and expected feature of this process and should be viewed and treated as such. This is not to say that error correction is a thing of the past, a potentially inhibiting to language learning practice (although Ellis (1990, p.73) has concluded that no study has definitely proved that error treatment promotes acquisition), but rather that continuous and repeated correction of errors may demotivate students and most importantly make them regard language for what it is not: a system of intricate rules and patterns which must be mastered in detail before communication can take place.

Returning to the questions posed at the beginning of the chapter, the findings of teacher error correcting behaviour have revealed that teachers tend correct almost all errors, be they linguistic, content or behavioural. It appears to be the case that teachers still consider learner error to be "like sin, to be avoided and its

influence overcome but its presence to be expected" (Brooks 1960, p.58<sup>6</sup>). Despite the guidance and information in the teachers' guide that errors should be corrected selectively and that serious errors are those to do with appropriacy rather than linguistic accuracy, teachers tend to view errors as reflections of faulty learning (even, possibly, faulty teaching) as "crisis points" (Allwright 1975) in the lesson, that must be eradicated the moment they appear. The correction of almost all discourse and behavioural errors reveals that any form of "misbehaviour", whether verbal or non-verbal, is not tolerated or permitted in class. Teachers require learners to speak clearly, loudly, accurately and only when they have been allocated a turn. Inattentiveness, laughing or speaking to neighbours always results in reprimand. Even if students do follow the "rules" of proper classroom behaviour, even if they do speak accurately and appropriately at the times selected by the teacher, their verbal behaviour may be negatively reacted to simply because it did not conform to the teacher's expectations. Although non-acceptance errors were relatively few in number, their mere existence in almost half of the classrooms suggests that characteristics of "real" communication are not present in all classrooms. If, as Littlewood (1992, p.100) claims, continuous focus on learner error can lead to a sense of inadequacy and hopelessness, then it seems that the learners in this study would have great difficulty in feeling confident in using the language freely. Even if the learners were inclined and motivated to communicate, the tendency of teachers to intervene and correct almost all their errors would probably result in dampening whatever enthusiasm and motivation they may have had.

The analysis of teacher error correction strategies reveals that teachers employ a wide repertoire of behaviours to correct their learners' errors. Although teachers tend to revert to direct and indirect corrections with equal frequency, by far the most commonly used treatment type is "supplies correct", in which immediately after the occurrence of an error the teacher supplies the

correct answer. The high frequency of this particular treatment type may be explained in terms of the teachers' desire to keep a steady pace in the lesson. Any learner error creates a diversion in the lesson; if the teacher chooses to give opportunities to the learner to self-correct, then time is lost, the regular pace of the lesson is inevitably shaken and the teacher may lose control of the classroom proceedings. Supplying the correct answer straightaway guarantees, to a certain extent, that the lesson will proceed according to the teacher's predetermined plan.

The high frequency with which teachers interrupted students' utterances in order to correct their errors, is quite revealing. What makes this frequency even more significant, is the limited amount of student output that occurred in all lessons. The majority of student turns barely consisted of a complete sentence; thus, to be interrupted after having uttered a few words, makes evident the controlling effect of teachers' error corrections on student interaction. If the materials teachers are using were developed so as to encourage learners to experiment with the language and take risks (Dendrinos 1988) (something which inevitably involves a process of trial and error), it seems that initial objectives are not being realised when materials are put into practice in the classroom.

The results up until now have provided tentative indications that the classrooms observed are far from being "communicative". The majority of teachers seem to regard and use error correction not only as a tool for controlling language output, but also as a means of maintaining control over the classroom proceedings. Error correction guarantees that students will not divert or lose attention and that the lesson will proceed according to plan; but most importantly, it guarantees that the students will not lose sight of the fact that the teacher is the language expert and the sole arbiter of "wrong" and "right", of what it is permitted to say and do and what not. These implications for teacher

roles may seem somewhat premature at this point but will become more evident and substantiated in the chapters which are to follow.

#### NOTES:

1) For the sake of ease of reference, the schools outside Athens will be referred to as OA1 (teacher D1) and OA2 (K2, J3); the schools in the centre of Athens CA1 (teachers C1, C2, P3) and CA2 (teachers A1, A2), and the schools in the northern suburbs of Athens NA1 (KO2, K3, S3) and NA2 (L2).

2) This problem has been pointed out by Allwright (1975) as one of the main difficulties in identifying errors.

3) Although this definition encompasses the problem of defining "standard variety of English" and, consequently, "whose" standard variety- the researcher's or the teacher's- is used as a criterion, it was felt that this problem becomes less significant when:

(a) the researcher knows the students' native language and, therefore, understands many of the causes of their errors, and

(b) the students' level of English is very low.

In the latter case it is expected that the students' potential errors will be on basic structures of English, on (a very limited) vocabulary, or due to their rudimentary knowledge of syntax. Consequently, it is believed that, with "elementary" level students errors can be easily recognised by both the non-native teacher and the researcher. Moreover, only "British" English is taught in Greece. As a result, what constitutes "target language norm" is more or less clear-cut there, in contrast to countries like India, China and Africa where "language norms" differ from region to region, or between ethnic groups.

4) Explanation in the "Direct correction" category includes instances where a teacher provides information as to the cause of a students' error, but does not provide the latter with an opportunity to self-correct. E.g. (the teacher has asked a student to describe the position of various objects in a room)

Student: A poster is on the wall...

Teacher(A1): We said this, OK? ..(the teacher nominates another student).

Explanation+ in the "Indirect correction" category is similar to the previous one with the exception that the teacher, after the explanation, gives the student the opportunity to provide the correction

him/herself. e.g. (the teacher has shown the students a picture of a bookcase and has asked them to identify it)

S: It's a library.

T: A library? We don't ch...Library is the room or the building ...this is a piece of furniture...How do we call this piece of furniture?

5) This figure was calculated after subtracting the number of ignored errors (n=86) from the total (n=742) and then subtracting the number of acceptances\* (n=9)(i.e. when a teacher repeats student error confirming that it is correct). Acceptances\* figure in five teachers' speech (G1 n=1, C2 n=2, K2 n=1, KO2 n=3, S3 n=2).

6) This quote from Brooks (1960) is taken from Hendrickson (1987, p.355).

## CHAPTER 6

### *Teachers' Questioning Practices*

#### 6.1.: Second focus of analysis: Teacher questioning behaviour.

This chapter attempts to answer research question 1c (see chapter 4, section 4.1) concerning teachers' questioning practices and the roles they give rise to. The investigation of the types of questions the teachers use in the classrooms was a developmental focus of the study rather than a pre-planned one. Initially it was thought that an analysis of the frequency and the types of teacher error correction strategies would provide sufficient evidence as to the teachers' roles in the classroom and the results of this analysis could subsequently be used in complementing and substantiating the observation scheme data. After transcribing the first few lessons, however, various common and recurring features of the teachers' linguistic behaviour (other than their error correcting practices) emerged, which provided, tentative at this stage, evidence of the teachers' control over the classroom discourse. One of these features was the sheer amount of their talk in comparison to the students' contributions. As the transcription process continued, this unequal distribution of talk became even more apparent. The teachers initiated exchanges using questions and closed them by providing feedback (after which another question was asked). Their talk at each turn extended from 2 lines of the transcript to 36 lines (i.e. one A4 page). On the other hand, the majority of students' contributions rarely extended one line; many of them consisted of two to three words barely making up a complete sentence. This feature of the linguistic situation of the classrooms intrigued me, and so I ventured, for reasons of curiosity in the beginning, into a more careful analysis of the nature of the teachers' talk. What emerged from this analysis was



that lessons (in their majority) consisted of recurring three part exchanges: teacher initiates (I), students responds (R), teacher provides feedback (F) (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975). A further analysis of these exchanges revealed that almost all teachers' initiations took the form of questions, and, as a logical consequence, nearly all students' contributions were responses to teachers' questions. What also became apparent was that the nature of the teachers' questions was the principle cause of students' limited output. The questions determined not only the quantity and quality of students' response but also made natural the teachers' subsequent provision of feedback.

After having identified these characteristics of the teachers' talk in all classrooms, I became gradually aware of their relevance to the focus of this study and their implications for teacher roles. The study of literature concerning teachers' questioning practices and nature of questions confirmed my initial thoughts. Many authors (Carlsen 1991, Dillon 1982, Edwards & Westgate 1987, Ellis 1990, Hargreaves 1984, Mishler 1975, Van Lier 1988) have stressed the enormous power questions exert over the discourse and have asserted that the use of questions carries many implications about the roles and relationships of the interactants. As Goody (1978, p.39), who has studied the use and nature of questions in various cultures, claims "questioning not only involves asking for information but also carries a command function. Questions are speech acts which place two people in direct immediate interaction. In doing so they carry messages about relationships, about relative status, assertions of status and challenges of status". Within the classroom context, the use of questions by the teacher has been seen "as the principle way in which the teacher maintains control over the classroom discourse"(Ellis 1990, p.78). Through the use of questions, the teacher determines who will participate in the activity, when she/he will participate, how long he/she will participate (Dillon 1982) and more relevant to the language classroom context, what kind of language the students

will be exposed to and what contributions the students can make (Van Lier 1988). Successive questioning by the teacher, a practice termed "chaining" by Mishler (1975), enables the teacher to maintain constant control over the students' verbal and non-verbal behaviour (Dillon 1990), and guarantees students' undivided attention. The teacher thus becomes the "superordinate partner of the exchange" (Dillon 1982, p.133), the manager of talk and maintains linguistic dominance.

Moreover, the types of questions asked by teachers carry many implications for teacher roles. Research in content and second language classrooms has shown that teachers in the majority of cases ask questions to which they know the answer beforehand and their sole reason for asking them is to evaluate whether students have grasped some point of importance or to assess what students know from what they have been taught. The use of such "known-information" (Mehan 1979) or "display" questions (Long & Sato 1983), render the teacher as "knower", informant and language expert and also serve to assert the teacher's authority in the classroom (see Edwards & Westgate 1987).

In addition, there have been studies which have investigated various aspects of teacher talk (including the use of questions) to implicitly or explicitly draw conclusions regarding teacher roles. For example, Long & Sato's (1983) investigation of language teachers' talk/use of questions and comparison to conversations between native and non-native speakers revealed that the teachers were subscribing to the "transmission" model of education in which the teachers' role is to transmit information to the students and check whether students have received it. As a result, learners are reduced to passive respondents of teachers' questions and have very little opportunity to practise genuine communicative uses of the language. Pica & Long's (1986) results of the examination of experienced and inexperienced language teachers' talk (i.e. amount, use of questions and functions of their talk) were used to describe teachers (in both

groups) as transmitters, knowers, language experts and controllers who left little or no opportunity for negotiated interaction in the classroom.

It, therefore, becomes evident that various aspects of teachers' linguistic behaviour (other than their error correcting behaviour) can provide valid indications of their role(s) in the classroom. The amount and types of questions teachers choose to ask (have been used and) can be used as evidence of the extent to which teachers act as knowers, language experts, as authorities or as communicators, guides, users of the language and facilitators. Although this aspect of the teachers' talk had not been initially chosen as a focus of the investigation, after having identified its repeated occurrence in the data and having determined its strong relations to teacher roles (through the study of the relevant literature), the decision was made to pursue it as a focus of this study. It was felt that a quantification of the strategies the teacher uses to control interaction in the classroom could only provide further proof as to the roles the Greek English language teachers adopt in the classroom and, consequently, substantiate the findings of the observation scheme analysis.

## **6.2.: Problems with existing question classification systems used in content and second language classroom research.**

As was mentioned in the previous section, the analysis of teacher questions in the study began after the completion of the transcription process and the analysis of teacher error correction strategies. Since this particular focus was initially unanticipated, the study of the relevant literature began rather late. Initially, it was thought that the classification system of teacher questions used in second language classroom research, i.e. display-referential questions (Brock 1986, Long & Sato 1983, Long & Crookes 1987, Nunan 1987a, Pica & Long 1986) and comprehension checks - clarification requests - confirmation checks (Long & Sato 1983, Pica et al 1987, Pica & Long 1986, Pica 1987), would

suffice for the classification of question types asked by the Greek English language teachers. However, when this system was applied to the data, many shortcomings became apparent.

After having experienced these problems in the application of classification systems used in second language classrooms, I, then, turned to the study of question research in first and content classrooms, in the hope that a more satisfactory typology might be found. Problems of similar nature, however, became evident in question typologies of first language classrooms.

Discourse analysis was the last avenue I pursued in search for a comprehensive typology of teacher question types. Although discourse analysis provided many insights which helped me classify some of the functions of teacher questions found in the data, it, nevertheless, did not provide a solution to the shortcomings of the various question typologies studied, nor did it sufficiently account for the diversity of functions of teacher questions.

My unfruitful attempts to meaningfully classify the range and variety of teachers' questions according to a prespecified typology of questions, inevitably, led to an in-depth analysis of the types of questions found in the data, the functions they perform, and, eventually, the emergence and development of a new typology. In the next section a detailed account and exemplification of the shortcomings of existing typologies will be given. This will help justify the necessity to create a new typology to accommodate the question types asked in the English classrooms in Greece, as well as substantiate the claims made concerning the shortcomings of various question typologies used in second and first language classroom research.

### 6.2.a.: Classification systems of teacher questions in first language and content classrooms.

Research into teacher questioning strategies has been one of the most extensively investigated areas of classroom interaction. Ever since 1912, Stevens<sup>1</sup> observed that four fifths of classroom time was taken up by question and answer exchanges. Recent research into content and first language classrooms reveals that not much has changed since the beginning of the century (Gall 1970, 1984, Hargie 1978, Riegle 1976)

Numerous classification systems have been developed by educational researchers in order to describe this "ancient" feature of teacher-student interaction. The vast majority of these systems, some developed having a specific curriculum in mind, but most developed to classify teacher questions irrespective of context, are composed of categories based on the type of cognitive process required to answer the question. Their basic distinction has been between questions that require factual recall and those that require more cognitive work. Bloom et al's (1956) taxonomy of educational objectives for the cognitive domain has been the most influential scheme for classifying questions according to their cognitive level, although Bloom and his colleagues never intended it for such use (see Cazden 1987). Based on this taxonomy, and despite the purposes for which it was developed, educational researchers have classified teachers' questions into two general categories: a) "recall" or "factual" or "memory" or "convergent" or "lower-order" (these questions call for verbatim recall of information previously presented to students) and b) "interpretive", "evaluation" or "higher-order" or "divergent" which require "that the student mentally manipulate bits of information previously learned to create or support an answer with logically reasoned evidence" (Redfield & Rousseau 1981, p.

237) (see Gall 1984, Hargie 1978, Hargreaves 1984, Sanders 1966 for a review of the various terms given to the two basic categories of questions).

Although there has been an extensive amount of research utilising these two general categories of questions in order to prove the positive effect of higher-order questions on student achievement (see Arnold et al 1974, Carlsen 1991, Cole & Williams 1973, Dillon 1978 1981, Mills et al 1980), only recently were Redfield & Rousseau (1981) able to validate the correlation between higher-order questions and student achievement, by reviewing 14 studies and using the meta-analytic technique. But as Cazden (1986, p.52) remarks "the fact that it took a powerful meta-analysis to establish what teachers and researchers have believed, indicates that a lot of variation in cognitive impact is not caught by frequency counts of isolated question types".

Indeed, the reasons for this difficulty in establishing the educational benefits of higher-order questions have been pointed out by various authors. One of the obvious causes of inconsistency results from the abundance of the various terms employed for describing (the same) teacher questions. As Rosenshine (1971, p.120) correctly points out "...it is impossible to determine with any certainty whether higher level questions identified by Kleinman(1964), for example, differ from those identified by Spaulding (1965). Even when two or more investigators stated that they coded "divergent" questions, they may have used different operational definitions. Even if definitions were explicitly and clearly given we still would not know what modifications the observers made as they attempted to code the questions which teachers actually asked". The problem therefore is twofold: conceptual confusion regarding the definition of question types and/or methodological inconsistency (or more specifically, doubts as to the methodology used) in classifying questions according to this or the other type.

In addition to this, the overreliance of researchers on a dichotomy to classify teachers' questions (a phenomenon that occurs in second language research as well) seems unnatural. It is impossible to meaningfully classify all teachers' questions into only two categories. Indeed, there are a variety of questions asked by the teacher which serve various worthwhile functions, yet they have been persistently ignored in questioning research (see Gall 1970, Riegle 1976).

Another problem evidenced with question typologies used in content classrooms (and second/foreign language classrooms) is the failure of researchers to make clear their criteria for identifying questions. Teacher questions are regarded, either implicitly or explicitly, as easily identifiable behaviours, hence their inclusion in most observation schemes. However, as Dillon (1982, p. 143) in his review of research on teacher questioning concludes, "Lack of definition is the most remarkable deficiency of the studies reviewed...often the reader cannot be sure what has been counted as a question and what not".

Finally, probably the greatest shortcoming of using the lower/higher-order distinction to classify teacher questions is the inherent difficulty any researcher faces in objectively classifying the cognitive level of questions. As Gall (1970, p.10) points out "a weakness of the cognitive process approach to question classification is that these processes are inferential constructs. Therefore they cannot be observed directly". Moreover, it is impossible to know with certainty whether a particular question is "recall" or "evaluation" without prior knowledge of what has been covered in the classroom; a seemingly evaluative question may actually be a recall question for students who have been taught the answer in previous lessons. Despite this difficulty, researchers have straightforwardly assigned questions into one or the other category. It has been these problems that have made Cazden (1986,p.453) to conclude, and myself to agree, that

"thinking about questions in terms of some scale of cognitive difficulty is probably still heuristically useful for teachers, but inherently imprecise for researchers".

Another very popular dichotomy utilised in educational research for the study of teacher questions, is the distinction between "open" and "closed". This dichotomy has probably originated from the work of various grammarians, semanticists and sociolinguists (see Churchill 1978, Huddleston 1984, Kearsley 1976, Lyons 1977) who have classified questions according to their structural characteristics or form (i.e. "yes/no" questions, "x" questions and "restricted x" questions). However, even with this seemingly straightforward and simple distinction between teacher questions there seems to be great inconsistency among researchers as to what an "open" and a "closed" question actually is. As Macleod et al (1975, p.203) point out "the open closed dichotomy applied to teachers' questions appears to be used in various different ways, often with evaluative overtones". For example, Hargreaves (1984) identifies closed questions with factual ones and defines them as those to which "there is only one correct answer acceptable to the teacher"(p.46), while Dillon (1981) identifies closed questions as those to which a single phrase is sufficient in response.

From this brief review it is evident how frustrating it could be for the "new" researcher to come to terms with the literature and venture into an investigation of teacher questions. It is indeed remarkable how researchers tend to develop new terms for pre-existing categories of questions, and (as seen from the "open" / "closed" definitions of questions) how researchers tend to combine content and structure in the identification and classification of teacher questions, without coming anywhere near to a meaningful classification of the questions asked in the classroom.



One researcher who has tried to develop a more elaborate classification system in order to capture the various types of teacher questions is Douglas Barnes (1969). Although he has identified functions of teacher questions which have been ignored by other researchers, i.e. "control" and "appeal" questions, he, nevertheless, has combined structural characteristics of questions with cognitive processes; he thus employs the open-closed question dichotomy as well as the factual-reasoning one. The limitations of this typology have been pointed out by Yoke (1982) when he attempted to apply Barnes' system to secondary school classrooms in Singapore. Yoke (ibid) found that accurate classification of all questions was not possible, that without reference to the context it was impossible to identify questions, and, finally, "for a reasoning question, it was not always possible to know with certainty if the information required was a reasoning question or a recalled question from memory"(p.70).

The decision not to employ question classification systems utilised in educational research was based on their significant limitations and on the need to employ a subject specific question classification system. The typologies, mentioned so far, have been developed for the "general" classroom, be it science, maths or English, whose main objective is the development of students' cognitive skills. Language teaching, however, is guided by a quite different objective: the development of students' communicative competence. This is not to say that students' intellectual development is ignored in language classrooms; it is not, but it is a secondary aim. Therefore, it was felt that a subject specific question classification system was needed if the functions of teacher questions and the role they play in classroom discourse were to be described accurately.

### 6.2.b: Problems with typologies of teacher questions used in second language classroom research.

Overreliance on a dichotomy to account for and describe teacher questions is not a unique feature of first language and content classroom research, but a trend that second language researchers seem to follow. Although the terms used to describe language teachers' questions are different from the terms mentioned so far, second language classroom questioning research suffers similar limitations to its first language counterpart.

The most popular dichotomy employed by researchers to describe language teachers' questions is that between "display" and "referential" questions:

a) Display questions: (alternatively called "known-information" questions (Mehan 1979), "recitation" questions (Dillon 1988), "evaluative" questions (Kearsley 1976)). These questions have been defined as questions to which the questioner (the teacher) knows the answer beforehand and to which only one answer is correct (Brock 1986, Chaudron 1988, Hakansson & Lindberg 1988, Long & Sato 1983, Long & Crookes 1987, Pica & Long 1986). Reasons for asking such questions are usually to assess students' knowledge or to see whether students have grasped some point of importance. Display questions tend to be "closed"(Chaudron 1988) and usually require students to recall (previously learned) facts or information and, as a result, students' answers to such questions are typically short (Brock 1986, Long & Crookes 1987) as compared to referential questions. The detrimental effect that such questions have on classroom discourse is, according to Long & Crookes (1987, p. 181), that "by definition (display questions) preclude students attempting to communicate new, unknown information. They tend to set the focus of the entire exchange they initiate on accuracy rather than meaning". Similar to research findings in first language classrooms, research in second language classrooms

has found that these questions predominate in classroom discourse, even in so-called communicative classrooms ( Dinsmore 1985, Long & Sato 1983, Nunan 1987a, Pica & Long 1986, White & Lightbown 1984), while being almost non-existent in NS-NNS conversations(Long & Sato 1983, Pica & Long 1986). Typical examples of display questions asked in language classrooms are:

"What does temperament mean?"(Brock 1986)

"What is "hall"?"(from the data).

The definition and description of display questions mentioned so far, is relatively unambiguous and explicit. The criteria used by researchers for the identification of display questions do not seem to be "problematic". Problems do, however, arise when Brock (1986), a well-cited reference in second language questioning literature, tends to merge display questions with cognitive processes. In her 1986 article she states: "one can reasonably assume that questions at low cognitive levels, asking for factual recall or recognition are 'display questions'"(p.48).

Since in second language research display questions are questions with a non-communicative value (by precluding the exchange of new unknown information, see Hakansson & Lindberg 1988), I believe that it is mistaken to associate (non) communicative value with cognitive process. Although, undoubtedly, many display questions require nothing more than recall of factual information, there can, nevertheless, be display questions in which the teacher knows the answer beforehand, there is only one correct answer, yet some kind of reasoning is required on part of the student in order to answer it. An example from the data will probably make this point clear:

(In a listening activity the students are asked to listen to an interview. The interviewee gives hesitant and unclear answers to some of the interviewer's

questions. The students must decide to which questions the interviewee gives clear and to which she gives unclear answers)

T(C2): "Are you going to visit the president?" Does Carol give a clear answer to this question? (contextual features of the discourse, such as Carol's intonation, pauses etc. as well as the type of question being asked by the interviewer need to be taken into account by the student in order to respond appropriately to this question)

or: In K3's class, the students are being presented with the types, qualities and sections of newspapers. K3 tries to elicit students' understanding of these terms drawing on their experience and knowledge of the world. At one point, the teacher asks:

T: ...Do you think "The Times" is a quality newspaper or a popular one?

(Although there is presumably only one correct answer to this question, the students do need to use the information previously presented as well as their knowledge of the world in order to answer this question)

b)Referential questions: (alternatively called "general information" questions (Naiman et al 1978), or "discussion" questions (Dillon 1988)). The criteria used for the identification of referential questions in second language classroom research are the exact opposite of those used for display questions. A teacher asking a referential question does not know the answer beforehand and there is a range of possible acceptable answers. These questions tend to elicit longer (in terms of words) and syntactically more complex student utterances (Brock 1986, Long & Crookes 1987), since they allow for the exchange of new unknown information and "promote more meaningful communication between teacher and learner"(Chaudron 1988,p.127). Despite their communicative value, they tend to be almost absent in teacher-student interactions in the classroom, while being

predominant in "normal" conversations (Long & Sato 1983, Pica & Long 1986).

Researchers, however, have treated the properties of "referential" questions quite simplistically. Firstly, Brock (1986) has again mistakenly associated referential questions with higher-order questions. Thus, for her (*ibid.*, p.47) "questions calling for evaluation or judgement are likely to be referential questions". Associating cognitive level with referential questions may, however, contradict the criteria used for identifying referential questions, as shown in the following examples taken from the data:

T(A1): When you visit a house for the first time what do you usually do?

or T(A2):...Jim, what are you doing this Saturday?

In these questions the teacher does not know the answer beforehand and there is certainly not one correct answer to the question. However, it is obvious that the student need not engage into higher-order mental processes in order to answer these questions appropriately.

Secondly, it has become almost common knowledge and an undisputed fact that referential questions tend to elicit much longer and syntactically more complex student responses than display questions (see Brock's 1986 study). Yet, if Brock counted "Do any of you have Filipino friends?" as an exemplary referential question (p.52), it does not seem very clear how this question could have elicited longer student utterances than a display question such as "Is "went" the past tense of "go"?". The point being made here is that a finer distinction between referential questions must be made. Not all referential questions stimulate greater student output; referential questions like: T: Do you like travelling by boat?...Aren't you afraid of it?, can be appropriately responded to by either "yes" or "no".

The need to distinguish between referential questions in terms of potential student output has only been acknowledged by Long & Crookes (1987) who have distinguished between "closed" and "open" referential questions. The former "were defined as questions to which the speaker does not know the answer but to which there is only one or a very limited ("closed") set of possible answers (p.185). An example they offer is: "What is the word for shark in your language?". Open referential questions, on the other hand, are questions to which the answer is not known to the questioner but to which there are a variety of possible answers, for example, "What do people think of dolphins in your country?"(Long & Crookes *ibid.*). This distinction has been retained in the analysis of the data.

Another limitation found in the definition of referential questions when attempts were made to identify them in the data, has to do with the notion of teacher intent. Researchers have tended to classify questions in isolation without any reference to the context in which the question was asked, even though as Edwards & Westgate (1987) have argued, failure to take into account the context of an utterance often makes its function unidentifiable (also see Carlsen 1991). Thus, for example, Long & Sato (1983, p.276) classify the teacher's question "Why didn't you do your homework?" as a referential question. Although this question certainly encompasses all the characteristics of a "referential" question (i.e. teacher does not know the answer, there is a range of possible answers), it is doubtful whether the teacher actually asked this question in order to exchange new unknown information and to encourage genuine communication in the classroom; anyone who has been a teacher would agree that the reason for asking such a question is to reprimand the student and make clear that this behaviour is unacceptable in the classroom. Many similar examples of this type of question are found in the data:

E.g.: (Teacher has spotted two students speaking )

T(C2): (interrupts the activity)...What are you talking about?

or T(G1): What are you laughing for? ...stay at the end.

Although these questions appear to be referential, and would be classified as such by researchers, closer examination of what stimulated the question and what followed it, clearly show that these are not referential questions. Following this, I believe that it is essential to take into account the "intent" of the teacher when assigning questions to categories. The intent of a speaker can only be specified by examining the environment of an utterance (what has preceded and followed it), its structure and intonation (see Cazden 1986).

Other types of questions frequently employed by second language researchers have been "comprehension checks", "clarification requests", "confirmation checks"(Brock 1986, Ellis 1985, Pica 1987, Pica & Doughty 1985, Pica et al 1987, Pica & Long 1986). These terms were originally coined by Long & Sato (1983) as a subdivision of Kearsley's(1976) general category of "echoic" questions. Long & Sato (op. cit.) found however that their data made necessary a finer and more meaningful distinction of the echoic category into:

a) comprehension checks: (also called "listening responses" by Van Lier 1988) are "any expressions by a NS designed to establish whether that speaker's preceding utterance has been understood by the interlocutor. E.g. Alright? OK? (Long & Sato 1983,p.275).

b) clarification requests:"... require that the interlocutor either furnish new information or recode information previously given"(ibid., p.276). Examples of clarification requests given by Long & Sato include "What do you mean?" as well as "I don't understand". This last example, however, makes apparent the importance of explicitly defining what a researcher identifies as a "question". Although Long & Sato attempt to identify "the forms and functions of teachers' questions", it is not very clear whether they take teacher questions to mean

elicitations requiring a linguistic response (which could be realised by questions, commands and statements) or interrogatives in structural terms.

c) Confirmation checks: These questions "involve exact semantic, complete or partial repetition of the previous speaker's utterance...and serve to elicit confirmation that their user had heard and/or understood the previous speaker's previous utterance"(ibid., p.275). An example of a confirmation check would be:

A: the homemaker woman

B: the homemaker? (Pica & Doughty 1985).

These three categories of questions were retained for the analysis of the data since their occurrence in the classroom would provide evidence that learners are engaging in meaningful interaction with the teacher (Pica 1987, Pica & Long 1986). Confirmation checks and clarification requests are asked when there appears to be a problem (or a "procedural problem" as Churchill 1978, p.90-98, terms it) in the reception/comprehension of information by the interlocutor and serve as means by which the interlocutor provides feedback to the speaker concerning the content of his/her utterance. Van Lier (1988) considers clarification requests and confirmation checks as forms of "other-repair", while other authors (Chaudron 1988, Murphy 1986), who have dealt with teacher error correcting behaviour, have regarded these two types of questions as "communicatively" valuable forms of feedback. Following these observations, it was decided to treat these two types of questions (when used by the teacher) as types of corrective reactions. This is the reason for their inclusion in the feedback category of questions (see next section).

The types of questions mentioned so far (i.e. display, referential, comprehension checks, clarification requests, confirmation checks) are the ones most commonly employed in the analysis of interaction in second language classrooms. Only Long & Sato (1983) have ventured further and have employed



a more elaborate system for the classification of teachers' questions in classroom discourse. The other types of questions used by Long & Sato (*ibid.*) have all been taken from Kearsley's (1976) typology of questions. These are:

Rhetorical questions: which require no answer from the listener and are answered by the speaker. They are asked for effect only. For example:

"Why did I do that? Because I..."(Long & Sato *ibid.*, p.276)

This type was retained for the data analysis.

Expressive questions: The definition offered by Long & Sato for this type of question is taken verbatim from Kearsley (1976, p.362): "when questions are used for an expressive purpose, they convey attitudinal information to the addressee". The example Long & Sato give for this type of question is : "It's interesting the different pronunciations we have now, but isn't it?"(p.276). Although the definition of this question was only vaguely understood, when it came to apply it to the data its "vagueness" became even more apparent. Unfortunately, Long & Sato do not provide concise criteria for the identification of these questions, and the example they offer does not enlighten the situation either. Consequently, this type of question was retained in the analysis, but with many modifications in order to accommodate the data.

Had the Greek English language teachers' questions neatly fallen into the categories of questions (despite their limitations) used by second language researchers (including Long & Sato 1983), the development of a new typology would not have been necessary. Had there been a small number of teachers' questions that could not be accommodated by the display-referential-echoic categories, the development of a "rag-bag" category (Coulthard 1977) would have provided a solution. However, both these avenues were abandoned because of the numbers of unclassified teacher questions found in the data, and

the important functions these questions served in classroom discourse. It seemed peculiar how questions such as:

T: who wants to read the dialogue?

T: ...anything else?

or S: they are in a plane

T: in?

or T: [can you be more patient? Can I say what I have to say before we continue?] (asked when students are arguing about who is going to read aloud a dialogue),

which are certainly not unique in any way, have been unaccounted for by second language researchers.

Before developing the final typology of questions to be used for the analysis of the data, and after suggestions from lecturers of the department, I ventured into an investigation of the works of discourse analysts in the hope that a substantiation of the limitations I had observed in the types of questions used in research would result. Although discourse analysis did validate some of my objections regarding the way in which teacher questions have been classified in second language research, it did not, however, offer many insights into the classification of the variety of teacher questions found in the data. One of the most important points made by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) regarding the analysis of teacher questions concerns the importance of taking into account the context of a question when classifying it. They point out that there is usually a disparity between form and function (i.e. a question can also function as a command) and a way of accurately classifying utterances is by taking into account what they call "situation" (features of the environment, social conventions) and "tactics" (what linguistic items have preceded and utterance and what are expected and what actually follow). As far as types of questions, however, are concerned, the only ones they identify are "loop" (something that

approximates Long & Sato's (1983) clarification requests and confirmation checks) and "checks" "which are realised by a closed set of polar questions concerned with being "finished" or "ready", "having problems" or "difficulties", being able to "see" or "hear"" (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975, p.40). This last type of question is, according to Sinclair and Coulthard, the only "real" questions asked in the classroom, in that, for once, the teacher does not know the answer beforehand. All other teacher questions (which are known-information questions) they classify under the general act of "elicitation". The reason for this predominance of known-information questions in their data is because they have concentrated on traditional lessons in which knowledge is unequally distributed between teacher and pupils (Stubbs 1983).

### 6.3.: An emerging typology of questions.

In sum. the study of literature on teachers' classroom questioning practices, and the application of existing typologies of questions to the data, have revealed the following limitations of teacher questioning research:

1) Overreliance of researchers on dichotomous classifications of teachers' questions has led to failure to meaningfully cope with the range and diversity of teacher questions (see Cazden 1986, Dillon 1982, Gall 1970, Macleod et al 1975, Riegle 1976, Van Lier 1988),

2) Failure of researchers to provide clear and concise criteria for the identification of question types has led to semantic confusion over the various terms used for question types (see Rosenshine 1971); in language teacher questioning research, confusion has resulted from the tendency to equate cognitive level of a questions with communicative value (length of response).

3) Failure of researchers (in content and language classrooms) to provide an explicit definition of "question".

4) Failure to distinguish content from structure of a question (Dillon 1982); researchers have tended to identify wh-construction questions with referential/open ones, and yes/no questions with display/closed ones. As Kearsley (1976) argues, it is impossible to draw an exact correspondence between questions forms and question functions.

5) Failure to take into account the context of a question when classifying it. Researchers of content and language classrooms have tended to classify questions in isolation, as decontextualised utterances, ignoring the intent of the teacher, i.e. the purpose of the teacher in asking it (Cazden 1986, Edwards & Westgate 1987). This dimension (teacher intent) has a strong bearing on the expected (if any) student response.

In view of these shortcomings, it was felt that the typology developed for this study should avoid as much as possible the inadequacies identified in classroom questioning research and that conscious efforts should be made to create a system which is comprehensive (i.e. coped with the entirety of the data), finite, operational (i.e. criteria for the identification of question types were clearly specified) and relevant to the purposes of this study.

The first problem to overcome concerned what exactly was to be identified as a question. It was decided to identify questions in terms of their structural properties, i.e. the structural characteristics of interrogatives. This was done for two reasons: a) for the purposes of methodological consistency. Since "questions" was the focus of this analysis, it was felt that only "true" questions and not anything requiring a response, be it a command or a gesture (nod of the head), should be identified, and b) for practical purposes. If questions are identified as anything uttered or done by the speaker requiring a verbal response from the addressee, then non-verbal questioning behaviour cannot be identified on the basis of transcripts. In this case, videotapes of the lesson or a detailed

real-time observation of teachers' linguistic behaviour (which was not possible since the observation scheme did not capture these finer aspects of teachers' non-verbal behaviour) would have been necessary.

Thus, any utterance that met one or more of the following criteria was counted as a question:

- 1) The operator is placed immediately before the subject, e.g.: Will you speak to the boss today?
- 2) The sentence begins with an interrogative word, e.g. Who will you speak to?
- 3) The sentence has rising intonation (in spoken English), e.g.: You'll speak to the boss today? (Leech & Svartvik 1975, p.289)

The condition that questions are utterances that require a response, was not employed for the identification of questions in the data. This was deemed necessary since there were a fair amount of questions in the data which the teachers asked for effect or to express their attitude, and neither required or expected a response from the students. This practice is not at all irregular, since as Lyons (1977, p. 754) states, " ...it does not seem to be essential to the nature of questions that they should always require or expect an answer from the addressee".

After identifying the questions on the basis of structural criteria, questions were subsequently classified into types according to function, i.e. the purpose of the teacher in asking them, what the teacher intends to achieve or as Malamah-Thomas (1987, p. 38) calls it, in terms of the question's communicative purpose. This criterion for the classification of questions was considered essential because of its implications for teacher role and its pervasive effect on the response expected from the students. Van Lier (1988) also stresses the importance of this criterion by claiming : "an analysis must go beyond simple distinctions such as display and referential questions, yes/no and open-ended questions and so on, to

investigate what different tasks questions set and the different commitment they place on the answerer”(p.224). In order to specify the teacher's intent in asking a question, a close examination of the context of the question (what preceded it, what stimulated it, what, if anything, followed it, and the teacher's subsequent reaction ) was essential.

### 6.3.a.: Types of questions identified in the data.

1) Evaluative questions: These are questions to which the teacher knows the answer and to which only one answer is correct. The purpose of these questions is to assess students' knowledge or to check whether students have grasped some point of importance. Students' output in relation to these questions tends to be extremely limited (in the majority of cases one word is sufficient to answer such questions). Evaluative questions can be open or closed in form. These questions are very similar to display questions; the reason the term "evaluative" was adopted is because no association is made with cognitive level (e.g. Brock 1986). Evaluative questions may or may not require some kind of reasoning on part of the student in order to be answered. Examples of evaluative questions in the data are:

- a) T(C2): ...what is the title of this page?
- b) T(P3): spoil...it's irregular...spoil-spoilt-spoilt. It means what spoil? Can you give a synonym?
- c) T(K3): ...Do you think the "Times" is a quality newspaper or a popular newspaper?

2) Communicative questions: These are questions which request information unknown to the teacher and to which there can be a range of acceptable answers. Such questions usually ask students to express experiences, ideas, feelings and opinions and resemble questions asked in "natural" conversations. Again with these questions no association is made with cognitive level (i.e. they may or may not require some kind of reasoning, evaluation and/or judgement in order to

be answered; this is irrelevant to the identification of communicative questions). With such questions, the teacher is genuinely interested in the student's response (see point 3, p. 166). Students' answers to these questions tend to be longer ( in terms of words) and syntactically more complex than their answers to all other kinds of questions. For example:

- a) T(G1): What do you like doing in your spare time?
- b) T(L3): ...what did you find interesting about this unit?
- c) (a student has disagreed with the way in which an event happened in a story and has given her version and explanation of it)  
T(KO2): (to the other students) what do you think? what do you think?  
...is that right what Stella says?

3) Closed-communicative questions: (This type resembles the closed-referential type identified by Long & Crookes 1987; the term communicative was employed to avoid any association with cognitive level) These are questions to which the teacher does not know the answer beforehand, and to which there can be more than one acceptable answer. However, the range of answers is limited as is the amount of student output. For example:

- a) (students had to write a paragraph about the life of one of three famous explorers)  
T(L2): John who are you going to talk about?
- b) (students have read an article about the TV viewing habits of French people)  
T(P3): Now.. could you please tell me eh.. first of all what kind of magazine is this article from?

4) Prompting questions: These questions are asked by the teacher to "prompt" students to continue participating. They refer to an original question (evaluative, communicative, closed-communicative) but their purpose is to encourage students to continue talking. For example:

a) T(L3): ...looking at this picture what can you understand from the next unit? Panagioti.(original communicative question)

P: eh.. I think about the sea .. the boats-

T: the boats, yes

P: and eh.. we bring some information about the ship...and about this(pointing to the picture)

T: about this.. what else? (prompting question)

Other examples include questions like: "Anything else?", "Does anyone want to add anything?". These questions can also be asked when a student's answer (to an original evaluative, communicative, closed-communicative question) is correct but incomplete and the teacher prompts the student in order to elicit more information or when the student hesitates to answer and the teacher repeats the student's utterance with a prompting word and rising intonation. For example:

b) (students have just read a paragraph about John's life)

T(G1): What does John like doing in his spare time?(original evaluative question)

S: he likes studying

T: he likes studying and..? (prompting question)

c) (students are practising the use of present continuous with a future meaning. They are given a dialogue in which the answers are only given; they must construct the appropriate question)

S: eh.. how are you getting ..(hesitates)

T(A2): how are you getting where?(prompting).

These four types of questions are included under the general category of "information seeking" questions since their function is to request information from the student for evaluative or communicative purposes.

The next general category of questions (which consists of four question types) is called "feedback" questions. The function of the first three types of



questions in this category is to provide feedback (directly or indirectly) to the students as to the appropriacy and accuracy of their responses; the fourth type (comprehension checks) is used by the teacher in order to get feedback from the students concerning the reception of his/her utterance.

1) Clarification requests: The definition employed for the identification of these questions has been taken from Long & Sato (1983)(see p. 167) with the exception that statements ("I can't hear") or imperatives ("Repeat it") have not been included. Examples of clarification requests from the data include questions like:

"What?", "IIm?", "What did you say?", "What do you mean?",

"Can you repeat that please?" or questions like:

T(A2): What are you doing during your Christmas holidays?

S: I'm opening my presents

T: he will? .. what are you doing?(clarification request).

2) Confirmation checks: For the identification of these questions Long & Sato's (1983) definition was employed (see p. 168). Examples of these questions in the data include:

a) S: to ..make the clothes of the actors

T(P3): to paint? paint... you mean to paint the scenery?(confirmation check)

b) S: a note is.. is on the .. on the wall

T(A1): a note? (confirmation check)

S: yes

T: over the bed you mean? (confirmation check)

3) Correcting questions: These questions are asked by the teacher in order to signal to the student that an error has been made. These questions can take three forms: a) the teacher repeats the whole of student's utterance putting emphasis

on the error and with rising intonation, or repeats part of the student's utterance (the erroneous part) stressing the error and with rising intonation. For example:

S: they are in a plane?

T(C2): in?

or (students have a plan of a house in front of them)

T(A1): .. so how many bedrooms are there in this room?

S: five

T: five? (the answer is three) {correcting question}

b) the teacher repeats part of the student's utterance without including the error in an attempt to have the student self-correct. E.g.:

S: eh... when I returned at home I see the firebri-

T(KO2): I? (correcting question)

c) the teacher uses a question which directs the student to the correct response (with these questions the teacher points explicitly to the source or nature of the error). E.g.:

T(KO2): ...how did you get to the telephone? how did you get there?

S: by foot

T: [do we say by?](correcting question)

Such questions (in all three forms) occur frequently in the data and provide a useful means of encouraging the student to self-correct. Although such questions have been classified as a common type of teacher corrective reaction (Allwright 1975, Chaudron 1977a, 1988, Fanselow 1977), it seems peculiar that second language researchers investigating teachers' questions have not acknowledged their existence in their analyses (even though this type of question serves to elicit (correct) verbal output from the students).

4) Comprehension checks: Long & Sato's definition of comprehension checks was retained for this study (see p. 167). These questions asked by the teacher serve to elicit feedback (from the students) that his/ her utterance has been understood. Examples from the data include:

"Alright?", "OK?", "Do you understand?", "Have you understood?", "Do you know what to do here?"

The final general category of questions I have termed "control" questions. The term "control" may appear a bit naive since all questions regardless of type serve to control the discourse. As Ellis (1990, p. 82) rightly claims, "any question - even an open one- exerts a form of control as it constitutes the first part of a question answer pair". However, the term "control" was employed for this group of questions because of their explicit and extensive controlling effect on students' verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Questions in this group determine who will speak (offering floor questions), whether students are to speak (rhetorical questions), what exactly they are expected to say (leading questions) and how they are expected to behave (attitudinal questions).

1) Rhetorical questions: This type identified in Long & Sato (1983), are questions to which either no answer is expected from the listener and are asked for effect only,

e.g.: (students have been asked to write about an accident without identifying it (car, boat). One student has written a story in which a popular Greek singer was involved in an almost fatal accident)

T(K3): I didn't know that! Why is he still alive? Why is he still alive?  
Unfortunately, he is still alive.

or, when the answer is provided by the speaker(teacher) him/herself:

T(A2): .. you get a higher education how? you are attending some classes in a university or college OK?

or T(C2): Another word for telegram is?.. cable

2) Offering floor questions: These questions are asked in order to encourage students to raise their hands so that the teacher can nominate. Of course, the teacher can nominate a student who is not raising his/her hand, but in the data teachers usually wait for offers before nominating. Examples from the data include:

"Who wants to read the dialogue?"

"Who wants to start?"

"Who wants to be Jonathan O'Connor?" (in a role-play)

"Would anyone else like to repeat it?"

3) Attitudinal questions: The teacher asks such questions in order to express his/her attitude, one of discontent in the majority of cases, to the student. These questions are predominantly reactions to students' behavioural errors (i.e. students not paying attention, or disrupting the class in some way). Attitudinal questions usually intercept the normal flow of classroom interaction (i.e. the teacher usually interrupts the activity at hand in order to pose them). What is interesting with attitudinal questions, is that the teacher, in most cases, does not expect or require an answer from the student, exemplified by the fact that immediately after posing them the teacher goes on to something else. In general these questions relate to improper student behaviour and serve as a means of signalling to the student that a "rule" has been broken. Classroom observations, which occurred prior to the transcript analysis, assisted tremendously in the identification of these questions. Some examples of this type of question found in the data are:

a) (students are arguing about who is going to read a dialogue)

T(A1): ...[are we going to spend all our time arguing about who is going to read and who isn't?]

b) (teacher has spotted a student doing something)

T(C2): ...what are you doing there? ...leave it!

4)Leading questions: When asking such questions the teacher has established beforehand, through the use of clues or by his/her intonation, what answer is required. Even if the student's opinion is different, in the majority of cases the student answers the question as is required from him/her; doing otherwise may result in disagreement with, and discontent on part of the teacher. These questions are asked in the normal flow of classroom interaction. It seems surprising that such questions have not been identified in other classrooms (be they language or not) since as Sinclair & Coulthard (1975, p. 113) argue, "there are techniques almost always used unconsciously by the teacher which provide children with strong clues to the answer required". A very close analysis of the context in which the question was asked is essential to the identification of these questions. What is interesting about these questions is that they require a simple yes/no (i.e. agreement with the teacher) in order to be answered and satisfy the teacher . For example:

- a) (the teacher has discussed with the students their TV viewing habits and preferences. She wants to make the point that watching TV is counterproductive and time-consuming, at least for students)

T(P3): ...Good for entertainment, but not for us. I would say for older people ...who have nothing to do...who stay at home during the day, isn't it? (control question)

Ss: yes (who would disagree?)

- b) (a student has given the correct answer to a question)

T(KO2): [eh..very good...do you agree?] (to students)

Ss: Yes

T: [does anyone disagree?]

(the teacher has accepted the student's answer and praised it. She then asks the class whether they agree. It would seem unnatural for any student to disagree after the teacher has accepted only one answer as correct).

A model based on the types of questions identified in the data and their relation in terms of student output has been developed (Figure 6.1.). According to the model there are three general groups of questions, each group consisting of four types of questions. The two axes refer to potential (and not actual since it is impossible for the researcher or even the teacher to definitively predict what a student's answer will be) student verbal output (S.V.O.). The vertical axis relates to the general groups; according to it, maximum student output is most likely to be produced by the information-seeking group of questions; whereas the questions in the control group would elicit minimum student output. The feedback group of questions is at the middle of the axis (likely to generate less student output than the information-seeking group, yet much more than the control group), since students, when asked these questions, usually clarify or correct what they have previously said. The horizontal axis refers to the types of questions included in each group. Therefore, the types of questions on the left side of the axis (e.g. communicative, clarification requests, attitudinal) would generate the largest student output within each group; whereas, those on the right (evaluative, comprehension checks, rhetorical) would generate the least, if any, student verbal output in the group.

This question typology does not purport to create a "breakthrough" in classroom questioning research; indeed further research in other classrooms would be needed to prove its descriptive "powers". This classification system was developed solely for the purposes of this study in an attempt to answer my research questions and to judge to what extent teacher questions can be revealing of teacher roles. As has become probably obvious, many question types in this system are similar to other types employed in second language classroom research.

A Typology of questions:

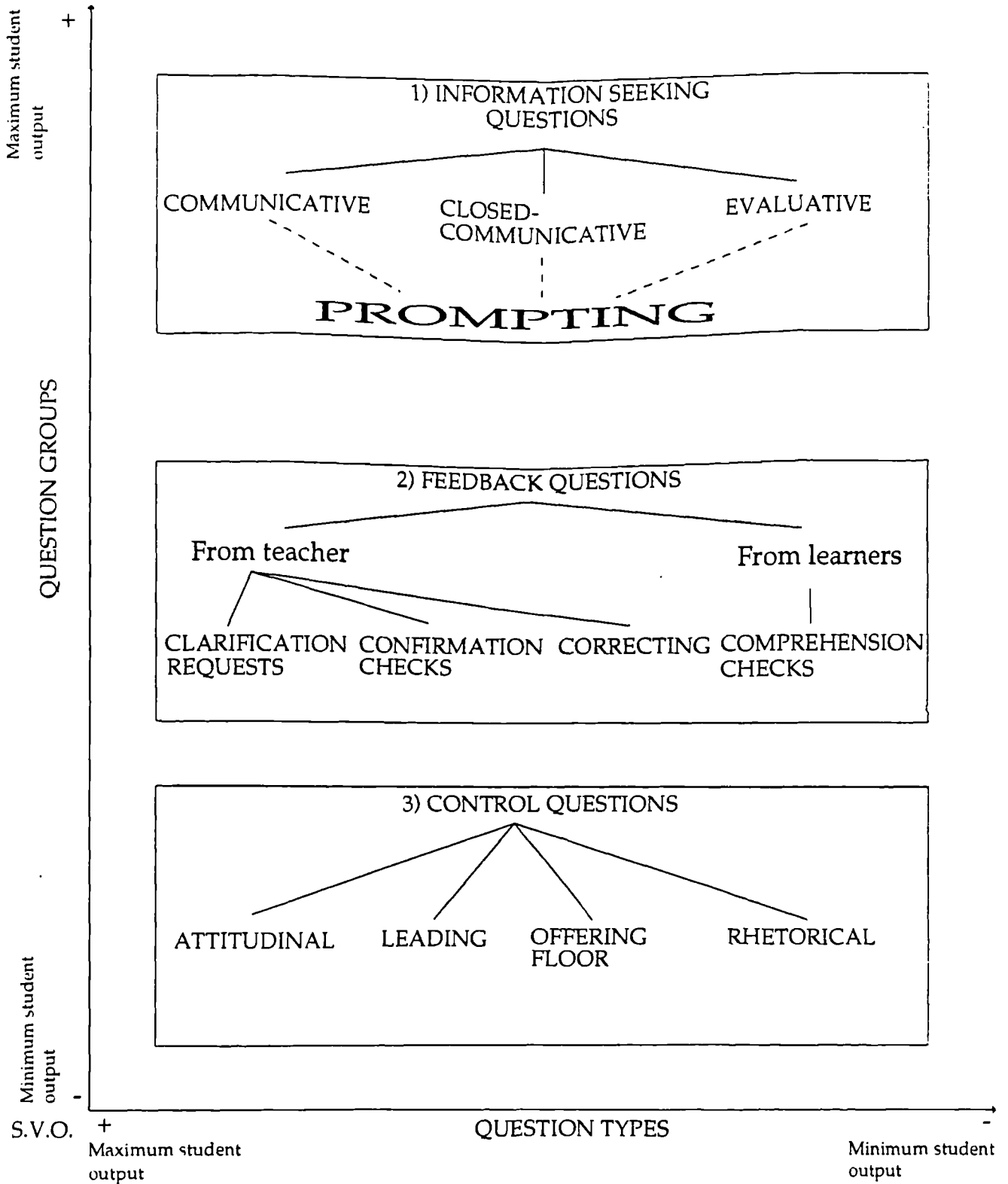


Figure 6.1.: A typology of questions.

The reason new terms were employed was to avoid any links with cognitive difficulty of a question in the case of referential/ display questions; in the case expressive questions, the term "attitudinal" was preferred because of the modifications made to the original definition of expressive questions. The only original, at least to my knowledge, question types (i.e. types not employed by any other typology reviewed) are leading questions, prompting questions, correcting questions and offering floor questions. Finally, before proceeding to the application of this typology to the data, it should be noted that the questions were quantified in terms of question types. The general groups of questions were developed in order to assist in the discussion of the implications of questions for teacher roles.

#### 6.4.: Types of questions used by the 14 teachers in the study.

The results of the analysis (frequencies of questions and their percentages) were checked twice to assess the reliability of the analysis. The first analysis was carried out in May 1992, while the second in October 1992. The correlation coefficient between the two sets of results was  $r=0.998$ .

Table 6.1 shows the distribution of all question types as they occurred in the 14 lessons.

Type	A1	C1	D1	G1	A2	C2	K2	KO2	L2	T2	K3	L3	P3	S3	Σ
Total	136	57	109	91	189	203	98	159	109	35	92	58	162	80	1578
Evaluative	62	20	35	51	43	135	51	38	13	1	21	8	91	42	611
Commun.	3	0	0	3	9	0	1	13	1	0	5	7	2	0	44
Closed-C.	1	1	3	0	3	0	5	19	10	1	33	5	13	0	94
Prompting	9	1	7	10	13	16	6	6	7	1	2	10	11	8	107
Comp. Ch.	19	20	22	8	105	14	15	32	14	16	8	3	14	11	301
Clarif.Req.	3	0	2	2	3	1	0	0	10	1	4	7	1	2	36
Confir. Ch.	8	2	4	1	1	1	4	4	10	2	2	5	2	0	46
Correcting	16	2	17	4	4	10	5	19	10	2	2	1	3	13	108
Attitudinal	6	2	10	6	0	4	4	1	5	1	1	0	1	0	41
Leading	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	11	0	2	0	10	0	31
Offer. Fl.	0	7	3	4	2	13	2	15	14	8	5	10	9	1	93
Rhetorical	7	2	6	2	6	8	4	8	4	2	7	2	5	3	66

*Table 6.1.: Frequency of question types used by the teachers in the 14 classrooms.*



The total number of questions asked in the 14 classrooms was 1578. The number of questions asked in each lesson ranged from 35 (teacher T2) to as high as 203 (teacher C2). The average number of questions asked per lesson was M=112. As far as the frequency of questions types is concerned, the least favoured type were leading questions (n=31, 7 teachers did not ask any leading questions in the lessons), while by far the most favoured and commonly occurring question type was the evaluative question (n=611).

Table 6.2 shows the distribution and frequencies of the information seeking group of questions that occurred in the 14 teachers' speech. In this group, 611 questions (39%) were evaluative, 44 (3%) were communicative, 94 (6%) were closed-communicative and 107 (7%) were prompting questions. The evaluative questions were by far the most frequent type within the information-seeking group, followed by prompting questions, closed-communicative and communicative.

	A1	C1	D1	G1	A2	C2	K2	KO2	L2	T2	K3	L3	P3	S3	Σ
No. Eval.	62	20	35	51	43	135	51	38	13	1	21	8	91	42	611
% Eval.*	45.5	35	32	56	23	66	52	24	12	3	23	14	56	52	39
No. Com.	3	0	0	3	9	0	1	13	1	0	5	7	2	0	44
% Com.	2	0	0	3	5	0	1	8	1	0	5	12	1	0	3
No. C-C	1	1	3	0	3	0	5	19	10	1	33	5	13	0	94
% C-C	1	2	3	0	1.5	0	5	12	9	3	36	9	8	0	6
No. Prom.	9	1	7	10	13	16	6	6	7	1	2	10	11	8	107
% Prom.	7	2	6	11	7	8	6	4	6	3	2	17	7	10	7

\*: Percentages refer to the percentage of the question type from the total no. of questions asked by each teacher. Percentages have been rounded.

*Table 6.2.: Frequencies and percentage of evaluative, communicative, closed communicative and prompting questions asked by the 14 teachers.*

Since prompting questions always refer to an original question (evaluative, closed-communicative, communicative) and taking into account the fact that the overwhelming majority of questions were evaluative followed (with a large

difference) by closed-communicative questions, it becomes obvious that the majority of prompting questions were follow-ups to original evaluative questions. The frequency with which evaluative questions occurred in the lessons ranged from 1 (teacher T2) to 135 evaluative questions in teacher C2's lesson. With the exception of teacher T2 and L3, the average number of evaluative questions asked in the remaining 12 teachers' lessons was  $M=50$ . There are reasons, however, why teacher T2 and L3's speech exhibited this small amount of evaluative questions. In the former case, the length of the lesson was half (i.e. 20 minutes) to that of other lessons; in addition, the majority of this teacher's elicitations were in the form mostly of commands and secondly of statements. This tactic of using commands was mainly due to the behaviour of the students, who were extremely noisy and disruptive during the observed lesson. Although the presence of an observer may have been responsible for the students' behaviour, at the end of the observation it was noted by the teacher that this was her most "undisciplined" group. Teacher L3 asked a relatively small amount of evaluative questions for quite a different reason. The main part of this teacher's lesson was on a form focused section which is at the end of each unit in the textbook. The teacher, thus, read aloud the instructions of each grammatical exercise and then nominated students. Most of her elicitations, in other words, were in the form of statements.

The number of communicative questions asked in the classrooms was comparatively very small. Five of the teachers (C1, D1, C2, T2, S3) did not ask any communicative questions during the course of their lessons. For the remaining nine teachers, the average number of communicative questions asked per lesson was  $M=5$ . The occurrence of communicative questions ranged from 1 (teacher K2 and L2) to 13 (teacher KO2). In teacher KO2's lesson, communicative questions were asked in an activity where students had to figure

out (using their imagination and logic) how the events of a particular story concerning a fire accident, happened.

The frequency of closed-communicative questions in the data (6%) is not as low as the frequency of communicative ones, yet, does not by far approximate the number of evaluative questions (39%). Although only three teachers (G1, C2, S3) failed to ask any closed-communicative questions, the average number of these questions asked during the remaining 11 lessons was only 8 questions per lesson (this average rising due to the fairly high amount of closed-communicative questions in teacher K3's lesson,  $n=33$ ).

It is also evident that the level of students does not seem to affect the types of questions teachers tend to ask. The average number of evaluative questions asked in first, second and third year classes does not seem to differ greatly (1st year  $M=42$ , 2nd year  $M=47$ , 3rd year  $M=40$ ). More communicative questions were asked on average in second year classes than in first and third year classes. This result is surprising since one would expect teachers of more advanced students to ask questions which would encourage greater student output. The frequency with which closed-communicative questions were asked seems to rise according to student level; hence, third year teachers asked 12 closed-communicative questions on average per lesson, while an average of 1.2 closed-communicative questions were asked by first year teachers in each lesson. The average of prompting questions asked, seems to be quite high for second year teachers ( $M=8.1$ , probably due to the high average of evaluative questions asked in this year), while quite the same for first year and second year teachers ( $M=6.7$  and  $M=7.7$  respectively).

Table 6.3 shows the distribution and frequencies of the feedback group of questions as they occurred in the 14 lessons. By far the most popular type of question in this group were comprehension checks ( $n=301$ ) which account for

19% of the total number of questions. Apart from the high frequency of comprehension checks in A2's speech, the average number of comprehension checks asked by the remaining 13 Greek English language teachers, was M=15. The reason why teacher A2 asked this large amount of comprehension checks (n=105) is because this teacher tended to utter "OK?" or "Alright?" after almost every utterance. The frequency with which clarification requests and confirmation checks were asked in the English language classrooms is rather low. Three out of the fourteen teachers failed to use any clarification requests, while the remaining eleven teachers asked on average M=3.2 clarification requests per lesson. In relation to the other teachers, L2 and L3 asked a comparatively high number of clarification requests (n=10 and n=7 respectively) in their lessons.

	A1	C1	D1	G1	A2	C2	K2	KO2	L2	T2	K3	L3	P3	S3	Σ
No.Com. Ch.	19	20	22	8	105	14	15	32	14	16	8	3	14	11	301
% Com. Ch.	14	35	20	9	55.5	7	15	20	13	46	9	5	9	14	19
No. Cl. Req.	3	0	2	2	3	1	0	0	10	1	4	7	1	2	36
% Cl. Req.	2	0	2	2	2	0.4	0	0	9	3	4	12	1	2.5	2.3
No. Con.Ch.	8	2	4	1	1	1	4	4	10	2	2	5	2	0	46
% Con.Ch.	6	3.5	4	1	0.5	0.4	4	2.5	9	6	2	9	1	0	3
No. Corr.	16	2	17	4	4	10	5	19	10	2	2	1	3	13	108
% Corr.	12	3.5	15.5	4	2	5	5	12	9	6	2	2	2	16	7

% refers to the percentage of the question type from the total no. of questions asked by each teacher

*Table 6.3.: Frequency of comprehension checks, clarification requests, confirmation checks and correcting questions asked by the 14 teachers in the study.*

The reason why L3 used clarification requests is because during the whole lesson she sat at her desk which was quite far apart from the students' desks. The classroom was a relatively large one, and, thus, when students sitting at the back of the class spoke, the teacher could not hear them; this made necessary the use of clarification requests (and confirmation checks). L2's use of clarification requests was due to the nature of the activity carried out in the lesson. During this lesson, students read aloud a biography of a famous explorer which they

had been assigned to write as homework. Quite frequently, students mispronounced words or read very quickly, which necessitated the use of clarification requests by the teacher so that students' speech could be understood. Confirmation checks seem to share the same "unpopularity" as clarification requests. 46 confirmation checks were asked in the 14 lessons, making up 3% of the total questions asked. On average the teachers asked  $M=3.5$  confirmation checks in their lesson (with the exception of S3 who used no confirmation checks at all). Correcting questions, however, occur frequently in the language teachers' speech. In all, 108 correcting questions were identified in the data, accounting for 7% of the total questions asked. Teachers on average used  $M=7.7$  correcting questions in their lessons. The average number of correcting questions asked by the teachers seems to be dependent on the level of students; thus, third year teachers tend to ask the least number of correcting questions ( $M=4.7$ ) than second year ( $M=8.3$ ) and first year teachers ( $M=9.7$ ).

The distribution of control questions as they occurred in the 14 classes is shown in Table 6.4.

	A1	C1	D1	G1	A2	C2	K2	KO2	I.2	T2	K3	L3	P3	S3	Σ
No. Attit.	6	2	10	6	0	4	4	1	5	1	1	0	1	0	41
% Attit.	4	3.5	9	7	0	2	4	1	4.5	3	1	0	1	0	3
No. Lead.	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	11	0	2	0	10	0	31
% Lead.	1.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	1	2.5	10	0	2	0	6	0	2
No. Off. Fl.	0	7	3	4	2	13	2	15	14	8	5	10	9	1	93
% Off. Fl.	0	12	3	4	1	6	2	9.4	13	23	5	17	5.5	1	6
No. Rhet.	7	2	6	2	6	8	4	8	4	2	7	2	5	3	66
% Rhet.	5	3.5	5.5	2	3	4	4	5	4	6	8	3	3	4	4

% refers to the percentage of the question from the total no. of questions asked by each teacher.

*Table 6.4.: Frequency of attitudinal, leading, offering floor and rhetorical questions asked in the 14 classrooms.*

The most commonly occurring question in this group was the "offering floor" question ( $n=93$ , 6% of the total questions asked). This result seems natural

provided that offering floor questions are an effective means of classroom management and of ensuring that students do not "steal" turns and only one student speaks at a time.

Although with classes of 25-30 students such questions seem essential for maintaining "order" in classroom interaction, they, nevertheless, leave no space for student initiative since once the student has been nominated, the turn belongs to him and only to him, while the next turn belongs, inevitably, to the teacher. A student who chooses to violate this strict pattern of interaction will be seen as breaking the rules of the game (Bellack et al 1966) and will, therefore, be reprimanded by the teacher. Moreover, these questions give opportunities to the more extrovert and proficient students to contribute to the interaction; shy students usually prefer to remain silent rather than raise their hands and attract the whole class' attention. The next most popular question in this group is the rhetorical question (n=66). It seems that teachers of all levels tend to ask questions for effect or so that they can answer them. Following rhetorical questions are attitudinal questions (n=41, 3% of the total), which seem to share the same unpopularity with communicative questions (n=44, see table 6.2). Most attitudinal questions found in the data did not require an answer from the student; they are thus similar to rhetorical questions with the exception that in the latter no attitudinal information is expressed in the question. Apart from teachers A2, L3, S3, all other teachers asked on average 3 attitudinal questions in their lesson. Leading questions are the most unpopular questions in this group (n=31, 2% of the total number of questions). In fact, half of the teachers in the study (C1, D1, G1, A2, T2, L3, S3) did not favour this questioning technique at all. There are, however, two teachers (L2, P3) who used a high number of these questions. The 11 leading questions in L2's class were asked during a segment of the lesson in which two students had become disruptive. The teacher used these questions in order to "persuade" the students that their misbehaviour was

due to their lack of attention and inability to behave as "serious" students; whatever the students had to say in response to the teacher's questions was ignored by the teacher. In the end the students "had to" agree with the teacher's comments. P3's leading questions were asked during an, initially, free conversation in which students' TV viewing habits were being discussed. Although in the beginning the students were sincere about their habits and TV preferences, when the teacher made clear to them her views about the uselessness of TV viewing and her astonishment about the hours students spent watching TV, students, subsequently, agreed with the teacher and began contradicting what they had previously said.

Table 6.5. shows the total frequencies of the 12 question types found in the data (the percentages in the table have been rounded off), while Table 6.6 shows the 12 question types in a descending order depending on the frequency with which they appeared in the data (in this table the exact percentages were employed so as to make the ordering possible).

Question Type	Total	Percentage*	
Evaluative	611	39	Information
Communic.	44	3	Seeking
Closed-Comm.	94	6	Questions
Prompting	107	7	
Compr. Ch.	301	19	Feedback
Clarif. Reques.	36	2	Questions
Confir. Ch.	46	3	
Correcting	108	7	
Attitudinal	41	3	Control
Leading	31	2	Questions
Offer. Floor	93	6	
Rhetorical	66	4	
TOTAL	1578		

\*: Percentages have been rounded.

*Table 6.5.: Total frequencies and percentages of questions types asked in the 14 classrooms.*

From the tables it becomes evident that evaluative questions are not only the most commonly occurring questions in the information seeking group, but by far the most frequently occurring type of all 12 question types. Evaluative questions are asked 14 times more than communicative questions (the proportion being 1 communicative question to 14 evaluative ones) and almost 7 times more than closed-communicative questions (1 closed-communicative questions to 7 evaluative ones). This result does not seem to contradict similar results from second language classrooms (Long & Sato 1983, Nunan 1987a, Pica & Long 1986), where display questions were found to predominate, even in apparently communicative classes, while referential questions were almost non-existent. The large number of evaluative questions asked in the Greek English language classrooms reveals, that, contrary to the recommendations of the curriculum and textbook developers, genuine communication in which two parties exchange new unknown information, has not become common practice for the Greek English language teachers.

Question Type	Total	Percentage
1: Evaluative.....	611.....	38.7
2: Comprehen. Ch.....	301.....	19
3: Correcting.....	108.....	6.8
4: Prompting.....	107.....	6.7
5: Closed Comm.....	94.....	5.9
6: Offering Floor.....	93.....	5.8
7: Rhetorical.....	66.....	4.1
8: Confirm. Ch.....	46.....	2.9
9: Communicative.....	44.....	2.7
10: Attitudinal.....	41.....	2.5
11: Clarif. Req.....	36.....	2.2
12: Leading.....	31.....	1.9

NB: Exact frequencies are employed in this table so as to make the descending order possible

*Table 6.6.: Frequencies of question types in descending order.*

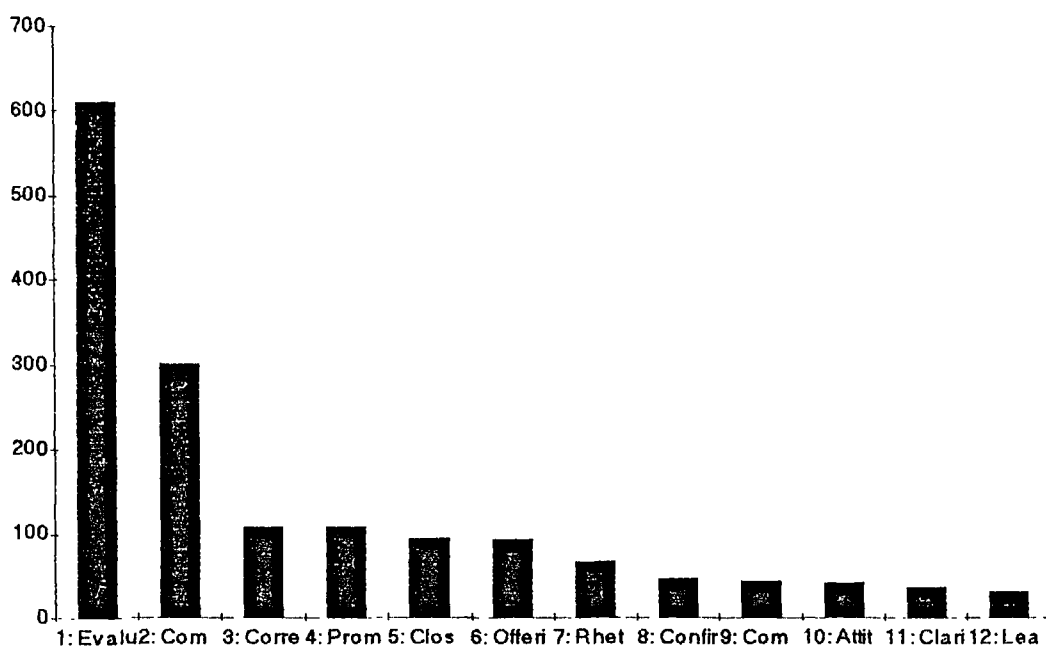
Moreover, as far as the roles of the teachers are concerned, it is evident that the Greek English language teachers see themselves as language experts, as "knowers" whose primary function is to transmit information and then test to see



whether students have received it. The "transmission" model of teaching (Barnes 1975) seems to be the one favoured and followed by most of the teachers, despite the attempts of the textbook writers to instil, via the materials, a learner-centred process oriented approach in the classroom accompanied by a change of teacher role (see chapter 2). Furthermore, the defining characteristic of evaluative questions (i.e. only one answer is predeterminantly correct) creates a clear boundary between knowledge and ignorance in the classroom. The students are faced with many constraints "on what they can say and mean because it has to be confined within the limits of what the teacher treats, for practical purposes, as being relevant and correct" (Edwards & Westgate 1987, p.45). Thus, opportunities for communicative language use (which are encouraged by the use of communicative questions) are rare in the Greek English classrooms.

Evidence of the non-communicative language use and the controlling role of the teacher in the classroom, is also provided by the distribution of the feedback group of questions. The high frequency of comprehension checks (which come second in the hierarchy, n=301, 19% of the total questions) and the low number of clarification requests and confirmation checks (n=36 and n=46 respectively) provides evidence as to the one-way flow of information occurring in the classrooms investigated. The scarcity of clarification requests and confirmation checks is due to the fact that teachers are rarely in any doubt about what students are trying to say since they are responding to questions to which the teacher knows the answer. What new information is exchanged in the lesson originates from the teacher, who has to ensure by the use of comprehension checks that students have understood (Pica & Long 1986). Although clarification requests and confirmation checks are signs that meaning is being negotiated and thus input is made comprehensible to the learner (Pica 1987, Pica et al 1987, Pica & Long 1986), there seems to be no need for their use in the classrooms investigated, since the majority of teachers' questions are evaluative.

Furthermore, the fact that the teachers in the study see their role as controller and evaluator is evident from the amount of correcting questions identified in the data (correcting questions came third, n=108, after evaluative questions and comprehension checks). The three most frequently occurring questions in the data give a clear picture of the nature and patterns of classroom interaction in the 14 classes: the teacher structures (making necessary the use of comprehension checks), then elicits (making use of evaluative questions) and finally evaluates students' responses (using correcting questions). A glance at Table 6.6 and Figure 6.2 will reveal that the questions with the greatest potential communicative value (communicative, confirmation checks, clarification requests) are the ones least frequently employed in the Greek English language classrooms.



*Figure 6.2: Frequency of question types as they appeared in the data.*

Indeed, if the frequencies of these three types of question were added together, they would approximate only the number of correcting questions.

Another revealing feature of the teachers' control of classroom discourse, is that rhetorical questions ( which, in actual fact, serve no purpose in the exchange of information at all) occurred almost twice as frequently as the communicatively valuable questions did.

Although the high frequency of closed-communicative questions (fifth in the hierarchy) gives us some hope that teachers relax their control and do resume the role of non-expert (since for once they do not know the answer to their question), a glance at Table 6.2 where the distribution of closed-communicative questions among teachers is shown, reveals the fallacy of our hopes, since over half of the total closed-communicative questions occurred in two teachers' classrooms (K02 n=19, K3 n=33).

Offering floor questions (occurring more frequently than all communicatively valuable questions) are the sixth most frequent questions in the data. The fairly high frequency of these questions reveal the rigid structure of classroom interaction and the controlling role of the teacher who uses offering floor questions to ensure that turns are precisely allocated and that no violation of the rules of classroom interaction occurs.

Although the findings regarding the teachers' classroom questioning practices clearly reveal the degree of control teachers exert over the discourse and their tendency to favour the role of expert and authority in the classroom, it was felt that a few clarifying comments concerning the limitations of the analysis and some possible justifications of the popularity of evaluative questions are in order.

Firstly, despite the value communicative and closed-communicative questions have in generating authentic communication in the classroom and in facilitating the development of students' fluency, it is acknowledged that the use of such questions may pose threats to the teacher's self-image and managerial

skills. Indeed, as Edwards & Westgate (1987) argue, there are many risks involved in asking "open" questions because of the unpredictability of their response. An unpredictable response may bring the teacher to an awkward position or may create a situation in which the teacher is unable to respond (Carlsen 1991). Undoubtedly, experienced, well-trained and confident teachers will have little or no difficulty in overcoming such problems. Other teachers, however, may regard the potential outcomes of such questions as threatening to their authority, control and knowledge, and may choose to avoid them simply because they are not worth the risk. Furthermore, questions with unpredictable answers may create management problems for the teacher "since they authorise pupils to indulge in long and sometimes irrelevant answers which leaves the teacher with the unpleasant task of cutting off the speaker in mid-flight as well as the task of restoring relevance" (Hargreaves 1984, p.50). It is therefore not without reason that teachers have long preferred and relied on the use of evaluative questions.

Furthermore, the presentation of findings on teacher questions has been carried out without reference to the types of activities implemented in the classrooms. Undeniably, the objectives, participant organisation, language/skill focus and communicative features of an activity determine to a great extent the types of questions that can be asked. No reference was made in this chapter (or in the previous one) to the nature of the activities since this is a major focus of the observation scheme data analysis and which will be presented in the following chapter. However, it is important to note that the vast majority of activities implemented in the 14 classrooms were form-focused, teacher-fronted activities (which justifies the overwhelming amount of evaluative questions and high frequency with which errors were corrected). Very few pair work or relatively open-ended activities were carried out, although many of the textbook

activities that were covered during the lessons were of this nature (how this came about will be explained in the next chapter).

Another limitation worth acknowledging concerns the behaviour of the teachers in view of the presence of an observer in the classroom, the "observer paradox" or "reactivity" as Allwright & Bailey (1991) term it. It is very difficult to establish whether the teachers deliberately chose to implement teacher-fronted activities and revert to evaluative questioning as a means of sustaining control of the students throughout the lesson. Open-ended activities and questions, being vulnerable to noise, diversions, and disruption, may have been purposely avoided by the teachers in the fear of my critically evaluating them. Indeed, this is a problem that any researcher should anticipate, face and acknowledge. The only evidence I can offer that sheds doubt on this possibility comes from the interviews with the teachers, in which almost all teachers stated that pair/group work activities were very infrequently implemented due to the noise and disruption they gave rise to. If this is genuinely the case, then it can be asserted with (relative) confidence that the classrooms observed were more or less typical of teachers' everyday classroom practices.

A final limitation concerns the methodology used in analysing the teachers' linguistic behaviour. Although the analysis of teacher questions and error correcting behaviour has revealed that characteristics of genuine communication are largely absent from the 14 classrooms, and has provided many indications concerning the roles teachers enact in the classroom, it should, nevertheless, be pointed out that teachers differed in the degree of control they exerted over the students' verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Unfortunately, quantitative methods of analysing teacher behaviour, although advantageous in many respects and essential for certain types of data, tend to conceal or obscure individual differences between teachers and "average them out". Quantifications are excellent at presenting the "general" picture, providing rough indications of a

teacher's classroom practices and allowing the reader a "glimpse" of the teacher's actual behaviour in class. Moreover, the analysis of teacher talk lends itself easily to quantifications, and, thus, has been long preferred and extensively used by researchers interested in teachers' linguistic behaviour.

A further attraction of this type of analysis is that "numbers" (frequencies, percentages, averages) constitute hard and undisputable evidence and tend to create an aura of objectivity in a study. But the problem, as Allwright & Bailey (1991, p.67) state, "is that not everything can be counted or measured adequately and therefore numbers cannot tell the whole story". A further limitation of quantitative analyses of teachers' linguistic behaviour is that they inevitably reduce the complexities of classroom interaction (Van Lier 1988) and the classroom context as a whole by focusing on isolated aspects of teachers' talk. A more qualitative analysis of teachers' classroom behaviour is essential in making clear the individual differences between teachers and indeed on justifying and shedding light on many of the findings of the 14 teachers' talk. Such an analysis would serve to complement and explain the teachers' tendency to control the discourse, would provide more concrete indications of teacher roles, and would highlight the individual differences of teachers' classroom practices. This qualitative analysis, based on the findings of the observation scheme data will be undertaken and presented in the next chapter.

**NOTE:**

- 1) Steven's (1912) study is cited in Dillon (1982) and Gall (1970).

## CHAPTER 7

### *Teacher Roles in the Classroom*

#### 7.1 Observing the classrooms.

This chapter focuses on the findings of real-time classroom observations during which an observation scheme, designed for the purpose of describing teacher roles in the classroom, was employed (see Chapter 4, section 4.4. for a description of the scheme's development and composition and section 4.1. for the corresponding research question this chapter attempts to answer). The classroom observations were carried out during a period of three months (from the end of November 1991 until the end of January 1992). From the 14 classroom observations, seven took place from the end of November until the end of December 1991, while the remaining were carried out after the Christmas holidays.

Before carrying out each observation, a standard procedure was followed. Firstly, I would approach the headmaster/headmistress of the school, show the formal permission of access, explain the objectives of the study and research methods, as well as the kind of co-operation needed from the teachers. After the negotiations with the headmaster/headmistress, I was introduced to the English language teachers of the schools. The teachers were given an outline of the study and its objectives, i.e. that the study focused on their opinions of the textbook series and the way they managed to implement the textbook in the classroom. Conscious efforts were made to involve the teachers and make them feel that the study was for, rather than against, their interests, i.e. that the study was in no way judgemental or evaluative of their practices. Moreover, guarantee

of anonymity and the possibility of making available the results of the study were offered.

The teachers, on the whole, became interested and were very cooperative throughout the study. During the first meeting, arrangements were made with each teacher concerning an appropriate time for the classroom observations and the interviews; four teachers (P3, L3, T2, D1) agreed to be observed on the day of our first meeting. The other teachers were asked not to prepare anything special for the observation since the objective of the study was to describe how the textbook materials worked in class and not to evaluate their teaching. After arranging the dates and times for the observations and interviews (which almost never took place on the same day), the teachers were given the questionnaire and were asked to have it completed by our next meeting (which seldom happened, necessitating, thus, a fourth visit to the school).

The number of students per classroom ranged from 18 students (school NA2) to 36 students (school NA1). On average, the number of students per class was 26. Students' age ranged from 13 to 15 years old (1st year students: 13 years old, 2nd year students: 14 years old, 3rd year students: 15 years old). The majority of classrooms were large, well lit and relatively warm (apart from school CA1 and OA1 where classes were extremely small and crammed for the numbers of students). The layout of the classrooms and student seating arrangements were similar in all schools; in front of the blackboard stood the teacher's desk (in many schools this was on an elevated platform), while four feet apart from it stood the students' desks, usually divided in four rows. Each student desk accommodated two students (an arrangement which facilitates the execution of pair work activities). Although each school has the right, depending on its resources, to differentiate students according to level for their foreign language classes, only one school (NA1) had taken up this practice by grouping students of each year into two levels respectively, via a placement test taken at



the beginning of the school year. In all other schools, the classrooms observed were of mixed ability students.

During the observations I preferred to be seated in the back corners of the classroom so as to make my presence as "unnoticeable" as possible. This, however, was not made possible with teacher C2, who insisted that I sit at the teacher's desk (which in this class happened to be elevated), putting myself in full view of the students throughout the lesson. Another similar incident occurred with teacher A1 who asked me to sit in the front row sharing a desk with a female student; if the other students managed to ignore the presence of an observer, the female student certainly did not. Apart from these two "misfortunes", the rest of the observations proceeded smoothly. After the first few minutes, the students managed to overcome their nervousness and assume their "normal" role. As far as the reason of an observer's presence in the classroom was concerned, some teachers (A1, D1, T2, K2, A2, L3) briefly explained to the students that I was carrying out some kind of research relating to English language teaching in Greek state schools, one teacher (L2), after introducing me, invited the students to ask any questions they wished, while the rest of the teachers behaved as if nothing was out of the ordinary and ignored my presence altogether.

Once I was seated, and until the teacher calmed the students, the audio equipment was set up and a clipboard with the observation schemes and the textbook were placed on the desk. Details concerning the name of the teacher, date, name of school, and the number and level of the students in the class were filled in the observation scheme before the lesson "proper" began. The moment the teacher asked students to open their books, the completion of the observation schedule commenced. Each activity took up one observation sheet; the boundaries between activities were easily identifiable. Teachers often used framing moves such as "OK", "Alright...turn to page..", "now..let's continue",

which served as a reliable signal that a new activity was about to begin and, thus, a new observation sheet should be taken out.

The first two classroom observations (which took place at the school I had attended as a student) proved valuable in pointing out some unanticipated limitations (limitations that the pilot test of the scheme failed to reveal) of the observation scheme and its practicality as a real time observation instrument. On the whole, the scheme was easy to use and there was sufficient time to tick the various categories describing the activity and write a description of how the activity was carried out with as many details of the students' and teacher's verbal and non-verbal behaviour as possible. What became evident, however, was that the category "communicative features of activity" could not be reliably ticked unless the activity was at its end. Furthermore, some activities exhibited two modes of participant organisation (i.e. very frequently the teacher gave the students a few minutes to work individually and then continued to ask questions). In this case "individual" and "T-S" were both ticked but no.1 was written next to the former and no.2 next to the latter. The same applied to the category of "activity focus". In some activities the focus was dual, i.e. 1) function (e.g. expressing intentions) and 2) grammar (e.g. using "going to"). In such cases both sub-categories were ticked. Similarly, in activities which focused on two aspects of form (i.e. "word" and "grammar") both foci were ticked. An unanticipated aspect of form, which became evident in teacher G1's class (where the teacher, on a normal basis, gave students texts to memorise for homework and then had them write it at the beginning of the next lesson), was spelling. Thus, each time such an activity, or a similar one, was carried out "spelling" was written next to the focus "word" and ticked.

Another "gap" of the observation scheme, which became apparent during G1's lesson, concerned the activity focus when reading comprehension was carried out. Since this problem had not been anticipated (no textbook reading

passages actually ask students to read the text and then answer reading comprehension questions), when this activity was carried out it was decided to write "general comprehension of text" in the box labelled "Free". Finally, as is natural, some activities involved the use of more than one skills (e.g. reading and speaking for reading activities or listening and speaking in the case of listening activities). When activities integrated skills, all the skills integrated were ticked in the "skill focus" category.

A final revealing point (which became evident only after the completion of all 14 observations) concerns the "utility" of the "parallel activities" category. This category was included in the observation scheme (after the pilot-test) to accommodate those situations in which the teacher, in his/her attempt to cater for the various levels of students within the classroom, carried out different activities with different groups of learners. The implementation of parallel activities is encouraged by the textbook writers who have regularly included within each unit a series of so called "EXTRA" tasks which facilitate the teacher's attempts to distribute autonomous learning processes within the classroom (see chapter 2, section 2.8). Unfortunately, despite the value of carrying out parallel activities, not one of the fourteen teachers took up this practice in the classrooms observed. The category of "parallel activities" was thus the only one left blank in all observation sheets.

## **7.2.: Definition of teacher role and the organisation of the chapter.**

The purpose for the development of this study's observation scheme, and indeed the purpose of the analysis of the lesson transcriptions, was to determine and describe the roles the Greek English language teachers adopt in the classroom and to assess whether their roles are in agreement with those required for the implementation of a communicative learner-centred approach. The term "teacher role" is one employed frequently in both the educational and language

teaching literature. In the former, the teacher's role has been investigated within the wider social context, i.e. the teacher's position in the community and within the social context of the school. Thus, studies have concentrated on teacher role expectations (i.e. parents', school officials', students' and teachers' expectations of their role, Biddle et al 1966, for a review of studies see Biddle 1969), teachers' views of their occupation (Kob 1961), and teachers' roles in the classroom as imparter of knowledge and disseminator of social values and social patterns of behaviour (Westwood 1967, Wilson 1962). Studies have also focused on factors other than teacher personality and attitudes (i.e. factors external to the teacher) that may influence and lead to conflicts in teacher role (see Westwood 1967). More recently, educational studies of teacher role have shifted their emphasis to the "pedagogical" role of the teacher (i.e. the teachers' behaviour in the classroom). These studies have concentrated on, and analysed the patterns of communication in the classroom and teachers' linguistic behaviour. Teachers have been described as controllers of students' verbal and non-verbal behaviour, as sole possessors of truth and wisdom, as transmitters of knowledge and as harsh evaluators of students' verbal and social behaviour (Barnes 1975, Hustler & Payne 1982, also see Adams 1972, Edwards & Westgate 1987, for a review of studies exemplifying these teacher roles).

In language teaching research investigators have focused almost exclusively on a specific aspect of teachers' linguistic behaviour in order to understand how teachers enact their various classroom roles. Investigations have thus focused on : a) the teacher as a source of input (e.g. Gaies 1977, Pica & Long 1986), b) the teacher as provider of feedback (e.g. Chaudron 1977b, Nystrom 1983, Van Lier 1988), c) the teacher as explainer of language (e.g. Mitchell, Parkinson & Johnston 1981), and d) the teacher as controller of discourse (e.g. Aziz 1987, Dinsmore 1985, Gremmo et al 1985). (See Allwright

& Bailey 1991, Chaudron 1988, and Lynch 1989, for a review of investigations on teacher "linguistic" roles in the classroom).

Although such investigations have revealed a great deal concerning the teacher as "communicator", they are, nevertheless, fraught with problems. Even though none claim to explicitly investigate teacher roles (with the exception of Gremmo et al 1985), when the findings of such studies are discussed they are interpreted in terms of teacher roles. Moreover, none of the studies (apart from Gremmo et al, *ibid.*) provide a theoretical rationalisation of teacher role; a problem apparent in investigations of teacher role in content classrooms as well (Adams 1972). A further limitation with studies of teacher roles relates to the choice of the area of teacher behaviour to be examined; in their majority, investigations have focused on one particular aspect of teacher behaviour (functional features of teacher talk, teacher error correcting behaviour) to make inferences about teacher roles in the classroom (this limitation is also a feature of research in content classrooms, see Adams 1972). Finally, probably the most severe limitation of studies of teacher roles in language classrooms has been the implicit assumption (explicitly stated in Gremmo et al. 1985) that the teacher's role is solely manifested and apparent in the interactional (linguistic) behaviour of the teacher. Gremmo et al (1985, p.39) unambiguously and simplistically view role as "the enactment of interactional privileges and duties which are realised by certain types of act", and then proceed to describe the teacher as the "ringmaster" and controller of discourse by quantifying the number of illocutionary and discursive acts in a segment of discourse between the teacher and the students. Undoubtedly, the teacher's verbal behaviour and the type of interaction that goes on between the teacher and the students is most suggestive of teacher role and the most tangible area to work with; it is simplistic, however, to assume that the teacher's roles in the classroom are solely manifested in his/her verbal behaviour. There are a variety of factors that influence, create or give rise to

different teacher roles; the seating patterns in the classroom, the nature of the activity being carried out, the teacher's interpretation and implementation of the activity, the teacher's use of realia, the teacher's "physical" proximity with the students, the teacher's gestures and probably many others (see Wright 1987, and Dolle & Willems 1984 for the importance of teacher gestures), all "amalgamate" to create the teacher's role.

The failure to explicitly define teacher role, is a feature common even to theoretical texts on communicative methodology. One would have difficulty in finding a piece of work on the theory and methodological principles of communicative language teaching without some mention of the importance of teacher roles in the classroom. Teacher roles have become an indispensable and key feature of communicative approaches and are considered to lie at the heart of the teaching - learning process (Wright 1990). A cursory reading of the communicative methodology literature will present the reader with an abundance of "new" terms; the teacher as facilitator, as interdependent participant, as co-communicator, monitor, guide, organiser, resource, motivator, conductor, supporter, adviser, instructor, creator of an unthreatening atmosphere, informant, diagnoser, to mention only a few (see Breen & Candlin 1988, Cranmer 1991, Harmer 1983, Legutke & Thomas 1991, Littlewood 1982, 1992, for the various roles a teacher is to adopt within a communicative framework). What the interested reader and researcher will not be presented with, however, is an explicit definition of teacher role. Indeed, not one author who has written about and described teacher roles within a communicative framework, goes as far as to define and explain what teacher role actually is. A possible reason for the failure of authors to explicitly define teacher role may be due to its acceptance as a layman's term. Parents, teachers, priests, doctors, children all play different roles at home, at work and in society. But one must admit that widespread use of a term does not render it operational for use in empirical investigation. It seems

quite probable that the absence of an operational definition for teacher role accounts for its absence in investigations of communicative language classrooms. Only in Wright (1987), who has dedicated a whole book on this issue, and in McDonough & Shaw (1993) can one find some "illumination" and understanding of the concept.

For this study a paraphrase of Widdowson's (1987, p. 83) definition of role, and Wright's (1987) conception of it, will be employed. Drawing on these, thus, teacher role is the "part" the teacher plays in his/her performance in the classroom. It is a kind of script which constrains the teacher to adopt to normal or expected patterns of behaviour. The teacher's role in the classroom is seen as an amalgam of the teacher's beliefs, educational attitudes and personality. These influence and determine teacher's role and manifest themselves in the teacher's verbal, non-verbal behaviour and the type of relationship he/she develops with the students. The teacher's role is flexible and dynamic; the teacher can assume various roles separately and simultaneously depending on the nature, focus and objectives of the activity being carried out and the organisation and the composition of the classroom.

It cannot be denied that "teacher role" is an inherently inferential and qualitative concept. Although the observation scheme was developed in order to assist in the accurate and systematic description of teacher roles, I was, nevertheless, confronted with the problem of presenting and analysing the overwhelming amount of data in a coherent and meaningful manner. Since the observation scheme was divided into two parts (a systematic observation part analysing the type of activity, and a more ethnographic part describing in detail how the teacher carried out the activity), a way had to be found in which to blend the two parts and present a clear picture of teacher roles. Furthermore, the "merging" of the two parts of the observation instrument had to be geared towards achieving the aim of the study which is to describe how teachers

implement a communicative course in the classroom or more specifically, what happens to a communicative textbook when used in the classroom. It was, thus, felt that a comparison of the textbook activities (as presented and explained in the teachers' guide) and the teacher roles they require, and the implemented activities (i.e. the activities that were actually used and carried out in the classroom) and the teacher roles they suggest, would serve to provide a valid indication of what actually happens in the classroom when communicative materials are (or should be) used and would also enable the data collected via the observation scheme to be analysed and reported in a focused way.

Having established the framework and direction of the analysis, I was still confronted with the task of reducing or condensing the overwhelming amount of data into meaningful "chunks". A study of the literature on qualitative data analysis (Delamont & Hamilton 1986, Merriam 1988, Van Lier 1988, Walker 1986) made apparent that selection and focus on specific, emerging issues from the data was an inevitable part of any qualitative approach to data analysis. Following the suggestions made by these authors, I undertook a repeated and careful analysis of the data; this endeavour revealed some common themes, some regularities evident in almost all teachers' classroom practices. It also revealed many features of the teachers' teaching style particularly suggestive of the roles they adopt in the classroom. As the analysis continued, I discovered that these common patterns could be grouped under general categories or headings, which would assist immensely in the orderly description and presentation of the observation scheme's findings. These headings, thus, determined the structure of this chapter, which is divided into two main parts; in the first, a comparison of the textbook activities and their implementation by the teachers will be presented, while in the second, various features of the teachers' teaching style strongly suggestive of teacher roles in the classroom will be discussed.



It should be noted at this point that in the comparison of activities and discussion of the features of teachers' teaching style, both common practices and individual tendencies of teachers will be commented on. Although ethnographers tend to focus on regularities and patterns of their subjects' behaviour, this approach, as has been pointed out by Hammersley (1986), may lead to partial descriptions and interpretations of reality. This pitfall can only be avoided "by classifications which pick out similarities and differences which match the underlying structure of the world that is being studied"(Hammersley *ibid*, p.46). Acknowledging, thus, the potential significance that atypical practices may have in understanding the complexity of teachers' classroom behaviour, it was decided to incorporate in the description some idiosyncratic practices of teachers. It was also felt that this approach would be particularly interesting in showing how teachers working with the same materials under the same conditions develop and exhibit a unique teaching style. A further word of caution is also in order at this point. The analysis and discussion which is to follow should not be viewed as judgemental or evaluative of teachers' classroom practices. Roles are not presented as "good" or "bad", as desirable or undesirable; a teacher adopting the roles of controller, evaluator, transmitter, and instructor, for instance, is not in any way considered in this study an ineffective teacher who inhibits the process of successful language learning. This is an issue which it is up to second language acquisition research to investigate and validate. The aim of this study is to describe the degree of implementation of a communicative curriculum and subsequently to point out that it is only the teacher (and the learner) who ultimately and solely determine the success and feasibility of a curriculum innovation.

### 7.3.: Classroom implementation of textbook activities.

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the length of lessons ranged from 20' minutes to 50' minutes, the mean lesson duration being 40' minutes. Throughout the fourteen lessons 81 activities were carried out (20 activities in first year classes, 32 activities in second year classes, and 29 activities in third year classes); the average number of activities per lesson was  $M=6$ . Activities covered a wide spectrum of activity types; from strictly form-focused and controlled to uncontrolled free communication ones, and exhibited various modes of participant organisation (individual, pair work, Teacher-Student). On the whole, all teachers followed the syllabus and sequence of activities within the textbook. Supplementary activities, however, were also common: from the 81 implemented activities, 25 (30%) were supplementary while the remaining 56 (70%) were directly from the textbook. The high frequency with which teachers supplemented the textbook is revealing of their attitudes towards the philosophy and objectives of the textbooks. As was determined in the interviews and the questionnaire, the teachers were dissatisfied with the composition of the materials and the nature of the textbook activities, and, therefore, supplementation was deemed essential by the teachers if the textbooks were to be used effectively in the classroom.

Probably, the most interesting and revealing feature that emerged from the comparison between textbook activities and their realisation in the classroom, is the sheer vulnerability of the materials and activities in the hands of teachers. The teachers who took part in this study managed to transform purely communicative activities into structural, controlled, teacher-fronted ones. This was achieved not only by changing the participant organisation required for activities but also by changing the objectives, language foci and skill focus of activities. In the end many of the activities implemented throughout the 14

lessons were highly reminiscent of grammar-translation and audiolingual approaches.

The description of the implementation of activities which will be presented below, will focus on features which are believed to be most revealing of teachers' teaching style and roles. The analysis will be based on four general activity types: 1) listening activities, 2) reading activities, 3) pair/group work activities, and 4) supplementary activities.

### **7.3.a.: Implementation of listening activities.**

Listening activities are a very common feature of the Taskway series. On average, each unit in all three textbooks contains at least 3-4 listening activities. These activities are mainly used as a means of introducing new language (i.e. the structural/functional element which is the focus of the unit) to the students and require students to carry out a variety of tasks making necessary, in most cases, the use of extralinguistic knowledge. The authors of the textbooks claim that: "the actual conversation pieces are usually authentic, or authentic like, and very often above the learners' production level. As such we require the learner to understand much more than s/he can produce...we consider such comprehension practice very important and ask the teacher that s/he try to achieve the comprehension objectives specified, overcoming progressively more traditional comprehension teaching views" (Teachers' Guide, 1987, p. 15). Finally, a feature of the listening activities worth mentioning regards the location of the listening transcripts. All transcripts are located at the end of the students' book. The numbering, however, of the transcripts does not correspond to the numbers of units or the activities within them. This was done by the authors so as to avoid having students turn back and look at the listening transcript before the task is completed. Once the objective of the task is achieved, the teacher is

encouraged to have students look at the listening transcript and carry out further practice if necessary.

Within the range of the 14 lessons, 8 listening activities were carried out (teacher C2=2 activities, L2=1, P3=1, S3=1, and A1=3). What is particularly interesting with the implementation of listening activities is that no tape recorder was used. The teachers, in whose classrooms these activities were carried out, came from different schools and taught different level students. One could put forward, of course, the justification that no tape recorders were available in the schools. This, however, was not the case as was determined in the interviews with the teachers. Tape recorders were available in all schools, although not in adequate numbers. The problem, therefore, lay in negotiating with the other English and Music teachers in each school the allocation of use of the tape recorder. All teachers felt that this negotiation process was pointless and too much of a burden and thus decided to do away with using the tape recorder altogether. Consequently, whatever "authenticity" the tape recording had to offer was eliminated, and the only source of authentic listening input in the classroom became the teacher. Listening transcripts were read aloud by teachers, regardless of whether they were monologues, dialogues or conversations between two or more people, or were assigned to students to read aloud. In teacher A1's classroom, for instance, the students were asked to listen to a dialogue between an alien (who spoke English like a robot) and an Australian boy, and to comment on the alien's pronunciation of English (in the dialogue the boy explained the layout of his house to the alien who was to be the boy's guest. The objective of the activity was to expose students to the vocabulary associated with rooms of the house). For this activity, the teacher took the role of the alien and assigned to another student the role of the Australian boy. As a result, the students were not exposed to any mechanical robot-like English or to the Australian accent. The students managed to carry out the listening task based on

their knowledge of the world (their experiences with sci-fi movies), rather than on their teacher's efforts to imitate a robot.

A most revealing feature of teachers' attitude to language and language learning was exemplified in the way in which listening activities and their objectives were carried out. With very few exceptions (teacher A1) all teachers followed the following steps when carrying out listening activities:

- 1) Teacher reads aloud listening transcript (teacher A1, C2, P3, S3) or assigns to two students to do the reading (teacher L2).
- 2) Teacher asks (evaluative) comprehension questions on listening text (C2,P3,S3).
- 3) Teacher asks/explains or elicits the meaning of known and unknown words (C2, L2, P3).
- 4) Teacher asks students to read aloud listening tapescript (C2, P3).
- 5) Teacher carries out textbook listening task (i.e. the task for which the listening material was originally designed for).

Regardless of school, student level and background the teachers seem to understand the process of listening comprehension as the decoding of every word and structure within a text. Although the teachers' guide cautions the teachers against this approach to listening comprehension, pointing out that such practices make learners "...overdependent on words rather than meaning, on sentences rather than discourse" (p.15 ,1987) and may inhibit the development of the essential skills needed for authentic listening, the teachers, nevertheless, approach listening texts as if they were written to be read; the teachers treat these as a series of sentences which must be broken down into their constituent

elements, and be decoded, explained and understood, before any effective "listening" comprehension can take place.

A description of P3's implementation of a listening activity is probably most representative of the teachers' listening comprehension views: For the textbook listening activity, the students were presented with the evening programmes of BBC1 and BBC2. They were asked to listen to a TV presenter commenting on one of the programmes (without revealing its title) and then guess which of the twenty or so programmes the presenter is talking about. The objectives of this task were to train students to comprehend the "whole message" of a text and make logical deductions, inferences, about its topic. The teacher, after explaining the instructions of the task, asked three students to read aloud the TV programmes, correcting all pronunciation mistakes. The teacher then proceeded to read aloud the listening transcript (the students' books were closed at this stage). Controlled listening comprehension questions, with predictable answers, were the next item on the agenda. After the teacher had made sure that students had understood the text as a whole, the process of "deconstruction" began; the teachers asked for the meaning of known words and also asked students to construct sentences using the words. After this stage, the teacher asked students to open their books on the page of the listening transcript and assigned a student to read aloud the text (correcting all pronunciation mistakes). The final stage of this activity was to carry out the instructions of the original textbook task. The teacher asked students their opinion regarding the TV programme the presenter was commenting on; after eliciting four different opinions, and without commenting or elaborating on any of them, the teacher brought this activity to a close by saying:

"I suppose that Maria is right eh... don't you think that a boy, a twelve year old boy wouldn't face a lot of dangers living on his own?...eh? in Florida...I suppose this is..anyway..its of none importance...."

Making logical deductions, inferring and discussing students' opinions is "of none importance", dissecting the text and asking questions (all evaluative) on its every single word, however, seems to this teacher to be of greater importance.

### **7.3.b.: Implementation of reading activities.**

Reading activities and passages were implemented in the same way as listening activities. Teachers (P3, A2, C2, K2), regardless of student level and task objective, treated every piece of written text (consisting of more than one sentence) as traditional reading comprehension exercises. The teachers' approach in carrying out these activities was similar to their implementation of listening tasks: i.e. 1) the teacher reads aloud text or assigns students to read aloud (in which case pronunciation errors were corrected), 2) the teacher elicits the meaning of known and unknown words (P3, A2, K2), 3) the teacher asks controlled comprehension questions on the text (P3, C2), 4) the teacher carries out the task for which the reading passage was originally designed for (only teacher K2).

What is interesting with the teachers' treatment of written texts, is that none of the textbook reading activities asked the students comprehension questions but rather asked the students to perform some much more meaningful task (e.g. skim a text and guess its title or where it may appear, use information in the text to complete a table), while other written texts which were not designed for purposes of reading comprehension at all (but were designed for the purposes of establishing the context of a listening or speaking activity and usually consisted of two or three sentences), were treated by the teachers as conventional reading passages.

For instance, in P3's lesson the students were presented, at different stages of the unit, with two reading texts: one was an account of how a television programme is developed (focusing on the use of passive voice), while the second presented the results of a public opinion poll concerning French people's TV viewing habits. The textbook tasks which accompanied the first text asked students to skim the text and decide a) in what kind of school book such a text would appear and b) what new information this text offers the students. For the second reading text the students were asked in pairs to skim through it and decide what the text was about and think of an appropriate title for the text. Not one of these four tasks was carried out by the teacher. The teacher implemented both texts as traditional reading comprehension exercises following all the steps mentioned above.

Another example comes from A2's lesson. In their textbook the students were presented with pictures of the main tourist attractions of London, a map of London and an extract from a tourist guide briefly describing the landmarks of London. Students were asked, in pairs, to plan a day of sightseeing in London. The activity continued by giving students brief descriptions of famous cities/towns in England (and a map of England) and asked students, in groups this time, to plan a week in England. For this activity, the teacher read aloud all the "descriptions" and elicited and explained the meaning of almost all words despite the fact that the teachers' guide strongly urges the teacher for this activity not to focus on vocabulary at all since it is not essential for the achievement of the activity's objective. The teacher spent 3/4 of the lesson time explaining vocabulary (known and unknown); in the end, since there was no time left, the teacher assigned both tasks for homework.

The high value teachers place on traditional reading comprehension is further exemplified in the lesson of G1 and S3. Both teachers brought texts in



class, taken from sources other than the textbook, and carried out reading comprehension activities. Teacher G1 asked a student to copy the text on the blackboard while the other students copied it in their notebooks. The teacher asked controlled comprehension questions and then had a few students read aloud the ten sentence text. The text did not focus on any particular function or structure, nor was it related to the focus of the unit (i.e. asking for, and giving directions). The teacher probably felt that the textbook lacked such controlled reading practice, and, therefore, had to be supplemented regularly so that students could develop their reading skills. Teacher S3's lesson focused on the use of past perfect. Apart from the activities in the textbook which practised (in detail) this structure, the teacher distributed to the students a text focusing on past perfect, read it aloud, asked for unknown words and then continued to ask students a series of very controlled comprehension questions based on the text. One could, of course, propose that the teacher simply used the text as a means of providing supplementary practice on the past perfect. This would have been a justification had the teacher not passed quickly through (even ignoring many of) the activities in the textbook which practised the past perfect in a much more authentic and enjoyable for the students way.

### **7.3.c.: Implementation of pair/group work activities.**

The textbook writers' aspiration to encourage a communicative learner-centred approach in the classroom makes natural their emphasis on pair/group work activities throughout the three textbooks of the series. The number of pair/group work activities increases as the students' level increases (thus the third year textbook contains by far the greatest number of such activities per unit), yet their occurrence is fairly common even in the first units of the first year textbook. The tasks that require students to work in pairs or groups practise a range of skills and exhibit a range of objectives; some are communicatively difficult, others cognitively difficult; some may focus on a particular structure

encouraging its production, while others are designed to encourage the free production of speech. In general, pair work activities are a common and recurring feature of the Taskway series, and all exhibit a variety of "communicative features". The most common communicative feature of such activities are information gap, task dependency, authentic purpose and personal involvement. Opportunities for genuine (uncontrolled) interaction are found in a small number of pair/group work activities, while in many the authenticity of input is questionable. Whatever their limitations, these activities provide a welcome break from the more structured teacher fronted activities while at the same time develop and encourage student cooperation, negotiation and the personal active involvement a learner-centred approach wishes to instil.

From the 56 textbook activities that were carried out during the fourteen lessons, 23 were designed for pair/group work (i.e. 41%). More specifically, 18 activities required students to work in pairs while 5 required that the students be organised in groups. Pair/group work activities figured with different frequencies in all but three teachers' lessons (Teacher A1, D1, K2). The findings, therefore, which will be presented apply to all eleven teachers. From the 18 pair work activities that appeared in the textbook, only 2 (1 in teacher K3's class and 1 in teacher KO2's class) were carried out as pair work in the classrooms. From the remaining 16, 7 textbook pair work activities were carried out between teacher and student(s), 3 were assigned in class as homework, 2 had been assigned as homework and were carried out individually in class, 1 was carried out as individual work, while 3 were not implemented at all (i.e. they were ignored). The avoidance of pair work classroom organisation appears to be a uniform feature of teachers' classroom practices, and a particularly revealing finding in view of the fact that the teachers who participated in the study came from different schools, taught different level students and were of different age and educational background.

A few examples of teachers' implementation of pair work activities will serve to demonstrate their roles during the execution of these activities and their attitudes towards learner cooperation and independence. In teacher C1's class the students were presented in the textbook with a series of instructions for the construction of a geometrical shape (i.e. students were asked to put together various geometrical shapes to construct a much larger abstract shape). The focus of the activity was on prepositions of place and required the students to fully understand the instructions if the appropriate shape was to be constructed. The opportunity for genuine interaction, cooperation and personal involvement was inherent in the activity and the task itself was authentic in that students will most probably in real-life be required to construct something on the basis of detailed instructions. For this activity the teacher explained (translated) the instructions, drew each shape on the blackboard, and gave students (individually) five minutes to prepare and draw the shape following the instructions. It was evident that not many students understood what they were to do and, thus, started talking amongst themselves and did things other than the task. During this time, the teacher monitored and worked with one student, whom she eventually brought to the blackboard to carry out the task. In the end, and after very few students had managed to draw the shape, a student asked the teacher what the purpose of the activity was and what the shape represented. The teacher briefly explained the objective and continued with the next activity on the agenda.

In a second year classroom (teacher KO2), among the textbook activities covered in the lesson, four were designed for pair work and one for group work. Only one of the four was carried out with students working in pairs. In this information gap activity one student was asked to assume the role of an interviewer and the other the role of a daughter whose father had been involved in a fire accident. The "interviewer" had to construct questions based on a series of notes, while the "daughter" was to answer them as logically as she/he could

with the help of some information contained in a newspaper article describing the fire incident. The teacher, after explaining the activity and asking the students to work in pairs, went around the classroom monitoring and helping students. When the students had finished, the teacher chose a few pairs to carry out the activity. The teacher, however, corrected every single error (despite the fact that this activity was relatively open-ended); for one error, in particular, the teacher spent a considerable amount of time trying to elicit the correct answer from the error-maker. From the remaining three textbook pair work activities, one was carried out between the teacher and the students, the other was assigned as individual work, while the third was not implemented. The group work activity which asked students to write a complete report of the fire incident (based on the information obtained in the pair work activity described above) was assigned for homework.

The implementation of role-play activities is a point worth mentioning due to the particular way in which the teachers carried them out. Not many textbook role-play activities were carried out (only three to be exact) but the uniformity of their implementation was very interesting. Role-play activities were observed in three teachers' lessons (C2, KO2, L3). In C2's and KO2's lesson the role-plays were controlled, i.e. they focused on a particular structure and provided students with explicit cues. Both teachers did not assign the role-play as pair work nor did they allow students any time to prepare the dialogues. The teachers randomly picked students to create one "turn" of the dialogue. Finally, what both teachers did to eliminate any kind of "naturalness" in the dialogue was to repeat every single sentence after each student had finished uttering it. All errors were corrected during the role-plays and the teachers interrupted students to correct. In teacher L3's lesson the role-play was much less controlled; students were simply given a set of instructions, and a helpful list of words and were asked to create a dialogue expressing their opinions about a particular TV programme

they had both seen. This role-play had been assigned as individual work for homework. When the lesson began the teacher picked two students to carry out the dialogue. Naturally perhaps, only these two students had completed the dialogue at home.

It should be pointed out that the teachers' guide gives explicit guidance to teachers as to how role-plays should be carried out. Teachers are requested to assign role-plays as pair work, while the pairs are working the teachers are encouraged to monitor, guide and help the students with whatever problems they are facing. In the end, the teacher is asked to pick one or two pairs to carry out the dialogue in front of the class. It seems that the impact of the teachers' manual has not been as substantial as the authors of the textbook had probably intended.

Finally, the teachers' avoidance of any kind of classroom organisation other than Teacher-Student, is evident in the implementation of group work activities. These activities appear much less frequently than pair work activities in the units (the proportion being, on average, one group work activity to three or four pair work activities per unit), while their occurrence is much more common in the second and third year textbook rather than the first year. Group work activities in the Taskway series are, on the whole, much less controlled (in terms of language outcomes) than pair work activities, and their execution invariably involves a great deal of student cooperation, negotiation and genuine interaction. It is with these activities that the roles of the teacher as facilitator, guide, monitor, organiser, participant and helper become absolutely essential if they are to be carried out successfully.

Textbook group work activities appeared in three second year classrooms (one in teacher A2's lesson, one in KO2's lesson and one in T2's lesson) and in two third year classrooms (one in S3's class. and one in P3's class). From these

five group work activities not one was carried out with students working in groups. In reality, only one was implemented (individually) in teacher T2's class. For this activity the students were presented with a poster created by children citing various reasons why the war must stop. The students were asked in groups to create a similar poster with the title "Pupil punishment must stop". The teacher asked two students to read aloud the poster and then asked students to work individually and jot down reasons for abandoning pupil punishment. After a few minutes, the teacher picked a few students to read aloud their reasons. The fate of the remaining group work activities that appeared in the various classes was much different. Three were assigned as individual work for homework (P3, A2, KO2) while one, asking students to write a story with an unexpected ending for young EFL readers was ignored altogether (teacher S3).

The implementation of pair/group work activities is probably one of the most challenging aspects of CLT since they require a complete restructuring of the traditional teacher-learner roles and relationship (see Harmer 1983, Littlewood 1992, Wright 1987). It seems, however, that the Greek English language teachers who took part in this study are not prepared to take up this challenge. There is not much that can be said about teachers' roles during the textbook pair/group work activities since almost none were implemented in class (apart from teacher K3, KO2). Teachers seem to prefer their traditional role as "conductor" "instructor" and "controller". Indeed, giving up one's role as "authority" in the classroom may be frightening and even threatening (Medgyes 1986). The teachers' inadequate exposure and training in the principles and procedures of the communicative approach (as determined in the interviews and questionnaire results) may also be held accountable for teachers' avoidance of pair/group work activities. It may be that teachers are unconvinced of the benefits of such activities and do not feel capable and confident in carrying them out successfully or sufficiently motivated in restructuring the existing

relationship with their students. In addition to this, the unpredictable outcomes of open-ended pair/group work activities may be perceived as threatening to the teachers' managerial skills. The (inevitable) noise that these activities give rise to, may also lead to complaints from other colleagues teaching in adjoining classrooms (this problem was frequently mentioned in the interviews). No one can doubt the difficulties and problems involved in successfully carrying out pair/group work activities in a classroom of 30 or so teenagers. Teacher skill, patience and determination are not the only requirements of such activities; the most important prerequisite is the teachers' acceptance and belief in the potential that such activities have in encouraging learners to communicate, cooperate, be independent and responsible for their learning. It seems quite likely that the majority of teachers in this study have not been given the opportunity to become aware of the potential of these activities.

#### **7.3.d.: Implementation of supplementary activities.**

Almost all teachers (apart from C1, I2, and T2) supplemented and embellished textbook activities with their own. This is only natural, since not any one textbook can cater for the needs and interests of all learners regardless of how extensive a needs analysis was carried out before its production (Allwright 1981). The teacher must be able to foresee the potential limitations of textbook activities and diagnose gaps in students' knowledge and supplement the textbook activities whenever necessary or appropriate. It follows, however, that supplementary activities should be as, or even more, engaging than textbook activities and should reinforce them if students are to see their worth and actively participate in their execution.

Thirty percent of the activities observed in the classrooms were supplementary. The vast majority, however, (i.e. 21 out of the 25 , 84%), were designed to focus on a particular structure or function that was being presented

and practised in the unit. The form focused supplementary activities designed by teachers took two forms; they were either compiled on paper, photocopied and distributed to students in class or they were created by the teachers on the spot using materials in the textbook.

Teacher A2 and S3, for instance, had compiled a series of exercises all focusing on a particular language point ("going to" for expressing intentions in A2's lesson and the use of the past perfect in S3's lesson) and distributed them to the students. The exercises, taken from other foreign language textbooks and grammar practice books, took the form of what one may term "traditional grammar focused exercises", i.e. substitution exercises, transformation exercises, putting verbs in brackets in the correct tense etc.. In S3's lesson the photocopied grammar activity page took up almost 3/4 of the total lesson time (during this lesson the grammar activity page at the end of the textbook unit was also carried out).

Other supplementary activities were created and implemented using materials in the textbook (but not carrying out the tasks they were designed for), and focussed on a particular language phenomenon. Teacher KO2 and P3 used a reading text in the textbook and asked a series of very controlled comprehension questions focusing on the use of a particular structure (i.e. direct-indirect speech in KO2's lesson and the passive voice in P3's lesson). In teacher A1's lesson, which focused on vocabulary related to rooms of the house and prepositions of place, the teacher implemented a series of supplementary activities by exploiting the pictures presented in the unit. Students, for instance, were asked to describe the position of various pieces of furniture presented in a picture of a bedroom, or to pick out opposites (e.g. bottom/top) from two dialogues at the beginning of the unit.



There were also teachers that supplemented the textbook with activities more akin to grammar-translation approaches. Teacher K2, as a means of presenting and practising the use of the simple past tense, which was the focus of the unit they were about to begin, asked a fair number of students two questions: "What day was it yesterday?" (in which case the teacher required a complete answer, "Yesterday was Monday") and "Were you present here yesterday?" (a question which puzzled students since the teacher knew who was absent and who present the previous day). As a follow up to this activity, the teacher asked students for all the persons of the simple past tense of the verb "to be" and had a student write the tense on the blackboard. Teacher G1, on the other hand, on a regular basis had students copy a small text from the blackboard, asked comprehension questions and then asked students to memorise it for the next lesson. When the lesson began the students were asked to write the memorised text on a piece of paper (with their name on it) and when finished give it to the teacher for marking. This was done, as was established in a subsequent informal interview with the teacher, as a means of systematically practising spelling and vocabulary; practice in these two areas was, according to G1, largely ignored in the textbook.

Exceptions, however, did appear. There were teachers who tried to implement more "authentic" and "meaningful", uncontrolled supplementary language activities. Teacher A2, for instance, as an introduction to a textbook task in which students were to plan a day of sightseeing in London, had brought postcards depicting various famous places in England and had stuck them on the blackboard. The teacher, before introducing the task, asked students in groups to come to the blackboard and "view" the postcards. She did not, however, exploit this authentic material further; once the "viewing" had been completed, the teacher went on explaining the textbook's task (a pair work activity which was not carried out but assigned for homework because the teacher spent the

remaining lesson time eliciting the meaning of all known and unknown words of the text accompanying the task). Teacher K3, as a means of practising the use of past tenses for narrating, implemented a pair work activity. The teacher asked students in pairs to write a short account of an accident, imaginary or real, without identifying the type of accident; when students finished, they were to read aloud their "accident" while the others tried to guess the type of accident.

Finally there were examples of teachers who tried to implement supplementary activities without any apparent focus on structure, but rather for the purposes of stimulating discussion. For example, teacher L3, after the completion of the textbook unit, asked students their opinion of the unit, the activities they enjoyed most and what the unit had offered them. Teacher P3, as an introduction to a passage on French TV viewers habits initiated a discussion on students' TV viewing habits and preferences.

On the whole, the teachers tried and succeeded in supplementing the textbook activities in ways they saw fit. However, for the majority of teachers supplementing the textbook meant reinforcing and practising language functions and structures. Only 4 supplementary activities (out of a total of 25 that were implemented throughout the 14 lessons) were relatively open-ended, i.e. the language outcomes of the activities could not be established beforehand by the teacher. The remaining 21 activities were designed to focus and practise specific aspects of form or lexis. As was confirmed in the interviews, the teachers felt that it was necessary to provide extra grammar and vocabulary practice since the textbook was severely lacking in this area; extensive and explicit grammar practice was deemed essential if students were to learn the language. The value, however, that teachers place on formal properties of the language is also evidenced in the teachers' implementation of listening, reading and pair/group work activities. Their tendency to front the classroom and transform activities into controlled ones with an explicit focus on grammar suggests that teachers

seem to view language as a decontextualised system of structures and words; mastery of these will lead to effective language learning. The teachers' role in the classroom is to ensure that students are presented with explicit information about the underlying patterns of the language and are given ample practice on them. The teachers need to front the classroom in order to control and assess whether students are producing accurate language. The findings of teachers' questioning and error correcting behaviour give further evidence of these tendencies.

This discussion, it should be noted, is not aimed at criticising teachers' classroom practices and their views on language teaching and learning. Teachers may well be right in believing that explicit grammar practice is essential for effective language learning. Second language classroom research has not as yet invalidated this belief (see chapter 2). What is crucial here, and essential to the aims of this study, is that there appears to be a disparity between the teachers' and the textbook writers' objectives; if the writers' aspirations are to construct tasks so that learners explore and discover new language and meaning rather than passively accepting it (Dendrinos 1988), this aspiration does not seem to be shared by some teachers based on the analysis of teachers' error correcting and questioning behaviour and teachers' implementation of textbook and supplementary activities. A description of some characteristics of teachers' teaching style, which will be presented in the next section, will serve to substantiate this claim and provide more concrete indications of teachers' roles.

#### **7.4. : Some features of teachers' teaching style.**

This section will focus on those aspects of teachers' classroom practices which are believed to give further evidence of teachers' attitudes to language learning and the roles they adopt in the classroom. The features which will be commented on are not always (and could not possibly be) common to all

teachers' classroom behaviour; some are apparent in the majority of teachers, while others are unique to a particular teacher. This will be specified whenever necessary. This analysis was mainly based on the second part of the observation scheme where a qualitative description of teachers' implementation of activities and general classroom behaviour was carried out. Whenever appropriate, the presentation of the characteristics of teachers' teaching style will be accompanied by corresponding extracts from the lesson transcriptions in order to clearly delineate and substantiate the characteristic under analysis.

#### **7.4.a.: Teachers' emphasis on the formal properties of the language.**

The teachers' emphasis on form has been indicated by their tendency to explain and elicit the meaning of all words in every single piece of written text (regardless of the purpose for which it was designed, see implementation of listening and reading activities) and the almost universal practice of eliminating communicative features from textbook activities.

However, some teachers demonstrated their priority on form by insisting that students give full grammatical explanations for the use of a particular piece of language or by demanding that students know the grammatical rule of a particular structure. In KO2's lesson, for instance, the teacher used a written text from the textbook to practise the conversion of direct speech into indirect (the text was not, however, designed for this purpose nor were the tasks accompanying it designed to focus on this particular structure). The teacher asked students to convert particular instances of direct speech within the text into reported speech :

T: ...tell me what did Cobb say when he was interviewed?..What did he say?

S: [in indirect speech?]

T: [exactly in indirect speech....somebody else?] Somebody else?...Vangeli..[come on]

V: [well]...he said that he didn't know how Fisher got stuck in there and he didn't know..eh..he don't, he didn't care..he was just happy he was alright.

T: that he was alright.. Right? [bravo] ...correct it ..say it again

FS: he said that he didn't know how Fisher had got stuck in there and he didn't care..he was just happy that he was alright.

T: Why ? Vangeli why?

V: [why?]

T: ...she said he got, he had got stuck

V: because..

T: eh? why? she said ..she eh..that Fisher ..how Fisher had got stuck in there..  
(Ss raise hands)...no you will tell me

V: [should I say why she said it?]

T: [yes] why had got and not got stuck?

V: [because "got" is in the past tense ..consequently...]

T: [bravo that's it..because it's past tense and we convert it to past perfect.  
Very good...the next sentence...]

The teacher continued the activity in the same way with four other students. All students were required to provide complete grammatical "justifications" for their choice of language.

In teacher D1's lesson the students were carrying out the form focused activity page located at the end of each textbook unit. For one of the activities the students were asked to fill in "blanks" in a letter with a verb in the correct tense:

FS: "Sometimes I think he does because eh... he feels so bored"

T: so bored ...[and where did you base all these present tenses?]

FS: [from "sometimes"]

T:[why is it in the beginning? ...is that its normal position?]

FS: [we know that we put it in the beginning to give it emphasis]

T: [right] to make it stronger...to emphasise it..

Many similar examples can be found in P3's, S3's, C2's lessons. It seems that teachers do not only insist that students use English accurately at all times but also expect students to be prepared to justify when and why a particular piece of language is correct. The teachers' tendency to demand full grammatical explanations from fourteen year olds serves to confirm that their priority and main responsibility is to create accurate users of the language.

Another way in which a few teachers exhibited their emphasis on the formal aspects of the language to the expense of real communication is indicated by the considerable amount of time spent on eliciting the meaning of words or correcting a single error.

For instance, teacher KO2 spent 4' minutes trying to have a student self-correct a syntax error during an open-ended pair work activity. Although the other students offered the correction, the teacher insisted that the error-maker rectify the error himself. The teacher asked a series of questions which aimed to lead the student to the correct response; the questions, however, did not indicate the nature or source of error, something that confused the learner and inevitably delayed self-correction. In the end the student managed to rectify the error of word order (after the other students whispered the correction to him), but it is doubtful whether the student actually understood why he had erred in the first place. Teacher A2's lesson focused on vocabulary explanations. The textbook task that students were supposed to carry out was to plan a day of sightseeing in London and a week in England. Although understanding all the vocabulary was not essential for carrying out the task, the teacher spent three quarters of the lesson time on this activity. For one word in particular (i.e. centre of culture) the teacher spent 5' minutes trying to get students to provide a formal definition of it. It was evident that all students understood the meaning of this word since they

provided its Greek translation from the beginning, yet they did have difficulty (as even accomplished lexicographers would have) in explaining its meaning in detail.

Some teachers' insistence on complete "model" phrases and sentences is also indicative of their emphasis on "artificial", accurate language use. Teacher S3, for instance, insisted that students use the phrase "by the time" when constructing sentences using the past perfect and past tense. Thus, a student's accurate and appropriate sentence "when I arrived eh.. the bus had already left", was corrected by the teacher. Teacher G1, during a textbook pair work information gap activity where one student was to describe the position of a building on a map while the other student was to identify the building, insisted that students begin their descriptions with the phrase "in my hometown"; failure in doing so resulted in immediate correction.

#### **7.4.b: The teacher as facilitator.**

Within a communicative framework the function of the teacher in the classroom changes dramatically. The teacher is not there to merely transmit knowledge and information to passive and wisdom-thirsty recipients, but rather to create the conditions conducive to learning and see to it that learning occurs. The teacher as instructor, as sole repository of truth and knowledge has lost its universally accepted status, and in its place has come the teacher as "facilitator" of learning (Breen & Candlin 1988, Littlewood 1982, Rivers 1983). The role of facilitator comprises a range of responsibilities, the most important of which is the encouragement of students expression of their ideas and opinions and the creation of an atmosphere in which students are motivated and feel free to take the communicative initiative (Taylor 1985, Dolle & Willems 1984). The teacher's role as facilitator appears to be essential to the philosophy and principles of the

textbook since, as the authors claim, the tasks in the textbooks are designed so as to activate students mentally and emotionally and make use of their knowledge and experience as social beings. Thus, the acceptance and encouragement of students' contributions and ideas and the development of students' cognitive and interactive skills are a primary concern and objective of the textbook writers (Teachers' Guide 1987).

In the classrooms observed, student unelicited initiations and contributions were not encouraged, accepted or elaborated upon simply because the teachers' control over the discourse prevented their occurrence. In very few classrooms did students manage to produce language other than in response to the teachers' questions (teacher T2, L3, K3) and only in one classroom (K3) did the teacher actually encourage students' expression of opinions. This section will focus on instances of student initiations and how they were reacted to by teachers. It appeared to be the case that the teachers' behaviour tended to demoralise and demotivate the students leaving them with a sense of doubt as to what the teacher is there for.

In teacher L2's class the teacher's response to a student's simple query not only resulted in leaving the query unanswered but also in embarrassing the student in front of the class:

T: ....so listen to Nasos first...he's going to talk about--

S: [miss] ...I have one word here

T: OK

S: eh...[when we write the word]-

T: not now ...you had to do that at home ..it's a homework(sic)..why did not you look at your books to find the word?

S: [miss]

T: yes



S: [I looked it up in my dictionary, the "dictionary" and...I couldn't find the word]

T: ..so you expect me to know words more than a dictionary...(Ss laugh)..so now be quiet and listen to Nasos first.

In teacher K2's class, the students were to skim a text and decide in which one of four books the text would appear. The text was a small biography of Marco Polo and the options were: a history book, poetry book, encyclopaedia, or a story book about famous people. One student, from the beginning, seems to disagree with the teacher's opinion. It is interesting to see how the teacher resolved this disagreement:

T: [...one of these...Papageorgiou tell us]

SS: Miss miss

P: C

T: C? I don't think so

Ss: B! miss, miss

T: [it is...?]

S: D

T: D [it has more details in a story book about famous people...there are details]

P: Miss. miss. miss ...can I say something?...eh..we can..eh..we can say..we can say a ..

T: a? in a history book?

P: in a history book

T: you can't find so many details

P: xxxin a history book, because eh..it's history...No?

T: Maybe..eh..we are going to do task two....

The teacher chooses the "diplomatic" way out ("maybe) rather than having to divert by asking the student to justify her opinion or by asking other students'

opinions. The student is left feeling that her opinion is not valued and that the teacher's "maybe" was only a means of ending the conversation as discreetly as possible.

#### **7.4.c.: Classroom atmosphere; teacher-student relationship, teachers' motivating behaviour.**

This aspect of teachers' classroom behaviour, the rapport the teachers had developed with the students and the general atmosphere they created, is probably the one in which teachers varied most. The classrooms observed ranged from happy and lively workplaces to quite traditional, teacher-centred classrooms.

Undoubtedly, one of the most important conditions for successful language learning is the creation of an unthreatening atmosphere in which the learner feels secure and free to experiment with and explore the language and plunge into the mysteries of foreign language learning (Littlewood 1992). The creation of such an atmosphere, however, depends, to a large extent, on the personality and the attitude of the teacher. If teachers want their students to be actively involved and participate in the proceedings, it is the teachers who have to, in the first place, be involved and actively participate in the classroom processes.

From the fourteen teachers who participated in the study, there were many who tried to create a lively atmosphere in their classrooms (A2, A1, D1). These teachers had a very warm and pleasant personality and constantly smiled. They constantly moved between the isles trying to motivate students and prompt them to speak. Humour was common in all three lessons, much of it originating from the teachers. Due to the young age of A1's and D1's learners, instances of

misbehaviour or disruption were bound to occur; when these did, the teachers tried as "gently" as possible to restore order and avoided bringing anyone to the forefront of attention and reprimanding him/her. Although D1's lesson focussed entirely on grammar revision, the teacher tried to make it as interesting as possible by involving students and praising when students remembered a particular grammar phenomenon or rule. The students throughout the lesson were eager to respond to their teacher's elicitations; some even "fought" over the right of a turn.

Probably the most relaxed and enjoyable classroom atmosphere was evidenced in teacher K3's classroom. This teacher used a range of techniques to get students to feel at ease and contribute as much as possible in the lesson; all activities aimed at personally involving students and encouraging the students to bring their experience and knowledge of the world in the classroom. The teacher accepted and valued student contributions regardless of their content or accuracy. The teacher acted as a guide, motivator and monitor throughout the lesson. Few errors were corrected; the teacher's objective was clearly to get students to talk. The students seemed very interested and involved in the classroom proceedings and in their entirety participated actively in the lesson. Humour and jokes were a common and recurring feature, originating from both teacher and students. Although this was a 50' minute lesson, not once did the students "divert" and create disruption or noise. The teacher had full "control" of the lesson but without inhibiting students' attempts to initiate and contribute.

Not all classrooms were as relaxed and lively as the ones described above. Some teachers made no efforts to engage students' attention and motivate them, while others saw their role in the classroom as "restorer" and "maintainer of order" constantly issuing threats and insults in order to get students to participate and behave "properly".

Teacher L3, for instance, had a very nervous and subdued class. The teacher tried to encourage and motivate students, but to no avail. The reason for the students' lack of interest and involvement can be sought in the teacher's physical position in the class. Throughout the lesson the teacher was seated at her desk and got up only to write on the blackboard. The teacher never walked through the isles or came "close" to the students. It seems hardly surprising how students can become motivated and involved in the activities when the teacher is so physically distant. Since the classroom was relatively large, many of the teacher's prompts were not even heard by students sitting in the back of the classroom. What is more, the teacher's lack of involvement was evident in the implementation of activities; the teacher went through the activities at a remarkably quick pace, reading aloud their instructions and carrying them out quickly. The teacher did not divert from her lesson plan nor did she elaborate on student responses.

A similar "unfriendly" atmosphere was observed in teacher G1, C2, P3, C1, and S3's classroom. Although these teachers taught in different schools and different level students, their teaching styles were similar in many ways. All teachers tried to control students' verbal and non-verbal behaviour by rapidly firing questions, and by not tolerating diversions or any form of student misbehaviour. It became quite clear that these teachers had one aim in mind: to finish within the prescribed time the activities that had been planned without any disruption. Some teachers resorted to insults (G1 and S3) to get students to participate, while other teachers (C2 and P3) achieved this by randomly picking students and demanding that they respond to their questions. The teachers made no overt efforts to motivate or interest students, nor did they provide any opportunities for students to initiate and express themselves. They usually stood in front of the classroom like conductors in an orchestra and occasionally walked through the isles to nominate students or to check whether all students

were working when individual work had been assigned. All teachers were serious and "to the point" and expected their students to behave in a similar manner.

Finally, the most anxiety-ridden atmosphere was evidenced in teacher I.2's classroom. This lesson comprised two activities; during the first (which took up more than 3/4 of the lesson time) the students read aloud their homework (i.e. a short biography of one of three famous explorers), while during the second various students read aloud a listening transcript. During the first part of the lesson many instances of misbehaviour occurred. This was only natural since listening, over and over again, to the biographies of three explorers has little potential in engaging students' interest and attention for a long period of time. After a certain point the students became restless and started talking amongst themselves or laughing. The teacher made no attempt to change or abandon the activity and engage students in a more interesting one. The teacher's technique for dealing with student disruptions was to issue threats, demand that students pay attention and subsequently expel from the class the "sources" of misbehaviour. By the end of this activity, the teacher had managed to expel four students, take another student's name down after seriously reprimanding him and frighten the remaining students. By the end of the lesson all students were well-behaved and involved probably due to their fear of being expelled or ridiculed in class.

#### **7.5.: Teachers' roles in the classroom: Summary and discussion of findings.**

One of the most revealing aspects of this analysis has been to demonstrate the disparity that exists between the planned curriculum and its implementation by the teachers. The results of the classroom observations have served to prove that

materials can only be termed as "potentially communicative" (Andrews, 1983) and that the success of a curriculum innovation can only be asserted within the classroom. The overwhelming tendency of teachers to transform communicative activities into "traditional" teacher-fronted ones, to transform objectives of tasks to conform to their views of language and language learning, serves to strengthen the validity of Andrew's (1983), and indeed many a methodologists claim (see Rodgers 1984), that "the fact that a piece of teaching materials embodies certain communicative principles in no way guarantees that it will be used communicatively. Materials are not "teacher proof"...and most materials, however explicit the guidance given in the teachers' book may be taught in a variety of ways...The teacher's treatment of the materials will be the principal determining factor"(Andrews op. cit. p. 130).

The findings relating to the teachers' implementation of activities, teachers' linguistic behaviour and the features of their teaching style, however, also shed doubt on the possibility of categorising teachers' classroom practices as communicative or not. In the same way as for materials and syllabi (Johnson 1988), it is empirically naive and dangerous to definitively classify teachers' classroom practices into communicative or traditional. Indeed, many (the majority in fact) teachers' practices exhibited characteristics reminiscent of audiolingual or grammar translation approaches (see Richards & Rodgers 1986, and Quinn 1984 for a discussion of this approach ); for example teacher G1, D1, C1, C2, K2, L2, P3, S3. Other teachers seemed to follow an eclectic approach, exhibiting features of both communicative and more traditional approaches in their practices (e.g. teacher A1, A2, KO2, T2, L3). While one teacher (K3) could be quite confidently classified as "communicative" exhibiting many features characteristic of a communicative learner centred approach in his classroom behaviour.

Just as with the classification of various approaches as "communicative", it is only upon a continuum that one could characterise teachers' classroom practices. The findings of teachers' roles in the classroom confirm this: the majority of teachers saw their role in the classroom as "instructor", "controller" and "language expert"; others, however, supplemented these roles with some more compatible to communicative approaches; finally, teacher K3, although (probably) the most "communicative" teacher of all, did not exhibit the full range of teacher roles required for the implementation of a communicative learner-centred approach. A summary of the roles the fourteen teachers did (or did not) adopt will make this point clear:

Within a communicative learner-centred context the teacher is to be <sup>1</sup>:

1) A facilitator of learning: this role requires the teacher to:

A: Negotiate with students in the selection of activities: None of the fourteen teachers made any attempts to negotiate with students which activities were to be carried out. The decision of what activities were to be implemented, how and when was within the teachers' realm of responsibilities.

B: Create conditions to cater for the differing needs and interests of the learners: Although the majority of classrooms were of mixed ability students, no attempts were made by the teachers to implement activities that would cater for the different levels of students in the class. Although the materials make provisions for "autonomous" learning with the inclusion of "EXTRA" activities, the teachers either implemented these with the whole class or ignored them altogether. As was mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the parallel activities category in the observation scheme was not ticked during the 14 lessons.

C: Create conditions conducive to learning by :

i) creating an unthreatening atmosphere: In some classrooms the teachers managed to create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere in which learners were relatively "free" to make contributions or ask questions (A1, D1, A2, KO2, T2, K3, L3). In other classrooms the teachers' power and control over students' verbal and non-verbal behaviour resulted in the creation of a demotivating language learning environment (P3, C2, L3, C1, K2, G1, L2, S3).

ii) supporting students in expressing their own ideas: The only teacher that made conscious efforts to encourage students to express themselves was teacher K3. Teachers T2, L3, KO2, also to a certain extent and at specific points in the lesson, made possible the students' expression of ideas and opinions.

ii) encouraging cooperation - negotiation - discussion between learners: A minimal requirement for learner cooperation and discussion is that the teacher allow learners to work with each other (i.e. that learners work in pairs or groups). Although no group work activities were carried out throughout the fourteen lessons, three pair work activities were implemented: 1 supplementary form-focused pair work activity in K2's class, 1 (relatively) open-ended in KO2's class and 1 open-ended (uncontrolled in terms of language outcomes) in K3's class.

2) Organiser: Although no "complex" (e.g. group work, simulation, or jigsaw activities) activities were implemented which would require a great deal of skill on part of the teacher for their successful organisation, in most teachers' lessons activity instructions were easily understood by learners and subsequently carried out with success. In some teachers' lessons (A1, C1, K2), the lack of clear and concise activity instructions resulted in the loss of valuable time and in dampening the enthusiasm and motivation of the students.



3) Monitor - observer : These roles are particularly essential during the execution of pair(group) work activities. The teachers who implemented pair-work activities did adopt these roles. The roles of observer and monitor were also enacted by a few teachers (G1, S3) when individual work had been assigned.

4) Guide - helper- consultant: The teachers who had implemented pair work activities did act as guides and helpers. The teachers, however, who acted as observer and monitor while students were carrying out individual work, did not.

5) Co-communicator - participant: Only one teacher (P3) could be said to have acted as co-communicator during a discussion she initiated with students on the value of TV viewing. The fact, however, that she tried to impose on students her views regarding the uselessness of TV viewing, does make her role as co-communicator rather dubious. As far as the role of the teacher as participant is concerned, no teacher actually took the role of "learner" in any of the 81 activities carried out.

6) Instructor - controller - corrector at the presentation and controlled practice stages of the lesson: These three roles were the most common and preferred roles of the teachers (with the exception of teacher K3). The analysis of teachers' error-correcting and questioning behaviour also gives ample evidence of this. Some teachers managed to adopt these roles during the stages of the lesson that require them (T2, L3) but the vast majority seemed to adopt these roles throughout the lesson regardless of stage and activity objective.

On the whole, the analysis of teachers' linguistic behaviour and their implementation of activities, seem to suggest that teachers have not, as yet, managed to come to terms with and enact the various roles required for the implementation of a communicative approach. The teachers' preference for

activities explicitly focusing on aspects of form with predictable language outcomes, and the teachers' overwhelming avoidance of any kind of classroom organisation other than teacher-fronted, reveal that teachers seem to regard the teaching of English as the teaching of any other subject in the school curriculum, as a discipline in its own right with its unique content. The teachers' function is to transmit the content of their subject and to evaluate whether it has been received and understood by learners. The teachers are in control not only of what is to be taught, but also how it is to be taught and of the criteria for acceptable performance. Although some teachers managed to break away from the overall and time-honoured role of instructor and controller and adopt (at specific points in the lesson) less rigid roles (i.e. motivator, encourager, prompter), their "transformations" were brief; once learners became more involved in the proceedings, violating (perhaps, inevitably) some rules of classroom interaction and "proper" student behaviour, the teachers immediately resumed their roles as controller and authority. More importantly, the role of facilitator, perhaps the most characteristic and essential role of a communicative teacher, was adopted (within certain limits) by only one of the fourteen teachers who participated in the study. If the adoption of this role is to be taken as a criterion for characterising teachers as "communicative", then the teachers in this study cannot be said to ascribe to the principles of the communicative learner-centred approach. If not, then the teachers in this study seem to be adhering to a mixture of principles from various approaches, an eclectic language teaching method, a hybrid version of the communicative approach, incorporating a few features of communicative language teaching but many more akin to the audiolingual approach. Whatever interpretation is followed, the "gap" between intended and implemented curriculum remains an undeniable fact. If the textbook writers had aspired to create a language learning/teaching context in which the learner would be the centre of attention and would assume responsibility in the

arduous task of learning a foreign language, the teachers' efforts do not seem to be geared towards the realisation of the writers' aspirations.

Before proceeding to the next chapter where the results of the interviews and questionnaires will be presented, a few qualifying comments regarding methodological issues and the nature of the teachers' classroom behaviour are in order.

The first comment concerns the utility of the concept of teacher role as a viable focus of empirical investigation. In the summary and discussion of the findings of the classroom observations, teacher roles have been presented as if they were natural outcomes of the findings, as if they were observable acts which could, with relative ease, be identified; unfortunately they are not. Although I attempted at the beginning of this chapter to provide a concise definition of teacher role (possibly making the concept more concrete), the definition alone did not render the term "role" operational. Teacher role(s) still remains an inherently inferential and qualitative concept and the various teacher roles described in this chapter have been inferred on the basis of various features of teachers' classroom practices. Even though some roles (e.g. monitor, observer, co-communicator, helper) could be objectively identified on the basis of teachers' specific verbal and non-verbal behaviours, others (e.g. facilitator, guide) involve a great deal of inferencing and may only be described confidently when the teachers' classroom behaviour has been observed over a period of time; even in this case the teacher in the role of facilitator would still be difficult to describe due to the lack of an operational definition (see chapter 10, section 10.2.). Indeed, one-off real-time observations can only provide tentative indications of teacher roles, not definite descriptions of it. The reader is thus cautioned to interpret the findings of this chapter in the light of these limitations.

A second comment concerns the utility of the observation scheme as a descriptive tool for teacher roles. The observation scheme was easy to use and provided a vivid and detailed picture of the teachers' classroom behaviour. Had the lessons not been recorded, however, and teachers' linguistic behaviour not been analysed, the scheme on its own would have had limited potential in describing teacher roles. Indeed without the results of the lesson transcript analysis, only tentative (and to a certain extent subjective) descriptions of the 14 teachers' roles could have been provided. This is not to say that the analysis of teachers' linguistic behaviour would have been sufficient on its own in describing teacher roles; such an approach would have ignored features of the classroom context and teachers' non-verbal behaviour which are essential in understanding teacher roles. If valid descriptions of teacher roles are to be arrived at, a combination of these methods (real-time observation and analysis of classroom interaction) I believe is essential (further research, however, would be needed to (in)validate this claim).

A final comment concerns the nature of the actual findings. It has become clear that there is a disparity between intended and implemented curriculum, between the textbook writers' objectives and the teachers' aims. What has not been questioned, however, is the feasibility of the textbook writers' objectives and the extent to which they can be realised in the Greek English language classroom taking into account the nature of the Greek educational system, teachers' inadequate training, lack of resources and the circumstances under which the teachers are required to teach. Another question relates to the pitfalls of dogma : Should the Greek English language teachers (or any teachers for that matter) be expected to adhere to the principles of one approach regardless of their experiences, practices and learners, just because this approach has proved effective in certain contexts? Even if this approach was considered appropriate for the Greek context, is it realistic to expect teachers to apply it in its entirety?

I do not wish to elaborate on these questions at this point. Such an approach would be premature without first presenting the teachers' views and attitudes towards the communicative approach, its feasibility in the classroom and the day to day problems teachers face in their classrooms. I just wish to mention these questions here since it was the classroom observations that led me to seriously question the feasibility of the textbook writers' proposals and the universal applicability of the communicative approach. These questions will be taken up and dealt with in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

#### NOTE:

1) This summary of teacher roles has been based on the works of various authors dealing with communicative language teaching methodology. In particular, a description of the teacher as facilitator can be found in the works of: Breen & Candlin (1980, 1988), Dolle & Willems (1984), Littlewood (1982,1992); a description of the teacher's role within a learner-centred framework is found in the works of Nunan (1988), Rivers (1983), and Edelhoff (1986); teachers' roles during pair/group work activities are described in Wilkins (1983). Finally, a summary of teacher roles within a communicative language teaching context can be found in the works of: Andrews (1983), Cranmer (1991), Dubin & Olshtain (1986), Medgyes (1986), Richards & Rodgers (1986), Taylor (1985), Willems (1984), and Wright (1987).

## CHAPTER 8

### *Teachers' Attitudes towards, and Understanding of, the Communicative Learner-Centred Approach: Attitude Scale and Questionnaire Analysis*

#### 8.1: The questionnaire and attitude scale.

Chapter 8 and 9 will focus on the findings of the two other research methods and instruments employed in this study as a means of achieving methodological triangulation, i.e. the questionnaire and interviews. The incorporation of these research methods in the research design was deemed essential for two reasons. Firstly, it would help overcome the inevitable pitfalls of rigidity and the limitations of a single perspective (i.e. the researcher's) in the interpretation of findings by taking into account the teachers' perspective, how they conceptualise their teaching and what problems they face in their everyday classroom practices. This approach could cast new light on the observation findings, possibly justifying them, or, at least, providing a broader understanding of the phenomenon under study. Furthermore, the questionnaire findings may serve as a means of validating the classroom observation results; whatever the outcome of this comparison, a more realistic picture of the complexities and difficulties involved in being a non-native language teacher and teaching a foreign language within a secondary school context, will, hopefully, emerge.

Apart from providing an in-depth understanding of the teachers and the circumstances under which they work, the questionnaire and interviews were designed so as to investigate whether certain factors (i.e. teachers' non-involvement in the innovation, teachers' opinions and understanding of the

textbook and its philosophy, constraints of the wider educational context and teachers' opinions of their training; see chapter 3 for a discussion of these factors and their impact on curriculum implementation and section 4.1. for the research questions{2a,b,c,d} which attempt to investigate these factors) have a bearing on the Greek English language teachers' classroom practices. Although the content of the three instruments (questionnaire, attitude scale and interview schedule) overlapped to a certain extent (this was done for the purpose of cross-validating the results of each instrument), the findings of each will be presented in separate sections. This approach will help in revealing the strengths and weaknesses of each method and the extent of its exploratory and/or descriptive powers. The integration of findings, which will take place after the results have been presented, will hopefully enhance the validity of the results as well as point out the importance of employing method and data triangulation techniques in investigating and understanding language classrooms.

This chapter focuses on the results of the questionnaire and attitude scale. It begins with the presentation of the questionnaire results (section 8.2.a.) followed by a summary and discussion of the most important findings (section 8.2.b.). The second part of this chapter concerns the findings of the attitude scale. After reporting the 14 teachers' attitude scores (section 8.3.), a more careful analysis of teachers' responses to semantically similar attitude statements follows (section 8.3.a.). Finally, the chapter closes with a cross-comparison of teachers' responses to various attitude statements and questionnaire items and their corresponding classroom behaviours and with a discussion of the results of this comparative analysis (section 8.4.)(Both the questionnaire and the attitude scale can be found in Appendix 3).

## **8.2: Responding to the questionnaire.**

It was felt appropriate to begin this chapter with the teachers' responses to the questionnaire, since many questionnaire items were more or less of a factual nature, i.e. length of experience, training experience, involvement in the production of the textbooks. Prior knowledge of these facts would assist the reader in understanding and interpreting the teachers' responses to questions concerning opinions, views and their classroom practices, as well as the pattern of teachers' responses to the attitude statements.

The questionnaire consisted of 28 closed type (i.e. yes/no or multiple choice) factual or opinion questions. Attached to the questionnaire was the attitude scale and an introductory letter explaining the purposes of the research and the general content of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was handed to each teacher on the day of our first meeting and was collected during my second or third (sometimes fourth) visit to the school. All 14 teachers returned the questionnaire. The results of the questionnaires were computed by hand and checked twice (on two separate occasions).

### **8.2.a.: The questionnaire results.**

Length of experience is one of the essential features of a teacher's profile determining to a great extent how firmly attitudes are held and how amenable they are to change or refinement (Dingwall 1985, Widdowson 1993). Few would deny that the more experienced the teacher, the clearer views she/he has regarding what works and does not work with the students, what is feasible and what is not in the classroom. On the whole the teachers in this study were fairly experienced. Based on the results of question 27 (see Table 8.1.), the majority of teachers (i.e. 11) had been teaching English in 1991-1992, when the study was carried out, for 10 or more years. Question 28, which asked teachers about their



teaching experience in Greek secondary schools, was included as a means of establishing the teachers' length of experience with the Taskway textbooks. As had been previously mentioned, the Taskway textbooks were implemented on a national level in 1987; a teacher, therefore, with an experience of 5 or more years in the secondary school sector would have used the textbooks since the beginning of their implementation and would, by the time the study was carried out, have been well acquainted with the content, structure and demands of the materials.

<p><b>Question 27: How many years have you been teaching English?</b>  A. 1-5 years: 7% (teacher I.3)  B. 5-10 years: 14% (teachers C1, K3)  C. 10 or more years: 78% (teachers A1, D1, G1, A2, C2, K2, KO2, L2, T2, S3, P3)</p> <p><b>Question 28: How many years have you been teaching English in Greek secondary schools?</b>  A. 1-5 years: 21% (teachers C1, D1, L3)  B. 5-10 years: 14% (teachers KO2, K3)  C. 10 or more years: 64% (A1, G1, A2, C2, K2, I.2, T2, P3, S3)</p>
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*Table 8.1.: Teachers' teaching experience; questions 27 and 28.*

Furthermore, the teachers' responses to this question would provide an indication of whether and to what extent teachers are accustomed with the constraints of working within a secondary school context. Based on the teachers' responses to this question it appears that the majority of teachers have worked in Greek secondary schools for more than five years and have therefore used the books since the beginning of their implementation. Only three teachers (C1, D1, L3) have worked in the public secondary education sector for less than five years.

Table 8.2 shows the results of teachers' responses to questions relating to the quality and quantity of their training. The majority of teachers have taken part in some kind of teacher training since their university years (question 26); 6 teachers, however, have never received any kind of training. When asked

whether Greek teachers of English have been adequately trained in the communicative approach (question 24), all teachers responded negatively.

<p><b>Question 24: Do you believe that Greek teachers of English have been given adequate training in using the communicative approach?</b> YES: 0% NO: 100%</p> <p><b>Question 25: If no, why?</b> A. Training courses are very short: 14% (teachers A1, C2) B. Only few teachers have the opportunity to attend the courses: 50% (teachers A1, G1, A2, C2, K2, KO2, L2) C. Very few training courses have taken place: 43% (teachers A1, C1, D1, A2, C2, T2) D. Training courses focus too much on theory and not the practical aspects of language teaching: 78% (teachers C1, D1, G1, A2, K2, L2, T2, K3, L3, P3, S3)</p> <p><b>Question 26: Have you taken part in any kind of teacher training?</b> YES: 57% (teachers A1, A2, C2, K2, L2, T2, K3, S3) NO: 43% (teachers C1, D1, G1, KO2, L3, P3)</p>
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*Table 8.2.: Teachers' opinions of the quality and quantity of their training; questions 24,25 and 26.*

The most popular cause of this inadequacy (licked by 11 teachers) was that training courses focus too much on theory and not the practical aspects of language teaching.

The first six questions of the questionnaire dealt with teachers' opinions of the communicative learner-centred approach and the feasibility of its application in Greek secondary schools. Table 8.3 shows the results of teachers' responses to these questions. All teachers but one (KO2) believed in the value of the communicative approach and agreed that the communicative approach leads to more effective language learning in comparison to other approaches used in the past (question 1). The vast majority (i.e. 12 ts) also believed that the communicative approach can be implemented successfully within the Greek secondary school context (question 2); only two (D1, L3) teachers disagreed with this.

- Question 1:** Do you feel that the communicative approach to language teaching can help learners learn a language more effectively than other approaches used in the past?  
 YES: 93% (13 teachers)                      NO: 7% (Teacher KO2)
- Question 2:** There are authors who believe that the communicative approach can be used successfully only with certain types of learner, and in certain types of teaching situation. Do you think the communicative approach can be used successfully with Greek secondary school students?  
 YES: 86% (12 teachers)                      NO: 14% (teachers D1, L3)
- Question 3:** Do you use the communicative approach in your language classes?  
 YES: 93% (13 teachers)                      NO: 7% (teacher K2)
- Question 4:** One of the features of the communicative approach is that it is learner centred. What does "learner-centred" mean to you?  
 A. Learners should be given more work to do: 0%  
 B. Our teaching should be determined by the language needs and interests of our learners: 86% (A1, D1, C2, C1, A2, K2, KO2, L2, K3, P3, S3)  
 C. Learners can learn on their own without much help from the teacher: 0%  
 D. Our teaching should aim at making our learners more responsible for their learning: 36% (A1, D1, C2, G1, T2)
- Question 5:** Many educationalists believe that a learner-centred approach can only be used when the educational system of a country supports such an approach. Do you think that a learner-centred approach can be used in Greek secondary schools?  
 YES: 71% (10 teachers)                      NO: 29% (teachers D1, G1, T2, L3)
- Question 6:** If no, why?  
 A. The Greek educational system does not encourage such an approach: (D1, L3)  
 B. The learners are not used to such an approach: (G1, T2)  
 C. The teachers are not used to, or trained for, such an approach: (not ticked)

*Table 8.3.: Teachers' opinions and understanding of the Communicative Learner-Centred Approach and the feasibility of its application in Greek secondary schools; questions 1 -6.*

When asked about their classroom practices, 13 teachers said that they used the communicative approach in their classrooms, while only one teacher (K2) admitted not using it. Question 4 dealt with the teachers' understanding of the learner-centred philosophy. For the majority of teachers (86%) "learner-centred" meant that teaching should be determined by the language needs and interests of the learners; making learners more responsible for their learning was ticked by only 5 teachers (36%). Furthermore, only 3 teachers (A1, D1, C2) believed that both statements expressed principles of the learner-centred approach. Question 5 aimed at tapping teachers' opinions of the (potential) constraints the Greek educational system may impose on attempts to apply a learner-centred approach in the classroom. According to 10 teachers (71%) the implementation of a

learner-centred philosophy within the Greek secondary school context was considered unproblematic; only four teachers (D1, G1, T2, L3) believed the opposite. From these four teachers, it is interesting to note that not one teacher believed that it was the teachers themselves that were not used to and trained in the application of a learner-centred approach.

Table 8.4 shows the results of teachers' responses to questions 7 to 13. This group of questions relate to teachers' opinions of the Taskway textbooks and their development:

<p><b>Question 7: Initially, the authors of the book (Taskway) intended to produce not a series of textbooks, but a series of folders containing a number of activities which the Greek English language teachers could change, refine, or supplement with their own, depending on the students' level. Would you have preferred to use this in the classroom instead of the textbook?</b></p> <p>YES: 43% (Ts.D1, G1, KO2, K3, P3, S3)      NO: 57% (8 teachers)</p>	
<p><b>Question 8: What is your opinion of the new textbook "Taskway English"?</b></p> <p>A. It is excellent: 0%</p> <p>B. It is quite good although it could do with some improvements: 50% (C1, A2, C2, KO2, L2, T2, S3)</p> <p>C. It is fair, but I would rather use a textbook of my own choice: 50% (A1, D1, G1, K2, K3, L3, P3)</p> <p>D. I do not like it at all: 0%</p>	
<p><b>Question 9: Do you think that the textbook (Taskway) fulfils the English language needs of the Greek secondary school student?</b></p> <p>YES: 14% (teachers C1, L2)      NO: 86% (12 teachers)</p>	
<p><b>Question 10: Have you taken any part in the production of the book?</b></p> <p>YES: 0%      NO: 100%</p>	
<p><b>Question 11: If no, would you have liked to have taken part in its production?</b></p> <p>YES: 50% (7 teachers)      NO: 43%* (A1, D1, K2, KO2, T2, S3)</p>	
<p><b>Question 12: Are there any aspects of the textbook that you believe need improvement or changing?</b></p> <p>YES: 100%      NO: 0%</p>	
<p><b>Question 13: If yes, which of the statements below would you agree with?</b></p> <p>A. The book needs more grammar exercises and drills: 86% (12 teachers)</p> <p>B. The book is too complicated to follow: 21% (3 teachers)</p> <p>C. More writing activities are needed: 57% (8 teachers)</p> <p>D. More reading activities are needed: 57% (8 teachers)</p> <p>E. More speaking activities are needed: 28% (4 teachers)</p> <p>F. There needs to be more 'recycling' of the language features students learn in each unit: 28% (4 teachers)</p> <p>G. More attention should be given to grammatical and syntactic rules: 28% (4 ts)</p> <p>H: A workbook is needed: 78% (11 teachers).</p>	
<p>* teacher I.2 did not answer this question.</p>	

*Table 8.4: Teachers' opinions of the textbook and their involvement in its production; questions 7 - 13.*

More specifically, teachers were asked whether they would have preferred to use a series of folders containing activities which they could supplement or refine, instead of a self-contained textbook. This was actually the writers' initial plan which was eventually abandoned (see section 4.11.). The teachers were more or less divided on this issue; 6 teachers replied that they would have preferred a collection of activities, while 8 teachers prefer to use a textbook. When asked of their overall opinion of the textbook they are using, half of the teachers (C1, A2, C2, KO2, L2, T2, S3) believed that it was generally good but did need certain improvements, while the other half (A1, D1, G1, K2, K3, L3, P3) were less favourable and replied that they would rather be using a textbook of their own choice. It was interesting to see that all teachers held moderate views towards the textbooks, neither condemning them nor applauding them. The two other alternative responses to this question (A: "it is excellent" and B: "I do not like it at all" ) were not ticked by any one of the teachers.

Following this, teachers were asked whether they believed the textbook fulfilled the needs of Greek secondary school students. The vast majority of teachers (86%, 12 teachers) believed it did not; only teachers C1 and L2 believed it did. Questions 10 and 11 dealt with teachers' involvement in the production of the textbook. Although none of the 14 teachers in this study had actually taken part in the production of the textbooks, when asked if they would have liked to, only half of the teachers said that they would. Finally, the last two questions in this group (questions 12 and 13) asked teachers whether they believed the textbooks needed improvement and if yes, what could be improved. All 14 teachers believed that the textbook needed changes or improvements. Almost all teachers (apart from L2 and L3) believed that the textbook was in need of more grammar exercises and drills, and in need of a workbook (agreed to by 11 teachers with the exception of C1, D1, KO2). A



These questions were mainly included for the purpose of validating the classroom observation findings; for establishing a link between what teachers say they do and what they actually do in the classroom. According to the teachers' responses to question 14, none of the teachers in this study rely exclusively on the textbook for the provision of input and practice, but supplement it regularly with their own materials and activities. This aspect of the teachers' classroom practice was validated during the classroom observations where 30% of the total activities carried out were supplementary. As far as the use of the textbook in the class is concerned, 64% of the teachers (i.e. 9 ts.) said that they use the textbook as a basis for their lesson plans and follow its syllabus and sequence of activities, while for 36% (i.e. 5 ts.) the textbook is more of a supplementary tool.

When asked about their opinions of pair/group work activities and their impact in the classroom, the teachers were more or less divided. In 8 teachers' classrooms pair/group work activities were accepted by and worked well with the students, while in 6 teachers (A1, D1, G1, K2, T2, L3) classrooms the students did not respond well to such activities. Furthermore, the majority of teachers (64%, 9 ts) enjoyed using pair/group work activities in their classrooms, while 5 teachers (A1, D1, G1, K2, T2) did not. In general, the teachers who said that these activities worked well with their students were the ones who enjoyed using them (or vice versa); the exception was teacher L3 who liked them but her students did not.

The next two questions related to teachers' error correcting priorities and preferences. More specifically, question 18 asked teachers which errors they would correct during a relatively open-ended problem solving activity. Five teachers (C1, D1, C2, KO2, P3) circled more than one alternative. 7 teachers said that they would correct errors related to the meaning and not the grammatical

accuracy of students' utterances, while quite a few teachers (i.e. 6 ts) said that they would mainly correct very serious grammatical and syntactical errors. The other alternatives to this question were ticked by less than half the teachers. Some interesting points arise from the teachers' pattern of response to this question. Firstly, not one teacher believed that he/she would correct grammar errors alone during a problem solving communication activity. Secondly, although only 7 teachers stated that they would react to errors impeding on the meaning and not the linguistic form of students' utterances, four (C1, D1, C2, KO2) of these seven teachers also ticked other alternatives. For instance, KO2 apart from communication (and not linguistic) errors would also correct errors on language items previously taught and lexical errors. D1 would correct "meaning" errors, errors on language points previously taught and serious grammatical and syntactical errors. In essence, then, only 3 of the 14 teachers would focus on student errors which impeded communication during an open-ended pair (or even group) work activity. For the majority of teachers, students' inaccurate (albeit comprehensible) language would be reacted to during a communication activity. Question 19 aimed at assessing whether teachers inhibit students' attempts at producing language by constantly interrupting to correct errors. According to half of the teachers, corrections usually take place after the student has finished his/her sentence; 4 teachers (A2, K2, T2, P3) admitted correcting students the moment an error is made. Finally, 3 teachers (incidentally 3 third year teachers, K3,L3, S3) claimed that they usually correct a student after the activity has finished and only in the case that his/her error is serious.

The last two questions in this group concerned the teachers' reactions to students' feelings and interests and the role of the learner in the selection and implementation of activities. In cases where an activity did not interest the students the majority of teachers (11 ts.) said that they would abandon the



activity and try to invent a more interesting one (question 20). Four teachers said that they would not abandon the activity but try to carry it out as quickly as possible. A point worth mentioning in relation to teachers' responses to this question is that not one of the 14 teachers said that they would carry on doing an activity which bored the students simply because they considered it useful (question 20,b). Therefore, for the majority of teachers, the students' feelings and reactions to activities do influence the lesson's agenda; the teachers seem prepared and willing to change or refine activities in order to actively involve the students. Question 21, relates to the extent to which teachers involve students in the selection of classroom activities (this is one of the main responsibilities of the teacher as facilitator). Although for the majority of teachers students' feelings are taken into account when executing activities, very few teachers (i.e. 4 ts. A2, C2, T2, I.3) go as far as to allow students to choose the activities that interest them. 10 teachers claimed that the selection of activities to be carried out was their prerogative and not their students'.

The last topic that the questionnaire investigated was teachers' opinions of the teachers' guides to the Taskway textbooks (questions 22 and 23, see Table 8.6.). The teachers were divided concerning the usefulness of the teachers' guide. Five teachers (A1, KO2, K3, I.3, S3) believed that the teachers' guide provides adequate information for the successful implementation of the textbook. What is interesting, is that 3 of these 5 teachers who found the guide useful were third year teachers (K3,I.3,S3). The third year textbook, however, is not accompanied by a teachers' guide; instead, teachers are given a 10-page leaflet providing suggestions on the implementation of few activities in the textbook. No information on the principles of communicative methodology or indeed on the objectives of the activities are provided in this leaflet.

**Question 22: Do you believe that the teachers' guide to "Taskway English" provides enough information to help you use the book successfully in class?**

YES: 38% (5 ts. A1, K02, K3, L3, S3) NO: 57% (8 ts.)\*

**Question 23: If no, what more is needed?\*\*\***

A. More information on the principles of the communicative approach: 21% (D1, C2, L2)

B. More detailed guidance on how to carry out activities: 36% (D1, A2, C2, K2, L2)

C. More help on how to present grammatical points: 29% (G1, C2, K2, T2)

D. More information on how to evaluate students after the end of an activity: 14% (G1, C2)

\*P3, did not answer.

\*\*P3 and C1 did not answer. The results are based on the eight teachers who answered "NO" to the previous question.

*Table 8.6.: Teachers' opinions of the teachers' guide to the textbooks: questions 22 and 23.*

The majority of the first and second year teachers, on the other hand, (i.e. C1, D1, G1, A2, C2, K2, L2, T2), who are provided with a detailed teachers' book, did not believe that the teachers' guide was particularly helpful. Most of these teachers (5 ts., D1, A2, C2, K2, L3) believed that the teachers' guide needed more guidance on activity implementation, while four teachers also believed that the guide lacked explicit help on the presentation of grammatical points.

#### **8.2.b.: Summary of results; discussion.**

The 14 teachers' responses to the questionnaire have provided essential information regarding their views on a variety of topics and tentative evidence possibly justifying certain aspects of their classroom practices. Their responses have also revealed an important finding of this study (which will be further exemplified through teachers' responses to the attitude scale and the interviews), namely, the teachers' limited understanding of the communicative approach and its practical implications.

Based on the results of the questionnaire, the teachers almost unanimously believe in the value and the effectiveness of the communicative approach. The vast majority of teachers regard the application of the communicative learner-centred approach within the Greek secondary school context as unproblematic. Although all teachers admit to not being adequately trained in the communicative

approach, all teachers (apart from K2) claim to be using it in their everyday classroom practices (so does KO2 who does not believe in its effectiveness). Even teachers D1 and L3 who agreed that a communicative approach cannot be used successfully with Greek secondary school students and who feel inadequately trained in the communicative approach, assert that they use it with their students. Moreover, if one of the distinctive features of the communicative approach is its attempt to bring the learner to the centre of attention giving him/her the opportunity to initiate and express his/her opinions and contribute actively in the learning process, if one of the basic tenets of the communicative approach is to mould teaching practices and materials to the needs and interests of the learners, then four teachers in this study seem to hold a quite different conception of the communicative approach. Although the first few questions in the questionnaire implicitly disassociated the communicative approach from the learner-centred philosophy, this was in fact done deliberately as a means of assessing the depth of teachers' understanding of the approach their textbook is based upon. It appears that for teachers D1, G1, T2, L3, principles of the learner-centred philosophy are not necessarily included within the framework of the communicative approach. Although these teachers place faith in the effectiveness of the communicative approach and claim to use it in their classes, they, nevertheless, believe that principles of the learner-centred approach are not tenable within the Greek secondary school context either because of learners' inability to adapt to them or because of their incompatibility with the philosophy of the Greek educational system.

Contradictions also arise when one examines the teachers' responses to questionnaire items relating to their classroom practices. Undoubtedly, the use of pair work activities with an in-built information gap or small group work activities which stimulate and require students' cooperation in order to solve a

problem or carry out a task, are a trademark of communicative language teaching. Yet, four teachers (A1, D1, G1, T2) who claim to use a communicative approach in their classes do not enjoy using these activities. What is more, when teachers were asked what student errors they would correct during a communication pair/group work activity, only 3 teachers said that their focus would be to rectify errors impeding the meaning and not the linguistic form of students' utterances; for the majority of teachers grammar and syntax errors would still be a concern. Furthermore, when asked about the timing of their corrections, 3 teachers (out of the 13 who claim to use a communicative approach) admitted interrupting and correcting students' errors the moment they were made.

Another suggestive source of contradiction stems from teachers' attitudes towards the textbooks they are using. The textbook writers have tried to achieve an integration of form focused and meaning focused or communication activities within the units of the Taskway series. Grammar is practised, learnt and (hopefully) acquired by having students engage in and carry out various tasks with an implicit grammar focus. Grammar is also explicitly practised through a series of exercises at the end of each unit. Grammar practice is, therefore, not ignored within the textbooks. However, it appears that one of the major limitations of the textbooks for the teachers is its lack of grammar practice activities. Indeed 12 teachers agreed that if the textbook could be improved it should include more grammar exercises and drills and, secondly, it should be supplemented by a workbook (providing more grammar practice). Based on the teachers' responses to questions relating to their classroom practices, it seems that teachers have not yet refined (or changed) their conception of learner error and the place and importance of grammar. For the majority of teachers, errors are regarded as signs of imperfect learning and must be rectified whenever and

wherever they occur; extensive and implicit grammar practice also seems to be regarded as a *sine qua non* of effective language learning.

There, thus, appears to be a certain amount of confusion in teachers' minds over what teaching communicatively actually means. Their reports of their teaching practices seem to contradict main features and principles of the communicative learner-centred approach. This misunderstanding of theory and between theory and practice will become more evident, and the possible causes of it clearer, when the teachers' responses to the attitude scale and the interview questions will be presented. However, before proceeding to the findings of the next section some other interesting results arising from the teachers' responses to the questionnaire items are worth mentioning.

On the whole, it appears that teachers are critical of the textbooks and question their value. All teachers believe that changes and improvements are needed in the textbooks, and, what is more, the majority of teachers (12 ts) doubt the textbooks' usefulness and suitability for Greek secondary school students. In addition, a fair number of teachers (8 ts) also believed that the teachers' guide is not helpful and in need of improvement. When asked, however, if they would have liked to have taken part in the production of the textbook, and, consequently, be involved in the production of materials and activities and in the construction of the teachers' guide, a fair number of teachers responded negatively. This is a particularly interesting result in view of the fact that many curriculum developers and researchers (see, for example, Brindley & Hood 1990, Stern & Keislar 1977) regard the teachers' involvement in the process of innovation as a key to successful implementation. It is implied by these researchers that teachers are more than willing to take part in the innovation process, provided that the educational authorities or the institutions that initiate the innovation permit them to do so. Based on the responses of almost half the

teachers in this study, this does not appear to be always the case. Indeed, taking part in the development of a curriculum may be a fulfilling and intellectually stimulating exercise and an invaluable training experience, it is not however without its costs. Apart from being an alien experience for many teachers, it requires a lot of effort, time and self-confidence. Teachers with an already heavy workload and with little confidence in their skill and abilities, would obviously think very seriously before embarking on such a venture; even more so, when incentives are frugal.

Finally, an indication of teachers' lack of confidence in their skills can also be found in the teachers' unwillingness to work with an unstructured set of activities. Had the textbook writers' initial plan been realised, Greek English language teachers would have been given folders containing a series of activities which they would supplement depending on the needs and interests of their learners. Teachers would have been given the freedom to construct and follow their own syllabi, construct and use whatever activities they thought would best suit their learners and fulfil their objectives. Such a situation would necessitate a lot of effort, planning and time on part of the teachers but would overcome the pitfalls of exclusively relying on one textbook for the provision of input and practice. Eight teachers in this study, however, seemed reluctant in taking up such a challenge; these teachers replied that they very much prefer using a self-contained textbook. Reasons for this preference may be sought in the fact that textbooks offer security and predictability; qualities essential to unskilled (and even skilled and experienced) teachers (Box & Peponi 1992). Textbooks offer a well laid-out plan on what to teach and how to teach. Teachers with little or no training or experience in producing materials and activities, teachers with little confidence in their skills (or even their knowledge of the language) may regard

the textbook as a "crutch" (ibid 1992, p.20), as an aid which will effectively assist them in carrying out their professional duties.

At this point, these findings are only inferences based on very little empirical evidence. They will, however, it is hoped, be verified and further exemplified with the presentation of the attitude scale results and the interview findings.

### **8.3.: The results of the attitude scale.**

The attitude scale was developed not only to describe but also to measure the teachers' attitudes towards the communicative approach. The 24 statements making up the scale covered a variety of themes or topics: the importance and place of grammar (statements 3, 12, 15, 17, 18, 23), quality and quantity of error correction (statements 1, 6, 14, 10), place and importance of pair/group work (statements 2, 9,13, 22), the role and contribution of the learner in the learning process (statements 4, 5, 8 ,11, 20, 24) and the role of the teacher in the classroom (statements 7, 16, 19, 21). Depending on the respondents' endorsement of each item (strongly disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree, strongly agree) a different score is rendered. The highest score a respondent can obtain for any one item is 5, while the lowest is 1. The total score is computed by adding up the scores obtained for each item. Obviously, the highest possible score and the one indicative of the most favourable attitudes towards the communicative learner-centred approach is 120 (by scoring the highest mark (5) on all 24 statements), while the lowest and the one indicating the least favourable attitudes towards the communicative learner-centred approach is 24 (see chapter 4, section 4.10.d., for a description of the scale's construction).

One of the limitations of Likert type scales is the difficulty of establishing a neutral point (and consequently a neutral score) on the scale. The neutral point is not necessarily the mid-point between the extreme scores (Oppenheim 1966).

This is because a respondent can obtain a middle-of-the-range score by either being uncertain about many items, or by holding inconsistent or strongly favourable and strongly unfavourable attitudes towards the attitude object in question. For purposes of presentation, however, the score of 72 will be taken as the neutral or middle score of this study's attitude scale. It is acknowledged that teachers obtaining scores around this middle point do not necessarily hold lukewarm attitudes towards the communicative learner-centred approach; this will be exemplified when teachers' responses to the attitude statements are analysed in-depth. Table 8.7 shows the 14 teachers' scores on the attitude scale:

<u>Teacher</u> .....	<u>Score</u>
A1 .....	79
C1 .....	85
D1 .....	89
G1 .....	56
A2 .....	88
C2 .....	91
K2 .....	84
KO2.....	73
I.2 .....	76
T2 .....	94
K3 .....	103
I.3 .....	85
P3.....	75
S3.....	96

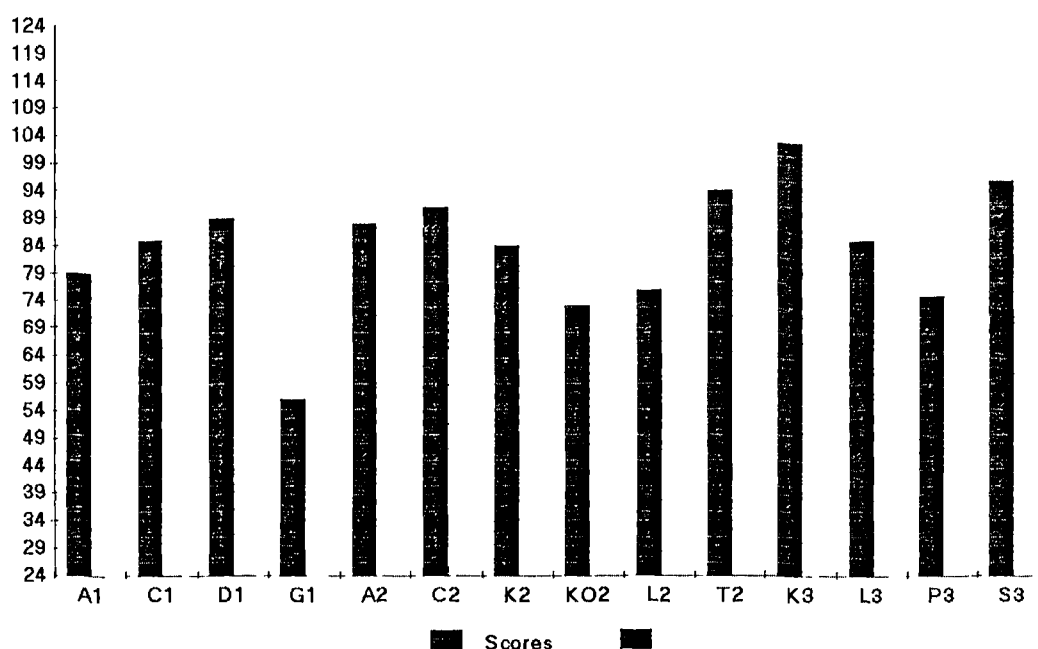
*Table 8.7.: The 14 teachers' scores on the attitude scale*

On the whole, not much variation appears among teachers regarding their attitudes towards the communicative learner-centred approach ( see Figure 8.1).

If a score of 72 is taken as the midpoint of the scale, then the majority of teachers seem to hold mildly favourable to favourable attitudes towards the communicative approach. Teachers A1, KO2, I.2 and P3 seem to hold moderately favourable attitudes, while teachers C1, D1, A2, C2, K2, T2, K3, I.3, S3 (scoring over 80) seem to be favourably disposed towards the communicative approach. Two extremes also appeared; teacher K3 scored the highest (i.e. 103) while teacher G1, on the other hand, scored the lowest (i.e. 56)



exhibiting rather negative attitudes towards the communicative learner-centred approach. The standard deviation of the 14 scores was  $SD=11.2$ , the average score being 83.



*Figure 8.1.: Teachers' scores on the attitude scale.*

A comment should also be made on the relation of the teachers' attitude scale scores with the school they work in. It has been suggested (Morrison & McIntyre 1973), that teachers' attitudes differ depending on the social position of the school and the social background of its pupils. In the sampling of teachers, efforts were made to research teachers working in a variety of schools which differed in terms of the social class background of their students (see chapter 4, section 4.12.). Thus, teachers working in "working class" schools (OA1, OA2), "middle class" schools (CA1, CA2, NA3) and "higher class" schools with pupils coming from relatively wealthy backgrounds (NA1, NA2) were investigated in

order to assess whether teachers' educational attitudes did differ. When classifying the teachers' scores according to the school they worked in (see Table 8.8) no apparent differences in their attitudes emerged.

<u>SCHOOL.....</u>	<u>TEACHER.....</u>	<u>SCORES</u>
CA2.....	A1.....	79
.....	A2.....	88
CA1.....	C1.....	85
.....	C2.....	91
.....	P3.....	75
OA1.....	D1.....	89
NA3.....	G1.....	56
.....	T2.....	94
OA2.....	K2.....	84
.....	L3.....	85
NA2.....	L2.....	76
NA1.....	KO2.....	73
.....	K3.....	103
.....	S3.....	96

*Table 8.8: Classification of teachers' attitude scale scores in relation to the school they work in.*

Teachers working in the "lower social class" schools did not differ in their attitudes towards language and language teaching from their colleagues working in "upper middle class" schools (compare schools OA1, OA2 to schools NA1 and NA2). Thus, social class background does not appear to influence or bear any relation to the teachers' educational attitudes. What was most surprising, however, was the fact that teachers working within the same school tended to differ (some considerably) in their attitudes towards the communicative learner-centred approach. With the exception of the teachers working in school OA2, who seem to hold favourable attitudes towards the communicative approach, teachers C1, C2, P3, working in school CA1, teachers A1, A2 in school CA2, and teachers KO2, K3, S3 in school NA1 seem to deviate considerably in their scores on the attitude scale. The greatest difference appears between the attitudes of teachers G1 and T2, who both teach in school NA3. G1 scored the lowest score of all 14 teachers (56), while her colleague obtained one of the highest scores (94). It thus becomes quite clear that the social position of the school

does not seem to affect teachers' educational attitudes (at least the teachers' attitudes in this study) since even teachers working within the same school exhibit differing attitudes. A similar finding has also been reported by Clark & Peterson (1986, p. 291) who say: "Even within what appear to be relatively homogenous groups of teachers...there is wide variation in the content and orientation of teachers' implicit theories".

Moreover, training experience also does not seem to affect teachers' attitudes towards the communicative approach. With the exception of K3 (who held a postgraduate degree in Linguistics and scored the highest), the only teachers (A1, L2) who had attended a one-year teacher training course, do not seem to differ greatly in their attitudes towards the communicative approach from the other "untrained" teachers in the study. Length of experience does, on the other hand, appear to have some bearing on teacher attitudes. The most experienced teachers (i.e. having over 12 years of experience) A1, P3, G1, L2, and KO2 seem to hold less favourable attitudes towards the communicative approach than their younger colleagues. Exceptions, however, do appear as regards the effect of length of experience on attitudes; teacher C2, with over 25 years of experience, T2 with 18 years of experience and S3 with 10 years of experience, scored some of the highest scores in the study.

These findings raise serious questions about the factors that have been proposed to affect the educational attitudes of teachers. Although it is impossible to draw generalisations from the expressed attitudes of 14 teachers, it may well be that other variables (e.g. teachers' personalities, teachers' values, teachers' learning experiences) have a much more significant bearing on teachers' attitudes than has been hitherto acknowledged. However, a considerable amount of research into teachers' instructional conceptions, educational attitudes and

general educational background will be needed before any of these suggestions can be verified.

### 8.3.a.: A closer look at teachers' responses to the attitude scale statements.

On the whole, the teachers' scores on the attitude scale have revealed that teachers support and are in favour of the principles of the communicative learner-centred approach. While marking the teachers' responses to the attitude statements and computing their scores, however, many inconsistencies became evident. My initial impressions were verified after correlating their scores on the favourable items with their scores on the unfavourable items (i.e. statements 2,3 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20 and 24 are favourable while the other 12 statements are unfavourable). The result was not very optimistic (as far as the reliability of the scale is concerned), especially when one considers that the attitude scale had achieved a correlation coefficient of 0.88 when tested for reliability on the initial sample of teachers (see chapter 4). The correlation of the 14 teachers' scores yielded a coefficient of  $r=0.5274$ , which is significant only at the 0.05 level .

I then undertook a careful analysis and comparison of the teachers' responses to various attitude statements to see where (and why) inconsistencies arose. I began by looking at teachers' responses to the attitude statements relating to error correction. Statements 6 and 14 are favourable (i.e. consonant with the principles of the communicative approach) while statements 1 and 10 are unfavourable. Table 8.9 shows teachers' responses to the statements. It appears that 7 teachers were consistent in responding; teachers C1, D1, A2, C2, K3, S3, L3 were, on the whole, favourable (i.e. they agreed with the favourable statements and disagreed with the unfavourable statements). A look at Table 8.9,

however, reveals that the other half of the teachers (i.e. A1, K2, KO2, G1, P3, L2, T2) were not consistent.

<i>(F) Statement 6: For students to become effective communicators in the foreign language, the teacher's feedback should be focused on the appropriateness and not the linguistic form of students' responses.</i>	
3 Ts	STRONGLY AGREED (A2, C2, P3)
11 Ts	AGREED (A1, D1, G1, C1, K2, KO2, L2, T2, K3, L3, S3)
<i>(F) Statement 14: Since errors are a normal part of learning much correction is wasteful of time.</i>	
2 Ts	STRONGLY AGREED (A1, A2)
6 Ts	AGREED (C1, D1, C2, K3, L3, S3)
4 Ts	UNCERTAIN (G1, K2, L2, T2)
2 Ts	DISAGREED (KO2, P3)
<i>(UF) Statement 1: Grammatical correctness is the most important criterion by which language performance should be judged.</i>	
1 T	STRONGLY DISAGREED (K3)
5 Ts	DISAGREED (D1, A2, K2, L3, S3)
6 Ts	UNCERTAIN (A1, C1, C2, L2, T2, P3)
1 T	AGREED (KO2)
1 T	STRONGLY AGREED (G1)
<i>(UF) Statement 10: The teacher should correct all the grammatical errors students make. If errors are ignored, this will result in imperfect learning.</i>	
2 Ts	STRONGLY DISAGREED (K3, S3)
4 Ts	DISAGREED (C1, D1, A2, L3)
2 Ts	UNCERTAIN (C2, T2)
5 Ts	AGREED (A1, G1, K2, KO2, L2)
1 T	STRONGLY AGREED (P3)

*Table 8.9: Teachers' responses to statements relating to error correction.*

To take one teacher's responses as an example, teacher L2 was uncertain whether grammatical correctness is the most important criterion to judge language performance and was also uncertain whether much correction is wasteful of time. However, she agreed that all student grammar errors should be corrected and also agreed that the teacher's feedback must be focused on the appropriateness and not the linguistic form of students' responses.

Another interesting result of the analysis of teachers' responses to statements on error correction is that not one of the teachers strongly disagreed, disagreed, or was uncertain about statement 6 (not even the teachers who were generally

unfavourable). This may be due to the special meaning of the term "appropriateness" which may not be completely understood by all the teachers, despite the fact that the teachers' guide provides a detailed definition of appropriacy. For some of the teachers an appropriate response could well be understood as any utterance that is both grammatically correct and sociolinguistically "appropriate".

After confirming the teachers' inconsistency in responding to the items on error correction, an analysis of teachers' responses to attitude statements dealing with the place and importance of grammar was undertaken. Six statements in the attitude scale concern grammar instruction: statements 3, 12, 18 express ideas on grammar compatible with the principles of the communicative approach, and were, therefore, favourable, while statements 17, 23, 15, were unfavourable. Table 8.10 shows the teachers' responses to these statements. Only 5 teachers were consistent; teachers C2, K2, T2, K3 were on the whole consistent and favourable, while teacher G1 was unfavourable. The majority of teachers (i.e. 9 teachers, A1, C1, A2, I2, I3, P3, S3, D1, KO2), however, were quite inconsistent:

Looking, for example, at teacher A1 and C1's responses one can see that both teachers responded favourably to four statements (i.e. statements 3, 12, 18, 17) but also agreed that direct instruction in the rules and terminology of grammar is essential if students are to learn to communicate effectively (statement 23). What is surprising, is that both teachers agreed to another contradicting statement (18), i.e. that language is acquired most effectively when it is used a vehicle for doing something else and not when it is studied in a direct or explicit way. In addition, both teachers agreed that the communicative approach produces fluent but inaccurate learners.

<i>(17) Statement 3: Grammar should be taught only as a means to an end and not an end in itself.</i>	
6 Ts	STRONGLY AGREED (A1, D1, A2, C2, K3, P3)
7 Ts	AGREED (C1, K2, KO2, T2, L3, S3, L2)
1 T	DISAGREED (G1)
<i>(17) Statement 12: Knowledge of the rules of a language does not guarantee ability to use the language.</i>	
7 Ts	STRONGLY AGREED (A1, D1, C2, L2, T2, K3, L3)
6 Ts	AGREED (C1, A2, K2, KO2, P3, S3)
1 T	DISAGREED (G1)
<i>(17) Statement 18: For most students language is acquired most effectively when it is used as a vehicle for doing something else and not when it is studied in a direct and explicit way.</i>	
3 Ts	STRONGLY AGREED (D1, A2, T2)
6 Ts	AGREED (A1, C1, C2, K2, L2, P3)
4 Ts	UNCERTAIN (G1, K3, L3, S3)
1 T	DISAGREED (KO2)
<i>(17) Statement 17: By mastering the rules of grammar students become fully capable of communicating with a native speaker.</i>	
5 Ts	STRONGLY DISAGREED (A1, T2, K3, L3, S3)
5 Ts	DISAGREED (C1, D1, A2, C2, K2)
2 Ts	UNCERTAIN (L2, P3)
2 Ts	AGREED (G1, KO2)
<i>(17) Statement 23: Direct instruction in the rules and terminology of grammar is essential if students are to learn to communicate effectively.</i>	
2 Ts	STRONGLY DISAGREED (C2, K3)
3 Ts	DISAGREED (D1, K2, S3)
1 T	UNCERTAIN (T2)
7 Ts	AGREED (C1, G1, A2, KO2, L2, L3, P3)
1 T	STRONGLY AGREED (A1)
<i>(17) Statement 15: The communicative approach to language teaching produces fluent but inaccurate learners.</i>	
3 Ts	DISAGREED (K2, T2, P3)
7 Ts	UNCERTAIN (G1, A2, C2, KO2, L2, K3, L3)
4 Ts	AGREED (A1, C1, D1, S3)

*Table 8.10.: Teachers' responses to statements relating to the importance of grammar.*

Probably the most interesting result of this analysis derived from the teachers' responses to statement 15. The reader is reminded that 13 teachers (apart from KO2) believed that the communicative approach was the most effective approach to successful language learning and 13 teachers (apart from K2) said that they use the communicative approach in their classes (questions 1

and 3 in questionnaire). Yet, in the attitude scale 4 teachers (A1, C1, D1, S3) agreed that the communicative approach produces fluent but inaccurate learners, 7 teachers were uncertain, while only 3 disagreed with this statement (K2, T2, P3). Teacher K2, who disagreed, was the only teacher in this study who claimed not to be using the communicative approach.

Following this, teachers' responses to attitude statements relating to the use and importance of pair/group work activities were analysed. Four statements in the attitude scale dealt with this topic; statements 2 and 9 express favourable attitudes towards the use of pair/group work activities, statements 13 and 22 express unfavourable attitudes.

<i>(F) Statement 2: Group work activities are essential in providing opportunities for cooperative relationships to emerge, and in promoting genuine interaction among students.</i>	
3 Ts	STRONGLY AGREED (A2, C2, T2)
9 Ts	AGREED (C1, D1, K2, KO2, L2, K3, L3, P3, S3)
2 Ts	UNCERTAIN (A1, G1)
<i>(F) Statement 9: Group work allows students to explore problems for themselves and thus have some measure of control over their own learning. It is therefore an invaluable means of organising classroom experiences.</i>	
1 T	STRONGLY AGREED (P3)
8 Ts	AGREED (C1, D1, A2, C2, L2, T2, K3, S3)
3 Ts	UNCERTAIN (A1, K2, KO2)
2 Ts	DISAGREED (G1, L3)
<i>(UF) Statement 13: Group work activities take too long to organise and waste a lot of valuable teaching time.</i>	
2 Ts	STRONGLY DISAGREED (A1, A2)
6 Ts	DISAGREED (C1, D1, C2, K3, L3, S3)
4 Ts	UNCERTAIN (G1, K2, L2, T2)
2 Ts	AGREED (KO2, P3)
<i>(UF) Statement 22: Group work activities have little use since it is very difficult for the teacher to monitor the students' performance and prevent them from using their mother tongue.</i>	
5 Ts	DISAGREED (A2, T2, K3, P3, S3)
3 Ts	UNCERTAIN (C1, C2, KO2)
4 Ts	AGREED (D1, K2, L2, L3)
2 Ts	STRONGLY AGREED (A1, G1)

*Table 8.11.: Teachers' responses to statements relating to the use of pair/group work activities.*



Table 8.11 shows the teachers' responses to these statements. Teachers' views on pair/group work activities were also compared with their responses to two questionnaire items, namely questions 16 and 17, which asked teachers whether these activities work well with their students and whether the teachers enjoy using them. Seven teachers were consistent in responding to the attitude statements and the questionnaire items. Teachers C1, A2, C2, K3, P3, S3, held favourable attitudes towards the use of pair/group work activities; these activities worked well with their students and they enjoyed using them. Teacher G1 was unfavourable towards these activities, her students responded negatively to them and she did not enjoy using them. The other seven teachers (A1, K2, KO2, L3, D1, T2, L2) in this study were inconsistent

Teacher L2, for instance, agreed with the two favourable statements on pair/group work activities (i.e. 2, 9), was uncertain about their wasting a lot of valuable teaching time, yet, agreed that these activities were of little use because students used their mother tongue. She enjoyed using them and so did her students.

Teacher D1 responded favourably to 3 statements on pair/group work activities (statements 2, 9, 13) yet, she also agreed that group work is of little use because the teacher is unable to monitor the students and prevent them from using their native language. She did not enjoy using pair/group work activities and nor did her students.

Finally, teachers' responses to statements concerning the role of the teacher in the language classroom were analysed. Four statements focused on this theme; statements 7 and 16 were favourable and statements 19 and 21 were unfavourable. The analysis revealed that the teachers' understanding and conception of their role in the classroom was largely incoherent. Only 6 teachers appeared to be consistent (see Table 8.12). Teachers C1, D1, T2, K3, S3 held

attitudes towards the role of the teacher consonant with the principles of the communicative approach, while teacher G1 held attitudes more compatible with traditional conceptions of the teacher's role. The remaining 8 teachers (A1, A2, C2, K2, KO2, L2, P3, L3) had rather confused notions of what their role in the classroom is, or should be.

<i>(F) Statement 7: The teacher as "authority" and "instructor" is no longer adequate to describe the teacher's role in the language classroom.</i>	
3 Ts	STRONGLY AGREED (A1, D1, K3)
6 Ts	AGREED (C1, C2, K2, KO2, L2, S3)
2 Ts	UNCERTAIN (T2, L3)
2 Ts	DISAGREED (G1, P3)
1 T	STRONGLY DISAGREED (A2)
<i>(F) Statement 16: The teacher as transmitter of knowledge is only one of the many different roles he/she must perform during the course of a lesson.</i>	
6 Ts	STRONGLY AGREED (A1, D1, A2, K3, L3, S3)
7 Ts	AGREED (C1, C2, K2, KO2, L2, T2, P3)
1 T	DISAGREED (G1)
<i>(UF) Statement 19: The role of the teacher in the language classroom is to impart knowledge through activities such as explanation, writing and example.</i>	
1 T	STRONGLY DISAGREED (C1)
5 Ts	DISAGREED (A1, D1, T2, K3, S3)
6 Ts	AGREED (C2, K2, KO2, L2, L3, P3)
2 Ts	STRONGLY AGREED (G1, A2)
<i>(UF) Statement 21: Students do their best when taught as a whole class by the teacher. Small group work may occasionally be useful to vary the routine, but it can never replace sound formal instruction by a competent teacher.</i>	
1 T	STRONGLY DISAGREED (T2)
5 Ts	DISAGREED (C1, D1, K2, K3, S3)
2 Ts	UNCERTAIN (C2, L3)
5 Ts	AGREED (A1, G1, KO2, L2, P3)
1 T	STRONGLY AGREED (A2)

*Table 8.12.: Teachers' responses to statements relating to the teacher's role in the language classroom.*

Teachers C2 and K2, for example, generally disagreed with the roles of the teacher as transmitter, authority and instructor (i.e. statements 7, 16, 21). On the other hand, they agreed that the role of the teacher in the language classroom is to impart knowledge through activities such as explanation, writing and example (statement 19).

Teacher KO2's and L2's attitudes towards the role of the teacher were probably the most contradictory. Both teachers agreed to all statements, favourable or not.

By analysing the patterns of teachers' responses to the attitude statements, the difficulty of establishing a neutral point on the scale becomes quite clear. If the teachers' scores on the attitude scale were taken at face value, the general impression would have been that the majority of teachers in this study seem to be fairly knowledgeable of, and favourably disposed towards the principles of the communicative learner-centred approach. By scrutinising and comparing the teachers' responses it appears that numerical scores in themselves can be quite misleading; most teachers' average to fairly high scores on the attitude scale are the result of contradictory endorsement of items. These teachers seem, at the same time, to hold both favourable and unfavourable sentiments towards the communicative approach.

One of the possible causes of the teachers' inconsistency in responding may be sought in the content of the attitude scale itself. It may well be that the wording and the thematic content of the attitude statements are inconsistent and that the scale as a whole is unreliable. This would have been a likely possibility had the scale not been tested for reliability on a sample of nearly 100 non-native language teachers prior to its implementation. In fact, in the final reliability check involving 37 Greek English language teachers working at private language institutes in Athens, a reliability coefficient of  $r_w=0.88$  was achieved. This is not to say that the attitude scale is perfect; indeed, as was pointed out during a departmental research seminar at the University of Warwick, some statements in the scale (e.g. statements 4, 11, 5) are more strongly worded than others. This may have a significant bearing on the teachers' pattern of responding. However, in the construction of any type of attitude scale certain rules must be followed;

for Likert type scales only those statements with a correlation over  $r > 0.25$  must be selected. All 24 statements in this study's attitude scale had achieved a correlation of over 0.30 (see chapter 4, section 4.10.d.). Indeed, there were a fair number of statements in the initial pool of items which were less strongly worded and, at least to the author's eyes, much more indicative of the attitude under question. Surprisingly enough, these statements did not achieve a high correlation in the initial item analysis, and, thus, had to be rejected. What is more, the initial item analysis carried out for Likert type scales has been regarded as one of the great strengths of Likert attitude scales; the item analysis is said to purify the scale and establish its internal consistency by rejecting those items which are not consistent and homogenous (Oppenheim 1966). Therefore, it seems more likely than not, that the cause of the teachers' contradictory attitudes lies elsewhere.

All the teachers in this study have acknowledged the inadequacy of their training. A fair number of teachers have never received any type of formal training since their university years. Although occasional seminars and conferences have been set up and attended by a willing few, these can do very little towards effectively exposing and informing teachers of the philosophy and principles of the communicative approach. There is, of course, the teachers' guide to the textbooks which offers a fairly detailed account of the principles and practical implications of the communicative learner-centred approach. Few would deny, however, that the potential of any teachers' guide for developing a coherent understanding of a language learning and teaching theory is extremely limited. Most importantly, perhaps, the teachers in this study (as was determined in the interviews) only occasionally use or refer to the teachers' guide; some have never even seen it.

It therefore seems quite likely that the teachers have been charged with implementing an approach into which they have not been properly trained, and of which they possess little understanding. Teachers have picked up bits and pieces of information from the occasional workshop, seminar or article and have incorporated these into their existing theories of language and language learning. They have come to understand that communication is important in learning a language and that students should be given opportunities to communicate and negotiate interaction in the classroom; but how this is to come about, what this entails for the teacher and the learner (and even why this should be the aim) has not been clarified by the teachers. Although the teachers claim to be using the communicative approach in their classrooms, probably because they know the textbook they are using is based on this approach, they have an unclear understanding of the importance of learner error and effective techniques for its treatment, of the role of grammar in language learning and the role and responsibilities of the teacher and the learner in the language classroom; this is reflected in their responses in the attitude scale.

Another likely and tenable cause of the teachers' contradictory attitudes towards the communicative learner-centred approach may be the fact that teachers more often than not do not conceptualise their teaching practices in terms of a particular theory of language and language learning (Nunan 1990, Wagner 1991). In Whitaker and Moses' (1988) study, the majority of the 722 elementary and secondary school teachers they surveyed were unable to name, let alone describe a particular language learning theory that informed their classroom practices. In Swaffar, Arens and Morgan's (1982) study, it became quite clear that the 19 language teachers they surveyed could not identify their methodology in terms of theoretical statements. The teachers conceptualised their practices in terms of a graded hierarchy of activities. Thus, as regards many of

the teachers in this study, it may well be that teachers' lack of training is not the primary source of their inconsistent attitudes towards the communicative approach. The teachers' attitudes towards the communicative approach may have been more successfully investigated if the statements on the scale had dealt with classroom practices and activities in the communicative approach rather than with its theoretical principles. If this is so, (much more extensive research would be needed to validate this) then, the usefulness of developing elaborate theories to describe methodological approaches comes under doubt. If theories are not taken up by practitioners to defend and inform their classroom behaviour, if they do not have pragmatic relevance to teachers but are only used as stimuli for intellectual debate between linguists, then the whole purpose for developing theories becomes rather redundant.

#### **8.4.: Teachers' expressed and "observed" attitudes towards the Communicative Learner-Centred Approach.**

One of the advantages of employing multiple research methods within a particular study is that the findings of each method can be crossvalidated, which in turn can be used for establishing and strengthening the validity of the research instruments and the theoretical assumptions the study is based upon (see Sieber 1982, for a discussion of the potential value of integrating fieldwork and survey methods). Not having been able to affirm the full validity of the attitude scale before its implementation, I felt that at least a post hoc criterion related validation (achieved by comparing the teachers' responses to the attitude scale with an external criterion, i.e. their classroom practices) would be a worthwhile venture. The results of this comparison, however, were not very encouraging, at least as far as establishing the validity of the attitude scale was concerned. A wide gap

appeared between what teachers thought and said they did, and what they actually did in the classrooms.

First, a comparison was made between teachers' responses to the attitude statements relating to error correction and their error correcting practices. I carried out a correlation between teachers' responses to statements 6, 14, 1, 10 of the attitude scale and their percentages of grammar error correction in the classroom (see chapter 5, section 5.4.) using the Spearman rank correlation. The coefficient was quite low:  $\rho=0.492$ , which is significant only at the 0.10 level. The causes of this barely significant correlation can be seen in Table 8.13. Although the error correcting behaviour of 8 teachers (A1, G1, K02, T2, K3, P3, L3, L2) was more or less consistent with their expressed attitudes towards error correction, for 6 teachers in this study, their classroom behaviour does not seem to conform to their attitudes towards error correction.

Teacher	Attitude	% of Error Correction	% of Grammar Correction
C1	Favourable	82	80
D1	Favourable	96	95
A2	Favourable	89	78
C2	Favourable	97	90
K2	Inconsistent	91	100
S3	Favourable	92	95

Attitude: attitude towards statements relating to error correction.  
 % of Error Correction: Percentage of errors corrected in the classroom.  
 % of Grammar Correction: Percentage of grammar errors corrected in the classroom.

*Table 8.13.: Inconsistency between teachers' error correcting attitudes and their classroom practices.*

C1, for instance, was consistently favourable in responding to the attitude statements on error correction (i.e. she was against overcorrection and believed that appropriacy and linguistic accuracy should be the teacher's priority when correcting). Yet, she corrected 82% of the total student errors and 80% of the students' grammatical errors.

D1 and A2 expressed similar favourable attitudes towards error correction but corrected 96% and 89% of their students' errors and 95% and 78% of their grammar errors respectively.

The largest disparity between theory and practice was evidenced with teachers C2 and S3. Teacher C2 corrected 97% of her students' errors and S3 92%. Moreover, teacher C2 corrected 90% of her students' grammar errors and S3 95%; yet these teachers objected to overcorrection and exclusive focus on students' grammar errors.

Finally, teacher K2, although inconsistent in responding (she disagreed that grammatical correctness is the most important criterion for judging students' performance, yet she agreed that the teacher should correct all student grammar errors and that the teacher's focus should be on appropriacy and not linguistic accuracy), corrected 91% of her students' errors and all their grammatical errors. Following this teachers' reports of the timing of their correction was compared with the frequency with which they interrupted students to correct (question 19 of the questionnaire asked teachers of their "interrupting" behaviour, see Table 8.5).

<u>Teacher</u>	<u>When do you interrupt?</u>	<u>% of interruption</u>
A1.....	.....It depends .....	.....21
C1.....	.....After S. has finished sentence .....	..... 0
D1.....	.....After S. has finished sentence .....	.....25
G1.....	.....After S. has finished sentence .....	.....37
A2.....	.....Moment S. makes error .....	.....33
C2.....	.....After S. has finished sentence .....	.....51
K2.....	.....Moment S. makes error .....	.....35
KO2.....	.....After S. has finished sentence .....	.....35
L2.....	.....After S. has finished sentence .....	.....37
T2.....	.....Moment S. makes error .....	.....37
K3.....	.....Activity finished, error serious .....	.....26
L3.....	.....Activity finished, error serious .....	.....31
S3.....	.....Activity finished, error serious .....	.....39
P3.....	.....Moment S. makes error .....	.....58

*Table 8.14.: Comparison of teachers' responses to question 19 and their "interrupting" behaviour in the classroom.*



Table 8.14 shows the results of this comparison. Half the teachers' (A1, C1, D1, A2, K2, T2, P3) responses to question 19 were compatible with their classroom practices. For the other half of the teachers, the situation was quite different:

Teachers G1, KO2 and L2 claimed that they usually corrected a student error after he/she has finished his/her sentence. Yet, in their classrooms these teachers interrupted to correct over 1/3 of their students' errors. Similarly, teacher C2 said that she usually waited until students have finished their sentences before correcting. However, she interrupted to correct almost half of her students' errors.

The greatest disparity comes from teachers K3, L3 and S3. These third year teachers said that they usually corrected after the activity has finished and only in the case that the student error is serious. Teacher K3 interrupted 26% of the time, L3 interrupted 31%, and S3 interrupted to correct 39% of her students' errors.

Next, a comparison was carried out between teachers' attitudes towards the importance of direct grammar instruction and their classroom practices. The comparison could only be made with teachers in whose classrooms explicit grammar instruction or insistence on the expression of grammatical rules was evidenced. Seven teachers (A1, G1, D1, K2, KO2, P3, S3) exhibited an explicit focus on the formal properties of the language by either providing direct instruction of a particular grammatical phenomenon or by insisting that students justify their particular choice of language by reciting the corresponding grammatical rule. From these 7 teachers only 3 (A1, G1, KO2) appeared to be consistent with their attitudes towards grammar instruction and their classroom practices. Teachers D1, K2, P3 and S3 were not:

Teacher D1's lesson focused exclusively on grammar revision. Apart from demanding that students use correct tenses in their sentences, she also required students to know the rules for each tense. Yet, in the attitude scale she was consistently against the "value" of direct and explicit grammar instruction.

Teacher K2 provided direct instruction in the use and form of the simple past tense in her lesson. Yet, she agreed that language cannot be learnt when studied in a direct and explicit way.

Teacher P3 generally did not believe in the effects of explicit grammar study nor that knowledge of grammar leads to ability to use the language. Yet, the first part of her lesson focused explicitly on the correct use of passive voice.

Finally, teacher S3 was consistently against explicit grammar instruction in the attitude scale; in her lesson, however, she insisted on the correct use and knowledge of the rules for the past perfect tense.

The greatest gap between the teachers' attitudes and behaviour was evidenced when their attitudes towards pair/group work activities was compared to their classroom practices. Based on the results of Table 8.15, only two teachers (G1 and K3) were thoroughly consistent.

<i>Consistent were:</i> G1, K3, D1(?), A1(?)		
<i>Inconsistent were:</i>		
<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Attitude</u>	<u>Classroom Practice</u>
C1.....	Favourable.....	1 p.w.= individual
A2.....	Favourable.....	1 p.w.+ 1 g.w.= homework
C2.....	Favourable.....	1 p.w.= T Ss
K2.....	Inconsistent.....	1 p.w. supplementary
KO2.....	Inconsistent.....	4 p.w.+ 1 g.w.= 1 p.w. impl.
L2.....	Inconsistent.....	1 p.w.= individual
T2.....	Inconsistent.....	1 p.w.+ 1 g.w.= T Ss
I.3.....	Inconsistent.....	1 p.w.= individual
.....	.....	1 p.w.= T Ss
P3.....	Favourable.....	1 p.w.= T Ss
.....	.....	1 p.w.= Homework
.....	.....	1 g.w.= Not implemented
S3.....	Favourable.....	1 p.w.= Homework
.....	.....	1 p.w.= T Ss
.....	.....	1 g.w.= Not implemented

*Table 8.15.: Teachers' attitudes towards pair/group work and their classroom practices.*

For teachers A1 and D1 no comparisons could be made because no pair/group activities appeared in the textbook lessons of these teachers. For the rest of the teachers, however, many inconsistencies emerged.

Five teachers (K2, KO2, L2, T2, I.3) were inconsistent in their responses to the attitude statements, hence, nothing definite can be said about their feelings regarding the use and value of pair/group activities (although K2 and KO2 claimed that these activities worked well with their students and they enjoyed using them). Their actual classroom practices, however, may be used as a valid indication of their attitudes. During these teachers' lessons, 8 pair work activities appeared in the textbook; only one was carried out as pair work by teacher KO2. Also, another supplementary pair work activity was carried out in K2's lesson. From the 2 group work activities that appeared in KO2's and T2's class, one was assigned as homework (KO2) while the other was carried out between the teacher and the students (T2).

From the teachers who held consistently favourable attitudes towards the use and effectiveness of pair/group work activities, teacher C1 implemented a pair

work activity as individual work, teacher A2 assigned 1 pair work and 1 group work activity as homework, while in C2's class a role play activity was carried out between herself and the students.

The gap between teachers' attitudes towards pair/group work activities and their classroom practices becomes much wider when one considers the attitudes and classroom behaviour of teachers P3 and S3. Both these third year teachers were in favour of the use and value of pair/group work activities, both enjoyed using them and the students of both teachers liked carrying them out. But, then, why were the two pair work and one group work activities that appeared in each of these teachers' lessons not carried out as such? Why were the group activities ignored and from the two pair work activities, one carried out between the teacher and the students and the other assigned as homework?

Finally, teachers' attitudes towards the role of the teacher in language classroom were compared with their classroom behaviour. The results of this comparison are largely tentative and should be interpreted cautiously mainly because of the abstractness of the concept which is to be compared. Moreover, as was exemplified in the previous section, many teachers' (8 teachers') attitudes towards the role of the teacher in the classroom were apparently inconsistent and contradictory. It is, thus, difficult to make any valid comparisons when the teachers themselves lack a concrete conceptualisation of their role in the classroom. Therefore, the comparison will be limited to those 6 teachers who responded consistently in the attitude scale and who seemed to have a clear understanding of their role in the classroom.

Teacher	Attitude	% of Talk	% of E. Questions	% of C. Questions
C1	Favourable	59	35	0
D1	Favourable	76	32	0
T2	Favourable	58	3	0
K3	Favourable	73	23	5.4
S3	Favourable	68	52	0
G1	Unfavourable	65	56	3.2

*Table 8.16.: Comparison of teachers' attitudes towards the role of the teacher in the classroom and the percentage of their talk and frequency of evaluative and communicative questions asked.*

These six teachers' expressed attitudes were compared with the amount of their talk <sup>1</sup> and the percentage of evaluative and communicative questions asked in their classroom. These three indices were thought to be suggestive of the linguistic (in terms of talk) dominance (or not) of the teacher in the classroom and the degree to which the teacher assumes the role of transmitter (% of evaluative questions) or the role of co-communicator (% of communicative questions) in the classroom. The results of this comparison are shown in Table 8.16. Three teachers (T2, K3, G1) appear to be relatively consistent. Teachers T2 and K3 were against the role of the language teacher as imparter of knowledge, instructor, and authority. Their linguistic behaviour seems compatible with this conviction. (Teacher K3's quite high percentage of talk is relatively misleading; there was a great deal of conversation between students during the pair work activities carried out, which could not be deciphered in the recording). The other consistent teacher was G1. She generally believed in the central role of the teacher and agreed that the role of the teacher in the language classroom is that of authority and transmitter of knowledge. Her linguistic behaviour verifies her beliefs.

Inconsistent, however, were teachers C1, D1, S3. Although these teachers did not see themselves as evaluators, imparters of knowledge and authorities in the classroom, their linguistic behaviour contradicted these claims. All three

teachers were the dominant conversational partner in the classroom, allowing no opportunities for students to communicate new unknown information (based on the percentage of communicative questions asked). The high frequency with which evaluative questions were asked suggests that the roles of evaluator and transmitter of knowledge were enacted, possibly unconsciously, by these teachers.

This disparity between teachers' theories and practices, between their words and deeds, although not evidenced with all the teachers in this study, raises serious concerns about the validity of the attitude scale. Although the content validity of the scale was fairly established by deriving all statements from the literature of the communicative approach, the reports of the Council of Europe and the project rationale, and by making conscious efforts to include the main features of the communicative learner-centred approach in the final version of the scale, the inconsistencies that appeared between teachers' responses to attitude statements and their classroom practices, seriously affect the concurrent validity of the attitude scale (i.e. the degree to which a scale can relate to or describe actual performance). However, validity, albeit an essential quality of any scale, is in practice extremely difficult or impossible to prove; as Moser and Kalton (1971, p.356) explain, "the difficulty of applying rigorous and objective tests of validity in attitude measurement arises from the fact that such measurement is invariably indirect. ...An attitude is an abstraction and in consequence it is generally impossible to assert validity directly".

On the other hand, the discrepancy between teachers' theories and practices is not a finding unique to this study. Although there have been authors who have claimed that teachers' theories and views of knowledge correspond to, or influence their classroom practices, their assertions have mainly been based on

intuition or on teachers' reports of their classroom behaviour (Bennet 1976, Chryshochoos 1990, Swaffar et al 1982, Wright 1987). Many researchers (Burns 1990, Jakeman 1983, Keddie 1971, Mitchell 1988a, Morris 1985, Nunan 1987a, Walz 1989) who have investigated teachers' theories and observed their actual classroom behaviour, have found a lack of correspondence between teachers' beliefs or reported practices and their actual behaviour. More specific to the application of the communicative approach, Burns (ibid), Mitchell (ibid), Nunan (ibid) and Walz (ibid) have all investigated teachers who professed a commitment and adherence to the principles of the communicative approach but in whose classrooms, communicative language use and evidence of communicative language teaching practices, were largely non-existent. The results of these investigations suggest that the disparity between teachers' attitudes and behaviour evidenced in this study may not be due to the design and structure of the attitude scale.

Why then this discrepancy? One of the essential conditions for successful implementation of curricula or educational innovations, is that teachers have a clear understanding of the innovation. This understanding should not be limited to the theoretical level; the practical implications and procedures for implementing the innovation should be spelled out and made clear to teachers right down to the level of activity implementation, student assessment and reaction to misbehaviour (Brown 1980, Brown & McIntyre 1978, also see chapter 3, section 3.2.b.). Lack of this understanding, more often than not, results in teachers' translating innovatory concepts into their own existing and well-tried classroom practices (Olson 1981). As regards this study, the teachers' minimal or non-existent training and exposure to the principles of the communicative approach has resulted in teachers' having confused perceptions of the communicative learner-centred approach (see results of attitude scale

analysis). It should, thus, not seem peculiar that many teachers "may interpret what they know about methods and feel that they are doing exactly what the new method calls for" (Wagner 1991, p.304).

Teachers' lack of awareness of the theoretical and practical implications of the curriculum may not be the only cause of the disparity between teachers' attitudes and behaviour. Indeed, many other factors, mostly beyond the teachers' control, may give rise to this inconsistency; for teachers committed to a communicative learner-centred approach, factors such as students' lack of motivation, students' resistance to their new learning role (Hutchinson & Klepac 1982, Nunan 1988, Tudor 1992), lack of time and resources, large classes, lack of departmental support and incentives, prescribed norms of appropriate behaviour within a school or an institution, fear of alienation from other teachers working within the same institution, can all have a bearing on what happens in the classroom and may force the teacher to disregard and act inconsistently with what she/he believes should happen in the classroom (Finlayson & Quirk 1979). As far as the Greek English language teachers are concerned, all these obstacles do exist and may explain the discrepancy between their responses to the attitude scale and questionnaire and their actual classroom behaviour. However, based on the questionnaire and observation findings alone only speculations can be made on the causes of the gap between words and deeds. The outcomes of the interviews with the teachers, which will be presented in the next chapter, will hopefully make clear the real causes of the disparity between teachers' beliefs and behaviour.

#### **NOTE:**

1) The amount of teacher/ learner talk in the classrooms observed was quantified in May 1992. The investigation also included an analysis of the amount and content of student contributions. Considerable limitations of space, however, did not allow its inclusion in the thesis. Teacher/ learner talk was quantified on the basis of lines in the lesson transcripts.



## CHAPTER 9

### *The Teachers' Side of the Story: The Results of the Interviews*

#### 9.1.: The interview process.

Interviews with the observed teachers were mainly included in the research design of this study because of their power and potential for probing into the teachers' feelings, attitudes, thoughts and providing more revealing information than any set of closed questions could ever hope to achieve. The interviews would provide an opportunity to get the teachers' side of the story, what they did, how they did it and why. Initially, the interviews were regarded as a complementary, secondary research tool, whose findings could be used to corroborate the classroom observation and questionnaire findings. The outcomes of the interviews, it was thought, would provide the last piece (yet by no means the key piece) of the puzzle. The general picture of the classrooms and the teachers would be quite discernible after the observation scheme and questionnaire analysis; the interviews would simply add a bit more "flavour", a bit more "flesh" to what would have already been revealed. After having analysed the data from the classroom observations and the questionnaires, after having experienced the discrepancy between the two sets of results, the value and the key role of the interviews within the study became much more evident. As will become clear, the interview findings served to fill in many of the "gaps" between teachers' theories and practices, to explain some of the inexplicable inconsistencies and to offer myself and (hopefully) the reader a much more realistic glimpse into the complexities of classroom language teaching.

The interviews, as has been mentioned in chapter 4 (section 4.8.), were of a semi-structured nature. All the questions were open and established beforehand, but the order and the exact wording of the questions varied depending on the teacher, his/her knowledge of an issue, and the degree to which he/she elaborated when responding. The questions were of various types and some overlapped in content with items in the questionnaire; some questions were purely "background" questions asking teachers of their training experiences, relations with the educational advisor, their length of experience with the textbook; others were opinion questions asking the teachers their opinions of the textbook, the communicative approach, the learner-centred philosophy, their learners' reactions to the textbook, their views on the teachers' guide. Some other questions related to teachers' behaviour i.e. their use of pair/group work activities, their preferred roles in the classroom, their reaction to error and finally, other questions touched upon the teachers' feelings towards their status and their profession (see Merriam, 1988, for a discussion of types of interview questions).

A note should be made about the language of the interviews. Being aware of the difficulty and importance of establishing rapport with respondents in any interview situation, and in order to avoid the possibility of intimidating in any way the teachers, it was decided to carry out the interviews in Greek. It was felt that however competent and proficient the teachers were in English, Greek still remained their mother tongue and would facilitate the teachers in expressing their views more fluently and with more "passion" as it were. Moreover, all the teachers knew that I was Greek; carrying out a conversation in English, even if it were about English language teaching, would have been quite artificial and awkward.

As was explained to the teachers, the purpose of the interview was to obtain more information about their opinions on various issues and mainly on the textbooks. The time of the interview was left to the teachers to decide. Any time that they felt did not affect their workload and would be free to have a small chat would have been fine. All the teachers accepted to be interviewed during one of their "free" teaching hours. Interviews took place in the school staffroom, which was most convenient for the teachers yet, not the most ideal place for an interview (during some interviews the staffroom was occupied by other teachers who made no effort to keep the noise levels down even though they knew that an interview was taking place). Before the interview, the teacher was guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality and was asked whether he/she objected to the interview being recorded; only two teachers (KO2, D1) felt uneasy about the tape recorder and, therefore, during these interviews notes were taken. All other interviews were recorded using a Sony walkman with a microphone extension, and were subsequently transcribed and translated. The length of each interview varied considerably; the duration of each interview depended on the degree to which the teacher was willing to elaborate on his/her responses. Therefore, interviews lasted from 18 -20 minutes (G1, C2, P3), to 45 minutes with the very articulate teachers (S3). On average, each interview lasted for half an hour.

Although it was initially planned to carry out the interview after the teacher had been observed and had returned the questionnaire so that our discussion could focus on some of the points raised during the observation and the brief analysis of the questionnaire, this "sequence" did not prove possible during the actual fieldwork. Since the appointments for the observation and interview were set by the teachers, I could do nothing but agree with the times they gave me; doing otherwise could have resulted in teachers' refusing to cooperate altogether. Therefore, my three step research schedule (observation - return of

questionnaire - interview) changed from teacher to teacher. Four teachers (A2, K2, T2, C1) were interviewed before they were observed and given the questionnaire, while the rest of the teachers were interviewed after the classroom observation ( but before they returned the questionnaire)

Although all the interviews touched upon the same issues, each interview had its own unique character. With many of the teachers, the interview took the form of a friendly chat between colleagues (S3, L3, A2, T2, KO2, D1, A1). The teachers did not seem nervous, at times they took over the conversation answering all at once many of my questions, and, in general, regarded the interview as a chance to, for once, have their say and express their opinions on issues of their profession that no one had given them the opportunity to express. With other teachers (K3, C2, K2, C1), the interview was kept at a professional semi-formal level. These teachers were willing to give me the information I asked for, but did not divert to say more than what the question required. Finally, with few teachers (P3, G1, L2), the interview took the form of a formal question-answer session. These teachers were brief and rather curt in their answers. In general, they elaborated only on those questions relating to issues that were concerning or bothering them. One of the factors responsible for the lack of trust and openness with P3, G1, L2, may have been the age gap between interviewer and interviewee. These three teachers were some of the most experienced in the study ( they were in their late 40's to early 50's). Indeed, it may have been perceived as very awkward and peculiar to be questioned about one's feelings, opinions and knowledge by an, until then, unknown person half one's age. This is one factor, which albeit outside one's control, may have quite a devastating effect on the rapport that should be developed between interviewer and respondent (see Powney & Watts 1987).

Finally, a note should be made on the structure of the interview. Although the interview was used as an exploratory device, conscious efforts were made not to put words into the teachers' mouths, not to lead or intimidate the teachers in any way. Prompts to questions, suggesting a possible answer, were therefore not used. If a question was not initially understood, it was rephrased adding some more information but without suggesting a possible answer. If teachers were unable to elaborate or uneasy about their response, then the question was dropped. Probes were used only in the case the teacher had provided an unclear answer. These were used as a means of encouraging the teacher to elaborate on her/his response possibly making it clearer.

The interviews were analysed after the analysis of the classroom observation and questionnaire data, i.e. February 1993. Since some of the questions were of a factual nature and were amenable to quantitative analysis, answers to these questions were not transcribed verbatim. On the other hand, teachers' responses to opinion questions were all transcribed in detail. The presentation of findings will follow the order with which questions were usually asked. The major themes or common points of teachers' responses will be presented and, whenever and wherever possible, translated quotes will be provided so as to substantiate the point under question. Efforts will be made to include quotes from all teachers; the selection of quotes was based on the degree to which a particular teacher expressed the "common view", the opinion expressed by most teachers. Points or issues on which teachers varied or disagreed, will also be presented to the extent possible.

## **9.2: The teachers' side of the story.**

### **9.2.a.: Teachers' length of experience with the textbooks and their relations with the foreign language advisor.**

One of the first questions asked during each interview regarded the teachers' length of experience with the textbooks so as to establish the teachers' degree of familiarity with the textbooks' materials and rationale. Five teachers (A2, K2, L2, T2, G1) had worked with the textbooks ever since they were introduced on national level to Greek secondary schools, while 6 teachers (K3, L3, S3, A1, C1, D1) had been using them for three years or less, mainly because they were working at the Lyceum (the higher level of Greek secondary education) when the Taskway textbooks had initially been implemented in 1987. Three teachers (P3, KO2, C2), indeed three of the most highly experienced teachers in the study, had the opportunity to use the textbooks in their experimental form (called English 1,2,3, Experimental Language Teaching Materials); these materials were used in the second phase of the project (i.e. 1985-1986, see chapter 3, section 3.3.), by 120 teachers working in different schools in various parts in Greece. The purpose of these materials was to determine the diversity of Greek EFL teachers' and pupils' needs and to evaluate how appropriate these materials were for Greek EFL learners. According to the Report of the EFL Project in Greece (Dendrinis 1985a), the teachers involved in the second phase of the project were asked to fill in evaluation forms for each unit commenting on the applicability of the materials in the classroom, students' reaction to the materials, and their (the teachers') opinions of them. Based on the teachers' responses, the necessary revisions and refinements were made, which later led to the development of the Taskway series. However, according to teachers P3, C2 and KO2, who were involved in the experimental phase, no such evaluation forms were ever received. The teachers were never given the opportunity to express

their assessments and opinions of the experimental materials. When asked about their opinions of these materials in the interview, all three strongly expressed their dislike for the activities and especially the visual presentation of the materials.

The teachers were also asked about their relations with the foreign language advisor. The foreign language advisors were firstly appointed in 1983 (substituting the existing education inspectors) in order to provide support and guidance to teachers on an individual level; their role is primarily advisory and not supervisory (Triantafillou 1986). Their responsibilities involve visiting schools and offering their expertise and advice on issues of immediate concern to teachers, carrying out "model" lessons in schools and inviting teachers from within the area to observe and discuss problems of their teaching situations and, finally, setting up workshops and seminars on a local level. The relationship of the 14 teachers with the foreign language advisor ranged considerably. The teachers from schools NA3, OA2, CA1, i.e. teachers G1, T2, K2, L3, C1, C2, P3, claimed to have poor or even non-existent relations with the advisor. As L3 pointed out:

"She hasn't set her foot in this school...in the seminar on exam preparation she didn't even come.."(L3)

In other schools (CA2, OA1, NA2, NA1) the presence of the advisor was very much felt and appreciated. The teachers from these schools stated that the advisor was always ready and willing to help them and was in frequent contact with them.

### **9.2.b.: Teachers' training experiences and their opinions of the quality and quantity of teacher training in Greece.**

Teachers were then asked about details of their teacher training experiences and their opinions of the state of teacher training in Greece. The teachers' responses to the corresponding questionnaire item (question 26) were to a great extent verified in the interviews; teachers K3, S3, A2, D1, K2, L2, A1 were attenders of seminars and conferences and tried to keep in touch with the teacher training scene in Greece. Teachers KO2, L3, P3, C1, G1, C2, T2, admitted that they had either attended very few seminars in the past or none at all since their university years. Teacher T2, however, who quite clearly stated that she had not been able to attend any teacher training opportunity, in the questionnaire responded that she had, while the exact opposite happened with teacher D1. What was interesting with the 7 teachers who admitted not having taken part in any teacher training, was their tendency to offer justifications for their behaviour. Many of these teachers stated that their poor attendance was due to factors outside their control; personal problems for L3, the dates and times conferences/seminars were set up for C2, refusal of the headmaster to allow teachers to attend seminars for KO2.

Teacher P3 justified her lack of participation in teacher training seminars in quite a different way:

"I don't think that they are necessary..I don't feel any need for them (seminars and workshops). I think I can cope with the demands of my job"(P3)

The teachers were almost unanimous in their opinions of teacher training in Greece. Most teachers found the content of seminars and conferences too theoretical and estranged from the realities of the classroom context. As D1 explained,



"I attended the conference this year but I found it too theoretical, for instance, using poetry in the classroom... good ideas but when you go to the classroom everything changes"(D1)

Teacher K3 also expressed a complaint regarding the structure of conferences, to which many teachers agreed. As he said:

"I don't find them all helpful because there is a tendency to set up seminars which are something between a seminar and a conference. In other words, together with you there are another 700 teachers attending. Then it ceases to be a seminar. Since it is not possible to organise seminars frequently on a local level, they take place once or twice a year, and it thus becomes a kind of socialising"(K3)

Teachers L2, A1 were also asked of their opinions on the usefulness of the one-year teacher training course they had attended. Both found it extremely informative and helpful for their teaching, but L2 made a comment that points to the unfairness of the system for the selection of teachers to be trained (see chapter 3, section 3.4., for the system of selection):

"...If I could express my opinion of SELME I would say that young teachers should be selected. ...they have trained me just before my retirement...why should they train me? What do they offer to education? It would be better to train teachers when they are young because there (at SELME) they are taught psychology and things like that which are missing from the University, things that are not worth being taught just before you retire"(L2)

### **9.2.c.: Teachers' opinions of the Taskway textbooks.**

The next series of questions focused on the textbooks and their philosophy. The teachers were quite varied regarding their reaction towards the textbooks; four teachers were favourably disposed towards the textbooks as a whole (A2, C2, KO2, C1), 5 teachers were more or less neutral, i.e. they didn't mind using them although they would have preferred using a textbook of their own choice (K3, L3, K2, L2, A1), while 5 teachers found very little worth in the textbooks

(P3, S3, T2, G1, D1). Whatever their attitudes however, all teachers agreed that the textbooks had disadvantages and needed improvement in many areas. The teachers' most popular complaint was the textbooks' lack of grammar (in terms of instruction and activity practice), lack of a workbook, and reading passages. In general, the teachers found the textbooks quite poor in terms of input and structured practice (L3, P3, S3, C2, K2, L2, T2, C1, G1, D1, KO2). Teacher G1, who was unfavourably disposed towards the textbooks, concisely expressed the complaints of most teachers:

"...the books have a lot of gaps. They leave us teachers barefoot among thorns...it needs a grammar book, supplementary, it can't just leave the students bare without presenting a grammatical phenomenon. Also it needs more texts, so that there could be some discussion, some dialogue in the classroom"(G1)

Another problem of the textbooks that 4 teachers (D1, L3, S3, A2) mentioned was their lack of cohesion. When one compared the three textbooks, a gap (in terms of communicative and cognitive difficulty) appeared between the second and third year textbook:

"If we compare the books on their own, I don't think that the students proceed smoothly into the third year textbook...Suddenly the students have to know things which the previous book hasn't taught them, or has simply mentioned without this meaning that the students have acquired these...The students have reached the point, although these books are based on communicative approaches, to be unable to make a correct question, we write on the board the sequence of the words..."wh", "auxiliary", "main verb", or to be unable to discern which answer is needed for "what do you do?", "what are you doing?" and "how are you?", which are supposedly taught in the first unit"(S3)

Teachers A1 and T2 also found the textbooks a bit too "communicative" and loosely structured. The activity instructions, they thought, were too complicated to follow. Teacher D1, who had taught students in rural parts of Greece, found that some of the textbook topics (e.g. pollution) were not appropriate for all

Greek students, and that they could not cope with mixed-ability classes (also mentioned by I.3), with the result that,

"the advanced students are bored while some students don't understand anything"(D1)

Apart from the insufficiencies that the teachers thought the textbooks had in terms of materials and activities, I was frequently given the impression that what some teachers (K2, A1, G1, KO2, D1, S3) disliked most from the textbooks was the (overwhelming) demands they made on them. Although this was not always explicitly expressed, I felt that the teachers disliked having to work on their own and spend time creating and designing supplementary activities; they would have very much preferred using self-contained textbooks with all the "trimmings". Quotes from some of the teachers, and their particular choice of words, will probably make this point clear:

"The teacher is forced, if he is willing, to find examples from some old-fashioned grammar book ..he has to bring 20 examples from his home, photocopy them or write them on the board, which is a waste of time."(T2)

"We struggle to find something supplementary, something else to attract the students' attention and fill in their gaps"(G1)

"I am forced to give grammar exercises but because there isn't a photocopier it takes me a quarter of an hour to give them"(D1)

#### **9.2.d.: Teachers' opinions and understanding of the Communicative Approach.**

Following the teachers' opinions of the textbook in terms of its content, teachers were asked of their views on the textbook methodology and the extent to which they use it in the classroom. The reader is reminded that in the

questionnaire 13 teachers (apart from KO2) believed in the effectiveness of the communicative approach, all but two teachers (D1, I.3) believed in the applicability of the communicative approach in Greek secondary schools, and, finally, all teachers but one (K2) claimed that they used the communicative approach in their classrooms. In the interviews, however, possibly because of the opportunity the teachers had to elaborate and justify their answers, they gave almost totally different responses. Only 3 teachers, K3, C2, L2, clearly stated that they used the communicative approach in their classes. However, when responding, teacher C2, seemed not to be speaking only for herself; she used a plural verb in her answer, probably because she thought that the communicative approach is the only approach that should and can be used under the circumstances:

"I use it...of course, we can't say that we always use it in a perfect way, but this is the method we use"(C2)

On the other hand, G1 felt that she was forced to use a communicative approach (probably because the curriculum and textbooks are based upon it) despite her best judgement:

"I use it because I have to, but I don't want to. I don't believe that it should be completely abolished but it should be married to something else..but not only that (the communicative approach) because I see that we are only that. But only that is not enough, it has degraded the lesson"(G1)

A number of other teachers (L3, P3, S3, A2) admitted to using an eclectic approach, a combination of various methods and techniques and adopting them to the needs and gaps of the learners:

"I apply it without meaning that I apply it...I use something from all known methods...I choose elements from all methods and I try to adopt them to the level of the children, the age and the cognitive level, and, of course, depending on the time and the resources we have here..."(A2)

Teacher C1 did not know what the communicative approach meant although in the questionnaire she claimed to be using it in her everyday classroom practices:

"To tell you the truth I am not prepared to tell you this moment what the communicative approach or other approaches entail..I know that I use my own approach depending on the circumstances and the level of the class"(C1)

With four other teachers (T2, A1, D1, KO2) this question caused uneasiness and they tried to elude the question. In the end, their response did not give a clear indication of whether they used a communicative approach or not. I did not pursue in eliciting a definite response from these teachers, in view that this may have caused greater uneasiness and awkwardness and may have unnecessarily pressured the teachers in responding to a question they were not sure about. For instance, when asked whether she used a communicative approach in her classroom, D1 replied that she disagreed with communicative approaches for placing too much emphasis on speech and ignoring writing, while T2 and KO2 vaguely responded that the application of a communicative approach depended on how well students and teachers responded to it.

Finally, the only teacher who was consistent in responding to the questionnaire and the interview was K2:

"I agree (with the communicative approach) but I can't say that I use it....completely(laughs). In other words, the book may be based on this method and have activities etc. but I also use old-fashioned grammar activities or sometimes translation from Greek to English..."(K2)

Eliciting teachers' understanding of the communicative approach by asking which features of this approach they find most applicable in the classroom, was not a simple task. Some teachers (G1, K02, P3) eluded the question and jumped to other topics, other teachers (C2, K3,A1) provided very short, curt responses, while with other teachers it was very difficult to ask this question either because they had explicitly or implicitly stated very little knowledge of the topic, or because of their tendency to take over the conversation and divert. Despite these difficulties, it was possible (although not always) to discern from teachers' responses (if not to this question, at least from other questions) the depth of their understanding of the communicative approach. As was evidenced in the teachers' responses to the attitude scale, most teachers had a narrow understanding of the principles of the communicative approach. In the interviews, it became apparent that for some teachers (C2, K2, L2, A1, D1) the communicative approach was limited to the development of the speaking skill. What was interesting with these teachers' responses, is that not once was the word "communication", or "interaction" mentioned. As C2 said,

The communicative approach entails "...to be able to make the children converse, understand and answer...What else?"(C2)

For teacher C2, however, conversation meant, as was established at another point in the interview, the teacher asking questions and the students being able to respond:

"...as you saw yesterday, I carry out the lesson with discussion, in other words with questions and answers etc. and I try to work out all the points"(C2)

L2 seemed quite confident when explaining the principles of the communicative approach:

"To be able to put the student in the situation in which he can take part in a conversation, in other words, to stimulate the student so that the things he wants to say or thinks, correspond to his role. That's what I think"(T.2)

For teachers S3 and T2, the feeling was that the communicative approach can only be used with advanced learners. Young, inexperienced, beginning students are not capable of responding to the demands of a communicative approach. As T2 put it:

"It requires knowledge of English, which is OK for children who have done some English outside (private institutes), but if the child has done only three years ...I doubt if even the best teacher can make him/her (the child) follow the book appropriately"(T2)

For other teachers (KO2, D1, L3, G1) the communicative approach was perceived more in terms of what it is not. G1 and KO2 did not agree with the communicative approach because it abolished grammar; teacher L3 did not completely agree with the communicative approach because it encouraged students not to take the lesson seriously and it gave rise to chaos in the classroom, while for D1, the communicative approach was not compatible with her views of language learning because it allowed students to get away with their errors; students ended up speaking not a language but a "monstrosity", as D1 claimed.

The quotes that relate to teachers' views and perceptions of the communicative approach, reveal quite clearly that teachers' understanding of the communicative approach is far from complete. The teachers, on the whole, have misunderstood many of the principles of communicative language teaching; for them teaching communicatively means focusing mainly on the development of oral skills (which does not necessarily mean oral communication), excluding explicit grammar instruction and ignoring all errors. There also seems to be an

impression that the communicative approach can be implemented only with advanced, mature learners; learners who are not knowledgeable and mature enough, cannot respond to this approach. Their particular conceptualisation of the communicative approach, justifies to a great extent the inconsistencies that arose between the teachers' responses to the various statements in the attitude scale.

#### **9.2.e.: The Learner-Centred Approach and the feasibility of its application in the Greek secondary school context and teachers' perception of their role in the classroom.**

After deliberating on the pros and cons of the communicative approach, the interview proceeded to the discussion of the learner-centred approach and the feasibility of its application in the Greek secondary school classroom. To item 5 in the questionnaire, 10 teachers responded that the application of a learner-centred approach is feasible within the Greek educational context; only 4 teachers (D1, G1, T2, L3) disagreed. The corresponding interview question, however, elicited quite different responses. Only teacher C2 believed in the learner-centred approach, and implied that she used it in her classrooms. On the other hand, teacher K2 was the only teacher who stated that she was "teacher-centred":

"I think I'm teacher-centred...I think it (learner-centred approach) can be used but both teachers and learners need training. Of course, the teachers need it more so that they can train their learners"(K2)

Three teachers (G1, A1, P3) claimed to be learner-centred only to a certain "controlled" extent, within certain limits. As G1 stated:

"I don't use it alone but together with something else. We now have only this but this should be used in relation to something else"(G1)



For 7 teachers (K3, L3, A2, T2, L2, KO2, S3 ), the application of a learner-centred approach was considered extremely difficult, while for teacher D1 it was considered impossible. The causes of this difficulty were due to the nature of the Greek educational system(K3), students' and teachers' lack of training (K3, S3, KO2, A2, T2, L2, D1), lack of resources and mixed ability classrooms(A2), and large classes (T2). Teacher K3, in particular, believed that the difficulty lies in getting students to cooperate:

"The issue is to get the children as they are today to cooperate. They are not used to working non-competitively. This is of course a criticism against the educational system as a whole, the non-competitive work in class, not seeing the other person in class as a rival whom you must surpass but to be able to learn by cooperating with him"(K3)

For L3, D1, T2, the problem lies mostly with the students, their immaturity and lack of discipline. As L3 said:

"I believe it is difficult to apply because the children have learned that the centre is not the student but the teacher..they expect everything from the teacher"(L3)

In sum, thus, for most teachers the implementation of a learner-centred approach depends on factors beyond their control; although some teachers (A2, L2, A1, C2) have made efforts to surrender their central role in the classroom, they nevertheless believe that the students' age and lack of training, teachers' lack of training, the nature of the Greek educational system and large mixed-ability classrooms, hinder and obstruct their efforts. Thus, despite their good will, the teachers still remain the central focus, the pivot of the classroom scene. This fact was further verified when teachers were asked about their roles in the classroom and the nature of their relationship with the students. It should be noted, that although the question on the applicability of the learner-centred approach posed no problems for the teachers in responding, the question

relating to their roles gave rise to many perplexed glances. I strongly felt when asking this question that some teachers had never really been given the opportunity to think about their teaching in terms of role. After rephrasing the question, many interesting findings arose regarding the way teachers conceptualise their function in the classroom.

Many teachers (KO2, L3, K3, S3, A1) viewed their role in the classroom, primarily and ultimately, as the language expert who was equipped with the ability, knowledge and skills to transmit information about the language to learners. Even teacher K3, who had performed a variety of roles during his lesson and mainly that of motivator and guide, saw himself primarily as a knower of the language:

"I see myself as a person who is an excellent speaker of the foreign language and, having some mediocre theoretical knowledge, I am not being modest, some knowledge of methodology, tries to apply it in order for people to learn the foreign language. I always have the tendency to listen to the children, I make efforts to create a pleasant atmosphere in class, this is essential..I don't want anyone to fear me or be shy, and as a consequence I try, if anything else, not to be unpleasant".(K3)

Teacher A2 was aware that the teachers' role in the classroom should be that of guide and observer, but admitted that the age and immaturity of the learners make the enactment of these roles largely impossible. The teacher needs to be "teacher-centred" with such learners.

Teacher K2 and T2 clearly stated that it was impossible to relinquish their control in the classroom. According to T2, other teachers who say that they are learner-centred "...either are not telling the truth or I don't know...I simply know that I don't belong to this class of people"

Teacher G1 when asked whether her role and relationship with her students has changed as a result of this new approach, was quite surprised. She believed that nothing, in essence, has changed in terms of classroom role relationships; the teacher is still there to impart information and the students are still expected to accept and digest it. As she said:

"The teacher was always the guide, he was never omniscient. the teacher is the same now as he was in the past...those 3 or 5 things that he knows he has to transmit to the students."(G1)

There were three teachers (C2, L2, C1) who conceptualised their role in more different, varied and humane terms. For C2, the role of the teacher should be that of friend and cooperator, while teacher L2 saw her role in the classroom primarily as stimulator and motivator. The only teacher in the study who saw her role not so much dependent on the students but rather on the objective of the task and the stage of the lesson, was teacher C1:

"..I say certain things to them but I also give them some freedom, not always, not always, it depends on the lesson, on what I'm saying . If I'm doing grammar, for instance, I leave them little space, I'm more of a classic teacher, I say what I have to say...now, in matters of communication I give them greater freedom to express themselves"(C1)

With the exception of L2, C2, C1, the majority of teachers in this study saw their role in the classroom in narrow, instrumental terms. Their main responsibility and duty is to transmit information; that is what they have been educated and trained in. They do not see their relationship with their students as complex and diverse; students are in the classroom to learn, teachers are there to teach. This very restricted perception of their role in the classroom, probably and to a certain extent, explains the contradictions that arose between the teachers' responses to attitude statements concerning role, and justifies their tendency to adopt more traditional roles in the classroom.

### 9.2.f.: Teachers' use of pair/group work activities and their correction of learner error.

After dealing with questions of a more or less theoretical nature, the interview continued with questions relating to the teachers' classroom practices, i.e. the use of pair/group work and the correction of errors. Although in the questionnaire most teachers appeared to favour group/pair work, their classroom practices revealed quite the opposite. The teachers' responses in the interview seem to be more consistent with their classroom behaviour, for only two teachers K3 and P3 claimed to use pair/group work on a regular basis. For the rest of the teachers, pair/group work activities figured only occasionally, sometimes rarely, in their lesson plans. The teachers tended to justify their avoidance of pair/group work on the basis of inadequate resources and time, and the tendency of these activities to create chaos and noise in the classroom. For teachers KO2, D1, L3, S3, A2, L2, A1, G1, the main difficulty in the execution of these activities were the students: their age, their numbers, their level of English, and their unfamiliarity with this line of work. For G1 and S3 the problem with pair/group work activities was the difficulty of maintaining control over the students' language and behaviour:

"We use them ..when classes are small, they are productive. When classes are big then it becomes difficult. You can't control what happens. In small classes you can control group work, you go around, you listen, you can control everyone. If you have 10 groups, who can you control? What can you do?"(S3)

C2's response, apart from revealing the difficulties of carrying out group work activities, expresses one of the main arguments of this thesis:

"I use them, but I don't use them too much because we can't say that they're a waste of time, they're not, but we have pressures of time, we have mixed ability classes.. Many times we want to do things that we can't, right? What we believe we should do is one thing, what we do is another..."(C2)

As far as error correcting is concerned, for many teachers (C1, L2, C2, S3, K3, L3) errors impeding communication and the message the student wants to express, are considered most serious and worth correcting. As teacher S3, explained:

"if he (the student) gets his message across, if I understand what he said, from then on I don't consider it an error...If I understand what he wants to say, if, for instance, he says, "look an airplane is falling" and I look in the right direction and I see an airplane falling, from then on I don't care what errors he made"

As she continued explaining her error correction tactics, it became evident that when students speak their output is limited to the expression of grammar rules (a feature also revealed by the classroom observation) and it is in these cases that communication errors are S3's focus:

"...and many times I allow the students to talk, talk, talk without interrupting them to see where they are getting at. If, at the end, I understand when he says a grammar rule, that he has got it in his head, I don't correct"(S3)

For L2 and C2 as well, communication errors are considered most important but this does not prevent them from correcting all errors. As L2 explained:

"...if he can get his message across even with errors, OK...in other words, big errors. I don't care if he says "he write" and he hasn't put the "s". I will correct it of course immediately but it's not so important to me, but if he can't get his message across, then yes"(L2)

For A1, on the other hand, inexcusable are errors on language points that have been presented, practised and revised. While for teachers KO2, D1, G1 most serious errors are those impeding on the formal properties of the language. According to KO2 and D1, grammar and syntax errors render an utterance incomprehensible. Their preoccupation with accuracy was also verified in their classrooms: teachers KO2 corrected all her students' grammar errors, D1 95% of

their grammar errors, and G1 92%. Finally, when teacher K2 was asked of her error correction foci, she made it clear to me that her error correcting practices were quite distinct from her error correcting philosophy; she knew that she should correct errors impeding on the meaning of students' utterances but nevertheless admitted to correcting on the spot all errors students made. The sincerity of her response was verified in the analysis of her lesson transcript. From the 57 errors that were committed in her classroom, 52 errors were corrected.

#### **9.2.g.: Students' reception of, and attitudes towards the textbooks.**

If the teachers, on the whole, were neutrally or negatively predisposed towards the textbooks, their students shared the same feelings. The next question in the interview concerned the students' reception and reaction to the textbook; only two teachers (A2, C1) said that their students enjoyed using the textbook and its various activities. Two teachers (P3, C2) could not say what their students' reaction was because they rarely used the textbooks on their own. As C2 put it:

"I always try to make the lesson more interesting so that they can't react"(C2)

However, for the other 10 teachers in this study (KO2, K3, D1, L3, S3, K2, I.2, T2, A1, G1), the situation was quite different; their students are dissatisfied with, and have reacted negatively towards the textbooks. According to many teachers (K3, G1, T2, A2, KO2, S3) the reason for students' rejection of the book is that they are used to other more interesting and varied EFL textbooks published abroad and used in private institutes. As K3 concisely explained:

"There is the factor of comparison with books that they use at their institutes and they (students) appreciate them more because they are more impressive, they usually cost more and for the majority of

students and schools, they believe that they learn better with those books and in school they just pass their time."(K3)

Teacher L3's students are not satisfied with the book because they find it complicated in relation to books that they use at the institutes. While for K2's students, who have not gone to private language institutes, these books are seen as tremendously difficult. Finally, G1 believes that it is the structure, content and presentation of these books that force the students to attend private language institutes:

"They are not satisfied and I've asked them repeatedly. I'm talking about children who are concerned and those who are weak. Parents come and tell me "They don't offer anything, there is no help from the school" so they're forced to enrol their children at private institutes or pay for private lessons so that students fill in their gaps"(G1)

#### **9.2.h.: Teachers' opinions of the teachers' guides to the Taskway series.**

If the textbooks have not gone down well with the teachers (and students) neither have the teachers' guides. The next questions in the interview related to the textbooks' companion, the teachers' guides, whether teachers use them, whether they find them helpful and if not, what would they have liked the teachers' guide to contain. It should be noted that the structure and information contained in the three teachers' manuals varies considerably; by far, the most informative (and indeed the thickest, i.e. 293 pp.) is the teachers' guide to Taskway English 1. The first 25 pages of the guide are dedicated to an account of the project, the project rationale and principles of the communicative approach and general methodological guidelines on how to carry out lessons. There is also a 6 page glossary with definitions of the most important terms used in communicative language teaching. This theoretical component is followed by a task breakdown from unit to unit. Each task is described in terms of objectives,

teacher implementation and potential student outcomes. The answers to some tasks are also given. The manual for the second year textbook is more compact. To begin with, it is less than half the first manual's length. Although the theoretical input is the same as in the first one (i.e. first 25 pages), the tasks are described in much less detail. Each task is accompanied by a list of objectives and a few comments on what the students are expected to do; answers to a few activities are also provided. Coming to the third year teachers' guide, one should be prepared for a shock. This guide is 10 pages long, contains no theoretical information on the principles of the communicative approach and the textbook rationale, but simply some very laconic guidelines on the implementation of a few tasks. The reason for this considerable variation between the three teachers' guides must lie in the textbook writers' assumption that teachers will start using the first year textbook and teachers' guide and gradually work their way through to the third year textbook, by which time they will have become accustomed to the principles of communicative language teaching and the materials implementation and will, therefore, have no need for a teachers' guide. This, however, was not the case with the teachers in this study.

As far as the use of the teachers' guide is concerned, 5 teachers (S3, KO2, A2, L2, S3) clearly stated that they did not use the teachers' guide either because they felt no need for it since they were experienced or because they did not find it useful. The teachers from school CA1 (P3, C2, C1) could not use the teachers' guides because they were stolen days after they had arrived at school. P3 said that she had never seen them, C2 had in the past glanced at the first year teachers' guide, while C1 had only seen the third year teachers' guide which she found uninformative and brief. Only L3 stated that she used the teachers' guides, which she found...



"...helpful especially for someone like me who hasn't taught these books before.They offer many things"

However, she continued with a comment that probably justifies why many teachers in this study do not use the guides:

"But I believe that after I've read these books and have taught them for one or two years, they won't be able to offer me much"(I.3)

The other teachers in this study did not clearly state whether they used or referred to the teachers' manuals, but rather offered their opinion of them (which is, nevertheless, quite revealing of whether they use them or not). The reader is reminded that in the questionnaire only 5 teachers (A1, KO2, K3, I.3, S3) found the teachers' guides helpful and informative. In the interview only 3 of these teachers (A1, L3, K3) were consistent with their responses to item 22 of the questionnaire. I.2 and G1 who found the teachers' guide inadequate in the questionnaire, claimed that they were helpful during the interview. Although I.2 did not use the guide because she has been teaching for years, she nevertheless, finds them helpful "when you get stuck". Teacher G1 also found the guides relatively helpful, but on the other hand she believed that they were not necessary for the successful implementation of the textbook.

Six teachers (D1, KO2, A2, K2, T2, S3) who had seen and read the teachers' guides found them extremely unhelpful, and much too theoretical. According to S3:

"It's not helpful. The first one is unnecessarily detailed, it has so much theory that it offers no practical help. The third one doesn't say anything, it's virtually non-existent...now, all that analysis in the first and second one I don't think helps..especially for new teachers, all this linguistic theory which concerns

linguists and not practising teachers, does not help at all. If they wrote this for linguists to understand their objectives and what they've done, then it's fine, but not for teachers"(S3)

When these teachers were asked what they would have liked the teachers' guide to contain, almost all teachers replied that they wanted step-to-step guidelines on how to carry out tasks and supplementary activities. Probably influenced by their experience with the teachers' guides of various EFL textbooks, the teachers regarded these as examples of teacher manuals; they wanted a teachers' guide to offer them guidance on what to say the moment they come into the classroom, how to present grammar, what examples to use, how to introduce activities, how to carry them out and how to evaluate the students. In sum thus, for these teachers the teachers' guide should constitute the backbone of their lessons. Many teachers offered examples of other guides they used in the past in order to explain what for them was the perfect teachers' guide. For instance, C1 explained:

"I want it to be understandable, pleasant and easy to use. There are others from foreign publishing companies, for instance, "Look, Listen and Learn" which is for young learners who are beginners and its teachers' guide is an example for me, it's brilliant, it gives you nice things, extra activities for everything, you never feel that there is a gap in the materials"(C1)

Finally, for teacher T2, a teachers' guide however complete and informative can do nothing to help the "good" teacher:

"I believe that everyone should teach how he thinks it should be taught without being influenced by guides or introductions. That's what I believe"(T2)

### 9.2.i.: Problems of ELT in the Greek secondary school context and teachers' opinions of the innovation as a whole.

After having discussed with the teachers their opinions of the textbook, its philosophy, and the teachers' guide, the interview came to a close with two questions: what are the main problems teachers face in their everyday teaching and whether they felt that the innovation as a whole was necessary. To the first question, most of the problems mentioned by the 14 teachers, were problems faced by almost all English language teachers around the world. Many teachers (D1, KO2, K3, P3, A2, C2, L2, A1, K2, C1, G1) felt that 3 hours of English language instruction per week were ridiculously inadequate. As L2 logically pointed out:

"The hours are not enough...three hours. We take so many years to learn Greek at school and for a foreign language can three hours a week be enough?"(L2)

Another pressing problem felt by all but one (P3) teachers was the lack of, or as some teachers said "non-existent", in-service and pre-service teacher training. K3 expressed the view of many teachers as regards in-service training:

"Training is almost non-existent. What we call in-service training does not exist apart from SEI/ME which concerns 30 a year and when we are 5000 teachers working for public education it's a shame to say that 30 teachers are trained per year, and there are many colleagues that are forced to go to the British (Council) to get trained" (K3)

Teacher L3 pointed to the problems faced by the newly appointed teachers:

"Training is not enough. It's minimal to non-existent. Until now whoever gets appointed or whoever works as a substitute has no training at all. When I came to this school they didn't tell me anything. In Greece the way training is carried out is redundant and unnecessary. I've been teaching English for 7 months at the Lyceum and the Gymnasium and I've also taught anthropology and history that bear no

relation to each other and nobody has told me anything ...nothing about how I should do something, how I should mark. I don't know what to do"(L3)

Another well-cited (A2, D1, K3, P3, C1, G1) problem was the large numbers of students, mixed ability classes and the lack of resources. The use of only one textbook was also considered a problem by many teachers (T2, K2, G1, K3). Teachers T2 and K2 felt the need for supplementary books (i.e. workbook and grammar book) while G1 and K3 felt that it was essential that the teacher have the right to choose his/her own textbook. As G1 claimed:

"If we had the ability to choose as many books as we wanted, I stress this, as many books as we wanted, I believe many children would stop going to institutes"(G1)

The difficulties mentioned by these teachers echo many teachers' cries from around the globe. Lack of training, lack of resources, too few hours of instruction, too many students, are not problems unique to ELT in Greece; what is probably unique is a problem mentioned by the majority of teachers (K3, L3, P3, S3, C2, A1, G1, D1, KO2): the inhibiting effect of private language institutes. Apart from their being responsible for the vast diversity of levels in each class, they are also responsible for creating the impression, to students<sup>1</sup>, parents and teachers alike, that English language teaching and Greek secondary education are incompatible concepts. By being better equipped, more up to date, by employing native speakers of English and having the students pay dearly for tuition, the institutes or "frontistiria" are regarded as the only effective means to learn English. The school, as K3 put it, is the "tail of the frontistirion"; the effects of this are strongly felt by the secondary school English language teachers, who feel that they are playing "second fiddle" to the institutes, filling in students' gaps rather than providing substantive instruction in English. A1 concisely explains the effects and dimensions of this problem:

There is "...attitude towards the lesson, attitude towards teaching and learning English in public schools: Noone learns English in the public school. You struggle, especially during the first year, to convince them (students) but there is always a frontistirion that proves you false, a frontistirion that works better and more than you do, and the child progresses more. And of course he'll progress. Is it possible to compare 6 hours with three 45 minute sessions?"(A1)

Later on in the interview, A1 provided an anecdote from one of her first year classes, which points quite realistically to the problems teachers face teaching secondary school students attending private institutes:

"After having taught numbers two lessons ago to a first year class, after spending half an hour drilling and practising numbers from 1 to 30, then we did tens, hundreds, thousands, I wrote everything on the board, the students wrote everything in their notebooks, we made sentences, questions and answers, towards the end of the lesson someone who goes to a frontistirion turns around and tells me, "Miss, I haven't done these things at the frontistirion, how will I learn them?" After having done all this, I just felt like strangling him"(A1)

The final question in the interview touched upon one of the key issues for successful implementation of innovation. i.e. the degree to which the teachers believed that the innovation as a whole, and the textbooks were needed. Seven teachers (K02, A2, C2, L2, T2, A1, C1) stated that these textbooks were indeed needed; among the reasons offered were that for the first time the teaching of English in the secondary sector is unified; all Greek students are now offered the same input. Teacher A1 also stated that one of the benefits of the textbooks was that students no longer had to pay for their foreign language textbooks.

Teacher K2 was neutral; although she did not condemn the textbooks, she would have preferred to choose her own teaching materials.

Apart from teacher I.3, who could not express a definitive opinion because she was newly appointed and did not have anything to compare them with, the rest of the teachers in the study (D1, K3, P3, S3, G1) were strongly against the production of the textbooks. According to K3:

"If the reason (for production) was to save money, I don't even think we achieved that. There was much ado about nothing. A sum of 3000 drachmas is ridiculous"(K3)

While teacher P3 believed that: "the books were made without consulting us".

Finally, teachers S3 and D1 believed that the whole project was worthless, because *they did not think the textbook authors had the expertise for materials construction*. As D1 said:

"I don't understand. What did this committee who wrote the book think? that it was better than foreigners? that it was more acquainted with linguistics than foreigners? Since there are special EFL books why this book was produced I don't know. Maybe the people who wrote it know. I would prefer to choose a foreign book depending on the students instead of this"(D1)

### 9.3.: Putting the picture together.

Interviews have been largely regarded as invalid, unreliable and secondary research tools, highly prone to various sources of bias and error. As a result, researchers have tended to use interviews as a source of data for research instrument preparation and construction rather than as a primary source of data collection (see Cohen & Manion 1989, Powney & Watts 1987, for critiques of the interview as a research method). However, in the context of this study, had it not been for the interviews with the observed teachers, many of the disparities between the questionnaire results and observation findings would have remained unexplained, and the possible causes of the teachers' inconsistency in responding to the attitude scale and questionnaire, would have remained issues

of speculation and inference. In this respect, thus (and in many others), the contribution of the interview data in answering many of this study's questions proved invaluable.

Firstly, the nature and content of teachers' responses to interview questions revealed some of the limitations of the structure of the questionnaire items. A few closed or pre-coded items in the questionnaire forced the teachers to respond to one or the other given alternative, without their necessarily agreeing to any of them, and depriving them, thus, of the ability to qualify their response. This is an inevitable risk one has to take in deciding to use closed or fixed-alternative questions. This limitation was evidenced with teachers' responses to question 3 regarding the use of the communicative approach. In the questionnaire, all but one teachers claimed to use the communicative approach in their classes. In the interview, however, the majority of teachers responded that they usually followed an eclectic approach, incorporating features of various methods (including the communicative approach) and depending on the needs and level of their students.

Another advantage of the interviews was their ability to provide more extensive and in-depth information even on simple factual issues. For instance, to item 26 in the questionnaire (Have you taken part in any kind of teacher training?), a teacher who had taken part in a workshop and a teacher who had attended an extensive in-service teacher training course, would have answered "yes". In the interviews it was possible to determine the exact nature and quantity of the teachers' training experiences as well as other vital background information (i.e. length of experience, length of experience with textbooks).

A particularly surprising result of the questionnaire and interview data analysis was that many of the overlapping questions produced different sets of

responses. For instance, although in the questionnaire all teachers held mildly favourable to favourable attitudes towards the textbooks, in the interview half of the teachers were strongly against them. Another example concerns the teachers' use and attitudes towards pair/group work activities. In the questionnaire, the majority of teachers claimed that pair/work group activities worked well with their students and they enjoyed using them, while in the interviews, the majority of teachers admitted to using them very infrequently due to the noise they give rise to and the time they take to organise. Or, to take another example, only 4 teachers in the questionnaire stated that a learner-centred philosophy cannot be applied within the Greek secondary school context. In the corresponding interview question, however, the majority of teachers agreed that the application of a learner-centred approach in Greek secondary schools, is from extremely difficult to virtually impossible. Why this disparity?

Had I used the questionnaire responses as a basis for the interviews and had I asked the teachers to clarify, qualify and extend their responses to questionnaire items, the teachers in their effort not to lose face and be confronted with their inconsistency, would have "stuck" to their initial responses and would have tried to justify them (Powney & Watts, 1987). By treating, however, the interview as a separate research tool, by giving it the form of a friendly informal chat between colleagues, the teachers felt freer and less inhibited in expressing their views. Although it has been argued that one of the advantages of questionnaires, is their ability to encourage more honest responses by being anonymous and impersonal (Oskamp 1977), this was certainly not the impression created in this study. It was the interviews that stimulated more sincere, more "passionate", more realistic and qualified responses from the teachers. In the questionnaire, the teachers held a moderate stance, avoided the extremes, and responded in the way they felt things should happen; in the



interviews the teachers did not fear using "strong" expressions to verbalise their views, they responded more along the lines of what actually happens in the classrooms, and tried to justify their responses by referring to problems and limitations of the classroom context. In other words, during our discussions the teachers did not revert or refer to theories or abstract principles, but to what works and does not work with their students, why it works and why it does not work. This is probably why it was the interview and not the questionnaire findings that corroborated the classroom observation results.

The teachers' responses to the interviews also verified the main findings of the attitude scale analysis. The teachers' almost average scores on the attitude scale were mainly due to contradictory endorsement of items. Many teachers appeared to be inconsistent when responding to statements concerning the role of grammar, of error correction, as well as their role in the classroom. It was tentatively suggested that the teachers' pattern of responding was due to their limited understanding of the communicative approach. This suggestion was verified in the interviews. Many teachers had indeed misinterpreted principles of the communicative approach and had an incomplete understanding of the practical implications of communicative language teaching. Teachers, thus, translated their ill-conceived notions of the communicative learner-centred approach, to conform with their existing classroom practices. The teachers, for instance, believed that errors impeding on the message, on the meaning the students wanted to express, were most serious since they could result in a breakdown of communication, but they still regarded every error as worthy of correction (this is why linguistic and content errors were corrected with almost similar frequencies in the classrooms). The role of grammar created for the teachers a kind of "catch 22" situation; knowledge of grammar alone does not lead to effective communication, but how can one attempt to speak a language

without knowledge of grammar? The role of grammar has created a dilemma for teachers, or an "E-knot" as Wagner (1991, p. 304) terms it. Not understanding when, where and how grammar should fit in their instructional objectives, the teachers still emphasise it and prioritise it since, at least for them (based on their experience as language learners), grammar instruction and knowledge proved effective.

The use of pair/group work activities creates an "R-knot" for teachers. As Wagner (ibid. p.303) claims, an R-knot appears when "...there is a contradiction between an imperative derived from a new method and perceived reality in the teaching institution". The teachers believe that pair/group work activities do potentially have the ability to encourage authentic interaction between students, but how does one prevent students from using their mother tongue? How does one convince students that these activities are not used for passing the time but are effective to language learning, especially when students at their highly respected frontistiria do not carry out such activities? And, finally, how does one monitor the language and give feedback to 30 students without wasting the whole teaching session? Seeing that the problems associated with these activities supersede their advantages, it seems quite natural that most teachers avoid this kind of classroom organisation and opt for the more reliable and predictable teacher-fronted configuration.

This preference to front and control the classroom proceedings leads to the final area of teachers' misunderstanding, i.e. their role in the classroom. In the attitude scale the statements relating to teacher role were inconsistently endorsed by most teachers. In the classroom, apart from very few exceptions, the teachers tended to assume traditional roles. On the basis of their linguistic and general classroom behaviour, the teachers' apparently preferred roles were that of instructor, transmitter and evaluator. It became clear in the interviews that most

teachers had never been given the opportunity to reflect upon and clarify this aspect of their behaviour. When urged to reflect upon their roles, the teachers' responses did in fact reveal that teachers conceptualised their role(s) in limited, instrumental terms. They saw themselves as knowers of the language whose duty it was to transmit their knowledge to the students. They did not perceive their role as complex and everchanging but rather as static and uniform; for them "role" was limited to what they do or should do in the classroom rather than how they teach. Even if some teachers felt that the roles of transmitter and authority were inadequate and ineffective for language learning, the realities and constraints of the classroom and the general educational context, and their lack of training made it virtually impossible for them to change. Even if some teachers were courageous enough and determined to ignore and overcome these constraints and change their relationship with their students, they would still have to face the danger of jeopardising the already unpopular image and status of ELT in Greek secondary schools. If students are used to traditional role relationships at their highly respected frontistiria (Box & Peponi, 1992) and their other "primary" subjects at school, how will they react to a change in the "status quo" in the context of the "useless" English lesson at school?...Not very well, as many Greek secondary school English language teachers will agree.

#### NOTE:

1) Manopoulou-Sergi (1992) conducted a survey of Greek EFL learners which aimed at determining which factors were perceived as demotivating in state school foreign language learning. From the 85% of the students who said that they studied English at frontistiria (apart from their school English lessons), the majority believed that the work done at frontistiria was better than that done in schools.

## CHAPTER 10

### *Conclusion: Summary of Findings and their Implications*

#### 10.1: Summary of findings.

"...teachers are not retailers of ready-made products. Innovations are not delivered or distributed but diffused, and they change in the process to meet the pedagogic conditions of different classroom contexts. Teachers are not retailers but mediators" (Widdowson, 1993, p.260).

The aim of this research was to investigate the extent to which the Greek English language materials and their underlying philosophy and principles are implemented in the Greek secondary school language classroom. What the results of this investigation have revealed is the validity of Widdowson's (ibid) and many an authors' ( e.g. Brophy 1982, Doyle & Ponder 1977, Spada 1987) claim, that teachers do not slavishly adopt, but rather adapt innovations to the classroom contingencies, their students' needs and their own theories of language, language teaching and learning. The Greek English language curriculum and textbooks advocate a communicative learner-centred approach with the teacher in the role of facilitator and guide, whose main responsibility it is to create the conditions for genuine communication to take place and whose main objective should be the development of students' communicative competence. The results of the classroom observations have revealed that the objectives and intentions of the textbook developers have not been taken up with much enthusiasm in the classrooms.

From the analysis of teacher error correcting behaviour (research question 1b, see p. 69) it became clear that teachers regarded learner errors as signs of

imperfect learning (the teachers corrected over 80% of student errors) which needed to be rectified the moment they occurred (teachers interrupted nearly 1/3 of learner errors in order to correct). The teachers did not seem to exhibit specific priorities when correcting since almost all types of error (with the exception of pronunciation and syntax errors), whether they related to the linguistic accuracy or content of student output, were corrected with similar frequencies (see Table 5.4). The analysis of teacher error correcting strategies revealed that teachers used a range of treatment types both direct and indirect but by far the most favoured treatment type was the "supplies correct" in which the teacher supplies the correct answer immediately after an error is made (usually accompanied by interruption). This tendency seems to suggest that teachers regard student errors as "crisis points", as potential diversions, whose rectification if given to students may prove time-consuming; by supplying the correct answer the teacher, at the very least, ensures that the lesson will proceed according to plan.

The analysis of teacher questioning practices (research question 1c, see p.69) revealed that creating opportunities for genuine communication in the classroom does not seem to be high in the teachers' list of priorities. The teachers overwhelmingly favoured questions whose answer was known beforehand by them and to which student output is by nature extremely limited (i.e. evaluative questions, comprehension checks and correcting questions were the ones most frequently asked, see Table 6.6). Questions which provide evidence of real communication and a two-way flow of information, questions which have the potential of generating extensive student output or making input comprehensible to learners (i.e. clarification requests, confirmation checks and communicative questions, see Table 6.2, 6.3) were only sporadically asked in very few classrooms.

The teachers' tendency to control the accuracy and content of student utterances and student non-verbal behaviour in the classroom was further exemplified by the observations of teachers' classroom behaviour and implementation of activities. From the 81 activities that were carried out, the vast majority were either transformed or designed to focus on and practise aspects of form or lexis. Teachers tended to eliminate the intended communicative features of many textbook activities, transform their objectives and implement them as controlled grammar practice exercises. *Any activities from the textbook that required students to work in pairs or in groups, with very few exceptions (teachers K3, KO2), were implemented between the teacher and students, were assigned as homework or were assigned as individual work in class; many such activities were ignored. Texts consisting of two or more sentences designed for the purposes of listening, reading or speaking were implemented as reading exercises and were accompanied by elicitation/explanation of known/unknown words and a set of controlled comprehension questions. The vast majority of supplementary activities, which figured frequently in almost all teachers' lesson plans, were designed to practise and consolidate formal properties of the language. Only in three (K3, L3, KO2) teachers' lessons were open-ended activities implemented.*

In terms of teacher roles (which was the ultimate focus of the classroom observations, see research question 1a, p. 69) these three areas of analysis have revealed that the teachers (with the exception of K3) have not as yet broken down the traditional authority structure of teacher-student relations in their classrooms. The teachers behave and see themselves as language experts, transmitters of knowledge of the language and evaluators of student verbal and non-verbal behaviour. The roles of facilitator, guide, co-communicator, supporter and teacher as learner have not made their presence felt in the Greek English language classroom.

The results of the questionnaire and attitude scale made evident a disparity between teachers' professed and actual practices as well as their confusion over many aspects of the communicative learner-centred approach (research questions 2a,b,c,d, p. 69-70). Although the teachers' practices proved that a communicative approach has not had its impact in their classrooms, and although all teachers (based on their responses in the questionnaire) felt inadequately trained in the communicative approach, the vast majority claimed to be using it, believed in its effectiveness and found its application with Greek secondary school students unproblematic. Similar responses were obtained by the larger sample of teachers (87 teachers) to which the questionnaire was given<sup>1</sup>. Although it would be dangerous to infer the classroom practices of the larger sample, evidence points towards the fact that the Greek English language teachers believe that they are using a communicative learner-centred approach simply because the curriculum and textbooks they are using are based upon it. Other points at which the 14 teachers' words and deeds contradicted each other related to their professed and actual use of pair/group work activities, their professed attitudes towards formal instruction and their classroom behaviour, and their reported and actual use of interruptions when correcting student errors (see chapter 8, section 8.4.).

The discrepancy between the 14 teachers' theories and their practice and indeed the disparity between intended and implemented curriculum can be explained with respect to a number of factors, the most important of which must be teachers' limited understanding of the communicative learner-centred approach. Due to their lack of training the teachers have not been given the opportunity to become informed and fully aware of the theoretical and practical implications of a communicative approach. This was evidenced in the 14 teachers' tendency to respond inconsistently to many statements in the attitude scale and questionnaire. The teachers appeared to have confused notions

concerning the role of grammar, of error correction, the value of communicative activities and of their own role in the classroom. For example, although the majority of teachers claim to be using a communicative approach and believe in its benefits, their most common complaint with the textbooks was their lack of grammar practice (an area which the textbooks do not lack) and workbook. A similar response was obtained by the larger sample, where the need for a workbook and grammar practice was ticked by 75% and 60% of the teachers respectively. Given that within a communicative approach errors should be judiciously and selectively reacted to especially during communicative activities, for the 14 teachers errors related not only to the meaning but also to the grammar and syntax of student utterances would be a concern. The larger sample of teachers responded in a similar manner; 47% would correct serious grammar and syntax errors and 45% errors related to the meaning of student utterances during an open-ended activity. If within a communicative learner-centred approach learners should be given opportunities to take part in decisions regarding the choice of activities, for 10 of the 14 teachers this does not apply since they do not allow their students to choose activities; nor do the majority (48%) of the larger sample. Finally, if the learner-centred philosophy is to be seen as an integral part of CLT, then for 4 of the 14 teachers and 48% of the larger sample, this is not necessarily the case, since although a communicative approach can be implemented successfully within the Greek secondary school context, a learner-centred approach cannot.

The causes of the 14 teachers' inconsistent responses and their limited (or non-) implementation of the innovation were made quite clear in the interviews. Their responses in the interviews revealed that the majority of teachers had misinterpreted many aspects of the communicative approach and that teachers perceived their role in the classroom as language expert, controller and transmitter. The majority of teachers also stated that they used a variety of



approaches and teaching procedures in the classroom, that they regarded all errors as worthy of correction and that they infrequently used pair/group work activities. Revealing also was the teachers' tendency to justify the infrequent use of communicative activities, the necessity to assume the role of controller and authority, their tendency to overcorrect, and the impracticality of applying learner-centred principles with their students on the basis of their incongruity with the existing classroom contingencies. As was made quite clear during the interviews, large mixed-ability classrooms, the age and maturity level of their learners as well as their previous language learning experiences at private institutes, and the nature of the Greek educational system were considered to render extremely difficult the application of a communicative learner-centred approach in the classroom.

Another factor that may be held responsible for the disparity between the principles of the textbooks and their realisation in the classroom, is the teachers' attitudes towards the textbooks. In the questionnaire the 14 teachers expressed lukewarm attitudes towards the textbooks and the majority felt that the teachers' guides were unhelpful; in the interviews, which elicited more "passionate" responses, more than half the teachers were strongly against the textbooks and expressed their preference for using textbooks of their own choice. The teachers also expressed their dislike for the teachers' guides and explicitly or implicitly stated that they seldom referred to them. The larger sample expressed similar attitudes; the majority held lukewarm attitudes towards the textbooks, while 9% stated that they did not like them at all; 70% also rated the teachers' guides as unhelpful. What is more, the majority of teachers in both samples (86% of the 14 teachers and 59% of the 87 teachers) felt that the textbooks did not fulfil their students' needs. This result was particularly interesting in view of the fact that the textbooks were, according to their authors, developed and based on extensive research into Greek EFL learners' needs.

Thus, without having received adequate training, the Greek English language teachers have been charged with implementing an approach whose rationale they do not comprehend, of which they possess little understanding and the application of which they find incongruous with their preferred teaching style and the constraints of their classroom contexts. They have been asked to use textbooks which they do not particularly like, and, most importantly, which they find unsuitable for their learners. Thus, the teachers, despite their best judgement, continue to use the textbooks but adapt principles of the textbooks' philosophy to conform to their own language learning beliefs and their classroom exigencies. Undoubtedly, the implications of these results for curriculum developers working in a context similar to the Greek one are many. Before proceeding to a discussion of these implications, however, some comments regarding the research methodology of the study are in order.

#### **10.2.: Research methodology of the study: Some reflections.**

In general, the methodological triangulation approach proved invaluable in achieving the aim of this study and in revealing the complexities involved in the arduous process of implementing innovations. Indeed, I would urge any researcher working within the field of curriculum implementation to employ a multi-research method approach not only because of the inherent limitations of each method when used in isolation but, most importantly, because of the inability of a single method to tap all the dimensions of implementation.

The classroom observations proved essential in assessing the behavioural dimension of implementation, i.e. the degree to which the philosophy of the textbooks was implemented in the classroom. Given that the description of teacher roles was the ultimate focus of this analysis, it is acknowledged that the observation scheme data would, on their own, have rendered partial and subjective results; the analysis of teachers' linguistic behaviour assisted

enormously in complementing and substantiating the observation scheme findings and in providing a more concrete depiction of teacher roles (see chapter 7, section 7.5). The development of the question typology, which was deemed necessary due to the limitations evidenced in other typologies, was particularly illuminating as regards teacher roles and teachers' theories of language teaching/learning. However, use of the typology in other classroom contexts would be needed in order to prove its descriptive abilities. The analysis of teacher error correcting practices was also revealing of teachers' roles and instructional theories; the problem, however, of defining "error" when researching non-native language teaching contexts still remains: what the teacher regards as an error may be quite distinct from what the researcher (especially when he/she has little knowledge of the students' previous language learning experiences and the "routines" (Breen 1991) of a particular classroom) regards as an error, which in turn may be different from what a prescriptive grammarian regards as an error. Indeed a convergence of these three perspectives must be achieved before we can confidently analyse teacher error correcting behaviour, and draw conclusions and make recommendations for teacher training on the basis of it. The observation scheme, granted that it cannot cater for classrooms other than teacher-centred, was easy to use and especially the second part useful in revealing aspects of teachers' non-verbal behaviour and the classroom context as a whole. However, despite its "insightful" powers, the second part makes the establishment of reliability of the observation scheme rather difficult. This is a problem any "holistic" account of classroom processes must contend with.

Finally, another comment concerns not the classroom observation instruments per se, but rather the description of the feature they were designed for, i.e. teacher roles. As was mentioned in chapter 7, some roles such as that of controller, evaluator/feedback provider, transmitter, observer, monitor and resource could/ were with relative ease identified and described on the basis of

teachers' verbal and non-verbal behaviour and teachers' use of activities in the classroom; the same unfortunately does not apply as regards the teacher in the role of facilitator. Despite its fundamental position in CLI theory, the role of facilitator still remains imprecise and vague. Idealised and theoretical statements such as a facilitator "facilitates the communicative process between all participant in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and texts"(Breen & Candlin 1980, p.99), or the facilitator creates space for the learner, allowing him to contribute his personality to the learning process (Littlewood 1981), or helps the learners understand the dynamics of the group and articulate their needs and feelings (Legutke & Thomas 1991), do very little in helping teachers understand how this role can be realised in the classroom. Unless, this role is explained and described in precise and operational terms, unless authors suggest specific techniques and ways in which this role can be performed, it will remain an idealised and impractical specification for teacher behaviour and an un-operational concept for use in research.

The attitude scale, questionnaire and interviews, which were designed to investigate the non-behavioural dimensions of implementation, proved revealing of teachers' theoretical and practical understanding of the communicative learner-centred approach and of the factors which have inhibited implementation of the Greek project. The first two instruments, however, were not without their limitations. More specifically, it was observed that the attitude scale (or any Likert type scale for that matter) could only provide rough indications of an individual's attitudes; average scores can mean many things other than lukewarm attitudes, as was made clear in this study. It appears to be the case that Likert scales achieve their objective best with individuals whose attitudes are more or less clear-cut and consistent. This is not to say that the attitude scale in this study was useless; on the contrary, it did provide the first indications of teachers' limited understanding of the approach they were asked to implement (and it may

prove extremely useful for teacher training courses in elucidating teacher attitudes). Had I not, however, analysed the teachers' responses to attitude statements in depth, this significant result (teachers' confusion over the communicative approach) would not have been revealed.

The questionnaire and interviews, which overlapped in content to a great extent, produced in many cases two different sets of results with the teachers' responses to interview questions proving more truthful, i.e. more akin to their classroom practices. This raises serious doubts as to the potential of questionnaires in eliciting valid information, especially when questionnaire items touch upon sensitive issues, i.e. teachers' knowledge and implementation of principles of a "prestigious" approach. Although questionnaires have been viewed as a most effective means of eliciting respondents' true views "...since they (respondents) can express their opinions in a context with little of the give and take of ordinary conversation in which individuals are always accountable for their opinions" (Dingwall 1985, p.90), it may well be that this sense of unaccountability and impersonality which questionnaires generate, encourage respondents to provide answers not compatible with reality. At least within the context of this study, interviews, in which respondents are held accountable for their opinions and may be called to justify them, were much more effective in probing into teachers' minds and uncovering their "true" opinions on a variety of issues. This finding is particularly significant for validating the exploratory powers of interviews, especially when interviews have been underrated and infrequently used in second language classroom research (Grotjahn 1991, Nunan 1991b).

### **10.3.: Implications of the study's results.**

In an attempt to describe teachers' classroom behaviour in relation to methodological and materials innovation, and the causes of this behaviour, the

study has revealed that teachers' limited (or mis-) implementation of the Greek EFL project is due to a variety of factors; factors that have been cited as obstacles to implementation in educational research, yet have been (and will probably continue to be) ignored by language curriculum developers. If we wish language teaching innovation projects to bring about more effective teaching and learning, and not "...amount to 'more of the same' of an exhausted paradigm of language learning" (Legutke & Thomas 1991, p.304), then I would urge current and would be innovators working in contexts similar to the Greek one, to take serious account of the following:

1) Teachers' attitudes towards the teaching/learning process and teachers' clear understanding of the innovation projects' rationale and underlying philosophy are key aspects for successful implementation. Teachers are not atheoretical beings before the introduction of innovation projects as many curriculum developers seem to assume; they have built up theories of what language teaching/learning is or should be on the basis of previous teaching and learning experiences and prejudices and beliefs (Freeman & Richards 1993). These theories are deep-seated and affect teachers' interpretation, judgement and classroom behaviour (Clark 1988, Grotjahn 1991, Pennington 1989, Wright 1987). If incompatibilities between the innovation projects' philosophy and the teachers' theories exists, the teachers will tend to interpret new information in the light of their own existing theories and will tend to translate innovative ideas to conform with their own style of teaching; this was made abundantly clear with the 14 teachers in this study. Gentle persuasion or rational argument embodied in documents (i.e. teachers' guides) or naive beliefs that teachers, through the use of innovatory materials, will come to appreciate the benefits of the new approach (see chapter 3, section 3.3) will do little in altering teachers' classroom behaviour. Teachers' attitudes must lie at the heart and constitute the starting point of any innovation process. Extensive and intensive teacher training, prior

to and well-after implementation, should have as its primary aim the refinement of teachers' attitudes. Training courses must strive to uncover the knowledge and beliefs teachers hold and make teachers aware of these (Breen et al 1989); teacher training must have at its heart not changing or replacing teacher attitudes, but clarifying teacher attitudes (especially those dogmatically held) and subsequently accommodating new elements within teachers' existing theories (Breen 1991). Transmission of new information and techniques will have little impact on teachers' behaviour unless teachers have the proper frame of reference in which to receive new ideas (Pennington 1989). One-off mass training sessions in which teachers are bombarded with theoretical exhortations of the new approach, sessions in which participation is optional and for which teachers are not offered incentives or support to take part (as has been the case in the Greek project until 1992, see note 3, chapter 3) will do nothing towards successful implementation.

2) Innovatory projects must be based on an analysis of the features of the instructional environments in which they are to be implemented. Failure of procedural recommendations to mesh with the realities of the classroom and wider educational context, will lead teachers to judge the innovation as impractical and unworkable. As was made clear by the teachers in this study, constraints of their classrooms, the characteristics of their learners and the nature of the Greek educational context as a whole, made it very difficult, sometimes impossible, to apply many features of a communicative learner-centred approach. The Greek teachers faced problems in using a communicative approach with large mixed-ability and inadequately resourced classes; they faced problems in applying communicative principles with unwilling and unmotivated learners; they faced problems in assuming non-authoritative roles within an essentially teacher-centred working environment; problems that curriculum developers appeared to have overlooked. Many authors (Breen

1983, Tudor 1992) have stressed that when the realities of an educational context are incompatible with the proposed changes of an innovation, any attempt to apply a communicative learner-centred approach seems unreasonable. I would not go as far as to suggest this, since such an attitude would close the doors to any possibility for change and would result in inertia and maintenance of the status quo. However, I do believe that characteristics of educational contexts must be taken into account in the design of the innovation project and that new ideas need to be "...evaluated for relevance by critical appraisal and application" (Widdowson 1993, p.271, also see Holliday 1992). Furthermore, communication systems must be set up between curriculum developers/ foreign language advisors and teachers which will function as a means of identifying the problems of implementation and providing support to teachers in overcoming them. Unfortunately, such feedback mechanisms were largely non-existent in the Greek EFL project. The teachers were left to work out the meanings of the innovation and overcome the difficulties of implementation with the help of one foreign language advisor whom half the teachers in this study had never even met (see chapter 9, section 9.2.a).

3) Evaluation should constitute an integral component of the innovation process, should be systematic and must involve information derived from the teachers. Evaluation data will prove the effectiveness and suitability of the project for the particular context, and needs to be fed into the project leading to its continuous improvement and refinement. Ever since 1987, when the Greek EFL project was implemented on a national level, no form of summative or formative, process or product oriented evaluation has been carried out. Five years after the implementation, the teachers have expressed grave complaints with the textbooks, the most important of which must be their unsuitability for Greek EFL learners. Indeed, there must be some justification for these teachers' complaints; yet no one has sought to investigate it. If evaluation is to be seen as a



"never-ending needs analysis"(Brown 1989), both of teachers and learners, it appears to be the case that the Greek English language project has not yet fully met those needs. This in turn raises the question of whether a single textbook can appeal to and fulfil the needs of an entire learning/ teaching population. Since, as Wilkins (1983) argues, identifying and predicting the communicative language needs of 12 to 13 year olds is an unrealistic task, it may have been (or may be) more appropriate to have teachers use the textbooks as a reference/starting point and offer the teachers a range of other resources from which they could choose activities and materials which would best match their learners' needs. This approach might not only lead to greater language learning benefits, but would also grant teachers greater autonomy in the classroom. Since the development of students' autonomy is of central importance within a communicative learner-centred approach, it would only seem reasonable that teachers were granted some autonomy themselves.

4) My final comment relates to some questions raised in chapter 7 regarding the universal applicability of the communicative approach. The CLT movement arose in response to particular pedagogic and theoretical concerns in Britain and America. During the past two decades the communicative approach has undergone expansion and refinement, and its proponents have been engrossed in the task of spelling out its practical implications and justifying its basic principles. Yet, until this day the communicative approach remains in some ways ill-defined and, for many, practically confusing. A number of its principal tenets are in need of convincing empirical validation. For example, the place or importance of grammar instruction is still very unproductively controversial. For programs pursuing communicative objectives, issues such as the nature and quantity of formal instruction and the ideal ratio of grammar practice and communication activities for students of different levels are problematic (see Spada & Lightbown 1993). VanPatten and Cadierno (1993) in their recent study

on the nature of grammar instruction point to this gap of research; as they say: "One issue that has been overlooked in the research on explicit instruction is how grammar should be taught. That is, the nature of the instruction itself and the processes it attempts to modify in the learner have largely gone uninvestigated" (ibid, pp.225-226). Controversy also reigns over the effectiveness and place of error correction in the communicative classroom: In what way does error correction facilitate language learning? How does the teacher practise selective error correction (depending on the objectives of the activity) without appearing inconsistent and confusing the learners? (this issue was raised by Allwright in 1975 and has not yet been resolved). What are the most effective error corrective reactions available to teachers? Questions such as these have still not found satisfactory answers. Pica (1991) attributes the confusion and contradiction over error correction to the fact "...that so little is known about the nature of correction ...and its effect on the learning process". Finally, there also appears to be a lack of consensus as regards the language learning value of various communication activities. We have yet to ascertain whether one-way or two-way information gap activities elicit more student output and whether and in what ways problem-solving activities and group discussions differ from teacher fronted activities in terms of potential student output (Pica 1991, also see Ellis 1990, for inconsistent results in these three areas of research).

With these comments I do not wish to argue that controversy is necessarily counterproductive. Brumfit (1988) views controversy and inconsistency as a natural feature of any historical movement "...when the beliefs of (its) practitioners are examined collectively"(p.5). Indeed, controversy gives rise to intellectual stimulation and productive debate and provides incentives for further research. If, however, we wish to introduce teachers to the workings of a communicative approach and convince them of its potential benefits, we must be

able to provide teachers with tangible evidence of its effectiveness; evidence, which until now, has been rather patchy. I therefore believe that investigations into the effectiveness and nature of grammar instruction and error correction and further studies into the benefits of various communication activities should constitute one of the most prominent future directions of second/foreign language classroom research.

Another almost unpursued direction of language teaching research has been into the application of communicative approaches in foreign language secondary school contexts (see Pica 1991). Most research into the application of CLT has been carried out in second language classrooms with adult learners (e.g. Brock 1986, Long & Sato 1983, Nunan 1987a, Pica & Long 1986) whose motivation and learning style and language learning environment is certainly much different from younger foreign language learners. There has been virtually no research on the feasibility of, for example, the use of referential or echoic questions, or selective correction of errors, or implementation of group work activities in secondary school foreign language contexts. Yet most curriculum innovations (at least within Europe) embracing communicative principles are targeted at such an audience. What is more, research into the application of the communicative approach has not acknowledged the overpowering effect on the quality of classroom life, of teachers' and learners' attitudes to learning, of the conventions of classrooms, of the values of particular educational contexts and of the more or less fixed roles of teachers and learners within them. The few classroom based accounts of CLT (see chapter 3 for a review of such studies) that have been carried out reveal that although teachers profess a commitment to communicative principles their classroom behaviour gives contrary evidence to this. Why this disparity exists has been left to the reader of these studies to explain. Indeed, reasons for this disparity may be sought in teachers' attitudes towards teaching and learning, in teachers' perceptions of their role and in the constraints under

which teachers are required to work; areas of investigation most prominent in the field of educational research (Shavelson & Stern 1981, Wittrock 1986), yet largely neglected in second/foreign language classroom research (see Grotjahn 1991). Although this study has (hopefully) contributed to this much neglected area of second/foreign language classroom research, further research is essential. The investigation of teachers' attitudes towards language, language learning and teaching may prove a goldmine for understanding the workings of language classrooms and for revealing the most appropriate areas of support in teacher training.

The identification of directions for further research is a natural outcome of any study; it will however prove ineffective insofar as these directions are exclusively addressed to and taken up by professional second language classroom researchers. If the communicative movement is "...concerned with excellence in language teaching.." and not with "..discipleship and loss of individual autonomy by teachers" (Brumfit 1988, p.5), then it is essential that practitioners themselves contribute towards that excellence. Since, as this study has made clear, the implementation of communicative materials does not inevitably lead to communicative language teaching it becomes imperative that teachers are involved in the process of investigating the feasibility and effectiveness of communicative principles in their classrooms. Teacher training must not only be geared towards introducing teachers to the practical and theoretical implications of the communicative approach but also towards encouraging them to experiment and assess its feasibility and practicality with their particular learners (Nunan 1993). Support for, and widespread use of an approach will not only come in the form of articles and research reports written by experts in the field, but by teachers who have evidenced and ascertained that it works better than approaches previously used. Teachers must be seen not as inconsistent and conservative research subjects but as research partners and

researchers who strive towards a common goal: to offer optimal language learning opportunities to students. We must not lose sight of the fact, as Allwright and Bailey (1991) argue, that the teacher is the intermediary between research(ers) and learners. By encouraging teachers to engage in research we will not only ascertain whether ideas work in the classroom, but most importantly, how and why they work (ibid, p197).

#### **NOTE:**

1) Due to considerable space limitations the results of the attitude scale and questionnaire given to the larger sample of teachers could not be presented in full; in this chapter only a few important results will be presented. Teachers' attitude scale scores and their responses to the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 4. The former were computed by hand and checked twice, while the latter were analysed using a computer programme (Charalambakis 1993) especially designed for this study's questionnaire. It should be noted that all respondents were Greek English language teachers working at secondary schools in and around the Athens area. The vast majority of teachers (82%) have been teaching English for more than ten years and all were acquainted with the Taskway textbooks.

## APPENDIX 1

### *The Study's Observation Scheme*

Date	School	Grade	Level	Duration of lesson	Stage of lesson	Obsv. No	
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Participant organisation</b>		<b>Activity Form</b>	<b>Focus Function</b>	<b>Sociol.</b>	<b>Free Topic</b>	<b>Skill Focus</b>
	1) T/s 2) T/SS 3) Ss (pair) 4) Ss (group) 5) Individual		1) sound 2) word 3) gram.				a) reading b) listening c) writing d) speaking
<b>Teaching Medium</b>	<b>Communicative features of activity</b>		<b>Language Control (teacher)</b>				
1) textbook 2) suppl. authentic 3) supplementary 4) audio 5) visual	1) information gap 2) information transfer 3) authentic input 4) authentic purpose 5) personal involvement		1) + high 2) -high 3) +medium 4) -medium 5) +low 6) -low 7) unpredictable				
1)	2) Parallel Activities		3)	4)			

## APPENDIX 2

### *The Interview Schedule*



**1) Teachers' experience with the Taskway textbooks**

When did you start using the Taskway textbooks?

Did you take part in their production?

Did you receive any questionnaires asking you to assess the books?

**2) Teachers' training experiences and opinions of their training**

Since you started using the books, have you taken part in any kind of teacher training?

If yes, what did the seminar/workshop/course deal with?

Did they help you in your everyday teaching?

If no, what did they lack?

What would you want seminars/workshops to offer?

**3) Teachers' relation with the foreign language advisor**

Does the foreign language advisor visit your school?

What kind of relationship do you have with the advisor?

**4) Teachers' opinions of the Taskway textbooks**

How do you find the textbooks?

Have you encountered any problems when using them?

**5) Teachers' opinions of the communicative learner-centred approach and reports of their classroom practices**

Do you agree with the approach the textbooks adopt?

If yes, do you use the communicative approach in your classes?

Which features of the communicative approach do you find most applicable in your classrooms?

Do you use pair/group work activities? If yes/no, why?

Which student errors are most important to you?

Do you agree with the learner-centred philosophy the textbooks are based upon?

How do you see your role in the classroom? Has it changed in relation to the past?

Can a learner-centred approach be used successfully in Greek secondary schools?

#### **6) Students' response to the Taskway textbooks**

How have the students responded to the textbooks? Do they enjoy them?

#### **7) Teachers' opinions of the teachers' guide**

Do you like the teachers' guide?

Is the teachers' guide helpful/useful? If no, why?

What would like a teachers' guide to contain?

#### **8) Problems teachers face/ teachers' opinions of the innovation**

What do you think are the most significant problems Greek secondary school English language teachers face in their everyday teaching?

Do you feel that the Taskway textbooks were needed?

## APPENDIX 3

### *The Study's Attitude Scale and Questionnaire*

Dear colleague

My name is Evdokia Karavas and I am currently working on my PhD thesis at the University of Warwick, England. My research topic focuses on the new series of textbooks "Taskway to English" and, more specifically, on the Greek English language teachers' response to the new textbook and its underlying philosophy and methodology. My research is in no way judgemental or evaluative of teachers. Its aim is rather to grasp the Greek teachers' feelings and opinions regarding the feasibility of using a communicative learner-centered approach in an educational system which is essentially teacher-centered. My aim is to understand you, as implementors of this approach, and how you find this way of teaching with your students. Your cooperation is, therefore, essential and invaluable to me.

Part of this investigation is this questionnaire. It consists of two parts. The first, consists of a number of general statements concerning teaching practices. All you have to do is read each statement and in the grid tick your degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement. The second part consists of a series of questions that are specific to the new textbook "Taskway" and to its use in the classroom. The questionnaire takes no more than thirty minutes to complete. I know that you are very busy at this time with other responsibilities, but I would be grateful for your cooperation. The only thing I can offer you as a token of my gratitude is to inform you of the results of the research after it is completed.

Thank you in advance for your time and help,

Looking forward to hearing from you

Sincerely yours,



	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
1) Grammatical correctness is the most important criterion by which language performance should be judged.					
2) Group work activities are essential in providing opportunities for cooperative relationships to emerge, and in promoting genuine interaction among students.					
3) Grammar should be taught only as a means to an end and not as an end in itself.					
4) Since the learner comes to the language classroom with little or no knowledge of the language, he/she is in no position to suggest what the content of the lesson should be or what activities are useful for him/her.					
5) Training students to take responsibility for their own learning is futile since learners are not used to such an approach.					
6) For students to become effective communicators in the foreign language, the teacher's feedback must be focused on the appropriateness and not the linguistic form of the students' responses.					
7) The teacher as "authority" and "instructor" is no longer adequate to describe the teacher's role in the language classroom.					
8) The learner-centered approach to language teaching encourages responsibility and self-discipline and allows each student to develop his full potential.					
9) Group work allows students to explore problems for themselves and thus have some measure of control over their own learning. It is therefore an invaluable means of organising classroom experiences.					
10) The teacher should correct all the grammatical errors students make. If errors are ignored, this will result in imperfect learning.					
11) It is impossible in a large class of students to organise your teaching so as to suit the needs of all.					
12) Knowledge of the rules of a language does not guarantee ability to use the language.					
13) Group work activities take too long to organise and waste a lot of valuable teaching time.					
14) Since errors are a normal part of learning much correction is wasteful of time.					
15) The communicative approach to language teaching produces fluent but inaccurate learners.					

	5	4	3	2	1
16) The teacher as transmitter of knowledge is only one of the many different roles he/she must perform during the course of a lesson.					
17) By mastering the rules of grammar students become fully capable of communicating with a native speaker.					
18) For most students language is acquired most effectively when it is used as a vehicle for doing something else and not when it is studied in a direct or explicit way.					
19) The role of the teacher in the language classroom is to impart knowledge through activities such as explanation, writing and example.					
20) Tasks and activities should be negotiated and adapted to suit the students' needs rather than imposed on them.					
21) Students do their best when taught as a whole class by the teacher. Small group work may occasionally be useful to vary the routine, but it can never replace sound formal instruction by a competent teacher.					
22) Group work activities have little use since it is very difficult for the teacher to monitor the students' performance and prevent them from using their mother tongue.					
23) Direct instruction in the rules and terminology of grammar is essential if students are to learn to communicate effectively.					
24) A textbook alone is not able to cater for all the needs and interests of the students. The teacher must supplement the textbook with other materials and tasks so as to satisfy the widely differing needs of the students.					

Part 2

- 1) Do you feel that the communicative approach to language teaching can help learners learn a language more effectively than other approaches that were used in the past?  
A. Yes      B. No
- 2) There are authors who believe that the communicative approach can be used successfully only with certain types of learners and in certain types of teaching situation. Do you think that the communicative approach can be used successfully with Greek secondary school students?  
A. Yes      B. No
- 3) Do you use the communicative approach in your language classes?  
A. Yes      B. No
- 4) One of the features of the communicative approach is that it is learner-centered. What does learner-centered mean to you?  
A. Learners should be given more work to do.  
B. Our teaching should be determined by the language needs and interests of our learners.  
C. Learners can learn on their own without much help from the teacher.  
D. Our teaching should aim at making our learners more responsible for their learning.
- 5) Many educationalists believe that a learner-centered approach can only be used when the educational system of a country supports such an approach. Do you think that a learner-centered approach can be used in Greek secondary schools?  
A. Yes      B. No
- 6) If no, why?  
A. The Greek educational system does not encourage such an approach  
B. The learners are not used to such an approach,  
C. The teachers are not used to and trained for such an approach.
- 7) Initially, the authors of the book (Taskway) intended to produce not a series of textbooks but a series of folders containing a number of activities which the Greek English language teacher could change, refine or supplement with her own depending on the students' level. Would you have preferred to use this in the classroom instead of the textbook?  
A. Yes      B. No
- 8) What is your opinion of the new textbook "Taskway English"?  
A. It is excellent.  
B. It is quite good although it could do with some improvements.  
C. It is fair but I would rather use a textbook of my own choice.  
D. I do not like it at all.

- 9) DO you think that the textbook (Taskway) fulfills the English language needs of the Greek secondary school student?
- A. Yes      B. No
- 10) Have you taken any part in the production of the book?
- A. Yes      B. No
- 11) If no, would you have liked to have taken part in the production of the book?
- A. Yes      B. No
- 12) Are there any aspects of the textbook that you believe need improvement or changing?
- A. Yes      B. No
- 13) If yes, which of the statements below would you agree with? (You may circle more than one)
- A. The book needs more grammar exercises and drills.
  - B. The book is complicated to follow.
  - C. More writing activities are needed.
  - D. More reading activities are needed.
  - E. More speaking activities are needed.
  - F. There needs to be more "recycling" of the language features students learn in each unit.
  - G. More attention should be given to grammatical and syntactic rules.
  - H. A workbook is needed.
- 14) Do you supplement the book with your own activities and materials?
- A. Yes      B. No
- 15) In your language lessons do you,
- A. Follow the sequence of the textbook
  - B. Choose a few activities from the textbook and follow your own syllabus.
- 16) In your classroom do you find that group/pair work activities work well with your students?
- A. Yes      B. No
- 17) Do you enjoy using pair/group work activities?
- A. Yes      B. No
- 18) If you were carrying out an activity where students had to discuss and decide eg. what gift to buy for the birthday of a friend, which student errors would you correct?
- A. All the errors they made.
  - B. All the grammatical errors.
  - C. Those errors on language points that were previously taught.
  - D. Only very serious grammatical and syntactical errors.

pto. —————>



- E. Errors related to the meaning of what the students were trying to say and not the grammar of their sentences.
- F. Lexical errors.

19) When you correct students' errors do you usually:

- A. Correct the student the moment he makes the error so that he/she will remember and not repeat it in the future.
- B. Correct the student after he/she has finished his/her sentence
- C. Correct the student after the activity has finished.
- D. Correct the student after the activity has finished and only if the error is serious.

20) If you were carrying out an activity and saw that students were not interested or motivated to do it, would you:

- A. Finish it quickly to get it over with.
- B. Carry on doing it because you believe it is useful for the students.
- C. Stop the activity and do the next one in the book.
- D. Try to invent a more interesting activity.

21) Do you allow students to choose which activities they want to do?

- A. Yes
- B. No

22) Do you believe that the teacher's guide to "Taskway English" provides enough information to help you use the book successfully in class?

- A. Yes
- B. No

23) If no, what more is needed? (You can circle more than one)

- A. More information on the principles of the communicative approach.
- B. More detailed guidance on how to carry out activities.
- C. More help on how to present grammatical points.
- D. More information on how to evaluate students after the end of an activity.

24) Do you believe that Greek teachers of English have been given adequate training in using the communicative approach?

- A. Yes
- B. No

25) If no, why? (You can circle more than one)

- A. Training courses are very short.
- B. Only a few teachers have the opportunity to attend the courses
- C. Very few training courses have taken place.
- D. Training courses focus too much on theory and not the practical aspects of language teaching.

26) Have you taken part in any kind of teacher training?

- A. Yes
- B. No

27) How many years have you been teaching English?

- A. 1-5 years
- B. 5-10 years
- C. 10 or more years

28) How many years have you been teaching English in Greek secondary schools?

- A. 1-5 years
- B. 5-10 years
- C. 10 or more years

I hope the questionnaire was not too exhausting. I am deeply grateful for your attention, time and assistance upon which this research depends.

Thank you.

## APPENDIX 4

*The Results of the Attitude Scale and Questionnaire Given to the Larger Sample of Greek English Language Teachers*

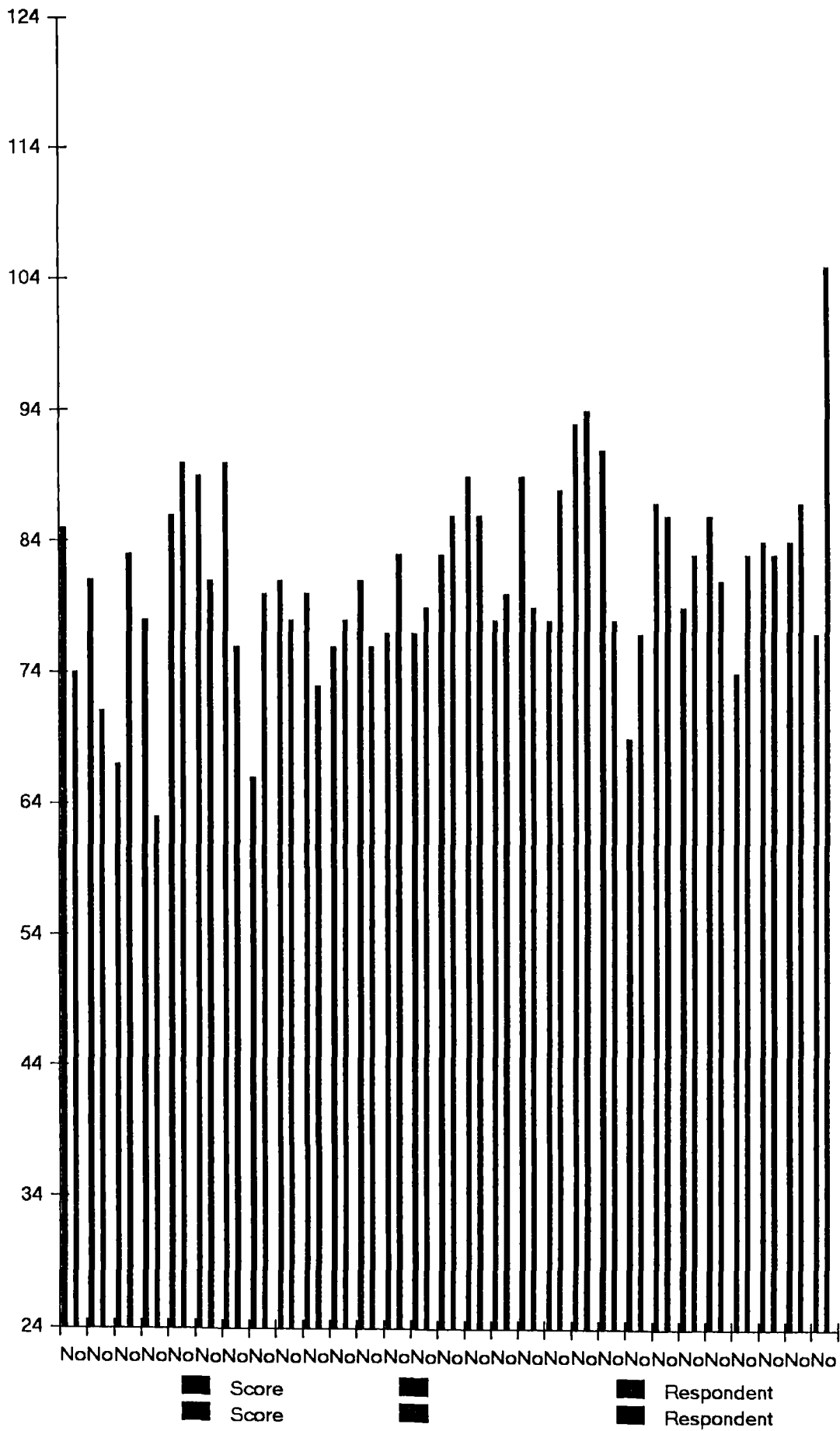
Respondent	Score
No 1	85
No 2	81
No 3	67
No 4	78
No 5	86
No 6	89
No 7	90
No 8	66
No 9	81
No 10	80
No 11	76
No 12	81
No 13	77
No 14	77
No 15	83
No 16	89
No 17	78
No 18	89
No 19	78
No 20	93
No 21	91
No 22	69
No 23	87
No 24	79
No 25	86
No 26	74
No 27	84
No 28	84
No 29	77

Respondent	Score
No 30	74
No 31	71
No 32	83
No 33	63
No 34	90
No 35	81
No 36	76
No 37	80
No 38	78
No 39	73
No 40	78
No 41	76
No 42	83
No 43	79
No 44	86
No 45	86
No 46	80
No 47	79
No 48	88
No 49	94
No 50	78
No 51	77
No 52	86
No 53	83
No 54	81
No 55	83
No 56	83
No 57	87
No 58	105

Respondent	Score
No 59	77
No 60	87
No 61	99
No 62	91
No 63	90
No 64	70
No 65	75
No 66	76
No 67	76
No 68	86
No 69	96
No 70	85
No 71	83
No 72	82
No 73	98
No 74	91
No 75	81
No 76	95
No 77	77
No 78	104
No 79	114
No 80	90
No 81	86
No 82	92
No 83	95
No 84	83
No 85	109
No 86	88
No 87	80

M= 83.58  
SD= 9.08

*THE LARGER SAMPLE'S ATTITUDE SCALE SCORES*



The larger sample's attitude scale scores

Question	Yes	No	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	NA*
No. 1	80%	20%									0%
No. 2	80%	20%									0%
No. 3	92%	7%									1%
No. 4			1%	53%	6%	49%					0%
No. 5	49%	48%									3%
No. 6			26%	9%	23%						54%
No. 7	46%	40%									14%
No. 8			0%	48%	39%	9%					4%
No. 9	33%	59%									8%
No. 10	7%	90%									3%
No. 11	33%	54%									13%
No. 12	98%	0%									2%
No. 13			60%	7%	34%	47%	29%	45%	24%	75%	2%
No. 14	78%	20%									2%
No. 15			75%	22%							3%
No. 16	61%	38%									1%
No. 17	69%	30%									1%
No. 18			7%	1%	25%	47%	45%	5%			1%
No. 19			11%	28%	14%	41%					6%
No. 20			37%	3%	9%	49%					2%
No. 21	43%	48%									9%
No. 22	25%	70%									5%
No. 23			36%	46%	38%	17%					31%
No. 24	10%	86%									4%
No. 25			28%	47%	25%	48%					16%
No. 26	80%	17%									3%
No. 27			2%	15%	82%						1%
No. 28			8%	24%	67%						1%

Total respondents: 87

NA\*: % of respondents who did not answer.

**RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE GIVEN  
TO THE LARGER SAMPLE OF TEACHERS**

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