

**Towards an Understanding of Presence in Teaching:  
Having and Being**

Submitted by Gillian Umpleby to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education.

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*Gillian Umpleby*

## Abstract

The study reported in this thesis investigates the phenomenon of 'presence' in teaching. Past research suggests that the relationship between the teacher and student is the "*keystone in student achievement, motivation and engagement and in their capacity to trust what they know*" (Midgley et al, 1989; Pianta, 1999; Roeser et al, 2000; cited in Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006: 266). Despite this, a comprehensive review of the literature has revealed that the notion of 'presence', offering a holistic, relational, situated and dynamic lens through which to explore the essential elements of classroom interaction, has been strangely neglected to date in the educational research domain (Kornelsen, 2006; Meijer et al 2009; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). Moreover, in many teaching milieus, despite there being so little clarity about what the notion of 'presence' means in teaching terms, it appears as an observational criterion in both initial and developmental teacher education programmes, where it can be used to make judgements about teachers at different stages of their careers.

Contextualised within an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) school over a nine month period on site, this phenomenological study employs individual and focus group interviews with teachers, teacher educators and students, alongside classroom observations and post-observation discussions. Findings generated by the study offer a new depth of understanding about the multi-dimensionality and complexity inherent in the notion of 'presence' in teaching and allow a critical interrogation of the ways in which it is currently being used in a school context. This highlights the potential power it has as a pedagogic construct and reveals a paradoxical duality, intrinsic to the ways in which it was construed; making it more suitable for developmental than assessment purposes.

In short, this study offers a valuable holistic and existential contribution to understanding the nature of teaching, by augmenting the ways in which teachers and teaching have been construed to date. In addition, by illuminating the inherent ambiguity and paradoxes in the complex, dynamic and multi-layered meaning of 'Presence in Teaching', the findings have strong implications for teaching practice, teacher education programmes and in

particular for the practice of teacher observation in respect of observer awareness, understanding and development; all of which are discussed in the final chapter of the thesis.

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## DEFINITION OF TERMS

### **CELTA**

The Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults is '*an introductory course for candidates who have little or no previous English Language teaching experience*' (CambridgeESOL, 2010: 74). This course is also run for teachers who have some experience of teaching but little previous training in TESOL. It is an internationally recognised course for beginner ESOL teachers.

### **CPD**

Continuing Professional Development, through which teachers continue to learn about teaching as a 'life-long process' over the course of their teaching careers.

### **DELTA**

The Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults is an internationally recognised advanced course for practising ESOL teachers, who are developing their professional practice.

### **DOS**

Director of Studies, whose responsibility it is to oversee all aspects of the curriculum and the teaching and learning involved in it.

### **ESOL**

English for Speakers of Other Languages.

### **INSET**

In-Service Training for Teachers, which normally consists of half-day or full-day workshops or courses aimed at developing the skill sets of teachers, for example 'interactive white board training'.

### **MEd (TESOL)**

Master of Education (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)

### ***Teacher Train(er)(ing)/Teacher Educat(or)(ing)***

From my personal experience, 'training' is generally used to describe the process of imparting information, giving instructions or modelling different teaching practices to improve skills or competencies, whilst 'education' is generally used to describe the process of learning through experience to gain understanding. However, in this thesis, the terms 'teacher train(er)(ing)' and 'teacher educat(or)(ing)' are used inter-changeably, as they were used inter-changeably by the participants during the research study to describe the ways in which 'becoming teachers' were supported during their developmental process of 'becoming', as both pre- and in-service teachers.

### ***TESOL***

TESOL means Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. It includes both Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and Teaching English as a Second Language (ESL).

# CHAPTER ONE

## *Introduction*

The focus of the study reported in this thesis is a phenomenological inquiry I conducted in order to investigate the ways in which the notion of 'presence' is experienced and perceived by those who work and study in a school classroom context. I chose to contextualise this study in a school where ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) is taught as this is where my personal expertise and experience lie. Moreover, it was in this particular context that I first became aware of the apparent tensions between the ways 'presence' was described in a written syllabus and the ways it was being used in practice. Hence, it was, in essence, the potential tensions encapsulated in using a term such as 'presence', with its essentially philosophical roots, in a practical and grounded context such as teaching, which inspired me to find out more about how its meaning could be interpreted, understood and portrayed in practice and what this could mean to the teaching profession.

### **1.1 The evolution of 'presence' as an educational construct**

Since the seventies, there has been heated debate in teaching and teacher education circles over whether priority should be given to the technical competence of a teacher or to their personal growth (Meijer et al., 2009: 297). This tension was particularly highlighted in the differences between competency based teacher education (CBTE) and humanistic based teacher education (HBTE) (Joyce, 1975). According to Meijer et al (2009: 298), CBTE aimed to provide concrete and observable criteria of good teaching, forming what it believed was a basis for effective teacher training programmes. Long lists of trainable skills came from measuring the process-product relationship between teacher behaviour and student learning outcomes and formed the foundation of many teacher education programmes.

However, there was criticism (see Combs et al, 1974) that this approach was too technically orientated for a humanistic type of vocation such as teaching which cannot be measured solely through scientific data as it involves human

beings with their inherent anomalies, emotions, and idiosyncrasies. Moreover, there were questions about the extent to which such theory could actually help teachers in practice make the decisions they needed to make 'on their feet' in the heat of the moment. HBTE was seen as a more human approach to exploring what it actually means to be a teacher in the reality of any classroom situation. According to Meijer et al (2009: 298), HBTE *'tried to promote student teachers' reflection on such questions as "who am I?", "what kind of a teacher do I want to be?", and "how do I see my role as a teacher?"*.

Moving the focus of this debate now from that of general education to the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) which provides the context for this study; it seems that this shift in thinking has also played out in the TESOL arena. For, whilst traditionally teacher learning in TESOL was traditionally construed as applying theory to practice, it is now perhaps more aptly construed as the *'theorization of practice'* (Richards, 2008: 164) whereby the nature of practitioner knowledge is made visible, so that it can be elaborated, explored and understood (Richards, 2008: 164). Moreover, although TESOL is a relatively recent arrival in the educational arena and *'in the form that we know it today, dates from the 1960s'* (Richards, 2008:159), it has also had to respond to the same key issues which have arisen in general education fields regarding the relationship between practical teaching skills and academic knowledge. Accordingly, it has also had to address the evolving dichotomy between a technical rational type of approach to teaching and teacher learning and a socially constructed approach, which highlights an exploration of the beliefs, theories and the various sources of knowledge which underpin the things teachers do and the decisions they make.

So, in TESOL, in the late 1980s, as a response to such changes in understanding about the nature of second language teaching and learning, alongside a recognition of the increasingly urgent need for competent language teachers worldwide, a rethink regarding the knowledge base and instructional practices supporting teacher education became essential (Richards, 2008: 158). At the same time, critical perspectives on teacher education highlighted challenging tensions between theory and practice, which led to an uneasy truce through which such difficulties *'[were] sometimes resolved by distinguishing*

*'teacher training' from 'teacher development'* (Richards, 2008: 160) Specifically, Richards (2008: 160) describes 'teacher training' as providing novice teachers with the entry-level teaching skills they need for a specific teaching context and 'teacher development' as providing the individual teacher with longer-term development over time. 'Good teaching' was generally still seen as the mastery of a set of skills or competencies (Richards, 2008: 160) and at this time, qualifications in TESOL were typically offered by teacher training colleges or by organisations such as the British Council, who delivered 'teacher training' through courses such as the CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults).

In addition, traditionally, any problems teachers have with learning have been viewed as evolving from the need to improve the effectiveness of their delivery (Richards, 2008: 164). Singh and Richards (2006) have even gone so far as to suggest that the failure of teachers to 'acquire' knowledge is often seen as being due to their resistance to change (Richards, 2008: 164) and that the perceived solution was believed to be to 'overcome' teachers' resistance to change (Singh and Richards, 2006, cited in Richards, 2008: 164). However, attitudes towards teacher education seem to be changing, in tune with the growing interest in the significance of the social world to learning in general and that includes teacher learning. This is reflected by Richards (2008), who suggests that:

*By the present time the contrast between training and development has been replaced by a reconsideration of the nature of teacher learning, which is viewed as a form of socialization into the professional thinking and practices of a community of practice (p. 160).*

Such a view sees teacher learning as relationally and socially construed, context specific and adaptive and yet still begs the question of how teachers are, or become, able to handle the demands of the moment and demonstrate the type of 'artistry' (Schön, 1987; Stenhouse, 1984) they require in order to deal with the wide scope of complexity now recognised as inherent in the teaching profession.

Moreover, such an 'artistic' view of teaching questions the assumptive values placed on '*externally imposed mandates or norms of "best practice"*' (Rodgers, 2010: 45) and forefronts instead the "*civic capacity*" (Rodgers, 2010: 45), creativity, moral agency and humanity of teachers as essential instruments in a teacher's capacity to make the right decisions, take the right action and seize available opportunities for learning. In essence, this view of teaching emphasises the relationship teachers have with their own sense of self first and foremost, as the strength and health of the connection between teacher and students is '*nurtured or jeopardized by the teacher's relationship to herself*' (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006: 271). So, possibly in response to the increasingly visible need over recent years to explore those critical facets of teaching and teacher learning which evolve within the relational and situational dimensions of the teaching and learning processes; the notion of 'presence' in teaching has emerged as a construct to be seriously considered in teacher education debates and discussions. In short, the educational field appears to be slowly awakening to the potentiality of this phenomenon as a means of providing invaluable insights into the ways in which learning is facilitated in the classroom environment through the holistic presence of the teacher, rather than through modelled, learned modes of behaviour or ways of thinking.

As a teacher, I personally support this more '*human*' and '*artistic*' view of what teaching and being a teacher means. I have been involved in the teaching profession for over twenty years. During this time, I have certainly found that my personal and professional life journeys have somehow become melded together. This merging of 'me the teacher' and 'me the person' has emanated, I believe, from drawing on both personal and pedagogic sources of knowledge and wisdom in the classroom. In particular, this interweaving of knowledge(s) has brought into clearer focus the importance of 'being me, whilst teaching'. Such understanding has not been easily won; it has been gained through many years of soul searching and is still 'a process in motion'. I find that I am learning more about myself both as a person and as a teacher every time I step into the classroom.

In the early days, as a novice teacher, my focus was purely on my performance. I could somehow hear and see myself as a teacher from a distance, forever

berating myself for any discrepancies with my 'ideal teacher' facade. I felt distanced from my students, perhaps not even really there at times. I thought the key to being a good teacher lay in getting the techniques right. Was I talking too much or too little? Were my instructions clear? Was my timing on track? I can see now that there was little of me per se in the classroom; to me then, the role was clear-cut and impersonal. From my own personal experience, in those early days, being a teacher meant demonstrating the skills modelled during my initial teacher training. I was painfully shy, terrified of somehow being found lacking by the students and unable to let myself really be me in the classroom. I realise now that only a part of me was there in the classroom at that time and that part was reduced to a shell; a shallow reflection of the techniques I had learned. I had quite simply reduced myself to technique. I did not dare to let myself, as a human being, fill the relational void between the students and myself. I dared not get closer to them, in case I would then no longer be 'the teacher' with 'the authority'.

However, a few years later in my twenty-year career as a teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to adult students, I took a couple of years away from teaching to become a qualified therapeutic counsellor, using person-centred therapy techniques. Whilst acknowledging that counselling and teaching demanded very different skills, techniques and knowledge, I realised that some of the self-understanding I had acquired and embodied through the deep reflection and self-actualising activities needed to become a person-centred counsellor, had actually also helped me to become a better teacher and personal tutor. In fact, on returning to TESOL after learning to become a person-centred counsellor, I noticed that my classes were generally more energised and positive. At times, they even seemed to take on a life of their own; whilst fulfilling my teaching and learning aims in ways I had not previously planned or anticipated. Such episodes were hard to anticipate and often seemed to happen spontaneously. Moreover, it seemed that an essential element of such an occurrence involved the students themselves also being fully open to participate in the dynamics of the class, both in their interaction with me and with their peers.



Slowly, I came to realise that being authentic in the classroom, with an ability to give a genuine and heartfelt human response rather than just playing a role or relying on technique was an essential aspect of teaching for me. I found that not only were such experiences positive and energising for both myself and my students, but I also personally felt less exhausted as I was able to relax into being myself whilst I was teaching. My students also seemed more relaxed; their participation became more evident and animated; they were more willing to ask for help both from myself and their peers and I sensed a more positive attitude towards learning.

As I became more aware of what was happening in the classroom, both in terms of the learning taking place and the more negative manipulative games of attention-seeking and distraction, I found that I was more able to pay attention to what was going on around me as well as inside my mind. I realised that by being as fully aware and engaged as possible at any given moment whilst in the classroom, I could be more in tune with the situation and more in relation with my students. As my understanding of myself and my own unique personal classroom presence developed, I grew into myself both personally and as a teacher.

In addition, if, as it appeared, this combined configuration of my personal and professional energies had the power to initiate, support and at times deflate the positive learning dynamic in the classroom, I started to understand how integral my presence as the teacher was to the ways in which this configuration of energies took shape and was able to wax and wane. I discovered that, for me, being present initially meant a conscious and intentional awareness of what was happening around me at any given moment. This, in time and with experience, grew into a more instinctive, embodied, sensitive attuning to the context in which I found myself. Through being present, I also found that I could foster a truly positive learning space within which my students and I began to experience teaching and learning as a complex, exciting, at times of course challenging, but essentially human activity, rather than a wearisome duty.

So, as has become apparent through this personal narrative; becoming a person-centred counsellor was an intense awareness-raising experience for me

which had a considerable influence on my teaching career. Before learning about, reflecting on and practicing the core conditions which underlay the principles of the person-centred approach to counselling, I felt as though I was struggling relationally in my teaching. However, the understanding gained through my counselling training and practice have emphasised how essential it is to connect with others personally with a warmth and openness born of genuine interest, empathic awareness and positive regard. I believe that promoting a warm, positive and energetic relational climate is fundamentally important in the educational domain, as it can provide a catalyst for personal growth and transformational change in both the teacher and the learner, who then discover for themselves the wealth of personal possibilities they have available.

In short, the doctrine I discovered by becoming a person-centred counsellor and embodying the therapeutic model initiated and inspired by the work of Carl Rogers (1902 - 1987) informed, expanded and grounded my evolving humanist philosophical approach towards education. Such an approach seems to be ever more essential in the information driven world in which we live. As man looks to technology for the answers, those human traits of 'being with another' infused with a spirit of care, authenticity, immediacy and empathy often seem to have little value and yet their transformative potential is priceless.

### ***My evolving humanist philosophy of education***

In all honesty, learning about the work of Carl Rogers (1902 - 1987) was a life changing event for me as an educational professional. His contributions in terms of the key principles he champions regarding the importance of sensitive listening, empathic response, congruence, unconditional positive regard and 'presence' within the fields of theory, practice and research in psychotherapy are considered to be '*universal and foundational*' (Cain, 2007: 3). Certainly, such tenets of practice have now become firmly established within the educational field and have inspired the work of the National Consortium for Humanistic Education (NCHE) which draws on Roger's (1957) principles of empathy, congruence and positive regard (Heim, 2012: 290) in its teaching programs. Furthermore, Rogers (1983), has found that employing such core

attitudinal qualities in the teaching domain have a positive impact in this field, leading to improvements in attitudes, discipline problems, physical health, attendance, IQ and cognitive growth (Heim, 2012: 290).

In addition, Baldwin and Satir (1987: 50) suggest that Carl Rogers himself provided a prime example of the core values of this type of relational stance, in the 'mode of being' he manifested in his therapeutic relationship with his clients. They described this as his 'presence', of which Rogers (1957) himself says:

*....it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other. Our relationship transcends itself and has become part of something larger. Profound growth and healing and energy are present (cited by Baldwin & Satir, 1987: 50).*

Personally speaking, I have certainly found that developing a philosophical teaching approach underpinned by the humanistic principles I embraced in my counselling practice has been practically invaluable in creating growth and energy in my classes. Just as Rogers (1957) described in his therapeutic relationship, they somehow become part of something larger as a type of '*group dynamic*' seems to transcend the initial boundaries of the class. Listening sensitively, responding empathically, being genuine and congruent, and giving positive regard relationally are, I believe, key aspects of teaching in this way. Moreover, I have found that by developing a strong relational climate; both illuminative and transformational dialogic encounters have naturally evolved in my work both as a teacher with my students and as a counsellor with clients.

What is more, by embracing the core values championed by Rogers (1957) within both the personal and professional facets of my life, they have become encapsulated within my presence in respect to every aspect of the way I live and work. They have become an integral part of who I am. In this way, the evolving humanistic philosophy I have embraced in my professional life has, I believe, imbued my presence with a deeply humanistic dimension which now resides at its core. It is this 'life philosophy' which has, quite simply, been integral to every step of the work I have undertaken for this study. In essence, underpinning the heart and soul of this enquiry with its spirit and infusing every aspect of the work with its unique flavour, it is born fundamentally from a deep

relational sensitivity, inspired initially by that encounter on the boundaries between 'being a counsellor' and 'being a teacher'.

## **1.2 The study**

### **1.2.1 *What is this thing called presence?***

So, as I have described, my deep interest in the notion of 'presence in teaching' has crystallised from my deep regard for the essentiality of a teacher's 'growth-promoting' presence, firmly supported by the work of Carl Rogers. It is further encapsulated in three core beliefs I hold about teaching, as I will now outline.

Firstly, I believe that the complexity and multi-faceted nature of teaching makes such a myriad of demands on the teacher that it is impossible to conceive that intellect, technical skills or competence type behaviours alone can provide for them.

Secondly, I believe that it is from an existential 'core', rather than through teaching 'performance', that teachers are able to connect with their students at a 'human' level. It is, I speculate, through this human connection that teachers and students encounter each other authentically. I would further surmise that it is the depth and the authenticity and genuineness of this encounter which enriches the 'space' between teacher and the student in such a way that both are able to seek, negotiate and find mutual purpose within any teaching and learning experience.

Thirdly, I believe that the notion of 'presence' has been misrepresented in many ways in the field of education and myths about its meaning have led to it often being misconstrued as merely a projection of personality or a quality or characteristic which teachers need in order to engage their students, and without which they are deemed to be somehow lacking as teachers.

Moreover, as I have endeavoured to illustrate through the different ways in which teachers and teaching have been construed, as well as the narrative of my personal journey as a teacher; I have always been aware of the importance of my presence in the classroom and yet I have also always sensed its inherent mystery. Recalling how I have, at times, felt alone in my struggles as a teacher,

I realise now that I would have appreciated being assisted in my desire for deeper understanding about what the notion of 'presence' really meant for my practice much earlier on in my career. Deeper understanding might perhaps have reassured me that it was not, in reality, some mythical and shadowy yardstick, which I didn't really comprehend, and yet which I sensed could potentially impact on my professional future.

For this reason, I believe that the meaning of 'presence' in teaching needs to be fully interrogated, so that it can potentially be addressed in the world of teacher education at all stages of becoming a teacher, from initial teacher training to on-going professional development. Moreover, I believe that, as a construct, it needs to be 'de-mystified' in some way, so that it is no longer something which appears desirable and yet often seems to be out of reach and inaccessible for practicing teachers. Certainly, for me, being offered an avenue to explore the notion of presence deeply, in the early stages of becoming a teacher, could have helped me to understand some of the personal and professional dilemmas I was facing, reassured me that I was not alone in my plight and possibly helped me to rebalance myself at those times when I became distracted by my inner emotional world and was anxious that my connection with my students had somehow been lost.

To my mind, a traditionally technical type of approach to the nature of teaching has meant that some of the intricate depth and complexity, which nestle tacitly within its interlocking web of systematic or contextual elements, have been overlooked in some professional teaching and teacher learning milieus. I believe this is clearly illustrated by the limited and somewhat superficial way in which 'presence' tends to be depicted in teacher education programs. So, whilst it is certainly true that the notion of 'presence' has firmly established itself in the real world of teacher education; even here, it still appears to be represented by generalisations and competency-type behaviours, despite the developments in thinking I have previously described about what 'being a teacher' really means. Specifically in the world of TESOL, I am referring to its inclusion in a number of teacher education programs, where it is referred to as 'professional presence' or 'classroom presence', which I will now describe and critically interrogate in turn.

## 1.2.2 Professional presence

Trinity College London is a well-known college which offers training in TESOL. In its '*Licentiate Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*', under their 'Assessing the Classroom Teaching' section (p.56), the first of the categories is entitled 'Professional presence' (see Appendix 1);

*The candidate succeeds in creating a positive and motivating learning environment. The relationship with the group and individuals is professional and encouraging. Non-verbal communication is effective in conveying meaning to the students. Clear voice projection enhances teacher talk and listener confidence. Teacher talking time is appropriate. Empathy with the students' difficulties and learning styles is evident. The candidate is assertive when appropriate (TCL, 2007: 56).*

Firstly, whilst listing the competencies needed to have 'professional presence', it is not clear here exactly what is meant by 'professional', which can of course be interpreted in a myriad of ways. Atkinson and Claxton (2000) draw on the work of Hargreaves (1993) to describe a different approach to the meaning of professional, when they describe an intuitive type of '*professional common sense knowledge*' (p. 102). Professional knowledge, in this sense, consists of well-established formulas a teacher uses for organizing and structuring the classroom environment (Atkinson & Claxton, 2000: 102). Such 'formulae' are uniquely personal to a teacher and can typically include the use of specific routines, such as management routines, support routines and exchange routines (Leinhardt et al, cited in Atkinson & Claxton, 2000: 102).

On the other hand, John (2000: 98), depicts such professional routines more as '*recipes*' which are based on judgement and reason and are underpinned by a unique and personal system of values and principles. He believes that novice teachers can use such recipes to construct solutions for commonplace classroom problems in their own way, according to their own judgement and reason, which they can then build into their own ways of doing things. Furthermore, Gendlin (1981, cited in Atkinson & Claxton, 2000: 103) points out that it is essential for teachers to focus on feelings and practice simultaneously so that they are able to '*notice the moment*'. I would argue from this that

teachers are flexible beings, who are able to find their own way through the maze of classroom activity (Atkinson & Claxton, 2000: 103) by making decisions which are informed by their intuitive senses as well as by their intellectual processes. It would appear that such intuitive practice would be impossible to categorise and delineate within a fixed set of criteria, such as those outlined.

### **1.2.3 Classroom presence**

The term 'classroom presence' is another way of defining presence in teacher education programmes. For example, in the University of Cambridge DELTA (Diploma in English language teaching to adults) syllabus specifications, in classroom observation assessment, under section 4 'Managing and supporting learning' (p.12) 'Classroom presence' is mentioned as follows (see Appendix 2):

*Classroom presence (is the) ability to gain and hold attention, to give clear unambiguous messages, to listen to, interpret and respond to what students say, to show support, understanding and empathy where appropriate (CambridgeESOL, 2008: 13).*

In the University of Cambridge CELTA (Certificate in English language teaching to adults) syllabus and assessment overview, in Unit 5 'Developing teaching skills and professionalism' (p.17), 'Classroom presence and *control*' are combined and described as '*the ability to establish and maintain a good rapport with students at all times and foster a constructive learning atmosphere*' (CambridgeESOL, 2010: 17) (see Appendix 3). In this syllabus, the novice teacher is portrayed as the holder of power (or control) within the relational dynamics of the classroom and is expected to use such power to foster '*a constructive learning atmosphere*'. There seems to be an implicit understanding within these specifications that, as a novice teacher, classroom presence inevitably includes a degree of control, although this is not mentioned at the higher 'diploma' level, where it appears to be more a case of 'gaining and holding attention'.

However, I have found that the ways in which I, as a teacher, have built a rapport with the class and 'gained and held' their attention is uniquely personal to the ways in which I and the students in that particular class interact. I have also found that developing a sense of trust is essential within any genuine

interpersonal relationship, particularly a pedagogic one. For teachers to develop a nurturing and safe environment within the classroom culture, they need to have developed the ability to trust their own judgement first (Atkinson & Claxton, 2000: 55) and it is this that leads to a sense of 'control' of self or self-regulation which is reflected in the classroom dynamics and within their relationship with the students.

So, I would argue that in reality, the notion of 'classroom presence' refers not to a set of competencies but rather to a mode of '*being*', in the fullest and deepest sense. By this, I mean that it is by accessing uniquely personal and professional multi-faceted layers of understanding from the infinite number of sources available at any moment in time, that teachers are able to find, establish and forge connections through the pedagogic space between themselves and their students. I would surmise that whilst such a space is context specific and relies heavily on the students also being open to their teachers' desire to connect, it is here that the potential for learning can be realised. In this way, by being present, teachers are able to reach out and respond to their learners needs in the best way possible at any moment in time.

#### **1.2.4      *The idiosyncratic nature of presence in teaching and teacher education***

As I have mentioned, 'presence' appears to be an important construct in teaching. Teacher educators can make vital decisions regarding a teacher's competency on the basis of their perceptions of a teacher's classroom presence. 'Presence' features in documentation concerning the observation of ESOL teachers and it is clearly deemed important in the TESOL community as it is codified and described in specific terms. It has become a tool for gate-keeping and decisions on whether a person is deemed suitable to become an ESOL teacher can be made on the basis of how a teacher's presence is perceived during classroom observations.

Moreover, from my professional experience, there is a stark differential between the ways in which 'presence' is portrayed in professional conversations and the ways in which it is written down. Often teacher educators talk about a teacher having got '*it*'. However, '*it*' is so non-specific that it can be open to a multitude



of interpretations. Using the word '*it*' can even be used as a way of sowing the seeds of judgement towards a particular individual which have nothing to do with the intended use of the written criterion.

So, personally speaking, it seems unfair to include a notion such as presence as an observation criterion in any syllabus without a clear idea of what it actually means to those who embody it every day within the classroom context. I fear that without a clear idea of what it means in context, through an empirical research study such as the one that is reported in this thesis, it will remain open to misinterpretation and generalisation. This could lead to it being used as a measuring stick for something which doesn't actually exist; something which perhaps actually inherently belongs within the socially constructed folklore of teaching communities and as such is indefinable in any measurable sense. In the words of Polt (1999: 71) '*the way in which the entity we are interpreting is to be conceived can [only] be drawn from the entity itself, or the interpretation can force the entity into concepts to which it is opposed in its manner of Being*'. He continues by arguing that '*we must never allow our presuppositions to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather.....in terms of the things themselves*' (Polt, 1999: 71).

### **1.3 Aim of the study**

To fill the gap in knowledge I have just described, the aim of this study is to explore what 'presence in teaching' means to those involved in teaching, by paying particular attention to the critically important connections teaching staff have with their own sense of self, other teaching staff, students, content and their own pedagogical ideologies. For the sake of clarity, I am using the term 'pedagogical ideology' here in a similar way to van Manen who describes how a teacher, '*in addition to the "ability to respond" actually acts in a manner that is responsible and thus morally accountable and defensible in terms of pedagogical perspective, framework or rationale*' (van Manen, 2006b: 15). Such perspectives, frameworks or rationales tend to be deeply personal to each and every teacher and the ways in which they interpret, embody and enact them. As Polanyi (1958/62) suggests '*such is man's relations to his ideals; he can know them only by freely following them*' (p. 377).

Indeed, within any collective group of professionals over time, a type of 'cohering' of personal resources takes place; something Wenger (1998: 82) describes as a *'shared repertoire'*. Such a repertoire includes *'words, tools, ways of doing things, gestures, actions and concepts'* (Wenger, 1998: 83), which over time become accepted as part of that collective practice. In this way, meanings can be socially negotiated until they become reified into collective 'truths'. Such 'truths' can then become the 'ways we do things' which are not questioned as they blend into the background of habitual routines and conventions.

However, despite this tendency towards reification within social groups, historically derived social interpretation does not necessarily constrain the formation of new emergent meanings, as socially constructed meaning is itself always inherently ambiguous. This leaves any construct open to fresh insights, however deeply its meanings have become contextually engrained within a social group. Polanyi (1958/62: 374) in his discourse on *'Personal Knowledge'* refers to this when he reminds us of *'our capacity for continually discovering new interpretations of experience which reveal a deeper understanding of reality'*. From this, it follows that new meanings can emerge as a consequence of a fuller, deeper inquiry into any construct or notion. In fact, at times such as these, existing tried and tested routines might suddenly and spontaneously take new, possibly unexpected directions. This could happen when, for instance, professional conventions are being looked at in a fresh light or reflected on from a different angle. In this way, fresh meaning can be inspired, renegotiated and created from the very ambiguity such meaning inherently embodies.

In other words, helping teaching professionals understand how they experience their own selves and their connectedness to their students can, in turn, help them perceive how they might in turn be experienced by others. According to Bolton (2005: 121), such understanding and development can be encouraged by investigating the hidden depths of previously unexplored metaphoric systems. Such investigation can then serve to illuminate and highlight the impact of agency on the lives of others; an aspect which deserves continued and deep consideration by those involved in any pedagogic relationship.

Furthermore, I have found that it is very important to gather multi-voiced perspectives of what the notion of 'presence' means to the different people involved in the classroom context. As discussed, for becoming teachers, 'presence' is particularly important as it is included in the teaching syllabus as a criterion against which they could be judged during classroom observations. It could therefore have a serious impact on their teaching career; as a student teacher, for instance, one teacher educator's decision as to whether or not they have 'presence' could reflect in choices about whether teaching is a suitable profession for them to pursue. This could lead to worries about what could happen if they were deemed not to have 'presence' and how they could go about setting this right and somehow get 'presence'. For more experienced teachers, judgements on their presence could impact on their confidence in themselves as teachers. Again, if they were not deemed to have the attributes necessary to tick the 'presence' box, this could lead to questions about how they could work on this in order to acquire 'presence' so that they could fulfil this criterion. In this study, I therefore deemed it to be essential that teachers were given a voice and a space in which they could discuss what 'presence' meant to them as they were the ones, who were '*at the chalk-face*' in the classroom.

Moreover, it was equally essential to gather data about the meaning of 'presence' from those involved in teacher education, as they held the power over decisions made about a teacher's presence. It was imperative to know how teacher educators perceived the notion of 'presence' to be meaningful in teaching; whether they conceptualised and quantified it to render it concrete in assessment terms and if so, how they did this. Moreover, this perhaps more 'distanced' perspective they offer could then be compared to that of those who were actually 'doing' the teaching. Finally, it was clear that students also had to be given the opportunity to voice their experiences and perceptions (in this study, they provided a secondary source of data; the primary sources of data came from the teachers and teacher educators). This was essential as it was the students, who could offer a source of understanding about the ways in which a teacher's presence could have an impact on them as learners and their learning journey.

So, to summarise, the main aim of this study is to explore and probe deeply into emergent interpretations of meaning by interrogating, eliciting and co-constructing the ways in which members of a teaching community frame their understandings of the notion of 'presence in teaching'. By doing so, this thesis aspires to establish a heuristic ensemble of essential facets considered to be integral within the notion of presence in teaching which will together form a framework, register and repertoire of vocabulary which can act as tools to make this ethereal notion more easily accessible to the teaching and research communities alike. This, in turn, will provide teachers and teacher educators with a means of discussing it in more tangible ways and offer the research community a foundation from which to explore it further.

Finally, through this inquiry, this thesis aspires to enhance awareness of the situated relational dimensions and agency inherent within the act of teaching by exploring the ways in which these are embodied within the construct of 'presence'. By doing this, it further aims to offer fresh insights into the embodied, relational and situated nature of teaching which can in turn inform those involved in teacher education and teacher development.

## **1.4 Key significances of the study**

From the above, it is clear that this study into the notion of 'presence in teaching' has strong theoretical, methodological and practical significances for both education in general and TESOL specifically. I will now outline these in turn.

### **1.4.1 *Theoretical significance***

Theoretically, this study seeks to build on and synthesise the seemingly fragmented ways in which presence has been looked at through different discourses. Essentially, through such discourses, it has been construed as a 'mode of being' by means of which teachers demonstrate a strong conscious awareness and sensitivity (Meijer et al., 2009: 298); as a situational state of knowing in which teachers are able to react to the unexpected and the unanticipated (Kornelsen, 2006: 74); and finally as a deep mutual inter-connectedness with the students, providing a mode of engaging and inspiring

(see Hill, 2006; Meijer et al., 2009; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). By bringing such discourses together, this study can make a significant contribution to understanding the ways in which teachers construe their personal and professional knowledge, coined the '*hidden side of the work*' (Freeman, 2002: 1) .

This can, in turn, serve to support and develop the idea that teachers' personal practical knowledge is a '*moral, affective and aesthetic way of knowing life's educational situations*' (Connelly et al, 1997: 59) by highlighting the dialectical situation and dynamic embodied within a teacher's classroom presence. This suggests how whilst some 'ways of being' in the classroom can be observed, others are not easily accessible to the observer and yet form an integral part of the ways in which a teacher interacts with the students and the classroom environment.

So, by illuminating the ways in which teachers' personal and professional sources of knowledge can be manifested through their situational, normative, relational and reflective as well as practical ways of being in the classroom, this study has the potential to offer a unified and holistic theoretical approach to recognising how the personal and professional aspects of teaching entwine within a teacher's classroom presence as well as what this means in real terms. In this way, this study seeks to offer an invaluable resource for exploring an understanding of teaching and teachers that stands in sharp contrast to the more instrumental approaches to teaching that currently tend to prevail.

#### **1.4.2        *Methodological significance***

I have found three empirical studies on 'teacher presence' and extracts from these are included in the next chapter. They are qualitative in nature, drawing on papers and stories from student teachers, interview data and stories from a group of teacher educators (Meijer et al., 2009; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006; Stieha & Raider-Roth, 2012). Until this study, no-one has attempted to provide insights into the ways in which the notion of presence is meaningful within a teaching community, at both an individual and a group level, whilst confirming and extending what was found through participatory observation and related

discussion. So, one of the major intended strengths of this study is that it can augment the scant research currently available on 'teacher presence' through a new methodological approach which confirms, extends and grounds narrative descriptions co-constructed through interviews and focus groups, by combining them with the illuminating power of observation. This can provide a richness and depth to the findings with which any reader involved in the educational field can identify, thus bringing together practice and theory in ways which are potentially accessible to practitioners and theorists alike.

### **1.4.3 Practical significance**

It seems to me to be blatantly apparent that educational standardisation can fundamentally ignore the essentially human, multi-dimensional complexity inherent in the vocation of teaching and yet the desire to measure and rationalise the art of teaching is still deeply embedded in many current teaching trends. Perhaps for this reason, despite the fact that there are increasing calls to recognise and acknowledge the construct of teacher presence, it is not often taught explicitly in teacher education programmes or talked about by pre- and in-service supervisors (Liston, 1995). This study can potentially rectify this shortfall by exploring what the holistic and human notion of 'presence' in teaching actually means to the teachers who experience it through their practice on a daily basis and to the teacher educators and teachers who perceive it through teacher and peer observations. By making this phenomenon more visible and accessible, the findings of this study will enable teacher educators and teachers to talk about presence in more explicit and meaningful ways. I would argue that such awareness-raising is essential if novice and developing teachers as well as teacher educators are to understand what is expected of them in real terms and how this appertains to the actuality of their classroom practice.

Furthermore, in the field of TESOL, as I indicated earlier, a crucial need for further knowledge of the nature of teaching ESOL has been identified by Richards (2008), who suggests that a rethinking in the realm of Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) is currently evolving as '*a response to changes in our understanding of the nature of SLTE*' (p.158). Richards (2008:

163) makes further reference to this by stressing that '*a third strand has often been missing from formulations of the core content of second language teacher education – namely the nature of [second language] teaching itself*'. By this, he refers to the processes whereby teachers of ESOL have to continually construct, negotiate and transform themselves (and their practices) within the classroom context. Freeman and others have also commented that the knowledge base of SLTE should be augmented by looking at the '*processes of teaching and teacher-learning*' (cited in Richards, 2008: 163) and Duff and Uchida (1997: 471) believe that in order to achieve their educational objectives, teachers of ESOL have to go through complex and dynamic processes, which some teachers seem to achieve more naturally than others. Such processes are inevitably embodied within and manifested through their classroom presence.

This study thus potentially provides invaluable insights for both general and ESOL teacher training and education. Moreover, this is the first research to date undertaken in this area in the field of TESOL, despite the fact that thousands of people each year in the UK take one of the many teacher training courses that are currently available (Brandt, 2008: 37). This does not of course include the many thousands of non-native speaker teachers around the world, who have become teachers of ESOL through other academic routes. In addition, making the notion of presence more accessible and helping raise professional consciousness of the ways in which presence is manifested through practice will help expert teachers and teacher educators verbalise what presence in teaching means to them, and offer a discourse framework through which they will be able to pass on their accumulated knowledge to novice teachers. This will have a considerable impact on teacher education, supervision, mentoring and observational practices.

### **Overview of the thesis**

In Chapter Two, I provide a conceptual framework for my research, incorporating a synopsis of the ways in which the notion of presence in teaching has been construed by academics, researchers and educational philosophers. This framework includes an enhanced model of teacher presence developed

from the findings of my master's dissertation study with a group of international ESOL teachers in 2009.

Chapter Three describes the design of the study. In it, I discuss the philosophical approaches taken, the ways in which these are embedded within the design, together with the research process itself and the ethical issues involved. I then provide an account of the ways in which I processed, analysed and interpreted the data.

Chapter Four provides an in-depth first level analysis of the ways in which the research participants articulated and narrated their perceptions and experiences of the meaning of 'presence in teaching'. These accounts are informed by two sets of semi-structured interviews undertaken with each teacher and teacher educator participant, together with extracts from their observations and discussions following their observations and insights from a group of students and teacher and teacher trainer focus groups.

Chapter Five then offers a composite, hermeneutically informed discussion of the findings reported in Chapter Four by exploring the notion of presence through two theoretical 'meta' lenses. Here, I argue that whilst 'presence' was often construed from a 'distanced' type of perspective offering what could be seen as a subjectively derived static appraisal of its manifestations in practice, a second lens offered a more 'existential' perspective on the meaning of presence. Through this second lens; presence in teaching was construed as something which was not always manifestly available for external appraisal. In contrast to the possible facade of 'having presence'; 'being present', an emergent form of presence, emanated from the personal and professional systems embodied within the teacher which were continually being negotiated in and through their teaching practice.

Finally, Chapter Six serves to provide explicit answers to the research question posed, by critically reflecting on the insights into the nature of 'presence in teaching' generated by the study and illustrating how these relate to and offer an original contribution to knowledge in this field. I will complete this chapter by giving my views on the implications of this study in terms of its theoretical and methodological insights, how these can be applied practically in teaching and



teacher education, and finally how the research process had an unexpected bi-product in that it offered key insights into the ways in which professional development can be supported through a participative research activity such as the one embedded within this research inquiry. I will conclude by discussing the potential power 'presence' has as a construct in educational terms and what I believe to be the limitations and counter-balancing strengths of this study. I will finally close this thesis with my thoughts on possible next steps regarding future directions for research in this field and some reflections on what this research journey has meant to me personally.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Towards a conceptual understanding of presence*

#### **Introduction**

My aim, in this chapter, is to review the existing knowledge base currently available in the literature regarding the notion of 'presence in teaching'.

In truth, I have found that constructing a strong conceptual framework has been an essential element in making sense of my unfolding understanding about presence and its place in teaching. So, in the first part of this chapter, I present a framework for 'presence' that has evolved from a research project I undertook into the notion of 'teacher presence' during my Masters of Education (TESOL) in 2009. In essence, the framework of essential features of 'presence' drawn from the narratives of the teachers who participated in this Masters study has provided a strong foundation for enhancing my conceptualisation of 'presence'. Using this framework has also enabled me to filter and sift the literature available, in accordance to its relevance and importance for the design of this deeper study of 'presence' in teaching.

Moreover, using the foundations of my Masters conceptual framework as a point of reference has allowed me to draw together a cohesive and thematic account from the diverse literature on aspects of 'being a teacher'. Helping me to shape the decisions I have made about which literature to include in my conceptualisation of 'presence' has been essential as, in reality, the vast array of literature currently available regarding the notion of 'being a teacher' can be extremely confusing. Developed in diverse fields, using different categorisations, despite some strong overlapping features, it can be difficult to make sense of the ways different aspects of the literature 'fit together'; teacher identity, teacher knowledge, teacher development and authenticity are good examples of this. So, drawing on the conceptual framework I developed during my Masters research project has the further advantage of allowing me to demonstrate how seemingly discreet features of the literature can be reconstructed and drawn together within the holistic framework I have developed to provide a fluency within the narrative of 'presence'.

It is important to note that, in drawing on my Masters research, my framework for 'presence in teaching' forefronts not only its uniquely individual aspects, but also the ways in which these are manifested through the relational sphere. So, in this chapter, in support this stance, I will call on the work of renowned academics and researchers who have explored such dimensions. This will include writers such as van Manen (2000, 2002a; 2006b) who talks about the 'tact' and ethical responsibility implicit within the teaching endeavour; van Manen and Li (2002) who discuss the pathic dimensions of being; Schön (1987) who coins the phrase 'reflection-in-action' in teaching; and Bohm (2004) who discusses the notion of authentic communication through 'dialogue'.

Later in this chapter; having explored the different aspects relating to the conceptualisation of presence through this enhanced framework, I then consider the ways in which the notion of 'teaching' has evolved over time from its construction as a predominantly intellectual endeavour, through which information is 'transmitted' from one source to the next, to the recognition of the inherent 'artistry' (Stenhouse, 1984) it holds as a complex, multi-dimensional, dynamic and context specific enterprise. The historical (Dilthey, 1976, cited in Crotty, 2009: 94/95) and cultural dimensions to the evolution of human understanding, where '*culture is best seen as the source rather than the result of human thought and behaviour*' (Crotty, 2009: 53) are crucial as they can have a strong impact on the ways in which phenomena are perceived and experienced.

After considering ways in which 'presence' has been construed as a feature of everyday life and teaching, I will move on to explore in depth the three research studies I have found which have interrogated the notion of 'presence' in the educational realm. In the first of these, Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006: 265) have made links between a teacher's 'presence' and her sense of engagement with students through an authentic and dynamic relationship. When they (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006: 266) liken presence in teaching to a '*state of alert awareness, receptivity and connectedness*', they offer a view of presence in which the teacher's 'ways of being' are construed as a sensitive attuning to their students within the teaching context. In the second of these, Meijer et al (2009) look at the ways in which presence in teaching can be supported through

teacher education. This study follows an individual student teacher as she formulates her own notion of what 'presence' meant within her teaching practice and as she is supported in developing 'presence' whilst teaching. In the third of these studies, Stieha and Raider-Roth (2012) build on Rogers and Raider-Roth's (2006) original theory of presence by adding nuanced understanding about the role school context has in teachers' abilities to support their students' learning. This study forefronts the relational elements of a school environment and the impact this can have on a teacher's capacity to be present.

Finally, at the end of this chapter, the ways in which this study has been informed by the literature and the research studies described will be drawn together to provide a foundational base for deeper exploration of the phenomenon of 'presence in teaching'; alongside a clear enunciation of the research question which inspired and drove this enquiry.

## **2.1 Building a deeper understanding of presence – a first step**

As I have discussed in the previous chapter, it was through my personal experiences in teaching practice that I began to realise that my presence as a teacher in the classroom and the ways in which I manifested my presence were fundamental aspects of any teaching and learning processes which took place. And yet, what the notion of 'presence' actually meant and the ways in which it was actualised continued to be an enigma to me, and seemingly to others as well. This is what motivated me to set out to explore it through the first empirical study I undertook as part of a Master's course.

### **2.1.1 *The first study***

In 2009, as part of my Master's dissertation, I worked with 12 multi-cultural ESOL teachers from Japan, Korea, United Kingdom, China, Saudi-Arabia, Indonesia, and Malaysia, using semi-structured narrative interviews and held two small focus groups with six of these teachers to explore the questions:

1. How is teacher presence perceived by ESOL teachers in their own classroom realities?

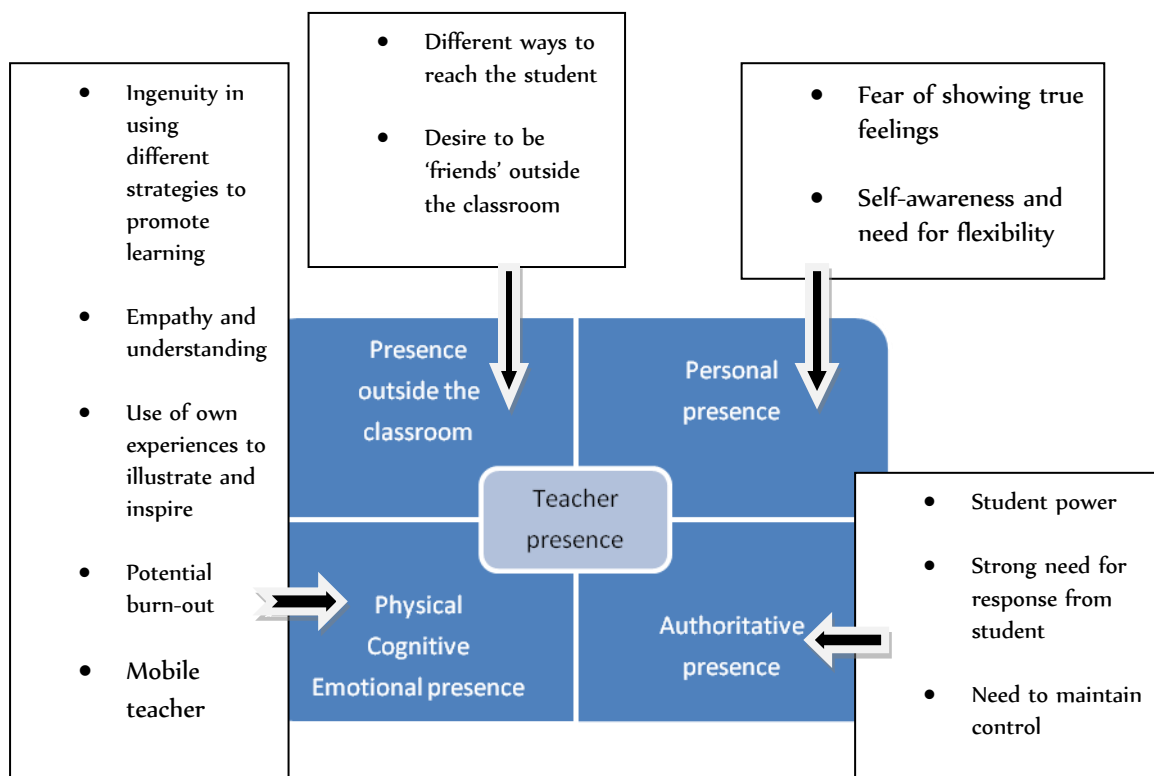
2. How is teacher presence experienced by ESOL teachers in their own classroom realities?
3. Are there any threads of connectedness regarding the notion of teacher presence within the perceptions and experiences of ESOL teachers?

Through reflection, personal understanding and knowledge, the teacher participants provided insights into the ways in which they manifested their teacher presence in their very different teaching contexts. The aim, at this early stage, was to identify any common themes being generated by the inquiry, by using a grounded theory approach to analysing the data collected.

### **2.1.2      *The first findings***

It was apparent that although each teacher had a strong sense of individuality and personal presence, there were also commonalities in the ways they described their experiences and perceptions of 'being a teacher'. Each of them had their own way of dealing with the interface between 'being a teacher' and 'being a person', whilst simultaneously taking account of the complexities of the situated and spontaneous aspects of the teaching environment and their pre-determined learning goals (Umpleby, 2009).

The participants were also aware of their '*authoritative presence*' (my term) and its impact on the students and the teaching situation. Their desire to maintain a connection with their students both as a teacher and a friend and, by doing so, expand the scope of their influence outside the classroom, was a key theme; along with an understanding of the effects their presence had on the students. It was clear that the teachers were strongly affected by their students' attitudes towards them. They felt a sense of loss when their students became disassociated or distanced from them. When this happened, the students could inhibit the flow of energy between them and often used strategies to do this, such as not answering a question or looking away from them (Umpleby, 2009). The initial themes and sub-themes generated by the data are portrayed as a model overleaf:

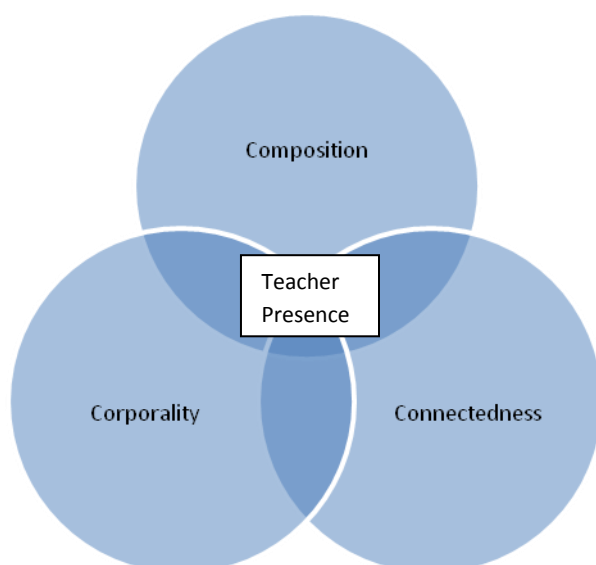


**Figure 2.1:** TESOL teachers' perceptions and experiences of the notion of teacher presence (Umpleby, 2009)

### 2.1.3 Links with the literature

The perceived split the teachers experienced at times between themselves in their role as 'teachers' and out of role as 'people' had strong similarities to Rogers and Raider-Roth's (2006: 271) conceptualisation of '*Risks of a divided self*'. Furthermore, their desire to connect with their student in any way possible suggested, as Rogers and Raider-Roth (2006: 273) argue, that a teacher's sense of self is '*connected to the larger society to which it is responsible*' possibly as a '*moral imperative of self*'. In essence, a strong affective dimension of teaching emerged from the study, demonstrating what Surrey (1991) describes as '*mutual empathy*'. The teachers did not want to be '*seen*' purely in a cognitive or physical capacity. They also needed to recognise and be recognised in all their complexity and in this way feel *seen* and *accepted* (Jordan, 1995) as whole, embodied beings.

I named the three emergent central categories as *Corporality*, *Composition* and *Connectedness* (see illustration below –Figure 2.2).



**Figure 2.2:** Three interwoven themes of teacher presence (Umpleby, 2009).

I used the term '*Composition*' to illustrate the complexity of the interface between personal and teacher presence; 'personal presence' here means the presence of the teacher as a unique individual or person, whilst 'teacher presence' is used to describe the presence of the same individual whilst they are working in the role of a teacher. The complexities involved were similar in many ways to those involved in the interface of personal and professional identities (Umpleby, 2009).

I used the term '*Connectedness*' as a vehicle for further insight into the way in which the teacher reached out to the student in order to make a connection through their presence; not necessarily to build a rapport, sometimes to make their authoritative presence felt, sometimes to demonstrate empathy and congruence and sometimes as a reaction to student power (Umpleby, 2009).

I used the term '*Corporality*' to portray how teacher cognition was essentially intertwined with physicality and emotionality and how these three states combined and became embodied within a teacher's presence. This was explored as an alternative way of conceptualising teacher cognition and embodied learning (Umpleby, 2009).

## 2.1.4 *Implications of this first study*

It certainly seemed from this first investigation that the nature of being an ESOL practitioner involved a complex and dynamic interplay between the teachers and their socio-cultural identities. This also appeared to evolve and deepen with time as it had done in my own case, as I have already documented in the previous chapter.

I also identified that there was at times a certain energy flow or ‘buzz’ which energised both the teacher and the students, especially when the teacher understood the students’ needs clearly and felt able to provide for them. In one of the interviews, a teacher participant described how energised she felt when she felt she and the students were working together in a way which was mutually beneficial:

*I was actually teaching, working with them, giving them what they wanted but they were very clear what they wanted from me, so I felt it was mutually beneficial, very energising – in the sense of the buzz of working together. [Extract from interview]*

The teacher participants also made it clear that ‘teacher presence’ was a two-way process to which their students also had to be open. The ‘presence’ the teachers described was therefore not static but dynamic, described above as a ‘sense of buzz’. Such a ‘buzz’ adapted to the moment and had a spontaneity which could not be predicted or controlled. This echoes Kornelsen (2006: 74), who suggests that ‘*Teaching with presence means teaching in a way that encourages openness, imbues vitality and sometimes abandons order*’.

One of the teacher participants further described this reciprocal flow of energy between the teacher and the student as ‘*the light-bulb moment*’ and reflected that ‘*when you’ve got it, you can nurture it and you can keep it but it takes time, well not time but energy, but that energy also infuses you. You are buoyed up by it*’ [Extract from interview with teacher]. In this way, the presence described by the teacher participants appeared to have a nurturing core, which could be considered as a fundamental feature of ‘care’ (Noddings, 2003) and being there for another, which, Noddings (2003: 180) argues, is an essential stance in teaching ‘*What I must do is to be totally and non-selectively present to the*



*student – to each student – as he addresses me. The time interval may be brief but the encounter is total.*

I summarised the notion of teacher presence in ESOL, as it was generated by this first study, as follows:

*Teacher presence appeared to be the dynamically and contextually adapting interface of genuine teacher and personal presence in the here and now within a two way mutually receptive cyclical process involving the physical, mental and emotional workings of both teacher and student' (Umpleby, 2009: 48).*

The findings from this first study convinced me even more that 'being a teacher' involves far more than cognitive processes and knowledge alone. This more holistic view of 'being a teacher' moves the focus from teaching as 'performance' to situating it deeply within inter-connected layers of meaning. So, inspired by this first study to discover more, I read extensively about the different ways in which 'being a teacher' have been construed. Through this, it has become obvious to me that some of the vast array of literature written about teaching is overlapping, as evolving understandings about similar aspects in the field have been approached from diverse perspectives. So to allay this confusion, I have used the initial framework for 'teacher presence', generated by the data I analysed for my Master's study, as a filter to shape the decisions I have made regarding which literature to include in this review, as I will now describe in more detail.

## **2.2 An enhanced framework of presence in teaching**

As stated, the findings from my first study provided me with an interwoven model of presence which depicted three essential intersecting dimensions of a teacher's presence (see Figure 2.2, p.47). In order to develop this model into a conceptual framework to support and underpin this doctorate work, I turned to the literature to help elaborate and enhance my understanding of each of these dimensions. It is, of course, extremely challenging to separate out aspects of such a ethereal and holistic construct as presence as the boundaries are inevitably fuzzy, and yet my efforts to do so are designed as a means of 'staking out my territory'; as whilst my understanding has developed considerably through my reading, the literature has served to enhance and confirm the

robustness of my three original dimensions of 'composition', 'connectedness' and 'corporality'. Indeed, as the findings generated by the data collected in my first Masters study have acted as a guide for what to include, each of the aspects incorporated in this framework have considerable intrinsic meaning to bring to this PhD study. Moreover, as will become more apparent through reading the following sections; I have placed aspects into the sectional dimensions according to where I believe they 'best fit'. I appreciate that each aspect naturally tends to spill over to a greater or lesser extent into other dimensions, due to the holistic nature of the phenomenon I am interrogating. However, I would argue that the inevitable 'fuzziness' within the boundaries of this construction is more than compensated for by the aide to understanding such a thematic sifting provides.

So, in essence, my main aim in making these three dimensions explicit in this way is to draw together a number of important threads from the literature and thus synthesise some of the seemingly fragmented perspectives provided by the diverse views on teaching currently available. I will now present each of the three dimensions of 'composition', 'connectedness' and 'corporality' in turn.

### **2.2.1      *Composition***

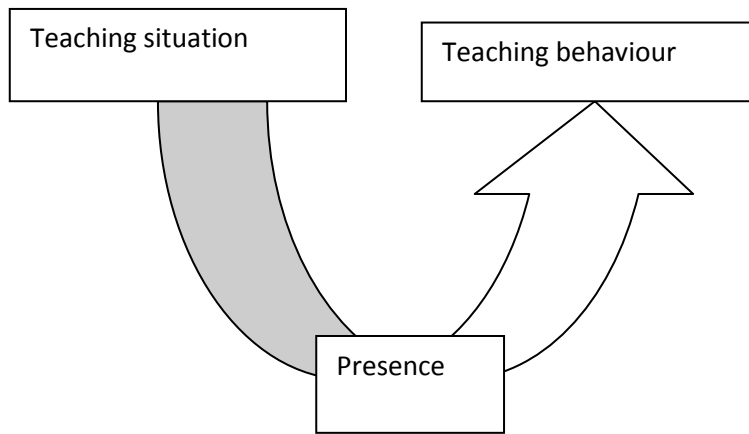
In the holistic model of presence I developed through my Master's research project, (see Figure 2.2, p. 47); I have called one dimension incorporated in a teacher's presence 'composition' (see p.47 for a synopsis of the meaning of 'composition' as it was construed in the first study). Here, it became very evident that a strong theme generated by the data was the teacher's sense of self or identity, both as a person and as a teacher. This includes a teacher's relationship with her own sense of self, her ideologies and her teaching practice in terms of the development of personal pedagogies, content knowledge and the beliefs, attitudes and the ethical sense of responsibility that underlies such practice.

So, I have chosen to write about the particular topics I include within this section because of their resonance with the narratives provided by the teachers in my first study regarding the ways in which they experienced their presence as

classroom teachers; such narratives fell within the three main themes I have identified as *'Teachers' personal professional theories'*, *'Reflection-in-action'* and *'Ethical responsibility'*. To enhance my understanding about these topics, I have drawn on the work of renowned academics and researchers (see Connelly et al, 1997; Scharmer, 2007; Senge et al, 2004; Meijer et al, 2009; Schön, 1987; Szesztay, 2004; Kahneman, 2011; van Manen, 2000; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006) to support my evolving understanding. As it will become clear through this section, all three of these aspects focus on the ways in which teachers identify with and develop their teaching practice through deeply individual 'meaning making' processes. In essence, such processes bring together the personal and professional aspects of teaching in ways which fit with the dynamically developing belief and value systems the teachers hold and which they demonstrate through their actions in the classroom.

### ***Teachers' personal professional theories***

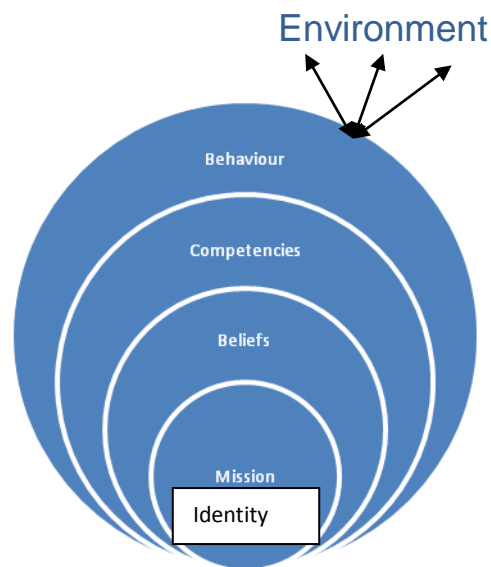
It is now keenly recognised that teachers have their own deeply personal rationales which together form a framework for what they do in class, how they see teaching and how this relates to what they construe as their duties and their role as a teacher. This has been coined as teachers' personal practical knowledge (Connelly et al., 1997). I would argue that it is from this dynamically developing teaching framework of personal practical knowledge that a teacher's presence in the classroom can emerge and be manifested. In support of this, Scharmer (2007) and Senge et al (2004) surmise that standardising teacher behaviour in order to 'fit the box' is often ineffective and describe a process with a so-called 'U'. At the bottom of the 'U', the teacher connects with a state of being that Senge et al. (2004, cited in Meijer et al, 2009: 298) call presence (see Figure 2.3 overleaf).



**Figure 2.3:** Deep learning according to the U-theory (Meijer et al., 2009: 298)

Senge et al (2004) suggest that the teacher can reach the bottom of the ‘U’ through a process of core reflection through which the professional and the personal aspects of teacher can become interconnected. This leads to a unique, individual and integrated response which caters to the demands of the situation. In this way, a teacher starts integrating a capacity for presence within herself whilst developing a sense of ‘being-while-teaching’, which in turn strengthens and develops professional behaviour. This way of looking at presence links the development of teachers’ unique core qualities with a developing sense of who they are. This leads to a developing recognition of self and in time an appreciation of the uniqueness of self. Through this recognition, a stronger sense of capacity to respond to the student develops and in turn this demands a deeper response from the student.

Similarly, in the onion model of core reflection (Korthagen, 2004), six layers are distinguished within a person. These layers make up the essence of the person and according to Korthagen (2004), the fifth layer is identity and the sixth layer is personal mission (sometimes referred to as the layer of spirituality). He believes that by going through the layers of the onion, a teacher connects with and builds up awareness of self (identity) and sense of mission (ideals, calling, inspiration) as well as an awareness of possibilities which fit with the demands of the situation (see Figure 2.4 illustrating the layers of the onion overleaf).



**Figure 2.4:** The onion model – adapted from Korthagen, 2004 (see Meijer et al., 2009: 299).

This implies that by getting in touch with one's inner strengths and 'core qualities', teachers can be more fully present within a teaching situation and respond in a way which is both congruent with the situation and with their sense of self and is informed by the moral agency implicit within their perceived pedagogic responsibility, defined here as mission.

This approach is also in line with Nodding's (2003: 180) belief that teachers need to have 'total encounters' with students in order to have an educational impact. She believes that a core problem in teaching often exists when students do not sense the presence of someone who is naturally demanding their attention. According to Meijer et al (2009: 297), this could lead to a situation in which there is a perception that the teacher has 'insufficient presence while teaching'

### ***Reflection-in-action***

One very important aspect of the ways in which teachers develop their own personal professional theories, is that teacher learning and the development of personal theories is an ongoing and dynamic process which becomes inherently embodied within a becoming teacher. I have drawn on the work of Schön (1987) to help me understand how teachers naturally develop such theories

through their practice and how such learning then becomes a natural facet of their presence.

In essence, when talking about professional competence, Schön (1987: 158) develops the construct of 'reflection-in-action', to discuss the ways in which professionals caught up in the middle of practice often fall back on a sense of intuition and sensitivity through what he describes as the '*artistry of professional practice*' (Schön, 1987: 158) when they make decisions or choices about what to do. He believes that such artistry is as important as know-how in professional competence and argues that;

*[Such decision making is] a holistic skill. In an important sense, one must grasp it as a whole in order to grasp it at all. Therefore, one cannot learn it in a molecular way, by learning first to carry out smaller units of activity and then to string those units together in a [teaching] process; for the pieces tend to interact with one another and to derive their meaning and characters from the whole process in which they are embedded* (Schön, 1987: 158)

Again. this moves the notion of professional competence on from being an intellectual, cognitive, decision-making process in which ideas are pieced together to make a whole, through a linear 'thought out logic' type of activity, to the idea of competence being in some way seamless and holistic as it blends abstract sources of embodied understanding together in such a way that they make sense at *that* moment and in *that* situation. As practitioners unconsciously develop solutions to situations, based on what worked well in the past, they use recognition, judgement and skills in a form of '*professional artistry*' (Schön, 1987: 22) which is a kind of competence which goes beyond a traditional view of competence as it *[does] not depend on....being able to describe what [we do] or even to entertain in conscious thought the knowledge [our] actions reveal'* (Schön, 1987: 22).

This could be interpreted as what Polanyi (1967, cited in Schön, 1987: 22) calls '*tacit knowledge*', when referring to the type of knowledge craftsmen use when they sense or recognise whether something feels right or wrong for a particular task or context. The tacit knowing implicit in such 'knowing-in-action' (Schön, 1987: 25) can also apply to the ways teachers know and act in the classroom (Szesztay, 2004: 130) by making the link between knowing and doing. As

teachers often 'think on their feet', they have little time to consider, analyse, judge and act, often they just have time to do. However, in that split second before or after doing, they can have a sense of something different; something that makes that moment stand out in later reflection, called 'reflection-on-action' (Schön, 1983: 276).

Moreover, Schön (1987: 26-27) argues that for reflection-in-action to take place, there needs to be something unanticipated about the moment which catches the professional's attention, leaving an imprint of it in their minds, which can be reconsidered at a later time. This can help them to be more considered in their future actions. Put simply, through creating more opportunities for reflection-in-action, professionals, such as teachers, can become more aware of the '*inherent complexity of intuitive knowing*' (Schön, 1983: 279). Such '*intuitive knowing*' is now believed to be strongly entwined within an emotional dimension of being.

According to Kahneman (2011: 12) '*professionals' intuitions do not all arise from true expertise*' as it is now recognised that emotion is very involved in the ways in which we make intuitive judgements and choices (Kahneman, 2011: 12). According to Kahneman (2011), when a thought-out solution does not come immediately to mind, we fall back on intuition, which gives us an answer from our 'gut feeling'. This is often influenced by our feelings and personal preferences, although sometimes as human beings, we overlook its emotionality and accept it as thought-out logic. I would propose then, that for human beings, sources of 'knowledge' come in various guises, many of which come from our relationships with others and with the environment. Indeed, as human beings, such relationships naturally tend to incorporate a sense of ethical responsibility when we see ourselves in positions in which we have responsibility for others, such as teachers.

### ***Ethical Responsibility***

I have included ethical responsibility here as the third aspect of 'composition' as talking to the teachers in my first study and from my own personal experience, teaching is one of those professions that you cannot just walk away from at the end of the day. A sense of responsibility seems to be inherent in a teacher's

self identity and I believe that many teachers take their jobs home with them in some form. This view is supported by van Manen (2000) who has strongly contested that teachers could be viewed as moral agents. In fact, teaching and education have long been linked to an *“end-in-view’ that is moral, not only in terms of the immediate lessons being learned and taught but the ends to which education itself aspires’* (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006: 273) implying that the act of teaching implicitly has a moral obligation to remain committed to reflecting the aspirations of ‘Education’ itself. This suggests that teachers need to be ‘in tune’ with their students so that stability and expansion (within the constructs of order and novelty) are natural allies and lead to the experience of mutual trust (Hawkins, 1974/2002) deemed essential within any human learning experience.

Drawing further on the work of Levinas (1981), this phenomenon of ethical responsibility could in fact be construed as an involuntary experience which is fundamental to the experience of human relationship itself. In teaching, when a child (or other) is singled out as an individual and addressed as a unique being, this brings about an intuitive responsiveness within the teacher. This experience unleashes a different form of knowing; a moral knowing through which the teacher is charged with responsibility. As teachers, we have an ethical responsibility for those in our charge and teaching then becomes a moral endeavour. Underhill (1996) believes that it is personal qualities such as patience, warmth, confidence or spontaneity which can convey the morality of the encounter between teacher and student.

Moreover, backed by the work of Sockett (1993), van Manen (2000) believes that there is a vacuum created by a lack of a ‘sophisticated moral language’, through which the little understood realms of human caring and compassion can be expressed. Because such moral language does not exist, teachers and educators are rarely able to fully reflect on the caring dimension inherent within their profession, which they intuitively understand but are seldom able to voice. Consequently, the complexity of entwined thought and feeling, subsumed within the essence of the deep moral-emotional responsibility which lies naturally at the heart of any vocation within the caring profession (van Manen, 2002a), are often suppressed to a depth of being which is difficult to access. The void



created by this lack of individual expression and its social sharing can, in itself, result in feelings of helplessness, vulnerability and solitude.

According to Levinas (cited in Rotzer, 1995: 62), “[when] the presence of the other touches me...the ethical has entered my life: I feel I should do something, that something is demanded of me”. When this is applied to the teaching profession, the student could be experienced ‘as an appeal that the other makes on me’ (van Manen, 2002a: 269). Indeed, van Manen’s (2002a) writing implies that the presence of the teacher becomes ‘recognised’ or ‘touched’ by the presence of the student as it is mediated through and in response to the human trait of caring. In this way, through the experience of ‘care’, a teacher’s presence can leave an imprint on the student’s otherness and vice versa. From this, I would argue that the sense of care felt by teachers towards their students lies within the very core of their presence, as it is this which in turn embodies their sense of pedagogic and ethical responsibility. This core facet of care is then actualised in and through the ways in which this responsibility is manifested in practice. However, I would contend that the sense of responsibility felt by teachers is not always logical. As a teacher, I have often found myself worrying about a student after a class is finished, even though I have no concrete evidence that that particular student is in trouble. Often, I just seem to sense that something is wrong.

### **2.2.2 Connectedness**

I have called this second essential aspect of presence in teaching ‘connectedness’ (see Figure 2.2 on p.47 for a synopsis of the meaning of ‘connectedness’ as it was construed in the first study). The teachers’ desire to continually reach out and connect with their students and the emotionality that ensued when they did not feel a connection was mutual or was lost was strongly featured in my Master’s study. I have again drawn on the work of renowned academic and researchers as I have attempted to embellish my understanding of this aspect of a teacher’s presence (see Beard et al, 2007; Bohm, 2004; Boler, 1998 Brown and Levinson, 1987; Hargreaves 1998; Krashen, 1985; Levinas, 1981; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Nguyen, 2007; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006; Zembylas, 2007)

I have gathered the essential aspects of 'connectedness', garnered from my reading, together under the headings of *'The relational side of teaching'*; *'Authentic communication through dialogue'* and *'Emotionality in teaching'*. I have chosen to include these themes over others, as the findings generated by my first study indicated that the teachers construed their 'presence' through the relational aspects of teaching, and perhaps even more importantly, that their connection with their students made the endeavour of teaching worthwhile. Moreover, narratives from the Master's study implied that dialogue was a key feature of a meaningful encounter between teacher and student and that teachers are essentially emotional beings whose emotionality can impact on their 'presence' in the classroom in diverse ways.

### ***The relational side of teaching***

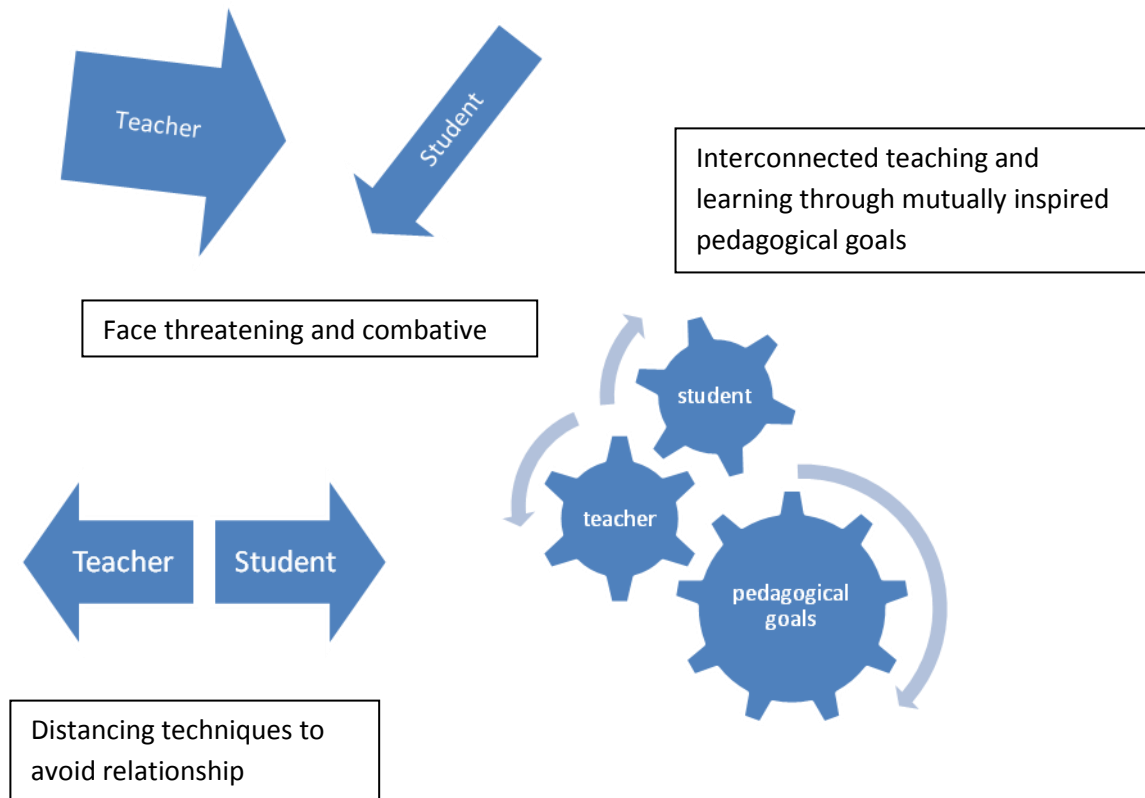
Past research strongly suggests that the relationship between the teacher and the student is an essential element in any learning experience. In fact Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006: 266) would go further by arguing that the teacher/student relationship is the "*keystone in student achievement, motivation and engagement and in their capacity to trust what they know*". Research by Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006: 266) demonstrates that the quality of the relationship between the teacher and student is not simply a 'feel good' aspect of schooling but it is an essential component of genuine learning experiences. It has been strongly suggested that *'we need richer conceptions of students as affective and embodied selves and a clearer theorisation of the role of emotion in educational encounters'* (Beard et al., 2007: 235). The term *'relationship authenticity'* coined by Surrey (1991: 61) illustrates *'the need to be seen and recognized for who one is and the need to see and understand the other with ongoing authenticity'*. This implies that both parties in the pedagogic relationship need to be equally present in an authentic way if they are to be able to understand and relate to each other.

Moreover, Krashen (1985) describes the need to lower student anxiety by creating a comfortable, warm and friendly environment within his 'Affective Filter Hypothesis'. Tsui (1996: 164) supports this when she declares *"establishing a good relationship with students is extremely important in creating a conducive*

*learning atmosphere in the classroom*". However, much of the writing on the teacher/student relationship has overlooked an integral part of teaching; often teachers have to put across a message which is not intended to build the relationship but rather to make the student think more about mistakes made or challenge students into putting more effort into their endeavours. Such situations do not always call for the teacher to create a warm and friendly atmosphere but require the building of a cyclical process of mutual respect, in which the teacher is there with advice or information to be listened to and acted upon. However, teachers are often viewed as the holders of the 'truth' as they are construed as having the responsibility of the muse or guide who holds the 'knowledge'. This paradox in the teacher's role in the classroom regarding rapport building with students is described by Nguyen (2007) who states:

*Whereas a combination of instructional and social functions in the classroom is appealing, it has an apparent, inherent paradox. The instructional goals require the teacher to perform many acts that are face-threatening..... In carrying out these teaching tasks, the teacher is positioned as having a higher status than the students in the power relationship, which can potentially create distance between the teacher and students. (p.285)*

This action/reaction cycle is part of a two-way process between teacher and student, which may or may not have the desired effect. The student also has power, although potentially less than the teacher in a classroom situation, in that they can ignore the instruction, refuse to participate in the interaction or remain merely as a bystander to the whole event, without participating in a genuine or heart-felt way. This is further considered by Nguyen (2007: 285), who contends, "*In order to be effective, the teacher needs to be able to build rapport with the students in the context of the asymmetric power relationship and the pedagogical goals of the classroom*" (see Figure 2.5 overleaf).



**Figure 2.5:** Different types of relationship stances between teachers and students.

Possibly because of its fundamental importance in a teaching and learning environment, Brown and Levinson (1987) consider the teacher/student rapport to be one of the most '*slippery*' concepts in classroom management. For this reason, it may be beneficial to reconceptualise it within the broader perspective of presence which takes account of the fact that rapport is not always desirable, nor possible, between teacher and student at any given moment in time because of the implicit authority and power issues in the situation. Rather than considering rapport as a continual uninterrupted process, teacher presence recognises that the flow between the teacher and student is sporadic and unpredictable and that connections can be lost and then regained through the conduit of the teachers' presence (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006).

As an authentic rapport between teacher and student appears integral to learning, it is obviously very important that the teacher is able to relate with their students through interactive dialogue; often believed to be the key to authentic communication.

## ***Authentic communication through dialogue***

To open a space for dialogue to take place between those involved in the teaching relationship, both parties need to find a way of sharing meaning in an authentic way. This means that both teacher and learner need to be willing to hear what each other have to say and to engage in an open-ended, democratic type of dialogue in which both can learn from each other. This also means listening without being defensive about those things either outside their current understanding or personal beliefs. Bohm (2004: ix) suggests that:

*Shared meaning is really the cement that holds society together, and you could say that the present society has very poor quality cement.....The society at large has a very incoherent set of meanings. In fact this set of 'shared meanings' is so incoherent that it is hard to say that they have any real meaning at all.*

Having a 'closed mind' challenges the possibility that true dialogue can take place simply '*by allowing multiple points of view to be*' (Bohm, 2004: ix). Holding on to assumptions and opinions and defending them blindly gets in the way of dialogue, although it is dialogue that a society or group truly needs in order to move forward collectively and coherently. Bohm, (2004: ix) argues that the incoherence in the world is sadly embedded in self-defence and if only society can move past that block, it would have a huge potential of collective energy with which to move beyond fragmented incoherence built on a divided past to a more positive and productive future.

A state in which both parties are in true 'dialogue' thus provides a core relational construct on which to build the teacher/student as well as the teacher/teacher and teacher/teacher educator relationship so that they are able to speak to each other from their core or their essence in order to find a meeting place of understanding. This is a place which is somewhat deeper than presupposition or belief. '*So you have to be sensitive to the whole of what you are doing*' (Bohm, 2004: 82). Bohm (2004) also claims that it is often the sense of self as 'observer', (that part of self which is observing what is wrong, but is not being observed itself) which is hiding doubt behind belief in order to create a sense of security within an uncertain situation.

Bohm (2004: 101) also makes a distinction between 'literal thought' and 'participatory thought'. In a way, he is connecting literal thought with looking inward and the self and participatory thought with looking outward and the collective. He believes the two have become muddled together in today's society and literal thought has objectified people and human beings into functions which have bred isolation and a lack of participation in community. He argues that '*society is not an objective reality. It is a reality created by all the people through their consciousness.*' (Bohm, 2004: 101) and that '*all views are just thoughts*' (Bohm, 2004: 101). However, whatever thought is, it is just thought; it is all one. It follows that if all thought is just one, this creates a collective reality in which everything can 'enfold' everything else. Developing Bohm's (2004) ideas particularly in the case of education; the teacher/student relationship could 'enfold' the embodied presence of the participatory thoughts of both parties through an open meeting ground facilitated by or heightened by the teacher's presence. This could in turn facilitate a deeper connection; one which reflects the 'collective' dimension of the human being. Through the notion of dialogue (Bohm, 2004), the teacher then has the potential to bring coherence and order to the collective consciousness of participatory thought, over-riding its multi-dimensional nature which can render it chaotic.

Bohm (2004) suggests observing everything (including the 'observer within') in order to access the deep essence of self that can be obscured by the very nature of the 'observer within'. He believes going deeply into a state in which 'listening' or 'observing' is embodied, without passing through a *listener* or an *observer* per se, can be brought about through '*suspension*' during which an activity or thought is allowed to reveal itself, '*to flower, to unfold ...so you see its actual structure inside you*' (Bohm, 2004: 84). Suspension can reveal the interconnectedness and interdependence of feelings, bodily reactions and thoughts, which he states can move as processes on their own as they are not being run by the person per se. Through the notion of suspension, Bohm (2004: 84) claims we can observe our own thoughts or feelings in a way which helps us to become more self-perceptive and, in this way, help thought itself become more self-perceptive, so that it does not cause a mess or incite chaos without intention. Somehow thoughts and feelings, when allowed free rein, can be self-

defeating (Bohm, 2004: 84); however, such human processes can be 'suspended' until they become interconnected within our whole entity in a meaningful way. If this is so, in the tacit process of building knowledge, there exists a built-in self-awareness. However, this 'proprioception' has been inhibited over time as the brain has a self-protective mechanism which protects a person from a painful thought and the associated feelings (Bohm, 2004: 84). In essence, the problem is that human thought treats itself as a truth rather than a process and by bringing to light one particle of thought from the complexity of inter-related systems of entwined thoughts, subtle but essential thoughts may be obscured and this allows for confusion and chaos to take precedence. *'Thought then is part of a material process. It goes on in the brain, the nervous system, the whole body – it's all one system'*. (Bohm, 2004: 94).

On a positive note, Bohm (2004) suggests that this facility of human thought could allow a person access to the 'unlimited' sources of collective consciousness, through subtle attentiveness (using the brain as an 'antenna' to pick up levels of subtlety rather than using it as an initiator of action). Although, in order to 'tune in' to such 'unlimited' sources of our collective consciousness, we first need to establish an 'empty space' (Bohm, 2004: 108) without distractions. Moreover, the energy and intensity embodied in those who are strong enough to look at such 'unlimited' sources of the infinite without distraction could potentially bring about a transformation of consciousness, both individually and collectively and for this reason 'dialogue' in its true form is essential for humankind (Bohm, 2004).

In summary, within the educational sphere, I would argue that this view of dialogue, as a medium for progress in learning and personal growth, implies that, when working with the uncertainty implicit in any group endeavour, teachers have 'unlimited' sources of collective consciousness to which they can refer, many of which potentially lie beyond the rational mind and that somewhere a space needs to be opened up where such sources can be voiced and heard without judgement.

## ***Emotionality in teaching***

Whilst the importance of the affective domain in educational contexts has become more prominent in educational discourses over the past few years, the study of emotion has always been considered problematic for educational researchers (Lupton, 1998). There has been little agreement on what constitutes an emotion (Zembylas, 2007: 356) and Zembylas (2007: 355) further suggests that research into emotionality in teaching needs particular attention as *'one aspect of teacher knowledge that has so far received limited attention is its emotional dimensions'*. Moreover, research has tended to view affective issues in education as being more complex and difficult to investigate than those associated with cognition. In fact, early studies tended to view emotion in teaching and learning from an individual plane and as an individual experience (Zembylas, 2007: 358), although more recent studies have emphasised the relational and situated nature of emotionality and the idea that emotions are cultural artefacts that serve to convey essential socio-cultural messages (Lynch, 1990). Moreover, despite the growing focus of attention on the role of emotion in education, it has been strongly suggested that *'we need [more] richer conceptions of students as affective and embodied selves and a clearer theorisation of the role of emotion in educational encounters'* (Beard et al., 2007: 235). I would argue that the same can be said of teachers, whose emotions are intricately interwoven within their practice as an essential and embodied part of being human.

Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1990: 12) suggest that *'to learn how, when, where and by whom emotions ought to be enacted is to learn a set of body techniques including facial expressions, postures and gestures'*. However, I would contest that 'learning' a set of body techniques does not necessarily mean that they are congruent with the feelings felt at that particular time, although of course they might be. Facial expressions, postures and gestures learned by rote or by mimicking a model could conversely be used as a way of creating a 'mask' through which authentic emotions can be held at bay. This often leads to confusion between the parties involved and interferes with the potential for authentic communication and dialogue to take place. Because of this, I believe that it is essential that all professionals recognise that emotions are intrinsic in



any human act, however much they might be camouflaged within logic and intellect.

There seems to be a tendency to feel a sense of disquiet or discomfort about the ways in which emotions and emotionality are intricately entwined in areas of life in which logical or intellectual structures are perceived as holding more weight or being more reliable. However, emotionality is an essential part of being human and should, I would argue, be given more credence as it provides powerful indicators of culture, ideology and power relations, described by Boler (1998: 49) as '*feminist politics of emotions*'. As such, they have a strong influence on any social or cultural gathering, such as a classroom, and can provide valuable indications of the ways in which a particular situated context becomes transformed into a site of social resistance or, perhaps more positively, into a site of transformation.

Moreover, social constructivist approaches to emotionality, which view it as deeply imbedded within prevailing cultural and social norms, suggest that to truly understand the processes of emotion, researchers have to envisage emotions as part of a dynamic, continuously fluctuating system of experiences which have specific meaning for the individual as well as the social group within a defined situational context. Holstein and Gubrium (2000) see this as indicating that a narrative type of approach to the study of emotions should be taken and argue that it is through story-telling and narrative that we are able to link our motives, intentions, desires and actions (Zembylas, 2003: 215).

This has led to several studies using social constructivist frameworks to study social and emotional relationships in the classroom and school (see Hargreaves, 1998, 2001, 2005; Nias, 1996; Van Veen & Lasky, 2005). Such studies indeed indicate that teachers and learners construct individual interpretations and evaluations regarding teaching based on the practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1997) and beliefs they have acquired through practice. However, Zembylas (2007) also argues that whilst exploration in research studies such as these is evidently of great value, a reductionism of a different type from that associated with positivism can arise through certain social constructivist approaches. This is summed up by Leavitt (1996: 522) who

suggests that '*to define emotions purely as emotion words or concepts [...] is to lose the feeling side of the phenomenon and reduce emotion to a kind of meaning*'.

Thus, viewing emotions in teaching solely through the lens of the social situation in which they are rooted, without linking them to root source of the feelings as they have meaning for the individual, could be seen as 'distilling' or 'reducing' the totality of the emotional state in much the same way that viewing emotions purely from the individual or psychological perspective does. As Hargreaves (1998: 835) puts it '*Good teachers are not just well-oiled machines. They are emotional, passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy*'. For reason of this intrinsic connection, it appears that personal feeling and the way such feeling interacts with social meaning need to be re-joined as mutually inseparable aspects, both of which are fundamentally crucial to the processes involved in the inter-connected systems embodied within the act of teaching as a holistic whole.

So, I would propose that any emotion which has deep meaning for the individual is manifested consciously or indeed, at times, unconsciously, in the ways in which they act and react within the social group in which they are interacting. Members of the group, in turn respond to this emotionality, sometimes without really even knowing why they are responding, as emotions are often, instinctively, triggered in return. This could be seen as the mutual cycle of a complex 'dance' in which all parties instinctively endeavour to protect themselves and their own vulnerability. When affective issues are left unresolved, this can become a type of 'standoff'; a state which Miller and Stiver (1997) call the '*central relational paradox*' in which teachers can lose confidence and can start to question that they really do know what they know (Gilligan, 2011). In this way, that precious connection with the student can be lost and a lack of trust can emerge which can further damage the relationship between teacher and student by impacting on the '*connective tissue that binds individuals together to advance the education and welfare of students*' (Bryk & Schneider, 2003: 44). It soon becomes apparent that such a state of disconnection has no advantage, either for the teacher or the student.

### **2.2.3 Corporality**

I have called the third of the essential aspects of a teacher's presence 'corporality' (see Figure 2.2, p.47). By this, I am referring to the ways in which a teacher's presence can be manifested through their physicality, their intellectual processes and their emotionality or a combination of all of these (see p.47 for a description of the way I used the term 'corporality' in my first study). My Master's study highlighted how some of the manifestations of presence are kept hidden from the external world, for example, strategic decisions which are not voiced or thoughts and feelings which are not visually demonstrated and are hidden behind a mask of competence. Others are more explicit, such as a physical movement or a facial expression. In truth, the majority of manifestations of a teacher's presence are fleeting and can remain unnoticed unless they are specifically referred to or reflected on at the time or at a later date.

In addition data generated by the narratives of the teachers in the first study revealed aspects of presence that the participants didn't really understand and yet which seemed to be embodied within the agency of their practice. These were recognised as little understood, yet important, elements of the ways in which a teacher's presence is manifested in the classroom. I have extended my understanding of these aspects of teaching through reading the work of prominent academics and researchers (see; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006; Szesztay, 2004; van Manen, 2006b; van Manen & Li, 2002) and I have found that the ways in which a teacher manifests their presence in the classroom are often tacitly expressed through the things they do and the actions they take, often without really understanding why they have acted in a certain way. I have grouped these together within the headings of '*Tact in teaching*', '*Ways of knowing*' and '*Pathic dimensions of being*'.

#### **'Tact' in teaching**

From the literature, it appears that inherent within the art of teaching is an ability to see what's going on and respond appropriately to achieve the best possible outcome (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). This view is reinforced by van Manen

(2006b: 47) who writes that *'The essence of pedagogy manifests itself in the practical moment of a concrete situation'*. However, according to Van Manen (2006b) 'theoretical knowledge' and 'diagnostic information' do not always meld appropriately in the choices made by the teacher in the pedagogical moment because pedagogical action is context sensitive and what may be appropriate in one situation would not be appropriate in another and confusion sometimes arises.

The interaction between the teacher and the student is an *'interactive unity that constitutes a relation, a pedagogical relation'* (van Manen, 2006b: 74). Moreover, what we learn as students has special significance as it is represented or embodied in the person of that particular teacher. For this reason, the pedagogical relation is not a means to an end but finds meaning in its own existence (van Manen, 2006b: 74). To put it simply, through the pedagogical relation, the teacher and the student become one, an existential whole, through which meaning is expressed as a unit. For this reason, learning for the student can become a pedagogic representation of a particular teacher's presence.

In fact, the pre-reflective or primitive form of the pedagogical relation is mirrored in everyday life in any context where there is influence towards formative growth; however in the pedagogical relationship between teacher and student, conscious desire mobilises and gives direction to such an influence. Of course the teacher cannot teach alone; only when such intentions are responded to can the pedagogical relation really come into existence. The student has the power to choose whether to actualise the teacher's intention into existence or not and for this reason, the teacher 'embodies' what she is teaching in a personal way. The presence of the teacher is thus interpreted by each student in a special personalised way. This implies that each student can somehow feel the 'teaching energy or essence' emulated by the teacher and then interprets it and responds to it in a unique way which is embodied within the learning being communicated.

Furthermore, van Manen (2006b) claims that it is foremost through pedagogical action that a pedagogical situation and a pedagogical relationship come into

being. This could be action, for instance, in the form of caring behaviour or more defensive action, for instance in the form of silence or withholding attention. According to van Manen (2006b: 85) 'pedagogical thoughtfulness' or 'tact' have a reflective capacity, whereas 'pedagogical understanding' requires seeing what is significant in any concrete situation. He believes that '*Living the pedagogical moment is a total personal response or thoughtful action in a particular situation*' (van Manen, 2006b: 109). Tactful action is then thoughtful in the sense that it is mindful. Tact shows itself in many different forms; holding back, being open to experience, attuning to subjectivity, exerting a subtle influence, demonstrating situational confidence and improvising (van Manen, 2006b: 149).

Tact is mediated through speech, silence, the eyes, gesture, atmosphere and example. Pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact are mindful in that they enable a teacher to improvise in ever changing educational situations. Once again, mindfulness is mentioned when van Manen describes the 'interactive pedagogical moment itself' which he says is characterised by a '*different type of reflectivity: a certain mindfulness*' (van Manen, 2006b: 101). He argues that in the 'rush' of pedagogical interaction, there is no time for the sort of reflection that happens after an event and emphasises that, in the immediacy of our actions, there can be no element of reflection which produces the action or is enacted in parallel to the action (van Manen, 2006b), although, the interactive experience or rush itself may embody a state of mindfulness. However, in truth, van Manen (2006b: 107) laments that '*the immediate acting on the spot in the ongoing flux of pedagogical moments is little understood in educational theories*', suggesting that teachers continually deal with situations, predicaments, possibilities and difficulties, in ways which are little understood and which need further inquiry.

### ***Ways of knowing***

It is now recognised that teachers' *ways of knowing*, which invisibly guide their classroom decision-making, are framed in a holistic interacting web of knowledge, which together form a 'frame' of competence, enabling and supporting the actualisation of their professional decisions within the classroom

situation (Szesztay, 2004: 129). Such a web of knowledge relies on intuition and sensitivity as much as on intellectual knowledge.

This could be likened to van Manen's notion of pedagogical understanding (Van Manen, 2006b: 100). Van Manen (2006b) argues that pedagogical understanding consists of various levels of systematic reflection, some of which fuse together. The first level is everyday thinking which is '*partly habit, partly routine and partly intuitive, pre-reflective and semi-reflective rationality*' (van Manen, 2006b: 100). Such thinking can then be put into language as it becomes an account of action. At a deeper level, reflection on the experience(s) of self and others can develop theoretical understandings and critical insights about what the action meant. At an even deeper level, a more self-reflective understanding comes from reflecting on the act of reflection. This can develop personal theories of the nature of knowledge and how it can be applied to practical action in different situations. Such a depth of understanding can help teachers to understand the significance of their practical actions and the types of knowledge they use to come to decisions about which action to take in any particular context. By drawing on deep sources of knowledge, van Manen (2006b) suggests, teachers develop mindfulness in the ways they act, which is drawn from different levels of reflective understanding.

Dewey (1938/1997) also distinguishes between acting on slim evidence, which he calls 'recognition' and acting on thick evidence, which he calls 'perception'. According to Rodgers (2010: 49), such perception evokes not just the thing itself, but also its past, its connection to other aspects of life, its patterns and its continuities. It stands to reason, therefore, that to be truly present as presence is constructed here, one must have a capacity to perceive at depth. One must have an openness to receive all the cues and a capacity to 'see', which is not limited or short-changed by preconception and fixed belief. This pre-supposes that one has a hospitality (Dewey, 1933) to new ways of seeing and an openness to being a 'reflective practitioner' (Schön, 1987) as '*education as growth or maturity should be an ever-present process*' (Dewey, 1938/1997: 50)

Rodgers (2010: 109) similarly argues that the human reflective capacity is sensitive to the intuitive dynamic and non-rational features of the act of teaching

and acknowledges that teaching is not a technical process with inputs, treatments and outputs, but requires thoughtful, often instant action (often referred to as thinking on your feet). These actions are acts of 'self' consciousness and embodied mindfulness. In these acts, teachers are actively and immediately involved in a manner of 'pre-consciousness' in that they have acted before they even know they have acted. Only later can they reflect on why they have acted in that way and what the consequences of their actions were.

Levinas' (1998) work has also inspired me to understand how the relational aspects of the teaching and learning processes incorporate such an ethicality when the teacher, as a susceptible human being, is open to the needs of the learner. According to Levinas (1981: xxxiii), it is through an 'openness to being' that the teacher is able to reach out and connect with the learner at an existential level; however to find such openness within their being, teachers are inevitably also open to feelings of exposure and vulnerability. For Levinas (1981: xxix) *'responsibility is putting one-self in the place of another'*, which he argues is a human ethical response to the other which is embodied within a natural human sense of responsibility. From this perspective, teachers, purely because they are human, react to their students with an almost instinctual response as they sense the need in them and they respond to this need in a way which they instinctively feel or sense is appropriate to the situation. It is only later that reflection on this action can reveal whether it was in fact appropriate to the situation or whether another action would be more suitable if such a situation were to be repeated.

### ***'Pathic' dimensions of being***

It appears that 'pathic dimensions' are essential aspects of a teacher's presence; they are those parts of a human being's psyche, which are little understood but which are often sensed as being integral to a form of knowing that lies beyond the obvious, rational and logical (van Manen & Li, 2002). Schön (1983: 49) also implies that artistic and intuitive processes are at work within an epistemology of practice in which practitioners bring an intuitive capacity to perceive, apprehend and act to situations of uncertainty, instability

and uniqueness. In addition, van Manen and Li (2002) build on the implicit dimension of this type of knowledge by implying that through the pedagogical task of teaching *itself*, teachers are able to discover a 'pathic' dimension within themselves. They believe that this is so because simply being able to perform the act of teaching depends on:

*The teacher's personal presence, relational perceptiveness, tact for knowing what to say and do in contingent situations, thoughtful routines and practices and other aspects of knowledge that are in part pre-reflective, pre-theoretic, pre-linguistic and, in a sense, non-cognitive (van Manen & Li, 2002: 215).*

Implicit in this idea is the notion that presence incorporates various aspects of being which are difficult to frame but are somehow accepted as 'being there' in order for a teacher to have the capacity to teach. This leads me to believe that such 'pathic' dimensions within the epistemology of teaching practice are immensely significant as it may be possible such dimensions, embodied within the teacher's presence, could be cultivated simply through the act of teaching itself, as the demands of teaching itself naturally allows the teacher to 'tune in' to these other 'dimensions of being' (van Manen & Li, 2002: 215).

If this is so, it would mean that teachers could be encouraged to notice and explore the unvoiced dimensions of being (or presence) they personally call upon when teaching and in this way step outside the external constraints and personal inhibitions limiting their professional judgements and choices. Van Manen (2002) argues that such knowledge as this is not cognitive in the usual sense, but has 'pathic' dimensions. Noticing of events, moods and atmospheres could help teachers access the 'pathic' dimensions of their professional lives, which is hugely significant, as pedagogical competence itself is '*largely tied into pathic knowledge*' (van Manen & Li, 2002: 216).

### **2.3 Towards a holistic understanding of the nature of teaching**

In the previous section, I have shown how the framework from my Master study has helped me to filter and synthesise confusing and overlapping knowledge from the literature on teaching and teachers into an interwoven account of features incorporated in the holistic phenomenon of 'presence in teaching'. I



have done this to provide the foundations of a strong framework in which to ground the design of this study. However, my developing conceptual understanding of the ways in which 'presence' is construed is not the only aspect to consider here. It is also crucial to look at the ways in which views about the meaning of 'teaching' and the construction of the teacher as a 'holistic being' have also developed in tune with the turn from a 'climate of cognition' in which teachers were construed as predominantly intellectual beings, towards a socio-cultural understanding of them as multi-dimensional, dynamic beings. It is important to recognise that the temporal nature of the world in which we live can have a strong impact on the dominating historical (Dilthey, 1976, cited in Crotty, 2009: 94) and cultural (Crotty, 2009: 53) perspectives which reign at any moment in time and how these can, in themselves, exert a strong influence on the ways in which phenomena are understood.

### **2.3.1.        *The climate of cognition***

Teachers and 'being a teacher' have been typically considered within the domain of teacher cognition (Borg, 2006). According to the construct of 'cognition', when a person becomes a teacher, a wealth of previous experiences, understandings and perceptions are brought into play as part of the cognitive processes involved in 'becoming a teacher'; Woods (1996) suggests that:

*Each teacher has an individual system of interwoven beliefs, assumptions and knowledge, a system which has evolved in an individual and organic fashion when aspects of that teacher's beliefs, assumptions and knowledge (BAK) have interacted with experience (p.248).*

Such systems inevitably change over time, as conflicts arise in the foundations of the newly acquired understanding or experience through evolving circumstances and context (Woods, 1996: 248).

Moreover, 'teacher cognition' contends that as teachers become more experienced, they develop perceptions about links between classroom activity and desired learning. Prabhu (1987) argues that it is the ensuing understanding about what such underlying rationales mean that gives the teacher a "sense of plausibility" (p. 104) of what works in a particular classroom and what doesn't.

With time, this sense of plausibility is modified according to experiences and knowledge as they are acquired and, in this way, teachers begin to deduce what works in particular situations and what could, might and should help learners achieve their learning outcomes. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that teachers interpret curriculum in many different individual ways. In a study he conducted into the ways in which teachers interpret curriculum, Woods (1996) found that although a number of *themes* of interpretation were common to teachers, they made very different personal interpretations of how to actually teach the language:

*The data revealed, for each teacher, an internal consistency among the decisions they made.....with the deeper underlying beliefs, assumptions and knowledge about what language is, how it is learned and how it should be taught....However, the data also revealed consistent differences....in their interpretations of the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of the course to be taught (p.217).*

So, whilst cognitive processes have been construed as lying at the core of the teaching endeavour, it has been strongly suggested that laying bare the realities of individualised classroom behaviour and interaction is essential in order to really get to the heart of the theoretical and emotional ground from which the interpretation of experience arises (Rodgers, 2002: 247). For this reason, although a cognitive model for the study of language teachers has been proposed (Calderhead, 1996; Carter, 1990; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Ferstermacher, 1994; Richardson, 1996; Verloop et al, 2001, cited in Borg, 2003: 81), studying teachers through the construct of cognition alone has proved to be 'problematic' (Borg, 2003: 86); an opinion supported by researchers such as Grossman et al. (1989: 31) who suggest that '*while we are trying to separate teachers' knowledge and belief about subject matter for the purposes of clarity, we recognize that the distinction is blurry at best*'. Put simply, it seems impossible to create distinct boundaries between what teachers 'know' and what they 'believe'. It is this which makes me question whether 'teacher knowledge' itself can actually be interrogated as a discreet field of inquiry. It appears to present itself rather more as 'muddy ground' which has artificially defined boundaries, is inherently ambiguous and is imbued with

assumptions and beliefs from various sources, which could make themselves known in the guise of 'knowledge'.

In other words, analysing the ways in which teachers build conceptual knowledge about teaching alone has been criticised as being necessary but insufficient (Rodgers, 2002: 249). In support of this, Huberman (1995:357) points out that '*although conceptual knowledge or understanding is essential, it is not sufficient ..... It is still possible to understand and yet not be able to do*'. I would argue that, from this, we can surmise that being a teacher is perhaps better understood from the perspective of a more holistic or embodied standpoint. So, whilst recognising that teachers' mental lives are essentially entwined within the art and act of teaching, I would propose, following a number of scholars who have written about this, that this cannot be the full story. For example, Ferucci (2004) illustrates the importance of taking a holistic view of human nature by suggesting that:

*Nothing is meaningful as long as we perceive only separate fragments. But as soon as the fragments come together into a synthesis, a new entity emerges, whose nature we could not have foreseen by considering the fragments alone (p. 22).*

Szesztay (2004: 130) also puts forward the idea that, in the act of teaching, mind, world and inherent wisdom are brought together through a holistic form of knowledge and that;

*we [as teachers] draw on skills, knowledge and intuition all at the same time.....this holistic process is steered by reflection-in-action, which is an intelligent and sensitive response to what is going on in the classroom (p.130)*

With all of the above in mind, I would question the wisdom of even endeavouring to take an approach to understanding teaching which distances mind from the embodied entity of being as '*in the mind of the teacher, components of knowledge, beliefs, conceptions, emotions and intuitions are inextricably intertwined*' (Verloop, et al. 2001).

### **2.3.2      *The turn towards socio-cultural understanding***

The challenge I have just described in trying to separate out 'teacher knowledge' from other aspects of a teacher's being has encouraged academics and researchers to turn to socio-cultural views of teaching and teacher learning for answers to their questions. In essence, a socio-cultural view of teaching forefronts teachers as situated beings who have dynamic relationships with other members of their community of practice as well as themselves and champion their own theories about practice, whilst recognising those of others (Kelly, 2006: 507). According to socio-cultural theory; teacher learning and development is context specific, as teachers are shaped by the working practices of the school within which they work, whilst their individual identities are revealed through the stances they adopt in their working lives (Wenger, 1998; Woods and Jeffrey, 2002, cited in Kelly, 2006: 507).

So, within the socio-cultural way of thinking, a teacher's identity has strong significance and the tensions here lie not between the teacher's inner and outer mental world, as they do within the climate of cognition, but between the teacher's individual identity, encapsulated within the bubble of beliefs, theories, attitudes, ethics and so on that they hold and the social world within which they live and work. Thus, whilst teachers' individual identities are inevitably shaped by the practices of the educational context within which they work, a socio-cultural perspective highlights the uneasy truce that the teacher needs to continually renegotiate in order to cope within the boundaries and demands of the context within which they work. As Kelly (2006) puts it:

*Teachers' identities are neither located entirely with the individual nor entirely a product of others and social setting. They can be regarded as the ways in which practitioners see themselves in response to the actions of others towards them: that is they are constantly changing outcomes of the iteration between how practitioners are constructed by others and how they construct themselves (p. 513)*

It appears that some of the challenges which came to light during the 'climate of cognition', when teachers were considered predominantly in the light of their conceptual knowledge, have been defused to a certain extent through the 'socio-cultural turn'. This fresh perspective has allowed tensions to be eased

within the boundaries construed by many as artificially disassociating the teacher's being from the world in which she finds herself. As a social being in the world, a teacher is both a source and a recipient of 'knowledge(s)' and through individually and socially derived attributes, encapsulates an existential presence in which embodied sources of cognition and social relationship work hand in hand. I would argue then that an interrogation of the construct of 'presence' can provide even deeper insights into understanding of this, by offering a holistic and existential view on the relationship between the teacher and the world, or perhaps more appropriately here, the teacher and the classroom environment.

In summary, I believe that exploring the notion of a teacher's 'presence' as it is actualised within the classroom environment provides an encompassing means of investigating many important aspects of teaching; specifically, the ways in which teachers source different forms of understanding about teaching; the ways they use this understanding individually and as part of the teaching community; and the relational effect this has within the situated context in which they work. In the next section, I will explore how the notion of 'presence' as a phenomenon has been discussed by leading academics and researchers, as an aspect of *everyday* life and *everyday* teaching encounters.

## **2.4 Presence and teaching**

In everyday life, 'presence' for a human being can mean fully and deeply experiencing the depth and totality of every minute. Presence can infer the sense of being alive in each moment as it occurs. It can be experienced in many life situations such as creating or enjoying art, watching a thunderstorm, meditating quietly alone or with others or teaching a class of students. It also has a therapeutic association, which I have explored in Chapter One through the work of Carl Rogers (1959) and his work on the person-centred approach to counselling. Bugental (1987) is also a prominent writer on therapeutic presence, which he describes as *being available, open and receptive* to the other. He suggests:

*Presence is a quality of being in a situation or relationship in which one intends, at a deep level, to be as aware and as participative as*

*one is able to. Presence is expressed through mobilization of one's sensitivity – both inner and outer – and through bringing into action one's capacity for response (Bugental, 1987: 27).*

In very general terms, presence or being present, has been defined by Webster as *'the fact or condition of being present: the state of being in one place and nowhere else.....being in view or at hand: being before, beside, with or in the same place as someone or something'* (Webster, 1961: 1793).

Moving now to the world of teaching; 'presence' also has strong links with the notion of 'being authentic'. Cranton (2001) suggests *'authenticity is the expression of one's genuine self (or selves) in the community and society'* (p. vii) and in classroom teaching, Kornelsen (2006: 73) recognises the importance of this and suggests:

*Those inner qualities that facilitate the presence of [teachers] themselves, their students and the subject content are aspects of the genuine self that teachers need to express in the classroom to help bring about learning.*

Farber (2008) also argues that when presence in teaching is construed solely as "poise" or "confidence", it can lack authenticity and prioritise 'performance' over 'teaching'. He believes that the condition of 'being fully present' in the classroom is essential if *'we want a full, multileveled engagement from our students'* (p.215), as students can tell when teachers are 'just going through the motions' of teaching. He argues that *'we are not likely to get [full engagement] if they [the students] sense that we ourselves are not entirely, genuinely there with them'* (Farber, 2008: 215) and claims that *'without presence, teachers are like guides in a theme park who tell the same joke a dozen times a day.....with presence, teaching lives; it may or may not be good teaching, but it's alive'* (Farber, 2008: 215).

However, being authentically present, as it has just been defined, often appears to be an enigma in today's hi-tech society, in which target setting and achievement hold high esteem in the competitive race for status and excellence. There often just doesn't seem to be the time to be *'as aware and as participative as one is able to be'* (Bugental, 1987: 27). Conversely, despite the challenge of finding the time to be authentically available; even in today's technical world of on-line teaching, there is recognition that the capacity of the

teacher to listen, adapt and make effective choices linguistically and emotionally helps to motivate students (Brady, 2002) and for this reason, endeavours have been made to replicate such skills in internet instruction. Many technically based research projects have aimed to investigate the outcomes of a teacher's presence within an virtual on-line system of educational communication and in this regard, Anderson et al (2001: 5) have taken a rather 'cognitive view' of presence by offering the following systematic and 'operationalised' definition:

*[Presence is] the design, facilitation and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes.*

So, even in a virtual sense, presence appears to be more than just words written by a teacher on a computer screen or their physical representation projected through that screen. Somehow, the very act of their participating in the learning task means that a teacher is not there purely in a representational sense but their 'presence' makes the task meaningful for the learner in a social sense. Somehow, it is not just the teacher's knowledge which is transferred, but by participating in a virtual way, the teacher makes the task 'educationally worthwhile', This implies once again that presence is far more than a 'cognitively derived' transfer of knowledge; it has transformative power.

In fact, the notion of 'presence' as transformative power has been considered important in teaching for some time by some renowned writers and researchers. For Spiro (2009: 1), for example, it is as if a '*creative space*' is formed through the teacher's presence. This 'creative space' is '*an environment not owned either by teacher or learner, but by both and [is] creative in the sense that it can lead to real transformation.....[it] combines the expectation of best possible achievement, with the opportunity for this*'. Here, Spiro (2009) talks explicitly about the transformative potential of presence. He sees embodied within the notion of presence, a sense of expectation; however, this expectation is not purely whim or ideology, he also forefronts the need for opportunity. Without opportunity, the expectation to achieve can expire, as it has nowhere to grow into fruition. So, the teacher also needs to be also able to recognise available opportunities and turn these into learning experiences. This implies that teachers have to 'be' in the classroom in such a way that they can be nowhere

else. The teacher is not lost in memories of the past or dreams of the future but in the immediate moment with the students in their immediate moment.

From this, I would argue that it is not sufficient for the teacher to merely be there physically, within the same contextualised space and time as the students. 'Presence' as a phenomenon is far more than this; it embodies a 'way of being' with the students, which is multi-layered, multifaceted and complex and which demands of the teacher both personally and professionally as Hill (2006: 62-63) describes: She portrays teacher presence as a construct through which teachers fulfil several key responsibilities. As they focus their precise attention on watching, listening, responding, and assisting students to learn, teachers become aware of students' individual developmental stages and levels and attempt to meet their unique learning needs by being emotionally and spiritually "in relation" with their students in both a personal and pedagogical sense.

By being present, they engage in a dynamic, organic, and changing relationship with their students by accepting the spontaneity, emotions, and silence that arise in the to-and-fro rhythm of daily teaching and learning conversations and interactions. In essence, through presence, Hill (2006: 62-63) proposes that teachers accept the eternal cycle of routine, repetition, dialogue, quiet hesitation and ambiguity that invariably emerge within the pedagogical enterprise and describes a class as '*the flow of the continuous and changing movement of the current in the river*' (Hill, 2006: 62-63). '*Flow*' being an analogy she uses in a similar way to Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi's (1988: 251) descriptions of the dynamic and organic interchange of words, gestures, facial expressions and actions that participants exchange within the teaching and learning relationship in schools.

## **2.5 Three research studies on 'presence' in teaching**

Looking now specifically at the three studies I found, which explored and interrogated the ways in which the notion of 'presence' is construed in teaching; I will consider each in turn as they each offer a different stance on the ways in which the phenomenon of 'presence' has relevance within a specific teaching environment:



### **2.5.1 'Presence in teaching' (Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006)**

This study was undertaken by Carol Rodgers and Miriam Raider-Roth and published in 2006. It was contextualised within a large state university in the north-east of the United States of America. The authors/researchers are themselves teacher educators at the university and they use an interpretative methodology in their research by drawing on their own experiences with students, student teachers, experienced teachers and non-teaching professionals whose practices they believe also demand presence. In the research, they also draw upon data which include papers and stories from the student teachers on their courses and under their supervision at the university, as well as interview data from a small group of students and a group of 12 experienced teachers who were interested in exploring the notion of presence.

#### ***Key Findings***

They have reported three key findings from their research:

##### **1. *Presence as connection to self***

They have found that a key aspect of presence is being present to oneself and that the health of the connection between the students and their learning can be nurtured or jeopardized by the teacher's relationship to herself. They have also found that when teachers allow themselves to be present both with and to students, the teachers themselves can become more aware of their own selves as the students' responses can aid deeper awareness. In addition, they reported that when new teachers perceive a split between themselves as 'teachers' and as 'persons', they often lapse into a state of anxiety which they call the '*Risks of the divided self*' (Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006: 271). Moreover, they describe a larger moral dimension to presence, which '*connects the teacher to the large society to which it is responsible*' and coin this the '*moral imperative of self*' (Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006: 273).

## 2. *The relational dimension of presence*

In this study, they have found that there are certain qualities which are inherent in a teacher's capacity to be present in the relationship with her students and that to be *'in connection with another human being, a person needs to see and be seen by the other'* (Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006: 274). They also report on the ways in which this connection can become disconnected, how teachers can learn from this disconnection and relate this to the ways in which a parent and baby can learn to understand *'the signals that help them return to a state of synchrony'* (Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006: 277).

## 3. *The pedagogical connection through presence*

This study has found that the most visible way a teacher's presence can be seen is through her pedagogy and that the more experience a teacher has and the more a teacher reflects on her pedagogy, the greater the capacity for presence. They describe how the pedagogical connection can be demonstrated by subject matter knowledge, knowledge of children, learning and pedagogical skills and context. They were also very aware of the complexity inherent in teaching as *'the confluence of teacher, students, subject matter and multiple contexts.....paints an exceedingly complex picture'* (Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006: 282)

### ***Strengths and weaknesses***

The strength of this study is that it provides a deep description of how presence is construed in a higher educational context through the verbal and written narratives of student teachers, experienced teachers and students. The weakness of this study seems to lie in the fact that the researchers relied on interview data, papers and stories for their analysis and did not include classroom observations to validate and/or illustrate the interview narratives. Furthermore, the researchers use a single definition to portray their findings as:

*A state of alert awareness, receptivity, and connectedness to the mental, emotional and physical workings of both the individual and the group in the context of their learning environments, and the ability to respond with a considered and compassionate best next step (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006: 265).*

The use of this definition appears to reduce the construct of presence to a single entity, which in itself seems to contradict the multi-dimensional aspects of the notion of presence they have described.

However, I have found that this research study has been extremely useful in informing my study of the different dimensions relating to self and relationship which were found to be embodied within the construct of presence. It helped me develop the findings from my first Master's study into the conceptual framework which I have used to underpin the design of this PhD study. Moreover, it has supported what I found in my first study, especially with regard to the relational and ethical dimensions of presence and the role of trust in the pedagogic relationship, which further validated my own findings.

### **2.5.2      *'Supporting presence in teacher education: The connection between the personal and professional aspects of teaching' (Meijer et al, 2009)***

This study was undertaken by Paulien Meijer, Fred Korthagen and Angelo Vasalos in the Netherlands and it was published in 2009. It was a mixed-methods case study of one female teacher's process of developing presence in the first year of her secondary school teaching, during which she taught 3 groups of 15 and 16 year old pupils for the first time. It used qualitative analysis to answer the following research questions:

1. What stages occur in a one-year process of a student teacher's professional development, guided by a supervisor promoting core reflection?
2. What supervisory strategies promote presence?

To collect the data, the researchers audio taped and transcribed all supervisory meetings between the teacher and her supervisor, the teacher kept a log to record events and reflections, a semi-structure interview was held with both the supervisor and the teacher and the teacher completed a Questionnaire on the Core Qualities (QCQ) developed by Evelein (2005, cited in Meijer et al, 2009: 300) The QCQ contains scales in the areas of 'thinking', 'feeling' and 'wanting' which are scored on a seven-point Likert scale to indicate the degree to which the person has used the core qualities in their teaching encounters.

## ***Key Findings***

The findings describe different stages within the essence of the teacher's development as; (stage 1) chaos and a fixation on problems; (stage 2) deepened awareness but also confusion and fears; (stage 3) reflection at the identity layer and confrontation with an existential tension; (Stage 4) discovering presence and deconstructing core beliefs; (stage 5) deepening presence; (stage 6) towards autonomy in core reflection and maintaining presence.

## ***Strengths and weaknesses***

The strength of this study lies in the longitudinal descriptions it provides of the ways in which a particular teacher can go through different stages in order to connect the personal and professional aspects of teaching and thus experience what the researchers describe as a state of "being-while-teaching" (Meijer et al, 2009: 306). It also provides a strong rationale for using 'core reflection' techniques to promote a teacher's awareness and help them to actualise their personal strengths, whilst recognising that the interventions of respect, empathy and acceptance (Rogers, 1969) helps the teacher to own the learning process herself. Its weakness appears to lie in the use of a single case as the inclusion of further cases would have made the findings regarding the stages of 'presence development' more robust. Furthermore, the 'core qualities' used in the QCQ could be very limiting to the research as they tend to pre-define the qualities needed for presence, rather than exploring which qualities the research participant perceived and experienced as being inherent within the notion of presence.

This study has informed me about the ways in which core 'qualities' appear inherent in the notion of presence in teaching and helped me to understand the value of the 'core reflection' approach in promoting a teacher's awareness of such qualities. This has developed my understanding about how the concept of teacher 'qualities' relates to the connection between the personal and the professional aspects of teaching and how, in turn, qualities can become encapsulated within the essential manifestation of a teacher's presence in the classroom. Such understanding has developed my own awareness with regard to the importance of 'teacher quality' for this doctoral study.

### **2.5.3 'Presence in context: Teachers' negotiations with the relational environment of school' (Stieha and Raider-Roth, 2012)**

This inquiry, published in 2012, was undertaken by Vicki Shieha and Miriam Raider-Roth and contextualised within an independent Jewish middle school setting in the United States of America. It builds on the theory of presence in teaching developed by Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) I have described in section 2.5.1 by presenting a more nuanced approach to presence by exploring the ways in which school contexts are instrumental in a teacher's ability to support their students' learning. In this study, the researchers employ an interpretative methodology within a '*constructivist and collaborative*' design and take a '*relational stance*' (Stieha and Raider-Roth, 2012: 517) using '*multiple interviews with five veteran middle school teachers, teachers' written work and field observations*' (Stieha and Raider-Roth, 2012, 511) to collect their data. The interviews were semi-structured in nature and the field observations took place over a 3 week period. The narratives collected during the study were analysed using the '*Listening Guide*' (Brown and Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan et al, 2003, cited in Stieha and Raider-Roth, 2012: 519), which pays particular attention to the participant's voice as Brown and Gilligan (1992: 23) suggest that the voice expresses the psyche in the '*ever-changing....sense of self and the experience of relationship*' (Stieha and Raider-Roth, 2012: 519). The main findings are expressed through a case study of one of the teachers participating in the research.

In this study, a '*system theories*' and a '*relational theories*' approach are drawn together to explain their findings (Stieha and Raider-Roth, 2012, 513), supported by Pianta et al's (2002) work on the organisational systems in schools and the impact of the sociological and cultural dynamics of a school on the relationships and learning which take place there. The findings presented in the paper are part of a 5 year educational action research study into '*teachers' leaning and our own professional practice as teacher-educators*' (Stieha and Raider-Roth, 2012: 518).

## **Key Findings**

1. The researchers found that the narratives they collected revealed *'how a teachers' presence could be undermined by a sense of isolation, invisibility or vulnerability in the school'* (Stieha and Raider-Roth, 2012: 523). They found a dominant theme of disconnection which was voiced by the teachers as 'invisibility' which inherently *'carried a sense of vulnerability'* (Stieha, 2010, cited in Stieha and Raider-Roth, 2012: 523).

2. They found that tensions in one part of the school system could impact on another part of the school system. This led to a reduction in the capacity of those involved to be present to all concerned, and disconnections within the system often ensued (Stieha and Raider-Roth, 2012: 523).

## **Strengths and Weaknesses**

A key strength of this study is the subjective stance it takes towards teachers and teaching and the ways in which it places this stance within a theoretical framework. This highlights the key role systematic and relational aspects play in the ways in which institutional context impacts on the everyday grounded aspects of teaching practice. It provides a personal and illuminative view of the ways in which teachers can feel vulnerable within a school context and how this in itself can destroy trust within the relational dimensions of the school, which then impacts negatively on the teachers' potential to grow and be resilient. One of the weaknesses of the study is that it does not include an account of any shared experiences within the group of teachers involved in the study themselves, as the ways in which the teaching practitioners 'as a group' socially construct their experiences of negotiating the relational environment of a school could add a further dimension to the research and potentially enhance the robustness of the findings. Moreover, only veteran teachers were included in this aspect of the study. It would be interesting to know how less experienced teachers dealt with the complexities of negotiating the relational elements of their teaching practice and the impact this had on their capacity to be present to their learners.

This study has informed my understanding of the ways in which the relational and systematic systems which naturally exist in a school context can impact on a teacher's capacity to be present. It has also developed my understanding of the relationships within an educational environment in a nested sense and how emotionality cannot be understood without placing it in the relational context from which it originates and exploring it as part of a web-like network which radiates outwards from the 'self' and the relationship one has with one's own self and how this interacts with those 'in connection' with oneself. This echoes Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, which was brought to my attention through Stieha and Raider-Roth's (2012) study and which became integral in the development of my own models in this doctoral work.

All three of the studies I have just described have informed the development of my study with their different perspectives. The first study by Rogers and Raider-Roth (2006) articulates a theory of 'presence' in teaching which provides a theoretical foundation for the dimensions of presence I have set about exploring further in the study reported in this thesis. The second study by Meijer et al (2008) provided a more psychological perspective by construing 'presence' as a developmental aspect of teaching which moves through 'stages' and is based on a number of core qualities accessible through 'core reflection' techniques; this study has informed me of the importance of 'qualities' in the notion of 'presence', whilst I did not agree with the limited number of 'fixed' qualities which were selectively included in the study. It has also informed my ideas of 'presence' as being 'developmental' and impacted by experience. The final study I have described has informed my understanding of how 'presence' is strongly influenced by context and the systematic environment in which a teacher works.

Whilst these studies were very helpful collectively in informing the design of my own study; I believe that there are gaps in the research perspectives they offer. This is because, although they provide different accounts of the meaning of presence, all of them draw on the narratives of teaching practitioners but do not consider the ways in which teachers or teacher educators themselves socially construct the notion of presence in a community sense. I believe that this type of 'group derived account' of presence cannot be explored through individual

narratives alone, so this enquiry also needs to address the ways in which teaching practitioners make sense of their own presence and that of others through professional dialogues, discussions and workroom 'teacher talk'. For this reason, I decided to take the research in this area a step further by exploring it through socially negotiated narratives (both between myself and the participants and between the participants themselves as a group) in a school community in which I did not already have a working relationship. Doing this would allow me to look 'afresh' at the ways in which the phenomenon of 'presence in teaching' was grounded in the real world, by interrogating it within a school with which I did not have an existing relationship but with which I could develop a new relationship; not as a teacher but as a researcher.

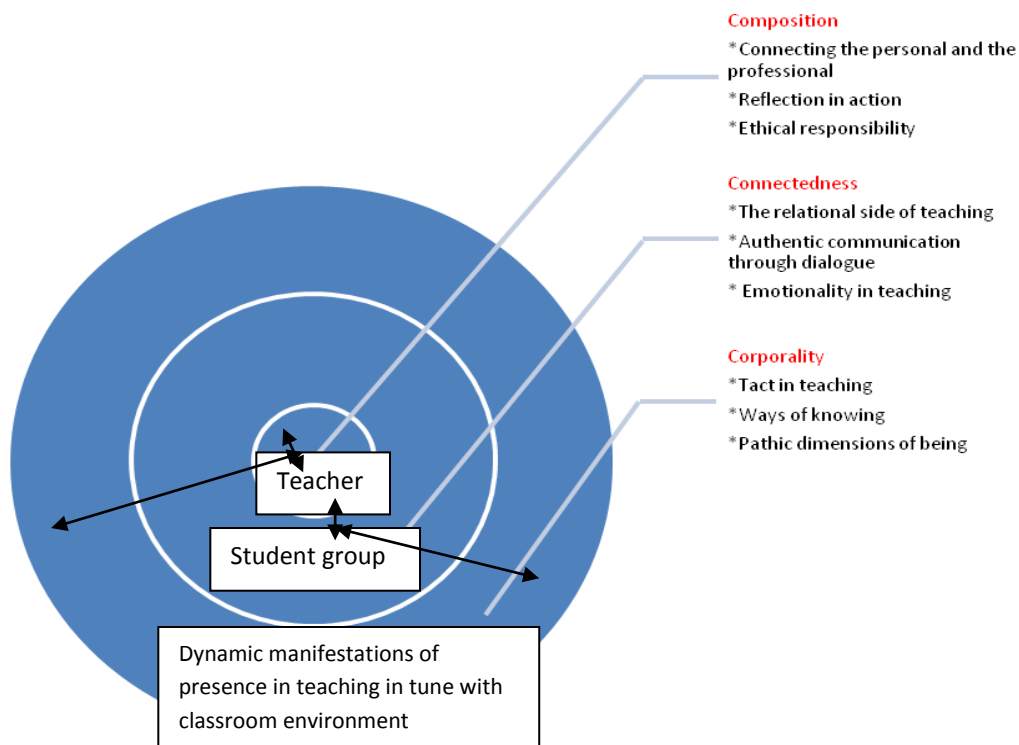
## **2.6 Drawing together the different dimensions of presence**

So, having been informed by the literature and the research studies I have just presented, I was able to draw together the strands of understanding I had gained regarding the notion of presence and develop a further model of the ways in which it is construed. To do this, I drew particularly on two theoretical frameworks; systems theories (Fullan, 2007; Pace & Hemmings, 2007) and relational theories (Pianta, 1999). I did this because the systems view provides a way of expressing the means through which the intricately interwoven parts of the classroom system play into one another through the interconnected relationships between those participating in the classroom space. In fact, Pianta (1999) used a system theory when researching an educational environment with the student at the centre of the system as it helped *'emphasize understanding the behaviour of the system's parts in relation to the unit as a whole and understanding the dynamic properties of the whole in relation to its context'* (Pianta et al., 2002: 24).

Stieha (2010) extended this theory by applying it to teachers. In the same way, in the model overleaf (Figure 2.6), I have used a nested illustration to depict the ways in which I construe the teacher's personal/ professional self (composition) as lying at the very heart of their presence in the classroom, as it is from this very core that a teacher reaches out to connect with the students. Aspects of self, embodied within this dimension I have called 'composition', are imbibed



with personal and professional theories dynamically displayed through the roles, responsibilities, beliefs, feelings and attitudes informing their presence as teachers. However, without a learner, a teacher cannot be a teacher. There is, therefore, an inherent need in any teacher to connect with their students. It is this connection which forms the relational web (connectedness) between the teacher and the students, within which the teacher self provides the pivotal hub, as the web-like network of relationships radiate outwards from the centrality of this core. This illustrates the co-dependency within the teacher/student(s) relationship and the ways in which some aspects of this relationship can be observed externally. The manifestations of the teacher's presence within this inter-connected relational web are depicted on the outside, as some of the components co-existing within the teacher's presence can be identified by an external observer, whilst some aspects remain hidden within the teacher's own psyche. This nested construction of presence is illustrated in the model below:



**Figure 2.6:** Presence in teaching as a nested and holistic construct.

## **2.7 Research question**

My first study was limited by time resources and because of this, concentrated on an in-depth exploration of the perceptions and experiences of a group of teachers. However, after reviewing the literature and reconceptualising it within the enhanced framework of understanding I have just described, my perplexity grew: Teacher education seemed to approach the construct of 'presence' in a simpler, more competency based way than the data provided by the teachers who participated in my first study, as well as the other studies on presence I had found and I began to wonder about the experiences of other practitioners involved in the educational field regarding this construct. For example, how did practicing teacher educators find 'presence' meaningful in practice? Did they perceive it in a similar way to the ways in which the teachers experienced it; or when observing a teacher, did they construe the notion of their 'presence' in an entirely different way?. I also wondered how or if the teacher educators would draw on their own experiences of presence in teaching when they attempted to describe it to others. Finally, with due consideration for the ways in which my first study and my embellished understanding of 'connectedness' (see Figure 2.6) forefront the importance of the relational element of presence, it also appeared important to include a sampling of the ways in which a group of students perceived the presence of their teachers by drawing on their classroom experiences. So I have brought such concerns and questions together within my research question for this study:

**'How is 'presence' experienced and perceived by practicing teachers, teacher educators and students?'**

### **Summary**

To summarise, having been convinced through my initial Master's dissertation study that presence in teaching lives in 'real time' teaching practice, I have developed and embellished my first findings into a framework, through which I have filtered the literature using insights generated by my Masters study. Such insights incorporate the connection between the personal and the professional, reflection-in-action, ethical responsibility, the relational side of teaching,

authentic communication through dialogue, teachers' emotionality, tact in teaching, ways of knowing and the 'pathic' dimensions of being.

Finally, I would argue that this chapter has not only revealed the gap in understanding about what the construct of 'presence in teaching' actually means for teaching practitioners, but also provides a fresh way of bringing together key insights and theorisations which touch on its essential core. Helping to fill this gap in knowledge by developing an 'enriched' understanding of what presence means in practice through an empirically-based explorative research study into my key research question seems to be of paramount importance. It appears that only through such research can the educational domain gain deeper insights into the essence of this human side of teaching, which, as I have previously argued, is often understated, undervalued and even more often misunderstood.

So, in the next chapter, I will discuss the design of the study I developed to explore this key issue.

# CHAPTER THREE

## *Design of the Study*

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I will discuss the theoretical issues embedded within my inquiry and the ontological, epistemological and philosophical approaches underpinning the approach I took. I will then provide a detailed description of the methods I used during the fieldwork phase, followed by an outline of the ways in which the research process unfolded. Finally, I will discuss the ethical aspects involved in a study such as this and conclude with the ways in which I analysed and interpreted the data I collected.

Initially, during the early stages of designing my inquiry, I became increasingly aware that as a novice researcher, undertaking a research project such as this, I should give considerable attention to the ways in which I understand the world as this understanding inevitably has a strong impact on the project. Such awareness grew into a realisation that my personal research stance had been tacitly informed by my personal views on the nature of 'being' in the world (ontology), what I believe understanding or knowledge means (epistemology) and what I believe to be the purpose of such understanding (Cohen et al, 2007: 5). So, as I have come to realise, the ontological and epistemological foundations of this inquiry are highly significant factors which need to be made explicit here, as they provide support for the findings I will later report as insights into the research question I am seeking to address (Cohen et al, 2007: 5).

In fact, Hitchcock and Hughes (1995: 21) have suggested that it is the ontological assumptions one makes about the nature of the world in which we live, which give rise to epistemological assumptions concerning the ways in which we form understandings about this world; they further propose that these understandings, in turn, give rise to methodological considerations, which, provoke issues regarding the means of instrumentation and data collection

(Cohen et al, 2007: 5). So, I will consider these matters in turn and describe the position I have taken with regards to each of them.

### 3.1 Ontological and epistemological considerations

As I have developed my understanding about the notion of presence, as described in the previous chapter, I have come to understand that ontologically people, as human beings, cannot be dismembered from the world in which they live as they are *'embedded and immersed in a world of objects and relationships, language and culture, projects and concerns'* (Smith et al., 2009: 21). In view of this inherent immersion in the world; whilst individual involvement in the lived world is something immensely personal, man cannot live alone; in the words of Buber (1937/2004), *'where there is no sharing, there is no reality'* (p.52).

So, I see individual human life as intricately entwined with the world of others through the natural human necessity and desire to have a meaningful relationship with the world outside oneself; with both things and people. For this reason, I have taken a social constructivist epistemological approach to the acquisition of knowledge in this project, acknowledging that 'knowledge' or perhaps more aptly 'ways of knowing' (Szesztay, 2004) are not only personally construed but are also continually co-constructed and reconstructed within the communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) within which a person works, lives and socialises.

In addition, as I have illustrated in Chapter One, my ontological position regarding this research endeavour has been strongly informed by my work as a person-centred counsellor. The principles embodied through reflecting on and practicing the work of Rogers (1957) have evolved over time into a deep commitment to a humanistic educational philosophy. Relating my person-centred perspective to this research endeavour, I strongly support Dewing's (2002: 160) suggestion that a *'nurturing personhood is a primary value'* in enquiry and consequently my ontological approach emphasises the *'being with another rather than the doing to or doing for'* (Dewing, 2002: 160, my own emphasis). Such an approach cherishes genuineness and closeness between

researcher and participants, where issues are explored and discussed through the building of trust and relationship (Dewing, 2002: 160) and knowledge(s) can be shared and made openly accessible for mutually reciprocal benefit.

From this stance, it is clear that, personally speaking, I would not wish to ontologically separate myself from the world and others. To me, such aspects of existence naturally play into each other and inform each other through the inseparable mutuality I see as inherent in being a caring person in the world. In addition, from my perspective, it is generally through the relational aspects of human interaction that life takes on its potent meaning. To find this meaning, I believe that it is vital to discover *'what lies at the ontological core of our being'* (van Manen, 1990: 13). Human agency itself can, I believe, act as a catalyst (Bhaskar, 1989) for doing this.

Moreover, my ontological position is strongly informed by a critical realist perspective. From this standpoint, whilst the institutional structure of a school could seem intransitive and could, as Clegg (2005) suggests, be perceived as having a *'flat ontology that only operates at the level of the empirical'* (Clegg, 2005: 420), illuminative theoretical insights into underlying processes can become accessible when inspired through the catalyst of human agency and enquiry. Clegg (2005: 421) coins this as a *'depth ontology'*, redefining the definition of 'evidence' in empirical research as *'work which can give insight into the structures, powers, ...and tendencies that help us understand the concrete worlds of experience'* (Clegg, 2005: 421). This perspective certainly goes a long way towards acknowledging the essential place hermeneutics have in educational research and recognising the *'transformative nature of social action and the absolute centrality of human agency'* (Clegg, 2005: 421/422).

So, this research project was, in effect, brought into existence through the 'core' dimensions of my own being. These not only provided the inspiration for it, but also afforded a 'source of being', which I continually called upon to maintain the 'spirit' of the agency which lay at the heart of this research endeavour. For this reason, it was inevitable that every aspect of this work was infused with my own presence as a researcher, as I continually strove to attune to the threads which ran between the past, the future and the present and endeavoured to provide a

'moral space' (Kitwood, 1990: 97) or perhaps more aptly a 'safe space' within which understanding could be explored without a 'power-knowledge relationship' (Clegg, 2005: 425).

What is more, as Nutley et al (2003) argue *'there is no such thing as **the** evidence' evidence is a contested domain and in a constant state of becoming'* (p. 133, my own emphasis) So, I believe that my personal unique presence as a researcher was instrumental in the ways in which evidence generated by this study evolved in the field. It was the unique stance I took, together with my own relational ethos and sensitivity, which unleashed a 'spirit of enquiry' within the school. Moreover, it was my own presence which informed the idea that I could act as a catalyst for the research and develop a 'research disposition' in the school; an essential ingredient in carrying this project through to its natural conclusion. So, in essence, at an ontological level, the research I present in this thesis recognises that the world is deeply complex, mysterious and 'messy' and that whilst the ways in which we construct our own realities in life cannot simply be reduced to experience, they can be explored *in and through* contextual experience. Moreover, the agency of doing this in itself can reveal insights into previously undetected theoretical underpinnings at play in the world and provide an enriched contribution to the web of knowledge available.

Crotty (2009: 10) suggests that *'ontological issues and epistemological issues tend to emerge together'*. Indeed, from an epistemological perspective, I see human experience as a journey; a lived process, which resides within the infinite scope of the ever changing perspectives and meanings uniquely encapsulated by the person's embodied and situated relationships within the world they inhabit at any specific moment in time. I would surmise that it is through the developing totality of such moments of experience, that individual and collective knowledge is dynamically created and co-created. For this reason, my research valued personal perceptions as individually cherished understandings and beliefs, which formed and reformed as strong supporting structures within the merging and developing co-constructed belief system as it came to be experienced by the group of participants in and through the research process.

Moreover, such a view of the world inherently implies that, whilst observed phenomena remain important, it is the meanings and interpretations given to such observations which are paramount, as they offer a source of collective understanding about the world (Cohen et al, 2007: 26). Heidegger (1962/1927) sees this as a natural consequence of *'Being-in-the-world'*, a world of *'embodied free subjects, embedded in an inter-subjective world of meaningful and value-laden objects'* (Morris, 2008: 61). According to Giddens (1976, cited in Cohen et al, 2007: 26), this way of viewing the world involves a *'double hermeneutic'*, whereby people are continually striving to interpret and exist in a world, which has already been interpreted; In such a world view, interpretation is an inherently core feature, embedded as it is in living in a meanings-driven socially constructed world (Cohen et al, 2007: 26). As such (re)interpretation generally evolves from the body of interpreted understanding which already exists within the situated context in which a person lives and works, this is also known as an *'epistemology of situated or embedded knowledge'* or *'localist hermeneutic'* (Harris, 1998: 132).

### **3.2 Exploring presence through phenomenology**

Moving now to the question of appropriate methodology; in essence, the ontological and epistemological positions I have just outlined informed my decision to adopt phenomenology as my chosen methodological research stance for the reasons I will now describe.

In very general terms, phenomenology is rooted in the turn from viewing human behaviour as determined by externally, objectively and physically derived realities (English and English, 1958) to being embodied within the phenomenon of active human experience (Cohen et al, 2007: 22). It therefore lies at the very heart of subjectivist understandings of ontology in the form of hermeneutics, in that it endeavours to understand the world of human experience through its active meanings and interpretations and, as such, provides a foundation which underpins the interpretative paradigm as a whole. Being interested in exploring an abstract and ethereal construct, such as presence, which offers little in the way of 'objective' physicality; phenomenology offered the perfect solution to my research dilemma. By its very nature, phenomenology seeks to represent the



very nature or 'essence' (Moustakas, 1994) of a phenomenon and therefore provided the means to do exactly what I was setting out to do.

According to Husserl (1927), the phenomenological quest is to explore that which makes a 'something' what it is and without which it could not be what it is; so, finding the 'essence' of a phenomenon can be described through '*the study of the structure that governs the instances or particular manifestations of the essence of that phenomenon*' (van Manen, 1990:10). The phenomenological study of presence in teaching could be viewed then as my systematic attempt to reveal and describe the internal meaning of the structures of the *lived experiences* of presence in teaching. So, from a phenomenological perspective, in order to intuit or grasp the essence of this phenomenon, I first needed to study the particularities or instances of this phenomenon through the lived experiences of those who encounter it. Heidegger (1962/1927) suggests:

*Before we ask what really exists and why, we should focus on what actually shows itself to us and notice how it displays itself, looking for patterns in this display (cited in Polt, 1999:14).*

Furthermore, through language, phenomenology strives to depict the essence or nature of an experience in a way which reawakens the experience in others. It attempts to portray any lived quality or significance of the experience as deeply and fully as possible. In this way, through my phenomenological descriptions of presence in teaching, derived from classroom observations, I will endeavour to explicate the meanings of experiences of the participants in this research study as they were lived in everyday existence with the aim of resonating with a real sense of events and happenings rather than purely conceptualising why they happened.

In life, there is generally a difference between our pre-reflective 'lived understanding' of a phenomenon and our reflective grasp of the phenomenological structure of the phenomenon's lived meaning. This is because a phenomenon does not necessarily show itself as an entity, behaviour, or emotion but instead can make itself apparent and visible *through* such means (van Manen, 1990: 50). The phenomenology of 'presence in teaching' did not, therefore, endeavour to reduce the primordial aspects of teaching into clearly defined concepts in order to dispel its mystery, but rather to

bring the mystery of 'teacher presence' more fully into awareness (Marcel, 1950, cited in van Manen, 1990: 50). It did this through the following phenomenological sources of knowledge; all of which were used in the research process.

### **3.2.1      *Phenomenological sources of knowledge***

#### ***Embodied knowledge***

During the interviews and after observing the teacher and teacher educator participants in their everyday classroom settings, I asked them about events or happenings with a view to describing how they felt at that time and what they could recall about the environment or situation. I asked them about the things they did in the form of routines and habits and how these were meaningful for them. My intention was to draw on their ways of knowing, not from the point of 'why' but from the point of 'how'. From a phenomenological point of view, the whole body could be described as 'pathic'. The body knows how to do things, without always needing to consult intellectual capacity (van Manen & Li, 2002). In truth, it could be argued that intellectually controlling activities can prevent a being from doing the things an embodied being intuitively knows how to do. So, by accessing an embodied understanding of activities such as routines, habits and conventions residing deep within, an embodied way of being allows the everyday world to happen, allowing access to the world through this way of knowing (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

#### ***Enacted knowledge***

By discussing the manifestations of their presence through its enactment in practice, the participants were able to make links between their presence and practice, in ways which they were previously hidden to them. Van Manen (2002) claims that we discover what we know in what we can do. However, sometimes we do things without really understanding why we do them or how we do them. In this way, not all our actions can be traced back to propositions or theories we hold. According to Van Manen (2006b), some knowledge is tacit, non-discursive and silent. It is only through action that we actually become

aware of this knowledge. In this sense, we discover what we know through what we can do and how we act (van Manen & Li, 2002).

### ***Relational knowledge***

Relational knowledge could be deemed to be essential in human existence in that without a sense of '*being*'; without what Heidegger (1962/1927) calls '*Dasein*', entities, other than self, could continue to be in the world but their existence would be devoid of meaning as there would be no-one to relate to them as entities. In this sense, without a relational sphere within which to live, work and act, being in the world would have no meaning at all as it is generally through others that we perceive ourselves as having existence. So, in this study, having a 'teacher' in the classroom gave the relationships between the 'actors' in the classroom a pedagogic meaning. With the teacher there, the room became a classroom, not just a room full of people. Without the teacher, it was just a group of people or children. Unless the classroom had previously been collectively defined as a place of learning by those present, in which case pedagogic activities could take place there with or without the teacher present, the teacher gave the classroom meaning in the sense that the teacher defined the classroom. Similarly, without the students, there were no teachers.

### ***Situated knowledge***

In this study, 'knowledge' came not only from the body as human beings, but also from material 'things' in the world. Such situated knowledge was found in the classroom atmosphere, the materials and texts used and the habits and routines that the teachers and students had co-constructed between them within the physical space and cultural ecology of a particular classroom (van Manen & Li, 2002). Heidegger (1962/1927) believes that we can only begin to understand the world by analysing the environment and that the environment provides the main clue to the world in which we live. It was important therefore to go deeply into a classroom setting in which the phenomenon could be placed meaningfully (Holliday, 2007: 10).

In summary, as a phenomenological researcher, I was keen to capture the essences of the notion of 'presence' through the participants' 'knowledge-

making' processes as I have just described. Generally, in order to gather this type of data, phenomenological inquiry advocates undertaking individual or group interviews as a means of collecting data, as experiences and perceptions become meaningful and coherent through the reflective processes, often in the form of narrative conversations (Kvale, 1996: 11). However, the phenomenological researcher can use any of the following data collection methods: field notes, participant observation, journal notes, interviews, diaries, life histories, artefacts, documents, video recordings and audio recordings, according to best fit for the circumstances (Cohen et al, 2007: 181). Consideration of the potential benefits and drawbacks of using such methods informed my decisions about the methods I would use, as I will later describe in the section on data collection methods (3.3). Before this, I would like to look at my role as a phenomenological researcher.

### **3.2.2        *The role of the researcher in phenomenological inquiry***

The hermeneutic approach (described in 3.1) to interpretive research was championed by Gadamer (1990/1960), who explicated the cyclical phenomenological process of trying to find meaning by studying the interrelationship between the parts and their relationship to the complex whole. Gadamer (1990/1960) believes that interrogating this interrelationship helps develop a more global understanding, which in turn provides an improved understanding of the parts, as the "*prejudgements that lead to preunderstanding are "constantly at stake"*" (Moustakas, 1994: 10).

Relating this theoretical stance to my own phenomenological study; each of the participants constituted a holistic 'part' by offering their unique personal perceptions and experiences and it was these parts which helped me find essences and meanings thematically appertaining to the 'complex whole' of the group of research participants. This, in turn, led me to a greater understanding when I returned to the accounts of individual participants. Consequently, the inter-relationship between the individuals and the group inspired a cycle of understanding which was continually enhanced by fresh (and often deeper) insights.

In truth, my position as a researcher of people was a highly significant aspect of the study design. As a researcher within the domain of the human sciences, I was working with people rather than objective 'things'. These people have emotions; they have intellectual capacity and they have ways of working things out for themselves. Van Manen (1990: 14) purports that knowledge in this realm cannot simply be portrayed as the product of formal intellect. It is more than that; simply by being human, ways of knowing are also, or at least should be, informed by moral and ethical sensitivity and responsibility and an awareness of freedom of choice. In the words of Van Manen (1990) '*Human science operates on the principle of the recognition of the existence of freedom in human life*' (p.21). This implies that there is no single reality or truth, but rather individual and collective understandings of reality or truth by '*free human beings who have acquired a deepened understanding of the meaning of certain human experiences*' (Van Manen, 1990: 21).

Seen in this way, knowledge, as it was represented in this study, should instead be viewed more as 'understanding'. According to Bollnow (1974, cited in van Manen, 1990:14), when human knowledge is manifested in the form of understanding, it becomes '*geistig*'; a concept which recognises human understanding as far greater than intellectual logic. This multi-layered and multi-dimensional form of knowledge springs from the depth of the soul and spirit and resides in an embodied sense of knowing and being. Such a view acknowledges that as human beings, the participants could only call upon their own beliefs, understandings, feelings and 'personal knowledge' at any particular moment in time to support their 'ways of being'.

According to Heidegger (cited in Polt, 1999: 47), 'knowing' for a human being is a specialised manifestation of 'being in the world' that is built through engaged and concerned '*dwelling*' in the world. According to Heidegger (1962/1927), this dwelling is not primarily cognitive; nor is it built up solely from observations, beliefs or knowledge but comes from a far more basic non-cognitive type of knowing which comes from the depth of 'being' or what Heidegger calls 'Dasein' (Heidegger, 1962/1927). Boss (1963) gives an explicit rendering of Dasein, when he states:

*Dasein' means 'being (sein) there (da).....man's Dasein is the being of the 'there'. The 'there' designates the realm of lumination, which human existence is, the realm into which all particular beings may come forth, where they may show themselves, may appear and thus be (p. 39).*

Although, the depth of the complexities of 'Dasein' are understated in this description, May et al (1958) offer a more grounded summary of the concept when he argues that:

*Dasein indicates that man is the being who is there and implies also that he has a 'there' in the sense that he can know he is there and can take a stand with reference to that fact. The 'there' is moreover, not just any place, but the particular 'there' that is mine, the particular point in time as well as space of my existence at this moment. Man is the being who can be conscious of, and therefore responsible for, his existence (p. 41).*

May et al. (1958) refer to the world as *'the structure of meaningful relationships in which a person exists and the design of which he participates in'* (p.59). They (May et al., 1958) believe that it is essential that man has this relationship with the world, in order to make sense of his own place within it and in this way, keep a modicum of clarity and sanity about the inter-relationship between himself and the meaning of his experiences in the world. This also provides some sort of structural reference through which worldly experience can be understood. For this reason, the experiential relational dimensions of the inter-connectivity between the teacher, the teacher educator and the student participants provided a strong framework for the ways in which classroom events and happenings became meaningful.

Throughout the process, I made every effort to remain aware of my preconceptions, as I knew these could influence my interpretation of the data collected. I realised that the inherent problem in this type of qualitative research is that as a human being, I have a philosophical heritage. This heritage, derived from collective unconscious and conscious understandings, could mean that, without even knowing it, my own inherited interpretations could be reconceptualised as 'truths' or as 'self-evidences'. Past experiences could get petrified into 'tradition' in the form of a rigid, unquestioning conceptual structure (Polt, 1999: 38). For this reason, phenomenology demanded that instead of taking my traditions for granted, I rediscovered things through the 'primordial

experiences' (Heidegger, 1962/1927) that gave rise to the engrained traditions or beliefs in the first place. Thus, as a researcher, I applied the 'principle of suspicion' (Klein & Myers, 1999: 72) not just to the participants' narratives but also to my own interpretation of those narratives. This was reflected in my honesty, reflexivity and transparency throughout the research study.

### ***Orientating myself to the phenomenon***

Phenomenology demanded that I, as the researcher, remained committed to exploring and questioning deeply in my endeavour to make sense of what I found. I recognised that the interpretation of one individual was limited by the scope of human nature. No single interpretation of human experience could ever exhaust the possibility of another complementary or potentially richer or deeper description. Through phenomenology, I could only hope to deepen understanding by working collaboratively to try to find clarity and sometimes, this raised more questions than answers.

### ***Seeking clarification***

My research drew on the reflective processes of the participants as I attempted to draw into focus that which had tended to be fuzzy, obscure or simply 'out of reach'. I tried to clarify things which could be considered outside the orbit of some seemingly more easily available cognitive functions. Phenomenology thus offered a less accepting or rather more questioning attitude to life's mysteries; Heidegger (1962/1927) believes that a totally rational approach can sometimes block and obscure an experience from those who are experiencing it, as the brain can in essence blindfold the soul to the depths of what is being experienced. Furthermore, for my study to be phenomenological and in order to understand it properly, I had to see it in context. Heidegger (1962/1927) describes context as a 'horizon' where all things have potential meaning. Within this 'horizon', things are revealed as they are relevant to our lives (Polt, 1999: 25) within the scope of our understanding as human beings. Moreover, it is by being and remaining open to this mode of existence that human beings can find a richer and fuller sense of 'being in the world'. So, having described the fundamental methodological principles I endeavoured to keep in mind

throughout my research study, I will now turn to the research methods I used to gather the data for this study.

### 3.3 The research methods

The purpose of this inquiry was to provide an enriched understanding of what the notion of 'presence in teaching' meant to a group of practicing teachers and teacher educators, along with a group of students, by interrogating it through an empirically based explorative research study into the research question: '**How is 'presence' experienced and perceived by practicing teachers, teacher educators and students?**'

Taking place over a nine month period on site, its site was a school in the south of the United Kingdom, which specifically catered to Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) to adults. A group of 7 teachers and 4 teacher educators took part in the study by participating in semi-structured individual interviews, focus groups, classroom observations and related discussions and a group of 7 students took part in a supported discussion, based on a feedback sheet they completed individually. The field work fell naturally into distinct 'mini phases' as illustrated below:

**Table 3.1:** Phases of data collection

Data collection method	Participants	Dates collected
First interviews	7 teachers 4 teacher educators	October 2011 – February 2012
Second interviews	6 teachers 4 teacher educators	November 2011 – February 2012
Observations	6 teachers 4 teacher educators	February 2012 – May 2012
Focus Groups	Group 1 (6 teachers) Group 2 (4 teacher educators) Group 3 (7 students)	April 2012



### **3.3.1 Choice of methods**

As a phenomenological researcher, there was no single prescriptive for which data collection instruments I should use and methods can be chosen on the basis on 'fitness for purpose' (Cohen et al, 2007: 181). However, I discerned that certain data collection methods were more appropriate for my study than others, as Cohen et al (2007: 96) suggest that:

*The more the project addresses intangible and unmeasurable elements, and the richer the data to be collected, the more there is a need for increased and sensitive interpersonal behaviour [and] face-to-face data collection methods.*

With this in mind, whilst I was well aware of the logistical drawbacks in time consuming face-to-face data collection methods and the impact this could have on the school curriculum, the school supported me in my decision to carry out individual and group interviews as well as classroom observations, as, together, these provided a flexible means of exploring deep, multi-sensory channels of data; verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard (Cohen et al, 2007: 347) from a variety of perspectives in order to generate a '*thick description*' (Geertz, 1993) of the topic under discussion.

I will now consider each of the methods I used in more detail.

### **3.3.2 Primary data sources - The interviews and participatory observations**

The Interviews and participatory observations I conducted both offered me invaluable sources of rich data, as I will now illustrate.

#### **3.3.2.1 The Interviews**

In qualitative research, interviews can typically range in design from being highly structured with a questionnaire type format in which typically closed (and some open) questions are asked in a fixed sequence; to being semi-structured in that there is some built-in flexibility in the ways pre-planned open questions are asked, in tune with the flow of the interview; to being completely unstructured so that the interview becomes more like an open-ended

'conversation' (Cohen et al, 2007: 355). According to van Manen (1990: 66), a conversational style interview method is a valuable tool in phenomenological research as it can be used as a portal to gather lived-experience material, such as stories, anecdotes, recollections of experiences and to reflect with the interviewee on aspects of experience regarding the topic under discussion.

Moreover, van Manen (1990: 63) suggests that the gathering of and reflecting on the interviewee's lived experience material can be done at two different stages in the research project to encourage research participants to speak with more depth about the topic in hand as the research project develops. Goodson (2011) also supports the use of two interviews. In the first, he believes as a researcher, you can use silence, prompts, coaxing and such techniques to encourage the participant to speak. He suggests marking up the key phrases or sections after transcribing the first interview and then, feeding these back in the second interview to encourage the participants to articulate or elaborate on what they said. This enables the researcher to go deeper, by 'slicing through the onion'; the layers of which could be seen as representing the protective, defensive layers a person develops as a reaction to life experiences and which can sometimes form a barrier to genuine and deep dialogue.

However, with the novice researcher in mind, van Manen (1990: 66) stresses that the most important consideration in the interview process is the need for a disciplined focus on the fundamental question under exploration, as a haphazard *'overabundance of poorly managed interviews may lead either to total despair or confusion'* (van Manen, 1990: 67).

### ***My decision to use interviews as a primary data source***

So, with all the above in mind, I decided to carry out two semi-structured individual interviews with each teacher and teacher educator participant; the first offering a space for 'structured flexibility' so that meaning could be co-constructed with myself within the scope of the interview, whilst the second offered an opportunity to me to press for more complete answers about the complex and deep issues (Cohen et al, 2007: 347) which had arisen. For the first interview, I designed a number of questions to interrogate the different sources of phenomenological knowledge I have already outlined in 3.2.1;

essentially the embodied, enacted, relational and situational elements of being a teacher, whilst keeping in mind the illuminating power of metaphoric systems of understanding (Bolton, 2005: 121) and exploring the perceived suitability of 'presence' as a criterion in teaching observations, as I have already discussed in Chapter One (the questions I asked in the interviews are listed in Appendix 4).

Moreover, in order to maintain focus, whilst simultaneously providing myself with an in-built flexibility, I copied the questions onto movable cards so that I could ask them in a way which naturally followed the flow of the conversation (once again see Appendix 4) whilst ensuring that all questions were asked. My main aim at this early stage was to encourage elucidation of the ways in which the teacher participants perceived and experienced their own presence in teaching and this often meant helping them to visualise themselves in their classroom and connect with their practice through remembered teaching and learning experiences, which had particular significance for them.

As I have already discussed, the second interviews offered an opportunity to ensure that the participants felt that they had represented themselves and their experiences with regard to the study topic as fully and as adequately as possible. At the beginning of the second interview, I asked each participant whether they had any thoughts or observations they would like to voice in the light of new insights gained, having had the time and space for further consideration of the topic. In preparation for the second interview, I had compiled a list of pertinent verbatim quotes made by the participants in their first interview together with a question or comment for each quote which I felt would encourage the participant to reflect more deeply on the issue they had originally raised (see Appendix 5 for an example of such quotes and comments)

Indeed, as the interview became more reflective, it turned increasingly into a hermeneutic type of interview. Van Manen (2006a) suggests that in this case *'the hermeneutic interview tends to turn the interviewees into participants or collaborators of the research project'* (p.63). Themes from the first interview thus acted as a launch-pad into discussions. The verbatim quotes chosen referred to topics or issues which the participant had brought up summarily or

fleetingly but which had not been developed, clarified or elaborated on during the first interview. This provided a further check to see whether the essence of the first interview had been accurately and fully captured (Cohen et al., 2007: 371). As Moustakas (1994:18) states:

*In heuristic investigations, verification is enhanced by returning to the research participants, sharing with them the meanings and essences of the phenomenon as derived from reflection on and analysis of the verbatim transcribed interviews and other material and seeking their assessment for comprehensiveness and accuracy.*

In this way the participants slowly developed into co-researchers or 'collaborators' in the research project. Van Manen (1990: 99) describes such a procedure when he states that:

*A series of interviews may be scheduled or arranged with selected participant; that allows reflection on the text (transcripts) of previous interviews in order to aim for as much interpretative insight as possible.*

### ***Interview style - A sensitive and reflective approach***

The research process was inductive, in that I tried to make sense of the situation, '*without imposing any pre-existing expectations on the research setting*' (Patton, 1980: 40). Mason (2001) makes the point that it is important to concentrate on the phenomenon itself so that the data can reveal themselves as naturally as the actor meant them, she writes:

*The starting point of the phenomenological approach is to consider every phenomenon, including known ones, as if they are presenting themselves for the very first time to consciousness. In this way, we can (again) become aware of the fullness and richness of these phenomena (Mason, 2001: 138).*

In order to capture the essence of the experience, I continually conducted myself and my work with an attitude of sensitivity. I strove to show this sensitivity in every aspect of the study; my initial contact with the school, my discourse with participants as a means of opening them up to the meaning of their teaching experiences and my interpretations of the data. As Ray (1994: 129) puts it, capturing the essence of an experience requires '*a sensitive*

*attunement to opening up the meaning of experience both as discourse and as text*'.

The interview framework for both the teachers and the teacher educators was continually adapted and enhanced as experience and understanding unfolded during the research process. This type of interview is itself phenomenological in nature and enabled me to have a strong degree of flexibility in terms of finding 'information in whatever direction appears to be appropriate' (Patton, 1980: 199). Each participant was encouraged to become immersed in his or her own lived experience of the phenomenon and then was given the space and time to describe it to the fullest extent possible, as it became accessible within conscious awareness. The questions, whilst providing a support structure, were thus individualised according to the individual being interviewed.

I was aware of the skills necessary to help the participant delve deeper into the experience and their developing understanding of the experience they were describing. I often paraphrased the main theme that was being expressed, or repeated points which were being made in order to encourage the participant to go deeper into the ways in which they were articulating their understanding. Patton (1980) describes the way in which the phenomenological researcher takes responsibility for guiding the interview as follows:

*The phenomenological interviewer must be able to interact easily with people in a variety of settings, generate rapid insights, formulate questions quickly and smoothly and guard against asking questions that impose interpretations on the situation by the structure of the questions (p.200).*

I encouraged participants to add their own ideas and opinions beyond the bounds of any questions I asked and they were, therefore, in essence enlisted as co-researchers. I similarly encouraged them to take responsibility for exploring the phenomenon in their own ways and build their own theoretical pictures through recollections and narratives.

### ***Bodily empathy, self-awareness and inter-subjectivity***

As a phenomenological interviewer, I tried to hold my own understanding in abeyance, whilst I attended to the explorations of the participants. Finlay (2006,

cited in Langdrige, 2007: 70) refers to this by suggesting that a qualitative researcher should show '*bodily empathy*', '*embodied self-awareness*' and '*embodied inter-subjectivity*', in order to be continually aware of how the flow of interaction is affecting both parties and ensure that the participant is not led, but is able to develop his or her own understandings and enunciate them from a position of empowered strength and freedom as an individual.

### 3.3.2.2 *The participatory observations*

A distinctive feature of observation as a qualitative research method, is that it offers an opportunity to gather 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations (Cohen et al, 2007: 376). Accordingly, it has the potential to yield more valid or authentic data than mediated or inferential methods (Cohen et al, 2007: 396) and in this way has a unique strength. Moreover, it provides a means of confirming what has been found through other methods, such as interviews. As Robson (2002: 310) suggests; what people do, may not be what they say they do, and so observation provides a 'reality check' (Cohen et al, 2007). Through observation, a researcher can look afresh at everyday behaviour and thus notice those things which might otherwise be taken for granted, be expected as a matter of routine or go unnoticed (Cooper & Schindler, 2001: 374). Moreover, being sensitive to context, observational data demonstrate strong ecological validity (Moyle, 2002) and are useful for recording non-verbal behaviour (Bailey, 1994: 244), which is particularly significant for a phenomenological study such as this.

In fact, Patton (1990) makes it clear that the phenomenological researcher can (and very possibly should) include a methodological mandate which involves the researcher in a direct experience of the phenomenon being investigated or explored, when he states that:

*A phenomenological perspective can mean either or both (1) a focus on what people experience and how they interpret the world (in which case one can use interviews without actually experiencing the phenomenon oneself) or (2) a methodological mandate to actually experience the phenomenon being investigated (in which case participant observation would be necessary (p. 70).*

For these reasons; in addition to the interviews I have previously described, I chose to also carry out participatory classroom observations, as they offered me that all important phenomenological conduit through which data could be elicited in situ, providing a 'real-life' perspective of the phenomenon of presence (Cohen et al, 2007: 168). In specific terms, they offered me a means of exploring the dimensions of composition, connectedness and corporality as I have described them in Chapter Two. Through observing the relational aspects of the classroom interaction between the teacher and the student(s), the ways in which the teacher's presence was manifested in and through the actuality of what they did in classroom practice and (in ensuing discussions), exploring any events or incidences which had impact on the teacher in terms of their sense of self, their reflection-in-action and their emotional world, I was not only able to gather a wide variety of contextual experiential data, but also to explore the meanings assigned by the participants to such experiences.

For example, one of my intentions was to record any pedagogically pathic dimensions of teaching practice (van Manen & Li, 2002) (see Chapter Two, in the section on 'corporality', 2.4.3) as they became visible within the classroom dynamics, as illustrated in the vignette below.

Observation 1 3/2/12 at 10.30 - Shaun (pseudonym)

*The teacher exerts his authority as a clear response. One student grimaces when she is asked a question, she says 'it's the only one I don't know'. The teacher encourages her by saying 'I do like your cheerful voice'. He praises her for making her response sound interesting even if it is wrong. The teacher uses the opportunity to show the rhythm of the sentence by waving his arm like a conductor of an orchestra. One of the students seems to be losing heart and concentration with her head on her hand. The teacher (possibly unconsciously) mirrors this gesture by putting his head on his hand and slumping in his seat. For a few minutes they sit like that as the teacher watches the student and then slowly, she raises her head and seems to rejoin the group with a renewed vigour.*

### ***Record keeping for the observations***

The observations fell neatly into the 'second phase' of data collection, which started in February 2012. After carrying out all the first interviews and all the second interviews except one, I began observing the teachers and teacher educators as they taught their regular classes. Principally, during the observations, I endeavoured to capture a '*snap-shot*' of different moments, incidences and occurrences through which dimensions of 'teacher presence' as described in the previous chapter, could be 'seen' and recorded as they happened. Evidently, such moments could not be pre-planned but occurred spontaneously within the class interaction.

Van Manen (1990: 116) makes it clear that the researcher who closely observes situations for their lived meaning is a '*gatherer of anecdotes*'. In addition, he suggests that when collecting anecdotes, it is important to develop a keen sense of the *point* or the *cogency* that the anecdote carries (Van Manen, 1990: 69, my emphasis). Without this point, an anecdote is '*merely loose sand in a hand that disperses upon gathering it*' (van Manen, 1990: 69). For this reason, it was particularly necessary to make a note of the living phrases and incidents that gave any anecdote its cogency and retrieve the surrounding 'trivia' which enabled its construction (van Manen, 1990). I did this by making detailed field notes during the observation and audio-recording both the class and the discussion after the class to capture the practitioner's spontaneous feelings and thoughts about happenings and events during the class.

Indeed Spradley (1980) and Kirk and Miller (1986) suggest that when observing, researchers should keep four sets of observational data which include notes made in situ, expanded versions of these as soon as possible after the initial observations, diary notes to record issues that arise during the fieldwork and a developing, tentative running record of ongoing analysis and interpretation (cited in Cohen et al, 2007: 407). I did exactly this and an example of the expanded version of notes I made during an observation can be found in Appendix 6, whilst diary notes to record issues that arose during the fieldwork as well as a running record of my ongoing, developing analysis in the form of notes I called 'memos to self' can be found in Appendix 9.



### ***The observations themselves***

The observations lasted between 30 minutes and an hour and a half depending on the time made available by the teacher or teacher educator and I kept an audio-recorded copy of them as a record. Being aware of the subjectivity of my observation notes, immediately after each the observation, I also audio-recorded my discussion with the teacher or teacher educator involved. In this discussion, we explored their experiences of what had happened in the class, focusing particularly on any '*critical episodes*' (Haynes & Murriss, 2011: 298) or '*critical incidences*' (Tripp, 1993: 25), which stood out and incorporated an element of surprise, or particularity for the teacher or teacher educator. The questions I asked in the discussions following each observation are included in Appendix 7.

Although I had always planned to observe the teacher and teacher educator participants as part of my research, as the research process proceeded I found that opportunities arose for further data gathering which gave me access to further insights. In this way during the discussions following the observations, new moments of perception brought previously unknown perspectives to consciousness, and fresh knowledge united the past, present and future and endowed the notion of 'presence in teaching' with depth and meaning. This is illustrated in the following extracts from a discussion after an observation with one of the research participants:

*Oh...that's right, yes, well I do that...I pick up on personal things as long as it's not too personal and that puts them at their ease and brings them out of themselves...not that I need much of that with the Brazilians...they are so open anyway. But I will use anything to get them involved and create a relaxed atmosphere for the more serious things that come. In that case, even grammar.....I don't know how I do it really...it's just.....my presence.... ah, we have found presence at last! Of course the danger is that you don't want to dominate people too much really...but I hope I kept a balance between myself and their own input...I think I did. (Shaun (pseudonym), discussion following observation).*

It is important to acknowledge that whilst I was indeed able to observe some events which were outside the teacher's conscious awareness due to the complex demands of the moment; I could never, as an observer, understand

the full nuances of such events for those involved. Through observation, I could merely hope to 'catch' lived experiences, which were 'pre-phenomenal' and 'undifferentiated' for the teacher (Schutz, 1967) and thus offer another dimension to understanding, by bringing events and happenings to the teacher's conscious mind for further reflection. This is illustrated in the quote below, when Shaun reflects on why he knocked on the board during the time I observed him:

*You can be relaxed and light-hearted but be right on the ball, I mean, so you don't miss a trick although you are entertaining; it's like a stand-up comedian, you don't miss a point, well, I hope not. Like earlier, the knocking [on the board].....[I realise now that] it was an emphatic gesture (Shaun (pseudonym), discussion following observation).*

### **3.3.3 Secondary data sources - focus groups and field notes**

#### **3.3.3.1 Focus groups**

Whilst the individual interviews offered a portal for an interchange of views between myself and the participants (Kvale, 1996: 14), focus groups were able to provide a means of taking the thematic data gathered to a group for further social discussion. As Krueger and Casey (2009: 19) suggest:

*Focus groups can provide insight into complicated topics when opinion or attitudes are conditional or when the area of concern relates to multifaceted behaviour or motivation.*

In life, we are continually working or living in groups and peer influence has a strong impact on our lives. In the words of Krueger and Casey (2009:19), 'a group possesses the capacity to become more than the sum of its parts, to exhibit a synergy that individuals alone don't possess'. Individual beliefs are continually influencing others and in turn being influenced by others (Krueger & Casey, 2009), and for this reason, focus groups could be deemed to offer a more natural environment for discussing key aspects of the professional practices of a teaching community than an individual interview. Focus groups

typically work best when participants feel '*comfortable, respected and free to give their opinion without being judged*' (Krueger & Casey, 2009: 2).

I used heuristic research as it is an open investigation during which the researcher is involved in exploring the phenomenon as widely and as deeply as possible. Moustakas (1994: 18) reinforces this by suggesting, '*Rarely is only one example or situation used to depict the research participants' experience*'. The focus groups, thus, allowed themes brought up in individual interviews to be re-visited within a social setting and enabled participants to reconsider their opinions and attitudes, after having heard those of other participants involved in the same practice and similar situations. Although this sometimes naturally led to individuals being influenced by their peers because of an evolving group identity, it helped individuals rework previous thoughts or see things in a new light, facilitating the movement from fixed pre-suppositions to a greater depth of thought or clarity of belief.

### ***Teacher and teacher trainer focus groups***

I was very aware that it was important to conduct the focus group in an atmosphere of openness and respect. Gadamer (1990/1960) describes the conversational relation as '*the art of testing*' (p.330) and the aim of 'testing' within the focus groups was to expose the limits of the present vision of the researcher and the co-researchers and to endeavour to transcend those limits together (McHugh, Raffel, Foss, & Blum, 1974).

Van Manen (1990: 100) also recognises that collaborative discussions are helpful in generating deeper insights and understandings. Each of the participants entered the discussion, having already reflected on their own experiences of the phenomenon and was then able to share their views of the way in which the common themes applied to them. Themes were thus examined, articulated, re-interpreted, omitted or added through sharing understandings and experiences.

The focus groups therefore allowed the participants to explore how different issues and themes related to the research topic were dealt with both from an individual and social perspective. This was consistent with Lin's (1976) belief

that the use of contrasting methods considerably reduces the chances of any consistent findings being attributable to similarities of method, rather than consistency of data. Bloor et al (2001) further support the use of focus groups in social research as a way of gathering rich data from such a multi-dimensional perspective. In this study, specifically, the focus groups provided the opportunity to revisit the research question through the use of questions taken from the themes provided by the individual interviews, which provided common ground and focus for the group discussions (Krueger and Casey, 2009: 150).

In line with the participants' wishes, the initial focus group of ten participants was separated into two smaller groups of six and four to give each participant more time and space in which to make their voice heard. The group of teachers, in fact, specifically requested that the teachers and the teacher educators be in separate groups, as one of the teacher educators taking part in the study was responsible for making decisions about their future employability at the school. Because of this, the teachers felt that they would be unable to speak freely if he was present in the group and so the groups were split accordingly.

The focus groups for both the groups of teachers and teacher educators were conducted whilst I was present in the room so that they could refer to me if they needed clarification about anything. They were given a list of questions to stimulate discussion about themes that had come up in the earlier interviews and observation discussions (these questions can be found in Appendix 8). Both groups were given the same questions and the participants were told explicitly that they were free to explore the themes given to them at their own pace or move onto other issues if they felt they were pertinent without any direction from me. Field notes made shortly after the Teacher Trainer Focus Group which combine insights from both focus groups are included in Appendix 9 (see Entry 13).

### ***Supported discussion with students***

I asked 7 adult students about what presence in teaching meant to them during a supported discussion (see Appendix 10 for an example of the feedback sheet

the students were asked to complete in order to support the discussion). This discussion was also audio-recorded and transcribed for later analysis.

### 3.3.3.2 *Field notes whilst on site*

Field notes provided me with a researcher 'aide memoire' in this research study. Being a sole researcher, I found it was humanly impossible to keep all those thoughts, observations, feelings and so on which were pertinent to the study in my mind. For this reason, field notes were a crucial method of retaining and recording secondary data gathered (Lofland & Lofland, 1999) during the field work stage of the study. These were recorded as soon as possible after the event in as much detail as possible but without judgemental evaluation. Bailey (1996: xiii) concurs with this approach and believes that field notes require a good degree of discipline as well as '*luck, feelings, timing, whimsy and art*'.

I kept this in mind throughout the process and also found the recording of the notes very useful as a means of keeping track of my own unfolding understanding of the context in relation to the setting and the participants (recording the research process, alongside evolving insights is deemed particularly important for phenomenological researchers). However, I was very aware of the dangers inherent in making field notes at the initial data collection stage as by making notes it was possible that data was prematurely categorised or squeezed into my own presuppositions and could thus bias my conceptual and theoretical framework.

For this reason, my field notes tended to be observational notes (ON) and methodological notes (MN). The observational notes were basically descriptive 'what happened notes' imbued with a sense of my own subjectivity. Bailey (1996) believes that it is essential to use all your senses when making observations and I endeavoured to portray this. The methodological notes were rather more written memos which I deemed helpful as I moved through the process as an inexperienced researcher. Such notes acted as reminders or critiques to myself and often challenged the comforting sense of familiarity that was developing as I became more and more accustomed to the process which I myself had set in motion. The notes also acted as a wake-up call as the

research itself twisted and turned and often developed in sudden and unexpected ways.

The final type of notes I made were theoretical (TN) or conceptual notes (CN), which I endeavoured to keep as loose and open as possible as I didn't want to set anything in stone at this stage. I called these notes 'memos to self' and they proved helpful in recording my attempts to find meaning as I thought or reflected on my experiences throughout the field work period. They also provided a record of my developing insights as well as offering useful signposting. I found that a positive bi-product of doing this was that it enabled me to keep my spirits high, whilst at the same time allowing me a sense of achievement; both of these proved to be key factors in maintaining motivation and focus throughout this key period of the study. Examples of such memos, which also acted as a research journal are included in the appendices to provide supporting documentation of the ways in which I recorded events and my own associated feelings and developing insights as the research process unfurled (see Appendix 9 for a set of examples of these).

### **3.4 The research site and participants**

#### **3.4.1 *The school***

The school in which the study took place was an English language school offering English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses. It was situated in the south of the United Kingdom and accepted international students from all over the world into its courses. The school itself was initially chosen as CELTA and DELTA courses are run there and, as described in Chapter One, 'classroom presence' is currently part of the syllabus on these courses. Knowing that the teachers and the teacher trainers in this school would have already come across the concept of classroom or teacher presence, I believed that they would have already developed a sense of what teaching with presence meant to them within practice.

Furthermore, the school ran their courses on a roll-on/roll off basis. For this reason, new students joined the class groups every Monday and existing students left the class groups every Friday. This meant that the classes were in

a continual state of flux and the teachers were working within this permanent state of modulating change and fluidity. I believe dealing with this constant state of change had a significant impact on the ways in which they perceived and experienced presence in teaching.

### **3.4.2 The participants**

#### ***The teachers***

A group of six adult ESOL teachers stayed with the study from beginning to end. One of the original seven, who agreed to participate in the study, left after the first interview, as she was employed on a casual basis and she no longer worked at the school after participating in the first interview. She is the first teacher in the table below, named Zara (a pseudonym). I have given each of the seven teacher participants pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. They had varying degrees of expertise and included three male teachers and four female teachers as detailed overleaf.

**Table 3.2: Teacher profiles**

Zara	<i>Zara started teaching in 1985 after doing an OU degree. She did a further qualification in teaching Adult and Further Education (FE) and taught at a FE college for 8 years. She then worked in various positions until about 3 years before the study when she took the CELTA and came to work at the school.</i>
Isabel	<i>Isabel has been an ESOL teacher since she took the CELTA in 2006. After doing the CELTA, she worked in many different countries overseas and returned to the UK to do the DELTA in International House in London a few years later.</i>
Glenda	<i>Glenda is Italian. She had taught English and other foreign languages in different countries before coming to</i>

Glenda (cont.)	<i>the United Kingdom to do the CELTA two to three years before participating in the study. After the CELTA, she started teaching English as a Foreign Language in England.</i>
Susan	<i>After Susan had finished her Bachelor of Education, she did a CELTA course and started teaching English. Two years before the fieldwork for this study, she did a DELTA, whilst still teaching mainstream primary classes and then moved into working as a tutor on a one-to-one basis and teaching autistic students with special needs. Since the funding for this dried up, she has been spending a greater proportion of her time teaching ESOL.</i>
Peter	<i>Peter took the CELTA six years before participating in the study and has been teaching full-time ever since then. Before becoming a teacher, he was a journalist and part-time geography teacher. He had worked as an ESOL teacher in Europe before coming to work at the school.</i>
Anthony	<i>Anthony was one of the newer teachers at the school when he participated in the study. He did the CELTA at the school in 2008 and had worked there ever since. Before taking the CELTA, he was a teaching assistant in a High School in Hong Kong for six months.</i>
Shaun	<i>Shaun had about forty years experience in teaching at the time of the study and was the most experienced teacher in the school. As well as being a teacher, he also had experience of being a DOS in two schools for their Easter and summer schools.</i>



### ***The teacher educators***

The study also sought the understandings, perceptions and experiences of a group of four teacher trainers (one joined the study after the initial teachers meeting), of whom, one was male and three were female. All four teacher trainers were involved in teacher education within the school during the period of time I carried out my field work at the school. During this study, they were in fact running a part-time CELTA course to begin with and then a full-time CELTA course a few weeks into the study, at the same time as the part-time CELTA course. They were also running a DELTA course during the time I was there. Their profiles are summarised below:

**Table 3.3: Teacher trainer profiles**

Mary	<i>Mary qualified as a teacher of ESOL in 1992 when she passed her CELTA. She then went on to do her DELTA in 1997. At that time, she became involved in teaching a variety of courses and since then, she has wanted to get involved with teacher training. At the time of the fieldwork, she was fulfilling her dream and was being officially trained to be a teacher trainer after being involved with teaching for almost twenty years.</i>
Bethany	<i>Bethany started teaching in 1989 in France and then came back to England and did the CELTA in 1991. At the time of the study, she had been working in the school for twenty years and she had been a teacher trainer for about ten years</i>
Paul	<i>Paul had been at the school for eleven years when I met him. He did his CELTA there after being involved in hotel management. He became Assistant Director of Studies five years ago and started to be trained as a teacher trainer two years ago. Apart from Mary, he was</i>

Paul (cont.)	<i>the newest member of the teacher training staff. At the time of the study, Paul described himself as not teaching directly but teaching vicariously through the CELTA trainees he was training. He also had managerial responsibilities in that he allocated classes to teachers.</i>
Cheryl	<i>Cheryl started teacher training about seventeen years before the study when she initially taught international teachers from Hong Kong and France at a local technical college. A year later, she trained and worked as a CELTA trainer at the college and then came to work at the school in 1999 where she started work as a tutor and a teacher. She is now training on the sixth DELTA course that the school has run. As well as being a teacher trainer, Cheryl is Head of School.</i>

### ***The students***

Seven students from an Academic English Class volunteered to take part in the study. They were considered suitable as their language ability was deemed sufficient by their teachers to express their understandings and experiences of a complex notion such as presence.

### **3.4.3 Gaining access**

I made initial contact by phoning the Head of the School and then sending her an e-mail (a narrative of the resulting e-mail communications can be found in Appendix 11). I also sent her an outline proposal (Appendix 12), a copy of the research questions (Appendix 13) and the study design (Appendix 14). Finally, a meeting was organised with a teacher in early September to discuss the

study, provide more details to pass on to the Head of School and incite more interest by discussing how and when we could proceed with the study.

To give a more personal description of the school, I would like to refer to an account of my first impressions of the school during my first visit there on 13 September 2011 (see Appendix 15).

A teacher, who was enlisted as a key contact at the school, spoke to the other teachers to find out whether or not they would be interested in taking part. Neither age nor gender were factors that determined a participant's suitability for selection as it was my belief, drawing upon my own personal experience, that this had no bearing on whether someone would have a reflective understanding of the notion of teaching or classroom presence.

### ***Initial meeting with potential participants***

A meeting was set up during which the main details of the study were presented. A window of only fifteen minutes was available due to the hectic work schedule of the teachers at a very busy time in the academic year. I prepared a handout in order to present the main themes of the study in a simple and easily recognisable form (see Appendix 16). I also made some notes before the meeting to make sure that I covered all the main points that were pertinent to the study (see Appendix 17). After this meeting, a group of seven teachers and three teacher trainers indicated to the key contact teacher that they were interested in taking part in the study and interviews were set up at a time convenient to them, to coincide with them being on stand-by, so that they were free for professional development activities unless a teacher was ill in which case they would have to provide cover.

Their voluntary participation was assumed through their interest and willingness to participate in the study and the fact that they were prepared to invest their personal time in it without any financial reward. My feelings during and after that initial meeting with the teachers and teacher trainers are explored in Appendix 18.

## **3.5 Ethical issues**

### **3.5.1 Ethical approval certificate**

Endeavouring to maintain a reflexive stance, at all stages of the research process, I was extremely mindful of ethical issues which could have developed during the field work stage. The participants themselves chose when and where the interviews would take place. They were fully aware that they could leave the study at any time, they given copies of transcripts to review and comment on, and they were told that if there was anything they did not want to have included, it would be deleted from the transcript. I continually assured them of their anonymity and confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms. I endeavoured to ensure transparency and visibility at all stages of the study (see Ethical Approval Certificate in Appendix 19, which also provides a copy of the informed consent form I asked every participant to sign). Throughout the study, I was keen to emphasise that processes were open-ended and methods and procedures could be shifted as the study developed. To ensure the comfort of those involved, I agreed with the participants request not to video the participatory observations but rather to audio-record their classes and then discuss them with them immediately afterwards.

In truth, over a short period of time, the research participants truly became co-researchers, as they became fascinated by the research topic. Their commitment was evident in their enduring resolution to stay with it until its natural end. In fact, although one of the initial participants left the school after the first interview, ten of the original research participants took part in every phase of the study from interviews to observations and from observations to focus groups. Despite the delays due to sickness and the pressure inherent in everyday school life, each of the ten research participants made sure they kept in step as the research project progressed from its conception to its completion.

### **3.5.2 Participant observer status**

As a teacher myself, I was aware of my dual role as a researcher and my inherent responses as an experienced teacher during participant observations. I was thus conscious of my need to stay alert to what was actually happening in

the reality of that particular classroom experience, whilst realising that I would inevitably consider it within the framework of my own teaching experiences. Therefore, during the observation, I endeavoured to stay as close as possible to the situation, whilst retaining a '*hermeneutic alertness*' (van Manen, 1990: 69) in order to allow and encourage both the teachers and myself to step back and reflect on the meaning of the situation. In this way, as a researcher, I was both a participant and an observer at the same time. During the process, I believe my reflectivity allowed me to capture what was actually happening in the situation, rather than manipulating it to suit my or the teachers needs. I kept my notes as descriptive as possible, with a mere suggestion of the underlying processes which I intuitively sensed between the classroom players. I brought these into later discussions immediately after the observation and in this way checked how my perceptions compared with the experiences of the participants.

### **3.5.3        *Ensuring methodological quality***

As a qualitative researcher, my aim was to develop a research study which demonstrated a resonance with the reality of living experience. Through soundness and rigour, developed from Lincoln and Guba's (1985) notions of '*credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability*', I strived to imbibe my study with personal integrity, transparency, openness, responsibility (both ethical and moral), and sturdiness in research design, alongside creative endeavour, richness, depth, originality, trustworthiness or 'goodness' (Angen, 2000).

By giving step-by-step details of my research design and incorporating the interview framework and examples of interview questions, I have rendered it transferable so that others could replicate it in different settings and contexts if they so wish. To ensure credibility, I have made clear step-by-step descriptions of the way in which the study design unfolded within the fieldwork setting. To ensure dependability, I sent interview transcripts to the participants for member checking, a technique considered by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 314) to be "*the most critical technique for establishing credibility*". In fact, after transcribing the interviews, I sent each participant a copy of the transcript and asked them to

carefully examine it and let me know if they wished to make any additions or corrections. Two participants responded and requested minor amendments as they believed that I had misheard the recording of a word or phrase. Such amendments were made and the transcripts were returned once more to the participants with any changes highlighted. It was only after the participants agreed that the requested amendments had been incorporated into the script and that the transcript was a true representation of what had been said, that I analysed the data for meaning. Moreover, I revisited the themes and issues they brought up at the first interview at a second interview, during discussions following classroom observations and during a focus group. This gave the participants time and space to clarify or elaborate on their developing understanding of the topic.

Furthermore a '*thick description*' (Holliday, 2007: 105) of data was achieved in the form of rich data collected from interviews, focus groups, field notes, observations and immediate recall of events 'as they appeared' directly after the observations during discussions with the participants. When discussing my findings in the chapters that follow, I will use contextualised evidence in the form of direct quotes by the participants to provide authenticity and 'confirmability'.

The data are enriched with field notes of events as they unfolded (provided in the appendices), as an attempt to capture the happening in a sensitive and mindful way. This is in line with Beck (1993), who views credibility as the capacity to endow a description with a vivid potency, by remaining faithful to the experience as it was lived. By doing so, Husserl (1970) believes that the insight itself is self-validating and if done well, enables others to see the text as a statement of the experience itself with which they can relate.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

The steps I took and the processes I went through to analyse the data I generated through this inquiry were complex, cyclical and both intellectually and creatively demanding. Dey (1993) describes qualitative data analysis as trying to find a way through a maze; looping back and forth through various phases as one moves slowly forward within the broader progress of the analysis. I found this to be very much the case and in order to do this, I drew on the work of

prominent phenomenological researchers (see Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). So, at this point, I will endeavour to provide an outline of what I did, why I did it and what I found at different stages of the analysis process, as I strove to elicit the essences of meaning from the raw data generated. In this way, I hope that the sections that follow will illustrate the extent to which my research analysis journey was far from simple as it weaved to and fro, with me returning again and again to consider the raw data over a span of time. Periods of time taken for pure contemplation followed and preceded periods during which I focussed entirely on a deep, intense and systematic analysis of the data gathered. In this way, my analytical journey took the form of an 'ever decreasing' circle in my endeavours to find the essential meaning of what I had found. Eventually, the clustering of essences and thematic patterning I identified within the data stood the test of time and the rigours of cyclical analysis which moved between the individual and the group. This became crystallised as the outcome of my first level analysis and will be reported as findings in the next chapter.

### **3.6.1        *Thematic analysis of the less easily definable***

First of all, it may seem obvious, but 'presence in teaching' does not actually exist, except perhaps in the physical realm; it is a term which has been constructed socially by those who talk about it or reflect on it, often through professional discussions and debates. Furthermore, it has become increasingly apparent through this study that teachers only tend to construct a 'formula' for it when they are asked directly about its meaning. It is seldom talked about in specific terms in general conversations, although all the participants in the study recognised that it was an important element in teaching and it had a bearing on many aspects of their practice. As Cheryl (Int. 1) stated when talking about a student teacher during his teaching practice; *'it [presence] did have a knock on effect, you know, with his instructions, and setting tasks and everything. So I suppose it's an underlying thing and it effects [everything]'*.

Therefore, in order to get to the essence of the phenomenon, I conducted thematic analysis or perhaps, more aptly, what has been called 'explication' of the data. Hycner (1999) warns that 'analysis' is not really a suitable way of

describing the way in which we look at data in phenomenology. He states that the *'term usually means a 'breaking into parts' and therefore often means the loss of the whole phenomenon'* (Hycner, 1999: 161). He therefore advises *'explication'* which implies an *'investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole'* (Hycner, 1999: 151).

'Thematic analysis' or 'explication' refers to the process of finding and elucidating the themes that are embodied and enacted in the evolving meanings and imagery of the research study. According to van Manen (1990), making meaning of a lived experience by interpretation involves a process of *'insightful invention, discovery or disclosure'* (van Manen, 1990: 79). Similarly, Titelman (1979) suggests that:

*The point of] the hermeneutical task is to find justifiable modes through which my experiences and comprehension of the phenomenon being researched can serve as a bridge or access for elucidating and interpreting the meaning of the phenomenon (p. 188)*

So, however much the process was iterative; there was a logical relationship between the different phases of the analytical process. I had to thoroughly read, reflect on and annotate each data set with such reflective analysis before categorising or linking data; whilst categorising or linking data was essential before I could produce an account. While making connections between categories, I needed to continually review my initial links and categories. By slowly moving between the parts and the whole, I found new data enriching the old, enabling new links, connections and understandings to be made. As when constructing a jigsaw puzzle, the slowly emerging form of the edges of the picture offered the vague sketchy outline of its potential future form; so the data slowly formed and reformed within the modulating space created through hermeneutic analysis. Within this space, a representation of the potentiality of the picture it could create slowly came in and out of focus within the fragile framework of its malleable outline. An example of this is provided overleaf with my initial thoughts on the meaning of the extract included in the box on the right (For a complete analysis of an interview, see Appendix 20).



*P: yes, because once you win people over emotionally, then it is so much easier to, err, to basically do your job. I don't like something which is altogether very rigid or stern or, um, you know, cold or so. I like warmth, you know, I am a Latin[o], you know, so I think that comes with the territory. You sort of have a need to....it's not touchy-feely or need to become best friends or anything like that...but people need to know that you are human and they are human and that you both are doing your best or trying to do your best, basically.(Peter, Int. 1)*

*Once you win people over emotionally, then it is easier to do job as a teacher*

*Human to human contact  
– both trying to do their best*

Phenomenological principles deem that an investigation is valid when the knowledge sought is found through descriptions, which allow for and bring about an understanding of the meanings and essences of experience (Moustakas, 1994: 84). In this way, description elucidates the essence of these structures as they appear in consciousness, and makes the invisible visible (Kvale, 1996). A vivid example of the use of description to bring an experience into the conscious mind is included below:

*I mean, he was somebody who was there, so it just came alive, everything came alive, you know...the smells, the fact he could talk about what a dead horse smelt like...something like that, you know....making tea by placing the cup on, um, on the tank because it was so hot. You know, frying eggs in the morning, you know, round about ten o' clock you could already fry eggs on your tank and so on.....these things, they make everything very real, very real, so err, I think that was experienced by his presence, I mean, it's bringing yourself into the classroom (Peter, Int. 1)*

I found, as this study progressed, that I became increasingly and acutely aware of the 'complex of concepts, assumptions, biases, attitudes and stances.....for the interpretive framework through which we make sense of the world' (Ely, Vinz, Anzul, & Downing, 1997: 226). In essence, the more clarification I sought, the more questions appeared and the more complex the topic became. At times, opening my 'can of worms' to those involved in the research stimulated more questions than answers and seemed to infuse the study with a intense stance of quizzicality, which was both disconcerting and awe-inspiring.

In order to make sense of the complexity involved, I took refuge in van Manen's (1990: 79) depiction of 'structures of experience'. Such structures are not mere conceptual abstractions; they are representative illustrations of the depth of an experience. In this way, a theme was generated as a focus, meaning or point of an experience. During analysis, such themes were intransitive and provided a way of endeavouring to 'capture' the phenomenon, in order to make sense of it whilst remaining open to its fullness using insightful disclosure. In this way, themes gave shape to the shapeless.

For example, in the case of the extracts below, the theme of 'natural teacher' was generated:

*Very often on that first day when they stand up, you identify people who are naturally going to be good, because those people are able to focus on the students rather than their own performance (Cheryl, Int. 1)*

*She was a natural....she sat down and her body language....she was sitting down and she was leaning forward and she was leaning towards them...and at their level (Paul, Int. 1)*

*I don't think everybody is a natural teacher. Some learn all the theory but fail in practice (Shaun, Int. 2)*

*For all the theory and the paper qualifications, you have got to have it in you (Shaun, Int. 1)*

*We both looked at him and saw him teach and you just knew that there was something about him that was very good and it is very hard to actually identify what it was (Teacher trainer focus group)*

However, using themes did not neatly tie up loose ends, but left them open and loose, as the full mystery, held within the enigmatic aspects of the experiential meaning could not be accessed through themes. Themes were useful as they provided '*metaphorically speaking.....knots in the webs of our experiences*' (van Manen, 1990: 90). As in a woven piece of cloth, where such knots make the structure sound and provide points of reference as the piece moves slowly from conception to completion, the knots in the web of experiences located and

relocated themselves as the study itself expanded and grew and as my understanding developed. However, despite such developing understanding, I had to continually hold myself in check so as not to prejudice what I had found though my own desire to reinforce what I believed I now 'knew', as this could lead to me overlooking vital elements of the evidence provided by the research participants in favour of my own preconceptions.

### **3.6.2 Challenges in phenomenological data analysis**

This 'holding back' presents a strong challenge in phenomenological data analysis. I have made a distinction between 'gathering' experiential material and 'analysing' this material. However, I have made this distinction purely for the purpose of providing clarity, as these two acts are not really separable and should be seen as part of the same process (van Manen, 1990: 63). I am fully aware that it was unavoidable during the gathering of experiential material that I sub-consciously processed the meaning of what was being said. However, by writing down my initial thoughts and reflections in a research journal and later reflecting on their meaning in 'the cold light of day', I endeavoured to hold final meanings or understandings in abeyance as the process slowly unfolded. Giorgi (1985: 14) expresses this idea clearly when he states:

*What differentiates the phenomenologically inspired method is the fact that a disciplined spontaneity is allowed to function whereby one first discovers the relevant meaning unit, or its category, and only later, based upon a subsequent analysis, explicates its actual full import.*

### **3.6.3 Paradoxes and conflicting realities**

Working in a hermeneutically informed way also meant working continually with paradoxes and conflicting realities. Dey (1993) vividly describes the complexities involved in qualitative research by stating:

*We have to come to terms with a series of paradoxes. Thus we want to use existing ideas, but not prejudge the data. We want to break the data up into bits, but also analyse it as a whole. We want to consider data in context, but also to make comparisons. We want to divide data into categories, but also consider how these relate. We want to be comprehensive, but also selective. We want to analyse*

*singularities, but also to generalise. We want our accounts to be accessible, but also acceptable. We want to be rigorous, but also creative. (Dey, 1993: 265)*

Such paradoxes were very much a part of the data analysis framework of this research study. As discussed, the study design offered four modes of understanding within which the notion of teaching with presence could initially be conceptualised. These were the modes of 'pathic' understanding (van Manen & Li, 2002) in practice, defined through phenomenological sources of knowledge as embodiment, enactment, relation and situation (see p. 98/99).

I had to be careful that I did not prejudice the data extracts by using this framework, as this could then limit my understanding rather than open it up. I had to continually reflect on and maintain a balance between my desire to categorise within the comfort of familiarity and be open to those new categories which were emergent and as yet unknown. I was also very aware that by seeing the detail, it could compromise the coherence of the whole. For that reason, I decided to use the two forms of analysis; the first of which allowed me to see the data as much more of a whole for each participant and the second of which allowed me to fragment it into smaller components to see how these fitted within the whole.

I recognised from the very beginning that it was essential to use careful and rigorous procedures for recording and interpreting data, as otherwise, there could be a strong reliance on impressions and intuitions about the data as a whole (Dey, 1993). In addition, although I viewed impressions and intuitions as an essential aspect of finding meaning within the data, I also believed it to be fundamental to go through rigorous processes to provide as full a representation of the data collected as possible (Dey, 1993: 30). For the sake of clarity, I will now provide a detailed synopsis of the procedures I used to handle the data.

#### **3.6.4      *A synopsis of first-stage procedures for handling the data***

To ensure that I had the right attitude and disposition to approach the data, I ensured that I went through certain procedures with each individual transcript of

interview data, observation notes, post-observation discussions and later focus group transcripts:

- \* I emptied my mind of everyday thoughts, worries and issues. Only the data in question was in focus in my mind.
- \* I opened my mind to the data and let it enter my consciousness in such a way that judgements, assumptions and pre-conceptions were put aside as much as possible to really 'see' it. Preparing myself in this way helped to step back from the everyday world and see things anew (Ihde, 1977). However, I also recognised that my being as a self-in-the-world (Gadamer, 1990/1960) could not be denied.
- \* I tried to immerse myself in the experiences and perceptions described by the participant in order to somehow put myself in their shoes and grasp the meaning they intended by what they said, how they articulated it and the way in which they said it.
- \* I transcribed each interview, discussion following observation and focus group word by word in its entirety and the analysis began with the transcription of the interview with the first participant.
- \* I read and re-read the transcript and reflected on, commented on and noted meanings, whilst endeavouring to stay as close as possible to the meaning inherent in the text rather than making interpretative remarks. This process is described as 'horizontalization' by Moustakas (1994: 180), by which he means that every statement is given equal value in the quest to find horizons which stand out as invariant qualities of experience. I repeated this stage as many times as necessary to ensure that the full meaning of the text was captured (see Appendix 20 for an example of reflective analysis on a full interview transcript).
- \* I noted emergent themes from each transcript and transformed them into more meaningful statements to reflect broader, possibly more theoretically significant, concerns and observations. Moustakas (1994) describes these as '*invariant qualities and themes*' (p.180) which are

composed of non-repetitive, non-overlapping constituents, clustered into themes.

- \* After this, I identified common links between themes so as to order them in a more analytical way. Some themes clustered together at this stage, whilst others needed to be broken down into sub-themes. I continually returned to the text of the transcript during this process in order to check and re-check the emerging analysis for authenticity.
- \* After the second interview, which was once again transcribed verbatim, I undertook the process of 'horizontalization' once again as outlined above, to ensure that I had noted all pertinent themes from both interviews. In this way, I was able to look at some of the themes from the first interview in a deeper or different way as a result of further reflection or experiences.
- \* I amalgamated themes from the first and the second interview so as to order them in a more analytical way. Again, some themes clustered together at this stage, whilst others were broken down into sub-themes. I continually read and reread the transcripts of both interviews to check and re-check the emerging analysis for authenticity.
- \* I observed each participant within the natural setting of a class of their choosing. During the observation, I made notes about what was happening in the class. After the observation, a discussion with the participant followed about the notion of teacher presence and how the participant felt their teacher presence was actualised in the class. I audio-recorded and transcribed this discussion. I made notes regarding the themes that emerged in this discussion and cross-checked these with those of the interview data. I also cross-checked those themes which arose in my 'memos to self' to see how they fitted with the themes which were generated by the interviews and observations.
- \* At this point, I considered the themes further in order to compose what Moustakas (1994) describes as an '*individual textural description*' (p. 180). Such an individual description was an integration of the invariant

textual constituents and themes, I had identified for each research participant.

- \* I then constructed a narrative style structural and textual description (Moustakas, 1994: 135) for each research participant (see Appendix 21 for two examples of these - one for a teacher and another for a teacher educator) using these themes and quotes from the participants to support them.
- \* Once this was completed for a particular participant, I moved onto the next case. The table of themes from the first case was used to guide the analysis and I was careful to check any subsequent emerging modifications with the preceding cases. I repeated this procedure with continual heuristic checking between the single cases and the whole emergent picture until I could produce a final table of themes. The process was cyclical and iterative, with a built-in flexibility as themes emerged in an attempt to capture the 'essence of what emerged as it appeared'.
- \* As a further means of cross-checking for reliability of themes and to ensure I had not overlooked any pertinent data, I loaded all the *interview transcripts*, the *anecdotal observation accounts*, the *discussions following observation transcripts*, the *focus group transcripts*, the *field notes* and the *memos to self* I had written as part of my research journey onto Nvivo 9 soft-ware, which was password protected.
- \* I reviewed all of the above inductively once more by fragmenting them and coding them into sub-themes.
- \* Once I had coded all the data in this way, I interwove the resulting nodes into the essential themes derived through my first attempt at phenomenological reflective analysis described previously. At this point, once again some of the sub-themes clustered together within previously identified themes, some formed new themes and others were discarded as they were duplicates (see Appendix 22).

- \* In this way, Nvivo provided a data management tool by means of which I could hold all data in an alternative paperless form and validate the themes I had identified through the initial reflective analysis. These procedures allowed me to analyse both thematic 'chunks' and fragmented phrases or sentences within the data. It also made the large amount of data I had collected manageable and easily accessible.
- \* I went on to construct a composite description of emergent clusters, themes and patterns from all sources of data by interweaving the themes identified during the first round of reflective analysis and annotation on paper with the second round of more fragmented analysis using Nvivo software (see Appendix 23). This ensured that I considered the data both at a micro and a macro level and that nothing was overlooked. According to Moustakas (1994: 137), *'From the total group of individual textural descriptions the Composite Textural Description is developed'*.

### **3.6.5 Final stages of first level analysis**

After the initial first stages of data analysis described above, I found that I had become too close to the data and was unable to see them from a more nuanced perspective. Having written my original drafts from the perspective of each of the individual research participants as well as an initial composite account of emerging themes and patterns, I spent the three months following this thinking deeply and writing drafts about what the data could mean.

During this time, it slowly dawned on me through these reflections and by revisiting the data at regular intervals during this 'thinking phase', that evidence generated by the study suggested that although, as a notion, 'presence in teaching' was socially constructed and therefore could have no objective 'truth', the ways in which it was construed by the research participants as a group were rooted in particular sources. One such source, which appeared to be the most easily accessible for teaching practitioners, was remembered past learning experiences. In essence, the people or 'players' in such experiences provided vivid clues as to its personal meaning by illuminating the ways in which



childhood teachers and learning experiences had left an 'imprint' or a snapshot of remembered meaning and how for those remembering the experience, such memories still provoked strong emotions, such as fear or love.

Another way in which participants were able to access 'imprints' of meaning was through metaphors, which provided a vivid and creative means of description which could embellish understanding when it was difficult to find the right words to describe a remembered emotive experience. As Bolton (2005: 119) points out, *'[Metaphor] is a fundamental way of making sense of the world'*. In fact, it was such metaphoric illustrations that often enabled the practitioners to link their understandings and conceptualisations of the abstract notion of 'presence' with other forms of social interaction and relational experiences, which were perhaps more habitually discussed and therefore easier to put into words.

Certainly, during the research process, it became clear to me that teaching practitioners found it easier to 'see' the presence of other people than to describe their own presence in the classroom. In truth, the ways in which their own presence played out in practice was often strangely an enigma to them until slowly through the co-constructed dialogues within the research process, the 'depths' of their understanding were stirred and meanings elicited bubbled to the surface to become available for reflection. In this way, although fragments of perceptions of remembered learning experiences were often more easily available in snapshot form; it was not until they actually visualised themselves in practice 'in motion' that they were able to 'notice' (Mason, 2002: 29) elements of their practice through which they experienced their own presence.

Moreover, such visualisations tended to be framed by reflecting on recent lived teaching experiences and noticing the ways in which their presence as a teacher was manifested and actualised during this classroom experience. These accounts were deeply imbued with associated feelings and thoughts and incorporated such things as the actions they took and the choices they made, as they grasped opportunities to enable their students learning. They also included the ways in which such agency was deeply entwined and interconnected with the people and the things outside themselves, including the

students, other teachers, teaching materials, learning aims and the classroom environment.

In this way, I realised that the dialogues with myself (in interviews and discussions following the observations in the case of teachers and teacher educators and in a supported discussion group in the case of the students) had encouraged the participants to think in previously unexplored ways about a notion they had scarcely considered until that time. In fact, the research process quickly turned into an intense consciousness raising experience for both them and myself, as the researcher, as connections were made between themselves and aspects of themselves and others that they had not previously considered. It soon became clear to us all that a teacher's presence in the classroom was an essential, through often unconsidered and unvalued aspect of practice and had an impact on classroom situations in diversely significant ways.

So, whilst one of the most obvious elements of 'presence' could be captured by exploring the physical realm, other less vivid or clear-cut dimensions of teaching presence were embodied within very fundamental and 'everyday' aspects of teaching practice and the perceptions and experiences associated with these aspects. Such teaching experiences could be described as both '*non-critical*' (Bolton, 2005: 3) or '*critical*' (Tripp, 1993) depending on the depth of feeling associated with the experience or the perceived criticality of the outcome of the experience.

Put simply, in essence, I discovered that such aspects of presence in teaching were often found in the '*qualities and attributes*' associated with 'presence', what teachers '*did*' in practice and the feelings, thoughts and intuitions associated with this, as well as the different types of *relationships* teachers endeavoured to build with their students. I also found that such experiences were often recalled in the form of 'stories' through which the participants were able to recall not only the experience itself but remembered aspects of the spatial environment in which the story played out. In this way, fragmented pieces of experience were recast through the fluidity of narrative. As Bolton (2005) suggests '*a story is an*

*attempt to create order and security out of a chaotic world'* (p. 3) and this was often the case in this study.

## **Summary**

The 'stories' in which teacher practitioners' 'doing' was grounded, the relationships they built with their students and the qualities associated with such agency in teaching all formed essential parts of the holistic whole I will discuss as I report the findings of what 'presence' meant to the participant members of the school both personally and socially. Such stories (along with excerpts from observations which provided 'in the moment' snapshots of perceived classroom experiences, which were then confirmed or negated through discussion with myself as the researcher) led to a collection of fresh insights regarding the meaning of presence in teaching to this community of teaching practitioners. It was essentially the ways in which these insights then developed and cohered into recognisable themes and patterns which provided a first-stage synopsis of the nature of presence in teaching as it was experienced and perceived by the research participants and I will explore this in detail in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Presence in and through practice: A first level analysis*

#### Introduction

This is the first of two chapters in which I present and discuss the findings of this study. In this first findings chapter, I will report the results of my first level analysis of the data. In the next chapter, I will discuss the ways in which the dimensions of such first level analysis intersected and worked together, by foregrounding them within two overarching theoretical themes. In both chapters, the findings will be supported and evidenced by extracts from interviews and focus group narratives with practicing teacher and teacher educator participants, the supported group discussion with students, field-work notes from on-site observations (boxed and in *italic* script) and discussions between myself and the participants following the observations.

In essence, as I reported at the end of the previous chapter, there were three major sources of understanding or '*geistig*' (Bollnow, 1974) which informed the participants' constructions of presence in teaching and the ways in which it was meaningful for them or became meaningful for them through the research process. Firstly, each of the participants had strong, vivid memories of particular teachers whom they perceived as having presence from earlier learning experiences. Reflections on these teachers and associated learning experiences provided potent illustrative descriptions of how the ethereal notion of 'presence' became actualised in and through those practitioners they identified as having the phenomenon of 'presence'. In this way, one aspect of the notion of presence could be construed as being rooted in everyday learning experiences and thus embodied within particular teachers whose pedagogies and practice had a particular effect on the participant personally, which they then defined as 'presence'.

Secondly, the participants often found it easier to fall back on metaphoric analogies (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) to describe the notion of 'presence' in

teaching when they were unable to capture their experiences in more concrete terms. In truth, such dimensions were seldom discussed in general conversations and for this reason, there was little in the way of register or vocabulary for the participants to fall back on when they endeavoured to put their reflections into words. As Shaun explained in his first interview *'presence could be physical obviously, but it's not just physical, there's something else, there's a physical presence there....but there's something else...'*. Using metaphors offered a means of exploring that 'something else'; the dimensions of which were not physical, were not easily definable and were difficult to put into words as they were often 'sensed' rather than articulated.

Finally, in order to reflect on the meaning of presence in teaching, the participants drew on recent teaching experiences by visualising themselves and other teachers in the classroom and describing how they construed teaching presence in these situations as being embodied within and emerging through everyday teaching practice. This included the relationships they built, the choices they made, the opportunities they took and the things they did in order to facilitate the students' learning.

In short, these three sources, co-constructed between the research participants and myself as the researcher, provided a wealth of information regarding the ways in which the phenomenon of presence in teaching was experienced and perceived in terms of everyday teaching. It was through detailed analysis of these sources that I discovered that meanings for this ethereal notion were often experienced as being rooted in three particular aspects of teaching, which I have identified as *'qualities or attributes'*, *'doing'* and *'relationship'*. These aspects were of course, in reality, fundamentally composites of a holistic whole and, as such, had strong inter-relational dimensions which inevitably overlapped; they also, however, appeared to have a degree of 'stand-alone' importance.

To be more specific, when a teacher was observed by an 'other'; either a student or a teaching mentor or educator, perceptions of their presence often seemed to be 'crystallised' or 'distilled' into a quality or attribute which served to 'represent' the ways in which their presence was appraised by the observer;

often inevitably linked to the observer's own emotive reaction to the teacher or teaching situation or the ways in which they interpreted the things they saw the teacher doing. I suggest that this provided a somewhat 'assumptive', 'static' or 'frozen' meaning of presence, which afforded a less than adequate description of what a teacher's presence actually meant in the complex and messy reality of the classroom. A 'deeper' description, however, became accessible through the teacher participants' reflections on their own practice and the ways in which they made meaning of such practice personally. So, it was, in essence, through exploring the more situated and relational aspects of their teaching practice that the teacher participants were able to unearth some of the more dynamic and fluid facets of their teaching presence.

In essence, I discovered, as van Manen (1990: 50) suggests, that the phenomenon of 'presence' did not show itself as a particular entity, behaviour, or emotion but instead made itself apparent and visible *through* such means. Moreover, these 'means' were experienced particularly as the *qualities and attributes* the participants personally associated with a particular teacher; what the teachers '*did*' (their agency) and the ways in which these were entwined with associated feelings, thoughts and intuitions and underlay the different types of *relationships* they endeavoured to build with their students.

So, I will now present these three elements of presence in teaching thematically in turn. Firstly, I will discuss '*presence through qualities and attributes*', then '*presence through doing*' and finally '*presence through relationship*'. Each section will be organised by looking first of all at the ways in which the teacher participants construed the meaning of a particular theme, then at the ways in which the teacher educator participants construed the same theme. I have split these accounts in this way in order to capture a sense of the different ways in which the teachers and the teacher educators experienced different dimensions of presence. I believe this is important because, as I have made it clear earlier in this thesis, presence appears to be important for teachers and teacher educators in different ways; it is the teacher educators who act as 'gatekeepers' and make decisions regarding whether or not a teacher has presence on the basis of what they observe and yet it is the teachers themselves who embody such presence, are appraised against such a criterion and whose

careers can be affected by decisions made in this regard. As the students provided a secondary source of data, through the supported discussion I conducted with them, I will include a synopsis of their contributions at the end of each section.

Finally, I would like to make it clear here that as these themes evolved inductively through the research process, not all themes were mentioned by all the groups of participants and that some themes appeared to have more significance for the teacher than the teacher educator participants and vice versa.

#### **4.1 Presence through qualities or attributes**

As previously reported, data gathered through this research study has demonstrated that often presence was construed by the participants in terms of the qualities or attributes that a teacher possessed. So, in this section, I will outline the ways in which such qualities were given meaning and the importance assigned to them by the research participants. However, I would like to point out before doing so, that whilst such qualities were sometimes discussed in a purely representational form, they were often inevitably linked to the ways in which they were manifested through actions taken and entwined with the relationships the teachers built with their students, both of which are discussed in later sections.

In essence, evidence generated by the data suggested that the five key qualities through which a teacher embodied the notion of presence were '*an aura of authority*', '*authenticity*', '*natural talent*', '*awareness of self and others*' and '*confidence*'. I will now discuss each of these in turn.

##### **4.1.1 *Aura of authority***

Four of the teacher and teacher educator participants had strong impressions of the ways in which a teacher could project an aura of authority and often remembered the effect this had had on them personally as learners. Moreover, evidence from narratives provided by the participants suggested that doing certain things in class or dressing in a certain way could project such a sense of authority which became embodied within their presence for the learner and it

was this representational type of embodiment of authority which was often recalled at a later date.

### ***The teachers***

Two of the teacher participants recalled how, as learners, a particular teacher embodied an authoritative type of presence to which they had a strong emotive reaction. Anthony described a teacher he remembered from his school days in distinctly emotive terms; *'it was like having a volcano in the room that would fall asleep and then come back to life'*. His perception of this teacher's presence appeared to be built around the way he embodied authority and a sense of 'academia' through the way he dressed *'I suppose, he was dressed in a very academic....what could be seen as an academic's way.....he was very tweedy, he looked like Bertram Russell...like that or like he should be a famous scholar'*. His physical presence engendered fear in Anthony and it was this that he particularly remembered rather than this particular teacher's teaching skills, *'he would do very little and honestly he wasn't a very good teacher but he had a presence which just, if he saw you moving away from what he wanted you to do....he would say 'YOU BOY'*.

On the other hand, according to Anthony, such a presence, although it could be deemed to be dark and forbidding, also provided a sense of order which inspired respect *'just the strength of it...the strength of it, the fact that it gave order really, it just...it gave order and people respected that'*, despite the fact that it *'didn't inspire too much creativity'*. From his recollections, this teacher had left him with no clear sense of his personal identity and his very being had somehow become embodied within a face-less and featureless presence *'you almost couldn't see his face...if that makes any sense...he was like in a shadow and he wasn't expressive'*. Anthony was also particularly aware that the way he dressed in class could provoke a certain image. He realised that if this was the case, then the ways in which his students perceived his presence could be more about their own emotive reactions evoked by the 'something he projected', than about the realities of his own being, as he chose the clothes he wore purely for practical reasons rather than as a means of projecting authority:



*I suppose if I smarten up or when I am wearing trousers and shirt and a suit jacket....I suppose then I project a certain kind of image[.....]I wear a suit jacket because I keep all my pens in it and it's practical for me but I suppose I project something.*

Zara, meanwhile, recognised that her own classroom presence was 'a more nebulous thing', which perhaps embodied an aura of authority which students sometimes didn't recognise in the same way they would in a teacher who stands there and says 'do this and do that'. So, for her, presence didn't always have to have an explicit authoritative edge; it could be more tenuous than that. However, she was particularly aware of the ways in which a teacher's presence could be imbued with a degree of negativity which they brought into the classroom with them and that this in itself could be construed in some way as 'a presence'. She distinctly remembered one of her former teacher's presence as a 'dark cloud', which seemed to be flooded with a bitterness born of resentment about the college in which he was working. She sensed from him that frustrations from external sources interfered with his teaching presence in some way and yet when he 'could put it [the frustration] aside, he could 'teach like nobody else'.

In fact, during the study fieldwork stage, when I was observing Shaun in class, he seemed to demonstrate just such an 'aura of authority' when he challenged one of the students who got the answer wrong and dismissed the importance of making a mistake. I recalled the event by writing:

**Observation 1 - 3/2/12 at 10.30 - Shaun**

*One of the students gets the answer wrong and the teacher corrects her. She comes back with 'I know, I know' but the teacher challenges her by saying 'Well, you don't know, do you, because you got it wrong'. This is said with a smile and the challenge is accepted by the student who smiles and nods in return and then continues to write*

**The teacher educators**

Two of the teacher educators also mentioned how presence in teaching could be construed as a type of 'authoritative aura'. For Bethany, presence in teaching comprised 'a certain aura about you that makes people listen to you, take notice

*of what you are saying, remember what you have done....maybe miss you when you are not there'. This may develop over time and 'it may only come out...or come out more as they [the teachers] have got more experience', although she recognised that 'some people may have it right from the beginning'. Bethany particularly remembered the presence of a teacher she described as 'austere' who could evoke a reaction in her and other students, just by walking into the room. As a consequence of his presence, they all became silent; 'there was a teacher, who was very austere, very old school and he only had to walk in the room with his hands behind his back and everybody would stop talking' She described how his presence was felt strongly without the need for words 'he definitely had a presence, because he didn't have to say a word and you knew he was there and he had an effect on people'.*

Like Anthony, Bethany also believed that wearing a particular set of clothes seemed to help an individual project a certain aura. This aura embodied a sense of power which appeared to come naturally from being in a position of authority, '*position...and position ....I am the teacher...I am in power*' (Bethany, Int. 1). Bethany called this a '*badge of authority*' and compared the 'badge of authority' that a teacher acquires through their position to that of other members of a professional body, such as those in the health profession, whose position could be embodied by the wearing of a uniform '*if you are wearing a uniform, people accept that you are playing a certain person...you know, if someone is dressed in a nurse's uniform, you automatically think that they are a nurse*'.

Mary similarly described her memories of a teacher whose presence she believed embodied a sense of power and authority in '*that old school sense*'. She described him as being like a sergeant major walking out in front of lots of '*bristling young men*' with an immediate authority over them, which appeared to be almost instinctively recognised and respected.

#### **4.1.2 Authenticity**

In this section I will report the many different ways in which the research participants described the role 'authenticity' plays as a key quality or attribute of presence in teaching. For the sake of clarity, I have broken this section down

into the core sub-themes of '*congruence*', '*uniqueness*', '*natural theatricality*', '*genuine care*' and '*enthusiasm*'.

## **Congruence**

During the interviews, the aspect of congruence was mentioned by two of the teacher participants, who described how they experienced their own presence as naturally embodying unique and individual aspects of their personality, which couldn't be forced into pre-defined boxes and were somehow entwined and embodied within their role as a teacher. They emphasised how important it was for them to be congruent in the classroom and portray themselves honestly. In fact, for Shaun, demonstrating a false persona in teaching appeared to be a dangerous thing to do and he remarked, '*I am an emotional person....it goes with me...I am not going to change my personality..... thereby lies danger*'. For him, such emotional honesty was part and parcel of being a teacher and '*trying to mould yourself to something that you are not is not going to work*'. However, he contrasted his own experiences with those of another experienced teacher he knew, who was CELTA trained and who talked about '*false bonhomie*'. He remembered how this teacher described how he could pretend to be jovial in the classroom and force himself to be humorous, whereas to be truly present, Shaun felt he had to be natural and authentic and that he didn't '*make an act of it*', which he was sure would be sensed by the students.

For Isabel, as well, the experience of being a teacher of ESOL involved responding intuitively and congruently to any pedagogic situation she found herself in. She believed that by responding to difficult situations in a positive way, she could turn a difficulty into an opportunity for learning and believed that in order to make the most of any teaching and learning opportunities, she needed to react with a heartfelt and congruent response to the pedagogic situation. This could mean that at times she became a type of counsellor and, by listening, enabled people to talk to her in a way which helped them to achieve their pedagogic goals. She experienced herself as '*somebody who helps people to talk to each other*' and who '*treated people as people, rather than just students*'.

It also seemed from the focus group that for the teacher participants, it was essential to be authentic and demonstrate a congruence born of being true to yourself and your own feelings. The teachers discussed this in terms of how, when congruence was embodied within the teacher's presence, it led to a more fulfilling existence as a teacher. However, the teachers also realised that authenticity of self was not a given in teaching as they knew some teachers who preferred to 'play a role' rather than bring their true selves into the classroom. They said of them; *'they [are] people who play it as a role, rather than being themselves so when they go and teach they become somebody else....they become somebody else for that hour and a half'* (Anthony, Extract from Teacher Focus Group).

### **Uniqueness**

Both the teacher and teacher educator participants discussed how they perceived each teacher's presence as embodying a unique quality which couldn't be replicated, copied or formulised.

#### **The teachers**

Shaun saw himself as someone who possessed a unique and individual presence which didn't lend itself to method or formula and for this reason, trying to 'box it' would, in essence, be impossible for him as *'that would be like holding a wild tiger on a lead'*. He believed that a teacher's presence was a type of unique reflection of their personality and said of his teaching peers *'they are all capable of presence simply as a reflection of their own personalities.....their presence is as unique as a painter's style is unique...you can't mistake a Turner for a Monet'*. However, in the Teacher Focus Group, Shaun added that perhaps the phenomenon of 'presence' in teaching could not be manifested through personality alone, as it had a unique quality which *'isn't [just] a question of personality'* (Shaun, Extract from Teacher Focus Group).

#### **The teacher educators**

Evidence suggested that, like Shaun, the teacher educator participants were aware that each teacher embodied a unique presence in the classroom and they agreed that no one type of presence was implicitly any more effective than

another. Cheryl described how each teacher she had observed had an individual presence, which she saw as a reflection of their own personality and character. She believed that different forms of presence could be equally effective in the classroom, although, for her, having presence did not necessarily imply a loud or strong authoritative or assertive force:

*I think it's just...there's not one single way of looking at it...I mean you have teachers who are very...I mean one of our tutors is very quiet, very quiet, the level of her voice, the way she is in the classroom. Her class is very student centred but she has still got a very strong presence in the classroom, so I think people have different ways of showing it (Cheryl, Int. 1)*

### ***Natural theatricality***

The aspect of 'theatricality' is included here as, although being theatrical may not necessarily be considered representative of 'authentic' behaviour in the domain of acting or drama; when considering the presence of teachers they had observed, two of the participants, one a teacher and the other a teacher educator, described how they experienced presence in teaching as embodying something 'theatrical' which the teacher seemed to naturally 'exude', sometimes without even being aware that they were doing so. So, in this instance, the participants appeared to be referring to a 'natural theatricality' rather than an assumed theatrical persona.

### ***The teacher***

Shaun perceived teacher presence as being aligned to the dramatic and similar in many ways to an actor's presence '*I think I know what it is...it's something like drama, it's like acting*'. So, for him, presence was something which *exuded* from the teacher, possibly even subconsciously '*people who walk on the stage and know...or exude something that they may not be aware of...it may indeed be sub-conscious*'. He believed that being entertaining was a key factor in making teaching engaging and this even included grammar '*if it is done with style*'.

*I think you can teach serious things with a light touch and I hope I succeeded, I think I did...grammar can be made entertaining if it is*

*done in the right way. There is nothing worse than a dead, concrete manner of speaking so that everything is done....there is a lightness of touch...I think I succeeded in that case, I hope and I hope they have learned, I'm sure that they did, something of use...laughing or being entertained is a good way...is always a good way to learn things* (Shaun, discussion following observation).

However, he cautioned that there was something of the less definable and of the mysterious about a teacher's presence which existed because of its elusive nature and this could be lost if it was subjected to too much analysis *'it's a bit like artists.... you don't want to analyse yourself too much for fear that you will lose your creative streak'*.

According to Shaun, this 'special something' also appeared to be recognisable when it was there *'I think we all recognise it when we see it'* and Shaun saw 'it' as something that was necessary in many professions apart from teaching *'teachers should have this, because teachers are not far removed from rabbis, priests, lawyers and entertainers and jugglers'* (Shaun, Int. 1).

### ***The teacher educators***

Mary similarly remembered her childhood drama teacher as being *'theatrical'* and described him as having a *'dark, swarthy look'*. He used drama and gesture to project his presence and would use his *'dark, smooth voice'* and *'coal black eyes'* in a wonderfully theatrical way and for that reason, she concluded that he *'had a lot of presence....there was nothing pale about him'*. So, for Mary, presence was something that became visible through the ways in which she responded to elements of this teacher's physicality and his use of gesture and voice. She described this teacher's presence as *'rich'* due to his *'richness of expression'* and the *'richness to [his] voice'*.

During the observation phase of the field-work, Paul also seemed to demonstrate this 'theatrical' aspect of presence in his teaching when I observed him with a class of student CELTA teachers. At the time, I noted this in the following way:

**Observation 6 - 22/2/12 at 9.45 - Paul**

*The complete group are still focused on the teacher and the board even though he has his back to them; he turns his head and looks at them over his shoulder with an almost reassuring facial gesture that he is still there with them despite having his back to them. Again using his hands to demonstrate, he moves around the room now, between the groups. The trainees are following his movements intently and he appears to have a dramatic presence which draws their attention; he is still the focus even though they are in closed circles, he connects with them personally 'OK, smarty-pants', he says to the trainee who is the fastest at the game. They laugh and seem to be relaxed and enjoying the flow as the trainee teachers come up to the board and write.*

Furthermore, this aspect of presence as 'theatrical' was also discussed in the Teacher Trainer Focus Group, where it was agreed that whilst a teacher can be a wonderful entertainer, this doesn't necessarily mean that the students have learned a lot or that it has been an effective lesson:

*I think that maybe you can't associate teacher presence with an effective lesson, can you?...they could be a brilliant entertainer but they [the students] have learned nothing and then the students might think it's a great lesson but they have actually learned nothing...you know they are motivated...you have got them motivated but at the end of the lesson, if you ask them what they have learned, it's nothing...so it depends how you judge a successful lesson (Cheryl, Extract from Teacher Trainer Focus Group).*

**Genuine care**

When the participants were discussing the notion of care in teaching, both the teachers and the teacher educators made it clear that they were talking about a deep and genuine sense of care which was embodied within all aspects of the approach they took towards their students. In addition, narrative evidence from the participants suggested that if the teacher was able to manifest such a genuine sense of loving care through their presence, this could have an effect on the students' behaviour in the class. This kind of love and care could be manifested in different ways, such as empathy, humour, respect, transparency

or a personal sense of responsibility for the students, but it had to be genuine and come from the heart.

### ***The teachers***

Three of the teachers particularly mentioned the ways in which they perceived a deeply caring approach to the other to be an important facet of a teacher's presence.

Glenda remembered the humour, kindness and love embodied within the presence of her teacher when she was a child

*She could be very funny, she could be very helpful, she could be....she had all these faces but she was a very loving person....she always, you could feel her heart, her emotions all the time, so I did accept her, even if she was strict (Glenda, Int. 1).*

She felt that this teacher's presence kindled a loving attitude from her as a student in return and said that she had never hated this teacher because '*she was present in this very natural and, err, sensitive way...she was honest, she was transparent...that was her but with her heart*'. Later, when Glenda became a teacher herself, she felt that teaching couldn't be any other way than '*with the heart*'.

Glenda also hoped that by being open and trusting, she could enable each of her students to '*move on, otherwise there is no way onwards, it's just stepping back...in my eyes*'. To demonstrate such care, Glenda tried to envisage her students' backgrounds and their life situations so that she felt she knew them personally:

*I have an eye on all of them, on each person and often I try to imagine their backgrounds or, because I can speak a few languages, it's all very well and I might try to understand where that might come from and the situation of the person. I tend to think about the different countries...the political...all these thoughts (Glenda, Int. 1).*

For Glenda, being present as a teacher came with a strong sense of caring responsibility as she believed that it was up to her to provide a source of continuity and constancy for her students; what she called '*a steady point of reference*'. She understood that as a teacher, she could have different roles in class, which changed '*from time to time, from moment to moment*', but her



teacher presence was always there, *'they [the students] can always refer to it'*. So, she saw her presence as an essential element to her teaching as *'they [the students] can't really do without it....they would notice it if it weren't there'*. Moreover, she sensed this need in her students at all levels, *'I think even the high levels, if I think about it, [the students] also look for this security; for this steady point of reference'*

Isabel also fondly remembered a teacher who she felt considered her feelings. She remembered how she believed that he only put her in any pedagogic situation for a particular reason and he ensured that she could understand this reason. She felt that by making it clear why she should do something rather than making her do it purely for the sake of doing it, he was aware of her feelings and *'he was respectful, I suppose'*. For this reason, Isabel perceived this school teacher's presence as that of an enabler; someone who helped her to feel at ease and more able to do things. *'[He was] treating people as people, rather than just students'*.

She contrasted his comforting presence with that of another teacher she remembered with fear. Her reaction to that teacher's presence made the most simple things and obvious tasks unmanageable because her natural reaction to him was to feel a sense of panic and this interfered with her learning, because *'even the most simple things....really simple and obvious tasks...[became] unmanageable because I was in a state of panic'*.

Peter also spoke about how he needed to feel that he embodied a genuine sense of responsibility within his teaching, rather than just playing a role, as this fostered trust in his students; *'they have to trust you; they have to trust that you are doing something in their interests, rather than just, just playing a role'*. However, the students also had to have a sense of responsibility for their own learning in return; otherwise, the teacher's pledge to help the student became meaningless. For Peter, this meant making a reciprocal promise that both teacher and student were bound by a responsibility to do their best *'So, what you have to do is to, sort of, pledge that yes, I am here to do my best.....if you do your best, we will both get to the same place, at the same time'* (Peter, Int. 1)

### ***The teacher educators***

Two of the teacher educators also mentioned how the notion of 'care' was deeply embodied within a teacher's presence. Mary was aware that sometimes positive classroom events could emerge spontaneously from difficult situations, if the teacher demonstrated a degree of empathy for the students. She believed that when she '*genuinely cared*' for the students and really wanted them to do well, her presence was able to break down barriers between them and herself and this fostered a deeper relationship. When this happened, classroom events could happen almost by default in spontaneous ways which had not been planned but which often resulted in a supportive and communicative environment in which non-judgemental discussion was able to emerge naturally.

Paul similarly described teachers who had a '*genuine empathy kind of care*'. These teachers truly wanted their students to feel comfortable and have the confidence to do things, like getting on a bus and asking for a return ticket, going into a pub or talking to strangers, because they wanted to empower their students and provide them with the confidence to deal with life in a strange country. Paul described how, as a teacher, he helped students to develop individual coping mechanisms for times when things went wrong as they inevitably did. As a teacher educator, he believed that a student teacher demonstrated presence when he could see that they provided a safety net for their students so that their fall would be broken when they made a mistake. For example, by letting the students check their answers with their peers rather than making them feel humiliated by getting the answer wrong in front of the whole class.

### ***Enthusiasm***

Evidence provided by both teacher and teacher educator participants suggested that a true sense of enthusiasm and joy in what you are doing was also considered a pre-requisite for having presence as a teacher. Four of the participants mentioned how a teacher's genuine enthusiasm about the subject they were teaching inspired enthusiasm in the learners. It was also suggested

that when the learners enjoyed the class, learning became easier and had more impact.

### ***The teachers***

Two of the teachers described how they perceived enthusiasm to be strongly embodied within the notion of presence in teaching. For Shaun, presence was more than just being physically there '*I mean presence could be physical obviously but it's not just physical, there's something else, there's a physical presence there....but there's something else*'. He sensed that the 'something else' included an element of enthusiasm '*the element of enthusiasm must be there, the joy in what [you] are doing....not [just] the joy, [the] fun*'. He tried to engage the students through his presence and make them want to listen to what he had to say through his '*electrifying effect*'. He believed that such an effect was not forced but came naturally from being enthusiastic and interested in what he was doing; '*only if I am interested in what I am doing, then I am going to be interested in what they are doing.... and I hope that it comes naturally*'.

Susan similarly had memories of two teachers from her own school days whose presence conveyed a genuine sense of positivity and enthusiasm; she had a maths teacher who she described as '*positive....he was very relaxed and comfortable and just said 'you can do it' and 'you are bright enough to do this, so get on with it'*'. She believed that this gave her the courage to take risks and believe in her own abilities. She also remembered another primary school teacher whose presence conveyed encouragement for her as a learner. As a child in her science class, she had wanted '*to make the universe in plasticine*' and although this teacher realised her plan was flawed, he still '*let me have a go*'. Later, when Susan became a teacher herself, she endeavoured to embody such a sense of positive encouragement and enthusiasm for her student's ideas and plans, as she believed this could help a child feel worthy and able, rather than dispirited and lacking in confidence.

## ***The teacher educators***

Two of the teacher educators spoke about the element of enthusiasm with regard to the ways in which a teacher was perceived as having presence. Cheryl described how one of the criteria the teacher educators used, which came within the scope of 'presence' when assessing student teachers when they were being observed on the CELTA course, was the *'ability to generate enthusiasm'*. She believed that when a teacher felt genuine enthusiasm; this in itself could generate enthusiasm in the class and explained how generating such enthusiasm was crucial because *'if you are not doing that....if you can't persuade anyone that what you are doing is useful or interesting, then the [student] motivation is not there'*.

Paul particularly remembered a primary school teacher who was a very kinaesthetic teacher and was very enthusiastic about 'making' things. *'She was very, very, very enthusiastic, incredibly enthusiastic'* and always positive *'you never saw her in a bad mood'*. He contrasted her embodied enthusiasm with another teacher who *'would have worn his hat and gown [if he could]...he was the teacher and that was that'*. He described how the different 'presences' of the teachers affected the students in different ways and how with the first teacher, the enthusiasm and effort she put into making the lessons fun meant that the students wanted to do their homework just because they liked her. *'It didn't even cross your mind...of course we are going to do what we are told, do our homework etc. because it's fun'*. With the second teacher, he described how he felt a barrier and only did what he was told out of a sense of obligation.

During the observations, Paul demonstrated this sense of enthusiasm himself in his own teaching during the CELTA class I observed him teaching:

### ***Observation 6 - 22/2/12 at 9.30 - Paul***

*There is a sense of shared humour; the teacher trainer makes a joke, the trainee teachers laugh..... Now the trainees are asked to put themselves into the teacher role. They are made aware of the versatility of the game; how they can expand on it and how they can adapt it to their learners or their own teaching style. While he runs through the practicalities of the task, he is continually asking questions, listening to comments made and maintaining a sense of rapport. He appears to be the epitome of 'embodied confidence'. He*

*gives them insights into being a TESOL teacher by giving glimpses of his own experiences. One trainee questions how the old pieces of music can be used in a modern day context, with the change in music taste over the years and the teacher educator responds with a personal teaching experience from a repertoire of teaching experiences he has from summer school.... He continues to move as he talks, exuding a sense of energy and enthusiasm.*

### **4.1.3 Natural talent**

Another quality mentioned by the teacher and teacher educator participants as being associated with 'presence' was that of innate ability or natural talent. I would like to point out, however, that only one of the teachers mentioned this, when he was talking about the profession of teaching as being 'in the family', whilst two of the teacher educators had vivid impressions of the ways in which they had perceived their student teachers as having natural talent embodied within their presence in the classroom. The teacher educators took this a step further in their belief that this show of natural talent had a strong effect on the capability of these student teachers to finish the initial training course at the school and later become practicing teachers.

#### ***The teacher***

For Shaun, being a teacher was 'in the blood', '*my mother was a teacher....it's in the blood*'. He saw certification as superfluous to what he believed to be a natural flair or talent '*it's like a born fiddle-player....all the qualifications can do is....polish up your initial innate...umm ability*'. He believed that this natural talent could be moulded or enhanced but it had to be there in the first place '*it's like a putty.....you can form it into shapes and that's a bit like teaching, I think.....you've got the basic material and it's up to you to do what you can with it*'. He also felt he could recognise this indefinable element he called 'it' when he observed a peer teacher '*I know it...[I] sense it*', but found it difficult to verbalise exactly what 'it' was. This 'teacher quality' was seen as more than skill, techniques and knowledge; it was believed to be something innate; something you were born with. '*For all the theory and the paper qualifications,*

*you have got to have it in you....you have got to be a born teacher'* (Shaun, Int. 1).

### ***The teacher educators***

Cheryl explained how some student teachers she had observed seemed to be able to understand how to teach instinctively. She described a teacher she had been working with on a CELTA course who, during her initial teaching observations, *'was doing it either instinctively or subconsciously'*. She believed that such teachers were able to *'generate enthusiasm'* naturally; an attribute she perceived as crucial *'because if you can't persuade anyone that what you are doing is useful or interesting, then the [student] motivation is not there'*. Cheryl pointed out that, in practice, some of these 'more natural' teachers had the ability to look outside themselves and relate to their students' needs. She observed that there were certain student teachers who were *'much more natural and very often on that first day when they stand up, you identify people who are just naturally going to be good, because I think those people are able to focus on the students rather than their own performance'* (Cheryl, Int. 1).

Moreover, Cheryl believed that the ways in which a teacher manifested their presence had an effect on the class in a multitude of ways; some of which were not easy to define or name. She explained how it was clear when there was an absence of presence in teaching; *'it's not something that is very easy to define, although it is clear when it is not there'*. She also found that the phenomenon of classroom presence had an effect on a multitude of different aspects of teaching; *'it affects all sorts of things like class setting.....'* and described a teacher trainee in whom she perceived a complete absence of presence. This perceived lack of presence had *'held him back throughout the course'* because he had to concentrate on generating interest and *'selling things to students'* throughout the course and because of this, found it more difficult to move on to other aspects of teaching *'that come, once you have got that in place'*.

Paul also described how, through being natural, a student teacher he had observed had generated interest and got the students to work with them without any difficulty:

*Some people do have it naturally, even the ones who have never taught before...but you stand them up there...the first time they are in front of a class and they just do it as if it is perfectly natural. They don't seem fazed by it or anything. That is, what I call, classroom presence (Paul, Int. 1)*

Furthermore, in a guise which often appeared almost parental, the 'natural teacher' also seemed to be a natural communicator who injected a degree of confidence into those who were more naturally shy or reticent to join in, *'Well, this teacher, the natural teacher can come in and will just completely forget all about that and just start using the language'* (Paul, Int. 1). Specifically, when a teacher was perceived to be a 'natural', they had a presence which didn't add to the sense of embarrassment or anxiety the student felt, as they were able to engage the student in a learning activity such as a speaking task without the student even realising that they were learning:

*You know, the sort of, the natural teacher can just, you know, doesn't add to the problem. They can still manage to encourage them and persuade them and get them to do what they.....sometimes they don't even realise, you know, that they are doing it....and that's the great thing (Paul, Int. 1).*

For the teacher educators, such natural teachers stood out as different to the majority of student teachers; *'that's one of the ones that crop up every now and again'* (Paul, int.1). It also appeared that they believed that teachers with this type of 'natural talent' were often not aware of 'having presence' in the classroom....*'the type that it's there, but she didn't know it'* (Paul, int.1).

In addition, Paul was keen to point out that it was difficult to describe what teacher presence was but compared it to artistic talents by using analogies like 'drawing' or 'playing the piano' or 'learning a language' and the way in which some people attuned to doing such things with ease whilst others struggled, made slow progress and didn't get any enjoyment from it. *'it's really difficult to describe and I think it's like, you know, I think people say anyone can learn to draw and anyone can learn to play the piano, but there are people for who it's just there'* (Paul, Int. 1).

In the same way, Paul believed that people either had a natural gift for teaching or they didn't. He had identified some first-time teachers who *'even in their very*

*first, their very first twenty minutes they teach, you can sit there and you go 'you've got it'....you can see it'. Conversely, he perceived student teachers who he immediately sensed were going to find the course difficult. He assumed that they would probably never become practicing teachers because teaching was not 'in them' and they were merely 'going through the motions' in order to pass the course and get the certification.*

In this way, there was a perceived dichotomy between those student teachers with natural teacher presence '*it's there...you can just see that it's there*' (Paul, Int. 1) and others who were only really ticking competency boxes as their presence as a teacher was '*actually not there*' (Paul, Int.1) He sensed that the latter types of teachers were purely '*going through the motions*' in order to fulfil the requirements of the course. He sensed that the presence of those teachers, who appeared to be merely going through the motions, could have been blocked by nerves or a lack of confidence; '*you will see them and they are very nervous, and they lack confidence, whatever*' and concluded that some student teachers were not personally invested in their teaching and so teaching was '*not their thing, so to speak*', and as a result it would be difficult for them to finish the CELTA course.

#### **4.1.4 Awareness of self and others**

Evidence generated by narratives from the teacher and teacher educator participants described how important it was to be aware both of yourself and of others in teaching. This awareness was embodied within the strong sense of authenticity previously mentioned and implied that the teacher felt a deep sense of care and responsibility for the students, as I described earlier.

In addition, in practice, for the teachers, this awareness embodied a certain mindfulness on their part which allowed them to consider how their actions impinged on their learners as well as on themselves. Whereas, for the teacher educators when they were talking about the student teachers they had observed, such awareness was perceived in a more distanced way through any perceived effects, such the consequences of awareness (or absence of awareness). For all participants, awareness of self and others was often



generated by previous learning and teaching experiences or general life experiences.

### ***Mindfulness***

One of the teachers mentioned the degree to which a teacher needed to be 'mindful' when dealing with the students. In her interview, Isabel was able to quickly retrieve a memory of a particular teacher she perceived as having presence because of his mindfulness of others. She described him as a 'very *thinking person*' and believed he thought very deeply about life and because of this, was very intelligent and considered in everything he did. She particularly remembered how this consideration for others helped her to feel safe as a student.

In the discussion following her observation in class, Isabel was quick to point out that she endeavoured to show this same type of mindful consideration for her own students:

*So I am kind of aware that I have to, you know, watch what I am saying.... I thought [one of the students] seemed very strong at first... I think that she is confident as a person so even if she doesn't understand something she doesn't have that panic stricken look, which can be a bit misleading...but although she looks as if she is fine...what I learned from yesterday is that sometimes she is finding things more difficult than she lets on...so that was something I was trying to be careful of. (Isabel, discussion following observation)*

In the focus group discussion, she also mentioned that intuitive reactivity naturally evolves over time as a teacher develops the ability to react to new possibilities and begins to understand the vast potential of actions she can take in any given situation.

*Developing over time.....I think what develops is the ability to react...once you have intuitively noticed something....as you see more possibilities and learn the different things you can do, once you have noticed something in the classroom....so I think that in a sense develops....maybe not the intuition but what you can do afterwards (Isabel, Extract from Teacher Focus Group).*

## ***An inner antenna***

Three of the teacher educators mentioned how important it was for a teacher to demonstrate that they were attuned to their students through their presence. As a new teacher educator, Mary often drew on experiences of her own teaching when she described her understanding of the notion of presence. Lacking the vocabulary to describe how she intuited or sensed aspects of her presence, she used a metaphor to describe such self-awareness as '*an inner 'antenna'*' which was able to pick up on things subconsciously even before her conscious mind considered how it was going to deal with a situation sensitively and appropriately. In this way, she saw her intuition working hand in hand with her mind and described a '*360 degree awareness*' which helped her sense when one of her students was out of tune, not 'with her' or simply tired.

Like Mary, Bethany also explained how it is essential for teachers to have a high degree of self-awareness about the ways in which their presence is manifested physically in the classroom. As a teacher trainer, Bethany warned that sometimes teachers she had observed were not aware of the discrepancy between the ways in which they manifested their presence physically and the effects she could see that this had on the class '*one of the guys who is a primary school teacher....he spent the first three lessons walking aimlessly and I just said 'what are you doing?'...'what are you doing when you are doing that?' and he didn't even realise that he was doing it...' It was only through becoming consciously aware that this teacher could see the effect his or her behaviour was having on the students 'I said 'you didn't actually look at anybody and how do you think it made the students feel with you pacing up and down?' and he stopped it'.*

Paul described some student teachers he had observed, who '*do have a presence and in certain situations that presence would be fine but it doesn't work in EFL*'. He believed such people were good teachers technically, '*they have got beautiful board-work, they can do the most incredible hand-outs, they can write a lesson plan like nobody's business*', and yet were unable to understand the students' needs or could not connect with them as their teaching was too 'sterile'; '*the actual lessons themselves either go straight over the top of*

*the heads of the students or it's just too sanitised or sterile, if there is such a way of describing it'.*

Finally, evidence from the discussion between the teacher educators suggested that from the perspective of student teachers, there is a fine balance between being self-aware and being *too* self-aware as the later could make the teacher feel over self conscious and this could in itself prevent them from being able to act naturally. Mary explained this when discussing a group of student teachers in teaching practice *'as they relaxed and forgot about that self-awareness or 'overly self-aware', then that is when the real dialogue and communication happened'* (Int. 2).

#### **4.1.5 Confidence**

Evidence generated through the study suggested that both the teacher and teacher educator participants perceived confidence to be an essential facet of presence in teaching.

##### ***The teachers***

The teachers discussed the notion of confidence in their focus group. For some teacher participants; having confidence seemed to be rooted in both technical knowledge and a sense of the ways in which they were perceived by others. To others, the notion of confidence had a more ethereal and less focused nuance; the confidence in something; something you could hold onto, something which made your presence in the classroom justifiable in a sense; *'Having confidence in something, maybe, but maybe not just in yourself...maybe your knowledge, maybe your persona, maybe in the class'* (Susan, Extract from Teacher Focus Group). This sense of having confidence in something, which could also be described as a sense of faith, helped bring the class alive and encouraged others to feel enthusiastic about the class and the language they were learning.

##### ***The teacher educators***

All the teacher educator participants mentioned how confidence was an important aspect of the notion of presence in teaching. From the data, it appeared that a sense of 'authentic' confidence incorporated a degree of

openness and also an awareness of your fallibility as a teacher.

*OK, umm, I think what the word presence gets translated in our minds to, or some people's minds to.....is to a degree confidence and, err, but there's confidence and there's confidence. Confidence doesn't always reflect content and knowledge (Mary, Int. 1).*

Furthermore, being confident as a teacher was perceived as more than purely holding the attention of the class. It also incorporated an ability to let go of control in an appropriate manner. One of the teacher educators described how she believed it took a strong degree of authentic confidence to let go of being the sole holder of authoritative knowledge and let things flow, whilst responding fluidly to the situation, rather than strictly maintaining a rigid aura of authority come what may; *'you have to have quite a lot of confidence in your own ability to be able to let things run and respond to situations'* (Cheryl, Int.1).

One of the teacher educator participants also described their emotive reaction to a student who was reluctant to accept their presence as a teacher and how, over time, this had a detrimental effect on her confidence. As a result of this particular student's reluctance to accept her as a teacher, she experienced a slow erosion of her confidence in herself despite resolutely attempting to maintain a solid sense of self.

*All the way through, he had a reluctance to accept me as his teacher.... it does knock your confidence a bit, you know (Bethany, Int. 1)*

In the Teacher Trainer Focus Group, presence through confidence was also discussed and it was agreed that such confidence is often accompanied by a sense of awareness and receptivity;

*'it comes through from confidence that allows it to shine and awareness....confidence, receptivity and awareness and I think that the nervousness layers [then] peel back...you get more to the core of who you are rather than what you know.....it takes time for that to develop (Mary, Extract from Teacher Trainer Focus Group).*

Being confident and being able to manifest that confidence appeared to be strongly linked to having classroom presence in the minds of those who were observing the teacher. *'Confidence is a lot about your presence quite possibly...you need to have confidence to have a good presence'* (Bethany, Int.

1). And yet, it was also accepted by the participants that confidence was widely variable according to the temporal and situational context the teachers found themselves in and that this in itself was vulnerable to the demands of the situation.

*Basically, confidence.....goes up and down, doesn't it, however long you have been teaching and you only need a student like that to completely destroy your confidence temporarily, I think (Cheryl, Extract from Teacher Trainer Focus Group)*

Confidence was also strongly interwoven with a degree of experience; *'we see it all the time with the teachers here now, still new to the game; it doesn't take much to knock their confidence'* (Paul, Extract from Teacher Trainer Focus Group). Moreover, teacher confidence was seen as something fragile; something which was vulnerable to being crushed by the student if the teacher felt overwhelmed by the student's demands and started to question his or her own authoritative knowledge, *'so he kind of...he kind of...the problem then is he doesn't dominate your attention but he's there in the back of your mind all the time...and you almost lose confidence a little bit because...with him you think 'am I right then?' and you begin to doubt yourself when he says it'* (Bethany, discussion following observation). And yet it was acknowledged that whilst confidence can sometimes be interpreted as presence, confidence itself was not always a reflection of a teacher's knowledge or the content of the class. It can therefore be argued that whilst being confident can project an aura of 'presence', it does not necessarily follow that a confident teacher means an effective class.

#### **4.1.6      *Insights from student participants***

As I have reported in the previous chapter, seven students from an Academic English Class volunteered to take part and provide a secondary data source for the study. Insight from the students suggested that of the qualities and attributes that I have just described as being associated with the notion of presence in teaching, two had particular meaning for them; an *aura of authority* and *emotional honesty* (reported above in terms of congruence).

Two of the students mentioned the attribute of a teacher having an *'aura of authority'* (see 4.1.1) through their presence. However in the students' view, such an *'aura'* incorporated a sense of being *'a friend'* as well as being *'serious'*. They explained that they needed a teacher to be *'serious'* in order to manage the *'class, the time and the students themselves'* because they couldn't concentrate or enjoy the session if other students stopped the flow of the class as this caused confusion and hindered their ability to practice the language effectively. As one of the group concluded, the teacher needed to have an aura of authority *'to reach the information to me'* and yet they agreed that they also needed a teacher *'as a close friend'* and added *'we don't need to feel there are any difficulties in teachers, easy interaction, easy conversation...'*. So, for the students, it was particularly important that they felt comfortable in the *'authoritative presence'* (my term) of their teacher and that the teacher's presence didn't arouse any feelings of discomfort or anxiety.

Emotional honesty (reported above in terms of *congruence* (4.1.2) by the teacher and teacher educator participants) was also mentioned as a key attribute of a teacher's presence by two of the students, one of whom spoke about this in a spirit of reciprocity by saying *'Don't cheat me and I don't cheat her....[it's] about feeling itself...honest in general....emotionally'*. This sense of honesty or congruence was echoed by another student who explained *'If teacher don't do that [be honest], we can't believe the teacher, we can't follow....they have no presence.....'*

## **4.2 Presence through 'doing'**

The participants described a repertoire of activities they associated with presence, which they often experienced as emanating from the qualities or attributes I have just described. Such activities were a part of everyday aspects of teaching practice and included the use of basic teaching activities to draw attention to themselves, using their voice, gesturing and body language, relationship building skills such as listening and ways of monitoring the class and individual students. As I have just explained, these activities inevitably interacted with the qualities I have reported above but in this section I will focus on the ways in which such qualities were manifested though the *'doing'* involved

in classroom practices and activities. The themes associated with 'doing' which were generated by the data collected in this study were '*sensitive receptivity*', '*self-regulation*', '*physicality*' and '*being aware of time and space*'. I will once again report each in turn.

#### **4.2.1 Sensitive receptivity**

Sensitive receptivity emerged as a core feature of presence in teaching. Seven of the participants, including both teachers and teacher educators, described how sensitive receptivity to others was a fundamental requisite for being present as a teacher. Such receptivity was context specific and therefore shown in different ways at different times. The teacher educators seemed to have a different repertoire of vocabulary available to discuss it than the teachers who often fell back on metaphoric associations and experiential reflections to put it into words.

##### ***The teachers***

Three of the teachers spoke about sensitive receptivity as a facet of a teacher's presence. Shaun was only too aware of a 'mysterious' aspect of teaching which he found difficult to define. He called this aspect of teaching '*it*' and believed that sensitivity was somehow a core element within it. He described such sensitivity as being all encompassing; '*sensitivity to teachers...other teachers... sensitivity [to] the students*' and believed that '*listening to the students....or sensing their needs....sensing their weaknesses, their wishes*' was an essential constituent of teacher presence. This aspect of teaching was also important to Peter, who was very sensitive to the ways in which his students showed what they were feeling through their body language or gestures. '*At times, I would see them, sort of, slow down or just shake their head because they didn't [seem to] know what purpose this [learning] would serve in their lives*'. When he saw such gestures, he made sure that he was available to listen to their fears and empathise with their difficulties.

Peter similarly demonstrated a sensitive receptivity to his students 'culturality' when he provided them with the space to talk about their own cultures during the class I observed as I noted in the vignette overleaf:

**Observation 9 - 5/4/12 at 2.30 - Peter**

*The teacher asks the Korean students for cultural insights and the female student tries to explain in English that they have differences in the formality of the language according to the listener/respondent status. The Slovakian student starts to talk loudly and the Korean girl puts her finger on her mouth as she speaks, almost subconsciously willing her to speak more quietly. As the students speak, the teacher leans in towards the group to hear what they have to say and he listens attentively to each student. The opportunity to speak about their own culture and their own country appears to have made the students more animated and they are now all actively engaged in the conversation.*

In the discussion immediately after his observation, Peter talked about how he had sensed a tension within this student group, which appeared to be having an effect on the ways the student group were working together and how he had to be mindful of the tensions that were going on in order to sustain a cooperative attitude in class:

*Threesomes are always difficult because one will dominate but there was also this.....tension of sorts. If [students] do create any kinds of ties with anyone, you have to know what kind of ties they have...you have to be aware of what's going on because there are a lot of things going on and if people misinterpret them or whatever, they end up being very isolated....you have to be extraordinarily careful, extraordinarily careful... (Peter, discussion following observation)*

Glenda deemed the connection between herself and the students to be on a different sphere than that involved in other forms of interaction in life, because in teaching she endeavoured to offer them 'something' that they [can] capture'. She hoped that by being sensitively receptive each individual in her class, she would provide them with opportunities to learn in a way that suited their way of learning:

*I tend to think about each individual in the class when I'm working and I keep observing and you know, I.....every time, you know, I take notice of an expression I think...maybe I need to do this and do that, maybe he's got that problem, so I keep.... while I'm teaching them, I'm really attentive about all that goes on for each individual and I think what I could do to help or to improve it there (Glenda, Int. 1)*

Evidence further suggested that it was particularly important for teachers to remain sensitive to their own needs as well as the students in order to keep 'burn out' at bay. Glenda described how when she felt emotionally drained from



the personal investment she made of herself in her teaching, she found it more difficult to be present as a teacher emotionally as well as physically;

*I think in the last couple of months, everything was a bit harder, because I was tired and so I can see this when I start getting tired, I just can't be there...not really there...I'm [just] there physically (Glenda, Int. 2)*

She was aware of an 'emptiness' in herself and her teaching when she felt exhausted which impacted on her desire to create a sense of openness and community through her encounter with the students. At times like this, despite her endeavour to be present, she felt drained and tired and although she wasn't sure that this was obvious to the students, it left her feeling unsatisfied with her teaching. When she felt this '*kind of emptiness*', she was aware that she needed to go somewhere and '*get [her] tanks filled up*':

*There [was] a kind of emptiness, but I don't think that they have noticed much but I did and I wasn't really satisfied because I could see the difference (Glenda, Int. 2)*

### **The teacher educators**

As a newly trained teacher educator, Mary also instinctively fell back on her classroom experiences to describe how she sensitively attuned to her students and their emotional needs. She described how she almost '*danced*' in tune with the ways she sensed her students were feeling and how if they were down, she tried to raise them up and if they were too 'hyper', then she would withdraw from the interaction. '*I'll dim my light and sit out in the corner and my ear radar on instead so it's like a dance.....so you are not crowding them out...you are going with their flow*'.

For the other teacher educators however, the data suggested that what was perceived as sensitive receptivity when construed by the teachers, was perceived as 'monitoring' and 'good judgement' in the eyes of the observer.

As a teacher educator, Bethany described what she called a '*degree of good judgement*' in some of her teacher trainees, which she believed helped them attune to the context '*they were good at listening..... so listening, listening carefully.... for me, the right presence is whether they know how to judge that situation...when to join in, when not to join in, when to leave it*'. According to

Bethany, the teacher needed to judge the situation so that the teacher's and the students' presences mixed and mingled in a way which felt comfortable for all concerned. This meant that a teacher needed to find the right balance between joining in with the students and keeping a distance from them. *'Sometimes you can be too distant from them which doesn't make the students feel very comfortable and sometimes you can join in too much and say too much'*.

So, for Bethany, presence had this inherent element of good judgement; *'I guess thinking of ideal presence...it's being in the right place at the right time, being there when they need you...saying the right thing at the right time'*. Such appropriateness of reactions changed at different stages of the lesson and she recognised that there was not just one appropriate way to behave; *'acting appropriately at different stages of the lesson and with different people...there isn't just one appropriate way to behave, [it's important] how the teacher acts and behaves'* Comparing teaching to juggling, she explained this was particularly important when new students joined an existing class; *'you have got to.....juggle three things.....you have got to adapt to each thing....new people coming in, yourself for the existing students and you have to make sure the new students are welcomed and involved'*

In the discussion following his observation teaching a group of CELTA student teachers, Paul described how he had demonstrated a degree of mindfulness and sensitive receptivity with the students teachers in his class. He explained how he had endeavoured to create a good class atmosphere by breaking down the barriers between himself and the student teachers at the beginning of the session by using games. However, he was mindful that not all the class members would want to get involved in games, as he didn't like them himself, so he kept them short. This could mean that those who felt uncomfortable or 'put on the spot' would only feel this for a short period of time and would then move on to other activities; he also gave them the opportunity to 'sit out' if they didn't want to get involved :

*We start them off with a good...well basically it's a version of musical chairs, that's at the beginning of the session and I think it really does help to break down the barriers...it gets them more energised.... but you keep the games short so not everybody has to do it, so I actually*

*can empathise with those who don't like doing it, because I don't....(Paul, discussion following observation)*

Cheryl also pointed out that the multi-dimensional aspects of teaching TESOL meant that a teacher needed to be fully aware of all that was going on in the classroom at any one moment in time, *'there's sort of the ability to...and this is to do with classroom presence I suppose...the ability to, it's like multi-tasking really, the ability to monitor a pair but also keeping your eye on what everyone else is doing'*. She believed that the teacher trainees needed to be able to maintain a balance between supporting current learning and challenging students to move on to new ground in order to keep the class dynamic and provide a point of equilibrium as the students endeavoured to make sense of their learning journey *'I suppose, that they need to support the weaker, well, no...support and challenge basically, to be able to support the students but also challenge them is really difficult; to know how far you can go before they get frustrated and recognising that; that's quite difficult sometimes'*.

According to Cheryl, student teachers often found it difficult to negotiate the ground between offering a strong nurturing, supportive presence and taking a step back, *'so they usually start by being too supportive and holding their hand all the way and then they try to take that away'*. She thought that this was a question of confidence because, for a teacher, pulling away meant that, *'you have to have quite a lot of confidence in your own ability to be able to let things run and respond to situations'*.

In fact, Cheryl herself demonstrated such sensitive receptivity herself in a class I observed in which she was working with a group of teachers during their last week of a five-week DELTA course. During this class, Cheryl encouraged the teachers to speak about their feelings and offered them a space in which they could do so. An extract from this observation now follows:

**Observation 5 - 13/2/12 at 9.30 - Cheryl**

*The teacher trainer picks up on something she overheard in the teacher/teacher conversation about confidence and opens it up to the class. She again offers reassurance that it can be painful or hard to look at yourself as a teacher and see that there is a gap between the way you perceive yourself and the way in which your students actually see you.....This encourages the teachers to talk further*

*about their own contexts....One of the teachers however, says that he doesn't want to talk about a problem he is having in his class...from his demeanour, he is feeling uncomfortable and edgy..... The teacher trainer reassures them that it is natural and it is a good idea to let someone in to discuss issues like this with them.*

## **4.2.2 Self-regulation**

Evidence from the teacher and teacher educator participants suggested that presence in teaching was affected by the degree of self-regulation a teacher manifested. Furthermore, this sense of self-regulation appeared to be embodied in the ways in which the teacher demonstrated mastery over the teaching environment and made it their own through whatever personal means they had available.

### ***The teachers***

Three of the teachers spoke about how they needed to be very conscious of regulating what they were doing and how they were feeling in order to be present as a teacher. For Peter, being an ESOL teacher meant being strongly aware of the need to be truly present and conscious of what he was doing. He felt that he had to be *'very, very present'* when he was teaching ESOL and compared it to other jobs, such as journalism, in which he was aware that his mind wandered at times. He described this sense of being present as *'be[ing] [the] most conscious....of what [you] are doing'*. He experienced teaching as more than something he had just been trained to do and recognised that there was *'a moment in which there is something more than just, let's say, more than all the archetypes and all the input and all the things that you have been taught, that takes hold at times'*.

For Isabel, her presence as a teacher emerged from the core of her being as it is *'something that comes from the person'*. In her experience, anyone could dress in the same way as the teacher, could hold papers and folders in the same way but they would not be mistaken for being a teacher as her presence as a teacher is something she *'exudes'* in whatever way is appropriate at any given time. She felt it could be conveyed through a degree of calmness and

controlling the way she spoke as well as a sense of being comfortable in her own body. *'[I] need to be feeling at ease and comfortable to be able to purely focus on the people around [me]'*.

For Glenda, if, as sometimes happens, the class didn't gel and she didn't feel that she and the class 'clicked', then *'I put my emotions a bit aside and try to be just, err, present but not too involved'*. She distanced herself emotionally from the students as a way of protecting herself from being engulfed by vulnerability, which she believed was stronger in some people, who like herself were more sensitive, *'so I think then you just have to find a way to protect yourself, to draw a line, just for yourself, which takes time...and I haven't reached that point yet; not in teaching or in real life where it is even more difficult'*. This was particularly the case if she didn't sense any reciprocity coming from the students:

*I don't withdraw my person, because I can't do that, but I put a kind of thin barrier between the students and me, until I see things changing a little bit and I can't do that for very long, because this is not who I am (Glenda, Int. 1).*

In fact, Glenda demonstrated this type of distancing activity during her classroom observation, as I wrote in my field notes:

**Observation 4 - 8/2/12 at 10.30 - Glenda**

*It is as if she has tried to give the students autonomy but their lack of direction and energy has disappointed her. She seemed to want more from them but they appeared unable or unwilling to offer it, so she has taken back the baton of authority and moved on to a more controlled activity. This activity is centred around the whiteboard and is looking at parts of speech..... It seems that the teacher now has their attention and they (the students) are happy that they no longer have responsibility to lead.*

Glenda was also aware that she was an emotional person and that this could sometimes have a negative rather than positive effect on her as at times of vulnerability, she lost confidence in herself, which led to a lack of focus. *'As far as I'm concerned, mistakes, from being unable to react properly, is not because I don't know things but because my emotional side starts trembling and I get all puzzled and confused'*. She realised that this strong emotionality she felt, needed to be 'managed' through a good degree of self-control, *'I realise that I start moving in a certain way or I start [to feel] a bit fidgety inside, because I get*

*a little bit anxious and insecure*' and because of this *'sometimes even good ideas disappear'*. When these emotional 'wobbles' happened she explained that *'I've got the impression that I don't know anything about what I am going to tell the students and I get a bit scared'*. This could have disastrous effects on her teaching and her ability to be present, as was demonstrated during her classroom observation:

**Observation 4 - 8/2/12 at 10.30 - Glenda**

*The students seem to be slow to catch on and the teacher appears exasperated. She knows what she wants them to do but they are not doing it and when she leaves the table they do nothing. The teacher realises that she has not mentioned phonetic sounds on the board and tells the group that 'it's language but it's music as well'. She is trying to get them to be enthusiastic about the language and trying a new way of getting them to view the language. She is appealing to their sense of the aesthetic and the creative but there appears to be little response. Once again, the teacher seems to be left feeling disconnected and disempowered by their lack of response and their disinterest in the aesthetics of the language.*

Glenda went on to discuss this aspect of her teaching during the discussion which followed the observation. She explained how she had not been able to connect with this particular class and that she felt frustrated when they showed no signs of autonomy or being able to work independently. This culminated in a sense of disharmony between what Glenda actually did (which was to lead the class and take charge of the students' learning) and what she felt she ought to do (which was to take a more distanced stance and let the students take charge of their own learning collectively):

*I think sometimes I should just really sit back a bit more but if I do that they just don't do anything because one day I did that...I said 'ok, I'm not doing anything today...it's just you' and time was flying and they were so slow and yes, I had to take charge of them once again....I think it's the class....I think it's the class because it doesn't often.....I wouldn't be surprised if they do this with every teacher.... I say 'no' and then they carry on....[voice showing exasperation] (Glenda, discussion following observation).*

### ***The teacher educators***

Although this aspect of presence was not specifically talked about by the teacher trainers in the interviews, it was mentioned during a discussion following an observation with Cheryl, who described how one of the teachers on the DELTA course found it hard to talk about her feelings. Cheryl explained how, by not talking about her feelings, the teacher did not receive the support she needed when she felt vulnerable, which meant that she would probably find the course harder as a result. Cheryl believed that it was sometimes necessary for teachers to discuss feelings and vulnerabilities as a crucial part of their professional self growth and self development.

*So that's the thing isn't it, not everybody wants to talk about things and that has been apparent in that group right from the beginning.... whereas in the second week, when they were really struggling with their first assignment, D told everyone about it and said she was feeling all wobbly..... R was also going through a similar stage because she was quite tearful that first week, but when D said to her 'Oh, are you feeling a bit wobbly [too]?' she said 'no, no, no' so she obviously can't discuss her feelings or is frightened to.... It's easier for D because she sort of gets it all out and gets the support she needs and is also willing to change and R bottles it up but she is going to find it hard...going to find it hard (Cheryl, discussion following observation)*

Bethany also found it hard to regulate her feelings of anxiety about a particular student in the class I observed. What follows is an extract from a class in which Bethany was training a group of CELTA trainees. During the observation, I perceived her presence as diminished and seemingly filtered through her teaching materials, although I didn't realise the reason for this at the time.

#### ***Observation 10 - 15/5/12 at 11.15 - Bethany***

*The trainer is now standing up in front of them showing them a book as an example of where the materials come from. The trainees show interest but seem a bit subdued and confused. They are able to offer suggestions but the rapport with the trainer seems indirect; as if it is being mediated through the medium of the materials. The materials somehow offer a safe third space through which contact can be made indirectly. The trainer outlines the advantages of 'product writing' and one of the trainees has picked up the differences. The trainer responds with 'yes, we will look at the two types in a minute'.*

The extract from the discussion that followed confirmed her feelings of vulnerability and lack of confidence during the class because of the stance shown by one of the students and her reaction to it. In the discussion, she was very open about the anxiety and vulnerability she experienced as a reaction to the stance taken by one of the students in the class and the resulting feelings which seemed to erode her sense of confidence in what she knew:

*In the first session this morning, he got excited, he disapproved of a grammar point which we did on presenting language and the different ways I used a picture to demonstrate the grammar point.....He ignored what I said and he is like a dog with a bone and he won't let go and I felt with him and also talking to the other trainers that you have got to....almost ignore him because he is the same in a lot of sessions...it's not just input, it's other things and so he kind of...he kind of...the problem then is he doesn't dominate your attention but he's there in the back of your mind all the time...and you almost lose confidence a little bit because as I said, with him you think 'am I right then?' and you begin to doubt yourself (Bethany, discussion following observation)*

### **4.2.3      *Physicality***

The data suggested that physicality was the most explicit demonstration of teacher presence. The teacher participants were particularly aware of the ways in which they used their physicality in order to make their presence known and often hoped that this alone was enough to encourage to student to respond appropriately.

#### ***Physical proximity***

Two of the teachers were very aware of the ways in which their presence was manifested through their physical proximity to the students. Anthony walked around to make his physical presence known in the classroom '*I am someone who walks around a lot; I'd certainly say that I linger*'. By doing so, he often became aware that the students were not '*doing what they are supposed to be doing*' and '*when they are doing something that they are not supposed to be doing, they do it under the table*'. He stood close to his students to alert them to the fact that he had noticed, whilst being careful not to be too direct '*I just stand behind them or stand near them and I don't say anything.....and then, they get*



*it....they get the fact that you are near them and that's enough quite often'. By moving closer to them physically, Anthony demonstrated his intentions were serious 'but just by being near them they think ok I have to continue...I have to really buckle down here' and he believed that sensing this, the students made more effort.*

On the other hand, Isabel, was very aware of a particular teacher's physicality when she herself had been a student. She remembered the acute sense of discomfort she had felt when this teacher physically walked behind her to check her work. *'I remember at my school, the teacher walking behind me to check my work and that has always made me feel incredibly uncomfortable'*. She describes how she had become very aware of this as a teacher herself and always tried to make her presence known by moving into a student's sphere of vision rather than standing behind them where they might, like her, sense her presence as something hidden or foreboding.

### ***Gestures and body language***

From the data, it was clear that the teachers manifested their presence in the classroom through teaching skills they had acquired, such as gestures and body language. Four of the teachers were particularly aware of the ways in which they used the gestures and how they were endeavouring to connect with the students through them, whereas the three teacher educators who spoke about this were more aware of how those gestures and body language could be perceived or misinterpreted and how this could impact on the messages the teacher was believed to be giving out through them.

#### ***The teachers***

Anthony described how he had simple ways of drawing attention to his presence in the classroom *'I go like this (knocking hand against the desk) and everybody looks at me or I tap at the board and then everybody turns around....very, very simple things like that...I do those quite often and everybody looks at me straight away'*. He found that this worked for him and he often used sounds and his voice to this effect *'so clap my hands (demonstrating) or I speak quite clearly and loudly'*.

Shaun used gestures and body language to illustrate words that the students found hard to understand, when he was trying to demonstrate the use of possessive nouns as described in this vignette:

**Observation 1 - 3/2/12 at 10.30 - Shaun**

*He moves on to possessive pronouns and gives a demonstration of 'myself'. The students watch as he mimes 'enjoy myself'. He uses facial expressions and gestures. The Korean student seems to enjoy the joke and makes an expression back which endorses the meaning. The teacher wants to explain that 'do it by yourself' is used to emphasise that it is 'you' alone who is doing the action...he hits the board with his pen (where he had written 'you') at the same time to demonstrate emphasis.*

*(And later in the same class)*

*The teacher uses the opportunity to show the rhythm of the sentence by waving his arm like a conductor of an orchestra.*

Later in the discussion following the observation, Shaun explained how he had used such gestures intentionally as he saw an opportunity to draw the students attention:

*Yes, I did that deliberately...to draw attention to the fact that they needed to use the reflexive verb to the fore...that was calculated... I knew what I was doing...I saw an opportunity there and I took it...I don't know whether teachers have to be born opportunists or, in the nicest sense, I am an opportunist...(Shaun, discussion following observation)*

On the other hand, Isabel was very aware of the need to make other people feel comfortable with her physical positioning in the class because when she was a student herself she felt uncomfortable when a teacher walked behind her. She therefore made sure she always walked in front of people if she could. She would make her students aware of her presence by smiling at them and walking over to them as she felt that was '*friendlier*'. She described situations where she felt she needed to be '*conscious of the way I was speaking and acting*' to help students to relax and help them feel safe and '*accept feeling safe*'. I witnessed this first hand in her teaching observation:

**Observation 7 - 28/2/12 at 9.30 am - Isabel**

*Once again, she sits with her hand over her mouth as if to show she is unavailable to comment; the students seem to understand this and try to work alone. The student who needs reassurance seems to understand this unspoken desire for him to find his way independently but acknowledges his need for help is greater. He says apologetically 'sorry, teacher' and the teacher once again responds with a smile.*

Although Glenda didn't mention explicit use of gestures verbally, she demonstrated them during her classroom observation, as illustrated in the following vignette:

**Observation 4 - 8/2/12 at 10.30 - Glenda**

*One student comes into the class. He is very late; he missed the first part of the lesson and has just come in for the second part after the break. The teacher asks him why he is late and tells him what he has missed. She demonstrates her disappointment with her facial gestures.*

*(Then later in the same class)*

*She encourages and laughs, but the students are slow to speak. She indicates that another student should take on the responsibility of speaking with her hands. She uses her hand to indicate that she is not involved with this activity.*

**The teacher educators**

Three of the teacher educators mentioned body language and gestures. Paul described how he had watched teachers who seemed to be naturally attuned to the class through the use of body language, such as eye contact, '*she sat at the table with them...she was at their level, she came down to their level and she was checking them with lots of eye contact and she graded her language and everything and I was like 'wow'...that's a natural*'.

However, he also stressed that if the teacher lacked interest or enthusiasm in what they were teaching, they could not hide it:

*You can see it...the mannerisms, the body language, the voice.....You can tell if teachers are really not interested or not sure about what they are teaching, it shows...and the students pick up on that...it's very easy for the students to pick up on that (Paul, Int. 1)*

Indeed, Paul appeared to manifest such a sense of enthusiasm during a class in which I observed him teaching a group of CELTA student teachers:

**Observation 6 - 22/2/12 at 9.45 - Paul**

*The teacher remains standing and the atmosphere of shared endeavour is palatable. The trainee teachers all look engaged and relaxed and there are peals of laughter at intervals. The lack of desks seems to create a feeling of community and the teacher educator's openness allows for constant, unobtrusive checking and sharing of practice. The trainees look comfortable with the idea of sharing ideas as if this has become commonplace in this classroom.*

*The teacher educator uses a lot of hand movements to demonstrate; he slaps his hand on his head and uses his voice in a way which portrays enthusiasm and energy. He uses humour as he connects with the learners in a way which is very personal and yet appears to have a cohesive effect on the class. As he speaks, he walks backward and forward using his physicality to connect and reconnect with the learners. They similarly move their heads and eyes to maintain that connection.*

Mary was keen to point out that a teacher's body language did not always portray positivity or strength. She described how, as a teacher trainer, she perceived that closed body language could make a person seem '*diminished as a person*' and how a teacher's physical presence manifested through body language and speech could indeed have an adverse affect on the way he or she was perceived as a teacher. '*Eye contact was down, he mumbled and spoke down. His body language was closed, but I even felt that he was not just visually.....but even if I turned my back, he was diminished as a person*'.

Conversely, Bethany remembered a teacher whose presence had an effect on her merely through suggestion, without the use of words; through the way he carried his body, held his chin up and surveyed the room, rather than through his voice '*he never, ever raised his voice.....never .....he would just walk into the room, with his chin up like this, look around and you just stopped in your tracks*'. Bethany found that this teacher's presence could inhibit her learning '*I didn't*

*realise it at the time...I don't think I learned anything at all' although it did alleviate disciplinary problems 'his lessons weren't fun but [he] never had any discipline problems in class'.*

### **Use of voice**

Both the teacher and the teacher educator participants were aware of how presence could be manifested through the use of voice. Whilst the teachers tended to use their voice to draw attention to themselves, for the teacher educators, a teacher's voice was often used as a guide to the degree of enthusiasm the teacher felt.

### **The teachers**

Anthony used his voice to draw attention to himself in the classroom, *'I suppose that one thing I remember being told when I did the training is that my voice booms and I have found that very natural....and I do this a lot'.* On the other hand, he understood that sometimes he didn't need to be loud to have his presence felt as by speaking softly when the students were being noisy, he could draw their attention towards him;

*like whispering...whispering always draws attention, doesn't it...when everyone else is shouting...it's kind of like that...and I find myself doing that with some of the kids when they are really getting out of control...trying to bring them to attention by being as loud as they are doesn't really work but if you sit still and just mutter something (Anthony, Int. 1).*

Shaun felt a connection with a particular teacher because of the clarity with which he spoke and the clear ways in which he expressed his ideas, Shaun inferred that when a teacher could do this *'he could connect....he certainly had presence'.* His presence provided a focal point within the class *'as a teacher you are undoubtedly going to be the focus of attention....the enumerator, someone who can make things clear...'* and this provided a point of connection with the students. He described how *'this teacher had a profound effect on me and I thought he was the most extraordinary EFL teacher I had ever come across.....I couldn't put my finger on what it was...it was the clarity, it was the ability to explain things clearly'.* He believed that such clarity was achieved through a clear voice *'he didn't mumble or make errors in speaking but*

*everything was very clearly enunciated*. This attention to the use of voice by one of the students was demonstrated when I observed his class:

**Observation 1 - 3/2/12 at 10.30 - Shaun**

*One student reads out her answer in a monotone voice, the teacher asks 'are you learning to be a priest?' She looks surprised; then the teacher mimics her voice, then says it again using a sing song intonation. The students laugh.*

**The teacher educators**

Mary described how she tries to bring everybody together in the class as quickly as possible and endeavours to keep her students engaged by changing the tone of her voice. Her aim is to *'whip the crowd up into a frenzy'* whilst continually monitoring to check which students are a bit quieter than the others. Without being able to use voice modulation, Mary described a teacher she observed who was unable to impart a sense of enthusiasm and drama in the class as the class felt drab and *'samey'*, *'maybe it's because she didn't modulate her voice but there wouldn't be a change in pitch or modulation or any drama and then calm moments...it was all fairly 'sort of floaty' and 'samey'*.

Cheryl similarly illustrated how students' awareness of the presence of the teacher could be raised or lowered through their voice. For Cheryl, one of the ways in which a teacher could demonstrate their enthusiasm for teaching the language was through voice. She described a student teacher who *'didn't seem able to generate interest in anything'* because he had a *'very flat and monotone voice'* and she spoke about how she had tried to help this teacher with the quality of his voice modulation because she believed that this was having an effect on the way his presence was perceived by the students:

*This person did have a problem with his voice, being very flat, so it was getting him to write out instructions and to highlight the words he was going to emphasise and make sure that he actually stressed them and also explaining how to stress them (Cheryl, Int. 1).*

#### **4.2.4 Being aware of time and space**

From the data, it appeared that being present incorporated a somewhat paradoxical element of temporal and spatial awareness for three of the teacher participants. In fact, for them, teaching *presence* could also be construed as teaching *absence* when the absence was volitional and the teachers were aware that they needed to provide a continuum of presence within which their students had the space they needed to learn autonomously.

One of the female teachers, Zara, when describing elements of how she connected with her students explained how she *'tended to appear and disappear'* in the class and how she and her students *'batted off each other'*. Susan was also particularly aware of this and sometimes to do this, she left the classroom completely *'sometimes I just leave the room....I will give them something, say work on this in pairs...I'll come back in two minutes...or I just leave...I don't even...I just leave them to it and I say, ask your friends if you have a question'*. She believed that this opened up the space necessary for her students to find their own way and that they enjoyed having this sense of freedom, *'I like to come back and find them laughing without me...that's great'*.

Anthony also demonstrated how his classroom presence still seemed to be embodied within different break-out groups when he managed the cramped spatial dimensions of the classroom by splitting the class into smaller groups. I have recorded the ways in which I believed this to be significant within the following extract of his class I observed:

##### **Observation 8 – 5/4/12 at 10.45 - Anthony**

*There are 15 students in a small cramped room. The teacher makes the decision to split the students into small groups or pairs in three different venues. There are four students remaining in the original room, and they seem happy to have more space..... The student pairs work as reporters and survivors from a plane crash.....the teacher moves between the rooms, encouraging, asking questions and just 'being there'. By entrusting the students to do what they were asked, they are getting on with it together, helping each other..... The teacher's presence is absence in a sense – they know he can return at any moment and they are aware that he is there as a support. There is a flow of energy within the groups and when the teacher is present, this energy flow includes him, as he is relaxed*

*enough to allow this freedom.... His presence seems to be there even in his absence - almost as a ghost of the relationship he has built with his students over the past couple of weeks. This presence/absence ghost appears to enable the flow between the students in the group and somehow a creative endeavour between the students takes place in the space created by his leaving the room.*

Isabel had also experienced times when she believed that her presence made a significant difference. She believed that without her presence, the students in the class would tend to stick together to be '*with someone who speaks their own language*'. She believed that just by being present in the classroom, the spatial dynamics changed and through her physical presence, she helped to '*open up*' students, so that they were able to experience the huge variety of cultures available within the class. Her presence then became a catalyst for change as the cultures intermingled and as a result, the class mix became '*a sort of international thing*'. Isabel demonstrated this awareness of the temporal and spatial dimensions of her classroom presence when I observed her in class:

**Observation 7 - 28/2/12 at 9.30 - Isabel**

*The learners were trying out mime in their pairs, making each other and the teacher laugh, the mime could enable the communication when the language was missing; the mime became a source of familiarity and provided a light-hearted focus. The teacher continued to give the students the space and time to try things out and to find their own gamut of vocabulary, which they often found within their own knowledge base - it seemed as if their unconscious knowing of it even surprised them at times.*

This aspect of presence having a temporal and spatial dimension was also brought up in the Teacher Focus Group, when the teachers discussed how 'switched on' they had to be in order to maintain a connection with their students and yet still provide them with the space to learn autonomously. It was recorded in the following discussion between the teacher participants:



- Anthony: *...So no, I don't think you have to be there all the time...you disappear and then come back...*
- Susan: *.....or withdraw and monitor.....so [they] learn to be more autonomous as well..... (However) We say when you are teaching you [have to be] switched on all the time....you know if you do switch off then you are not actually so much in the classroom, are you?*
- Isabel: *no....you disengage*
- Susan: *.....because one of the things that you....if you are not there you suddenly miss something .....they are asking you a question or something so you really sort of have to be a certain amount of switched on...*
- Isabel: *.....but maybe not at all time because like you were saying... sometimes you actively disengage...*
- Glenda : *.....I think that even if you leave the classroom, you are still following the whole process*
- (Extract from Teacher Focus Group).

#### **4.2.5 Insights from student participants**

In their supported discussion, the students also talked about the ways in which a teacher manifested their presence through their 'doing' in practice. In particular, they mentioned the aspects of '*sensitive receptivity*' and '*physicality*'.

One of them explained how, through experience, a teacher seemed to be more sensitive and instinctively knew whether students were able to understand something and as a result, they were '*more funny [and] they know how to make us laugh*'. Another student remembered meeting his teacher after class in a pub. When he had ordered a drink using a translation of the language he would use in his own country, the teacher had made him say it again using an tone appropriate for living in the UK. He explained that the teacher became one of his 'best teachers' because he was not just a 'classroom teacher' and he had found an alternative way to teach which suited him. He believed that just writing '*could I have*' on the white-board would not have had the same effect for him, as his understanding and investment in learning came from doing it '*physically*'.

Moreover, the students, as the teacher and teacher educator participants had done, described presence in terms of '*physicality*' (see 4.2.3). One of them described how her sensitivity to the physical presence of her teacher depended on who the teacher was '*because if the teacher was a young English man, I don't want the teacher to come to me really near like this....but if my teacher is middle-aged woman, if she do this (patting her shoulder), I am happy...like my mother*'.

### **4.3 Presence through relationship**

As the previous sections have described, the research participants had particularly vivid memories of the effect that a teacher's presence, both past and present, could have on the way they felt and the ways in which they responded to them in return. In fact, as strong evocative memories came to the surface, reflections on the perceived qualities of their teachers, together with the actions they took, led to further reflections on how these could either serve to build a relationship with them or alternatively form a barrier between the teachers and themselves. The practicing teacher participants also described how meaningful it was to them personally to build relationships with the students in their class.

So, in this section, I will report on how the qualities I described in section 4.1 interacted with the 'doing' described in section 4.2 as these aspects of presence came together in a relational sense and supported or conversely restricted the relationships the teachers built with their students. Such relational facets of presence will be presented through the themes of '*relational security*', '*emotional connectivity*' and '*organic flow*' which I will, once again, outline in turn.

#### **4.3.1 Relational security**

From the data, it appeared that both the teacher and teacher educator participants valued the sense of reliability and security a teacher's presence could provide and they often used metaphoric associations to describe such relational elements. Perhaps for this reason, classroom relationships were often discussed in terms of a familial type of group dynamic, in which people truly mattered to each other. Because the group members mattered, the teacher

was there to provide a bedrock of security on which they could depend and from which they could find the confidence to take risks.

### ***The teachers***

Four of the teachers spoke of the ways in which they believed that their presence provided a sense of relational security for the students. In fact, it seemed that when a teacher's presence helped a student to feel secure in class, he was able to take more risks without fear of punishment or humiliation. This type of risk taking by a student who was encouraged by the teacher's presence is illustrated in the following vignette I wrote during a teacher's observation:

#### ***Observation 1 - 3/2/12 at 10.30 - Shaun***

*The Korean student has been quiet until now but suddenly wakes up. He gives 'an interesting sentence'. The teacher says it is the most interesting sentence of the week. 'My girlfriend is a she man'. ..... The teacher writes transsexual on the board after checking the spelling. He joins in the laughter..... The originally quietly spoken Korean is now more animated and smiling. He says he is not sure but 'she man' could be slang.... The teacher doesn't respond but makes sure the student knows that he accepts the sentence by referring to it again as 'the most interesting sentence of the week'.... the student seems to understand that it is acceptable to use language creatively and that the novelty of the sentence has made the teacher laugh and the rest of the class have joined in.*

Susan also described how students were valued in her classes. She welcomed them when they joined the class and became part of the group and they were missed by both the teacher and their peers when they left. She believed that the teacher was responsible for protecting and managing the group, in much the same way a family member would take responsibility for another family member. In her discussion following observation, she described how teaching involved a sense of 'give and take':

*[Teaching is] a give and take and I don't want them ever to be afraid to ask a question and I think that's the thing...if you are afraid to ask a question, then you are not going to learn anything...so it has always got to be comfortable enough for them to learn and to try out the different pronunciation. (Susan, discussion following observation)*

Glenda too believed in providing the students with a sense of security quite early on in her teaching relationship with them. *'I give them a sense of security...I don't know how but they sense this quite soon in my classes'*. She believed that it is through *'being with them'* at all levels, but particularly in an emotional sense, that they could sense her presence as their teacher *'I go down on my knees to be with them...but I can also be very authoritative sometimes but they accept it and I think the fact that they call me teacher or think that I am the teacher is this [trust]'*.

Glenda suggested that her students seemed to sense that they could trust her at a subliminal level although she didn't know how it happened *'they know that they can trust me and that at any time, they can have the proof of this...whatever happens or whatever they need...even if it is not a material need...they just sense it'*. However, she was quick to point out that it was not her authoritative presence which she believed connected with the students as she *'doesn't really put herself on this stage and act like the teacher'*, so she believed that she and students connected at a deeper level than that associated solely with the roles the teacher and students took in class.

Anthony compared his presence in the classroom to that of a guide and described himself as almost paternal as he helped his students to learn and realise what they were capable of doing;

*so, that's, kind of, how I see myself....maybe, like a, almost like a father, showing his children 'you don't do it like that...you do it like that' and then stepping back and allowing them to do it and making them think that they have done it themselves, which actually they have (Anthony, Int. 1)*

Shaun similarly demonstrated the ways in which he reached out to provide an supportive personal connection with the students, as I have illustrated in the following vignette I wrote during his classroom observation:

**Observation 1 - 3/2/12 at 10.30 - Shaun**

*The teacher comes in and stands in front of the board. The class hasn't yet officially started. He makes contact by asking a female student whether it is her personal laptop. She replies that it is and he asks whether she has any family pictures on it. There seems to be an immediate connection; the student becomes engaged and*

*immediately responds by showing pictures of her mother and father. The teacher comments on how glamorous they look and she is encouraged to show him other pictures. Immediately the relationship becomes more personal between teacher and student as she proudly shows him her family photos.*

In a similar vein, Susan used the analogy of the 'fold' to describe her class; somewhere into which people were ushered and within which students developed a sense of belonging and later a sense of loss when they left, 'people have come in and out but we have, sort of, grabbed them into our fold...and missed them when they gone and things like that'. She was happy when an element of novelty or newness mixed with the existing class dynamics and found that when a new student entered the 'fold', it added extra interest because of the different life experiences brought into the classroom.

Susan believed her presence as the teacher enabled such integration into the class by acting as a kind of filter or channel to funnel this integration of the new into the existing 'she will explain to me and we'll work it out and then I will explain to the rest of the class what she is asking about'. In this way, trust in the teacher acted as an intermediary link between the old and the new. The new was not then something to be feared but something to be welcomed as it has been endorsed by the teacher, who had already established a position of trust within the group. This was illustrated by the following extract taken from the observation field-notes of this teacher's class:

**Observation 7 - 28/2/12 at 9.30 am - Isabel**

*The teacher was sitting at the table in front of the board, holding her hand over her mouth as if to physically show the students that it was their job to do the speaking; she was there but not part of the activity; she was on the side lines as a point of reference. This seemed to encourage the learners to take risks in their pairs as they tried out new vocabulary together. There was a general feeling of being comfortable and relaxed as the four learners and the teacher were sitting around the table.*

### ***The teacher educators***

Two of the teacher educators spoke of the need for relational security in the class. Paul believed that the teacher was there to provide a comfortable environment in which the students could learn without even realising that they were learning. He believed that this often happened once the teacher had connected with the students on a personal level, *'[the students] are more willing to do anything you ask, once you...you have connected with them'*. Once the students felt that sense of security, the teacher could help them move out of their comfort zone so that they began naturally to start taking risks by trying out the language.

This helped them to communicate in a way which enabled them to move on with their language learning. *'They can manage to encourage them and persuade them and get them to do what they.....sometimes they don't even realise, you know, that they are doing it'*. As far as Paul was concerned, this released the student from the communicative shell in which they were entrapped; *'previously they were stuck in their little bubble'* and gave them the freedom to communicate in ways which had previously been unknown to them. In this way, he believed that the teacher brought about a sense of release, *'it's like a dam's burst and they have now got the opportunity to use it and its all working'* and in this way, learning opportunities were created.

It was seen as important that the teacher was sensitive to the potential offensiveness of what a student might say or how he or she might act as cultural blindness could cause inadvertent offence:

*Whether you agree or disagree with certain points of view, you have to make sure there is a bar over which none of the students including yourself will climb, if it is going to be offensive in any way (Mary, Extract from Teacher Trainer Focus Group).*

Such sensitive ethical attuning manifested through a teacher being present could create a classroom space in which every individual felt valued and cherished:

Once again falling back on her recent teaching experiences, Mary described one group of students in which the group as a whole had fostered a

communicative dynamic, so that the *'atmosphere in the classroom was very, very communicative, very supportive and it ended up – it was almost like a big family in the end and even when newcomers came in, I think they opened the door and were surprised how welcoming everybody was'* She was not sure if it was her teacher presence which had instigated the opening up of channels of communication but she described the atmosphere as non-judgemental and believed this non-judgemental atmosphere had started a chain reaction which resulted in the class becoming *'very, very nurturing'*. This type of supportive care for the students was also demonstrated during her classroom observation, as I noted in the following field note:

**Observation 2 - 7/2/12 at 10.30 - Mary**

*The students are fascinated and very engaged. They watch her movements as she once again moves to the board. As if she becomes uncomfortable about breaking the connection with the students as she has to turn her back to them to write on the board, she apologises for turning her back. She seems to be more uncomfortable about this break of connectedness as the students are happily writing in their books and don't appear to understand the reason for her discomfort.*

### **4.3.2 Emotional connectivity**

The teacher participants seemed to be particularly aware of the ways in which presence in teaching emerged by means of the 'emotional sphere'. Five of the teacher participants described this emotional connection between themselves and the students and the ways in which it was manifested through their presence and it was a strong discussion point during the Teacher Focus Group whilst one of the teacher educators discussed the effects of such emotionality.

#### **The teachers**

Glenda, in particular, experienced her teaching as being most beneficial to her students when it was manifested through what she described as 'the emotional sphere'. *'I believe a lot in the emotional sphere...so I think that if there is an emotional honesty and encounter the students benefit through this experience'*. She did this by using a lot of body language and *'and then I try to capture the*

*single....each personality and to 'touch' each person in a certain way, not only with my words, but also with the approach, in order to get this wave [of interaction].*

She entered her classes with an awareness of the 'emotional sphere', and believed that *'there is some sort of link between knowledge and the emotional aspect which [work] together'*. She construed 'presence' as the essential element which linked the teacher and the student and enabled the interaction between them and although she didn't see the teacher's presence as being stronger than that of the students, she experienced her presence in the classroom as a central aspect around which *'many things should....roll'* with the students being *'taken into this sort of circle'*. Her presence as the teacher then became a catalyst for mixing the combined presences of the students and teachers together so that they can then *'flow in a river...in a stream...which is the result of this mixture'*.

For Glenda, the responsibility for her group of adult students was compared to the sense of responsibility she would feel within a family group. She then diluted this expression of responsibility from family to that of a 'guide'; someone whose responsibilities as a leader could escalate into feelings of guilt or remorse when mistakes were made:

*It's a bit like a big family and, it sounds a bit strange to say, I mean it's not the mother but a guide...in that situation, I feel like a guide and I shoulder this responsibility and if when I make a mistake, and I do make mistakes of course, then I feel responsible and I have this sort of, not guilt, but I don't know how to express it (Glenda, Int. 1).*

For her, this feeling of responsibility extended as far as the students' own futures. That somehow if she did not provide what was necessary for the student, they would not be able to move on and fulfil their full future potential. This is how she described the burden of emotional responsibility for those in their care:

*I think, you know, oh my god I need to do something because if I don't handle it the right way or if I've got misinformation then it might prevent them from moving forward so this is all that goes on...(Glenda, Int. 1)*



During the Teacher Focus Group, Glenda discussed how she experienced this connection through the emotional sphere.

*I think, you can reach so much of the emotional sphere of people, of students, for example and therefore I think, you don't need to but I think it is very good if you can be emotional because it is a way of reaching out to people (Glenda, Extract from Teacher Focus Group)*

A discussion then ensued in which the teachers talked about how reaching the students through the emotional sphere could help to bring about learning without the students even realising that learning was taking place:

Glenda: *It's like when you relate to other people, you can go through different channels to get close to people...to communicate...to get people to understand something, things that you want.....to make them understand and I think if you work on the emotional sphere, if you go along that way, it might be a bit more difficult but if you do it in a light way, you can reach a lot because they don't even notice that this happens....so it's for learning the past simple...it is an opening up...*

Peter: *It is a different form but they are doing it more naturally...it is in them.....*

Anthony: *You live it, don't you...it is more permanent.*

(Extract from Teacher Focus Group)

For Anthony, as well, classroom encounter needed to take place at a personal level in which he had '*moments [which] make me feel like I am making a difference*'. He sensed that through encounter with the students at a personal level '*they [were] there for you as, you know, your own friends*'. He felt as if a meeting had taken place between himself and his students in such a way that '*it feels like you get to know each other, so I know their brothers' names and when they talk about their mother, I know exactly what they mean*'. Anthony compared this to a story or a novel in which '*you get a real sense that everyone has a particular character and a particular part to play in that classroom*'.

Peter reached out to his students as he tried to connect with them but realised that for a true encounter to take place, his students also needed to be fully present '*you want the students to be there in their full capacity as well. You*

*don't want them to be, um, absent as in absent-minded or have some parts of them wandering away'. He was aware that he and the students all needed to be 'heading in the same direction'. He did this by 'trying to get people to be aware of why they are there and also be aware of why the others are there'.*

Peter felt a particular emotional connection with one of his students who had been struggling to make friends with other students and because of this had struggled to make progress with his learning. This particular student found it hard to express his emotions and so it was particularly significant for Peter when he did so during a leaving ceremony, as he described during a discussion following his observation:

*I saw that he was a little emotional and he has been so wooden-faced throughout and then....I shook his hand and he bowed and that for me....that is very significant. It is a sign of respect.... I think that that was significant (Peter, discussion following observation)*

Peter spoke of his desire to connect to his students at a personal level and how this made him acutely aware of opportunities that serendipitously came his way to make himself known to the students *'.....if I was ever sitting in a classroom and one of them would come in, I would sort of chat to them and chat about whatever it was that was going on that day, that week or whatever...even if we saw each other last week and we had a long three hour class, that's how I would handle it'*. He would endeavour to act in a mindful way in order to let the students know that he was there for them and that they could talk to him about whatever was worrying them *'if I saw a certain amount of frustration, or I saw stress or I saw something like that, I would try to find a moment alone..... they would just feel, oh, well, you are here as well and I would just sort of say 'oh, you look really tired today, why, what's happened?'*

Moreover, Peter's personal recollection of a teacher with strong relational presence when he was a child was someone whose rich recollections and descriptions could inspire an imaginative response from the students. Peter felt that aspects of his learning came alive through the vivid illustrations the teacher used. He believed that by bringing aspects of his own experience into the classroom in expressive ways, the teacher's presence was able to somehow embody the learning they were endeavouring to convey;

*so it just came alive, everything came alive, you know...the smells, the fact he could talk about what a dead horse smelt like...something like that, you know....making tea by placing the cup on, um, on the tank because it was so hot. You know, frying eggs in the morning, you know, round about ten o' clock you could already fry eggs on your tank and so on.....these things, they make everything very real, very real..... I think that was experienced by his presence, I mean, it's bringing yourself into the classroom (Peter, Int.1).*

Peter believed that when a teacher could bring experiences to life through his presence, it provided a deeper connection with him and the other students than just text alone *'it's certainly interesting to bring those experiences to life....even the anecdotal is more...is, let's say, is more interesting very often than just the dry matter that is there in the text book'*. For Peter, it was clearly important when he was a child that his teacher took a personal interest in him and was *'very interested in the students'*.

Like Anthony, Susan construed her class as *'a bit of a family group'*, and although she was quick to point out that *'you do kind of make sure that they don't look on you like a mother'*, she sensed that her presence in the classroom was closely affiliated to that of a parent. *'We could also sort of say family homework around the table, you know, if you've got quite a few, if you've got four children at one time after school...if you are that sort of family. It could work out like that'*. Susan also encouraged her students to explore inside themselves to discover what was unique or special about them, *'so it's all about finding out a bit about the individual, I think and letting them talk about themselves can bring out a bit more confidence'*. Teaching was a two-way flow for her and was as much about confidence building and sharing power as it was about building knowledge, *'as a teacher you walk in and the students immediately try to give up their power and my idea, I suppose, is making sure that I try and give it back'*.

Although it was Susan who discussed the idea of 'power sharing' in the classroom, it was in Peter's classroom observation that I saw this in practice as I described in this vignette:

**Observation 9 - 5/4/12 at 2.30 - Peter**

*When he notices that the students have finished, the teacher moves in to be closer to the student group. He sits on the floor next to the students and is part of the group but lower than them. He seems to be passing over some of his power to the students. One of the students feels so empowered by this that he feels able to make a joke about spending one hour in the hotel. The teacher understands the innuendo in the joke and acknowledges it.*

It was agreed in the Teacher Focus Group that the interconnected emotional energies within a class meant that the feelings of just one person in the class could have a negative impact on the class as a whole, so it was important for the teacher to be able to deal with their feelings outside the class and enter the class with a positive attitude:

*If you come into a class and one person is really unhappy or really angry...not you, then they tend to have an impact on the class so...if you are feeling....and you are not able to shift that feeling and you come in feeling negative and so on, it must have an impact as well, because just a negative student can have a huge impact (Susan, Extract from Teacher Focus Group)*

Isabel also made herself available and offered the students a safe space in which they could talk and she could listen, '*because that is an opportunity to get everything out...to talk about their worries or their fears or because they have had an awful experience which has just happened to them*'. In this case, Isabel felt she related to her students on a human level as another human being rather than purely as a student. She was aware of the alienation they could be feeling and that '*they might not have any family here or anybody they can talk to and they might not feel comfortable talking to their family on the phone because they would get worried*'.

***The teacher educators***

One of the teacher educators, Paul, also mentioned how he believed that students picked up on mood, feelings and energy levels through the teacher's presence. This, he believed, could have a traumatic effect on the class if such aspects were negative or self-seeking, as the teacher's presence then became a '*dark cloud*', using the same analogy one of the teachers had mentioned earlier. He concluded that whilst there had to be a depth of genuineness and

congruence within the teacher because as a teacher *'you are not just giving lip-service'*, such genuineness meant that inevitably at times, the teacher embodied negative as well as positive feelings within their classroom presence.

Paul described how he felt disconnected from a particular teacher because he lacked an emotional connection with him and when he thought back to this teacher, he remembered doing what he was told purely because *'that is what is expected of us...if we don't we are in trouble'*. He, on the other hand, described how he experienced a strong degree of connectedness in teaching. He demonstrated this connectedness in the form of 'personal availability' during the class I observed. He was teaching on a part-time CELTA course when I observed him and demonstrated a strong sense of openness as I commented in the following vignette:

***Observation 6 - 22/2/12 at 9.45 - Paul***

*This is a part-time CELTA course of trainee teachers who have been at the school since September 2011 and are four week away from the end of the course. There are twelve trainee teachers in the room, one male and eleven female trainees of different ages and backgrounds. They all bring their different life experiences into the classroom and are sitting in a semi-circle without desks to hide behind. They have clip-boards on their laps but there is a strong sense of openness and accessibility between them and the teacher educator. He is standing in front of the white board and has no chair. He appears energised and available to them.*

### **4.3.3 Organic flow**

Both the teachers and the teacher educators experienced a type of 'organic flow' in a class in which the teacher's and the students' energies became interconnected and fluid. Three of the teachers and two of the teacher educators talked about the significance of enabling classroom flow through their presence as a teacher, whilst it was also discussed in the both the teacher and teacher trainer focus groups.

## ***The teachers***

One of the teachers described this as 'the magic element'. By providing a sense of engagement and clarity through careful preparation, Shaun found that at times, the class seemed to develop an energy flow of its own '*Sometimes things seem to suddenly take off...that's probably the magic element*' [.....] '*the unexpected becomes a virtue and the class seems to have a momentum of its own*'. He believed his presence as a teacher, whilst being essential in the preparation and setting up, could be less evident when the class was flowing; '*having set the class up properly, then they are able to run [it]*'.

Shaun saw learning as something that he had inspired from deep within the students '*something that you bring out from the lower depths*'. He likened this to the joy musicians felt by being at one with the music and letting themselves go with the moment '*With actors or in particular musicians, there's a situation where they can change or go completely with the element of chance*'. Such a letting go could spontaneously bring about a change of direction which led to new unexpected destinations '*they can go with an interpretation and then suddenly change it at the last minutes and go in new directions. In a sense, they are being caught up by the joy of the music [.....] and I don't think teaching is so different*'.

Zara also described this flow in teaching by using an analogy of the ways she cooked '*I like to throw things into the pot....to see how things go*'. She experienced an element of surprise in her teaching; she likened this to the way in which when she was cooking, she sometimes intuitively threw things into a pot to create a dish which was totally different from any she had made before. This led to something new being created as the ingredients mixed together in a way which was often novel and original. She related this to a certain class she had been teaching, which she described as '*very different...but....working together in a way which is really amazing*'. She found that the ways in which the class interacted were totally different to the ways in which she could have predetermined them.

Like Shaun and Zara, Anthony recognised a 'flow' within the classroom which he compared to '*kind of like a snowballing type effect*'. He sensed a reluctance

in his students to act alone, *'people are very reticent to do something on their own but then once one person starts, they all join in and, err, one pair will start and then the others say 'ok' and then they start and before you know it, you've got sixteen people all talking but to be the first one is a.....very difficult thing'*. He has learned to calm his anxiety when nobody is willing to start talking in class and wait patiently, rather than filling the silence himself *'this morning, I had that, this morning....they were all looking at each other and there's a minute when you think...is it going to work? And then someone starts and then 'blah...blah....blah' and then you can't stop them'*.

Anthony explained how this sense of flow within the class had happened within the class I had observed in the discussion we had following the observation:

*I was going with the flow to a certain extent...mm, I wasn't so sure that they would get into it so much as they did and they took a little while to get started but once they were started, it seemed to flow quite well and they were all saying 'how much time do we have?' and I said 'don't worry about that...keep going' and I planned to do that in about twenty minutes or so but then as they were doing so well, I thought...I extended it and I planned...well, I have got three or four other things that I was going to do today or at least a couple of them but they didn't come up because they weren't needed and in the last ten minutes or so, we just looked at each other and talked about them a little bit. (Anthony, discussion following observation)*

However, it seemed that a sense of flow happened spontaneously and organically and couldn't be planned or predicted, as what worked once for the teacher often didn't work the next time:

*But haven't you been in classes where you know...the last time you had a wonderful class and everything worked well and you have another class and there is a kind of dead atmosphere and you think...what am I doing? I am doing the same thing that I did last time and something isn't working this time (Shaun, Extract from Teacher Focus Group).*

During the Teacher Focus Group, the teacher participants became increasingly aware that the cause of the 'dead atmosphere' was not solely caused by the teacher and so was not entirely the teacher's responsibility, but due to some form of 'chemical reaction' between the teacher and the students, which really could not be explained in any concrete terms: *'.....it's some chemical.....[reaction]'*. (Shaun, Extract from Teacher Focus Group).

### ***The teacher educators***

According to Paul, for those teachers with a natural teacher presence, the class was *'organic and the students lead where they want to go...somebody might ask a question and that might prompt another student to ask a question and before you know it, you are on a completely different track'*. Such resourcefulness and living in the moment led to a flow which endowed the students with an energy which enveloped the whole class, *'occasionally, a random question might...spark off all these other questions from all of them and the next thing you know, you have got a whole class debate going on'*. From his experiences, teachers with a natural teacher presence had a desire to throw themselves into teaching more and more *'it's like that's it, they're off, they have found their new niche, they love it and they just soak it all up and they can't get enough of it'*. These teachers connected with the students, put them at ease and encouraged a sense of self-confidence.

In a similar way to the teacher participants, one of the teacher trainers compared the classroom flow of energies to that in a 'rock concert'. Mary experienced her own presence as a teacher as being interwoven with that of a particular group of students, which led to a mass presence that had a particular effect *'like you have in a rock concert when everybody picks up on the vibe and goes with the flow...'* In this way, she experienced her own presence as part of a larger energy flow which passed from one person to another in a type of a chain reaction, which affected the whole. It was as if by being there in the classroom, she had helped to create and maintain the excitement and momentum.

By providing a strong point of reference within the energy flow of the class, in the following extract from an observation, Mary demonstrated how her presence became the focal point of the class. This helps the class to realise that there is a flexibility in learning and that the course book is not necessarily the 'all-knowing' providers of answers:



**Observation 2 - 7/2/12 at 10.30 - Mary**

*The teacher rewards [the student] by telling a story of her own and the class laughs. The class seems reunited by the teacher's story and now respond as a class. The class calls out the answers and then realise that they have mixed up the answers but no-one minds, the teacher is relaxed about it and they realise that there is flexibility in the answers. The course book is no longer all powerful and the students realise that some answers can be potentially put in two places. It is not set in stone.*

Mary discussed this fluidity in class after the observation, when she commented that the students seemed to become more familiar with using the language meaningfully when she had already built a sense of co-operation within the class culture:

*So that's the sort of atmosphere I like to foster in there...when they are co-operative and they are getting used to really using language meaningfully...to express...to do what it's there for rather than just answer that question mechanically...so that was nice....(Mary, discussion following observation)*

Despite this, it appeared that however much a teacher tried to build a strong interconnected flow of positivity within a class, feelings of dissatisfaction could spread between students when one of the students wasn't happy or found the teacher boring. This was discussed in this conversation during the Teacher Trainer Focus Group.

Paul: *Then again one student might find the teacher boring and another one is quite happy with that teacher, thank you very much, so...*

Cheryl: *.....it's an individual thing*

Paul: *.....totally, it's very unusual to have an entire class....it's very unusual to come across a whole class...*

Cheryl: *.....no, well sometimes it will spread through, won't it?*

(Extract from Teacher Trainer Focus Group)

## ***Being in the moment***

For teachers to be truly present to the flow of the class, the data provided by a teacher and a teacher educator suggested that they were both cognisant of how they often had to attune to the needs of the moment, rather than trying to fit the moment into a predetermined cognitive framework .

### ***The teacher***

Anthony found he had to continually attune to evolving class dynamics which came through a change in the class membership as students left and joined the class on a weekly basis. He often responded to this emotionally with a sense of loss that the connectedness he felt with his students had been severed and he instinctively tried to call them back to the point at which he had lost them to re-establish the connection, *'you have to, sort of, drag them back and say 'hey you, do you remember me...do you remember what we were doing?'* Sometimes, however, it took time to re-establish his relationship with them due to the change in class dynamics and when this happened, he readjusted the ways in which he related to them *'I always go back to just being more methodical and cold, I suppose'*.

For Anthony, this demanded an adaptability and flexibility which was continually in flux and a response to the situation in which he found himself at any one moment in time. Sometimes, he felt he had to go back to start over again with building the relationship and when this happened, new opportunities arose for finding a common thread from which to build a sense of community *'and then almost starting blank...and then these things always emerge and.....it's your choice whether you build on them or not'*. It was through these threads of opportunity to build a connection with his students that Anthony endeavoured to provide a thread of continuity that ran through his classes;

*So there are these little threads of bits that go through...I like to make fun of them...I like to make fun of them.....I think that really works....err, make fun of someone and then they...it depends on who it is...most people quite like it...if it's light hearted...it shows friendship, it shows an understanding (Anthony, Int. 1)*

So, by later revisiting the fun or light-hearted humour that happened spontaneously in the moment, Anthony endeavoured to lighten the mood again and bring them all back together. *'There will be something that you return to quite often...there's a thing that goes through the lessons that.....maybe if there's a dull point, you might return to it and remind everybody'*.

This use of humour to provide a connective thread is illustrated in the following vignette taken from an observation of Shaun's class:

**Observation 1 - 3/2/12 at 10.30 - Shaun**

*The teacher asks one student directly for a sentence and makes eye contact with the student, he uses humour to reach him by making a comment about the uniqueness of the pen the student is using.*

*(and later in the same class)*

*All the students are writing and the teacher uses mime to demonstrate 'I hurt myself'. He does it in a comical manner and the students laugh again. He connects directly with a student by making a point about their pen. The student looks at their pen and smiles in response.*

*(and again later in the same class)*

*There is a lull in the energy of the classroom, so the teacher seems to bring back the joke to re-connect.*

**The teacher educator**

Mary once again fell back on her own teaching experiences to describe how she cherished the connections she felt with her students. She felt she had a natural connection with some students while others took a while to *'tune into her presence'*. When this was the case, she found it was better to wait and not push them into a relationship with her but let them come forward in their own time. Similarly Mary was aware that one student could overwhelm others *'who are naturally more reticent to tune in'*. This was demonstrated in a classroom observation when Mary physically turned away from the student and yet still maintained contact with him, as I report in the following extract:

**Observation 2 - 7/2/12 at 10.30 am - Mary**

*The teacher seems to unconsciously (or perhaps consciously) recognise that this student could over-shadow the others and the teacher turns her back to him, writes on the board and then looks over her shoulder at him. Not cutting him out altogether but allowing him limited contact.*

#### **4.3.4 Insights from student participants**

During the supported group discussion with the students, the relational aspects of a teacher's presence evolved as a significant aspect of their learning experience. The data suggested that the '*emotional connection*' (see 4.3.3) between themselves and their teachers and a sense of '*relational security*' was just as important to them as it was to the teachers. One of the students spoke about her emotional connection to her teacher which naturally flowed from the genuine sense of care she felt emanating from her teacher. She described how her teacher '*talks naturally...sometimes too quickly...and she talk about life, about love, about future*' and how '*she always tries to give me confidence*'. In return the student said that she [had] '*started to find that she is a very interesting person....not only a good teacher but [an] attractive person...I want to talk to her, with her more and more and I want to discover her personality more and more....I think she is the best teacher in my life*'. The students also discussed the ways in which '*relational security*' (see 4.3.1) was built through mutual respect and agreed that the teacher should respect their opinions; one of the students remarked that '*[it] may be my stupid opinion*' but implored that teachers don't '*take it as a joke*'. The students wanted to feel that what they had to say was valued. Moreover, if they felt that it wasn't, then they didn't want to communicate anymore and the relational connection could be lost:

*One trainee teacher asked me about Japanese festivals so I was really excited and talked a lot and a lot but after that, she said 'ok', she looked like I am not interested in the Japanese culture; it make ok, I don't want to talk with you any longer* (Supported student discussion)

The students, also discussed the how a teacher's presence could provide support (this was also an aspect of presence which evolved from the data

generated by the teachers and teacher educators (see 4.3.1). One of the students described how she believed a teacher had demonstrated presence when she was feeling depressed because she didn't feel she had made sufficient progress. This teacher had taken her by the hand and walked with her around the school saying '*Speak, speak, speak...can you understand all their words?*' When the student realised she could understand, she felt that the teacher had demonstrated a deep personal care, which she experienced as presence.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I have reported the findings from the first level data analysis I conducted. In essence, through this analysis, I found that 'presence in teaching' was construed in and through three principle dimensions; the qualities or attributes a teacher is deemed to have, the ways in which presence is manifested through the agency or 'doing' of practice and the relationships the teachers build between themselves and their students.

In the following chapter, I will report the ways in which these dimensions intersected and merged as they worked together within the actuality of classroom practice. This will highlight the ways in which presence in teaching was construed in this study through two theoretical lenses; firstly from a distanced or observer type perspective and secondly from an 'in-the-world' (Polt, 1999: 56) or personal type perspective. By focusing on the way in which 'presence in teacher' can be construed in such different ways, these two lenses will illustrate how the term 'presence' can be misconstrued in teaching circles, as well as highlight the personal challenges the teachers faced as they negotiated their practice in response to the dynamically changing relational environment of the classroom; a complex and uniquely personal negotiation which, at times, threatened to undermine their ability to be present.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Discussion of the findings: Having presence and being present*

#### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I presented a first level analysis of the data I collected during the field-work stage of this inquiry to interrogate the notion of 'presence in teaching' and used quotes from the research participants in support of this. As I reported there, evidence suggested that the ensemble of research participants in this study construed facets of presence in teaching as emerging in and through three particular aspects of practice; firstly, the 'qualities or attributes' with which a teacher was endowed; secondly, the things the teacher did in class and finally, the ways in which these two aspects of presence underlay and impacted on the relational elements of classroom interaction.

However, these were not the only discoveries I made during the research process. As I will discuss in this chapter; the inductive processes embedded in this research study as I moved from the individual narrative accounts to the group as a composite whole and back again, brought another very important aspect of presence to light for me. This aspect of presence related to the ways in which presence was being construed by the research participants from two particular stances; one appertaining to the way in which it had meaning for the 'other', the second as it emerged from the 'self'. Accordingly, here in this chapter, I will revisit the findings previously reported, by discussing them in the light of these two overarching 'meta' lenses, which I have called 'having presence' and 'being present'. Furthermore, whilst in the previous chapter, I drew on the data generated through the inquiry to support my first level findings; here, in this chapter, I will interrogate the data again and use it to illustrate the theoretical insights I am drawing in relation to these two overarching lenses.

In addition, I would like to reemphasise that due to the subtly nuanced nature of the phenomenon of presence, the participants often found they lacked the

particular vocabulary or register they needed to describe its ethereality when they tried to make sense of its meaning. Because of this, they resorted at times to using metaphorical language to express their understanding. So, when I have found that the expressions or phrases they used were deeply evocative of the core essences they were endeavouring to portray, I have adopted such expressions as headings in this chapter, in an attempt to retain the essential meaning of what they were trying to describe when pre-existing language was not available.

## 5.1 Developing theoretical insights

First of all, before interrogating these 'meta' lenses of 'having presence' and 'being present' more deeply, I would like to refer to a diary entry I made in my research journal illustrating the ways in which I became aware of them through the research process.

### Memo to self - 9/9/12

#### ENTRY 15 - Having and Being - a first stage synopsis

I have increasingly noticed that the research participants are experiencing and perceiving the notion of presence in different ways according to whether they are reflecting on their own presence in the classroom or that of someone else.

*Having presence* appears to be a conceptualisation of what teaching with presence means subjectively by reflecting on the ways in which they were affected by a teaching or learning experience involving another teacher. It appears to be predominantly drawn from past and present teaching and learning experiences. Moreover, it seems that teacher trainers believe that 'having presence' is a display of 'visual manifestations' which a teacher can learn; perhaps in the same way in which an actress learns to act (so potentially, when construed in this way, training can provide the tools teachers need to manifest presence so that it can be used to demand and retain the students' attention and embody a sense of authority). I have also found that some teachers are perceived by the teacher educators as having a *natural* 'classroom presence' which they are able to manifest from the very first time they step into

a classroom. This is illustrated by the following quote:

*'Some people **do have it naturally**, even the ones who have never taught before...but you stand them up there...the first time they are in front of a class and they just do it as if it is perfectly natural. They don't seem fazed by it or anything. That is, what I call, **classroom presence**' (Paul, teacher educator, Int. 1)*

On the other hand, *'being present* is something that the teachers seem to be becoming aware of themselves; generally through reflection on their own practice, often without being consciously aware of what they were doing at the time they did it. They seem to understand the cognitive strategies they use and why they are using them to achieve what they have set out to achieve, but seem at times (especially in the early stages of becoming a teacher) to be unaware of the ways in which their presence is perceived by their learners and the affect that it has on the classroom dynamics. This can lead to a sense of frustration when things do not play out in the ways they believed they would.

Moreover, it appears that *'teaching with presence'* emerges from practice in that the majority of what teachers do seems to be inspired by, and infused with, a sense of their own unique presence – this *'uniqueness'* underlies the ways in which they are with their students and it is informed by a sense of moral responsibility, care and encounter at the human level. When perceived in this way, teaching can at times become an endeavour which has deeper meaning than that associated with archetypal or learned behaviours. This is illustrated in this quote by one of the teachers:

*'There's certainly, there is a moment in which there is something more than just, let's say, more than all the archetypes and all the input and all the things that you have been taught, that takes hold at times. You certainly, um, have to **be very, very present**' (Peter, Teacher, Int. 1).*

Furthermore, without this sense that there is *'something more'* to teaching than reconstituted modelled or learned behaviour, the act of teaching seems to be a joyless occupation which is mentally and emotionally draining. Teachers need to feel that they are making a difference in order to continually be able to give of themselves to the other. For this reason, teaching with presence feeds on



reciprocity. *'Being present'* as a teacher provides an environment in which the presence of the other is encouraged and rewarded and the absence of presence by the other (i.e. if the student ignores the teacher) can be felt as a personal rejection.

The *'being'* in presence can be further split into 'being' as a core presence. Here presence embodies a core dimension of self which needs to be encased in stability and self-awareness in order to provide a stable base through which the complex and dynamic interaction of the class can be stabilised and through which order can come from chaos in the classroom.

Finally, *The 'being meets becoming'* of presence is the way in which teaching with presence can create and support a comfortable environment within which learning affordances naturally arise. Here, the dynamic nature of presence can instinctively recognise these affordances as a meeting ground or third space within which creative learning can take place. It can adapt to encourage and release natural flows of energy within which an optimum learning environment can naturally unfold. This can often lead to a sense of euphoria or joy that something of value is taking place and can lead to an increased sense of feeling valued and appreciated within the classroom.

So, as illustrated through this research journal entry, it has become clear to me through this research project, that tensions existed in the duality of the ways in which 'presence' was experienced and perceived by the research participants. Specifically, when it was perceived from a 'distanced' perspective, through the eyes of an observer, for example, it tended to be construed as a 'distillation' of qualities, characteristics, or personality traits. This way of looking at 'presence' in teaching, involving what could perhaps be described as a 'conscious appraisal' of the other, appeared to exist in the mind of the perceiver, as something the other 'wore' or 'possessed' .

However, this perspective of 'presence' could be construed as a hollow representation when compared to the ways it was experienced in its existential dynamic state. This second lens on presence focused on the fundamental relational element of presence in teaching. This presence was not presence in the sense of the "poise", "charisma" or even "power". This was presence as a

dynamic relational state of being in which the teacher connected with the student. This existential lens on presence in teaching could not be conceptualised as such as it just was. It existed in the realm of '*being*'. Moreover, it seemed to be through this essential relational sphere that the presences of both teacher and student in their basic, grounded and authentic form were able to meet and converge. In addition, such a convergence of presences seemed to be fluid and temporal as it existed in the 'real time' agency of practice. Essentially, this was teaching presence as it emerged in and through the messy and demanding reality of classroom practice.

I will now explore these two theoretical lenses I have called 'having presence' and 'being present' in more depth.

## **5.2 Having Presence**

Here, in this section, I will outline the ways in which the findings suggested that a teacher could be construed as 'having presence' by an observer; whether this observer was a student, another teacher or a teacher educator. Such constructions of 'having presence' typically included those manifestations of presence which were visually or aurally available to the observer, who then imbibed what they saw or heard with subjective associations. For the sake of clarity, I have grouped the ways in which 'having presence' was construed under the headings of '*Archetypical perceptions*', '*Reinforcing myths*', '*The light beam*', '*Communicative force*' and '*Like the X factor*'.

### **5.2.1 Archetypical perceptions**

The notion of presence appeared to be deeply entwined with archetypical figures. So, when a teacher was recognised as 'having presence'; such a recognition sometimes seemed to be drawn from an entanglement of archetypical notions and associative residues of the past rather than conscious observations derived from the present moment. For this reason, archetypical manifestations, which were believed to be 'in the present' could well have been resurfacing traces of an emotive reaction to an encounter or an event long after the initial event was over. Moreover, embodied within such archetypical

perceptions, there appeared to be a strong element of cultural and social identity.

Indeed, this kind of archetypical embodiment of presence could provoke such a strong reaction in the student as the 'beholder' that the resulting reactive emotion could potentially override the actuality of the moment and the reality of the person who actually stood before them. So, without perhaps even being aware of it, it seemed that the teacher was able to rouse an emotional reaction in his students who, perhaps unconsciously attuning to this figure of perceived authority, conformed in kind. This is illustrated by Anthony's reflections on a teacher from his childhood, whose presence he remembers as being foreboding and filling him with feelings of dread and fear.

*He was an archetype so we conformed to an archetype of our own.....not looking sideways...looking straight on at our books and I guess that is what I mean...that he is playing that role...although he is not really playing it...more embodying it so we react by mirroring it and embodying another archetype...together...that's just how you fit, don't you,with what's around you (Anthony, Teacher, Int. 2).*

Moreover, such an archetypical perception of embodied 'authoritative' teacher presence seemed to take on such a bland 'faceless' form that it was almost 'non-human'; 'you felt that...you almost couldn't see his face...' (Anthony, Teacher, Int. 2). By lacking 'humanness', it appeared even more likely that its invasive force could arouse strong emotional reactions such as fear and shame in the students. So, rather than creating an environment conducive to learning, in which students could feel comfortable enough to learn through exploration and experiment, this strong embodiment of authoritative presence had the opposite affect; one which drove the students to distance themselves from the teacher and the subject. In fact, as discussed in the previous chapter, preconceptions regarding the authoritative presence of the teacher exerted such a strong influence on the student that it could be intrinsically sensed merely through the physical proximity of the teacher, without any explicit demonstration of power or authority.

## 5.2.2 *Reinforcing myths?*

As I have reported in the previous chapter, the findings generated by this study suggested that within the folklore of teaching, there existed what some might consider a fairy tale regarding the 'born' or 'natural' teacher. This person appeared to be a natural communicator, someone who knew intrinsically how to get students engaged and motivated; someone who was born a teacher, but had somehow been masquerading as an ordinary person until he found the teacher within. Paul described this characteristic in some of the student teachers he had trained on the CELTA course; *'those are the ones you think...there was a teacher in there waiting to get out'* (Paul, Teacher Educator, Int. 1).

Moreover, as I have also reported previously, evidence suggested that when a teacher displayed qualities which captured their imagination, such *'teacher qualities'* could be recognised by the observer as representations of 'having presence'. This was particularly the case if the qualities were recognised as demonstrating charisma and were labelled as 'engaging'. It appeared that such perceived demonstrations of charisma remained in the mind of the observer long after the event had passed and became crystallised as an concrete embodiment of the presence of the teacher. The decision about whether a teacher was a 'born teacher' seemed to be made quickly and decisively by the teacher educators. Those teachers who could be seen to focus on the student rather than on themselves and their own performance were deemed to have a so-called *'natural teacher presence'* which was imbibed with promise in terms of how good they would be as a teacher. Moreover, the opposite could apply when a teacher was deemed to be lacking in 'engaging' qualities by the observing teacher educator. When such qualities were not obvious to the observer, something appeared to be missing or didn't quite 'work'. In essence, this perception that *'something was missing'* could lead some teacher educators to the *'black and white'* argument that for some people teaching was just *'not their thing'*. For these people, the assumption could be made that teaching just didn't come naturally, as illustrated by this quote; *'[teaching is] just not for you...for whatever reason...it's not [your] thing'* (Paul, Teacher Educator, Int. 1).

### **5.2.3        *'The light beam'***

As previously discussed, the research participants often found the notion of 'presence' challenging to describe. It had an ethereal element to it which made vocalising the nuances of its meaning difficult at times and yet many of the participants conceptualised it metaphorically as something which exuded from the person and which they could relate to as a form of '*light beam*' which '*came on*' within the teacher. From the participants' descriptions, it appeared to be something that could be turned on and off in much the same way that an electric light bulb can be; '*all of a sudden when they are aware of the people or focusing on their audience or something like that, the light beam comes on....they are electric*' (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 2).

It appeared from this that presence was understood to be something that could be accessed and externalised, as and when the focus turned from self to the other or to an external need or condition. This suggested that awareness of the other and sensitivity to the other could trigger a '*lightening up*' which then became observable by the other. This could perhaps be viewed as a projection of the self which somehow made itself known to the other, although the ways in which the other perceived it was infused with subjectivity. Furthermore, however, perhaps dangerously, when presence was conceptualised in this way as '*shining*', it meant that if recognition was not somehow triggered in the mind of the observer, then it could be deemed to be missing or absent and this could have a detrimental effect on the way in which the teacher's classroom presence as a whole was perceived. This capacity to '*shine*' also seemed to be linked to the degree of confidence a teacher was believed to have and the ways in which the teacher could demonstrate this confidence in order for it to be recognised by another person.

### **5.2.4        *Communicative force***

The findings suggested that when a teacher was construed by the other as 'having presence', it implied that they had a strong degree of '*communicative force*', which could be visually recognised and responded to. Indeed, this communicative force seemed to exude from the teacher in such a way that it was recognisable by the students as a signal which drew attention to the

teacher and brought the class together so that they could focus on the subject matter at hand. The ways in which the teachers described drawing the students' attention was very individual but it was often non verbal rather than verbal.

In essence, the body language used, when a teacher was construed as 'having presence' represented a 'reaching out' to the students that could be visually or aurally observed or intuitively acknowledged. This included the ways in which the teacher graded their language according to the language level of the students, made eye contact and used their voice. In fact, the voice was often construed as a vessel which could carry the inner workings and thoughts of the teacher to the external world in such a way that they were made understandable and able to provide a strong sense of clarity in the material being taught. Moreover, for the observer, a teacher's voice also seemed to be able to provide a sense of how the teacher was really feeling, which could be picked up almost 'pathically'. For this reason, the voice could represent a 'window to the soul' which at times of emotion provided an authentic sense of how the teacher was feeling, even when they tried to modify their body language in an attempt to hide their emotions.

Moreover, the findings insinuated that if the teacher was not able to project such a strong sense of self through their own communicative force, then communication with the world outside the self was impeded by a subjective 'closing in' which was also recognisable through the body language used. The teacher was then seen as becoming alienated within some sort of invisible bubble and cut off from the world outside. In this way, such a 'closing in' was intrinsically deemed to have the opposite effect from that of 'reaching out' so that any potential for the teacher to 'touch' the other with his or her presence became restricted and eventually even lost.

In this way, the findings suggested that the construct of 'having presence' could be communicated by the teacher in such a way that it was interpreted by an observer as portraying a degree of comfort in their own being. So, it appeared that a sense of being '*comfortable in one's own skin*' enabled a teacher to exude a communicative force, rooted in a solid sense of their own identity and

conveying a degree of comfort with that identity. This was generally interpreted by an observer as 'confidence' which was in turn often understood as 'having presence'. This confidence in the teacher appeared to not only come from a sense of being comfortable and aware of their own physicality but also the ways in which they employed this physicality through the things they did in the classroom; '*...there is a confidence...a body awareness...*' (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 2).

I would also surmise from the findings that when teachers were, for whatever reason, unable to communicate in such a way that they could reach the other, then their presence somehow became diminished in the eyes of the observer. The communicative force which could have been perceived as glowing brightly from the very soul of their being was then seen as being reduced to a mere flicker which could be ignored or overlooked to such an extent that they existed in a diminished form in any relational sense; '*it was almost like the candle light had shrunk*' (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 1). This of course had a negative effect, as the teacher's presence did not '*shine*'; its '*beams*' could not radiate and its potential light became extinguished. In this diminished state, such a presence seemed to offer little to and demanded nothing of the student. Mary illustrated this when she reflected on a student teacher who had been a college lecturer in his previous position but found it difficult making the transition to being an ESOL teacher as he seemed closed off and unable to make a connection with the language students; '*He spent his time looking down at the floor...his whole body was closed off and....he wasn't very confident...despite having this humongous amount of knowledge*' (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 2).

From this, it appeared as if the teachers had to find a way to access their own individual 'life force' and then learn how to make this internal source of energy available to the world outside. Sometimes, however, this did not need to be actively managed by the teacher as it appeared to come about organically through the teacher's natural love and enthusiasm for the subject they were teaching; '*It was her enthusiasm that came out of every pore of her that infused everybody in the class...it was emanating from her*' (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 2)

### **5.2.5      *Like the 'X factor'***

As the findings in the previous chapter implied, it appeared that 'having presence' was sometimes interpreted as a type of charisma or a 'special ingredient' which in truth had an 'indefinable' element to it and for that reason, was often referred to as 'it'. In order to render such a quality 'quantifiable' so that it could be assessed and ticked off a list of observable criteria, the teacher educators seemingly interpreted it in their own ways. The findings suggested that one of the ways in which they did this was through the teacher's perceived ability to generate interest in and enthusiasm for the subject they were teaching, in this case, English language. This could be done in many ways but certain dramatic techniques could help stimulate interest and project a sense of enthusiasm.

However, this in itself could prove to be problematic as, whilst an aura imbued with enthusiasm could be perceived as 'having presence', if, conversely, such enthusiasm was not projected in such a way that it was visible to the observer, the assumption could be made that the teacher's interest was not there and that the teacher was thus lacking in presence. Paul illustrated this when he was reflecting on a teaching observation he carried out with one of the CELTA student teachers he was training; *'you can see it...the mannerisms, the body language, the voice..you [the student teacher] weren't interested'* (Paul, Teacher Educator, Int. 2).

In a similar way, 'having presence' was sometimes deemed to be encapsulated in an aura of power; something which resonated with a theatrical dramatic sense of personal power, captured in fictional prose. Mary illustrated this when she was comparing her childhood teacher to a fictional figure from a novel she had read; *'You read it in the novels, he emanates that sense of power or authority...steely eyes and that booming voice....like the X factor....'* (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 2).

On a final note, whilst 'having presence' in this dramatic sense seemed to be observable to the extent that it was manifested through technical means such as projecting the voice or using certain body language, in terms of teaching,



student teachers sometimes interpreted it as the capacity to *continually* generate interest. Cheryl described how this could mislead novice teachers into believing that they had to continually entertain their students and that quiet times had no value.

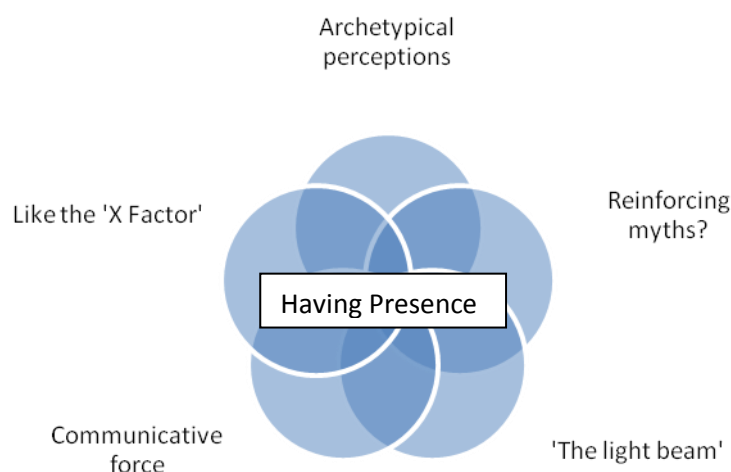
*A lot of them come on the course thinking that they have to entertain because there are times in the lesson, for example, when the students are writing and the [self] evaluations always say 'it was boring' but it was fine.* (Cheryl, Teacher Trainer Focus Group)

Whilst some teachers seemed to be great entertainers, this did not mean necessarily that they were attuned to their students and the learning that was going on. In these cases, despite some seemingly overt manifestations of presence, evidence from the teacher educators implied that something was missing; something to do with the relational realm. Mary illustrated this when she was reflecting on one of the CELTA student teachers she had observed and felt that *'although she was getting her job done in the classroom, we didn't necessarily sense that there was a bond between her and the students'* (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 2). In this case, it seemed that the student teachers had learned how to engage the language students through their teaching and yet had not yet become effective in the relational side of teaching. For this reason, they appeared to find it challenging to make those invaluable connections with their students through their classroom presence.

To summarise, 'having presence' was a lens through which presence was construed from an observer perspective and comprised a number of perceived manifestations of presence as they were filtered through the subjective processes of the observer. In essence, in this study, I would argue that the characteristic of '**Having presence**' was composed of the following clusters: '**Archetypical perceptions**', '**Reinforcing myths?**', '**The light beam**', '**Communicative force**' and '**Like the X Factor**'. These essences are visually represented overleaf. However, I would like to stress that this representation is included purely for the sake of clarity, as the composite essences did not and could not exist in isolation from each other. Rather, I see them as existing and co-existing together holistically within the being of the teacher; so any one of them or a combination of them could have been represented within the

construction of 'having presence' at any one time, depending on the ways in which they were perceived by the observer in a particular context at a given moment in time.

In addition, I acknowledge that by using models to represent the constructs of 'having presence' and (later in this chapter) 'being present', I appear to be attempting to freeze their form in time, and in doing so, representing them as a type of 'truth', I would contest that my use of models in this thesis is purely for the sake of trying to make explicit that which tends to be hidden, invisible, lack clarity or be less easily definable through other means. I am well aware that Cilliers (1998:96) would suggest that taking the part from the whole distorts understanding by asserting that '*the whole [of a complex system] cannot be fully understood by analysing its components as these relationships are not fixed but shift and change*' (p.ix) (the implication being that, however hard we try, we can never really gain a complete understanding of anything due to the complex dynamics of continual change and evolution). However, I would defend my use of these models, as whilst I recognise that they represent only a tiny part of the complex universal system they inhabit, they serve to provide a visual aide to portraying the ways in which the notion of 'presence' was construed within the temporal and spatial boundaries of this study. As such, I believe they are an invaluable support in understanding the complexities of a multi-tiered and multi-dimensional phenomenon such as 'presence'.



**Figure 5.1** Aspects of 'having presence' in teaching

I would now like to move on from this first lens of 'having presence' to that of 'being present'; the second lens on presence generated by the study. In essence, in contrast to the perhaps more superficial construct of 'having presence', 'being present' comprised a dynamic state which emerged in and through the teacher's own practice. This aspect of 'presence' existed in the real time and messy reality of the classroom. It emerged from the teachers' unique sense of self at both a personal and a professional level and was actualised in and through the physical, mental and emotional workings of their teaching practice as they engaged with the group energies of their class. I will now discuss this aspect of presence in more detail:

### **5.3 A second lens - Being present**

In the previous section, I considered the ways in which a teacher was construed as 'having presence' within the scope of this research project. However, as I implied earlier, this was only half the story. This was 'presence' as it was perceived and experienced by the observer, who could not, of course, always know why the teacher being observed did what they did or even, at times, perhaps selectively noticed certain things that the teacher was doing and inadvertently missed some of the more tacit manifestations of the teacher's presence.

In this way, 'being present', offered another, more nuanced lens on presence, which was generated by the participants' reflections on both the overt and hidden *manifestations* of their own presence in teaching, as well as what such manifestations *did* and *how* they did what they did. It was from these reflections that I was able to infer deeper insights into the ways in which presence lived in the realities of everyday teaching practice. Moreover, as I have already reported, the findings suggested that this more 'nuanced' form of presence could be found in the depth of sensitivity, attuning and awareness the teachers described as experiencing in their classes, at an existential level. So, this presence was quite different to that of the perhaps 'well oiled machine' of 'having presence' which could potentially have been developed from practiced skills, techniques and competencies. This was the other, perhaps more 'human' side of presence, which came from the fundamental being of the teacher.

## ***PART ONE - Ploughing the ground***

I have called this section 'Ploughing the ground' as the findings I reported in the previous chapter have suggested that when teachers are 'present' in the context in which they find themselves, they are attuned to their classroom environment in such a way that they are able to provide a source of relational security which helps the students feel more secure in class and develops the trust between the teacher and student. In this way, 'being present' could be compared to the analogy of a farmer preparing his field in the best possible way so that it is receptive and fertile for the seeds of potential new growth. I have broken this section down into the four core themes of '*Uniting the personal and the professional*', '*Creating a comfortable environment*' '*Unique and individual*', and '*The ethics of teaching*'.

### ***5.3.1 Uniting the personal and the professional***

As was suggested in the previous chapter; to be fully present, there needed to be a strong degree of congruence between the personal and the professional aspects of teaching which could be experienced as an *authenticity* in the teachers, who were true to themselves and their own personal value systems whilst teaching. The findings also implied that when teachers were not 'true to themselves' in this way, it could lead to a sense of being '*unfulfilled*', so that, somehow, their existence as a person in the world could be undermined by a lack of authenticity in their role as a teacher. This extended to being honest about their infallibility as teachers and implied that although trying to project a false image in response to external expectations could be a human response to vulnerability, in the long run, it didn't work; '*trying to mould yourself to something that you are not is not going to work*' (Shaun, Teacher, Int. 1).

In addition, the findings highlighted that students also needed to believe that their teachers were being authentic and emotionally honest in order to feel that they were really 'there' for them, rather than just playing out a role or going through the motions of teaching. In essence, when the teacher brought their authentic self into the classroom; through this authenticity, the students felt the teachers classroom presence manifested trust that they [the students] were

worthy of being treated with honesty and respect. This had an impact on the students as they derived a sense of empowerment from this, which drove them on to experiment and learn more. On the other hand, students seemed to feel cheated when they sensed that a teacher was not being open about their lack of knowledge at any given moment in time and this could lead to them feeling that they had been cheated *personally*. So, in order for the student to feel able to reciprocate in the relational interaction with the teacher in an open, honest way, they needed to sense that the teacher's very being was imbued with a degree of authentic honesty at a human emotional level and that this honesty was explicit within the teacher/student interaction. Glenda reflected on how she found that by being emotionally honest in the classroom, her students could relax and reciprocate in a positive way:

*I think as soon as they see how honest you are, they just react in a positive way and....ten minutes later, you are back to smiling and laughing and joking (Glenda, Teacher Focus Group).*

Moreover, the findings suggested that such an authentic sense of self within the teacher did not cater solely to the demands of the students but rather presented them with a reality which was grounded in the present moment. This reality came from the teacher having a sensitive receptivity to the teaching and learning situation as it was at a particular moment in time and manifesting this receptivity to the needs of the students in a way which helped the students understand the immediacy of their learning situation. So, however much projecting a 'false' demeanour to hid a teacher's true feelings could be perceived as 'having presence'; it appeared that students would actually find it very hard to relate to this teacher in a true sense as the teacher's presence in the classroom would then lack integrity and soundness. Shaun reflected on this in his interview; '*I am sure people pick up the falseness...in the same way, you can't patronise people...people pick up things like that*' (Shaun, Teacher, Int.2).

Furthermore, for a teacher to be truly authentic, sometimes a redistribution of power in the class was necessary and this tended to change the dynamics of authoritative knowledge. Sometimes even the students were resistant to a teacher offering them more power in the classroom, as they had social or cultural preconceptions about the teacher's position of authority. Moreover,

giving the students more power often did not seem to be in the teacher's interests as an authoritative presence kept the students under some degree of control and this could help the teacher to manage the class in an orderly way, especially in the early days of teaching.

Certainly, for the majority of the teacher participants, teaching was an ethical endeavour, which was strongly rooted in a sense of personal responsibility for the students and resounded with a depth of care which was evident in every aspect of their practice. Unfortunately, for less experienced teachers, this could lead to a sense of anxiety and angst when things didn't go exactly as they had planned. In fact, this desire to help and guide others extended not just from teacher to student but also from the experienced teachers to those with less experience. However, such a sense of responsibility could be overwhelming and the teachers needed to have some boundaries as, otherwise, it could impact on the students capacity to make their own decisions. Anthony described how he had a general 'cut-off' point regarding his responsibilities towards students, especially adults.

*I suppose I don't give...I don't invest everything no....I wouldn't say that I do because I am very conscious that there is a cut-off and that there should be a cut-off.....[...]... I am not in charge of their well-being or their life choices. .I can't get myself involved in that...but inevitably it comes up occasionally (Anthony, Teacher, Int. 2).*

Moreover, the findings suggested that teachers could put in hours outside those for which they were contracted because their sense of responsibility was entwined with a such strong degree of care. For this reason, such care did not necessarily emerge purely from a professional sense of responsibility, but seemed to come from a deeply human desire to care for another human being. Indeed, the findings implied that when it was genuine, this loving care offered a place where the students could reach out to the teachers and talk about the things that were worrying them. Peter described this very clearly as '*being open...to being*';

*You have got to be open... open to being, to discussing and debating those things that are worrying them and that are on their mind or whatever, within let's say the limits of what's appropriate, at any given time, obviously, because you have to be responsible that way*

*as well, but open as in accepting that they are reaching out [to you].....(Peter, Teacher, Int. 1).*

In addition, the language classroom appeared to offer particular opportunities for the students to voice their personal concerns, as it provided them with another identity through which they were able to speak about things which concerned them. Such things might have been considered inappropriate or unseemly to speak about in their own language, as it was imbued with different culturally constructed rules of acceptability.

On a final note, however, it is important to report that by being present for the students at a time when they were in dire need of support and were vulnerable, (especially for the beginner international students who were far from home and unable to communicate well with those within their new community) the teacher could find themselves in a position of power as the 'all knower'. Whilst this could give the teacher feelings of strength in their role as teacher; this was also a situation which could potentially impact negatively on the student's desire and ability to become autonomous both as a learner and as a member of their new community. Paul described how important it was for the teacher to be willing to take a step back from the students, as they grew more able in their language competence, in order to empower them and help them find their own sense of autonomy.

*You are the one who is giving them the knowledge and the power and the skills...you are enabling them to do things and as their level of English gets better and better then you step back....cut the apron strings. [.....]. Off you go, go and do it (Paul, Int. 2).*

Moreover, by uniting the personal and the professional aspects of teaching and manifesting these through the teachers classroom presence, the findings inferred that the teachers could take up the mantle of being the ultimate arbitrator within the classroom space, and in doing so keep the classroom boundaries sacred. This would ensure that the learning space provided a safe environment for all participants and in this way, the teacher's presence was able to imbue the classroom atmosphere with a sense of safety and comfort, which in turn helped to enrich the teacher/student relationship with a stronger degree of reciprocal trust.

### **5.3.2      *Creating a comfortable environment***

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the notion of 'being present' was experienced as an existential dynamic state which emerged spontaneously in and through teaching practice. It could not be forced or coerced as the very act of forcing or coercion could somehow block its organic and natural emergence. However, it appeared that a teacher could promote its emergence by volitionally endeavouring to create an environment in which all parties felt comfortable and in which worry or anxiety had less of a detrimental effect on the relationship between themselves and the students.

As suggested in the previous chapter, one way that the teachers put the students at ease and tried to build a relationship with them was to pick up on personal things and bring them out into the open in order to find a point of connection: *'I pick up on personal things, as long as it's not too personal and that puts them at their ease and brings them out of themselves'* (Shaun, Teacher, discussion following observation). In this way, consciously creating a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere encouraged the emergent aspects of learning to emerge for both the students and the teacher. One of the teachers described how she helped her students feel comfortable by being modest and down to earth;

*I think, for me, a teacher has to be something really down to earth, really modest and be able to sit at the desk with the pupils and just make them feel really comfortable.....this is how I enter my classroom basically. I feel like one of my students'* (Glenda, Teacher, Int. 1).

In addition, the findings suggested that 'being present' as a teacher also meant being cognisant of the two-way mutuality of the processes of learning that formed an essential part of teaching for all parties. This incorporated an element of reciprocal respect; so *'you [also] need to draw a line for respect'* (Glenda, Teacher, Int. 1). So, to create a comfortable environment for both the teacher and the students, the findings suggested that teachers had to have a sensitive and empathic receptivity regarding how their students were feeling individually and as a group so that they could take an overview of the whole class situation. Then, as the class atmosphere became more relaxed, the



teachers could sense when the students felt comfortable enough to express themselves in a more natural and individual way. Sometimes it took time for an anxious student to relax and for the teacher to sensitively attune to his changing demeanour; *'yesterday, he still seemed a bit tense, but [today] you could see him relaxing, so that was good'* (Susan, Teacher, discussion following observation).

Moreover, when the teacher related to the adult students in a friendly way, then the students often related in kind and made more of themselves available to the relationship. In this way, by standing on level ground, the teacher could become a friend the students felt comfortable with rather than an authority figure, as Paul described in his interview:

*With adults, sometimes you find actually that with those teachers that do have a much more chilled out, matey, kind of relationship, actually they can draw more out of the students, the students feel safer, more comfortable with you, because they don't see you as that authority teacher figure, they actually do see you as a friend* (Paul, Teacher, Int. 1).

According to the findings; providing that sense of comfort in teaching involved a strong degree of flexibility. One of the teachers described how he needed to be flexible in his demands, particularly if such demands were causing a sense of disquiet and anxiety as the students did not understand why he was making such demands. A sensitive attuning to the ways in which his challenges were being received by the student helped him make choices about how to proceed as Anthony illustrated; *'they look at me like....'what? ah what?'.....and then I might come out and be a bit more flexible with them* (Anthony, Teacher, Int. 1). In this way, 'being present' implied being sensitively receptive to the ways in which the students were responding to the teacher and making choices and decisions about what to do next in the light of this.

### **5.3.3      *Unique and individual***

Essentially, first level analysis suggested that the nature of teaching meant that it was a unique and subjective experience which could not be codified. Moreover, it appeared that whilst teaching, teachers could display a variety of different 'faces' or facets of self, which were fluctuating elements of their being,

which together comprised their own unique holistic teaching presence. Indeed, the appearance of such facets appeared to be fluid and dynamic in that the teachers reacted and responded in different ways as they attuned to the context they found themselves in and related to the student or students in the class before them. One of the teachers described teachers as being like 'chameleons' as they adapt to the classroom context in which they find themselves:

*So are you saying that we are chameleons... it's still you reacting with a natural.....teacher presence perhaps which is still coming from you, so maybe that is what you mean by the different facets (Susan, Extract from Teacher Focus Group)*

Moreover, without such a strong sense of uniquely individual presence, it appeared that the relationship between the teacher and students could become 'stuck' and lacking in fluidity. In this case, the routines and rites which were '*engrained into your personality [as a teacher]*' (Cheryl, Teacher Educator, Int. 1) could lead to a fossilised ritual with set patterns within which innovation and change had little place.

In addition, it appeared that the teachers themselves had to feel comfortable that they were manifesting a true representation of who they really were as unique individuals, rather than squeezing themselves into some sort of formulaic teaching template in order to conform to type. Moreover, and even more essentially, the unique facets of a teacher's core 'teaching self' needed to be actualised in an individualised way rather than as a representational form in order for it to be able to 'touch' the students in such a way that learning was inspired. To be specific, a teacher's 'teaching self' could not exist in a bubble, as to be a teacher obviously necessitated the existence of a student. So, the teachers therefore needed to be endowed with a strong degree of receptive sensitivity to their students and the ways in which they were reacting to their individual teacher presence. Without such sensitivity, the presences of teacher and students may never have been able to find a mutually acceptable 'meeting place', where connections between them could take place. In such a case, whilst the teachers might have believed that they were teaching; they were not, in actual fact, connecting with their students. Their teaching could, in fact, have

taken the form of a monologue, which in itself lacked the capacity to inspire learning, rather than a two-way transformational learning process for both parties.

What is more, the findings suggested that to be present as a teacher, there needed to be more than a natural projection of personality. The implication here was that it was necessary for teachers to become aware of the ways in which their presence could be 'automatically' projected through their individual personality traits and to notice how this could enhance or be detrimental to their relationship with their students. Doing this involved a sensitive attuning to the needs of the students, a degree of flexibility and a change of tack if and when necessary. So, in essence, the findings demonstrated that such a sensitive attuning to the unique and individual aspects of teaching required a form of 'intuitive noticing', which seemed to develop over time as the teacher developed a greater understanding of the multitude of possibilities personally available to them at any moment in time.

Furthermore, for the teacher, a sense of confidence in the unique and individual facets of their own self needed to be accompanied by a degree of confidence in their subject knowledge. Although the findings suggested that when a teacher lacked confidence in their subject knowledge about what they were teaching, they sometimes believed that they could fall back on a confidence in their own 'sense of self' and thus endeavour to project a degree of presence through this, this didn't really work. The findings have illustrated how this would lack the essential element of authenticity necessary to unite the personal and professional aspects of teaching previously described and whilst the teacher could try to bluff in order to override their sense of vulnerability, this would not give them the certainty they needed to do their job. This element of 'knowing you are right' in order to teach with confidence was discussed in the Teachers Focus Group, as described overleaf:

Glenda: *They could teach [without formal knowledge training] if they have the personality, but I do think that a solid knowledge does improve your confidence...*

Isabel: *For me it certainly does*

Glenda: *For me too...I need to be sure that I am right...be sure that I know, then I can do my job..*

(Extract from Teachers Focus Group).

### **5.3.4 The ethical side of teaching**

As indicated in the previous chapter; being present in teaching implied seeing the classroom as an ethical space with defined boundaries, which offered the students a sense of equality and fairness. When this was the case, the student was recognised as a human being in his or her own right, rather than as a 'mere student' who in essence had nothing to bring to the table. This also meant that the teacher did not do things purely out of a need to do something; they respected and recognised when the need for action truly arose within the dynamics of the context. In fact, the ethical dimensions of the findings suggested that in this study, the teachers were continually working with a sense of what was best for the student in the interests of his or her education rather than the political or business needs of the teaching establishment. As Glenda lamented after her observation; *'Why don't you [the establishment] let teachers work in a proper way and give students what they need to have and maybe enhance this but not cut it...it's always education...they just don't seem to care'* (Glenda, Teacher, discussion following observation).

It also seemed from the findings that the classroom was in every sense a microcosm of everyday life. However, the teacher's presence in the classroom imbued the proceedings with an ethical dimension incorporating a sense of equality which transcended the normal cultural stereotyping of class, education and profession. Furthermore, this sense of ethical responsibility involved establishing and maintaining a degree of confidentiality, *'if we talk in the classroom, we don't really go out and say...Oh my colleague, my classmate said this'* (Susan, Teacher, Int. 1) which helped create the democratic and

international environment which was deemed an important part of teaching ESOL, as illustrated in this extract from the Teacher Trainer Focus Group.

Paul: *Here it is important to [create a democratic and intercultural environment] because you have got so many nationalities...*

Mary: *I don't think it is in conflict with being a teacher...*

Paul: *It's an important part of being this kind of teacher...*

(Extract from Teacher Trainer Focus Group)

Indeed, evidence implied that by being attuned to the cultural dynamics of the classroom, teachers could make it a truly international space; one in which international presences could mingle and mix in an atmosphere in which the students felt comfortable, '*the minute you walk in the room it becomes international*' (Isabel, Teacher, Int. 2). The students also expected a teacher to manifest respect for them as people with opinions which were of value. As previously discussed, by inadvertently dismissing a student's cultural contribution to the class, a teacher could douse the fire of enthusiasm and contribute to the student's withdrawal from the relationship without even knowing it.

In addition, it certainly appeared that being a teacher demanded a certain degree of self-sacrifice, as the teacher had to be able to put his or her own needs on the back burner so to speak, in order to 'be there' in an intellectual and emotional sense to support the student. This could only really happen when the teacher had a solid sense of support on which to fall back, as sometimes the demands of the students were endless, as Paul discussed; '*it's constantly wanting your approval, isn't it? I've done this...is this right, is this right?*' (Paul, Extract from Teacher Trainer Focus Group). Continually providing for the needs of the students often led to the teacher feeling personally drained and exhausted, especially with the less able students or those who were less linguistically competent. This sense of feeling drained was metaphorically described as '*having the life sucked out of you*':

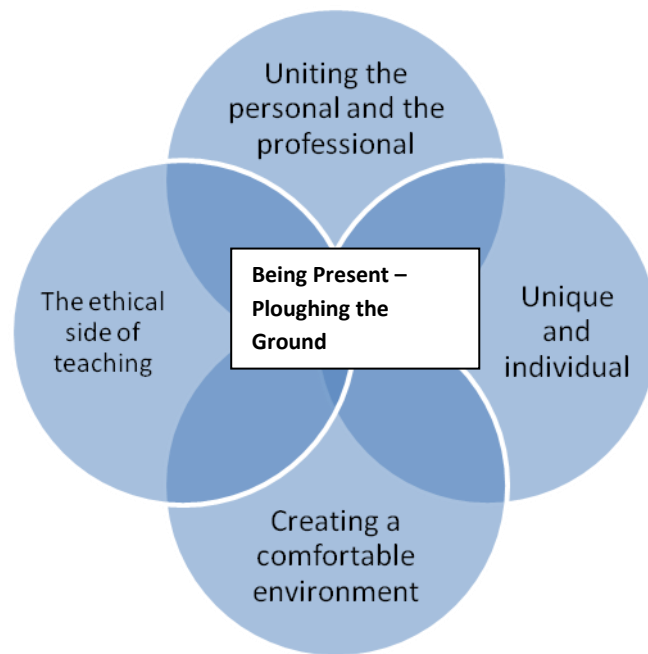
*With Beginners, it's constant work, work, work, work but you have to be doing all the work and encouraging them and you can feel absolutely drained after one lesson with a Beginner student.....Beginners can just suck the life out of you at times (Paul, Teacher Educator, Int. 2).*

Thus, when a teacher was giving everything in order to be physically, intellectually and emotionally present for the students, rather than just 'going through the motions', this could potentially lead to a sense of emptiness, which was counter-productive to the desire to be present. So, the tiredness which came from the self-sacrifice of giving could be self-defeating, '*I have used everything...so there is a kind of emptiness*' (Glenda, Teacher, Int. 2).

And yet, for some teachers, the reward for such selflessness could be found in the fulfilment of a sense of moral responsibility for the student as is illustrated in the following comment by Peter when he was reflecting on a particular student, whose life he believed had changed because he had learned English and by doing so, had become able to relate with people with whom he had not been able to communicate previously:

*Every once in a while, you can actually make a real difference to someone....you can make a real difference to their life. That's what I like , there's that opportunity at times to make a difference...that's what I most enjoy....making a difference (Peter, Teacher, Int.1)*

To summarise, I have divided the dynamic existential state of '**Being Present**' into two essential parts, the first I have called '**Ploughing the Ground**' consisting of the following clusters: '**Uniting the personal and the professional**', '**Creating a comfortable environment**', '**Unique and individual**' and '**The ethical side of teaching**'. In the actuality of 'real time', as I have explained previously, such clusters were experienced holistically within the entangled web of being, as they formed and re-formed dynamically in response to the situated context the teacher found themselves in at any moment in time. This is illustrated in Figure 5.2 overleaf:



**Figure 5.2:** Being present - Ploughing the ground

I would surmise that having 'ploughed the ground' (to use the farming analogy I have chosen to describe the classroom environment as a potential space in which new growth can be nurtured) through their presence, the teachers have fertilised it with their integrity and developed a classroom atmosphere infused with mutual respect. In such fertile ground, the green shoots of learning affordances could then emerge spontaneously and grow organically, as I will report in the next section

## ***PART TWO - Green shoots***

In this section, I will describe the ways in which the green shoots of learning could emerge spontaneously as they were nurtured by the classroom environment and the teacher's presence. For this to happen, the atmosphere in the classroom needed to be positive and reciprocally rewarding and the teacher needed the capacity to be present to the demands of the moment.. However, the findings suggested that this capacity to be present to the exigencies of the current moment was strongly affected by the teacher's emotional world, and that when the teacher was feeling negative or vulnerable, this could have a detrimental effect on their capacity to be present. This section is broken down into five core sections which I have called '*The emotional sphere*', '*Finding that*

*connection*', 'A big juggling act', 'The infectious yawning scenario' and 'Group flow'.

### **5.3.5        *The emotional sphere***

As previously reported, the findings provided evidence that a teacher's emotional world could have a strong effect on the ways in which both they and their students experienced their presence in the classroom. In short, as the teachers' emotionality seemed to be funnelled through their classroom presence, it appeared to underlie, support or constrain the relational elements of the class by providing a conduit which could serve as a type of '*network link*' between themselves and the students. In turn, this link provided a portal of 'interconnectedness' which could draw on the potential energies available within the classroom in a '*hub of connectedness*'.

In addition, this emotional influence could be manifested in a number of different ways. On the one hand, when the teachers' presence provided a strong and reliable point of reference for the students, trust was able to develop between the teacher and the students and emotional connections could be forged. Indeed, this seemed to be a crucial aspect of presence in that being emotionally connected with the students could make a class more successful, as Isabel reflected in the focus group; '*I think the more you connect emotionally, often it makes your lessons more successful...if you are thinking about how they are feeling at all times, you are going to be...surely you are going to be a better teacher*' (Isabel, Teacher, Extract from Teacher Focus Group). On the other hand, feeling emotionally challenged in the class could instigate feelings of discomfort in the teacher, which could disturb the general atmosphere in the classroom. This could, in turn, affect the whole dynamic of the class as Bethany illustrated when discussing her feelings of discomfort aroused by one of the students in her class.

*If there is somebody in the class who you makes you feel uncomfortable...[....]... you know you have got a troublesome student in class and you can't help but focus on them and the whole dynamic might change in the classroom* (Bethany, Teacher Educator, Int. 1).



The findings further suggested that when the teacher's emotional world started to "wobble", (if, for example, they lost confidence in themselves for any reason), they could react in an emotional way which somehow blocked their capacity to 'be present' to what was happening around them. Glenda describes this feeling as '*.....my emotional side starts trembling and I get all puzzled and confused*' (Glenda, Teacher, Int. 1). Put simply, an emotional reaction to certain class events seemed to 'dislodge' the teacher's existential way of being and highlight the fleeting waves of anxiety caused by a crisis of confidence. Feelings of vulnerability could then invade conscious thought to such an extent that this gave rise to feelings of being limited in their role as a teacher, as Glenda reflects; '*this aspect of vulnerability.....it is kind of limiting sometimes.....*' (Glenda, Teacher, Int. 2).

Moreover, whilst the findings implied that teaching involved a strong dimension of classroom 'inter-connectivity', the participants recognised that sometimes their presence and the presences of the students within the class 'gelled' and sometimes they didn't. This element of classroom connectivity was difficult to explain but was recognised as being some sort of 'chemical interaction' which Shaun described as '*mysterious*'; '*You can never be sure [.....] the mysteries of chemical [.....] what's the phrase? Chemical interaction? [...] Classroom chemistry? [...] Or presence?*' (Shaun, Teacher, Int. 2). As a consequence of the sporadic nature of such 'gelling', at times, the teachers themselves reacted emotionally when they felt that their class had not bonded effectively. At times like this, they could employ distancing strategies in order to control and limit their own emotional involvement and protect themselves, as Glenda explained; '*some classes just click or gel.....in some other classes, for some reason, you can't make it work.... I become a bit different...I put my emotions.. aside and try to be just, err, present but not too involved*' (Glenda, Teacher, Int. 1).

Finally, according to the findings, a teacher's emotionality could have a strong effect on their students' feelings regarding the class. In essence, when teachers appeared to be worried in class, this aroused feelings of disquiet in their students in turn, as they were sensitive to their teacher's emotional state. The students responded to this by feeling that the class was boring and, as a

result of this, they wanted it to end. The students discussed this in their student discussion group; *'Also if the teacher feel worried, you will feel boring and you need the class is finished'* (Supported student discussion). When this happened, it was then left to the teacher to endeavour to reconnect with the student(s) in any way they could.

### **5.3.6 Finding that connection**

According to the findings, there was an element of the unexpected to the ways in which teachers could find themselves connecting with their students in a personal way. What is more, often these moments seemed to come about through humour or enjoyment and such moments in time could even surprise the teacher; rather than being pre-planned, as Shaun explained in his discussion with me after I had observed him; *'it just caught me off guard which is good... I always like to be surprised'* (Shaun, Teacher, discussion following observation). Indeed, the incident could be memorable for any number of reasons; some more negative, such as the moment of humiliation or aggression Isabel experienced: *'I remember a German standing up in the class and shouting 'this is a senseless exercise' and everybody just stopped...he looked absolutely irate'* (Isabel, Teacher, discussion following observation).

Furthermore, when the students disengaged for whatever reason; tiredness, boredom or lack of self motivation for example, the teachers found their own creative ways of reconnecting with them. As I have already illustrated in the previous chapter; sometimes, the teachers identified *'threads of bits'* that run through the classes and returned to these *'knots of connectedness'* in order to reconnect with their students. This could be done by reigniting those moments in which the teacher and the students had had a shared understanding, or a mutual joke or humour. Such moments in time tended to be light-hearted and seemed to lift the group back to a more easy-going relational sphere. Shaun likened this to a free form jazz session, in which the musicians interacted with the music of their fellow musicians in a spirit of spontaneity and fun .

*It sounds like a free form jazz session but it's not quite like that but certainly the fun element must always be allowed to appear and in my case it is spontaneous...I pick it up from the students and get*

*things which I then feed back into the lesson and make them laugh a bit about things...weaknesses in production or some silly thing that I have got wrong which is embarrassing which they can then laugh at...not in a malicious way but simply good-natured humour (Shaun, Teacher, Int. 2)*

As such moments emerged organically through the class, the teacher had to subconsciously or consciously make choices about whether to take them and run with them or ignore them, as Anthony suggested; *'these things always emerge and I suppose it's your choice whether you build on them or not, I suppose'* (Anthony, Teacher, Int. 1).

Moreover, it appeared that the 'gulf' between the teacher and the students inevitably widened at times, however much the teacher tried to reach out to the students. Consequently, connectedness between them ineluctably became lost from time to time. Sometimes, this was because the students found their preconceptions incompatible with those of the teacher and sometimes it was just a question of time before a reconnection could be found. Mary described how this connection between herself and her students could 'warm' over time:

*You get some students and you reach out to them and it takes a while and you can tell that they are there in body but not necessarily in spirit...and you can see as they....warm to you or warm to the classroom, as they feel...more comfortable and you get that...whether it's look or a smile....an awareness (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 2)*

For this reason, teaching was as much about learning from the students and the classroom environment as it was about the act of teaching, as Peter discussed; *'It's a constant process of learning,..I'm learning at the same time as I am teaching, you know, all the time'* (Peter, Teacher, Int. 1). So, it often took time for the teacher to find out what the students' needs actually were and this was particularly the case in times of change.

In addition, it seemed that for a teacher to be present in teaching, they had to find some personal satisfaction in the moment; something which brought them to the moment in an individual way which stirred their own interest: In this way, through teaching, elements of a teacher's personal philosophy could be brought into the classroom spontaneously and as the findings illustrated, the mindfulness embodied within one teacher's spiritual being was able to emerge

naturally in class purely because it had become an embodied part of her being and was being demonstrated through this teacher's approach to life generally:

*I think I do [bring mindfulness into the classroom]...I do it quite spontaneously though, that's me..it's not forced... yes, I think it comes into the classroom very clearly...not saying it, I mean nobody knows...it's just the attitude, the behaviour, the approach (Glenda, Teacher, Int. 2)*

Furthermore, feelings of 'authentic care' towards the students also helped teachers to form a connection with them. In essence, the notion of 'care' here was experienced as a deep two-way connectedness which was infused with a profound sense of consideration and mindfulness for the other in every action taken. As a result of this, such 'care' in teaching had meaning at a deep personal level and it seemed that through this level of care, a teacher could cut through the barriers students might use as a form of defensiveness. Sometimes, this involved the teachers giving of themselves from a deep core of their being, which could leave them feeling personally exhausted, but which was rewarded by sharing in the sense of joy the students felt when they celebrated their own successes. For this teacher, feeling good in teaching is a two-way thing, which means giving as well as taking;

*I know that when they **do** do well, ..... it makes you feel good, it's a two-way thing, it's edifying, it's the reason a lot of people go into teaching. I don't want to vampire that feeling off them, but in order to get it, you have to give as well (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 1).*

The findings also suggested that such a genuine show of love from the heart could help students to trust the teacher and accept their natural authority within the classroom. This could help the students to understand that what the teacher was doing and what the teacher asked them to do, was in their interests rather than just a random activity with little purpose. What is more, this connection between teacher and student was able to provide a form of support which the teacher could call upon, as a point of reference when the complexity of the classroom dynamics demanded it. Put simply, the empathy and patience teachers demonstrated within their relationship with individual members of the class and the group as a whole could be compared in some ways to that of a parent, as Anthony described; '*she has got that.....patience and still be slightly...not motherly...but there's the strictness of her being a parent but also*

*the empathy'* (Anthony, Teacher, Int. 2)

On the other hand, the findings implied that for a teacher to be able to continue to genuinely care for their students, it was essential that the students were also truly 'present' in the class and genuinely wanted to learn themselves, as Mary reflected; *'if students come in and they don't care, then it is very hard for the teacher to want to be bothered'* (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 2). If the students didn't care about their own learning, the teacher's genuine feelings of love which had previously imbued their presence with a warmth and genuine empathic awareness, could become diminished. Mary described the students' presences in this case as *'closing down'*; *'[Sometimes], they close down their presence...make it into a disruptive presence....and that's difficult...it's not as edifying and I'd hate to be teaching classes like that because that is not the joy for me'* (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 2)..

In fact, the greater the students' need for the teachers to help them communicate and connect through language, the more warmth and affection seemed to be inspired within the teacher and student relationship. In the case of students with low levels of language competence, building a warm and loving relationship was perceived as a evolving from a sense of necessity, as Glenda reflected; *'the relationship that you build with lower level students needs to be more affectionate, because they need to have the support, this moral support, this warmth to burn them'* (Glenda, Teacher, Int. 2). So, I would surmise that to achieve such an authentic deep sense of care within the classroom space, the teacher's presence needed to entwine aspects of both 'personal' and 'teacher' care in its embodiment and enactment. Such a degree of care then had the potential to radiate from the personal to the social through the wider networks of family, community and even at a macro level to the cultural edifices of the country, as Glenda explained:

*It is both teacher care and personal care...especially if you work in a community where students are following us...so it's a different type of care isn't it because it is the culture, the country, the family in a way, so it is so many things, so I think that somehow you need to give this protection or warmth and reassurance* (Glenda, Teacher, Int. 2).

However, creating such a caring and connective environment within the messy reality of the classroom was not an easy endeavour. When the teachers sensitively attuned to the ways in which their students interacted in reality, such attuning revealed a complicated and intricate network of interconnectedness which a teacher had to deal with in the best way possible according to the demands of the moment. So, dealing with the realities of the classroom could be very different to an idealised vision of how the classroom dynamics could be, as Peter explained; *'You can't idealise the dynamics...you know, when you are sitting in front of real people'* (Peter, Teacher, discussion following observation). In other words, 'being present' to the realities faced within the classroom, rather than the idealised situation in the teacher's head, implied recognising that choices and decisions had to be made to deal with the constraints and conflicting demands of the pedagogic situation as it ebbed and flowed naturally through time. Such choices, although not perfect, were the 'best fit' at any particular moment in time.

To summarise, the findings suggested that teachers had strongly individual and creative ways of developing links and finding the connection between themselves and the students in their classes, both at an individual and a group level. In addition, through developing such links within the class through their classroom presence, the teachers came to be experienced as a 'connective source', which served to establish commonalities between the diverse cultures within the classroom. As a result, the classroom offered a space which became an integrated community in its own right. This aspect of the classroom was summed up by Anthony when he mused; *'I suppose I use myself as a link because there are commonalities between every culture....and concentrating on that...makes you feel that you are all one...you know, connected..[a] community'* (Anthony, Teacher, Int. 2).

### **5.3.7 'A big juggling act'**

The findings implied that 'being present' in teaching was necessary in order for teachers to personally make sense of and react appropriately to the complex and infinite array of demands made on their resources, as one of the teacher educators explained; *'This is to do with classroom presence...the ability to, it's*

*like multi-tasking really, the ability to monitor a pair but also keeping your eye on what everyone else is doing* (Cheryl, Teacher Educator, Int. 1). Knowing when to support the students, when to challenge them and when to 'leave them to it' was a difficult choice to make and when done without sensitivity could leave the students struggling or bored. One of the teacher educators described how certain elements of classroom teaching can't be planned for :

*To be able to support the students but also challenge them is really difficult; to know how far you can go before they get frustrated and recognising that; that's quite difficult sometimes....it's not easy knowing when to step in and when to leave them to work it out and help each other. Knowing when to step in is a really tricky thing, you know. It's something that you can't plan for really* (Cheryl, Teacher Educator, Int. 1).

Essentially, teaching was seen as a complex profession which made a multitude of different professional demands on the teacher, as Paul explained; *'In this job you are not just a teacher...you are a teacher, a psychologist, psychotherapist....a lot of things rolled into one'* (Paul, Teacher Trainer Focus Group). So, it seemed that an inherent feature of the teacher's role was being a kind of juggler, who struggled to ensure that all the students' needs were catered for and so, accordingly, teaching was described as *'a big juggling act'* (Paul, Teacher Educator, Int. 1). This was particularly the case for the teachers in the school in this study, who had to deal with new students being introduced into their existing class most Monday mornings. Correspondingly, 'being present' at those times involved a complex amalgamation of the old and the new, the past and the present, the self and the other. Through the teachers' presence, a new classroom environment could evolve from the previous class dynamics and the teachers had to ensure that everyone felt welcomed and secure in this new situation, as Bethany explained: *'You have got to kind of juggle three things....you have got to adapt to each thing....new people coming in, yourself for the existing students and you have to make sure the new students are welcomed and involved'* (Bethany, Teacher Educator, Int. 1).

What is more, maintaining a sense of continuity for the class involved a strong degree of flexibility on the part of the teacher in order to preserve their personal connection with the class. The research participants described how, at times

when they were teaching, they even found it necessary to adapt physically to maintain a sense of a degree of connectedness within the spatial limits of the classroom space *'you can see I am technically having to turn my back and do yoga at times'* (Mary, Teacher Educator, discussion following observation). Similarly, when things didn't work out in the ways the teacher had anticipated, then the fluidity of the teacher's resources once again came into play, as Paul explained *'...ok, let's adapt it to suit certain individuals'* (Paul, Teacher Educator, Int. 1). In this way, the teachers were continually fashioning the ways in which they related to the students to suit the demands of the moment, as Cheryl described; *'it's to do...with flexibility and adaptability to respond'* (Cheryl, Teacher Educator, Int. 1). Consequently, 'being present' embodied a type of judgement, often perceived as an intuitive type of knowledge about the best course of action at any one moment, in order to best bring about the desired result within the given circumstances. In essence, the ways in which the teachers dealt with the complexity involved in teaching reinforced the argument that teachers were in a constant process of becoming as learners whilst they were teaching. Their learning in this sense was rooted in their deepening understanding of how to best respond to the complexity of the moment and their endeavour to cater to the learning needs of the students in the best possible way they were able to.

However, it did not seem that this capacity teachers had to bring about learning by connecting with the students in and through their classroom presence was something which could be understood and conceptualised in a completely concrete way. Hence, 'being present' as a teacher incorporated a mysterious element, which was sometimes described as inspiring learning through a type of *'magic wand'*. In this way teachers were magicians who performed magic tricks in order to capture the imagination of the student. Indeed, it was believed that through this 'magic wand', the teachers were able to capture the student's imaginative understanding without really knowing how they did it, as Shaun reflected on in his interview. *'....they have understood by means of my magic wand as I put it'* (Shaun, Teacher, Int. 1). Moreover, investigating this 'magic wand' in an entirely rational way could somehow disable it. By endeavouring to make it concretely understandable rather than a mystery, it could become



ordinary and thus lose its power to capture learning in imaginative ways. So, adding an aura of mystery to the teaching and learning processes, helped the teachers explain what sometimes might not be logical, explainable or easily definable to the cognitive senses. Susan also referred to this element of teaching '*....we have magic in the classroom*' (Susan, Teacher, Int. 2).

### **5.3.8 'The infectious yawning scenario'**

As I have illustrated in the previous chapter; through their presence, the teachers endeavoured to imbibe the classroom space with a degree of balance and equilibrium, as a stabilising force within a situation which was in a state of constant flux brought about by the ever changing classroom dynamics. So, within this fluid, complex and dynamically changing space, the teacher's presence became a strong point of reference for the students. When this space also offered an atmosphere of openness and trust, then the energy of interconnectedness could spread throughout the group. This was illustrated by an analogy to the interconnected energies which could be inspired in a group of people through music.

*You find that if there is enough openness and enough students start to open up...it's a bit like the infectious yawning scenario...when you have got a group bond. It's like being in a Rock concert and everyone shares that meaning and everyone is clapping together.... or a few people start dancing in front of the guy who is busking in the street, which might then give a knock-on confidence to that person whose foot was tapping to go and join them. Then as more and more people do [dance]...those that are more self-conscious don't feel so [reticent] about joining in because they are lost within the group and they might come out and tentatively approach the group...and then [they] might come out and start dancing (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 2).*

However, it seemed that in such a group endeavour, the encouragement to become open and trusting, could come from the students if the teacher seemed reticent and lacking in confidence. Mary described such an incident when reflecting on an observation she made of a student teacher, whose presence she had previously construed to be lacking; '*there was lots of laughter and all of a sudden, he sort of sprang open somewhat*' (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 1).

Moreover, at times; through being open to the ways in which the students

responded in a manner they had not previously anticipated, the teachers could continually become aware of new possibilities for learning, as Anthony pointed out; *'it was incidences like that....that made me realise that actually I could probably get more out of them* (Anthony, Teacher, discussion following observation). Also, whilst making decisions and choices in the moment held continual challenge for the teachers, some of the choices seemed to be made consciously and some without real conscious awareness, as Shaun recalled in his discussion with me after I had observed him; *'I don't know exactly what I did...sometimes it is calculated but sometimes it is off the cuff...I can't really think what I did that engaged them* (Shaun, Teacher, discussion following observation). In addition, as previously mentioned, the findings suggested that there was a volitional element to the teacher's agency when they sought to make a moment memorable through humour. By doing this, it seemed to link the learning to the moment as a way of helping the students recapture it at a later date. Finally, the courageous side to being present meant that sometimes the teacher had to follow the flow of the class in ways they had not planned. This meant making choices to change tack in response to signals that the teaching was not working or was not connecting with the students. This element of teaching was discussed in the Teacher Focus Group; *'do we all have the courage to do this...I know I do...if I think it is not working then I stop it and do something completely different* (Shaun, Teacher Focus Group).

What is more, as well as being experimental, there appeared to be an opportunist element to being present and as discussed, teachers bridged the space between the present learning moment and the next by choosing which of the happenings generated within the class to take into the future and which to ignore. Being present thus helped the teacher intuit the next course of action, as Shaun reflected in the Teacher Focus Group; *'oh god I can see disaster coming, let's escape down this one'* (Shaun, Teacher Focus Group). In addition, the findings emphasised that inaction seemed equally important to being present as action. In this sense, Mary reflected that *'not doing something is as good as...and choosing when not to [do something]...is just as important as [doing something]* (Mary, Teacher Trainer Focus Group).

Hence, when the teachers were present to the classroom situation in the ways

illustrated, the organic nature of the classroom as a social space and meeting ground could then take on a life of its own. Within the interconnectedness of this group flow, the teacher's presence could act as a conduit which supported and encouraged the group energies to interact in a spirit of positivity and ethicality. When this happened, aspects of the present moment could be taken into the future in unexpected and spontaneous ways, as Paul explained:

*It's organic and the students lead where they want to go...somebody might ask a question and that might prompt another student to ask a question and before you know it, you are on a completely different track... (Paul, Teacher Educator, Int. 2)*

### **5.3.9 Group flow**

As previously described, evidence suggested that the teacher's presence could have a strong effect on the atmosphere within the classroom. What is more, whilst the teacher's presence could ignite the flames of creativity and enthusiasm, it could equally well douse them with its dark clouds. Indeed, it appeared that the mood that flowed around the class could come from any aspect of the classroom environment; for this reason, any negativity embodied within the presence of student or teacher could have a serious impact. However, whilst the clouds of negativity could seep into every aspect of the classroom in an all pervading sense; equally at times, the atmosphere in the classroom could become enthused and alive and then, the flames of positivity within the teaching and learning endeavour could spread with a sense of flow which encapsulated the whole classroom.

In this way, when the teacher's presence initiated an interconnected flow within the group energies, everyday life seemed to become suspended and the class became integrated through a sense of mutual endeavour. Such happenings could arise spontaneously and this could allow the teacher to stand back, putting their own presence on 'a back burner' until they sensed it was once again needed 'centre stage'. Anthony described this type of 'give and take' in teaching, as the teacher gave the students more autonomy, whilst monitoring their progress; *'Give them a little bit and then get it back and give them a little*

*bit more and then just withdraw completely and see what happens'* (Anthony, Teacher, Int. 2). In this way, the teachers could volitionally create a continuum of presence which danced in tune with the organic or emergent flow of the class and this, in turn, helped the students become more autonomous, as Anthony described; *'They want you to hold their hands and then if you take your hand away completely then, they are on their own aren't they? They have to sink or swim'* (Anthony, Teacher Focus Group).

Moreover, whilst the teachers could be physically absent at times, they were still present in a tacit way as they continued to be 'switched on' or present in some capacity, in order to ensure that they did not miss anything when they returned to the classroom. Within the flow created by this 'flexible continuum' of teacher presence, learning affordances evolved or were created and, similarly, as students joined and left the class, a change in group dynamics could have an effect on the whole group, as Peter explained; *'Usually there's a guy here, A, and he's very nice and he works with everyone but unfortunately he's gone....and that does have....that sort of has a knock on effect'* (Peter, Teacher, discussion following observation). Moreover, the findings suggested that although each student could be 'touched' in a unique and individual way by the presence of the teacher, sometimes feelings of boredom or lack of personal interest could spread through the class and this could have an adverse on the class as a unified whole. Conversely, a sense of positive flow within the class energies could have a strong impact on the teacher, as Paul described; *'you can come out....feeling all lively and enthusiastic and it keeps you going for the rest of the day'* (Paul, Teacher Educator, Int. 2).

In other words, it appeared that the atmosphere in one class could impact on the way in which a teacher went into the next class, whether it be in a positive or a negative way. Consequently, it seemed that the ways in which a particular set of classroom energies interacted may not have had a discreet identity for that particular class, as interactive elements may have been transmitted from or into another class through the presence of the teacher. Isabel reflected this by describing the different ways in which she could enter a class and the effect this could have on the class;

*I find it makes a huge difference, when a teacher goes in and they look flustered.....or when a teacher goes in looking fed up, or if they go in looking nervous, or if they go in looking....well, basically the attitude that a teacher has when they go into a classroom seems to affect the way the lesson goes a lot (Isabel, Teacher, Int. 1)*

Equally significantly, it appeared from the findings that when the class energies did flow, the teachers encouraged or steered the gambit of spontaneous or unexpected learning opportunities in ways which were informed by their own individual value systems. Sometimes teachers would even surprise themselves by getting caught up in the flow of the class in unexpected ways, as Mary described; *'you get swept away... (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 2)*. When the classroom took on a sort of *'community presence'*, the students often became brave enough to take risks that they perhaps would not have taken on their own. Anthony described this as *'kind of like a snowballing type effect....people are very reticent to do something on their own but then once one person starts, they all join in'* (Anthony, Teacher, Int. 1).

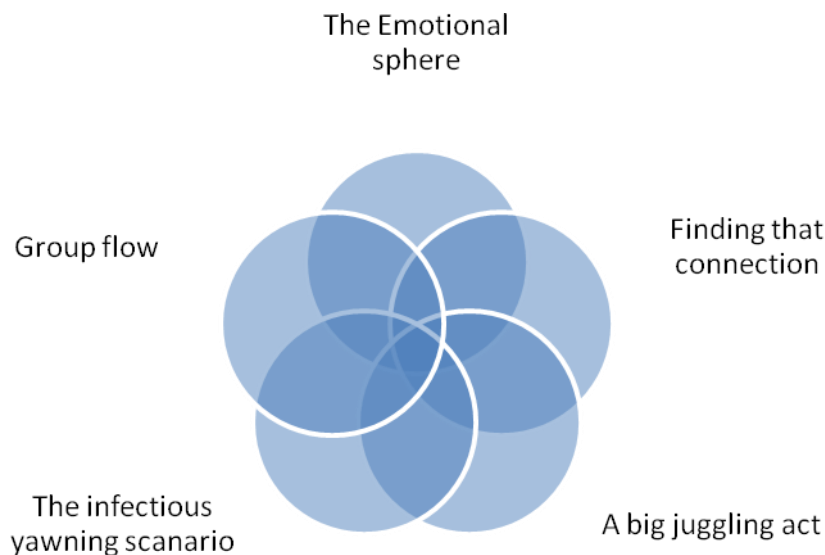
There certainly appeared to be a temporal dimension to this aspect of classroom flow. At times, it took a while for the group energies to flourish and intermingle. Moreover, at such times, there could be a nervous silence before the class began to flow and when this happened, the teacher could become anxious and needed to relax into the silence before the flow commenced. And yet, when the class was in flow, there was a strong sense of electricity as Shaun remarked; *'there was incredible electricity and you felt there was something really being achieved'* (Shaun, Teacher, Int. 1).

Put simply, the findings have implied that, essentially, for the 'flow' to flow, an initial connection had to be made between the teacher and students. Newcomers to the class could then become part of a kind of *'mass presence'* as they joined in, Mary likened this to the atmosphere in a rock concert; *'it was mass presence that had that effect, you know, like you have in a rock concert when everybody picks up on the vibe and goes with the flow'* (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 1). The class energies then seemed to join together and pass

*'from one person to another, there is almost a chain reaction, which effects the whole* (Mary, Teacher Educator, Int. 1). Once the connection with the students and between the students had been established, the teacher could encourage them to become invested in their own learning by taking a step back and becoming a so-called '*benevolent spirit*' watching over them in order to guide them in their learning, although Shaun contends that; *'they [the students] are [really] running the show themselves in a way* (Shaun, Teacher, Int. 1).

Finally, it is important to note that the findings imply that the emergence of such a flow of group energies in the classroom was more often than not spontaneous and unexpected and that however much the teachers tried to create or recreate this flow, it was just not possible. No class was identical and each class had its own group chemistry, as Shaun explained; *'no lesson is ever the same....because of the classroom chemistry* (Shaun, Teacher, Int. 2). Furthermore, although many of the research participants seemed to be aware of such a flow of energies within their own classes, they found it difficult to understand and conceptualise when it happened and why it happened. For this reason, it was generally described in metaphorical terms by the teaching participants such as *'some invisible, electrode-inducing object that stimulates people into working!'* (Shaun, Teacher, Int. 2).

This second part of 'being present' which I have called '**Green Shoots**'; was composed of the following clusters: '**The emotional sphere**', '**Finding that connection**', '**A big juggling act**', '**The infectious yawning scenario**' and '**Group flow**'. This is illustrated in the figure overleaf.

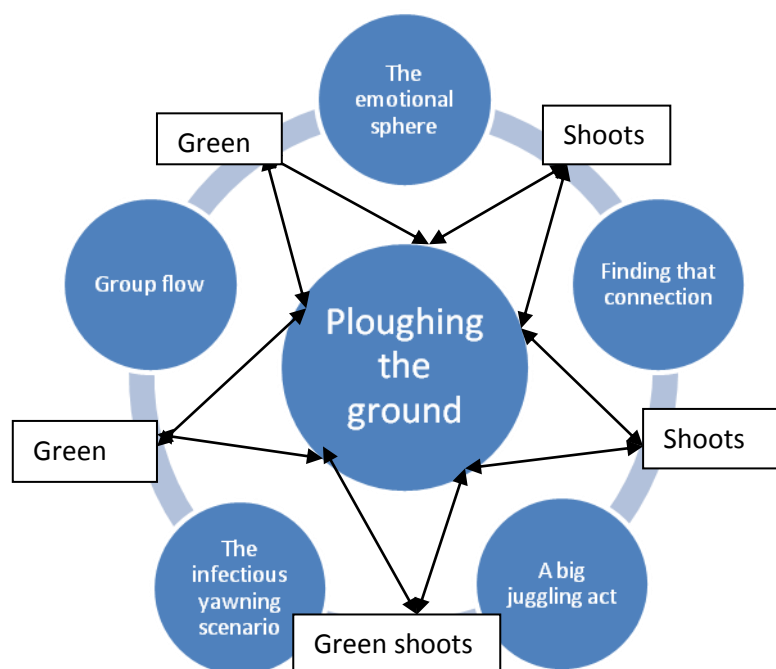


**Figure 5.3:** Being present - Green shoots

In summary, the findings suggested that the phenomenon of 'being present', as it was experienced by the participants in this study, was essentially holistic and had no fixed beginning or end point. It was an intense moment or series of moments in which life had depth, meaning and richness for the teacher and its numerous features blended or reconfigured to constitute the experience of 'being present'. I would like to stress once more that whilst I have outlined such features thematically and in a seemingly linear fashion, this is purely for purposes of clarity, as such features essentially existed and co-existed holistically and were in no way isolated from each other. In fact, they formed and reformed in clusters with blurred edges as the embodied, enacted and relational interplay between teacher and student(s) played out dynamically from moment to moment. However, it appeared that, rather like a spider's web, a 'hub' of essential and interdependent structures formed a type of core. From this core, other features emerged which could not exist alone: Essentially, all the themes I have described are thus interdependent and interact holistically to create and co-create each other.

So, in one sense, 'being present' in teaching was a spontaneous happening which 'lifted' the teacher within the routine day-to-day existence of his or her classroom life and gave it pedagogic meaning. However, whilst 'being present'

could not be forced or coerced into happening and seemed to almost have a life force of its own, there did appear to be a volitional element to it, as the teachers could choose whether or not to nurture an environment which would offer optimal conditions for its existential state to emerge. Then, when optimal conditions emerged, the classroom could become a democratic and ethical space in which the 'green shoots' of new growth could evolve and grow from the fertile foundations of the past. Thus, having created a space which provided equilibrium and trust; through sensitive awareness, the teacher could intuit when to challenge and push the students out of their comfort zone and when to provide a safety net for moments of vulnerability. In this way, crisis points in learning and understanding could become moments of disequilibrium from which new ways forward for both teacher and student could emerge organically or spontaneously in and through the teacher's practice. This full complexity of 'being present' in teaching is illustrated in the figure below:



**Figure 5.4:** The complexity of 'Being present' in teaching.



## 5.4 The relationship between 'Having presence' and 'Being present'

Whilst I would surmise that there was a relationship between the constructs of 'having presence' and 'being present', the boundaries between them could be best described as 'blurred' or 'fuzzy'. This was because when a teacher was being present, he or she was in an existential state of relational interaction with the student which emerged spontaneously or organically from practice; As such a state did not necessarily have temporal boundaries and could last a moment or a series of moments, the teacher could of course also have been perceived by the observer as 'having presence' at the same moment or moments in time, especially if the teacher manifested aspects of practice which fitted with an observing teacher educator's own pedagogic ideologies.

However, a strong difference between 'having presence' and 'being present' could be found by addressing the issue of relational authenticity or congruence. As I have illustrated, sometimes 'having presence' could be more of an illusionary preconception, which was entangled in archetypes, honed and skilled projections of self and residues of past associations, whilst 'being present' inherently embodied an individual sense of self, which resonated with congruence and authenticity . Whether 'having presence' also implied 'being present' depended therefore on the authenticity of the teacher's agency at any given moment in time and the extent to which the teacher was acting with sensitive receptivity in response to the demands of the moment rather than purely 'going through the motions' or projecting learned technical teaching skills, which did not connect with the students or inspire learning to happen.

### Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the notion of 'presence in teaching' through two theoretical lenses. The first lens I have called '**Having presence**' is a construct which has been broken down into the following elements; '*Archetypical perceptions*', '*Reinforcing myths?*', '*The light beam*', '*Communicative force*' and '*Like the X Factor*' ; I would once again emphasise that such elements were in no way separated from each other; they

were inter-connected and inter-related and existed and co-existed to form the holistic understanding of what 'having presence' meant to the research participants. I have argued that this is only one of the lenses generated by the findings of this study through which the phenomenon of 'presence in teaching' had meaning for this teaching community and that the findings presented a second lens through which presence could be understood.

This second lens focused on the fundamental relational element of presence in teaching. This presence was not presence in the sense of "poise", "charisma" of 'having presence', but was presence as a dynamic state of being. This existential state of presence in teaching could not be conceptualised as such, it just was. The conditions and existential aspects identified within the study as co-existing within this clustered core and precipitating or relating to the experience of '**Being present**' were presented in two parts. Part One, which I called '**Ploughing the Ground**' related to the following aspects; '**Uniting the personal and the professional**', '**Creating a comfortable environment**', '**Unique and individual**' and '**The ethical side of teaching**'. The findings suggested that once a teacher had provided this core cluster of conditions through their presence, a generative and open-ended mutual understanding could emerge from which the green shoots of learning could sprout for both the teacher and the student. This opened a new space of being, within which past and present learning could be taken into the future, embellished through new understandings. Such links between past, present and future learning were identified within Part 2 under the title 'Green Shoots' and they comprised; '**The emotional sphere**', '**Finding that connection**', '**A big juggling act**', '**The infectious yawning scenario**' and '**Group flow**'.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the fresh insights generated by this inquiry in the light of what they mean for the teaching profession. I will explore what I set out to do, what I achieved and the ways in which what I have discovered through this study link with and contribute to the conceptual framework I presented in Chapter Two, existing research studies and the literature. I will conclude by suggesting the implications my findings have for practice, associated research communities and future research in this field and

discussing the potential power the construct of 'presence' has in the educational domain.

# CHAPTER SIX

## *Insights, implications and conclusion*

### **Introduction**

At first glance, this research project could be viewed as my attempt to 'square the circle' in which the 'circle' represents the seemingly paradoxical and idiosyncratic nature of 'presence' as a construct in teaching. Indeed, as previously discussed in Chapter One, its complexity, 'ethereality' and 'less easily definable' composition have made it hard to pin down in teaching circles and this has led to it being rather overlooked or misconstrued in terms of its meaning to those working in the teaching profession. Moreover, when it has been defined, it has been generally simplified and presented in terms of competencies or techniques, rather than as a holistic and dynamic phenomenon. As I have already discussed, such a view could be potentially misleading or limiting for student teachers, as well as those in practice, who could conclude from this that 'presence' has a 'fixed' form which could perhaps be modelled and copied. From my personal experience in the teaching profession and the findings of this study, this is not the case. So, in essence, this study was my endeavour to 'de-mystify' the notion of 'presence in teaching' by grounding it in the actualisation of its situated reality in teaching practice.

However, over the course of my doctoral studies, this investigation has become more than that. Through this inquiry, which was my first experience of conducting a research study independently as a novice researcher, I have not only begun to understand more about what 'presence in teaching' means to those in the field but also, through this, become more able to articulate insights into the art and nature of teaching itself. In truth, my awareness has become so heightened and honed through the process of this research study that I have found that I have grown both personally and professionally in ways I didn't anticipate. Such a process is described by Giorgi, Fisher and Von Eckartsberg (1971) when they say '*both the person researched as well as the research-person are being changed through the existential method.....they change each other* (Giorgi et al., 1971: 75).

So, in this, my final chapter, I will strive to bring together all the strands of what I have achieved through this project, by clarifying what it has brought to light; both for me personally and the potential contribution it can make to knowledge in the field. To do this, I will start by discussing the insights generated by the findings and how these have served not only to answer the research question I posed and but also to enhance the understandings I explored in the conceptual framework in Chapter Two. I will then outline the ways in which the two theoretical meta themes I have identified as 'Having presence' and 'Being present' can contribute to and interweave with current literature and research in this field. I will then move on to outlining the implications of what I have found; firstly the theoretical and methodological implications, then the practical implications for teaching and teacher education and finally the ways in which research activities can impact on and support the professional development of those who participate in them. I will conclude with the potential, and to date seemingly hidden, power I believe that 'presence' has as an invaluable construct within the educational domain, my thoughts on the limitations and counterbalancing strengths of this inquiry, potential future research in this domain and an account of my final personal reflections on what this study has meant to me in terms of personal growth and learning.

## **6.1 Insights afforded by the study**

### **6.1.1 *A critical reflection on the findings***

In Chapter Two, I posed the research question '**How is 'presence' experienced and perceived by practicing teachers, teacher educators and students?**' The findings from this inquiry have answered this question in many ways, as I will now discuss.

First of all, this study has illustrated that 'presence' in teaching was perceived by the research participants from two very different types of stances; from one perspective, it had a 'representational' form which was subjectively construed by the other as a projection of certain qualities, attributes or characteristics, which elicited an emotive reaction in the other. Such a reaction evoked by the teacher's presence could be either positive or negative, but it had a form of

communicative force which could hold the other's attention and 'leave its trace' in the mind of the other. Furthermore, such qualities, attributes or characteristics could appear as 'distilled' representations of the visual manifestations of a teacher's presence through what I have described in Chapter Two as their 'corporality' (see Figure 2.6, p 89). It was through this aspect of presence that a portal into the ways in which the inner mental and emotional worlds of the teacher and the relational elements of the classroom could be manifested to the outside world through the teacher's presence. It also appeared from the findings that certain elements of this 'corporal' facet of presence were captured by an observer at times and some elements, especially those related to the teacher's emotional world, could remain hidden and tacit. This could lead to 'having presence' being a potentially 'illusionary' state, subjectively construed in the mind of the other, rather than a true embodiment of the teacher's presence in practice.

From a second perspective, the findings provided a more nuanced and dynamic stance on presence which found meaning as it emerged in and through the actuality of teaching practice. Here, my findings emphasised that 'presence in teaching' was a unique and individual phenomenon which required authenticity in the teachers, who each had their own individual ways of being whilst teaching. Moreover, evidence suggested that if a dichotomy developed between the classroom reality and what teachers felt they should be doing or achieving, this could lead to an erosion in their confidence. Such an erosion in confidence could in turn bring about a crisis in their belief in themselves and what they knew as teachers, which could have a knock-on effect on their capacity to be present. Perhaps in response to this, teachers found their own ways of regulating their emotions and developed a capacity to self-regulate in times of crisis. Furthermore, through a sensitive awareness of both themselves and their students in terms of the spatial and temporal dimensions of the classroom, teachers were able to provide a type of 'continuum' of presence (and volitional absence), which offered the space the students needed to develop autonomy and learn in their own ways and with their peers.

Moreover, 'being present' embodied a strong degree of sensitive receptivity and this allowed teachers to maximise the learning opportunities available in the

classroom environment. Specifically, the findings indicated that when teachers provided their students with a sense of relational security through their presence, the class could 'gel' and 'threads' could run through it, which served to link past and future learning by reinforcing the connectivity within the class. Moreover, decisions teachers made about how to or whether to pursue the *'threads that run through'* their classes were a reflection of the choices that they made in the moment, according to their own uniquely personal teaching theories. So, in short, teachers had their own individual ways of 'doing' things in class and building relationships with their students through their teaching presence. Furthermore, the individual paths they chose to follow during their teaching practice had considerable impact on the ways in which past or present learning opportunities were either discarded or taken into the future through the relational aspects of the classroom interaction.

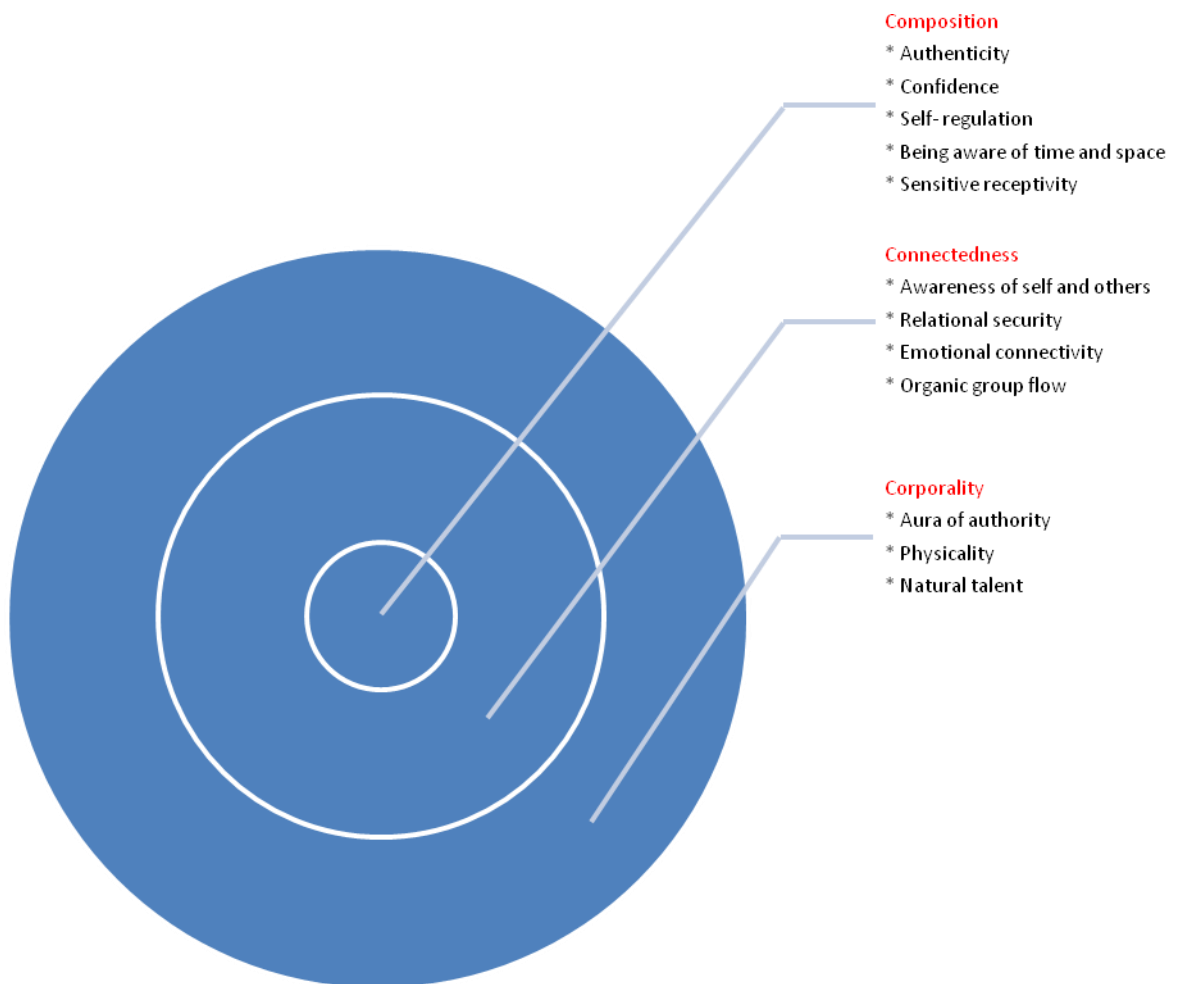
What is more, crucially, the findings have demonstrated the importance of 'flow' within the inter-locking energies of the class as a means of inspiring those learners who were more reticent to join in class activities, as well as encouraging a sense of positivity in the mutual endeavour of teaching and learning. In this way, the findings have highlighted that the dimension I have called 'connectedness' (described in Chapter Two, Figure 2.6, p. 89) also included an element of interconnectivity through which the teacher's presence provided a 'conduit' which served to funnel the hub of potential energies available in the classroom. This appeared to be all the more essential, as it was within this interconnected hub that new learning affordances could arise spontaneously or unexpectedly. If the teacher's presence in the class was or became 'unavailable' or 'inaccessible' for any reason, the findings suggested that a *'learning hub'* could, alternatively, evolve from the students' energies in the class. However, such learning would not then necessarily be directed or funnelled through the presence of the teacher. The teacher could then have little involvement in the flow of the class and therefore potentially manifest little 'presence' in class. The findings also indicate that this lack of personal investment could be sensed by the students, who might then withdraw or distance themselves from the class and their teacher in return.

So, I would surmise that the findings from this study, as reported in Chapter Four, have answered my research question by enhancing the model of 'presence in teaching' I presented in the conceptual framework in Chapter Two by adding new elements which have been generated by this study. In my original framework, I discussed how the different dimensions of presence I called '*composition*', '*connectedness*' and '*corporality*' were interconnected and together reacted and interacted holistically within the presence of the teacher. I would argue that the findings have reconfirmed the holistic aspect of presence. I would also surmise that the findings support the notion that 'presence' is a nested construct in which the teacher's identity or '*composition*' is embodied at its very heart or core of a teacher's being or presence. Evidence suggests that it is from this core that the teacher reaches out to their students (either explicitly or tacitly through sensitive attuning) by means of the corporal elements of their being; some of which are hidden or invisible to the observer and some of which are manifested explicitly.

So, whilst reconfirming the interconnected and multi-dimensional aspects of presence previously described in Chapter Two, the findings add new elements to these dimensions. Specifically, the dimension of presence I have called '*Composition*' also incorporates the elements of '*authenticity*', '*confidence*', '*self-regulation*', '*being aware of time and space*' and '*sensitive receptivity*'. The dimension I have called '*Connectedness*' also incorporates the elements of '*awareness of self and others*', '*relational security*', '*emotional connectivity*' and '*organic group flow*' and finally the dimension of presence I have called '*Corporality*' also incorporates '*aura of authority*', '*physicality*' and '*natural talent*' (these elements have been described in detail in Chapters Four and Five).

This is illustrated in Figure 6.1 overleaf:





**Figure 6.1:** Composition, connectedness and corporality in presence according to the findings.

### **6.1.2      *Theoretical insights emerging from the meta lenses of 'having presence and 'being present'.***

As I have discussed in the previous section, in essence, this study revealed that 'presence in teaching' was both a kind of '*mythical beast*' (my term) when perceived as a static quality, characteristic or personality trait and a potential '*hidden treasure*' (my term) when experienced in its existential dynamic state. It was in fact these two 'meta' orientations I have called 'having' and 'being' which offered me access to the differing depths through which 'presence in teaching' had been perceived, experienced, articulated and explicated within the scope of this study. Accordingly, I have argued that 'having presence' could be construed as offering a 'representation' of presence composed predominantly of a 'first-level' type of image; very like the reflection of an image on the surface of a pond; Such a view of presence, I have proposed, belies the deeper and more complex traits embodied within the construct of 'being present'".

As I further endeavour to square the circle using these lenses, I will now contextualise these orientations within the broader context of the literature and discuss their theoretical significances.

#### **6.1.2.1      *Having presence***

It appeared that when a teacher was deemed to have 'presence' or have '*it*', such an appraisal could well have been triggered by the observer's emotional reaction to what was seen and felt. Indeed, observer perceptions were sometimes triggered by memories of former teachers which had made an impression on them and which they then embodied within a representation in their memory which gave it a form or a shape. '*Oh, he has [had] presence*', they concluded as an emotive stirring provoked a sense of recognition. Moreover, such an appraisal also seemed to be triggered by their cognitive faculties; what was noticed by an observer made sense because it fitted with their own set of values, preferences and norms in terms of practice and pedagogic ideologies. In truth, the ways in which such manifestations of presence were perceived may well have dwelled deep within the collective unconscious of cultural assumptions and have become 'real' or 'authentic' over the years as they were produced and reproduced through such things as imagery, fiction and cultural

artefacts. Kumaravadivelu (2003) describes such intellectual tools available to the teacher as '*critical intercultural literacies*' which could be called upon to '*help one 'read' cultural events and activities*' (p. 274)

Dewey (1974) also discusses this tendency to 'reproduce assumptions' (my term) and coins this as the '*traditions of a calling*' (cited in Schön, 1987: 32) through which professional educational practices are socially and institutionally patterned so that they are familiar to those within the 'calling'. In a similar vein, O'Hanlon (1993) summarises the distinction between a 'professional theory' and a 'personal theory' of education by stating:

*A professional theory is a theory which is created and perpetuated with the professional culture. It is a theory which is widely known and understood.....professional theories form the basis of a shared knowledge and understanding about the 'culture' of teaching...* (p.245-6).

In this way, the practitioners believed what they thought and felt to be true, to make sense and to portray what it was expected to portray. '*Oh, she has presence*', was said of the teacher who had learned to project her voice or the teacher who had learned to manage the class with a contrived process of signalling, instruction or other authoritative gestures. Vickers (1978) similarly describes this as an '*appreciative system*' which practitioners of a profession often use to '*determine what constitutes acceptable professional conduct*' (Schön, 1987: 33).

Moreover, being intrigued by the ways in which the teachers and teacher educators portrayed 'presence in teaching' in archetypical ways or in ways which fitted with their own practice, I also referred to the work of Kahneman (2011) to help me make sense of what I had found. When discussing the ways in which we, as human beings, make sense of the world around us, Kahneman (2011: 415) talks about two 'characters' of the self which he calls 'System 1' and 'System 2'. System 1 has an intuitive function and thinks fast, whilst 'System 2' '*thinks slowly, monitors System 1, and maintains control as best it can within its limited resources*' (Kahneman, 2011: 408).

Kahneman (2011: 409) proposes that human beings remember things in a way which does not depict time as it was actually experienced, but rather the

intensity of the experience through the '*remembering self*' (p.409) and in this way, the '*remembering self is a construction of System 2*' (p.409). He describes how System 2 endeavours to make solid judgements and choices but in doing so it '*often rationalizes ideas and feelings that were [in fact] generated by System 1*'(p. 409). In other words, the choices and judgements we often make as human beings and which we believe are founded on well thought out rational judgements and 'realities' are more often than not the creations of an intuitive, fast thinking reaction based on what Kahneman (2011: 408) calls the potentially false realities of our '*remembering self*'. Moreover, when we, as human beings, make judgements which are questionable, he believes that we will '*search out memory [for] presentable reasons and will certainly find some. Moreover, [we] will believe the story [we] make up*' (Kahneman, 2011: 415).

If I now relate this lens on presence to the model of presence I constructed in Chapter Two (Figure 2.6, p. 89), it becomes clear that 'having presence' could be related to the ways in which an observer construes the manifestations of the '*corporal*' aspects of a teacher's presence. This could provide an illusory depiction if it is based on what an observer perceives and then 'rationalises' by imbuing them with gut feelings, intuition and residues of memories of the past into a believable narrative on which to base decisions and opinions. In other words, those things that are visible and audible tend to be perceived as reliably 'observable' and so an observer will inevitably focus on those elements of a teacher's presence (which I call '*corporality*') which they then interpret and give meaning to in their own way. For example, a deep, melodic voice and intonation could be perceived as being linked to a confident and enigmatic personal presence. Indeed, the findings suggested that the notion of 'having presence' was built on this somewhat ideological view of the ways in which 'presence' can be manifested in teaching. At times, these perceptions of 'presence' construed the teacher as 'a kind of archetype'; seemingly more an effigy built on emotive memories of past learning experiences and residues of previous associations than a reality. Such perceptions could perhaps become a 'reality' as they were discussed by those deemed to be the experts within a community of practice and in this way evolve into an accepted '*fossilised*' version of how presence should or could be manifested.

There has been a lot of interest in the ways in which teaching communities develop their own individual ideologies and systems. Warford and Reeves (2003: 49) build on the notion of a *'coherence system'* (Linde, 1993), which is described as a *'popular version of expert theories and systems'* (Linde, 1993: 18) and suggest that *'coherence systems are governed by the dynamics of causality and continuity in life experiences'* (2003: 49). According to Warford and Reeves (2003), the development of these so-called coherence systems appears to be highly influenced by the culture and context in which they happen and this certainly seemed to be the case in this research study.

In fact, a similar portrayal of 'having presence' is discussed by Kurtoglu Eken (2009: 9) in her PhD research on the effectiveness of language teaching at the Bilkent University School of English Language (BUSEL). She found that after an observation, teacher trainers had very subjective feelings about certain aspects of the teaching they had observed and often commented that something was missing or lacking without being able to verbalise exactly what it was. The teacher trainers tended to talk about teachers, using expressions such as *"She definitely had it"* or *"It seemed to be missing"* (Kurtoglu Eken, 2009: 9). Finding it almost impossible to verbalise or conceptualise what the 'it' was, the teacher trainers agreed to call it *'giss'*, a bird-watching term referring to 'General Impression of Size and Shape (Kurtoglu Eken, 2009: 9). Within her research findings, *'giss'* is linked to the concepts of 'personality', and 'body language and confidence' (Kurtoglu Eken, 2009: 73). She emphasises that careful analysis of the class is essential especially if the *'teacher has a "less obvious, striking or attractive personality'* (Kurtoglu Eken, 2009: 73).

This observation supports my findings in that 'having presence' can be subjectively construed by the other, in this case the teacher educator or observer, as what could be perceived as a type of *'X factor'*; a concept recently popularised by the media to such an extent that people are deemed to either have *'the X factor'* or not, although no one has specified what 'it' actually is. I believe that incorporating such an indefinable and certainly non-measurable essence into the qualities required by teachers can have serious consequences for the teacher whose classroom presence projects a personality which is perceived as somewhat lacking or understated which could lead to the

conclusion that teaching is '*not their thing*'. It might be more a case of finding a supportive shoulder on which to lean, as they strive to align their personal knowledge about who they are, with themselves in their role as teachers, rather than trying to project that illusive and potentially contrived element perceived by others as 'it'.

In truth, the notion of having '*factor X*' in language teaching has been considered within the TESOL arena for a while in terms of bringing the language alive (Arndt, Harvey, & Nuttall, 2000). The basic presupposition is that being more 'alive' to language can be of considerable benefit to both teacher and student, both professionally and personally. My findings developed this idea of 'bringing the subject alive' by emphasising that whilst the '*dramatic presence*' of a language teacher can be stimulating and exciting, such presence needs to be supported on a relational foundation. In other words, whilst '*bringing it alive*' in teaching can be perceived as an awareness of the need to energise and engage the class, it can only really bring the subject alive for the student if the teacher also demonstrates a subtle receptivity to the affects their presence is having on the students at any moment in time and then demonstrates such awareness by 'being present', or perhaps more aptly by being 'fully present' (Farber, 2008: 215), which means that the teacher is not merely going through the motions of teaching in a robotic, rehearsed way but is sensitively attuned to the demands of the moment in all ways; physically, mentally and emotionally.

Evidence from this study also demonstrated that having '*confidence*' was construed as a key component in 'having presence'. Kurtoglu Eken (2009: 75) also found in her research that 'being confident' was construed as a quality needed for having 'giss'. And yet my study has further revealed that a sense of confidence is not static, as it falls and rises in tune with the demands of the situation and in particular with the belief that one will be efficacious and able to cope with such demands. This is also associated with the degree of self-belief teachers have in terms of the content knowledge they can draw on. Confidence is therefore very subjective. Moreover, it can be difficult to understand how confident a person feels from visual clues, as some people are better at hiding their true feelings and projecting a state of confidence than others.

'*Communicative force*' was also identified in the findings as one of the ways in which teachers signalled to the students or drew attention to themselves in order to bring all the students together to a central point of focus. The participants described how they all had very individual ways of doing this, which they had developed through a '*trial and error*' type of evaluative reflection on what worked and what didn't work in different situations. Sometimes a whisper worked better than a shout, especially if the students were all being noisy at that time, sometimes communicative force was demonstrated through physical proximity. Moreover, if a teacher was able to modulate his or her voice and project it in a way which made him or her more visible in the classroom, this was construed as 'having presence'.

It certainly appears that if teachers are able to imbibe their presence with passion, rather than predictability or boredom, then they are more likely to be construed as 'having presence'. In the words of Brookfield (2006: 27), when we become complacent as teachers, '*a certain emotional flatness sets in, followed by a disinterest in the dynamics of our practice*'. However, the findings also implied that if a teacher was not able to project a strong sense of self, then communication was impeded by a 'closing in' which was recognisable through the body language. Farber (2008: 218) supports this finding when he argues that he can reduce or eliminate his presence in teaching '*by [planning] to lock myself, nose down, into a set of notes, more or less, as a defence against everything that I find intimidating or unpalatable or unpredictable about the classroom situation*'.

#### 6.1.2.2 *Being present*

As opposed to 'having presence' which, as discussed, could be recognised by the observer as a projection of qualities or characteristics; the findings suggested that 'being present' was an existential dimension of the moment rendered visible through core reflection into the ways in which a teacher experienced the dynamics of the classroom at any given moment in time. This aspect of presence was particularly accessible through metaphoric associations and visualisations by teachers of both their own self and others, in and through practice. In essence, through 'being present', teachers forged an integral link

between themselves and the complex system of inter-related and inter-connected events and unique experiences occurring within the temporal and environmental space of the classroom. So, for teachers, 'being present' implied being in the classroom in such a way that they could be nowhere else at that moment in time. When fully present in this way, teachers were not distracted by the ongoing chatter in their minds, memories or recollections of the past or imaginings of a potential future, but were truly there in the immediate moment with the students, who were encouraged to also be present in the immediate moment; as Buber (1937/2004: 18) states, '*True beings are lived in the present, the life of objects is in the past*'.

Furthermore, '*a strong sense of self*' in teaching helped the students feel trust in their teacher; trust that the teacher was truly invested in the students' interests, that there was substance in his or her actions and that he or she was not just playing a role. Presence could then be perceived as '*substance*'; the teacher's core being providing a rock of substance on which the student could rely and from which they could potentially learn and grow. However, for the engagement to be authentic, to be real, the students had to sense that the teacher was really there with them at a personal level; the teachers had to find a '*personal way*' to connect with their students. Such an investment of self in teaching is also described by Farber (2008: 215) when he suggests that '*typically, what we want is a full, multileveled engagement from our students: we want their full presence – but we're not likely to get it if they sense that we ourselves are not entirely, genuinely, there with them*'.

Moreover, it also appears that such a giving of self by truly '*being with*' the students, can only come from a strong core sense of who you are, both in your role as a teacher and as an individual person and this can perhaps be difficult or even impossible to access at the beginning of a teaching career. This finding concurs with Farber (2008), who points out that teachers (more often, he believes, those who are in the beginning stages of their teaching careers), have problems with relating to the students at a personal level because of their own insecurities and vulnerabilities. He describes a new teacher '*coming into a class session, so nervous, so insecure, clinging so desperately to the teaching plan....a sort of glass wall descends and the teacher and students remain as*



*remote from each other as though they were in separate mediums*' (Farber, 2008: 216). This glass wall between the teacher and the students makes forging a genuine connection all but impossible. My findings confirm and extend this conceptualisation of 'presence in teaching' as personal growth. The teaching participants described how personal crises of confidence can hit at any time, whether the teacher was new to teaching or had been teaching for many years and how such crises could affect their core sense of self in such a way that they *'wobbled emotionally'*. Haynes and Murriss (2011: 291) have also noted how such 'disturbing moments' for teachers have certain recurring themes and describe them as *'recurring moments of disequilibrium'*. During such periods of personal crisis, the teacher needed sensitive support and understanding in order to learn and grow from the experience and find out what they are capable of doing as unique individuals in a particular teaching context. Moreover, when disequilibrium struck, the teacher's relationship with the students could become 'disconnected' and no longer mutually empathic or empowering. Miller and Stiver (1997, cited in Stieha & Raider-Roth, 2012: 516) refer to this as a *'strategy of disconnection'* which becomes a 'relational paradox', as teachers move to protect themselves from the relationship due to feelings of vulnerability but, by doing so, inhibit the ability to feel confident in their own knowledge (Stieha & Raider-Roth, 2012: 516), which spills over into their teaching and impacts on their 'presence' in the classroom.

Inevitably, this *'relational dance'* (Stieha & Raider-Roth, 2012: 516) between the teacher and students is continuous and disconnections, whether short lived or more prolonged, naturally happen from time to time. This is inherent within the relational nature of teaching. However, evidence from this inquiry suggests that by reflecting on what such moments of disequilibrium and the attached emotional reactions meant to a teacher personally, she was able to *'find a connection'* with the students once again through her own source of caring energy. This also reinforces the essential relational role of the mentor in the teacher/teacher educator relationship, as mentors can help the teacher re-establish balance within themselves and foster their confidence to trust their own knowledge (Raider-Roth, 2005).

The sense of moral *responsibility* the participants felt for their students was evident throughout the study and was very much in line with van Manen's depiction of 'Care-as-worry' (van Manen, 2002a) as it has previously been described in Chapter Two. The findings indeed indicated that the participants developed a '*voluntaristic commitment to a set of principles*' (Hoyle & John, 1995: 104) and that such principles were embodied within a bedrock of feelings of responsibility and *genuine care* which they demonstrated in every aspect of their relationship with those they taught. Van Manen (2006b: 16) describes an involvement in care and responsibility in terms of '*influence*'. He portrays '*influence*' as something that takes over our bodies and our minds simply as a result of sharing and being together as human beings and yet being open to a particular influence which '*connotes the openness of a human being to the presence of another*' (van Manen, 2006b: 16). It appeared to be the negotiation of this openness and the influence it had on them that the teachers had to wrestle with within their practice. Being open to their students emotionally was necessary in order to be present to their needs and yet such openness also invited feelings of vulnerability and inadequacy when things didn't turn out as they expected them to.

In other words, because they faced complex and unpredictable situations on a day-to-day and minute-to-minute basis, it was even more essential that through a presence informed by both their intellectual and moral sensitivity (Hansen, 2000), their classrooms became ethical spaces imbued with *democratic respect* in which judgement was used to anticipate and recognise opportunities for learning. Dewey (1938/1997: 69) describes this as '*the intellectual anticipation, the idea of consequences, [which] must blend with desire and impulse to acquire moving force*'. But in order to move forward, my findings suggested that a sense of *comfort*, both within the self and the environment, was foundational and essential. In this way, stability and expansion (within the constructs of order and novelty) became natural allies and led to an experience of trust (Hawkins, 1974/2002). The participants certainly went to great lengths to ensure that their students felt comfortable with themselves, their peers and the environmental space within which they were learning.

Furthermore, my findings implied that once the '*ground had been ploughed*' and the teachers and the students had co-constructed an environment offering a sense of democratic openness and positivity, it was then possible and possibly even inevitable for the 'green shoots' of learning to take place. '*The emotional sphere*' discussed by the participants in this study offered a conduit through which the feelings and meanings of emotionality became mutually meaningful for both the teacher and the students. Through this emotional sphere, the individual and the group could come together in a way in which learning could happen without the students even knowing that it was happening, as the learning became imbued with an emotional value. So, in this way, this study suggested how personal feeling and the way such feeling interacted with social meaning could join together within mutually inseparable aspects of learning; all of which were fundamentally crucial to the processes involved within the nature of teaching as a holistic whole.

In other words, once the potential cognitive, physical and affective energies available within the classroom had been harnessed in what I have described as a '*hub of connectedness*', then the potential existed for the classroom to become a complex system in its own right. Cilliers (1998: 3) suggests that:

*In order to constitute a complex system, the elements have to interact and this interaction must be dynamic. A complex system changes with time. The interactions do not have to be physical; they can also be thought of as the transference of information.*

In this way the students and the teachers in the classroom became enmeshed in a complex system in which the teacher offered a central point of reference and thus provided a *link* within this hub of connectedness. However, this connection was intermittent and often happened spontaneously without any prior warning. The participants talked about a group '*gelling*' and how sometimes the group '*gelled*' and sometimes it didn't, even though they used the same materials and the same techniques; it seems that this gelling was more to do with the interactive and relational elements which emerged from the composition of the class than the subject they were learning.

Moreover, it appeared that when the students disengaged for any reason, the teacher and teacher educator participants reached out to them to re-establish a

connection with them in any way they could. Often they used *'knots of connectedness'* from previous classroom experiences as *'threads of bits'* which ran through classes, for instance a moment of shared understanding which everyone had enjoyed, such as a joke or light-hearted comment. Moreover, such *'knots of connectedness'* which emerged organically during the class could be ignored by the teacher or build on depending on the ways in which the teacher reflected-in-action (Schön, 1983) at any given moment in time. The choice of whether to run with or ignore an offered *'knot of connectedness'* often didn't seem to be a totally conscious decision at the time, but more an intuitive and reflective reaction to any given situation. The implications of making such a choice were often only realised later through more conscious reflection.

This type of approach to teaching has been described as a *'context approach'*, which focuses on the *'ecology'* of teaching and learning. The teacher is particularly sensitive to context and focuses on everything *'from learners' cultural preferences through syllabus requirements to community attitudes and even the weather'* (Pegrum, 2008: 142). The complexity of doing this in language teaching was evident when the teacher and teacher educators discussed the demanding nature of keeping all the plates in the air and how teaching was *'a big juggling act'*. Van Lier (2004: 81) talks about how a language teacher uses the *'semiotic resources'* of the environment in order to engage and stimulate further action. This is very similar to the ways in which the participants talk about identifying and using opportunities in the classroom. Van Lier (2004: 81) stresses that *'emergence is a reorganization of simple elements into a more complex system'* and this resounds with the ways in which teachers had to be fully present to all the interconnected energies and affordances of the classroom in order to keep all the plates in the air and provide a *'conduit'* through which such energies and affordances could cohere in a positive way and become accessible to all their students.

Kumaravadivelu (2003:8) also uses the metaphor of a *'conduit'*; however he uses the metaphor in a very different way to the way I have used it in this study. He describes how in the transmission approach to learning *'the teacher's primary role in the classroom is to function like a conduit, channelling the flow of information from one end of the educational spectrum (i.e. the expert) to the*

*other (i.e. the learner) without significantly altering the content of the information* (p. 8)'. With respect to presence, conversely, I have used the metaphor of a conduit to illustrate how the teacher acts as a type of 'hub' in order to cohere and (re)configure all the *combined energies* available within the classroom and make them accessible to all learners. I would argue that this is a very different interpretation of the teacher as a 'conduit' than that proposed by Kumaravadivelu (2003). The metaphor of conduit as it is used here infers that information can (and possibly inherently is) indeed altered and transformed, as it is influenced and reconfigured by both students and teacher through their interconnected mutuality of purpose. It is just that as an educator, the teacher assumes responsibility for ensuring that this is done by being present to the constantly changing contextual dynamic at any moment in time.

Moreover, van Lier (2004: 91) uses the term 'affordance' to describe '*what is available to the person to do something with*'. As discussed, for the participants, recognising and acting on the wide diversity of teaching and learning affordances, available at any moment in time, were key elements of being present in teaching. However, such processes varied immensely; for some teachers, recognition and action seemed almost instinctual; whilst for others, they came into being as part of routine practice achieved through experience. In a similar way, Mason (2002: 8), within his conceptualisation of '*noticing*', discusses how teachers '*frequently react according to established patterns*' as a way of dealing with the complexity of the interaction but argues that if instead of purely '*reacting*', when a teacher takes the time to '*notice*' what is actually going on and respond appropriately, then the pay-off for the teacher is a sense of acting from informed choice, rather than ingrained habit. This, in itself, provides a '*sense of freedom, of meaning, of worth-whileness and self-esteem*' (Mason, 2002: 8). He believes that it is '*these moments of personal freedom which keep us going*' (Mason, 2002: 8).

Certainly, understanding and working with the '*action potential*' (van Lier, 2004: 92) of the complex interactions within the physical, social and emotional world of the classroom, was as an inherent part of 'being present' in teaching. Being present within an environment, such as a classroom, in which students and teachers move physically, socially and mentally around a multidimensional

semiotic space, demanded sensitivity and receptivity on the part of the teacher whose responsibility it was to provide a strong point of reference within such inter-connectedness. It was only from this stabilising point of reference that trust and reliability could emanate. Such feelings of trust seemed to be catching; when students became caught up in a positive group dynamic, it seemed to pass from one to another like an *'infectious yawning scenario'*, as one of the participants metaphorically described it.

In addition, the findings also suggested that 'being present' involved a sensitive attuning to the moment and whatever dynamic choices or opportunities were available at that moment within the flow of space and time. This is in line with Hill (2006) who describes *'the flow of the continuous and changing movement of the current in the river'* (Hill, 2006: 62-63). 'Flow' here is an analogy she uses in the same way as Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988) to describe the dynamic and organic interchange of words, gestures, facial expressions and actions that participants exchange within the teaching/learning relationship. One of the participants, indeed, perceived that a flow-like current of learning was something that his presence had inspired from deep within the students. He likened this to the joy musicians feel by being at one with the music and letting themselves go with the moment.

When the classroom was envisaged in this way, it became a meeting ground for the convergent energies of the teacher and the students who all brought their own life experiences, previous learning experiences and dynamic and complex personal presences together within one space. Such a 'bringing together' seemed to offer the possibility of infinite possibilities as the members of the group formed and re-formed and shared what they believed, understood, perceived and 'knew'. Indeed, as Farber (2008) suggests, a classroom has something 'unwieldy' or 'unsettling' about it in the way of interference, distraction and "psychological noise" but argues that this is more than compensated for;

*what is learned in this kind of environment has the possibility of being more integrated, more enriched by the play of shifting perspectives, more securely fixed in an affective and situational context, more highly charged by the encompassing presence of the*

*group itself; this purposeful convergence of people in time and space (Farber, 2008: 217).*

The school and classroom relational and situational context, thus, had a strong part to play in the teachers' capacities to be present at any moment in time. Mutually enriching connections seemed to lead to a greater capacity to be present to the dynamic *flow* of the class, and this in turn led to a greater capacity to manifest presence and make these manifestations available to be seen by an observer, who then assigned their own meaning to them.

However, whilst the previous section has illustrated how the teacher was able to demonstrate their presence through the things they did and the relationships they built in practice, the findings also suggested that the teachers could not always maintain such a positive sense of interconnectedness. At times, the mood in the classroom changed and feelings of vulnerability and sudden critical episodes could bring about a lack of confidence which could temporarily diminished the capacity to be present. At such times (when the teacher felt such a loss of confidence because, for example, the students didn't demonstrate that they had learned what the teacher believed he or she had taught them), connectedness between teacher and student could be lost and the teacher may then withdraw from the relationship with the students in order to re-establish equilibrium within their own self. As a result of this emotional or relational withdrawal, the teacher seemed to have less capacity to be present and this could lead to less explicit manifestations of presence as the teacher wrestled with their own emotional world, rather than engaging with that of the class.

Now, in the section that follows, I will summarise the three key outcomes which lie at the heart of what I have found through analysing the data generated by this study.

## **6.2 Key outcomes**

The three key findings which constitute the major outcomes of this study are as follows:

'Presence in Teaching' is a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon which;

- (1) is construed through three core dimensions, relating to (a) a teacher's characteristics, (b) a teacher's agency and (c) the relational aspects of teaching.
- (2) is perceived and experienced differently according to whether it is expressed by the teacher or the observer.
- (3) is intrinsically paradoxical in nature.

## **6.3 Implications of the study**

I will now consider the implications of this study for education. After reiterating its significant theoretical implications, I will draw attention to its methodological implications regarding future research into the notion of 'presence' and educational phenomena in general. I will then discuss the more practical implications it has for teaching and teacher education and conclude by exploring the ways in which the research participants developed professionally through the study, the impact it had on them and the legacy it left in the context in which it had taken place.

### **6.3.1 *Theoretical implications***

Firstly, this study has generated a number of significant new insights into the meaning of 'presence' as an educational construct, as I have outlined in the previous section. In particular, it has highlighted its multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and holistic nature and demonstrated that it can be viewed through different perspectives or stances, which have an impact on the ways in which it is understood and conceptualised. In this way, it has a potentially infinite number of different 'faces', which are rooted in the ways in which it manifests explicitly or tacitly in different contexts. In the context of this study, from the more distanced perspective of an observer, 'presence' often resided in the emotive reaction aroused and the particular meanings assigned to this by the



research participants; whilst from the perspective of the teacher or 'doer', it took the form of a physical, mental and/or emotional sensitivity and attuning to the other, which supported the inter-relational aspects of classroom interaction and inspired a flow of energy which connected all the inherently diverse classroom affordances available.

Moreover, as I had hoped, the findings from this study have provided a framework within which the ethereality of the socially constructed notion of 'presence in teaching' can be grounded. This offers a clear and detailed register and repertoire of vocabulary appertaining specifically to the ways in which presence lives in teaching practice through the dual-lens perspective found in this inquiry. The discourse provided by this framework will thus allow the notion of 'presence in teaching' to be theoretically discussed and further developed by the teaching and research communities alike.

### **6.3.2        *Methodological implications***

#### ***The use of metaphor***

My findings have methodological relevance as they support the use of metaphor as a window into 'conceptual systems' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), especially when the issue or topic being researched has not been the focus of a substantial number of previous research projects. In truth, the practitioner participants found that they had little in the way of vocabulary or register to help them articulate their understanding of presence as it had seldom been talked about in professional circles. The word 'presence' tended to be avoided by the teacher educators as it had 'ethereal' connotations and lacked a concrete foundation which would help the teacher educators communicate its value to new teachers. So, falling back on metaphoric associations provided the research participants with a means of discussing 'it' in accessible terms. These less easily definable aspects of being a teacher, associated with 'having presence' or 'having it' were thus often described in metaphoric terms. 'Having presence' was often illustrated in terms of a source of light (in the darkness); 'Through the teacher's presence' '*a light beam had come on*' in the classroom. This also highlighted dangerous connotations in the use of descriptive

metaphor. If, however, the 'light' was not perceived as 'coming on' in the classroom through the teacher's presence, the teacher could be perceived as missing something. The assumption could then be made that teaching was '*not their thing*'.

This use of metaphor is particularly potent in phenomenological research, in which an abstract phenomenon such as 'presence in teaching' is 'brought to life' through the real life experiences and perceptions of those who live it on a daily basis; in this case the teacher, teacher educator and student participants, who worked and studied within the school community which provided the context for the inquiry.

### ***Phenomenological research in education***

I would propose from my experiences in this inquiry that phenomenology has a lot to offer the educational research community. However, despite its importance as a research methodology for studying the structure of conscious experience from the first person perspective, phenomenology and in particular the form of phenomenology championed by Heidegger (1962/1927) has traditionally been strangely disregarded in educational research. As Peters (2002) argues '*Heidegger and his forms of phenomenology have been a neglected figure in the field of philosophy of education in the English-speaking world* (cited in Dall'alba, 2009: ix)'. According to Peters (2002, cited in Dall'alba, 2009: ix), this could be due to the perceived complexity of Heidegger's (1962/1927) philosophical understanding and perhaps even his association with the Nazi movement. However, more recently Peters (2002) argues convincingly for the centrality of Heidegger's (1962/1927) philosophy for education, in particular his notion of 'authenticity' and its influence on phenomenology, hermeneutics and existentialism as essential theoretical approaches for education when it is being considered within the social sciences.

Many of Heidegger's texts are specifically pedagogical (see Heidegger, 1968) and strongly evidence his belief that learning is central to understanding. He suggests that '*we learn to think by giving our mind to what there is to think about*' (Heidegger, 1968: 4). Through his phenomenological philosophy, Heidegger (Peters, 2002) considers the profound need for 'openness' and 'truth

of being' in education; both of which have a natural trajectory which follows its own contours and finds its own way. In education today, there is '*a growing movement of openness (open source, open access, open publishing)....that offers ontologically the means for becoming open; being open and open being*' (Dall'alba, 2009: xiii).

Put simply, a research methodology, such as hermeneutic phenomenology, which embodies a deep regard for philosophical openness, should be considered as a fore-runner within the educational debate. Phenomenology '*has challenged taken-for-granted assumptions and prompted new insights into what it means to live, work, play and learn in our world*' (Dall'alba, 2009: 1). Consequently, as can be seen in this study, it offers a multi-dimensional methodology, fully capable of furthering and enriching understanding of today's complex and dynamic world.

### ***Multi-voiced perspectives***

This study has illustrated the value of collecting multi-voiced perspectives in qualitative research. It has demonstrated that different parties involved in the same community can have very different perspectives or stances regarding a particular construct and that it is essential to gather information from all the relevant levels of the organisational hierarchy in any research context in order to allow all voices to be heard. I believe that this project demonstrates that it is only through using such 'multi-voiced' perspectives that a robust and complete picture of the topic or issue being researched can be generated.

### **6.3.3 *Practical implications for teaching and teacher education***

In Chapter One, I outlined how practically significant I believed this study to be for both teaching and teacher education in terms of making the phenomenon of 'presence in teaching' more visible and accessible and thereby enabling practitioners to talk about it in more explicit and meaningful ways. I will now describe how I believe this study addresses such practical significance in terms of the implications it has for teaching and teacher education.

Through this study, the notion of 'presence' has shown itself to be a useful construct in teaching, as it has provided a portal for practitioners to reflect on the true nature of teaching as it happens in the classroom, rather than the perhaps less nuanced perspective of its technical nature, in terms of skill-base and competencies. In addition, whilst this deeper understanding of 'presence' as a pedagogic construct is important for teachers in a general sense, more specifically, it will allow teachers to critically reflect on their role as teachers and the ways in which their personal presence is manifested in the classroom and could be construed by their students. So, whilst gathering the data has made it possible to 'ground' the ethereality of 'presence' and go some way towards making its nature more visible, this study has also rendered it accessible to both novice and more experienced teachers alike. For this reason, I believe that a considerable implication of this study is the clear portal it has provided for discussion about 'presence' in educational practice.

Moreover, one particular aspect of the findings which should be brought to the attention of teachers is that 'presence' is individual and unique. So, a strong implication of this study lies in its support of the need to release teachers from the necessity of squeezing themselves into a '*teaching template*' (Kornelsen, 2006: 81), which shows commitment to a development of '*techne*', or technical skills, with little concern for helping teachers access their own potential 'presence' from within themselves and their own psyche. This supports the need for a teaching mentor or supervisor, who is able to elicit a process of core reflection in the teacher (see Chapter Two, p. 83/84), and help the teacher find their way through the maze of their subjective reactions to a particular teaching situation, which they have found personally difficult or challenging. The mentor or supervisor also requires 'presence' to do this, as they need to be able to build an atmosphere of trust between themselves and the teacher and provide a reliable and core strength to support the teacher through such critical times.

In addition, the discourses provided by the descriptions of the two themes of 'having presence' and 'being present' will offer those involved in teaching with a repertoire of language in terms of vocabulary and register, through which 'presence in teaching' can be contextually explored within any given teaching

community. Specifically, highlighting the tensions between these different lenses on presence will raise teachers' awareness of what presence means in the actuality of practice and draw attention to the inherent dangers involved in making professional decisions regarding a teacher's 'presence'.

In fact, the findings from this inquiry suggest that due to the subjectivity embodied within the construct of 'having presence', 'presence' is not at all suitable as a tool for assessing teachers or making judgements about their professional capabilities through observations. It seems more appropriate to use the notion of 'presence' as a developmental tool, through which becoming teachers at all stages of their careers can reflect on the ways in which they connect with their students, the ways in which this connection can be blocked by subjective, professional and institutional issues and how such a 'blockage' can impact on their presence in the classroom and on the learning flow within the class.

Moreover, it seems that the '*dramatic*' aspects of 'having presence', such as voice projection, confidence building and communicative capacity could perhaps be taught through teacher educational courses, in order to help teachers to make their presence in the classroom more manifestly explicit. However, this should be considered only as addressing the more visible and audible aspects of presence and should be considered alongside awareness raising activities of the 'existential' side of presence and its idiosyncratic and immensely personal dimensions. So, current instructional practices in teacher education programmes need to be looked at again in the light of this research to see if they can accommodate a more holistic attitude towards learning experiences for teachers, that focus on the whole person, both as a teacher, a student and an individual human being. One aspect of teaching highlighted as warranting more consideration in this research, is the provision of awareness raising activities for teachers, appertaining to the ways in which the relational aspects of classroom interaction impact on both teachers and students and how this can have an effect on classroom 'flow'. This research has also highlighted the fundamental need for trust and trust building in the classroom as well as the essentiality of robust ethicality, authenticity and integrity in teachers and in the teaching profession.

In addition, as discussed, this study draws attention to the need for the construct of 'presence' to be explored at all stages of becoming a teacher. At the present time, although presence is acknowledged as essential in the teaching and learning processes (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006), it is not often taught *explicitly* in teacher education programmes or even *talked about* by pre- and in-service supervisors (Liston, 1995). In truth, despite being included as an observation criterion in some ESOL teacher education course syllabuses as previously described in Chapter One, the teacher and teacher educator participants in this study confirmed that in their school, it was seldom talked about *explicitly* in the course curriculum and was often subsumed within other categories, such as 'classroom management' or 'class setting'. This could be due to the difficulty in developing materials which encapsulate its pedagogic meaning, as it has been the focus of so little attention. This certainly needs to be addressed as this study highlights the place 'presence' has as a key pedagogic element which cuts across many different elements of teaching.

So, to reiterate, it appears that, in many TESOL training courses, teachers are taught how best to use various teaching techniques but little attention is given to the importance of being with the students, being present in the teaching/learning experience and making use of the synergy or flow of energy which can be naturally present within the classroom environment as an aid to teaching and learning. I would argue that the layered and detailed understanding of the subjectivity and collective assumptions involved in 'having presence' and the complex nuances of the personal and pedagogic demands of 'being present' provided by the findings in this study can go some way to advancing professional understanding in this realm. For this reason, this inquiry has deep significance for informing teacher education programmes, and has particular relevance for teacher training, supervision and mentoring.

Finally, it is important that teacher educators, supervisor or mentors are aware that when they are observing a teacher, even when they believe themselves to be totally objective, their appraisal of a teacher may well be being influenced by internal processes outside their control. For this reason, it is essential that any developmental observations are discussed immediately with the teacher, so that the teacher can reflect on the meaning any critical moments have for them,

what they were thinking, feeling and doing at the time and how that impacted on the relational aspects of the class. This could help the teacher to better understand their individual subjective reactions and the ways in which these can be manifested through their classroom presence. In addition, providing the observer with a better understanding of the internal workings of the teacher will not only help develop mutual understanding and purpose between them, but also help the teacher develop a better understanding of what is expected of them in terms of 'presence' and how this can be achieved in future teaching situations.

### **6.3.4      *Implications of research for professional development***

This study has clearly illustrated to me how teachers' professional development can be inspired and supported by a participative research activity, such as the one reported in this thesis. In fact, an interesting bi-product of this inquiry was the realisation that the teachers and teacher educators alike were keen to talk about their professional practice in relation to the construct of presence and obviously believed that it was a vital aspect of their teaching. This provided some interesting insights regarding how the participants' involvement provided an excellent platform for their own CPD (Continual Professional Development).

In essence, the nebulous and dynamic nature of presence in teaching emerged through dialogues embedded in the research process and reflections that emotionality can get in the way of presence was also developed in a group discussion. Individual and group discussions embedded in the research process provided a spring-board for the participants' professional development in an interesting and motivating way, whilst they appeared to enjoy sharing some deeply held pedagogic beliefs and professional wisdom. In fact, the study took such a deep hold that the participants became increasingly invested in it over time.

The notion of investment I am discussing here is not an 'instrumental' type of motivation which presupposes that the teachers merely wanted to find out the meaning of the construct under discussion. The investment shown by the

teachers in this study was more encompassing than this and demonstrated how, as individuals, each of them brought with them a complex social history and multiple desires emanating from the ways in which they saw themselves and the world outside themselves. When they became involved in the study and started to speak to each other about their practice, they seemed to be not only exchanging 'personal and professional information' with each other but constantly organising and reorganising a sense of who they were and how they related to the social world in which they participated. Thus by investing in the study, they also appeared to be investing in their own personal and professional identities and the deeply held beliefs they had at the beginning seemed to evolve and change as they listened to the views of their colleagues.

So, I would propose that the fieldwork phase of this study highlighted the ways in which meaningful insights about practice could be forged through dialogic episodes (Bohm, 2004) within a group of professional practitioners, who were all engaged and invested in the same practice. Dialogue seemed to generate a mutual understanding of the benefits of engaging in a group which shared the same aspirations and the same challenges; perhaps demonstrating how an embryonic research community can be built through the development of negotiated understanding and meaning. An essential element of this study was that meaning forged at an individual level opened up avenues for further discussion at a group and community level. So whilst each participant had a unique and individualised understanding of what 'presence in teaching' meant, this personal understanding was later introduced at a group level, where other participants could reflect on it and perhaps embrace it and meld it with their own personal understanding in order to negotiate and create new meanings or understandings. Even those participants with rather fixed or rigid ideas or presuppositions began to revisit these and started to question taken-for-granted stances during the research process.

However, there were influences, external to the classroom, which had a negative effect on the willingness of the participants to participate in a whole group discussion. Thus, whilst in the company of other teachers, the teacher practitioners were happy to share their pedagogic ideologies and the personal realities of their classroom practice in a heartfelt and authentic way, they were



not willing to share these with the teacher educator who allocated classes (see p. 116). This meant that teachers' lived experiences were often kept within the walls of their classrooms and shared with those they believed to be like-minded in their ideologies, but were perhaps kept from those who needed to hear and see them most; the teacher educators who were involved in the training and development of teachers. So, I would suggest that it is perhaps only through developing trust between all teaching practitioners, from a democratic base upwards, in which all parties are not only said to be equal but all parties believe themselves to be equal, that authentic multi-party dialogue is able to take place and multi-voiced perspectives can take that further step towards full contextual and organisational transparency and shared understandings.

### ***Impact and legacy in context***

The field-work stage of this study has left its imprint in the context in which the research took place, albeit in a small, contextualised way and this was evidenced as follows.

First of all, by the end of the field-work stage of the study, the Head Teacher in collaboration with the teachers and teacher educators, had decided to set up a peer observation schedule as the teachers had found it so useful to talk things through after a class with a non-judgemental peer. No assessment would be involved in this to ensure that the ensuing dialogue was non-judgemental and supportive.

Secondly, it was recognised that an external influence was beneficial in opening up avenues for 'teacher talk' within the school. For this reason, the Head Teacher suggested that she took the research design model I had used to another school to encourage across school dialogue regarding key issues and open up avenues and opportunities for meaningful teacher talk. In return, she proposed that a representative of another school could come into their school and use the research model I had designed to similarly explore a notion which was professionally meaningful to them, so that 'across school' teacher talk could be encouraged.

Thirdly, a subject specific module was suggested by one of the teachers who underwent teacher educator training during my time on site. Through discussing the notion of 'presence in teaching', she had developed ideas for a module in the teacher training programme which would help new teachers feel more at ease with their own physical presence in the classroom through mime and drama type activities. She thought that this would help build confidence and ease self consciousness in student teachers, as she perceived a lack of confidence to be a key block to the manifestation of presence in teaching.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

### **6.4.1 *The power of presence***

'Presence in teaching' has shown itself to be a vitally important construct which should be given strong consideration both theoretically and practically in terms of teaching and teacher education. This study has drawn attention to the potential power of the teacher's 'presence' in the classroom and the part it can play in the essential development of relationships between teacher and students. However, as I have inferred in previous chapters, the notion of a teacher 'having presence' could be inherently misleading, as it was a construct which, at times, led to perceptions of characteristics, qualities or essences of the teacher which became intimated or voiced as a 'truth'. The danger of this is that it could encourage an observer to construe the teacher in a reduced or reflected form, which perhaps emanated more from the observer's preconceptions and assumptions than from a true portrayal of the teacher's presence. So, this study has also highlighted how important it is for teaching practitioners to consider how such a 'reduction' or crystallisation of presence might be tainted by the previous life experiences of the observer, who at that particular moment in time might have been unable to recognise the true complexity of the multi-faceted being before them as they were in reality blinded by their own preconceptions. Buber (1937/2004: 11) argues that *'[primary] words do not describe something that might exist independently of them but by being spoken, they bring about existence'*. As I found in this study, whether such words were spoken aloud or silently voiced in the mind; merely the act of vocalising or thinking them was sufficient to bring them into being in some form.

In addition, this study has made it clear that there was a second lens in play in the construction of 'presence', as another seemingly deeper core of presence emerged through dialogue and ongoing reflection on practice; both at a confidential personal level in interviews with me and later at a group level in the focus groups. This presence was existentially entwined *within* the dynamic being of both the self (the teacher) and the other(s) (the student(s)) and emanated from the embodied, enacted, relational and situational aspects of the teachers' practice as they responded, adapted and negotiated their practice within the context in which they were working. Making this aspect of presence explicit could help teachers to realise that the potentiality of their 'presence' in the classroom actually lies within their own being. This could, in turn, help them to reflect more fully on the relational aspects of their classroom presence and the ways in which their presence can serve to develop or inhibit learning opportunities and the part they have to play within the group flow of learning.

Furthermore, this inquiry has drawn attention to the ways in which understanding and consideration for students' vulnerabilities could help teachers to understand and manage their own distancing strategies when they themselves feel vulnerable or alienated. This could help them to develop personally and professionally by highlighting the ways in which they can provide a core 'substance' to which students can confidently refer when faced with the chaotic array of affordances which spontaneously arise when classroom flow is encouraged rather than restrained.

In short, the theoretical insights inspired by this study provide a holistic and inter-connected first-step towards an understanding of what 'presence in teaching' really means in 'grounded' terms, as it was informed by real classroom experiences as they spontaneously occurred in practice. Moreover, insights provided by the findings develop current understanding about what teachers 'know, believe and think' professionally and this in turn can inspire greater understanding about how teacher cognition (Borg, 2006) interacts with personal practical knowledge (Connelly et al., 1997) and emotionality as different facets of a teacher's being holistically synthesise within their presence in the

classroom. On a final note, the findings generated by the study echo a developing awareness in the field that teachers' prior learning experiences are instrumental in shaping their beliefs and practices (Crandall, 2000: 35), and reinforce appreciation that teaching is a mindful profession in which 'tact' (van Manen, 2006b) is required.

I hope that this study will be seen as a valuable contribution by others in the educational research domain and will help stimulate further research in this field.

#### **6.4.2        *Limitations and counterbalancing strengths of the study***

It is important to state that this research journey, as I should imagine any other, has been dotted with personal challenges as it has developed from the initial seed of my curiosity to the thesis it now is. Looking back, I no longer see such challenges in terms of limitations but rather the potential strengths they offered as I moved through them and on from them. So, essentially, through this doctoral work, I have come to accept that there are always concessions to be made or balances to be negotiated in order to provide a written text, such as this, in a way which has meaning and is accessible to others. Moreover, I have come to accept that such negotiations have necessarily involved counterbalancing 'trade-offs' which needed to be managed so that I could present what I have found in such a way that it could prove useful to the professional teaching and research community, rather than just offering a personal tapestry of interwoven insights, which may have little bearing on the reality of others.

I have also found that, as an inexperienced qualitative researcher, I have had to continually weigh up the choices available in order to open up the largest number of potential opportunities to explore my research question. Making such choices sometimes necessitated discarding potential avenues deemed impractical or unsuitable by the research participants and this could be construed as a limitation in any research inquiry. For example, I am aware that by observing 'snap-shots' of teaching and learning encounters, I was not always

able to achieve complete coherence, as related events could have happened before or after I was in the classroom.

I would argue, however, that I have minimised such inherent limitations in my quest for understanding, by endeavouring to integrate a depth of flexibility, rigour and transparency within my research design and thus provide clear reasons why I made the decisions I did. For example, I counterbalanced the limitation of 'snap-shot' observations by asking the participants to discuss anything which happened and which they believed to be significant when I was not in the classroom. This, I believe, imbues the study with the integrity and authenticity which is essential in a qualitative study such as this. So whilst I recognise that my findings cannot be deemed as 'universal' or 'generalisable'; I would contend that through the richness and depth of the data I have generated, I have explicated the ways in which 'presence in teaching' was perceived and experienced *at that time in that setting*.

Another potential limitation could be construed as the context I chose for the study. Of course, by choosing this context, I have discarded the potentiality of other contexts. However, here, I would defend my choice; firstly the school had already come across the notion of presence as part of their curriculum syllabus and secondly, they agreed to house the study for no reason other than to further knowledge and understanding. Thus, any interpretations or meanings I have generated provide fresh professional insights, which are untainted by personal gain. I believe that this in itself endows the research with authenticity, as such insights emerged organically from the realities of teaching practice.

Furthermore, by approaching a school community for access, with whom I had had no previous relationship, I was able to develop a bond with this community from scratch as a researcher, rather than having already played a role there, for example as a teacher or a student. In this way, the data collected was untainted by any past mutuality of experience or relationship. The participants had nothing to gain or to prove and this was, I believe, reflected in the actuality of their responses.

Finally I have found that, as human beings, there are lamentably a finite set of portals through which to articulate meanings and understandings. In the case

of the notion of presence, in particular, there is little in the way of existing language and discourse as a supporting foundation for expression. However, I would argue that this is counter-balanced by the potentiality of finding new insights, as the research participants were able to co-construct their meanings with 'fresh eyes' as they appertained to their own experiences, rather than by referring to pre-existing discourse.

### **6.4.3 *Future research in this domain***

I believe that this exploration of the experience of 'Presence in Teaching' can really only break the ground for future research studies in this area. As I have discussed, research in this fascinating and essentially meaningful area is scant and I have identified the following as possibilities for further investigation:

Firstly, using this study as a foundation for further exploration, each of the composite structures of 'having' and 'being' generated by the data could be taken to a new context and further interrogated. This could lead to an even deeper and more comprehensive articulation of its meaning through these 'lenses'.

Secondly, other researchers could conduct their own exploration of 'Presence in Teaching' either using the research design I have provided or with their own study design. This could offer a different perspective and might generate additional insights into its meaning. Moreover, this study was contextualised within an adult TESOL learning community; it could be replicated within general education; within different subject areas and with different aged students.

Finally, this study was purely qualitative in nature. Other researchers could investigate the notion of presence from a more quantitative perspective by taking the composites of 'having' and 'being' to a more general population of teachers, possibly in the form of a questionnaire, in order to find out to what extent they agree or disagree with them.

### **6.5 *Some final personal reflections***

Last of all, on a more personal note, I can only say that I have been profoundly affected by this study. The complex and, at times, deeply personal nature of

the question I asked, alongside the generosity of spirit and loyal commitment shown by the co-researchers I explored it with, have brought the profundity of existence and being human more sharply and deeply into focus for me. Quite simply, I have learned more about myself, about being a teacher, about being human and about 'Presence in Teaching' than I would have thought possible before embarking on this journey.



# **Licentiate Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (LTCL Diploma TESOL)**

Validation Requirements,  
Syllabus and Bibliography  
for validated and prospective course providers

from April 2005  
updated February 2007

This qualification is accredited by the  
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**Unit 4**  
**The Syllabus**

**The lesson**

Please place one tick for each bullet point in either the fail, pass or distinction column.

Weighting	Fail	Pass	Distinction	Mark
50%	0-59	S: 60-71 G: 72-83 VG: 84-95	96-120	/120

Category	Fail	Pass	Distinction	Comments by assessor/examiner
<b>1. Professional presence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The candidate succeeds in creating a positive and motivating learning environment.</li> <li>The relationship with the group and individuals is professional and encouraging.</li> <li>Non-verbal communication is effective in conveying meaning to the learners.</li> <li>Clear voice projection enhances teacher talk and listener confidence.</li> <li>Teacher talking time is appropriate.</li> <li>Empathy with the learners' difficulties and learning styles is evident.</li> <li>The candidate is assertive when appropriate.</li> </ul>				
<b>2. Language awareness</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The candidate's language awareness and knowledge of target language are appropriate to intended aims.</li> <li>An ability to convey language concept effectively is evident.</li> <li>The candidate checks concepts and shows evidence of evaluation of learning.</li> <li>Phonological aspects are integrated with language teaching and learning.</li> <li>Tasks are appropriate to linguistic aims.</li> <li>The candidate responds effectively to linguistic difficulties.</li> <li>The learners' strengths in language awareness are acknowledged.</li> <li>Effective error awareness and feedback are encouraged.</li> </ul>				
<b>3. Classroom management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sensitive management of learners' needs is demonstrated.</li> <li>The candidate succeeds in implementing tasks and activities through clear instructions.</li> <li>Student interaction patterns are effective and appropriate.</li> <li>Reflection and evaluation of main learning aims are encouraged.</li> <li>Effective eliciting is demonstrated.</li> <li>Awareness-raising and noticing techniques are relevant and effective.</li> <li>Pace and timing are appropriate to the task in hand.</li> <li>Space and time for note-taking, questions, peer support and effective monitoring are given.</li> <li>Teaching aids and materials are used effectively and are appropriate to the level and task type.</li> <li>Materials are imaginative, motivating and focus on varying learner styles.</li> </ul>				



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Experts in Language Assessment

# Delta Syllabus Specifications

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**Module One**

**Module Two**

**Module Three**

From September 2008

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	<p>4.4 Demonstrate ability to communicate with learners and to facilitate communication among learners</p> <p>4.5 Manage and support learning with individuals and groups to maximise learning</p> <p>4.6 Give feedback on progress/achievement for all learners</p> <p>4.7 Demonstrate, without stereotyping, an understanding of the learners' cultural background(s)/context(s) and implications for teaching and learning</p> <p>4.8 Demonstrate flexible and appropriate use of a range of practical classroom actions, techniques, traditional and e-materials and resources to help achieve specific goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity of learners' backgrounds, views and language abilities</li> <li>• Principle of equality, inclusiveness and respect for all learners at all times</li> <li>• Organisation of the physical space and utilisation of classroom resources, taking account of the learners, type of lesson, and safety regulations</li> <li>• Classroom presence: ability to gain and hold attention, to give clear unambiguous messages, to listen to, interpret and respond to what learners say, to show support, understanding and empathy where appropriate</li> <li>• Appropriate graded language to ask relevant and effective questions, and to give clear instructions, explanations, demonstrations, feedback and guidance as needed</li> <li>• Task setting and managing a variety of working arrangements as appropriate</li> <li>• Monitoring activities and learners</li> <li>• Strategies to deal with problems and misunderstandings</li> <li>• Accurate information on language systems and language skills</li> <li>• Ways of checking learners' understanding of the meaning, form and use of specific language items</li> </ul>
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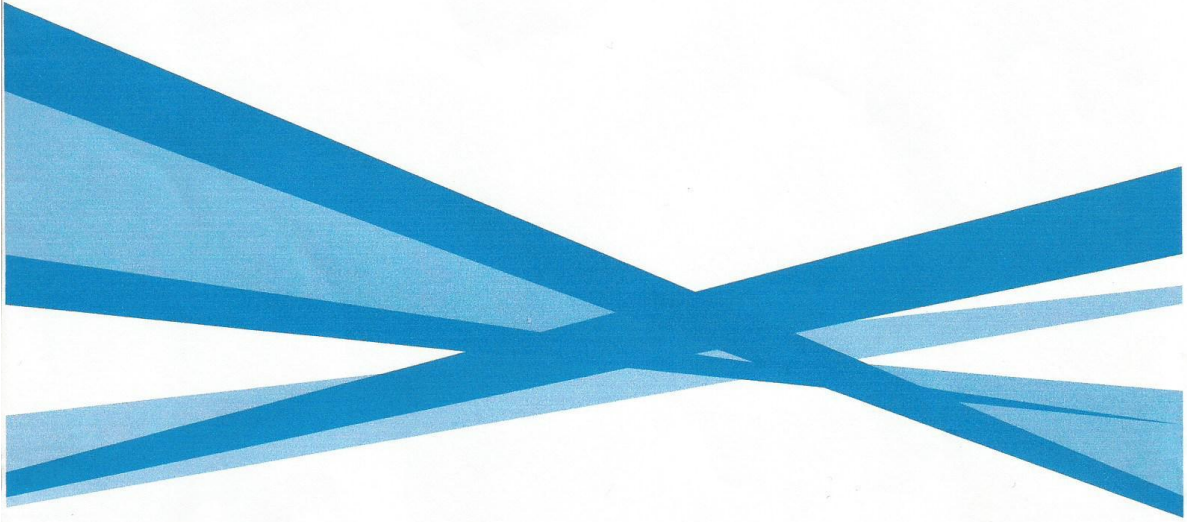
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*Third Edition*



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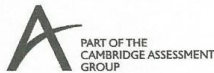
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**Unit 5 – Developing teaching skills and professionalism**

Ref	Syllabus content	Learning outcomes	Assessment
<i>Successful candidates can:</i>			
5.1	The effective organisation of the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. arrange the physical features of the classroom to suit the learners and the type of lesson, and ensure safety regulations are taken into account</li> <li>b. set up and manage whole class work, pair and group work and individual work as appropriate</li> </ul>	Teaching practice
5.2	Classroom presence and control	establish and maintain a good rapport with learners at all times and foster a constructive learning atmosphere	
5.3	Teacher and learner language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. use their own English Language skills to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching</li> <li>b. adjust their own use of language to the level of the class</li> <li>c. give clear instructions</li> <li>d. choose appropriate moments, and appropriate strategies for correcting learners' language</li> </ul>	
5.4	The use of teaching materials and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. make appropriate use of a range of materials and resources in relation to specified aims</li> <li>b. understand the implications of teaching with limited resources</li> </ul>	
5.5	Practical skills for teaching at a range of levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. work successfully with learners at different levels, using appropriate types of classroom activity to develop learners' language and skills</li> <li>b. involve learners of different ability levels in the work of the class and enable them to feel a sense of progress</li> </ul>	
5.6	The monitoring and evaluation of adult learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. demonstrate the ability to monitor learner behaviours in class time and to respond appropriately</li> <li>b. incorporate into their lessons some basic assessment procedures</li> <li>c. make planning decisions on the basis of assessment</li> </ul>	

**Interview Schedule - teachers**

1. **Please could you tell me a little bit about yourself and your teaching experience?**  
How long have you been a TESOL teacher?  
What do you like about teaching English?
2. **Can you think of a metaphor to describe your presence as a teacher?**  
Why have you used that metaphor?
3. **Can you think of a teacher you remember as having ‘presence’?**  
Why do you think you remember that teacher as having presence?  
Can you think of a metaphor to describe that teacher’s presence?
4. **‘Teacher presence’ is sometimes used as a criterion for teaching observations. What do you understand by the notion of ‘teacher presence’?**  
How do you think your particular presence influences the interaction in your classroom?  
How do you think your students would describe your presence as a teacher?
5. **Do you think ‘teacher presence’ or ‘classroom presence’ should be a criterion in teacher observations?**  
Why? Why not?
6. **What kind of relationship do you hope to form with your students?**  
Can you think of a time when you have felt distant or disassociated with your students?  
Why do you think that happened?
7. **How much of yourself do you think you bring into the classroom?**  
In which ways do you bring yourself as a person into the classroom?  
What does ‘being yourself, whilst teaching’ mean to you?
8. **Do you think your presence as a teacher changes at all?**  
Would you say you are the same you in every class?  
Why do you think that is?
9. **As a teacher, what difference do you think your presence in the classroom makes? Why is this significant?**

**Interview Schedule – teacher/teacher educators**

1. **Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your experience in teaching?**  
How long have you been a TESOL teacher/teacher educator?  
What do/did you like about being a teacher/teacher educator?
2. **‘Classroom presence’ is included in the CELTA and DELTA syllabuses. What do you understand by the notion of ‘classroom presence’?**  
How do you think a teacher’s presence influences the interaction in a classroom?  
How would you describe ‘classroom presence’ to your student teachers?
3. **Do you think ‘teacher presence’ could/should be included as a criterion in teacher observations?**  
Is it included in any way in your school at present?
4. **Can you think of a teacher you remember as having ‘presence’?**  
Why was that?  
Can you think of a metaphor to describe that teacher’s presence?
5. **Think of a student teacher you have recently observed. Can you think of a metaphor to describe their presence as a teacher?**  
Why have you used that metaphor?  
What do you feel is positive or negative about it?
6. **What kind of relationship do you hope to form with your students/student teachers?**  
Can you think of a time when you have felt distant or disassociated from them?  
Why do you think that happened?
7. **How much of yourself do you think you bring into your relationship with your students/student teachers?**  
What does the term ‘being yourself whilst teaching’ mean to you?
8. **As a teacher/teacher educator, what difference do you think your presence makes to the students/student teachers?**  
How is this significant?
9. **Do you think a teacher’s classroom presence is always the same?**

<p>Can you tell me a bit about your experience as a teacher?</p>	<p>How much of 'you' do you take into the classroom?</p>
<p>What do you like about being a teacher?</p>	<p>Can you think of a metaphor to describe your presence as a teacher in the classroom?</p>
<p>What does 'being a teacher' mean to you?</p>	<p>Can you think of a teacher you remember as having 'presence'?</p>
<p>How do you think you make your Presence known in the classroom?</p>	<p>How do you try to get through to your students?</p>
<p>What do you think is meant by the notion of 'teacher presence'?</p>	<p>As a teacher, what difference do you think your presence in the classroom makes?</p>



### Interview 1

1. *'I like finding different ways of letting them, you know, of giving them information. Sometimes, I do that without them even realising that I am, which is quite nice...'*

Can you elaborate on this, please?

2. *'I tend to appear and disappear in that class'*

Can you speak a bit more about this, please?

3. *'I do know that when I'm talking to some students (not all students, you can't win them all), the attention is complete, you know and you bat off each other.'*

When you say bat off each other, what do you mean?

4. *'I think that's my presence, maybe as a more nebulous sort of thing that the students maybe don't recognise as such, in the same way as they do someone who stands there and says 'do this and do this'.*

Can you say a little more about this, please?

5. *'There was a dark cloud to this presence'*

What do you imagine this dark cloud could be?

## Interview 2

1. (When talking about student teachers) *'it's that human aspect, rather than the practical aspect, more than anything else you have got to take into consideration'*

What exactly do you mean by 'human aspect'?

2. *'It's body language, interactions, defensive positions, eye contact'*.

Can you think of any other ways a teacher shows sensitivity?

3. *'Confidence doesn't always reflect content and knowledge'*.

Can you talk a bit more about confidence in teaching please?

4. *'It's a bit like not being able to tune into a radio station, you know, or to get the two way feedback.'*

Tune in?

5. *'I call it '360 degree awareness'*

.....Awareness of what exactly?

- 6 *'that was holding him back from performing the procedures that were necessary so it was becoming a disability'*

.....Disability?

- 7 *'it passes from one person to another; there is almost a chain reaction, which affects the whole.'*

Can you think of other times when this has happened?

8. *'The sense that you genuinely care'*.

How can you show that you genuinely care?

### **Example of observation field notes**

#### *Observation Eight – Thursday 5/4/12 at 10.45*

There are 15 students in a small cramped room. The teacher makes the decision to split the students into small groups or pairs in three different venues. There are four students remaining in the room, an older pair and a younger pair and they seem happy to have more space. The last two students to move volunteer to go to a new room, they seem to welcome the fact that it is cold and there is a lot of space. The teacher has an easy-going attitude but exudes a sense of authority when he asks them to move and they do so quietly and amicably.

The student pairs work as reporters and survivors from a plane crash. The interviewers have already written down a series of questions they want to ask and the teacher moves between the rooms, encouraging, asking questions and just 'being there'. By entrusting the students to do what they were asked, they are getting on with it together, helping each other. When the teacher comes into the room, they ask for a word or read what they have written out loud to the teacher. They don't need him to be there to do the work, they can create the story together but look to him for reassurance.

Three students are in the students' lounge. They seem relaxed and able to say what they want without feeling embarrassed or inhibited by the teacher. They appear to enjoy being together and a slight sense of rebellion comes in as they talk about something a 'bit naughty'. They seem to enjoy testing the teacher who lets them speak but seems embarrassed. He comments that it is inappropriate and they continue. They are now talking enthusiastically involving the teacher in their discussion. He is 'one of them' and they seem comfortable and able to speak without embarrassment or worry about making a mistake. He responds warmly to them. He has a wide range of ages in the class and deals with this by splitting them and letting them work in their age groups and monitor them by moving between the classes. The groups are getting on at different speeds, some more engaged than others. The space and freedom seems to encourage creativity and they communicate mainly in English without recourse to their L1.

The teacher's presence is absence in a sense – they know he can return at any moment and they are aware that he is there as a support. There is a flow of energy within the groups and when the teacher is present, this energy flow includes him, as he is relaxed enough to allow this freedom. Two young students are just sitting and thinking without the teacher present. Slowly, they start to create a story, without defining individual responsibilities within the task, one starts to tell the story verbally. The other starts to write it down and in this

way, the story unfolds. The allocation of roles is decided without verbal negotiation and without guidance from the teacher. They seem to just 'fall into it'. The teacher is there and not there at the same time – he spreads his attention between the groups and entrusts that they will do what is needed to achieve the task. His presence seems to be there even in his absence as a ghost of the relationship he has built with his students over the past couple of weeks. This presence/absence ghost seems to enable the flow between the students and somehow a creative endeavour is enacted in the space created by his leaving the room.

The teacher shows sensitivity to his students – he understands that asking them to read aloud in front of the others could make them feel vulnerable and exposed and so thinks that he will 'see how it goes' and decide on his next step in the light of this. On further reflection, he thinks that he will 'just mark them' but later lets them pass around their stories and share them with the others in the class. In this class, ideas are first and foremost but there is a reminder about language 'Remember in this story, it's all in the past!' They smile and check their writing.

## **Questions used in Post-observation Discussion**

1. How do you think that class went?
2. Was there anything that took you by surprise during the class?
3. How did you try to engage the students?
4. Did any particular student(s) stand out?
5. Why do you think that was?
6. Did anything happen that you didn't expect?
7. Were there any special moments or incidents that you remember?
8. How did these make you feel?
9. How do think you reacted when this happened?
10. How do you think you would feel if you had been a student in that class?

## Themes for Focus Group discussion

### **1** *Being a TESOL teacher*

*Is there such a thing as a 'born' or 'natural' TESOL teacher?*

*Is teacher presence a question of having confidence in yourself?*

*How does teaching style relate to teacher presence?*

### **2.** *Being in tune with students*

*Do you need to be 'emotionally transparent' to have presence?*

*Do you need to 'entertain' in some way to have presence?*

*Is part of having presence an intuitive type of knowledge?*

*Do you need to be 'connected' to the students to have presence?*

### **3** *Classroom environment*

*How can you create a democratic atmosphere and at the same time remain the teacher who has authority?*

*How does your presence as a teacher influence the classroom environment?*

*Is there really a 'dark side' to teacher presence which can have an impact on the classroom environment?*

## Examples of 'Memos to self' and Field Notes

### **ENTRY 1**

*Field notes – 3/11/11 (Methodological Note)*

*It was interesting to note that the teachers in the teachers' workroom were beginning to debate and discuss the meaning of the construct of 'teacher presence' during their break time conversations. One of the teachers said that he thought it meant the physicality of the notion and the teacher being physically present in the classroom. The other said he thought it meant the dramatic aspect of presence and how it is expressed through the dramatic presence of the teacher. They turned to me and asked whether I thought the notion of 'teacher presence' should be considered with reference to its dramatic connotation or its physical connotation.*

*Obviously, being at that time unconsciously mindful of the conceptual framework of the study and consciously mindful that I didn't want them to limit or box the construction of the understandings and the meanings that they were ascribing to the events in their own life worlds in any way, I responded instinctively. From what I have read and from my own professional experience, the embodied (and in this sense dramatic) and the enacted (and in this sense physical) aspects of teacher presence both have value and form part of the dynamics of the classroom, so I answered 'well, both really' before I even realised I had spoken. They seemed to be happy with this and later after further reflection agreed that both are important aspects within the totality of the notion and how they perceive and experience it in what is going on in their own classrooms. This incident made me realise that I don't have my own presuppositions in check as much as I thought I had!*

### **ENTRY 2**

Memo to self - 17/11/11

#### Cultural mismatch

There appears to be a cultural mismatch between the ways in which teacher presence is perceived and experienced by the teachers and teacher educators and the way in which they perceive that this fits in with the pre-conceptions and presuppositions of their learner's cultural heritage regarding education and what a teacher is.

Entry 2 - continued

Time helps meld incompatibility

Time appears to help to meld the incompatibility through the forging of relationship.

Core element of being human

There appears to be a core element to teacher presence which transcends culture.....this seems to be to do with humanness, care and a degree of mutual respect for each other as people.

Need for reciprocity

For a teacher to be fully present, there appears to be a need for reciprocity.....a teacher being fully present alone can be a lonely job, but once the students are also open to being fully present as well, it becomes a labour of joy.

Teacher and teacher educators being vs. objectifying

The teachers and the teacher educators appear to 'see' the notion in different ways. The teacher educators can recognise presence when they are doing observations and conceptualise it in a more objective way...they believe it is fundamental to a lot of other classroom activities, such as monitoring, building rapport, setting the scene etc. The teachers on the other hand have little conceptualisation of what it means as a notion until they start to visualise and describe themselves within their class. They then can describe their experiences through their feelings and actions and the strategies they use but still have a vision of presence as the 'doing'....it is embodied within their being...it is only after this that they begin to conceptualise what it means in terms of teaching....the developing conceptualisation is affected by the classroom experiences which follow and then they re-conceptualise again.... in some cases, their initial perception of teacher presence in the first interview seems to be moulded by their own experiences as a learner...in the second interview as they relate their perceptions to their recent teaching experiences, they re-mould their understandings so that they are more in tune with their own teaching experiences than recollections of past teaching. i.e. one teacher in the first interview said that teacher presence was bringing the teaching subject alive through personal narrative, in the second interview this was altered to see teacher presence in a more democratic way in which all the people in the classroom are fully engaged and that learning takes place by finding a mutual space in which both presences can meet. This cannot be done by the teacher alone.



Entry 2 - continued

The badge of authority

There is a mysterious element to the way in which someone is recognised as a teacher just by being a teacher.... is it because they are invested in the situation in a different way than a learner....is it because they are familiar with the setting....is it the clothes they wear...the pens they carry....

**ENTRY 3**

Memo to self – 21 November 2011

1        *The TESOL teacher's presence turns the classroom into an International space. Before the teacher goes into the classroom, the students sit in groups of the same nationality and culture, but by working through the teacher and the materials introduced by the teacher, the classroom becomes international, whereby cultures and nationalities are mixed up....the teacher's presence is an enabling force.*

2.        *Presence is socially constructed but has to be acceptable by both parties....identity.....if the teacher's presence doesn't fit in with the constructed image of what a teacher should be then the student becomes confused and goes back to own heritage to find out what or who the teacher is.... asks questions to reassure self that the teacher is a teacher....only then can join in....unless acceptance of teacher status without question...merely because he or she is standing in front of class.*

3        *Teacher is heavily invested in being a teacher and this investment is somehow embodied in their presence.*

4.        *Teacher takes ownership of teaching space.....through familiarity.....more intimate knowledge of surroundings....moral investment in desire to help and enable?*

5.        *Unwritten rules about hierarchy of teacher presence.....cover teacher maintaining class but not wanting to show presence more strongly than main class teacher....unwritten acknowledgement of ownership and positioning.....respect for peers and community.*

**ENTRY 4**

Memo to self – 23/11/11

1. Teacher presence provides opportunities for students to have a voice in English, thus in the international English speaking community.

Entry 4 - continued

2. Absence of presence is emerging as a key aspect of presence – both by being in and out of the classroom and by moving closer and distancing self from learners.

3. Ownership of classroom.....unwritten rules within teaching community.

4. Badge of authority....can be perceived in different ways....embodied within professional self or perceived as an 'air' or 'aura'.

5. Authenticity....teacher could be perceived as inauthentic by others if teacher presence is different from what is already known or assumed.

6. Presence is moderated in relation to perceived need for discipline/order etc.

7. Teacher presence embodied within a sense of encouraging risk taking.....learning through mistakes or not being afraid of making mistakes.

8. Burn out seems to be an issue with younger students but not really with adults.....something to do with boundaries or sense of moral responsibility or getting involved which children inspire in adult teachers more than adult learners do.

9. 'you can do it' attitude....enabling through modelling. Teacher presence as an embodiment of reassurance and comfort....providing a safe space in which to experiment and learn through trial and error without fear.

10. Teacher presence can act as a 'connector' between voiced and unvoiced needs of the learners as more confident learners vocalise the needs that others cannot express. In this way, learners find their own needs and gaps in learning can be filled by teacher's response to others.

11. Catering for one student and offering learning to the group can help less able students to find a voice

12. Teacher presence can be perceived in a mystified form.....a form which is not 'human' but which personifies the essence of 'being a teacher'. Such a mythical form seems to draw the learners in as a compelling sense of mystery surrounds the sometimes shrouded, portrayal of 'teacherness' which is more an aura than a concrete

Entry 4 Cont.

reality. Such a figure appear to stimulate an emotional reaction on the part of the learner...be it fear, insecurity etc and this shrouded vision remains locked in the memory as epitomising the 'teacherness' of a teacher.....could such a figure be linked within the child's memory to some other fantasy figure for which they had constructed an inner meaning...this links with mythical beast rather than hidden treasure.

**ENTRY 5**

Memo to self – 27/11/11

- 1. With adults there is less sense of moral responsibility than with children and teachers enjoy this – a sense of teaching without responsibility for their moral welfare.*
- 2. With roll on roll off system, there is not responsibility of who am I passing them on to...will they like them, do OK...but downside is that it is difficult to build a deep relationship and sense of community is continually in flux.*
- 3. With foreign students away from home there is a sense of a parental responsibility – do you eat vegetables....not allowed to cook in host families kitchen...parental sense of care.*
- 4.adapting to the students pronunciation quirks etc over time.....others hear it but teacher doesn't*
- 5. leaving the room is the ultimate way of insuring students work independently but can only be done after building them up to it so that they can trust their peers in the group as much as they trust the teacher. Building a sense of community gives the teacher a sense of release which enables her to put more into teaching on the whole.....a sense of freedom within the classroom which enlivens things and helps group to trust each other by her trusting them.*
- 6. understanding what is appropriate in class.....silliness in class could extend beyond the class and cause offense....young teachers may not have the authoritative presence to ensure appropriateness and banish what is inappropriate culturally....ie 'I will kill you'.....cultural sensitivity – very important in TESOL*

**ENTRY 6**

Memo to self – 28 November 2011

1. Experimental side of teacher presence....showing students the value of taking risks in learning though their own risk taking and experimenting with ideas....i.e. recording and listening for change
2. Encouragement ...through teacher and peers and doing something right....
3. Individual student wanting attention but teacher being very aware of responsibility to group and how giving one student attention will divert from their relationship with the group.
4. You can see it in his eyes.....reading the students thoughts by looking for clues...trying to get inside student's head....by having good relationship with one student- has knock on effect with group....one 'affiliation' within group can help ease the way for new students.

**ENTRY 7**

Memo to self – 29/11/11

1. *very mobile workforce and studentship....coming and going every week, so personal involvement is naturally limited by circumstance...get more personally involved with some than others because of special circumstances.*
2. *sharing power in the class with students who are older as Asians accept the natural authority that comes with age*
3. *students think a lot if teacher shows adaptability within work schedule....this is what I want so this works in teachers favour*
4. *providing beginners with a comfortable environment in which they feel able to take risks and speak....feeling of reward...you have taught them something...with more advanced...teaching is in past just part of a continuum of becoming more able to use language. Beginners at being launched at start of journey....more exciting...more feeling of being part of something new.....advanced is more a case of helping them revisit what they know*

Entry 7 (cont.)

*5. bringing needs of one student into class and enabling group to help build confidence in something...in end all find it useful*

*6 offering space for creative gap.....allowing space for creativity to take place...language learning is creative as well as mathematical.....calculation as well as contemplation*

*7. the presence the teacher brings to the class depends on the need to demonstrate it....some more boisterous and lively classes need it more than the more studious obedient classes.*

**ENTRY 8**

Memo to self - 04/12/11

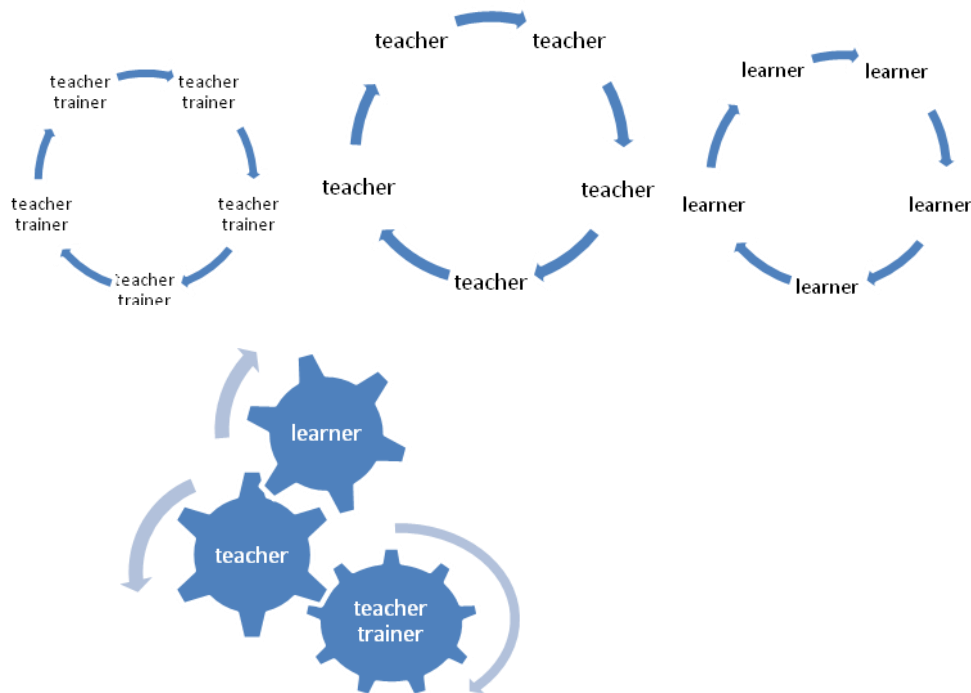
1. Teachers and teacher educators have a natural hierarchy within the school.....teachers are in work room...teacher trainers tend to stay outside work room with own room. The teacher who was 'becoming' a trainer seemed to change over course of study....spending less time in work room.
2. Teachers wanted a focus group with only them (the teachers) or with one teacher trainer who was 'teacher friendly'...not the one who held the power regarding job distribution.
3. Funnel effect...teachers had a strong instinctive conceptualisation of their presence in the classroom as educators....feeling of care for learners greater educational goals....teacher trainers saw themselves as only having a short time (4 weeks in case of full time CELTA) in which to model and train the novice teachers to perform as teachers. Saw it as a staged building exercise...once they had managed 'this' ...they could move onto next stage 'scaffolding' effect but didn't have time to 'educate' the teachers.
4. Presence was a phenomenon which the teacher trainers had heard of and they saw it as essential to many parts of classroom teaching but it was not seen as a whole...the teachers had a more instinctive grasp of what it meant as a whole within their teaching. Teachers could not grasp it without being able to link it and visualise it within their teaching experiences.

Entry 8 - continued

5. Both teachers and teacher educators had a sense of a teacher who had ‘presence’ when they were learners....but the teachers were more able to visualise that person and access the feelings associated with that person...the teacher educators had developed a more distanced stance which was more grounded in practice as a functional activity in which certain steps were taken to get the job done....they were more aware of a natural presence within some novice teachers who seemed to have a natural communicative ability to engage with the learners at an early stage.....possibly a link to

a parental aspect.....nurturing and instinctively understanding their needs, rather than being locked within their own teaching ‘box’.

6. The cycle of understanding



**ENTRY 9**

Memo to self – 8/12/11

- 1. Doing a first interview a bit later and after doing a lot of second interviews was hard....I had already moved on in my understanding of the topic and during the interview things were coming into my head that the other participants had said. It was evident that the participants and I were becoming a small research community of our own and that they were co-researchers....I was very involved in that and could no longer even attempt to 'bracket' my consciousness. I found myself making comments and participating with 'juicy morsels' I was beginning to gather within the pool of my growing understanding of how the group saw the meaning of 'classroom presence'*
- 2. The participants are talking about the topic in the workroom but when I came in the subject had apparently changed...(because of my presence?). the main debate seems to be whether it is their physical presence in the classroom which can be expressed through behaviour and therefore practice or whether there is more to it than that in the form of some sort of aura which is given off and sensed by the learners....that this aura is somehow interpreted as being a 'teacher' and has some sort of emotive effect which is remembered but also could be deemed to be an enforcer of rules so that discipline is maintained but fun and creativity could be lost.*
- 3. The mythical archetype of a teacher seems to be changing....the austere old school teacher doesn't seem to be popular and evokes a sense of fear even in the teachers of today. This figure is being replaced by a more democratic, fun-loving figure whose presence provides a sense of comfort and reassurance and who is there for the learners' needs rather than their own desire for power*

**ENTRY 10**

Memo to self – 8/2/12

*My confidence in the methodology of the study is rising! Yesterday, one of the teachers mentioned to me that the school are now thinking of including casual peer observations in their timetable. The teachers have found it so useful of have another 'teacher' in their class and they really value the opportunity to discuss their class in a non-judgemental way which doesn't involve assessment (ie teacher training) or inspection (ie British council). Today one of the teachers repeated that she found it very useful for her own professional development to*

*Entry 10 (cont.)*

*be able to speak to me about her teaching and that is was something she felt had been lacking. She said she found it 'enlightening and empowering'. I felt then that I wasn't just taking everything in this study but was giving something back and this was encouraging a stronger sense of professional community and awakening a sense of the need for mutual professional support within the teacher networks. It was most gratifying!*

**ENTRY 11**

**Memo to self – 13/12/11**

**1. Teachers**

The teachers seem to generally have a more abstract conceptualisation of the notion of 'teacher presence'. They are not familiar with the concept and how it is related to their practice....however they generally have a clear representation of what teacher presence means in terms of their own learning. The archetypes of teachers with presence seem to have an emotional resonance with their learning days. These teachers either instilled a sense of fear in them through the representation of an 'old school' type who dressed in what they considered a typically 'academic way' or maintained a degree of emotional distance. These teachers could enforce discipline without words...just by being a representation of a 'die hard' type with a set jaw or piercing eyes etc. The other type seemed to resound with them in a warmer emotional way....the dramatic drama teacher with a charismatic presence which entertained them or presented a bold representation of a strong character...nothing weak or fey about them....a person who is comfortable in their own skin and can 'project' themselves without self-consciousness.

Once they are thinking about their own classrooms and visualise themselves within it as a part of it...they start to give a more personal representation of the meaning of presence as they realise that it is related strongly to every facet of their teaching. It is embodied in the instinctive responses between themselves and their students. It is strongly aligned to the teaching techniques and skills they use although they are fully aware of the difference, tending to see technique as a way of managing the class and presence an embodiment of their interactivity with their students as a human being and as a representation of the ways in which they interact with those who need their guidance or care.



Entry 11 - continued

**2. The teacher educators**

The teacher educators tend to have a more dispassionate awareness of teacher presence as being inherently entwined with the technical requirements of classroom practice. They generally see classroom presence as something that the teacher brings to the classroom and are very aware of its absence as this seems to lead to a dull, monotonous class which is lacking 'something'...even if they cannot verbalise what 'it' is. It appears to be related to being able to reach the students....make their teaching presence known to the students in some way...that they are closed off and have formed protective skins which do not allow them to 'come out of themselves' and connect with the students in some way. In some way, this appears to be related to a sense of being 'grounded' and an ethereal quality, although being appreciated as attractive, can sometimes be viewed as hampering connectedness.....that they were not 'completely there'....not giving their attention and focus to the job at hand.

**ENTRY 12**

Memo to self – 19 December 2011

*1. Pragmatic validity – there is a pragmatic validity to the study in the sense that one of the teacher trainers is now beginning to think more deeply about how presence – in this case, physical presence can be used within teacher training to help trainee teachers become more aware and confident about their physical presence in the classroom and help them develop confidence through mime type activities in training sessions.*

*2. Paradigmatic – looking at things through a linguistic classification system*

*Diachronic – looking at things as they develop through time.*

*Both are useful ways of analysing narrative type of data.....My way is more diachronic as the participants are developing their understanding of presence through the research study and this is working both as a group and individually within interviews with me. It isn't just one story....it is the story of many...I am looking for movement, going back and forth....as the teachers are telling their stories and describing the meaning of presence to them through their stories, the diachronically enriched meanings and nuances are taken almost unconsciously to the next person and their reflections then enrich the meaning further and so on.*

Entry 12 - continued

3. Methodologically – by not having to complete informed consent forms for the learners in the observed classes, it will help ‘the flow’ of the research process as logistically it would be difficult to complete the forms without interrupting the class or expecting the teacher to take on the added responsibility of telling the learners about the research and asking them to complete the forms. Explanations might be difficult with learners with poor language skills.

4. By taking the participants out of the classroom and into another space for discussion offers them what Torbert (1991) calls a ‘liberating structure’ which enables the creation of a generative social environment. Such an environment can inspire intense dialogue through which knowledge is created. According to Torbert (1991:6), a liberating structure features a ‘theory of power, a practice of management and a method of inquiry’. The setting is not important and can include a business or educational environments. Torbert, W.R. (1991). *The Power of Balance: Transforming Self, Society and Scientific Inquiry*. London, Sage Publications

5. Despite some time away from the school environment and the team of co-researchers due to the Christmas holiday break, I found myself thinking about the project all the time. Even a visit to the hairdresser was a time to reflect on the experiences and meanings that were coming to light and thought about some insights into my own feelings of inadequacy stimulated by feelings of moral responsibility...to them and to myself.....that somehow I had to hold things together...that I was overawed by the generosity of their gifts to me....a few months ago a mere stranger...their gifts of their personal knowledge, feelings, awareness and understandings...I felt that they had given me something intensely personal and in return I felt I had little to offer.

6. I am still surprised by the teachers reaction to the thought of a focus group with the trainers....they feel vulnerable...something I need to take account of...maybe with time they will feel more confident and able to participate at an equal level..power is coming in strongly where I thought it didn’t exist...how naive I was to have thought that an establishment of any sort could be free of politics and power play.

**ENTRY 13**

**Memo to self – 23 April 2012**

This morning we had the teacher trainers' focus group. This was quite different from the focus group with teachers...the level of voices, the atmosphere. In the teachers' group, there seemed to be more of a sense of camaraderie. They all held such individual views on the art of teaching and yet welcomed each other's views with enthusiasm. Each teacher was listened to with respect and in turn listened to the others. This was also the case in the teacher trainers group and yet the difference was in the way they conceptualised the notion of 'presence'. For the teachers it appeared to emerge from reflection on practice, from visualising how they personally attempted to reach their students. For the teacher trainers, however, perhaps understandably, it seemed to hold a more solid form, something which they had seen and could verbalise with more

confidence from a stronger base as if observing it from a distance in their CELTA and DELTA teachers rendered it reified and graspable.

Their conceptualisation of teacher presence was somehow embodied within the ways they constructed the concept of teaching style yet also stood alone; teacher presence seemed to epitomise the very core of the teacher as a unique self and had little to do with achieving learning aims. Teacher presence epitomised the very being of teaching, whilst teacher style was something constructed and developed through experience. Teaching style could be modelled and emulated but presence just was. It could be admired and desired and yet it could not be bottled and made accessible. According to the teacher educators, some people have it and some people don't and it is identifiable through its absence as much as its presence.

**ENTRY 14**

**Memo to self – 27 May 2012**

*Closing the 'field-work' phase of the study*

Now that I am no longer 'there'

I am once again alone

The trust we built, the experiences shared

Seem like shadows riding on the crest of time

Entry 14 - continued

Forged synchronically into words alone

I wonder whether these can ever really do justice

To the actuality of what 'became' by 'being there'

The enormity of the task ahead now seems daunting

Somehow through words alone

I will try to bring once more to life

So that others can also share

What we all learned by 'being there'

*It seems both strange and amazing that I have accomplished so much of what I hoped to do when I designed this study. I feel that this is down to both serendipity and detailed and thorough planning in equal measure. I have received extremely positive feedback to the study both in the final 'mop-up chat' with the Head Teacher and the on-going discussions with those participating in the study. The DOS (who didn't participate personally in the study) ventured 'You have got my teachers thinking' and invited me to return 'any time' with my 'academic issues'. There seem to even be some developments in the way the teacher trainers are considering incorporating the notion of 'presence' in educational programmes. One of the teacher trainers mentioned incorporating an aspect of 'physical presence' by looking at mime with new teachers and inviting them to think about the ways in which they use their bodies in the classroom. There has been talk of 'peer observations', which would help teachers to become more aware of how other teachers show presence in the classroom which could in turn help them to be more accepting of their own teacher presence.*

*As an aside to the topic of teacher presence, it seems that the methodology of 'doing' professional development through a research project was seen favourably. The Head Teacher told me that she was considering taking this outside the school by encouraging an 'exchange' programme whereby different school communities working in TESOL are encouraged to debate the meaning of a topic by a visiting teacher. I wonder therefore whether the research study has been received so successfully and with such enthusiasm because it had 'originality value'. This way of working had not previously been incorporated into the professional development regime. Therefore, through the study, an 'external presence' offered a non-judgemental means of opening up topics in a*

*meaningful way for those working in the field. This in turn allowed the symphony of voices to be heard in a non-competitive way. This fostered an atmosphere of positivity and respect for the individual. I am hoping that in this way a community stance which encourages and supports an open and constructive debate of meaningful topics will be sustained within the TESOL community within which I was welcomed and spent nine months.*

## **Student Feedback Questionnaire**

1. Please describe in a few words what your class is like?
  
2. How did you feel during the most recent class?
  
3. How would you describe your relationship with your teacher?
  
4. What do you think 'teacher presence' means'?
  
5. Can you think of a teacher who has presence? What is she or he like?
  
6. How did he or she make you feel?
  
7. In which ways do you think a teacher can demonstrate their presence in the classroom?

## E-mail communications with Head of school

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From: Umpleby, Gillian [mailto:gu202@exeter.ac.uk]  
Sent: Tuesday, June 21, 2011 3:11 PM  
To:

Subject: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'

Dear

It was nice talking to you earlier today. As I explained, my name is Gill Umpleby and I am currently a PhD student at Exeter University. I have been a TESOL teacher for well over twenty years, have a TEFL Cert and a PGCE (PCE). I also have an MEd (TESOL) from Exeter University (2009). Last year, I completed and was awarded an MSc (Educational Research) at the university (2010). As a Cambridge Examiner, I first contacted [redacted] and [redacted] at Cambridge with a request for help with data collection for my study and they suggested I approach you directly as a Cambridge Teaching Centre.

I am attaching an outline of my study, my research questions and the study design. My study would involve about 4-6 teachers. I would hope to conduct semi-structured interviews with the teachers on two different occasions to gain snap-shot views of their perceptions at different times. During the interviews, I would use metaphor and encourage narrative accounts from the teachers in order to ground the ethereal notion of presence within actual lived experience. I would also hope to conduct a focus group session with the teachers at a later date when they could further discuss with their peers any of the thematic insights gained during the interviews. The purpose of my observations would be to later help the teachers reflect on how their presence influenced or affected the learning and teaching experiences taking place, though discussion of what the teachers believed to be 'critical incidences' and the rapport between themselves and their learners. I would also hope to talk to the teacher educators and learners in order to triangulate my findings. This is because the literature emphasises the importance of the relational interaction between teacher educator/teacher presence as well as that between teacher/learner presence. The holistic nature of the interaction between teacher educator/teacher/learner presence means that all three should have a voice in this study, as shown in my Study Design.

Thank you for suggesting that you will discuss my study with your teacher trainers at your next meeting. I hope that it will be received positively and I look forward to hearing from you.  
Kind regards  
Gill

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Appendix 11

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From:  
Sent: Tuesday, June 21, 2011 3:32 PM  
To: Umpleby, Gillian  
Subject: RE: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'

Dear Gill,

Thanks for your email. As promised, I'll discuss this with our trainers when we meet in 3 weeks' time.  
Could you also let me know how long you would expect the research here to take? Thanks.

Best wishes

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From: Umpleby, Gillian [<mailto:gu202@exeter.ac.uk>]  
Sent: Tuesday, June 21, 2011 7:46 PM  
To:  
Subject: RE: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'

Dear

Thank you for your speedy response. It's very difficult to give you an exact time-frame for the research. As this is a qualitative study, I will need time to build a relationship with the teachers in order to gain their trust. I understand that the school timetable and curriculum is of utmost importance to all and would not wish to cause any undue stress or disruption. Therefore, it would be up to the teachers, the teacher educators and the learners to let me know when they are available, both for interviews and observations and I would fit in entirely with their needs. I should imagine I would be with you for a few months but not everyday, possibly one or two days a week, according to the schedule of interviews and observations as decided by the needs of the teachers, teacher educators and learners involved.

I would really like to become part of the school culture during the research as I have been and still am fundamentally a teacher. I would be happy to help out during the time I am with you in any way I can within the learning environment.

I am sorry that I cannot be more specific at this time. Once the the study has started and I have had a chance to speak to those involved, I will be able to give you a more defined time-frame. I will certainly not take any longer than is necessary and will work as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Thank you so much for all your help.

Look forward to hearing from you in a few weeks time. If you have any more questions, meanwhile, please let me know.

Best wishes

Gill

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From:  
Sent: Wednesday, July 13, 2011 12:18 PM  
To: Umpleby, Gillian  
Subject: RE: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'

Dear Gill,

Although our trainers here feel that it might be difficult for you to be involved in the CELTA course, especially as we'll be training up a new



Appendix 11

tutor in September,  
I've talked to some of our teachers here and they are interested in helping you with your research. Would this be any good?

Best wishes

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From: Umpleby, Gillian [mailto:gu202@exeter.ac.uk]  
Sent: Wednesday, July 13, 2011 2:32 PM  
To:  
Subject: RE: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'

Hi

That would be really good! I don't actually need to be involved in the CELTA course. I just need to be able to talk to teachers and teacher educators who have either been through it themselves or teach on it. This is because 'classroom presence/professional presence' is an observation criterion on both the CELTA and the DELTA courses and therefore, they will probably have more idea about what such a notion means to them. It would also be interesting to talk to teachers who have done the DELTA and/or are more experienced to explore whether teaching experience/expertise has any influence on their perceptions. I should imagine the teachers and teacher trainers/educators will have more time to talk to me when they are not under the pressure of delivering the CELTA course and if that is the case then I am happy to fit in with whatever time scale suits them.

Thank you so much for raising this with your teachers. Perhaps, if you have got a free moment, I could come over to and chat things through with you before meeting the teachers? I am away from 23 July for a week but if you are around in mid to late August, I love to meet up.

Once again, thanks for your help.

Best wishes

Gill

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From:  
Sent: Wednesday, July 13, 2011 2:59 PM  
To: Umpleby, Gillian  
Subject: RE: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'

Hi Gillian,

I'm away in August but will be back the week of the 29th, so perhaps you could contact me then and we could arrange something.

Best wishes

-----Original Message-----

From: Umpleby, Gillian [mailto:gu202@exeter.ac.uk]  
Sent: Monday, September 05, 2011 1:05 PM  
To:  
Subject: RE: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'

Hi

## Appendix 11

I hope you have had a nice break away and this finds you feeling refreshed and well. It seems a long time ago now but if you remember, in July, you mentioned that some of your teachers were interested in working with me on my PhD study of teacher presence. I would really like to meet up with you to discuss this when you have a free moment. I appreciate that you are probably very busy right now preparing for the new academic year but if you could spare me some time I would be really grateful. I called you earlier today but you were not at your desk, so will call again. If you are able to call me, my number is 07816838945. Looking forward to speaking to you.  
best wishes  
Gill

From:  
Sent: Monday, September 05, 2011 3:10 PM  
To: Umpleby, Gillian  
Subject: RE: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'

Hi Gillian,

Nice to hear from you. I've just started an intensive CELTA today so have got very little time, but and , two of the teachers interested in helping out, are free in the mornings this week (except Thursday).

Best wishes

From: Umpleby, Gillian [<mailto:gu202@exeter.ac.uk>]  
Sent: Tuesday, September 06, 2011 9:45 AM  
To:  
Subject: RE: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'

Hi  
Thanks for getting back to me so quickly. I appreciate you are busy with the CELTA at the moment. Do you think you could ask and if they are happy to chat with me on Friday morning? If so, could you please let me know what time they are free and where I should meet them. I really appreciate your interest and look forward to meeting you too.  
best wishes  
Gill

From:  
Sent: Tuesday, September 06, 2011 5:28 PM  
To: Umpleby, Gillian  
Subject: RE: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'

Hi Gillian,

I've just realised that most people in the school won't be here on Friday as it's a day off (instead of the August bank holiday). Perhaps next week would be better?

Appendix 11

-----Original Message-----

From: Umpleby, Gillian [<mailto:gu202@exeter.ac.uk>]  
Sent: Wednesday, September 07, 2011 9:39 AM  
To:  
Subject: RE: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'

Hi

Next week will be fine. I am free Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday and am happy to fit in with your teachers availability. Perhaps you could just let me know where and when is best to meet them.  
Many thanks and best wishes  
Gill

-----Original Message-----

From:  
Sent: Wednesday, September 07, 2011 11:20 AM  
To: 'Umpleby, Gillian'  
Subject: RE: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'

Hi Gillian,

will be here next week and is happy to see you on Tuesday morning.

Unfortunately will be on holiday, but perhaps you could see her another time?

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From:  
Sent: Wednesday, September 07, 2011 11:37 AM  
To: Umpleby, Gillian  
Subject: FW: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'

Sorry, could you make it Tuesday afternoon? teaching in the morning.

-----Original Message-----

From: Umpleby, Gillian [<mailto:gu202@exeter.ac.uk>]  
Sent: Wednesday, September 07, 2011 12:00 PM  
To:  
Subject: RE: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'

Hi

Tuesday afternoon will be fine. Perhaps either yourself or could let me know where and when to meet her.  
Once again, many thanks  
Best wishes  
Gill

Appendix 11

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From:  
Sent: Wednesday, September 07, 2011 6:16 PM  
To: Umpleby, Gillian  
Subject: RE: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'

Hi Gillian,

You can just go to reception and ask for                    She'll be free from  
about 12.30.  
Could you arrive about then?

**RE: PhD study of 'TESOL teacher presence'**

Umpleby, Gillian

Sent: Thursday, October 27, 2011 11:18 AM

To:

Attachments: Interview seven.doc (53 KB)

Hi

Thank you so much for your time last week. I really enjoyed talking to you and  
found our discussion very useful. I am attaching a copy of the transcript.  
best wishes

Gill

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## **An Outline Proposal – Gillian Umpleby MEd, MSc, PGCE**

The purpose of this outline proposal is to present the 'bare bones' of my PhD study into the as yet little explored realm of TESOL teacher presence. It describes an exploratory study, which has been designed to interrogate the phenomenon of TESOL teacher presence pragmatically by using a qualitative research design incorporating '*multi-dimensional research strategies*' (Mason, 2006:9).

### Introduction

#### *Overall purpose of the Study*

In this study, I have chosen to focus on what I believe to be one essential, but seemingly overlooked, aspect of teaching; the sense in which the teacher's presence facilitates the student's learning and growth. In short, the phenomenon of 'teacher presence', also referred to as 'classroom presence' or 'professional presence'; a notion which offers a valuable holistic and experiential lens through which insights into the profound and complex nature of 'being a TESOL teacher' can be acquired.

#### *Rationale for the Study*

Some teacher educators have shown interest in the phenomenon of teacher presence, by including it an assessment criterion in their teacher education observation assessment. However, currently it tends to be presented more as a series of technical competencies, rather than an ethereal phenomenon which has been the subject of scant research and can be considered deeply subjective in nature. By asking teachers, teacher educators and students what they understand by the notion of 'teacher presence', I hope to gain a deeper insight into what this phenomenon actually means to those involved and how this could impact on teaching and learning.

### *Research Question*

How do a group of TESOL teachers, teacher educators and students perceive the notion of teacher presence through their lived experiences?

### Procedures

#### *Philosophical assumptions*

This study takes a social constructivist epistemological approach to the acquisition of knowledge, implying a commitment to an '*epistemology of situated or embedded knowledge and what might be called a "localist hermeneutic"*' (Harris, 1998:132). Informed by the principals of renowned philosophers such as Husserl (1927), Heidegger (1962/1927), Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Sartre (1956/1943), this study acknowledges a view of the person as '*embedded and immersed in a world of objects and relationships, language and culture, projects and concerns*' (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009:21). It interprets individual involvement in the lived world as something immensely personal, but also intricately entwined within relationships to the world and others. It understands experience as a lived process, residing in perspectives and meanings, which are unique to the person's embodied and situated relationship to the world and believes that though such experiences, individual and collective knowledge is created.

#### *Research Strategy*

It is hoped that the study will be contextualised in a language school or centre which houses CELTA or DELTA courses (or hopefully both) as this is one area in which the construct of teacher presence is being used and worked with in the teaching community as a criterion for observation assessment. This would mean trying to gain access to a language centre which offers CELTA and DELTA courses as such a venue would offer CELTA/ DELTA teacher educators as well as novice and more expert teachers and their students.

### *Role of the researcher*

As explained, it is intended that the first stage will be a phenomenological study set in a language school or centre as described above. The researcher will work with about 4-6 teachers, their teacher educators and their students. This phase of the study will be informed by the principles of phenomenological interpretative analysis with a view to building a complex, in-depth and multi-dimensional understanding of the 'essence' of this complex phenomenon.

### *Data collection procedures*

By building on the findings of a preliminary investigation, undertaken during an MEd (TESOL) in 2008 and using interviews, video recorded observations and field notes, the study will seek to investigate the ways in which a group of TESOL teacher educators, TESOL teachers and their students perceive their experiences of the ethereal notion of teacher presence by exploring their lived experiences of its actualisation within teaching practice.

### *Strategies for validating findings and assuring quality*

This study will attempt to show soundness, depth and rigour through the notions of '*credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability*' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

By giving step-by-step details of my research design and incorporating the interview framework and examples of the interview transcripts in an appendix, I will aim to render this study transferable so that other researchers can replicate it for further future analysis if they so wish. To ensure credibility and dependability, I will make clear step-by-step descriptions of coding procedures and member checking, a technique considered by Lincoln and Guba (1985:314) to be "*the most critical technique for establishing credibility*". *Triangulation* (Mason, 1996:25) of data will be achieved in the form of field notes, observations and stimulated recall of events 'as they appear' with the participants. I will use contextualised evidence in the form of direct quotes by the participants to provide authenticity and confirmability. Furthermore,

endeavouring to maintain a reflexive stance, I will give careful consideration to ethical issues and potential power imbalances and these will be rendered transparent at all stages of my study.

My aim will be to design and communicate interpretive research which demonstrates personal integrity, transparency, openness, responsibility (both ethical and moral), rigour and sturdiness in design and theoretical framework, creative endeavour, richness, depth, originality and '*trustworthiness or goodness*' (Angen, 2000).

#### *Anticipated ethical issues*

##### *Informed Consent*

Potential participants will be asked personally in writing and face-to-face if they would be willing to participate in the study. They will be given full details of the reason for, nature of and background to the study and their anticipated role in the proceedings, including the time commitment involved. They will be given reassurance as to their confidentiality and anonymity as well as being provided with written details of procedures. They will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form of which they will be given a copy and I will keep a copy. This will include their consent to the dissemination of the findings of the inquiry at a later date. They will be given full opportunity to leave the study at any time or to ask for any information they provide to be excluded from the final write-up or destroyed at any time they so desire.

##### *Expected outcomes*

In summary, I believe that the phenomenon of teacher presence offers a valuable holistic and experiential lens through which insights into the profound and complex nature of 'being a TESOL teacher' can be acquired. A major strength of the study lies, I believe, in its potential value for informing teacher education and development in general and TESOL teacher education and development in particular through its insights into this as yet unexplored realm.



## References

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- Smith, J.A., Flowers, P & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*: Sage publications Ltd.

## **Research Questions (sent to school)**

The purpose of this study is to pose and answer the following research question:

1. How do a group of TESOL teachers, teacher educators and students perceive the notion of teacher presence through their lived experiences?

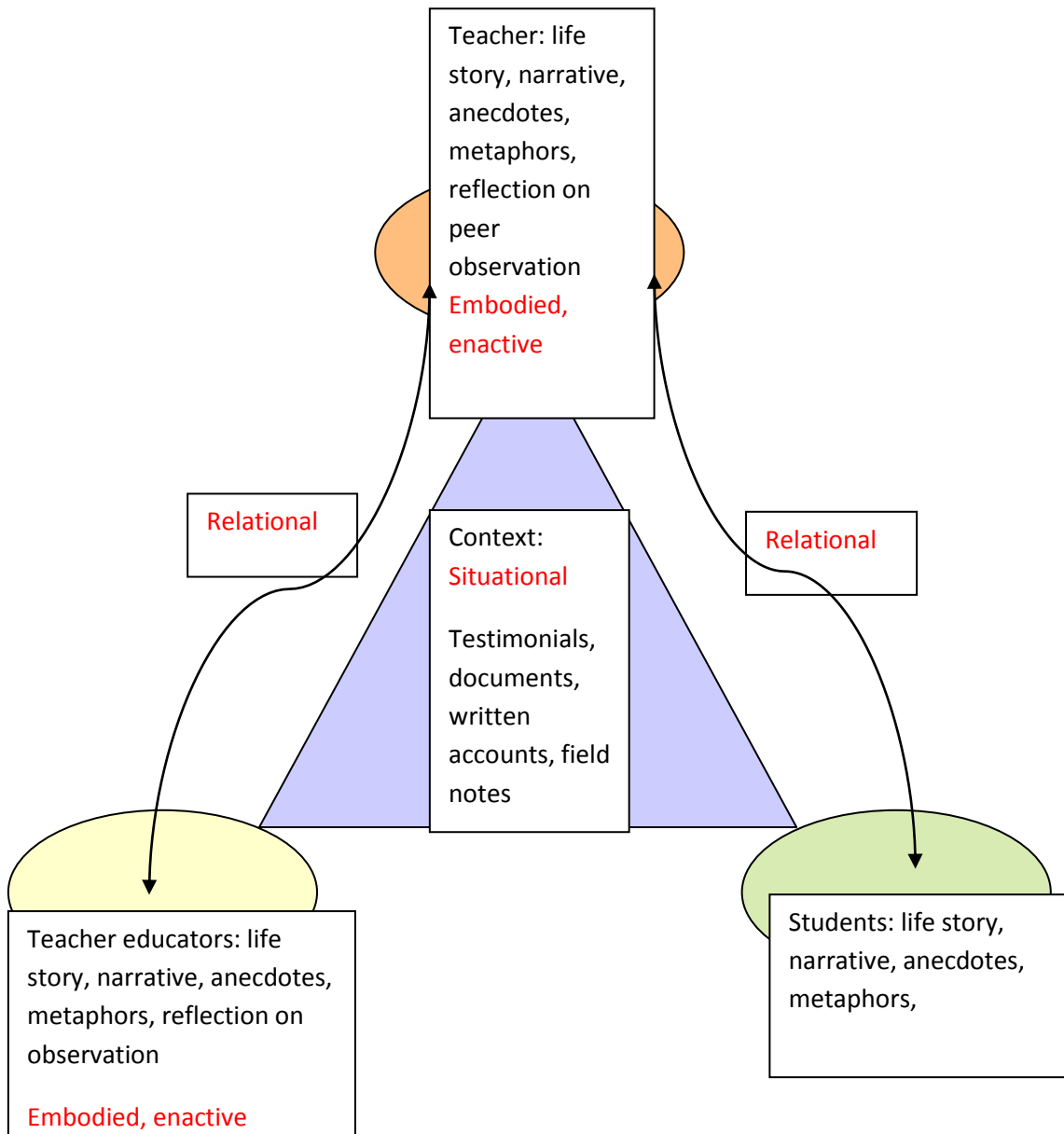
This will be done through asking and answering a series of sub-questions:

2.
  - a. What do TESOL teachers, teacher educators and students understand by the notion of teacher presence?
  - b. How do they describe their experiences of teacher presence?
  - c. In which ways do they perceive teacher presence to be embodied and enacted within practice?
  - d. What are the threads of connectedness between the lived experiences of teachers, teacher educators and students regarding the phenomenon of teacher presence?

## Study Design (sent to school)

### Teacher Presence

#### Micro/macro thematic reflection



## **First impressions of the school**

*Field notes - 13 September 2011*

Before entering the school building, I stood outside for a few minutes to get a general feel of the environment.

About ten to fifteen students of different nationalities and ages were sitting and standing around chatting, smiling and laughing. The overall atmosphere was one of peaceful purposefulness and engagement. The garden reflected a soft light which gave the picture a general sense of co-operation. On entering the building, the Reception was a busy and engaging area with details of excursions and trips around the area on show. Attention was drawn to the 'Agatha Christie' week which was displayed on a notice board, outlining different activities such as films, books and a play put on by the more long-standing students. There was a sense of cultural pride and a welcoming attitude towards the students.

The school was busy and the rest areas were alive with teachers talking, drinking coffee and going about their business. A morning activity of authentic listening exercises by the DOS was popular and I was proudly shown the room which had been full to capacity and displayed colourful and interesting posters on the wall. There was an air of engagement and purpose everywhere and I was shown the 'Agatha Christie Room' which had obviously been prepared with an eye for detail and pride in the in-depth and elaborate illustrations of Agatha Christie's work. Inside knowledge and observations were offered. I felt as though I had been personally introduced to Christie by one of her friends.


The school was bigger than I expected, but still felt cosy and welcoming. I could imagine as a new student arriving from overseas, I would feel as though I was being welcomed into a new family, one which would provide support in my new venture.

# Handout for first meeting with potential research participants

05/10/2011

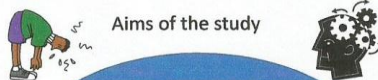
**TESOL Teacher Presence**

**Mythical Beast ?    Hidden treasure?**




The slide features two illustrations: on the left, a red dragon with yellow wings and a yellow gem on its chest; on the right, a wooden treasure chest overflowing with gold coins.

**Aims of the study**




A hermeneutic phenomenological exploration of the phenomenon of 'teacher presence' through the perceptions and lived experiences of TESOL teachers, teacher educators and learners



The slide includes an illustration of a person in a green shirt thinking, a gear with a brain inside, and a small photo of a person with their hand to their chin.

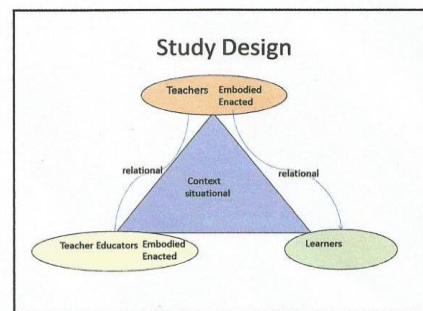
**You are the co-researchers !**



How is teacher presence actualised in the classroom and possibly beyond

- Your experiences
- Your perceptions


The slide features an illustration of a globe with a classroom scene below it, showing a teacher and students.



**What will it involve for you?**

- Teachers and teacher educators (at a time convenient for you)
  - 2 conversational semi-structured interviews
  - The second interview will go deeper into themes from first interview
  - An observation and discussion about what how events in classroom relate to presence
  - Focus group of teachers/teacher educators to discuss themes raised in individual interviews
- Activities/feedback from learners to allow them to give their voice on what teacher presence is to them

**Ethics**



- Informed consent forms
- Anonymity
- Confidentiality
- Member-checking of anonymised transcripts
- Can withdraw participation at any time
- Don't have to answer anything you don't want to

The slide includes an illustration of a person's profile with their finger to their lips in a 'shh' gesture.

## Notes for meeting with Teachers/teacher educators

1. 'Teacher presence' – construct which hasn't been the subject of much research – none in TESOL and yet provoking more and more interest worldwide. Pockets of interest are popping up all over the world....Hungary, USA,

2. Construct of presence came originally from therapeutic relationship. Bugental (1987) describes presence as the state of being '*all there...being totally in the situation....being there in body, in emotions, in relating, in thoughts, in every way*' (p.36). It is believed to be fundamental to the therapeutic relationship (p.12).

3. The notion of presence is found increasingly in teaching as 'classroom presence' or 'professional presence'. Kornelsen (2006: 74)suggests that '*Teaching with presence means teaching in a way that encourages openness, imbues vitality and sometimes abandons order*'. Some researchers suggest that It involves a flow of energy between the teacher, the students and the subject (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Hill, 2006). Others suggest that it is:

*A state of alert awareness, receptivity, and connectedness to the mental, emotional and physical workings of both the individual and the group in the context of their learning environments, and the ability to respond with a considered and compassionate best next step* (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006: 265) .

Classroom presence and Professional presence are used in teacher education syllabus by Cambridge and Trinity.

4. Presence as a construct in teacher education tends to be considered in a 'competency based' form – this study is a hermeneutic phenomenological study contextualised in a school to find out what it means to teachers/teacher educators and students though exploring their actual lived experiences and their perceptions. In this study, I will ask you to think of how you experience presence as a teacher and try to describe the experience....perhaps by visualising yourself in the classroom and then thinking of the ways in which you are aware of and perceive your presence as a teacher at different moments in time.

5. In this study, it is important to remember that you are co-researchers. We are exploring the question 'How is teacher presence actualised in the classroom and possibly beyond?' together.

6. From the literature, the study is hung upon four conceptualised constructs taken from the philosophy of being and presence. These notions have been

considered by many famous philosophers such as Heidegger (1962/1927), Husserl (1927), Satre (1972), Buber (1937/2004) and more recently van Manen (2002b; 2006b), who has considered presence in teaching as 'tact' or Schön (1983, 1987) who talks about 'reflection in action' and 'knowing in action'. Many researchers have considered constructs which relate to presence, but none until now have considered presence as a lens through which the holistic notion of 'being a teacher' can be explored through lived experience.

9. The four constructs acting as the framework for the study within teaching practice can be considered are **embodied, enacted, situational and relational**.

10. The Teacher, teacher educator and student interaction – show illustration.

11. What will it involve for you? It will involve 4-6 teachers and teacher educators, who are interested in the notion of teacher presence. For each teacher and teacher educator, there will be 2 conversational, semi-structured (in that the four constructs will be explored) interviews. The Int. 2 will go deeper into themes raised by interviewee in first. It will also involve an observation where themes from interviews can be observed in the field – discussion with teacher on critical incidences etc after observation and a focus group in groups of teachers and teacher educators to discuss themes with peers. There will be a workshop (or supported discussion) at the end with students to try to access students' perceptions and experiences of teacher presence. A possible final focus group with teachers and teacher educators together will be held, bringing together themes from both groups for discussion.

11. Consent forms – total anonymity and confidentiality for participants and school.

12. Transcripts will be written up in anonymised form and sent to participant for member checking – to see if they are happy with it and want to change or add anything.

13. Anonymised transcripts will only be shared with university supervisors in anonymised form.

14. The study could potentially help inform teacher education programmes in the future about the need to raise awareness of the importance of teacher presence and more experienced teachers could potentially help inform novice teachers about the teacher presence and how it relates to teaching and learning.

## References

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- Bugental, J.F.T. (1987). *The Art of the Psychotherapist*. W.W. Norton & Company.
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- van Manen, M. (2002). Phenomenological Inquiry: <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com>.
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## **A personal description of first meeting**

*Field Notes - Meeting on 6/10/11 with teachers* (pseudonyms are used to ensure anonymity).

This meeting was set up by Sheila with about 12-14 teachers/teacher educators. I waited for the meeting in the Student Canteen. It was buzzing with students who were having a coffee break between classes. At 2.15, they were hurried along to their classes by a couple of teachers. Slowly the canteen emptied, I was left alone with my thoughts except for one student, who was playing on his phone. I was nervous; this was going to be my first meeting with the 'insiders', the group of teachers who worked together.

I was met by Sheila at 2.25 pm as promised and taken upstairs to the meeting room. The room was long and narrow. I stood in front of the white board as a teacher would and wrote my email addresses on the board, along with my name. The teachers came in and there were a lot of them; more than I had expected. I felt even more nervous. I was the outsider in this group but I needed their help if I was to complete my study. Until now, the study had existed predominantly as a conceptual and theoretical development of my thoughts. I had been building it and developing it from the seed it was, as first conceived, in my MEd (TESOL) dissertation. Now, it had grown to unprecedented proportions and finally I was presenting it to the outside world as I would a new baby. I was protective both of it and my developing thoughts. I was worried that they wouldn't understand it. It was difficult to squeeze 3 years worth of thought and depth of understanding into 15 minutes.

I explained in as simple terms as possible the philosophy behind the conceptual framework, the design of the study. I explained my background, the preliminary study and the lack of research into the area. I emphasised the importance of such an ethereal notion in teaching and learning. I explained the details of what would be expected in terms of interviews, focus groups and observation, that videoing would not be necessary, that we could audio record the class. The point was made that videoing would have an effect on the students and I agreed that that was true. We could just discuss events in the class that related to the construct of presence and how the teachers/teacher educators construed presence. I explained the ethics of the study and the ethical approval I had obtained from the university.

I am now waiting to hear the reaction to what I said and whether the teachers/teacher trainers are willing to take part. I have no way of assessing their interest. Sheila will get back to me as she is in charge of coordinating the study. I feel as if I have become transparent, I fear that I might be exposed to

the shame of rejection. I hope they come on board and join this research journey.

### Notes

A great suggestion by one of the teachers was taken on board during the meeting i.e. if the teachers are willing to be videoed in order to have a discussion on critical events relating to teacher/classroom presence through stimulated recall, then the videos could be used later in the school for teacher training events. This would make sure that the school had something back from the study which they could make use of and find helpful in future training sessions. I would not need to keep the videos, only the audio recordings of the discussions about the videos, which would provide me with the data I need.

## Ethical Approval Certificate



Graduate School of Education

### Certificate of ethical research approval

#### STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS

You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines/> and view the School's statement on the GSE student access on-line documents.

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**READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER** (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). **DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

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Your name: Gillian Unpleby

Your student no: 580035131

Return address for this certificate: 28, Prospect House, East Cliff Road, Dawlish EX7 0BJ

Degree/Programme of Study: Doctorate in Education

Project Supervisor(s): Sarah Rich and Tony Wright

Your email address: [gu202@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:gu202@exeter.ac.uk) and [gillambert2@hotmail.com](mailto:gillambert2@hotmail.com)

Tel: 07816838945 and 01626867296

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I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed: Gillian Unpleby ..... date: 15/09/2011

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*NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must not be included in your work. It can be kept for your records.*

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Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
updated: July 2010

## Certificate of ethical research approval

Your student no: 580035131

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**Title of your project:** New Insights into the nature of being a TESOL teacher: Towards an understanding of TESOL teacher presence.

**Definition of Terms:** The term TESOL is used here to include both Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and Teaching English as a Second Language (ESL).

**Brief description of your research project:**

Over recent years, the educational research community has increasingly recognised the value of exploring new insights into the complex nature of teaching and being a teacher, many of which stand in sharp contrast to the instrumental and competency-based approaches associated with traditional educational systems. This growing recognition of the complex dynamics inherent within the professional and personal role of being a teacher has fostered a strong desire to understand and embrace the intricate, emotional, multi-faceted and converse nature of the teaching role.

I believe that the phenomenon of 'teacher presence', which has strangely been the subject of little research to date, offers a valuable holistic and experiential lens through which insights into the fluid, profound and complex nature of being a teacher can be explored. Research in this area could deepen understanding of how teachers' ways of 'knowing in action' (Schon, 1983) are actualised and embodied through their teacher presence.

I will carry out this research study in a TESOL setting due to my strong teaching background in this field. Insights from this project could potentially transform the nature of TESOL teacher training programmes and may indeed have broad significance for teacher educators in general. This study takes a social constructive epistemological approach to the acquisition of knowledge.

This research will consist of an in-depth, hermeneutically informed interpretative phenomenological exploration of the construct of TESOL teacher presence through the understandings, perceptions and experiences of TESOL teachers, teacher educators and learners. I will use semi-structured interviews and focus groups with teachers and teacher educators and feedback questionnaires and focus groups with learners; field notes, observations and stimulated recall after videoing of classroom events to encapsulate and co-construct a number of 'snap-shots' of different incidences and occurrences as they happen. In this way, I will endeavour to provide an in-depth portrayal of the unfolding dynamic of 'teacher presence' as it is perceived and experienced by the teachers, teacher educators and learners themselves through their lived experience. Participants will be provided with an outline of the research, the opportunity to seek further information and be given a summary of the findings in due course.

**Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):**

Semi-structured interviews, feedback questionnaires and focus groups: A group of 4-6 adult TESOL teachers with varying degrees of expertise and experience will be identified for inclusion in the study, along with their teacher educators and adult learners.

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Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
updated: July 2010

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:

- a) **informed consent:** Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents). An example of the consent form(s) must accompany this document. a blank consent form can be downloaded from the GSE student access on-line documents:

Consent will be sought from the University, the Programme Director of the teachers; the teachers, teacher educators and the adult learner participants. Participant consent will be sought via an Informed Consent Form (see attached).

- b) **anonymity and confidentiality**

Participants will be informed in writing of their anonymity, confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, the name of the Language Teaching Centre where the study takes place will not be disclosed, unless this is requested by the Centre themselves. Participants will also give their assumed permission through the Informed Consent form to allow the sharing of the findings of the study in any presentation or publication unless a participant specifically requests otherwise.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

#### **Data Collection**

A number of steps will be taken to ensure that no harm, distress or unreasonable stress is placed upon the participants:

1. I will send or personally give a copy of the Informed Consent form with details of the study to potential participants. Once I have received consent, participants will be invited to take part in semi-structured interviews and/or focus groups at a specific location and time or a location and time of the participants' choice.
2. I will pilot the semi-structured interview on a small group of teachers and teacher educators to try to identify any issues or concerns about the interview questions and proposed framework. After piloting the interview framework, I will establish appropriate times and dates for the interviews to fit in with the participants' personal schedules and work load.
3. Participants will be notified that drinks and snacks will be available to ensure that any personal needs regarding hunger and thirst are met. I will be in attendance at all times and will ensure that participants are aware when the interviews are recorded by audio tape and classroom observations by video.
4. I will ensure participants are put at their ease during the interview and focus groups and that they do not feel obliged to answer any questions with which they feel uncomfortable.
5. During the interviews, focus groups, classroom observations, video recording and stimulated recall of classroom events, I will make sure that the participants are aware that they can withdraw at any time and ask to have any event erased from the recording should they so wish.
6. I will ensure that participants needs and concerns will be addressed personally at all times to ensure that no harm, distress or unreasonable stress is suffered by participants in any way.

#### **Data Analysis**

All qualitative information will be transcribed and uploaded to an NVivo program. Data will then be coded and organised thematically to determine the experiences and perceptions of teachers, teacher educators and learners regarding TESOL teacher presence and the ways in which it is actualised in and possibly beyond the classroom.

**Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):**

As I will be in attendance during the participants' interviews, focus groups and classroom observations, I do not anticipate that there will be any issues arising with regard to secure storage of audio and video recording tapes. It is anticipated that the individual interviews and focus group interviews will last between one hour and one and a half hours and additional time will be provided for those who take longer to answer the questions or who need more time to think about the answers. Classroom observations will only be recorded with the consent of the teacher and the learners involved. The recorded audio and video tapes, field notes, meeting records, interview data and individual data will be securely stored in a locked cabinet at my personal residence at all times. Electronic information will only be accessed by the researcher with their username and password. Electronic information will be stored on a secure system with recognised virus protection. It will be destroyed once it is no longer required. Informed consent forms will be filed and kept in a secure cabinet.

**Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):**

I do not anticipate that there will be any exceptional factors which raise additional ethical issues.

*This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.*

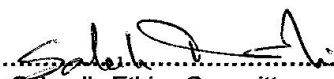
*N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor*

This project has been approved for the period: Oct. 2011. until: June 2012.

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): Sarah R. Wick . date: 15/9/2011

*N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.*

GSE unique approval reference: D.120/11/86

Signed:  date: 21/09/2011  
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from <http://education.exeter.ac.uk/students/>



**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

**CONSENT FORM**

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between the researcher and the university supervisors participating in this project in an anonymised form

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

.....  
(Signature of participant )

.....  
(Date)

.....  
(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Name and Contact phone number of researcher: Ms. Gill Umpleby; 07816838945

Other people you can contact regarding the research study:

Dr. Sarah Rich, Senior Lecturer in Education (TESOL), Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter

OR

Dr. Tony Wright, Senior Teaching Fellow (TESOL), Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter

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**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

**CONSENT FORM**

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

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any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between the researcher and the university supervisors participating in this project (as detailed below) in an anonymised form

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

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(Signature of participant) (Date)

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Extract from a first stage analysis of an interview transcript

P: ummm, there's a point where confidence, is well, and I think it's subjective and from experience, where just blagging your way through one charm is not enough, ummm, it could be a cover for insecurity sometimes. Umm, this is going into the realms of psychology more than anything else...

R: mmm

P: mm and that some people, err, we had a gentleman, who seemed very, when I say introverted, but almost, I'm using that term again, auricularly turned in on himself to the point of physical manifestation. Eye contact was down, he mumbled and spoke down. His body language was closed, but I even felt that he was not just visually..... but even if I turned my back, he was diminished as a person. I don't mean that personally to him....

R: no, but...

P: it was almost like the candle light had shrunk, and by degrees we tried through encouragement and with the practical things, eye contact, umm but I don't know if that is something you can ever intrinsically change within somebody with this characteristic. They are born with it...it is so fundamental and that prevented him from making that connection with the students and I think once you have made a connection then that flow starts going backwards and forwards. It's a bit like not being able to tune into a radio station, you know, or to get the two way feedback.

R: Yes

P: so he was sort of, cutting himself off by default then.

R: yes, I can see that...

P: you know what I mean... somebody like that, they can be very closed off as if they don't really want to reach out even in the physical sense.

R: really interesting, mmmm, so if you were to think of a metaphor to describe, maybe that classroom

*Sometimes projecting a degree of confidence could hide a depth of insecurity*

*Being closed in on oneself, closed to the outside world.*

*Being Imprisoned within self can be seen as a physical manifestation.*

*Closed body language gives a sense of being diminished as a person.*

*Teacher's physical presence enacted through body language and speech can affect the way his standing as a person is perceived*

*The light his presence projects is diminished by his closed in body language.*

*Inherent shyness and being closed in as a person prevents a connection with the student being made.*

*A connection with the students is fundamental to a two-way flow of energy between the teacher and the students*

teacher or maybe one that had presence and one that didn't have presence or as far as you were concerned, had issues with presence. Could you give a metaphor to describe that...

P: I would say, if you could imagine like the glow of a light bulb, a bit like a transceiver and you could see radio waves...like a transmitter you could see radio waves coming out of him as they do 'cartoonish' wise and vice versa with the students, umm and when you have got a good connection, those beams cross, they connect and there is no disruption, there is no sort of magnetic disharmony and there is a nice backwards and forwards flow. Umm, if your output is too much about yourself, or you are not aware of the others then your beams could diminish the beams from the other tower, i.e. the students and they would withdraw as you became louder and bigger and the entertainer.

R: mmm

P: umm, or could be discordant. Umm and those that don't have that presence, I feel like the reach of their beams, if you like, stop a couple of inches short outside their body and don't actually make contact. It's just a dim light, if you like..

R: yes

P: so they are not making any connection and they are not lighting the room or communicating, if you know what I mean. They are not outreaching...

R: so connection is a very big theme here

P: yes

R: and connection with individuals, with the group?

P: it has to be with the group, but if you bear in mind, it has to be, if you like, I call it a 360 degree awareness, then you can sense when somebody is out of tune or somebody is not with you or somebody is simply tired. And I don't know, I think we do it subconsciously, we have to be careful not to focus on that person and say 'oh, are you alright'..

*Teacher can close off if they don't want to reach out*

*Presence is like the glow of a light bulb which comes out of the teacher and tries to make a connection. It is a two way connection between the teacher and the students and a good connection brings about a harmonious backwards and forwards flow.*

*If the teacher is not sufficiently self aware and presents too much of self or is too dominant this can affect the students and could push them away so the space is filled with teacher self only*

*The teacher can adjust the output of their presence in accordance with the needs of the class*

P: so you use your antenna, it switches on subconsciously, picks up on something and then the conscious mind comes in and right ok, how am I going to deal with this .it has to be done sensitively and this is where, sort of experience comes into play..

R: mmm

sensitively and appropriately and then the mind takes over and that comes from experience then.

R: Ok so then this guy, or whoever, is not being able to connect, as you said with the radio waves, how do you go about helping him?

P: Right, in this case, this is one of the occasions when I wasn't actively training in the last case, but I think a lot of this initially would come down to, (if I had to look at his past history, perhaps his family life) would come from confidence so having a greater confidence in the subject knowledge, having affirmation from the peer group, from the training group would help as well, because we did notice that he did start to come out of his shell, because even away from the classroom he started off quite quietly, then he came out....umm it would take a period of time, you can't switch a light bulb on like that overnight....

R: no

P: and I have to think in terms of such a four week course, you couldn't. Umm practical clues, could be, I think were given as well. You know, just make sure when you can, do smile; if you smile it works, because you get a great response from the students.

R: mmm

P: and do look around the room, even if you feel a bit silly, as if you are eye-balling them, I can promise you, you are not. I'll give you a demonstration..... do you think I look like I am eye-balling the students, no, OK, that's fine and by exemplification, encouragement, with practical things, with sometimes doing the physical, it has a reverse psychological effect. It's bit like if you have a massage, you cry, and it lets out the

*Subconscious and subtle understanding of the students needs is not an overt gesture.*

*Sensitivity is essential*

*Subconsciously pick up clues from students and then consciously make decision on how to deal with it in a sensitive and appropriate way. Intuition working hand in hand with mind.*

*Gain sense of confidence through working with others*

*Need time to gain confidence and be able to project sense of presence in classroom*

*Physical gestures can help you connect to students*

*Look around the room give exemplification and encouragement. Sometimes the physical can have an effect on the emotional*

emotion and rather than doing hours of therapy just to get a better back, it would be two-way. With people who are obviously very sensitive, you can give them practical clues first of all...

R: mmm

P: and hope that they would have an internal manifestation...that would be better. Alternatively, we are going into the realms of psychotherapy over years, if he has got lots of hidden problems....

R: yes

P: and so forth

R: and which is maybe not appropriate...

P: exactly and can vastly undermine somebody in a practical course context.

R; sure

P: we are not here to sort out all his deep issues

R: so do you think it's fair as a classroom assessment?

P: umm, well the problem was, well what we perceived here was that it was that that was holding him back from performing the procedures that were necessary so it was becoming a disability...

R: OK

P: whereas, I contrast that to my colleague who is naturally very quiet but whose procedures and awareness in the classroom is absolutely fantastic...

R: right

P:but with him it was causing an inability to communicate and it was almost suffocating..... the fear of being like this or feeling that he should be by looking at his peers, not from overt pressure from us...

R: no

P: I think was clamping down on his intellectual processes...

*Better if teachers find the way themselves, an internal manifestation of their own being, not forced by others*

*Sometimes lack of presence can hold teacher back from performing the procedures that were necessary*

*Can be quiet and still and have awareness and sensitivity*

*Presence is informed by an ability to communicate inner being. Lack of ability to communicate can be like suffocating*

R: mmm

P: and he wasn't...the emotional fear was stopping him seeing the intellectual reasons for the staging and so forth so that it worked as a barrier

R: yes

P: and I think the students sense that and you could sense the slight unease, although they were delightful, they knew it was a trainee,

R: Yes

P: umm training situation and were very polite, but you could just sense the slight shifting in the seat..

R: yes

P: not wanting to look at him, because they could feel his discomfort and it sort of manifests, like the yawn around the classroom does

R: yes

P: so it was debilitating, so it was lovely one day, by default, by accident, which you can't plan, umm he did a little drill, there was a bit of a muck up at the beginning of it but because it was so out of character for him to try drilling, bless him, he tried, it ended up being great fun for the students.

R: right

P: and there was lots of laughter and all of a sudden, he sort of sprang open somewhat so I don't know how that can be engineered but that is a sign of affirmation. Feel the fear and doing it and having good feedback would open people up.

R: yes, so that one sort of positive experience might encourage him to carry on.

P: and as a trainer, its spontaneous, you can't engineer that.

R: no

P: it's difficult, you can't engineer that.

*Strong emotions such as fear can inhibit teacher presence*

*Students can sense when teacher emotions are inhibiting presence*

*Inhibition of presence is making students feel uncomfortable*

*Students didn't connect visually because of discomfort which spread among class*

*Spontaneous demonstration of presence through experimentation*

*Response from others can release inner self and allow opening up*

*Spontaneous happening, can't be engineered*

R: no, OK so moving on to think of yourself as a teacher now, rather than a teacher trainer...

P: Yes

R: and you think of yourself as being 'present' in a particular classroom.

P: yes

R: can you think of a class in which you felt your presence was really felt?

P: I think, umm, there was a class several years ago, where I think all roles of teacher, including that of counsellor came out....I had a class for an unusually long period of time, because normally they come and go every two weeks, but I'd had quite a long-term group and they were advanced and the dynamic, I don't think it is just myself but I hope we fostered a communicative dynamic, whether it be through the presence or through the manifestations of presence, that the atmosphere in the classroom was very, very communicative, very supportive and it ended up – it was almost like a big family in the end and even when newcomers came in, I think they opened the door and were surprised how welcoming everybody was. We had people break down and talk about their marriage breakdowns in the middle of a class of twelve people and so forth, but I think opening those channels in a non-judgemental way, whether I had instigated this, I don't know because there were other individuals in there who equally had their own presence. It all started a chain reaction but it became a very, very nurturing class. A lot of learning went on, the embarrassment factor went and I thought it was just wonderful, a fantastic group, but then again, it might not have been myself. I might have been, let's say, the tinder or it could just be it was a fortuitous group of minds and souls, if you like.

R: mmm

P: but everyone who did come in adopted that role as well so if it was mass presence that had that effect, you know, like you have in a rock concert when

*Long-term group brings out different dynamics*

*Fostered strong communicative dynamic through manifestations of presence*

*Very supportive and welcoming group presence*

*talking about personal issues in non-judgemental way*

*chain reaction (flow) led to nurturing class dynamic*

*comfortable*

*Teacher presence as the tinder?*

*Lucky happening*

*flow*

everybody picks up on the vibe and goes with the flow...

R: mmm, that's interesting, so it could be that the group presence almost over-rode the individual presence coming in and everybody melded in with that group presence...

P: mmm, look at Freddy Mercury...

R: mmm, true

P: you know, if you could create that in a room, it passes from one person to another, there is almost a chain reaction, which effects the whole..

R: yes, so when you enter a new class, do you have any metaphor to describe how you feel...someone said to me it was like a camp fire... you almost...

P: yes, that's nice

R: like everyone is going to be sitting around the camp fire and that was her way of preparing for the class.

P: yes, I think that's what it is. I try to bring in everybody together as quickly as possible and by exemplification, in a sense I suppose...don't worry about making mistakes and I would like to introduce you to so-and-so and tell you about...yes, I go in without fear, definitely without any fear or trepidation. I'm also monitoring if people are a bit quieter...oh really....that's great...I change my voice and everything to keep it dynamic at the beginning. It's almost like, you know, whip the crowd up into a frenzy...

R: Yes...

P: you know what I mean, you set the tone and then see whether they settle back again and you withdraw or you keep that momentum up and they have opened up..

R: yes

P: a bit like taking the stabilisers off the bike..

*Chain reaction which effects the whole*

*Bring everybody together through presence*

*Without fear or trepidation*

*Change voice to excite (to change energy levels)*

*Instigator of and energiser*

*Taking off the stabilisers, letting go*

R: yes

P: you know you get them whipped up into a bit of confidence and then take the stabilisers off and see if they fall or they carry on as such.

R: yes, very interesting

P: yes, so when I say feel no fear, it is not that you should be terrified of the classroom.

R: no

P: you just go in there with no presumptions or assumptions and everyone is going to be treated the same and you are all going to be wonderful people.

R: yes, so go in with a positive...

P: absolutely

R: .....frame of mind before you even get in there

P: yes, and that's why it's good for us to feedback as teachers if we are handing over one class or students. We do need to know where people have got strengths and weaknesses and we do need to know....oh, so and so is always in late and has got a bad attitude or what have you.... but my attitude is that I go in and say I'm going to change that in a sense or we'll see. It might just be a reaction to somebody else

R: yes, so do you think when you go into a classroom, it's the same 'you' that goes into every class?

P:Umm, let's say more or less. Because of the actress element, I suppose that I can tailor myself for whatever the activity is. I think it's the same me but you don't show all aspects of yourself. I've had one-to-one students where the first two lessons were literally counselling. She was very, very defensive first of all, but if you set up that positivity or give off that vibe, she ended up coming forward, grabbing my hand, bursting into tears and we talked about her ex-husband doing this, that and the other. Once that learning block was out of the way, she was fine, she flourished. She was deemed before, as a very difficult hard character, who might have issues. In fact, she

*Ensuring their safety*

*Treat everyone the same*

*Go in with positive attitude*

*Keep an open-mind*

*Endeavour to create change*

*An element of the chameleon*

*Giving time, building a relationship, building trust*

*Understanding need for support*



did but she needed a more supportive, well not more supportive, she needed a one-to-one element with someone who could pick up on that. So, as and when needs must, you can become the empathiser, if it's needed. You can be the 'gee-er upp-er'..

R: yes

P: for want of a better word at other times to raise the energy but it's got to be compatible with what you feel the students are feeling. If they are down, you try and raise them up, if they are too hyper, then you'll withdraw, if they are doing something very student-centred, then I'll dim my light and sit out in the corner and my ear radar on instead so it's like a dance.....so you are not crowding them out...you are going with their flow. I think when you bump into them, when you crowd them or when you pull back too much, you can ruin that balance of connection

R: and how would you say learners perceive a teacher's presence?

P: Again as an individual, they come in with pre-expectations anyway, whether it be 'teacher is god', you know as they do in Thailand or in certain places so they will have certain expectations and in the foreign language to English scenario, you can have that cultural difference before you get down to their personal assessment of you.

R: mmm

P: so they might find, some of them might find my jumping around the classroom like a loon untoward behaviour but then they do learn, we try and brief them that the methodology is not the same here. Those who are in their seventies...I wasn't taught English like this when I was at school, it was all chalk and talk. So there are lots of things to consider before you get down to the individual feeling of the vibe, if you like, so that can interfere in the classroom. I judge how I'm affecting the students obviously by their performance, their general sense of contentedness, umm I ask them, umm by keeping my radar out as well. You can see from the feedback...

*Empathising and cheering up*

*Raise energy levels in tune with how the students are feeling*

*Appear and disappear*

*In tune with their flow*

*Bumping crowding or pulling back of presence can ruin balance within group flow*

*Awareness of cultural assumptions and expectations*

*Foster awareness and understanding of differences*

*Understanding*

*Interference by cultural assumptions*

*Comfort and contentedness*

R: that's a nice metaphor, this radar

P: yeah, yeah, non-intrusive

R: really

P: and the sense that you genuinely care, I think that's it, you can put it on and smile and you can be looking as we say to the trainees...that may not be monitoring..that's looking with your eyes open to show us that you are looking but what are you actually getting from it? We say to the CELTA trainees, what are you looking for, why are you doing it? How is it going to help the students? Just to get over that barrier of ..... but if I do that, they might ask me a question that I can't answer. So again, that comes from confidence as much as anything, knowing that you could supply the answer

R: yes, because earlier, you mentioned care...so care as in empathy and care as in ..

P: well, care as in, seeing them want to do well. I know that when they **do** do well, it's like when you see kiddies getting excited about something, it makes you feel good, it's a two-way thing, it's edifying, it's the reason a lot of people go into teaching. I don't want to vampire that feeling off them, but in order to get it, you have to give as well. So even, even with what I perceive to be the difficult customers, I could be trite and terse with them and all that is going to do is build up a radar of triteness and terseness between us. But if I put that 'Grrrr' to the side and show them a lot of love, you often find you start to break down that barrier and they are nice people underneath that gruff, so knowing that, that it's a show, I think you pick that up with people.

R: yes, almost like the humanness of it

P: yeah, yeah

R: well that's brilliant. I think we've covered everything at the moment. Thank you so much.....is there anything you would like to add

P: no I don't think I can do, nothing springs to mind...

*Care*

*genuineness*

*Sharing success*

*Two-way street*

*Give and take*

*Love and care*

## **Two examples of structural and textural descriptions - a teacher and a teacher educator**

### ***Glenda's structural and textural description (teacher)***

Glenda's perceptions and experiences of teacher presence in TESOL focus around the essential themes of two-way flow between teacher and learner, encounter through the emotional sphere, a moral sense of responsibility and a presence which radiates with transparency, genuineness and care for the students

Glenda describes herself as having a big interest in *'people, in human beings'*. She experiences her teacher presence as being a grounding force *'I think for me a teacher has to be something really down to earth, really modest'*. She doesn't want to be authoritarian or give the impression that she is the one who holds all the knowledge. Through her teacher presence, she wants to connect with the students and offer a two-way flow of encounter which enables them to move on with whatever challenges or difficulties are holding them back. *'[I want to] help people to solve certain difficult situations and one of these might be, in this case, learning a language.'* *I just want to be one of them and be able to help these people to move on...* She perceives her teacher presence as being fundamental to and part of a two-way exchange between herself and the students *'it's also an exchange, I think, it should be an exchange of experiences...from both sides'*. For her, her presence and that of the students *'has to be what links you...that is what enables the interaction between the two parts in the class and I don't think the teacher is the strongest part but the teacher has of course this very important 'presence role'*. She envisages her presence as the focal point of the flow within the class and somehow through this flow everything gets mixed together. *'Because I think many things should, sort of, roll around ;the teacher, but again the students or the pupils are to be taken into this sort of, umm, circle, where everything flows and gets mixed together to then flow in a river maybe, in a stream, which is the result of this, mm, mixture'*.

Glenda perceives her teacher presence as being most beneficial to her students when it is manifested through what she describes as 'the emotional sphere'. *'You can be honest and you can be transparent and I believe a lot on the emotional sphere...so I think that if there is an emotional honesty and encounter the students benefit through this experience'*. She does this by using a lot of body language and *'and then I try to capture the single, each personality and to 'touch' each person in a certain way, not only with my words, but also with the approach, in order to get this wave'*. She enters her classes with an awareness of the 'emotional sphere', and believes that *'there is some sort of link between knowledge and the emotional aspect which [work] together'*. If, as sometimes happens, the class doesn't gel and she doesn't feel that she and the class 'click', then *'I put my emotions a bit aside and try to be just, err, present but not too involved'*. She believes that vulnerability is stronger in some people, who like herself are more sensitive, *'so I think then you just have to find a way to protect yourself, to draw a line, just for yourself, which takes time...and I haven't reached that point yet; not in teaching or in real life where it is even more difficult'*. Glenda is very aware that she is an emotional person and that this can sometimes have a negative rather than positive effect. *'As far as I'm concerned, mistakes, from being unable to react properly, is not because I don't know things but because my emotional side starts trembling and I get all puzzled and confused'*. She realises that this manifestation of her teacher presence, through her strong emotionality, needs to be 'managed' through a good degree of self-control, *'I realise that I start moving in a certain way or I start a bit fidgety and inside, because I get a little bit anxious and insecure'* and because of this *'sometimes even good ideas disappear'*.

She believes that as confidence grows through experience, her presence naturally modifies so, *'it's more difficult at the beginning'*. When she feels emotionally drained from the investment she makes of herself in her teaching, she finds it more difficult to be present as a teacher, *'I think in the last couple of months, everything was a bit harder, because I was tired and so I can see this when I start getting tired, I just can't be there...not really there...I'm there physically'*. She is aware of the diminishing of her teacher presence *'I was really drained so it's difficult because I tend to, when I am in an encounter I*

want to prompt the person, to welcome the person, to create this openness and the community'. But despite her desire to be present, when she is drained and tired, she feels that *'there is a kind of emptiness, but I don't think that they have noticed much but I did and I wasn't really satisfied because I could see the difference. I don't know if my students noticed that, the new ones probably not because I didn't know them before that'*. In order to let her teacher presence shine through again, she feels that *'I really need to go somewhere and get my tanks filled up'*.

For Glenda, her teacher presence is informed by a sense of responsibility to provide a strong bedrock of reliability for the class *'it's always there, they can always refer to it, I mean they can't really do without it...they would notice it if it weren't there'*. She feels this need in her students at all levels, *'I think even the high levels, if I think about it, [the students] also look for this security; for this steady point of reference'*. On the other hand, she is conscious that she must encourage independence through her presence as *'otherwise you could limit their space...their abstract space of course'*. By limiting their space and crowding them, she is concerned that then *'they can't explore; they have to face what they are doing...their approach or whatever'*.

She believes that her teacher presence provides the students with a sense of security quite early on in her teaching relationship with them. *'I give them a sense of security...I don't know how but they sense this quite soon in my classes'*. She believes that it is through *being with them* at all levels within this cocoon of security that they can sense her presence as their teacher *'I go down on my knees to be with them...but I can also be very authoritative sometimes but they accept it and I think the fact that they call me teacher or think that I am the teacher is this'*. She doesn't know how but they seem to sense that they can trust her at a subliminal level *'they know that they can trust me and that at any time, they can have the proof of this...whatever happens or whatever they need...even if it is not a material need...they just sense it'*. As it is not her authoritative presence which she believes connects with the students as she *'doesn't really put herself on this stage and act like the teacher'*, Glenda deems the connection to be on a different sphere, because *'there is something that*

*they capture' and by being open and trusting they 'can move on, otherwise there is no way onwards, it's just stepping back...in my eyes'.*

Her sense of responsibility extends to each individual in her class and she watches them intently for clues as to what they are feeling or how they are reacting *'I tend to think about each individual in the class when I'm working and I keep observing and you know, I every time, you know, I take notice of an expression I think...maybe I need to do this and do that, maybe he's got that problem, so I keep.... while I'm teaching them, I'm really attentive about all that goes on for each individual and I think what I could do to help or to improve it there'*. While teaching them, she tries to envisage their backgrounds and their life situations so that she feels she knows them personally. *'I have an eye on all of them, on each person and often I try to imagine their backgrounds or, because I can speak a few languages, it's all very well and I might try to understand where that might come from and the situation of the person. I tend to think about the different countries...the political...all these thoughts'*. She seems to feel that through their mutual and interwoven presence in the classroom, she and the students can develop a form of intimacy; that somehow if she knows them well, this will help her to relate to them as people and allow her to forgive them their mistakes.

This feeling of responsibility and care is almost maternal in nature and she says, *'they [my thoughts] are stories about them and then often I feel a sort of tenderness...some mistakes are made or some statements are given....so it's all about, I think, about them and it's, err, it's a bit like a big family and, it sounds a bit strange to say, I mean it's not the mother but a guide...in that situation, I feel like a guide and I shoulder this responsibility and if when I make a mistake, and I do make mistakes of course, then I feel responsible'*. She is fully aware of her own vulnerability and potential to make mistakes and she is fearful that this could have a bearing her students' life journey and their ability to move on *'I think, you know, oh my god I need to do something because if I don't handle it the right way or if I've got misinformation then it might prevent them from moving forward'*.

In Glenda's eyes, for the students to feel they can really trust her, her teacher presence needs to be congruent, transparent and loving. *'I mean 'you' as presence is what you've got inside, it can't be in anyway different from that, I don't think. I mean if you are really present, it's transparent'*. She sometimes feels the need to withdraw a bit to protect herself because she doesn't sense a reciprocity coming from the students *'I don't withdraw my person, because I can't do that, but I put a kind of thin barrier between the students and me, until I see things changing a little bit and I can't do that for very long, because this is not who I am'*. Through her personal experiences of genuine teacher presence, she believes that a student can sense the love and caring nature of the teacher despite their different roles, attitudes and moods. She describes one of her teachers when she was a child *'she could be very funny, she could be very helpful, she could be....she had all these faces but she was a very loving person....she always, you could feel her heart, her emotions all the time, so I did accept her, even if she was strict'*. She believes that this teacher's presence kindled a loving attitude from her as a student in return, *'I've never hated this teacher and I think it was because she was present in this very natural and, err, sensitive way...she was honest, she was transparent...that was her but with her heart'*.

### ***Mary's structural and textual description (teacher educator)***

Mary's perceptions and experiences of presence in TESOL teaching focus around the essences of connectedness, body language, sensitivity to mood and feelings of students, energy flow and care.

The experience of being present as a TESOL teacher for Mary involves reaching out and connecting with her students in any way possible in order to achieve her teaching objectives. *'I would say and I've been told with my students that I'm the actress and that serves its purpose, especially if you have to try and model a particular adjective and not worry about having egg on your face or doing an impression of an aardvark in the classroom'*. She describes teacher presence as *'the glow of a light bulb, a bit like a transceiver'* and

imagines it to be like radio waves coming out of a teacher and believes that these radio waves can harmoniously mingle with those of the students to create a balanced encounter in which there is space for the both the teacher and the students. *'When you have got a good connection, those beams cross, they connect and there is no disruption, there is no sort of magnetic disharmony and there is a nice backwards and forwards flow. Umm, if your output is too much about yourself, or you are not aware of the others then your beams could diminish the beams from the other tower, i.e. the students and they would withdraw as you became louder and bigger and the entertainer.'*

She perceives that these radio beams can *'stop a couple of inches short outside their body and don't actually make contact'*. If this is the case, then there is no connection and thus no manifestation of teacher presence. When communication as a manifestation of presence is lacking, it is *'almost suffocating'* and could have the effect of *'clamping down on intellectual processes'*. She believes that a teacher has to be able to relax and become aware of others outside the self in order to send out the signal that they want to make a connection with their students, *'as they relaxed and forgot about that self-awareness or overly self-aware, then that is when the real dialogue and communication happened'*. If the teacher is not able to come out of her or himself then this can mean that the students are naturally more distant and the connection is lost *'she would sort of lean slightly in the direction of the table and look around as if there were an invisible wall...and you could that in a sense the students weren't warming to her as readily because of that'*.

She describes how closed body language can make a person seem *'diminished as a person'* and how a teacher's physical presence manifested through body language and speech can affect the way he or she is perceived as a teacher. *'Eye contact was down, he mumbled and spoke down. His body language was closed, but I even felt that he was not just visually..... but even if I turned my back, he was diminished as a person'*. Through voice modulation, Mary believes that the teacher can impart of sense of enthusiasm and drama in the class, but without this, the class can feel drab and samey, *'maybe it's because she didn't modulate her voice, she didn't have those 'OK, everybody' and then*



*suddenly you go back to quiet again...it was all very...of a muchness, of a sameness and I don't know whether it was her voice that did that or the language but there wouldn't be a change in pitch or modulation or any drama and then calm moments...it was all fairly 'sort of 'floaty' and 'samey'.*

Mary describes her 'antenna' which she believes picks up on things subconsciously before the conscious mind considers how it is going to deal with the situation sensitively and appropriately. In this way, she believes that her intuition is working hand in hand with her mind to deal with a situation. She describes a '360 degree awareness' and how she can sense when somebody is out of tune or not with you or simply tired and such sensitivity informs her teacher presence and the way she deals with the situation.

She is very aware that her teacher presence can become intrusive when the students are having some 'quiet time' or working on an activity on their own. *'you can't be monitoring as if you are interrogating them and eye-balling them, because they need to close down....look down at the work that they are doing or the pair-work that they are doing, without feeling that your being is there'* An intrusive teacher presence can be too controlling and impede the students desire to be open *'so that you are focusing on them and they suddenly get all self-conscious and start covering their work or you are striding purposefully behind them so they have got that sense at the back of the neck and they start looking around...so you have got to tone it down a little bit as you are monitoring, just to make sure...a concerned eye but not (demonstrating) as if you are the prison guard...so there is knowing when to chop that down a little bit'.*

Mary describes one group of learners in which they 'fostered a communicative dynamic, whether it be through the presence or the manifestations of presence that the *'atmosphere in the classroom was very, very communicative, very supportive and it ended up – it was almost like a big family in the end and even when newcomers came in, I think they opened the door and were surprised how welcoming everybody was'* She is not sure if it was her teacher presence which had instigated the opening up of channels of communication but she describes

the atmosphere as *'non-judgemental'* and it all *'started a chain reaction but it became a very, very nurturing class'*

As a result of her teacher presence and that of this particular group of students, she experienced a *'mass presence'* that had a particular effect *'like you have in a rock concert when everybody picks up on the vibe and goes with the flow...'* She experienced her own presence as part of a larger energy flow which *'passes from one person to another, there is almost a chain reaction, which affects the whole'*. She adapts the manifestations of her own presence to create and maintain excitement and momentum *'I'm also monitoring if people are a bit quieter...oh really....that's great...I change my voice and everything to keep it dynamic at the beginning. It's almost like, you know, whip the crowd up into a frenzy'*. She perceives her teacher presence as constantly *'dancing'* in tune with that of her students. *'If they are down, you try and raise them up, if they are too hyper, then you'll withdraw, if they are doing something very student-centred'*. Sometimes she senses the need to withdraw her presence and *'then I'll dim my light and sit out in the corner with my ear radar on instead so it's like a dance.....so you are not crowding them out...you are going with their flow. I think when you bump into them, when you crowd them or when you pull back too much, you can ruin that balance of connection'*. She feels that there is a natural connection with some students but others take a while to *'tune into her presence'*. In this case, it is better to wait and not push them into encounter but let them come forward in their own time. *'You have got one or two who are immediately forthcoming and tune straight into you and you know it's going to take a couple of mornings for the others to do so, because they are waiting for their moment...they are not sure yet...you don't push it with them, you encourage them...and hopefully a bit like getting all the orchestra going, including the triangle at the back, who 'tings' occasionally...and yes, thank you for joining in and I think the enthusiasm or that willingness of the others has a knock-on effect on those who are naturally more reticent to tune in'*.

Mary experiences her teacher presence as a manifestation of love and care towards her students. She feels that this care is verging on a sense of parental care, *'I care as much as they care and I love to see....well I am not a mummy so*

*I don't know...but it's probably like seeing your kid on the stage or doing really well, doing well in exams and you think 'yeah, good on you'. She shares their sense of achievement and feels personal joy that she has been able to 'inspire some confidence in them...to help them glow a little bit and that's what I love about the job'. However, she needs to feel a reciprocity in the love and care she demonstrates, 'if students come in and they don't care, then it is very hard for the teacher to want to be bothered'. The manifestation of love and care through her teacher presence needs to be acknowledged and reciprocated if it is to endure.*

**Essential themes of 'presence in teaching' generated by first stage data analysis**

Building a sense of togetherness	'being with' the students at a personal level	Archetypical perception of embodied authority	Imbuing the class with a thread that 'runs through'	Natural
Sensitivity to the student's vulnerabilities,	Self-awareness	Encouraging risks	Empathy and care.	Engaging students through enthusiasm and joy
Providing an embodied sense of clarity	Spontaneity	Attuning	Good judgement	Uniqueness
Physicality	Connectedness	Gestures and body language	Sensitivity to mood and feelings	Energy flow
Care	Lynch-pin for setting up and generating interest	Conduit for aligning the personal and professional	Reflection of self through physicality of voice	Strong sense of the centrality of teacher presence within the class flow.
A source of continuity	Freedom	Respect	Making the subject come alive	Positivity
Channelling energies to build familial type support groups	Creating a space which offers equal opportunity	Safety	Balancing individual needs with those of the group	Boosting confidence through experimentation and exploration
Responsiveness to student	Impact of teacher presence on entering the classroom	Emotional honesty	Providing support for social and cultural interaction	Enabling comfortable classroom environment

Watching and reacting	Sensitive attuning to context,	Awareness of time and space	Ethereal nature	Effect of expectations and assumptions in the mind of the perceiver.
Two-way flow	Encounter through the emotional sphere	Moral sense of responsibility	Radiating with transparency	Genuineness
Loving care	Theatrical	Vulnerable	Inspiring	

## **First stage composite of clusters, themes and patterns generated by data analysis**

### *Aspects of the essential nature of Presence in Teaching*

The ethereal nature of presence

In the moment

Natural/born teacher

Leaves an imprint/in the mind of the perceiver/ evokes an emotive response – positive and negative

Embodies authority - Archetypical perception

Emotive response

Has impact on going into the classroom

Informed by a sense of moral responsibility for the other

Aligns the personal and the professional/Being oneself whilst teaching

Inspires and maintains a hub of connectedness

Disturbed by being observed/sensitive to criticism

Identifiable by its absence

Feeds on reciprocity

Reflects and embodies life experiences including own learning experiences

### *Manifestations of Presence in Teaching*

Body language and gestures

Empathy and care

Sensitivity to mood and feelings

Encounter through the emotional sphere – positive and negative

Genuineness

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Physical proximity

Voice

Order and clarity

Relates with students at a human level

Radiates through its transparency

Informed by an inner antenna

Emanates from a core sense of self

Informed by Intercultural awareness

### *What Presence in Teaching does*

Celebrates diversity, exoticism and the unique

Makes a difference

Inspires learning by means of its magic wand/ engages students with a sense of the mysterious

Offers opportunities for self-enrichment

Breaks down barriers

Brings the subject alive

Promotes freedom,

Encourages risks

Balances individual needs with those of the group/ Promotes equality

Scaffolds a stepped approach to learning

Gives space for creativity

Develops a comfortable classroom environment conducive to learning/ Creates an aura of safety

Acts as a conduit for a hub of social and cultural inter-connectedness

Leaves an imprint from its touch

### *How Presence in Teaching does it*

By building relationship through mutuality

By providing the lynch-pin for setting up and generating interest

By providing a strong sense of the centrality within the class flow

By boosting confidence

By providing a space for experimentation and exploration

By building a sense of togetherness

By sensitive attuning to context,

Through sensitivity to student vulnerabilities

By creating a space infused with civic responsibility for the other

By 'being with' the students at a personal level

Through responsiveness to student

By keeping all the plates in the air/keeping an eye on the ball

By coming from a positive place

### *Why Presence in Teaching is significant*

Through it, a teacher can foster a classroom environment within which learning affordances can occur naturally and spontaneously

Through it, a teacher can sense when opportunities arise within such naturally occurring affordances

Through it, a teacher can imbue the class with a thread that 'runs through' – a continuity....a link when connectedness is lost

Through it, a teacher can channel individual energies to build (familial type) support groups within which learning can take place through socialisation and experimentation

Through it, a teacher can provide an immediacy within which true dialogue has the opportunity to take place

Through it, a teacher can manifest sensitivity, which can soften the sharp edges of previously emotive learning experiences



Appendix 23

Through it, a teacher can inspire/unlock/release a dynamic classroom energy flow within which creative expression and learning can unfold spontaneously.

Through it, a teacher can foster an international space/meeting ground.

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