



# CREATE

Canterbury Research and Theses Environment

Canterbury Christ Church University's repository of research outputs

<http://create.canterbury.ac.uk>

Copyright © and Moral Rights for this thesis are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder/s. The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given e.g. Balchin, K. (2017) Local perspectives through distant eyes: an exploration of English language teaching in Kerala in Southern India. Ph.D. thesis, Canterbury Christ Church University.

Contact: [create.library@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:create.library@canterbury.ac.uk)



**LOCAL PERSPECTIVES THROUGH DISTANT EYES:  
AN EXPLORATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN KERALA  
IN SOUTHERN INDIA**

**by**

**Kevin Balchin**

**Canterbury Christ Church University**

**Thesis submitted  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

2017

## Abstract

This thesis examines professionalism of English language teaching (ELT) in one particular setting, the state of Kerala in southern India.

It reveals that there is an independent and unrecognised professionalism amongst ELT professionals in the setting. This includes a lack of recognition of the efficacy of methods and approaches traditionally used in the setting and a lack of recognition of the informal professional development that is happening in the setting. This professionalism is unrecognised by local ELT professionals because of their belief in 'Western TESOL'. I am only able to recognise it when I learn, through an autoethnography of my own professionalism, to put aside my own preoccupations with 'Western TESOL'.

The initial objective of this study was to attempt to gain insights into *local perspectives* surrounding ELT methodology and teacher education, set against a background of a perceived need for methodological change in the setting. However, once the study had begun, it became clear that my own professional background and experiences, my 'Western TESOL' 'professional baggage', combined with the fact that I was coming into the setting as an outsider, seeing it through *distant eyes*, was affecting the ways in which I was viewing the setting and interpreting the events happening within it. As I began to offload some of this 'professional baggage', realising that my 'Western TESOL' understanding of the setting did not necessarily match local participants' understandings of it, I began to question and re-evaluate the data I had collected. For example, I realised that I was focusing on what I saw as the negative aspects of what I was observing and being told about ELT in the setting, and comparing these to approaches to ELT in 'Western TESOL' settings that I was more familiar with. Over time, I began to look at these same aspects in a more positive light, seeing different perspectives and valuing what I was seeing or being told in different ways. My re-evaluations of the data from the setting over time also thus became a focus of the study.

The study as a whole is therefore ethnographic in terms of attempting to understand *local perspectives*, using open-ended questionnaire, classroom observation, interview and field note data, with an autoethnographic dimension to acknowledge the influence of my own *distant eyes* perspective in understanding these local perspectives. It brings into focus how I, as a researcher, through re-evaluating my own data and as a result gaining greater insight into my own positioning, was able to give credit to different perspectives on the data collected, particularly

the data from classroom observations and teacher accounts of practice, and in the light of this to offer possible ways forward for ELT in the setting.

It has implications for local ELT professionals in terms of understanding and appreciating their own professionalism. It also has implications for TESOL professionals in unfamiliar settings in terms of the need to understand the complexity of these settings, rather than make hasty judgments about local practices, particularly in the case of 'Western TESOL' professionals working in 'non-Western TESOL' settings.

It may therefore be of interest both to 'Western' teachers, teacher trainers and academics working or researching, or intending to work or carry out research, in settings with which they are not familiar, particularly 'non-Western TESOL' settings, and to local TESOL professionals and academics in the setting for the study.

## **Acknowledgement**

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Wendy and my son Daniel, without whose support and understanding, it would not have been possible.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude my main supervisors, Dr. Goodith White and Professor Adrian Holliday, for their much-appreciated support. In particular, I would like to thank Goodith for her persistent encouragement in pushing me to get the thesis moving forward, and Adrian for his 'bigger picture' guidance in helping me to get it finished.

## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Abstract  | 2  |
| Acknowledgement   | 4  |
| Table of Contents   | 5  |
| List of Tables  | 9  |
| List of Abbreviations   | 9  |
| 1. Introduction   | 10 |
| 1.1. Background to the study                                      | 11 |
| 1.2. Developing the focus of the study                            | 13 |
| 1.2.1. My starting position                                       | 13 |
| 1.2.2. Early discomfort   | 14 |
| 1.3. Positioning myself in the field                              | 16 |
| 1.3.1. Insider and outsider perspectives                          | 16 |
| 1.3.2. Emerging reflexivity                                       | 17 |
| 1.3.3. Introducing an autoethnographic dimension                  | 19 |
| 1.3.4. Final research questions                                   | 20 |
| 1.4. Structure of the thesis                                      | 21 |
| 1.5. Notes on terminology   | 24 |
| 2. Research Methodology   | 28 |
| 2.1. Research design  | 28 |
| 2.1.1. Postmodern qualitative research                            | 28 |
| 2.1.2. Working in ethnographic mode                               | 30 |
| 2.1.3. The setting for and the participants involved in the study | 32 |
| 2.1.4. Access, field relations and changing roles                 | 34 |
| 2.2. Data collection  | 36 |
| 2.2.1. Questionnaires   | 37 |
| 2.2.2. Classroom observations                                     | 39 |
| 2.2.3. Ethnographic interviewing                                  | 41 |
| 2.2.4. Field notes  | 47 |
| 2.3. Data analysis  | 49 |
| 2.3.1. Overview of the data analysis process                      | 49 |
| 2.3.2. Coding the data and generating themes                      | 50 |
| 2.4. Writing up the study   | 52 |
| 2.5. Trustworthiness  | 54 |
| 2.6. Ethical considerations                                       | 57 |
| 2.7. Limitations of the research methodology                      | 58 |

|        |   |     |
|--------|---|-----|
| 3.     | The Autoethnographic Dimension                                      | 62  |
| 3.1.   | Rationale for including an autoethnographic dimension               | 62  |
| 3.2.   | Positioning myself in the autoethnographic field                    | 66  |
| 3.2.1. | Exploring autoethnography   | 67  |
| 3.2.2. | Analytic Autoethnography  | 69  |
| 3.2.3. | Evocative Autoethnography   | 70  |
| 3.2.4. | My approach to autoethnography - a ‘middle way’                     | 71  |
| 3.3.   | Using critical incidents to underpin the autoethnographic dimension | 73  |
| 3.4.   | Trustworthiness and autoethnography                                 | 76  |
| 3.5.   | An overview of my ‘Western TESOL’ professional biography            | 78  |
| 4.     | Exploring ELT Methodology   | 81  |
| 4.1.   | Exploring some key concepts   | 83  |
| 4.1.1. | ‘Approach’, ‘method’ and ‘methodology’                              | 83  |
| 4.1.2. | Arguments against and for ‘method’                                  | 85  |
| 4.1.3. | An eclectic approach?   | 89  |
| 4.1.4. | The ‘post-method era’   | 91  |
| 4.1.5. | Complexity in the language classroom                                | 95  |
| 4.2.   | A more ‘communicative’ approach                                     | 97  |
| 4.2.1. | ‘Communicative’ and ‘communicative competence’                      | 98  |
| 4.2.2. | ‘The communicative approach’ and ‘communicative language teaching’  | 99  |
| 4.2.3. | Criticisms of ‘CLT’   | 104 |
| 4.2.4. | My own developing interpretation of ‘CLT’                           | 107 |
| 4.3.   | Educational change  | 110 |
| 4.3.1. | Implementing change   | 111 |
| 4.3.2. | Managing change   | 114 |
| 4.4.   | English in India and in Kerala                                      | 115 |
| 4.4.1. | The status of English in India                                      | 116 |
| 4.4.2. | ‘ELT in India’  | 120 |
| 4.4.3. | ELT in Kerala   | 127 |
| 4.4.4. | A context-sensitive approach to ELT in Kerala                       | 129 |
| 5.     | Exploring Second Language Teacher Education                         | 132 |
| 5.1.   | The nature of teacher learning                                      | 133 |
| 5.2.   | The knowledge base of SLTE  | 134 |
| 5.3.   | Professionalism and expertise in language teaching                  | 136 |
| 5.3.1. | Professionalism in language teaching                                | 136 |
| 5.3.2. | The role of practice in pre-service SLTE                            | 137 |
| 5.3.3. | Developing expertise  | 138 |

|        |  |     |
|--------|--|-----|
| 5.4.   | Collaboration in SLTE  | 140 |
| 5.4.1. | Formal collaborative professional development                      | 141 |
| 5.4.2. | Informal collaborative professional development                    | 143 |
| 5.5.   | SLTE in India  | 144 |
| 6.     | <i>Distant Eyes: Changing Perspectives</i>                         | 153 |
| 6.1.   | Getting rid of (some) of my 'Western TESOL' 'professional baggage' | 155 |
| 6.1.1. | 'Western TESOL' as a reference point                               | 156 |
| 6.1.2. | 'Western TESOL' or just good teaching?                             | 160 |
| 6.1.3. | Large classes or just classes?                                     | 162 |
| 6.1.4. | A lack of deliberate bracketing                                    | 164 |
| 6.2.   | Developing my understanding of the setting                         | 166 |
| 6.2.1. | The learning environment   | 166 |
| 6.2.2. | ELT methodology in the setting                                     | 170 |
| 6.2.3. | The (in)appropriacy of 'the Communicative Approach' in the setting | 174 |
| 6.3.   | Understanding my positioning and role within the setting           | 179 |
| 6.3.1. | Outsider or insider research?                                      | 179 |
| 6.3.2. | Multiple roles within the setting                                  | 189 |
| 6.4.   | Appreciating complexity  | 193 |
| 6.4.1. | Understanding complexity in the setting                            | 194 |
| 6.4.2. | Looking beyond reductive interpretations                           | 196 |
| 7.     | Local Perspectives through Distant Eyes: ELT Methodology           | 201 |
| 7.1.   | Describing methods and approaches                                  | 202 |
| 7.1.1. | The term 'method'  | 202 |
| 7.1.2. | The myth and simplification of 'method'                            | 205 |
| 7.1.3. | Importing 'Western TESOL' methods and approaches                   | 208 |
| 7.1.4. | The role of the teacher  | 209 |
| 7.2.   | The traditional-modern dichotomy                                   | 210 |
| 7.2.1. | Teaching language through literature                               | 213 |
| 7.2.2. | Teaching language with a strong focus on grammar and translation   | 215 |
| 7.2.3. | Development discourse  | 217 |
| 7.3.   | 'Communicative' approaches in Kerala                               | 218 |
| 7.3.1. | Why do Keralites struggle to communicate in English?               | 219 |
| 7.3.2. | What does it mean to teach communicatively?                        | 221 |
| 7.3.3. | The applicability of 'communicative' approaches in the setting     | 223 |
| 7.3.4. | The use of 'communicative' approaches in the setting               | 225 |
| 7.4.   | A localised approach to ELT in Kerala                              | 227 |



|        |  |     |
|--------|--|-----|
| 7.4.1. | Towards a localised approach to ELT  | 227 |
| 7.4.2. | Features of a localised approach to ELT                                    | 229 |
| 7.4.3. | A localised approach to ELT and recent literature on ELT methodology       | 234 |
| 7.5.   | Implementing Change  | 235 |
| 7.5.1. | Barriers to change   | 235 |
| 7.5.2. | The need for joined-up thinking  | 239 |
| 7.5.3. | Pockets of progress  | 240 |
| 8.     | Local Perspectives through Distant Eyes: Second Language Teacher Education | 245 |
| 8.1.   | Teachers' language proficiency and SLTE                                    | 246 |
| 8.1.1. | Concerns over teachers' language proficiency                               | 246 |
| 8.1.2. | Language proficiency and professionalism                                   | 249 |
| 8.2.   | Pre-service and in-service SLTE  | 250 |
| 8.2.1. | SLTE and classroom practice  | 250 |
| 8.2.2. | Sponsored professionalism  | 252 |
| 8.2.3. | Follow up after SLTE programmes  | 254 |
| 8.2.4. | School-based SLTE programmes   | 254 |
| 8.3.   | Independent professionalism  | 256 |
| 8.3.1. | Sense of powerlessness   | 257 |
| 8.3.2. | Informal networks and teachers' groups                                     | 259 |
| 8.3.3. | What counts as professional development?                                   | 265 |
| 9.     | Conclusions and Implications   | 268 |
| 9.1.   | Conclusions and implications for research practice                         | 269 |
| 9.1.1. | Understanding the setting  | 269 |
| 9.1.2. | Implications for research practice, particularly in unfamiliar settings    | 272 |
| 9.2.   | Conclusions and implications for ELT methodology and teacher education     | 275 |
|        | Bibliography   | 283 |
|        | List of Appendices   | 306 |
|        | Appendix 1 - Data collected during each visit to the research setting      | 307 |
|        | Appendix 2 - Open-ended questionnaire                                      | 308 |
|        | Appendix 3 - Classroom observations  | 309 |
|        | Appendix 4 - Example of my observation notes                               | 311 |
|        | Appendix 5 - Details of interviewees                                       | 312 |
|        | Appendix 6 - Example of an interview transcript                            | 313 |
|        | Appendix 7 - Examples of field notes                                       | 318 |

## **List of Tables**

Table 2.1 - Timing and length of visits to the setting

Table 2.2 - Number of classroom observations on particular visits

## **List of Abbreviations**

B.Ed. - Bachelor of Education

CELTA - Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults

CLT - Communicative Language Teaching

COLT - Communication-Oriented Language Teaching

CPD - Continuing Professional Development

CELTA - Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults

CTEFLA - Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults

DELTA - Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults

DTEFLA - Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults

EAP - English for Academic Purposes

EFL - English as a Foreign Language

ELT - English Language Teaching

INSET - In-Service Training

IELTS - International English Language Testing System

M.A. - Master of Arts

PRESET - Pre-Service Training

SLTE - Second Language Teacher Education

TESL - Teaching English as a Second Language

TESOL - Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

U.K. - United Kingdom

## 1. Introduction

This thesis investigates the professionalism of English language teaching (ELT) professionals in the state of Kerala in southern India.

It reveals that there is an independent and unrecognised professionalism<sup>1</sup> amongst ELT professionals, in particular teachers and teacher trainers, within the setting. It is 'independent' in the sense that, in terms of the ELT methodology, it is not the officially prescribed way and, in terms of professional development, it takes place outside of the officially imposed professional development activities in the setting. It is 'unrecognised' in the sense that there are aspects of the professionalism that seem either to be considered in a negative sense or not to be considered at all. In terms of ELT methodology, this includes a lack of recognition of the efficacy of methods and approaches traditionally used in the setting, such as using the students' first language and using translation in English classes. In terms of professional development, it includes a lack of recognition of the informal professional development that is happening in the setting in the form of, for example, networks of English teachers collaborating on an informal basis and teachers' groups organised by, rather than imposed on, practising teachers, also on an informal basis.

Furthermore, this professionalism is unrecognised by local ELT professionals because of their belief in 'Western TESOL'<sup>2</sup> which in turn is influenced by a pervasive development discourse that sees 'Western TESOL' approaches as 'modern' and forward-looking and more 'traditional' locally-developed approaches as outdated and needing to be replaced. This professionalism is recognised in this study through an autoethnography of my own professionalism, which allows me to put aside my own preoccupations with 'Western TESOL' and to see the setting its own right.

This chapter outlines the background to the study and details how the focus of the study developed. It discusses the development of the research questions and provides a

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Professionalism' and 'independent professionalism' are defined in the 'Notes on terminology' in Section 1.5.

<sup>2</sup> 'Western TESOL' is defined in the 'Notes on terminology' in Section 1.5.

discussion of my own developing positioning in the field. Finally, it outlines how the thesis is structured.

## **1.1. Background to the study**

There have been discussions concerning appropriate English language teaching (ELT) methodology, and related to this the need for methodological change in ELT, in India over a number of years, in particular with reference to ‘the Bangalore Project’ as discussed, for example, in Prabhu (1987), and more recently in relation to India’s readiness for more ‘communicative’ approaches<sup>3</sup> to ELT, an issue explored, for example, in Gupta (2004, 2005, 2006). However, these discussions do not generally focus on the perspectives of local practitioners with regard to appropriate methodology and methodological change in particular settings within India.

In the light of this, the initial impetus for the study came as a result of a number of experiences and reflections during a visit to Kerala, prior to commencing the study, in November 2007. I had become involved in a small-scale project between my institution, a university in the United Kingdom (U.K.), and a group of educational institutions in Kerala in southern India. These institutions included schools, two teacher training institutes for primary teachers, a teacher training college for secondary teachers and a college<sup>4</sup> offering undergraduate programmes.

The project covered different aspects of education and training, including a number of study visits from student teachers in the U.K. However, my involvement related specifically to English language teaching, and stemmed from a perception, outlined by representatives of the partner educational institutions in Kerala during a visit to my institution in the U.K. in June 2007, that the standard of English, and in particular spoken

---

<sup>3</sup> The use of terms such as ‘communicative approach’ and related terms is discussed in the ‘Notes on terminology’ in Section 1.5, with these terms explored in more detail in Chapter 4. As outlined in Section 1.5, I generally place these terms in inverted commas to show that they are contested. In this chapter, the term ‘communicative approach’ should be seen in a broad sense as an approach to ELT that emphasises communication interaction in language teaching and learning.

<sup>4</sup> In this study, the term ‘college’ is used in the sense that it is generally used in this setting, to refer to higher education institutions offering undergraduate programmes. Such colleges are usually affiliated to a local university.

English, was of a lower level than was desirable. Further, there was a belief among these representatives, who included two TESOL professionals working in Kerala, that there were 'methods' out there which we, as 'Western TESOL' 'experts', could make local teachers aware of and so improve practice, and more specifically that one way to improve the standard of English in these institutions was to improve the standard of teaching by encouraging teachers to adopt a more 'communicative approach' to English language teaching. Because of this perceived need among those working in Kerala for change and for a more 'communicative approach' to ELT in Kerala, I was invited, as a representative of my own institution, to visit the region.

My visit in November 2007 lasted ten days. It involved being taken to see a number of local educational institutions, discussions with teachers, teacher educators and school and college principals, and the opportunity to observe classes. These discussions and observations provided an opportunity to get a sense of the way English was being taught, and of the language level and expectations of the students and teacher trainees. It also allowed me to reflect on how I might be able to contribute to the professional development of the local English language teachers and perhaps, as I had been asked to do, encourage more 'communicative' teaching.

The present study began as an ethnographically-based investigation into practitioners' views on the current state of and possible ways forward for ELT in Kerala. The central themes of the study were initially envisaged as ELT methodology and teacher education, with the initial objective of this study being to gain insights into local practitioners' perspectives on these themes.

However, having spent time in the setting on several occasions, it became increasingly clear that my own 'professional baggage', that is, my professional background<sup>5</sup> in ELT, both as a teacher and as a teacher educator, as well as the fact that I had come into the setting as an outsider with a 'Western TESOL' background, was influencing my interpretation of the events happening and, as a result, the data collected, in particular the data from classroom observations and teachers' accounts of practice, within the

---

<sup>5</sup> Details of my professional background are given in Section 3.5, in the chapter discussing the autoethnographic dimension to the study in more detail.

setting. Furthermore, I began to notice that over time I was able to offload some of this ‘professional baggage’ and to interpret those same events and the data collected from them in different ways, as a result gaining greater insight into how my own positioning had and was affecting my interpretations. These revised interpretations of the data collected thus became a focus within the study.

The study as a whole is therefore ethnographic with an autoethnographic dimension: ethnographic in the sense of attempting to understand *local perspectives* within the setting, and autoethnographic in the sense of attempting to comprehend how my own *distant eyes* perspective has influenced my interpretation of these *local perspectives*.

In practical terms, the setting for the study was a group of educational institutions in Kerala in southern India, based around the city of Thiruvananthapuram, the state capital. The participants involved included education professionals - teachers, teacher trainers and school principals - working in the region. The main sources of data were open-ended questionnaires, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and field notes, with data collected over the course of eight visits to the setting.

## **1.2. Developing the focus of the study**

This section outlines how the focus of the study began to develop because of two critical incidents during the first visit to the setting after the study had begun.

### **1.2.1. My starting position**

At the outset of the study, I was questioning whether using a more ‘communicative’ approach to ELT was either realistic or appropriate in the setting and became interested in exploring the perceptions of English language teachers and other stakeholders about what methodology they considered appropriate for English language classes in Kerala. Alongside this, I wanted to investigate what the impact of any methodological change might have in terms of the teacher training and development needs of local teachers. Based on this, my *initial* research questions were:

1. What do stakeholders<sup>6</sup> in Kerala understand by the term ‘the communicative approach’ in relation to ELT?
2. To what extent do stakeholders in Kerala feel it is appropriate to adopt a more ‘communicative’ approach to ELT, similar to that encouraged in many ‘Western TESOL’ contexts?
3. What are the views of teachers and teacher educators’ in Kerala on the implications of any change in approach to ELT in terms of teacher education?

These questions allowed me to set out on the study, acting as catalysts for encouraging teachers and other stakeholders to speak about different aspects of their professional lives.

### **1.2.2. Early discomfort**

For my first visit to the setting after beginning the study, I was there as part of the project described in Section 1.1. During this visit, I was very much seen as an ‘expert’ from the U.K. However, the setting was very different to what I had previously experienced in a professional sense and this label of ‘expert’ was not one I felt at ease with. Although on the second visit I was there to facilitate professional development workshops with English language teachers, something that I had already been doing for several years in the U.K., the unfamiliar setting and in particular being seen as an ‘ELT expert’ made me feel quite uncomfortable. Alongside this, I felt a growing awareness of my own lack of awareness and understanding of the way ELT, and education generally, worked within the setting. These early feelings of discomfort and lack of awareness are highlighted in the two incidents described below.

*The listening workshop:* Prior to visiting the setting, I had been liaising with a local teacher about the themes and content of the workshops that I would be running. He suggested that I should also do a workshop giving teachers ideas for improving their students’ listening skills. In thinking about the types of activities to demonstrate, I assumed that there would be a CD player available in the college where the workshop was to take place and planned a listening skills

---

<sup>6</sup> By stakeholders, I meant teachers, teacher educators and school and college principals.

workshop accordingly. However, when I got there, it turned out that there was no CD player. I later learned later that very few schools had a CD player or any device for playing materials designed to improve listening skills in another language, though these were mainstays of the 'Western TESOL' at the time. [Adapted from field notes, June 2008]

This incident brought home to me how little I knew about the way English was taught in Kerala, and how it would be a mistake to try to transfer what happens in the 'Western TESOL' settings I was more familiar with to this setting, in spite of the fact that this was what those managing the project I was involved in, particularly on the Kerala side, wanted me to do.

*'How do you punish your students when they make mistakes?'* My discomfort was also highlighted when a teacher in a college teaching undergraduate students, asked me how I punished my students when they made mistakes. I taken aback by the question, and the teacher herself also looked somewhat surprised when I told her that 'I didn't punish my students'. [Adapted from field notes, June 2008]

This incident helped me realise that, in addition to any differences in our *approach* to teaching, which was what I had been focusing on as part of the project I was involved in, there were fundamental differences in our underlying *beliefs* about teaching. It was also clear that these beliefs may not be easily observable or easily uncovered and that, even though I was broadly familiar with the types of educational setting and what went on in ELT classrooms, I was still very much on the outside in terms of understanding the more hidden aspects of the setting. In addition to this, I later realised that I had immediately judged my non-punishment way as the 'normal' and somehow the more 'correct' way, stemming from my bias towards 'Western TESOL' ways of doing things.

As a result of these incidents, and having become more aware of my own lack of knowledge and understanding of the setting, I began to further question the suitability, not only of 'communicative' approaches, but also more widely of 'Western TESOL'



approaches and influences in the setting, and also to consider my own positioning within the setting.

### **1.3. Positioning myself in the field**

This section gives an overview of the evolution of my thinking in terms of positioning myself in the field. It first outlines my positioning in terms of insider-outsider perspectives, and then discusses how over the course of the study I initially became more reflexive and later felt it necessary to include an autoethnographic dimension in the study, which, in turn, lead to the final research questions given at the end of the section.

#### **1.3.1. Insider and outsider perspectives**

Within the ethnographic tradition, there has been a great deal of discussion about the insider's (emic) perspective versus the outsider's (etic) perspective on events, with both potentially important, though the emic view is often implied to be somehow superior (Richards 2003). Heigham and Sakui (2009, p.97-98), for example, favour the insider position, suggesting that 'by slowly adopting an emic position, over time you learn to understand certain cultural practices and routines, participate in them, and learn some of the jargon ... of the target culture', though at the same time they do caution that 'you must also maintain an objective distance, an etic position, as a researcher'.

Styles (1979) however seeks to debunk what he called outsider and insider myths, that only outsiders can have the necessary objectivity and that only insiders can understand the true character of a group. Along similar lines, Patton (2002, p.268) takes a balanced position, suggesting that for ethnographers, 'methodologically, the challenge is to do justice to both perspectives during and after fieldwork and to be clear with one's self and one's audience how this tension is managed'.

In this study, I tried to follow the advice of Maykut and Morehouse (1994) that the researcher should aim to maintain a marginal position, close enough to access participant perspectives but at the same time avoiding the dangers of over-rapport, being simultaneously an insider-outsider.

In practice, there was a gradual movement from outsider to partial insider, for example thinking at the outset that large class size must be a problem to deal with, primarily because, as an outsider, it felt like they must be difficult to deal with, but coming to realise over time and with greater awareness and understanding of the setting that, although perhaps not ideal, large class sizes were more of an accepted reality of the setting than being considered as a problem. Issues around my own insider/outsider positioning and perspectives in relation to this study are discussed as part of the findings in Section 6.3.

### **1.3.2. Emerging reflexivity**

The concept of reflexivity recognises that ‘social researchers are part of the social world they study’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.14) and ‘acknowledges that the orientations of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them’ (ibid., p.15). It accepts that researchers ‘bring their own biographies to the research situation and participants behave in particular ways in their presence’ (Cohen et al, 2011, p.225). Countering any suggestion that we should try to minimise or eliminate the effects of the researcher, even if that were possible, reflexivity ‘refers to the researcher’s/writer’s ability to reflect on their own positioning and subjectivity in the research and provide an explicit, situated account of their own role in the project and its influence over the findings’ (Starfield, 2010, p.54), with a reflexive researcher needing to be ‘acutely aware of the ways in which their selectivity, perception, background and inductive processes and paradigms shape the research’ (Cohen et al, 2011, p.225).

I came to realise that I had been quite naïve and had lacked reflexivity when the study began. For example, looking through the classroom observation data collected during my early visits, I noticed that my comments were all about differences between the setting for this study and settings I was more familiar with, with the study setting generally described in less favourable terms, focusing on issues that I perceived as negative such as the ‘dingy and cramped’ classrooms, the large class sizes, the (in my view at the time) overly ‘teacher-centred’ classes, and the lack of facilities in the classrooms. I tended to look at the research setting in a negative sense, without reflecting sufficiently on my own positioning or subjectivity. In this early observation data, my

comments appear to come from a combination of a 'deficit model' and a 'development discourse' perspective: a 'deficit model' perspective in the sense of comparing the 'deficient' research setting with an idealised 'Western TESOL' setting, and a 'development discourse' perspective in the sense that I was, albeit unwittingly, espousing the views of a dominant group, in this case the views of the 'Western TESOL' community, in the name of 'improving', though some would argue it is exerting control over, the lives of a more marginalised group. The idea of a 'development discourse' is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Fundamentally, I was not recognising the role my own background was playing in influencing the way I observed classes and the data I chose to record about those classes. For example, during my first three observations, all carried out during my first visit to the setting. I wrote comments such as 'very old-fashioned looking textbook', 'again very teacher dominated, little or no pair work /group work', and 'no personalising'. There seems to be an underlying, if misguided, assumption in my writing that classes involving what 'Western TESOL' considers as desirable characteristics of English language classes, for example, modern-looking coursebooks, 'student-centredness'<sup>7</sup>, pair and group work, and personalisation, are undeniably a good thing, whatever the setting, and therefore these characteristics should be strived for, regardless of the setting.

More generally, I was viewing classes from the point of view that they should be 'communicative', without having thought too much about precisely what this involved or how and why it might differ in the research setting compared with 'Western TESOL' settings that I was more familiar with.

---

<sup>7</sup> In this thesis, the terms 'student-centred'/'student-centredness' and 'learner-centred'/'learner-centredness' are used interchangeably, though for consistency, I have tried to use the terms 'student-centred' or 'student-centredness' except where particular authors have preferred to use the terms 'learner-centred' or 'learner-centredness'.

However, as the study developed and as I spent more time in the setting, I became more aware of how much of my own biography I had brought to the setting, and of the subjectivity that this had brought to the research process. I came to understand that my initial views were themselves contextually defined, and that I would need to question and reassess my understanding of concepts such as 'student-centredness' and 'communicative', and quite possibly broaden their definitions to a higher level of generality.

Consequently, I became aware of the need to more overtly monitor my role in the research process. For example, when it came to analysing my field notes some time after they had originally been written, my analysis would often question the assumptions underlying my own recording of data, such as what I had meant by terms such as 'teacher-centred' or 'student-centred'.

### **1.3.3. Introducing an autoethnographic dimension**

After my analysis of the data had begun, it became clear that simply having an increased awareness of the need for reflexivity could not fully reflect the significant changes in my own perspectives on the study over time. For example, looking back at the early classroom observation data mentioned above, I realised that many of the points I had noted at that time did not reflect the way my thinking about the setting had developed since taking those notes. For this reason, I began to explore the idea of including an autoethnographic dimension in the study.

As Wall (2006, p.3) notes:

The research community is relatively comfortable with the concept of reflexivity, in which the researcher pauses for a moment to think about how his or her presence, standpoint, or characteristics might have influenced the outcome of the research process. However, new "methods" such as autoethnography, founded on postmodern ideas, challenge the value of token reflection that is often included as a paragraph in an otherwise neutral and objectively presented manuscript.

These words resonated with my own thinking that I wanted to go beyond reflexivity in this study and that introducing an autoethnographic dimension into the study would provide a more realistic and holistic representation of the study. Taking this approach also provided a means of weaving the different aspects of the study together. However, although Wall's words, and those of other writers describing and discussing autoethnography inspired me to go down this route, I would not wish to describe this study as 'an autoethnography', rather as an ethnographic study with an autoethnographic dimension, so as to avoid any suggestion that it was solely about changes in my perspectives over time.

The balance between the autoethnographic nature of the thesis and the actual research on ELT in Kerala is difficult to describe in a precise manner as the two aspects are interlinked throughout most of this thesis. However, given that the first of three data chapters, Chapter 6, focuses very strongly on the autoethnographic dimension and that this then feeds through into the findings and discussion in the two data chapters that follow, it is clear that this autoethnographic dimension is fundamental to the study. Further, the core issues within this thesis surrounding independent and unrecognised professionalism in the setting would not have been uncovered without the autoethnographic dimension. Because of this, it was also the case that over time the study became increasingly slanted towards this dimension.

#### **1.3.4. Final research questions**

As discussed above, the emphasis of the study has thus changed over the course of data collection and data analysis process, from the focus being on local perspectives on ELT methodology and teacher education within the setting, to the focus being on the sense I was making, as a practising teacher, teacher trainer, and researcher, of these issues and how this was itself changing over time. That is to say, it started off mainly looking at the perspectives of those working in the setting, but over time introduced an explicit focus on my own *distant eyes* interpretations of those *local perspectives*, and how these interpretations changed during the study because of the introduction of an autoethnographic dimension to the study. The study had taken on the '*local perspectives through distant eyes*' angle from which the title of the thesis comes.

The *final* form of the research questions was:

1. What are the perceptions of ELT professionals in the setting in terms of good practice in teaching methodology?
2. What are the perceptions of ELT professionals in the setting in terms of good practice in teacher education?
3. How am I interpreting these perceptions in the light of an autoethnography of my own professionalism?

I focus in more detail on the specifics of this autoethnographic dimension in Chapter 3, and discuss findings relating to this in later chapters, in particular in Chapter 6, where I address issues such as gradually moving from feeling and being considered an outsider to becoming a partial insider over time and how my role would change, for example, from (perceived) 'expert' to 'teacher trainer' to 'teacher' to 'researcher', depending on where I was and who I was with.

#### **1.4. Structure of the thesis**

Having given an overview of the study in terms of the background to it, and outlined my position in the field and how this impacted on the broad approach taken during this study, I conclude this chapter by describing how the thesis is structured.

Following this introductory chapter, there are eight further chapters, structured as follows:

Chapters 2 and 3 discuss the research methodology used for this study. They are placed ahead of the literature review chapters to foreground, not only the importance of the considerations surrounding the methodology in terms of data collection and analysis, but also that the autoethnographic dimension of the study itself impacts on the literature review, such as in the sense that the first point of reference for selecting literature for review was 'Western TESOL'.

*Chapter 2 – Research methodology.* This chapter provides a rationale for the research methodology used in this study. It then sets out the research design and gives details of

the research setting and participants. Following this, practical issues such as access and field relations are explored. A detailed description of how data relating to both independent and unrecognised professionalism were collected is then given. Data analysis procedures are also discussed, along with procedures for writing up of the study, and considerations of trustworthiness, ethics and the limitations of the methodological approach taken for the study.

*Chapter 3 – The autoethnographic dimension.* This chapter attempts to explore the autoethnographic dimension of the study and to provide a broad framework around which to set the study in terms of understanding my own positioning and how this positioning effected of the study. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how autoethnography helped me to uncover independent and unrecognised professionalism in the setting.

Chapters 4 and 5 review literature relevant to this study. They seek to demonstrate how the literature helped me to understand the impact of ‘Western TESOL’ and to find alternative professional narratives.

*Chapter 4 – Exploring ELT methodology.* This chapter discusses key issues relating to professionalism in terms of ELT methodology. It seeks to discuss and clarify understandings of key terms used in the thesis such as ‘method’, ‘methodology’, ‘approach’, ‘communicative’, ‘the communicative approach’, and ‘communicative language teaching’. It also considers recent debates on methodology, such as the development of ‘postmethod pedagogy’, issues surrounding complexity in the teaching and learning process and methodological change. The chapter also contextualises the study in terms of exploring methodological issues within ELT with reference to India, and in particular to Kerala, and problematises the appropriacy of adopting a more ‘communicative’ methodology in this region.

*Chapter 5 – Exploring second language teacher education.* This chapter discusses key issues relating to professionalism in terms of SLTE. It explores current debates on teacher education, teacher professionalism, the knowledge base for second language teaching and different approaches to SLTE such as more collaborative and reflective

practice based approaches. The chapter then goes on to look at more informal forms of professional development, and finally makes further explicit links between SLTE and the setting of this study.

Chapter 6 to 8 present and discuss the data collected and analysed in this study. They seek to demonstrate how the data reveals independent and unrecognised professionalism in the setting once I learnt how to recognise it myself.

*Chapter 6 – Distant eyes: changing perspectives.* The autoethnographic dimension of the study, in terms of its influence on the findings, is highlighted in this chapter. The chapter describes and analyses a number of critical moments during the study that have influenced my own perspectives as a researcher and educator, both in this particular setting and more widely.

Where to position this particular chapter within the thesis has been something I have struggled with. In one sense, it would naturally fit after the other two data chapters, chapters 7 and 8, in that many of the realisations within it came after the data presented in those two chapters had been collected and at least partially analysed. In another sense, it might have been pertinent to embed the critical moments that influenced my own perspectives within chapters 7 and 8 to reflect the fact that, some of them at least, can be related to particular themes within the study. However, by placing this chapter where I have, as the first of the three data chapters, I am attempting to show how some of the realisations and shifts in my own perspectives that occurred during the study impacted on rest of the data analysis. It therefore seeks both to foreground the importance of the autoethnographic dimension and to allow the following chapters to be read in the light of this.

*Chapter 7 – Local perspectives through distant eyes: ELT methodology.* This chapter presents participants' perceptions relating to ELT methodology, and uncovers independent and unrecognised professionalism in terms of the approaches and methods used for ELT in Kerala.



*Chapter 8 – Local perspectives through distant eyes: second language teacher education.* This chapter presents participants' perceptions relating to SLTE in Kerala. It also explores a particular issue coming out of the data, relating to the way in which in-service teachers are developing professionally through informal 'networks' of like-minded colleagues and peers.

*Chapter 9 – Implications and conclusions.* This final chapter summarises some of the key findings of the study, in particular relating to the independent and unrecognised professionalism uncovered through the study, and offers implications for local practice and for practice in 'Western' supported projects in non-'Western TESOL' settings, as well as for research practice.

## **1.5. Notes on terminology**

### *Professionalism in language teaching*

I use the term 'professionalism' as defined by Leung (2009, p.50) to refer to 'a selectively combined set of disciplinary-based knowledge, ethical principles, and time- and place-specific work practices'. Leung (2009) further distinguishes, in terms of the professional development of teachers, between 'sponsored professionalism', development through, for example, institutions or professional bodies, and 'independent professionalism', development coming from the teachers themselves through social and political awareness of professionalism. I use these terms, but in wider sense where *sponsored* professionalism, refers to a more top-down professionalism sanctioned and encouraged by official bodies, and *independent* professionalism refers to a more bottom-up professionalism coming from the teachers themselves. In this wider sense, I use these terms to discuss ELT methodology as well as professional development, where independent professionalism in the sense of ELT methodology refers to more bottom-up teacher-led decision-making about methodological choices as opposed to following officially sanctioned or officially encouraged approaches.

### *'Western TESOL'*

This term is used in a broad sense to represent professional discourses about ELT emanating in 'the West'. More particularly, it is used to describe a way of thinking about and discussing professionalism within ELT that is influenced by theories and classroom practices largely developed in the West. In using this term, I fully recognise that "Western TESOL' is itself a diverse, divided, and complex culture' (Holliday, 2005, preface ix) and further that it is not necessary to be located in 'the West' to think in this way. I also refer within the thesis to 'Western TESOL' settings, which again is not intended to imply particular locations, but to apply to any setting where the ethos is based on 'Western TESOL'. For example, I previously taught EFL in Russia, which would not traditionally be described as 'Western', but the language centre where I was working had very much a 'Western TESOL' ethos in terms of the approaches that teachers were expected to use.

To give a further example of the influence of 'Western TESOL', I encountered several young academics from Kerala and other states in India who, having studied Masters programmes in 'Western TESOL' settings, had returned to India advocating approaches that they had learnt more about during these programmes, apparently without problematising possible difficulties in exporting such approaches from one setting to another very different setting, and also apparently seeing teaching and learning in their own setting as deficient in comparison to the 'Western TESOL' settings they had gained familiarity with. These academics could be said to be thinking about and discussing professionalism within ELT in a 'Western TESOL' influenced way.

My own thinking at the start of this study, favouring for example 'student-centred' classes or minimal use of the students' first language, reflected my own ingrained belief at the time, albeit largely subconscious, in 'Western TESOL'. This belief was the result of my own background and education, particularly TESOL education, within 'Western TESOL' settings. An overview of my 'Western TESOL' professional biography is given in Section 3.5.

Over the course of this study, my own understanding of the influence of ‘Western TESOL’ both grew and changed. Indeed, at no point during the study did I consciously employ any particular personal interpretation of ‘Western TESOL’, preferring to see the term in the broad sense described above as a way of looking at professionalism within ELT that is both complex and dynamic in its nature.

‘Western TESOL’ is written in inverted commas throughout the thesis to acknowledge that it is a shorthand way to describe the above and that the term may be interpreted in different ways.

#### *‘Method’, ‘communicative’ and ‘communicative language teaching’*

I generally place terms such as ‘method’, ‘communicative’ and ‘communicative language teaching’ in inverted commas to indicate that their meanings are contested and that I am aware that they will mean different things to different people and possibly different things to the same people at different times. These and related terms are discussed in Chapter 4. Where possible, I have used the more general terms *a ‘communicative’ approach* and *‘communicative’ approaches*, rather than using the more specific terms *‘the communicative approach’* or *‘communicative language teaching’*, which seem to convey a greater and, in my view, unwarranted sense of certainty about what they might mean. However, when highlighting more specifically the (contested) concept of ‘the communicative approach’ or ‘communicative language teaching’, I use these terms. They are used interchangeably within this thesis.

#### *Teacher training, professional development and (second language) teacher education*

Although there are a number of overlapping terms used in discussions concerning ‘teacher education’ - for example, teacher training, teacher development, pre-service training (PRESET), in-service training (INSET), professional development and continuing professional development (CPD) - for consistency, I have generally tried to use only the terms teacher training, professional development and (second language) teacher education.

I use 'teacher training' to refer to training prior to starting a job, in line with Richards and Farrell (2005, p.3), seeing teacher training as relating to 'preparation for induction into a first teaching position or as preparation to take on a new teaching assignment or responsibility'.

I use 'professional development' to refer to development activities for practising teachers that seek 'to facilitate growth of teachers' understanding of teaching and themselves as teachers' (Richards and Farrell, 2005, p.4).

I use 'teacher education' and 'second language teacher education' ('SLTE') as a broader term encompassing the training and development of teachers, both pre-service and in-service.

Having said that, where the literature or participants quoted in the study use other related terms, I have not changed them.

## **2. Research Methodology**

This chapter discusses the development of the research methodology used during this study. As discussed in Section 1.4, I have placed it, along with the discussion of the autoethnographic dimension of the study in Chapter 3, ahead of the literature review chapters to foreground the influence of the methodology chapters on the study as a whole.

Section 2.1 begins by locating the study within the qualitative research paradigm and providing a rationale for the ethnographic approach taken. Section 2.2 then provides a detailed description of the methods of data collection and data collected. This is the data from which, taking an autoethnographic perspective as described in Chapter 3, I was able to uncover independent and unrecognised professionalism in the setting. Section 2.3 describes the data analysis process, focusing in particular on how themes were developed. The remainder of this chapter discusses the process of writing up the study, the trustworthiness of the approach taken, ethical considerations, and some of the limitations of the research methodology.

As was briefly outlined in Chapter 1, during the data analysis process, an autoethnographic dimension to the study emerged. This dimension is explored and discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

### **2.1. Research design**

After briefly discussing qualitative nature of this study, this section describes the ethnographic approach taken.

#### **2.1.1. Postmodern qualitative research**

This study is attempting to uncover and understand the perceptions and actions of participants in the study, and to open, at least partially, a window into some of the complexity within the setting. I locate this study within the postmodern qualitative research paradigm, with a methodological framework based around ethnography and autoethnography.

At the outset, the objective was to explore and understand people's opinions, beliefs and values, and to observe what was happening within the research setting in terms of ELT methodology, methodological change and teacher education. Within this in mind, the study sits quite comfortably within the qualitative research paradigm, sharing general characteristics used to describe qualitative research such as, as Maykut and Morehouse (1994, pp.43-47), suggest 'an exploratory and descriptive focus', an 'emergent design', 'purposive sampling', 'data collection in the natural setting', 'qualitative methods of data collection', and 'early and ongoing inductive data analysis' resulting in a detailed "rich' narrative'.

Further, in choosing a postmodern approach, I acknowledge that, as Holliday (2016, p.16) puts it:

'Reality and science are socially constructed', 'Researchers are part of research settings', 'Investigation must be in reflexive, self-critical, creative dialogue', 'What is important to look for should emerge', 'Research procedures can be developed to fit the social setting as it is revealed', and that researchers 'can do no more than interpret'.

In terms of this study, I understand that what I was told and what I observed was a 'reality' constructed by the participants in the study and by how I interpreted the words and actions of the participants, and also realise that, as a part of the social setting for the study, I could both affect and be a part of the data collected. Further, I tried to be flexible in terms of adjusting research procedures to fit with my emerging understanding of the setting, and to let themes emerge during data analysis rather than basing this analysis on preconceived ideas of what might be important.

Initially therefore, my conceptualisation of the research design could be described as loose, having broadly defined areas for investigation but at the same time being open to change, as opposed to having completely fixed research questions and a precise research procedure. However, as data was collected and my understanding of the setting grew, a more focused research design and more precise procedures emerged, including, for example, a greater focus on interview data and a more purposive approach

to selecting key informants. More details on how these key informants were selected is given in Section 2.2.3.

The study started off with a number of 'foreshadowed problems' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), initial ideas of what the problematic issues in the setting might be, which provided the impetus for the study. The foreshadowed problems were based around a tension, as I saw it at the time, between the perceived need for changes in English language teaching methodology and the form that these changes ought to take. More specifically, there was an apparent tension between the desire to improve communication skills in English and the view of *some* local stakeholders that this necessitated a more 'communicative' approach in the ELT classroom. I felt that there were a number of issues around this. In particular, I wanted to find out more about what local stakeholders understood by terms such as 'the communicative approach', about the extent to which these stakeholders felt such an approach was appropriate in the setting and what any change in approach might mean in terms of teacher education.

My initial explorations in the setting and preliminary data collection helped to turn these foreshadowed problems into initial research questions. After further exploration and reflection, as described in Section 1.3, the final form of the research questions was:

1. What are the perceptions of ELT professionals in the setting in terms of good practice in teaching methodology?
2. What are the perceptions of ELT professionals in the setting in terms of good practice in teacher education?
3. How am I interpreting these perceptions in the light of an autoethnography of my own professionalism?

### **2.1.2. Working in ethnographic mode**

As discussed in Chapter 1, my initial introduction to the southern Kerala region in which this study is set was through working on a small-scale English language teaching and teacher training project in the region, with the initial idea for the study developing out of that project. During the project, I spent part of the time observing classes, taking part

in classes, informally chatting with teachers, and generally getting to know the setting. Broadly speaking, I was working in the ethnographic mode without specifically labelling it as such. Therefore, when it came to starting the study, it felt appropriate to continue taking this approach. Indeed, working within the ethnographic tradition, seeking to 'describe and understand the behaviour of a particular social or cultural group' (Richards, 2003, p.14), where 'people's actions and accounts are studied in everyday contexts, rather than under conditions created by the researcher' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.3), with the goal of creating 'a narrative that describes richly and in great detail the daily life of the community as well as the cultural meanings and beliefs the participants attach to their activities, events and behaviours' (Dörnyei, 2007, p.130), resonated closely with the broad intentions of this study, as did Spradley's (1979, p.3, italics in original) view of ethnography as 'a research method that helps us understand how other people see their experience ... rather than *studying* people, ethnography means *learning from people*'.

Having said that, this approach did initially feel somewhat back-to-front in the sense that the research started without a specific research design to base it on, or in Brewer's terminology, various *methods* of data collection were being employed without a particular research *methodology*, i.e. 'broad theoretical and philosophical framework' (Brewer 2000, p.2), around which these methods were to fit being in place. However, even in the early stages, the study broadly reflected the three features of ethnographic work that Dörnyei (2007, p.131) highlights as frequently mentioned in the literature: 'focusing on participant meaning', a 'prolonged engagement in the natural setting' and the 'emergent nature' of the research.

As my own understanding of the ethnographic tradition grew, I soon began to realise that the present study was very much in line, in terms of key characteristics, with what ethnographically-focused texts describe. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.3), for example, summarise what ethnographic work usually involves as: research 'in the field'; collecting data from different sources; unstructured data collection with the research design, research questions and categories for interpreting data not fixed at the start;



generally small-scale but in-depth studies, resulting in verbal descriptions, explanations and theories based on interpretation not statistical analyses.

However, though there are no set-in-stone rules about what ethnographic work involves, I did have some initial concerns about precisely how ethnographic my work was. Firstly, the issue of 'prolonged engagement in the setting' initially felt slightly problematic in that, rather than spending a single prolonged period in the setting, as seems to be implied by Dörnyei's point above, my own engagement was, through practical necessity, made up of regular shorter periods of engagement in the setting over a number of years. To be more precise, I made eight visits to Southern India over a five-year period, each visit lasting between one and five weeks. The date and duration of each visit is given in Section 2.1.3 below. In addition to the visits, there was a degree of engagement going on throughout this period through maintaining contacts with participants online. Over time, I came to understand that this type of engagement in short bursts was equally as valid as prolonged engagement, as it allowed more time for reflection and for emerging themes to be developed and then pursued on subsequent visits, with the sense of being 'in ethnographic mode' maintained.

Secondly, I was aware that the research was using interview data increasingly as time went on, rather than having a primary focus on participant observation as many ethnographic studies do, and was conscious of the concerns of Atkinson and Coffey (2002) among others about over-reliance on interview data. However, considering the data as a whole, there are a range of sources, as detailed in Section 2.2, which I believe have allowed a sufficiently 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) to be created.

### **2.1.3. The setting for and the participants involved in the study**

This section describes the setting for and the participants involved in the study.

#### *The setting*

The setting for the study was the southern part of Kerala in southern India, centering around the city of Thiruvananthapuram, formerly known as Trivandrum, the state capital. The study involved different types of educational institution within southern

Kerala: local schools, colleges, teacher training institutions and the local university. A small number of these institutions were in the city of Thiruvananthapuram itself, though the majority were in more rural areas within a ninety-minute drive of the city. Whilst in the setting, I tended to base myself in Thiruvananthapuram and travel out to the other locations as necessary,

The setting felt appropriate in that it had 'a sense of boundedness', the potential to provide 'a variety of relevant interconnected data', 'sufficient richness', was 'sufficiently small', and already offered some degree of 'access' (Holliday, 2016, p.34).

Further, as the study progressed it was clear that the setting reflected Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007, p.32) view of research settings where 'boundaries are not fixed, but shift across occasions, to one degree or another, through processes of redefinition and negotiation' in that different participants and different educational institutions within the setting were involved to different degrees at different points during the study.

Within the schools involved in the study, there was variation in the type of school. There were three broad types: free-to-attend state-government-run regional language (Malayalam) schools, government-aided schools receiving some government support but also charging small fees, and private schools, which typically had more resources than the other schools and taught much of the curriculum in English.

The educational institutions involved in the study were initially chosen because of pre-existing links between my place of work and a group of local schools, teacher training colleges and higher education colleges in the setting, though as I became more familiar with the setting other institutions which were not part of this group were included in the study.

A summary of the timing and length of my visits to the setting is given in Table 2.1 below:

| <i>Visit number</i> | <i>Length of visit</i> | <i>Month / Year of visit</i> |
|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 0 <sup>8</sup>      | 10 days                | November 2007                |
| 1                   | 10 days                | June 2008                    |
| 2                   | 1 week                 | July 2009                    |
| 3                   | 5 weeks                | July - August 2010           |
| 4                   | 2 weeks                | December 2011                |
| 5                   | 1 week                 | February 2012                |
| 6                   | 1 week                 | January-February 2013        |
| 7                   | 3 weeks                | June 2013                    |

*Table 2.1 – Timing and length of visits to the setting*

### *The participants*

The participants involved in the study included teachers, teacher trainers and school principals working in the setting. They were involved in the study in different ways - through completing open-ended questionnaires, being observed, or being interviewed. All of those who completed questionnaires or who were observed, and the majority of those interviewed, had spent most or all of their professional careers living and working in Kerala. Three interviewees, all teacher trainers, were not, at the time they were interviewed, working in Kerala, though they were working in southern India. The intention was that, by including these participants, a wider perspective would be given.

#### **2.1.4. Access, field relations and changing roles**

Where it was necessary to gain access to institutions and informants, I did as Silverman (2010, p.204) suggests and made use of existing relationships and local contacts to simplify the process. Having said that, as commented on by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.41), the act of gaining access itself provided ‘insights into the social organisation of the setting’ and ‘important knowledge about the field’. For example, although my

---

<sup>8</sup> This visit took place before this study had begun.

initial access to particular schools, teacher training colleges and higher education institutions within the setting tended to be through local teachers and trainers rather than the management staff in the institutions, there was, in almost every case, still a requirement for official approval from, along with a courtesy visit to, the head of the institution, usually the principal or manager.

Nevertheless, the overall process of gaining access to institutions was generally made easier when existing local contacts acted as informal facilitators of the process. At the same time, they provided support and validation for my identity as a 'researcher'. Indeed, given that people 'will seek to place or locate the ethnographer within the social landscape defined by their experience' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.63), with researchers often treated suspiciously, particularly at the start, the involvement and often physical presence of local contacts in all likelihood made this initial period of transition from complete outsider to known and accepted outsider a much smoother process.

Having said that, as described in Chapter 1, I was introduced to the setting through my involvement in a project aiming, among other things, to develop English language teaching and teachers, and needed to fit my research and data collection around this, hence I was having to act in different roles at different times, and in addition I realised I was being perceived in different ways by different people. For example, I was doing some professional development work with some of the participants in the study both prior to starting and during the study, so they tended to see me as a fellow teacher or teacher trainer, while for those who knew only that I worked for a university in the U.K., I tended to be considered as a visiting 'foreign expert', and for those who knew only that I was researching something, I tended to be viewed purely as a visiting researcher or research scholar. This fluctuation between roles created a tension at some points between participants' expectations of me and my expectations of them. For instance, when I was observing classes, the teachers being observed tended to see me as an 'expert' figure who had come either to judge them or to solve their problems, while I was seeing these teachers as experts in their own setting who could help to shed light on the pertinent issues for me. As a result, it was sometimes difficult to position myself

as a 'socially acceptable incompetent' (Lofland and Lofland, 1995, p.56), given this tendency of participants to assume some kind of expertise on my part, regardless of whether it existed or not, and even though my understanding of the setting, particularly when setting out on the study, was limited.

There is also a connection here to the need for 'impression management' (Silverman 2010, p.206) when working in the field. Indeed, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) discuss, I did feel the need to constantly manage the impression I was giving to people in the setting, constructing, subconsciously at times, what I perceived an acceptable identity, through dressing more conservatively and smartly than I would in my usual work setting, minimising any differences between my views and participants' views, showing some level of expertise and knowledge, or simply being sociable and being 'one of the group', i.e. the group of fellow educators and/or researchers in this case.

On a positive note, being perceived in different ways in the setting did, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.86) suggest, provide access to different types of data. For example, by playing the role of fellow teacher trainer and establishing common ground when interviewing teacher trainers, I believe I was able to access richer responses that would have been the case had I, for instance, been interviewing in the role of a researcher who was assumed to have no background in teacher training.

## **2.2. Data collection**

Data was collected over the course of 7 visits to the setting during the study, with the study also informed by the visit to the setting shortly before the study formally began. The data was collected through open-ended questionnaires, classroom observations, interviews and field notes. More specifically, a total of 31 open-ended questionnaires were completed by practicing teachers, 28 observations took place in ten different educational institutions, and 21 interviews were carried out, 19 of which were recorded. Field notes were written during 6 of the 7 visits to the setting during the study, with these field notes including descriptions of critical incidents that occurred over the course of the study.

All of these data collection instruments are discussed below, where I move from open-ended questionnaires to observations to interviews and finally field notes, to reflect, very broadly speaking, the trajectory of the data collection which focused more on the open-ended questionnaires at the start, with observation and interview data becoming more prevalent as the study progressed, and the field notes becoming more important towards the end as I reflected back on what I had written during the earlier parts of the study. A breakdown of the data collected at different points during the study is given in Appendix 1.

However, I should add that, by providing this neat breakdown, I would not characterise the data collection process as anything other than a messy one, concurring with Dörnyei's (2007, p.125) view that:

Qualitative research is *by definition* less systematic and standardized in its data collection approach than quantitative research ... [and] the messiness of the rich data we are aiming for is often merely a reflection of the complex real-life situations that the data concerns.

Further, I would recognise that, rather than data collection happening and then data analysis happening as separate and distinct stages in the research process, what happened in reality was a 'cyclical process of moving back and forth between data collection and analysis' (Dörnyei, 2007, p.126).

### **2.2.1. Questionnaires**

Open-ended questionnaires were used in the early part of the study as a means of getting the views of a number of different teachers in a relatively short time about how English was taught in the setting. This use of such questionnaires is in line with Brown (2009, p.201), who suggests that they 'are best suited to exploratory research, where, at the beginning, the researcher may not know what the central issues are on a particular topic'.

In constructing the questionnaire, I tried to follow guidelines set out in Brown (1997, 2009) with respect to, for example, avoiding overly long questions, avoiding questions

covering more than one issue, avoiding negative sentences, avoiding leading questions, and avoiding 'prestige questions' where one way of answering makes the respondent look better. I also took Brown's advice in terms of grouping questions on a similar topic together, grouping the questions about ELT methods together in the second half of the questionnaire.

The questions themselves were based on my initial research questions and some initial hunches I had about what might be important, based on my initial foray into the setting and what I had already learnt from those working in the setting.

The questionnaire was piloted with two potential respondents and, as a result, two questions were removed as they were deemed superfluous and one question was reworded in order to make its intended meaning clearer. The final version contained ten questions plus space at the end for participants to make any further comments if they wished. The questionnaire is given in Appendix 2.

The questionnaire was given to teachers in eight schools visited as part of the project I was working on during the early part of the study. A total of 31 questionnaires were completed. The sampling of respondents was therefore opportunistic in the sense of taking advantage of opportunities to identify potential respondents as they arose, reflecting, as Cohen et al (2011, p.231) note, that sampling in ethnographic work can often be ad hoc rather than fixed from the outset. Given that the questionnaires were primarily to be used for exploratory purposes, combined with practical constraints of having a limited time in the field and only having access to particular institutions, I felt this to be the most suitable approach to take.

Before the teachers completed the questionnaire, I explained that I was carrying out a research study, that they did not have to take part in the study if they did not want to and that, if they did take part, all answers would be treated as confidential and, if they were used in the write up of the study, then they would be anonymised. A message to this effect was also written at the top of the questionnaires.

### 2.2.2. Classroom observations

My rationale for carrying out classroom observations was to try to stimulate reflection on what was happening within ELT classrooms in the setting and from that to develop my understanding of ELT in the setting more generally.

According to Gebhard and Oprandy (1999, p.35), classroom observation involves ‘the non-judgemental description of classroom events that can be analysed and given interpretation’. Although this was my aim, with hindsight I would question the degree to which I succeeded in being ‘non-judgmental’, as is discussed in Chapter 6.

Nevertheless, my strategy for observation was to enter classrooms and observe without having preconceived notions of what I was looking for and without basing the observation on particular structured categories. Instead, I was aiming to look broadly at the way English language was being taught and at communication in English within the classroom, without wishing to be tied to assigning actions to categories. Indeed, as Harbon and Shen (2010, pp.277-278) note, critics of:

structured systems [of observation] claim, among other things, that the communicative language classroom is far too complex for all the notions to be labelled and captured in this manner, and that the essential communicative nature of the language classroom is lost.

28 classroom observations took place in 10 educational institutions: 8 schools, 1 higher education college and 1 teacher training college. They were carried out during five different visits to the setting, with the number of observations on each of these visits given in Table 2.2 below.

| <i>Visit number</i> | <i>Number of observations</i> |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 0                   | 4                             |
| 1                   | 5                             |
| 2                   | 6                             |
| 3                   | 9                             |
| 6                   | 4                             |

*Table 2.2 – Number of classroom observations on particular visits*



Of the 28 observations, 26 took place in the schools, one in the higher education college, and one in the teacher training college. Of the 26 observations in schools, 11 took place in one school, School A. The focus on School A was in part planned and in part convenience. It was planned in the sense that I had initially, in proposing the study, been considering focusing the whole study on a very small number of locations within the setting, and this school would have been one of those locations, hence in two of the earlier visits to the setting I focused my observations on this school. The convenience element of carrying out observations at School A was that, because it was one of the schools involved in the wider project that I was involved in, issues of access were minimised.

As noted earlier, in Section 2.1.3, there were three broad types of school involved in the study: state government schools, government-aided schools and private schools. A breakdown of the type of school where each the classroom observation took place is given in Appendix 3.

The higher education college, where one observation took place, is affiliated to the University of Kerala. Students at the college are typically aged 18 to 21 and are studying undergraduate programmes. As part of their undergraduate studies, all students, irrespective of what subject they are studying, must sit and pass three examinations in English: prose and essay summary; grammar and comprehension; and poetry, Shakespeare and modern drama.

The teacher training college, where one observation took place, trains teachers to work in secondary schools. It has five areas of specialism including English. However, teachers trained in other specialisms often end up teaching English due to the currently high demand for English teachers. In addition, those trained as English teachers often look for higher-paid jobs outside education because of their language skills.

In the classes observed, the selection of particular teachers to observe was opportunistic in the sense that I was directed towards particular classes, generally by the principal of the school or college concerned, as part of the project I was involved in within the setting. These observations were not arranged in advance, but depended on which

classes were being taught at the times I was there. As Richards (2003, p.125) notes with respect to observation data, 'as contact with different aspects of the field unfolds researchers will take opportunities to collect data as they arise'.

During observations, I would try to sit at the back of the room, but was often directed by the teacher to sit at the front in one corner. My observation notes were initially handwritten, using a brief notes technique (Delamont, 2002, p.61), with notes taken using short phrases or sentences that would later serve as prompts when I came to write full accounts. As far as was possible, I tried to type up these full accounts on the same day.

Finally, I should note that I was aware that my presence, whether as a researcher or in whatever role I was perceived as having, had the potential to and on a small number of occasions did encourage those being observed to 'seek to manage impressions of themselves and of settings' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.176). For example, in one school I visited, I sensed that the class I was taken to observe had been especially set up for my benefit, to show the school in what it thought was the best possible light, for example by using technological resources that did not seem to be present in other schools I was visiting.

Further details of the classroom observations carried out - in terms of location, school year or age of the students, number of students in the class, length of the observation and precise date of the observation - is given in Appendix 3, with an example of my typed-up observation notes given in Appendix 4.

### **2.2.3. Ethnographic interviewing**

One of the key data collection methods employed in this study was interviewing. Conducting interviews seemed to be a good fit with my objective of exploring the perspectives of teachers and other education professionals about ELT methodology and related topics. The interviews built upon the understandings gained through the open-ended questionnaires and classroom observations, and sought a more in-depth understanding of particular issues in the setting with regard to ELT.

### *Selecting informants*

In selecting informants to interview, my approach was in line with Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007, p.107) view that:

who is interviewed, when, and how, will usually be decided as the research progresses, according to the ethnographer's assessment of the current state of his or her knowledge, and according to judgements about how it might best be developed further.

All of the participants in the study who were interviewed were chosen by a combination of 'purposive sampling' where 'researchers hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their ... possession of particular characteristics being sought' (Cohen et al, 2011, p.156), and 'snowball sampling' where 'researchers use social networks, informants and contacts to put them in touch with further individuals' (ibid., p.158).

I chose to use purposive sampling 'in order to access 'knowledgeable people', i.e. those who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues' (ibid., p.157) and who I therefore felt might be best able to provide insights into the setting. These participants were initially people who I had built some kind of professional and personal relationship with, through my initial visits to the setting.

Although I initially intended to interview a broad cross-section of participants in the setting, the data collected during the first two visits pointed to the fact that those with more experience and those who appeared to be more proactive, particularly in terms of involvement in professional development activities, tended to provide what I considered as richer data, which in turn led to more purposeful targeting of those to be interviewed in later visits. It is possible that this may have created some bias in the data. However, those interviewed held various roles within the setting including school teacher, college teacher, university lecturer, teacher trainer and school principal, and further had varying levels of experience, therefore I believe a range of perspectives were given.

Several of those interviewed also informed me of other people I could potentially interview and helped to put me in touch with these people. This 'snowball sampling' element of the interview process could also be considered as 'reputational case sampling' (ibid., p.157) in the sense that several of those I was advised to interview were recommended because of their reputations within the setting as being well-informed about the topic being investigated.

This form of sampling is also 'prone to biases' as it will clearly be 'influenced heavily by the researcher's initial points of contact' (ibid., p.159). However, those recommended by others tended to be those in more senior positions who it was thought might have more in-depth knowledge rather than it being a case of one friend recommending another like-minded friend.

#### *Setting up and conducting the interviews*

The interviews were, where possible, set up in advance by email or telephone call to the interviewee. In a small number of cases, such as when I interviewed informants at conferences, the interviews were set up while at the conference. In all cases, I followed ethical procedures, as described in Section 2.6, in terms of explaining the general purpose of the study, ensuring confidentiality and gaining informed consent.

The interviews were conducted in quiet settings within the school or college I was visiting, or at the conference I was attending. One unexpected practical issue I encountered when interviewing, which the principal of one college highlighted to me early in my study, was that there may be a potential problem when interviewing some female teachers, as there tends to be very limited interaction between men and women who are not family members, particularly in more rural communities within the setting. For this reason, I made every effort to interview female teachers in open areas within their work setting, in sight but not in earshot, of their colleagues.

I tried to keep in mind standard guidelines for carrying out interviews, as outlined in, for example, Richards (2003), covering issues such as how to start the interview and what types of question to ask, but at the same time took on board Rapley's (2006, p.18, italics in original) view that:

Interviewers do not need to worry excessively about whether their questions and gestures are 'too leading' or 'not empathetic'; *they should just get on with interacting with that specific person.*

21 interviews were carried out, 19 of which were recorded and later transcribed. In the other 2 cases, the interviewee preferred not to be recorded so I took notes and added them to my field notes. The interviews varied in length, the shortest being just over 20 minutes, and the longest just over an hour long. The typical length of the interviews was between 30 to 40 minutes. Following each interview, I asked the interviewee if they would be willing to give me their email address so that I could ask any follow-up questions if necessary. They all agreed to this. After the interviews, I corresponded with several participants, though in only 2 cases asked them follow up questions relating to their interview responses.

#### *My approach to interviewing*

My approach to interviewing was, using Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007, p.117) distinction, 'reflexive' rather than 'pre-structured', which they explain as:

Ethnographers do not usually decide beforehand the exact questions they want to ask, and do not ask each interviewee precisely the same questions, though they will usually enter the interviews with a list of issues to be covered. Nor do they seek to establish a fixed sequence in which relevant topics are covered; they adopt a more flexible approach, allowing the discussion to flow in a way that seems natural.

The interviews could also be described as semi-structured, where, as Richards (2003, pp.185-186) notes, the interviewer:

knows what topics need to be covered and to a large extent what questions need to be asked ... However, at the same time, the interviewer needs to allow sufficient flexibility to probe some aspects in depth and, where necessary, to let the respondent lead.

In line with these comments, I went into each interview with a list of issues to be discussed but without precise questions in my mind. Initially, this list was based on issues covered in the open-ended questionnaire and some other topics arising from the questionnaire data, from early observation data, and from conversations I was having in the setting. The list could be described as an 'interview guide' (Richards, 2003) in that it provided guidance when I was conducting the interviews, but at the same time was flexible in the sense that it changed from interview to interview as different issues came up, and was often added to within interviews as particular responses generated new lines of inquiry. For example, initially, as is discussed in Chapter 6, I felt that 'large classes' was an 'issue' that should be discussed during the interviews, but after a small number of interviews I came to understand that it was not the 'issue' I was perceiving it to be, and so removed it from the list of topics to ask about.

The issues were not covered in a fixed order and the movement between different issues was often lead by the interviewee. When this happened, I always went with flow of the interview to keep the conversation as fluent as possible, though would occasionally come back to a previous issue if I felt I needed to find out more from the interviewee about a particular point. The interviews therefore felt like a 'conversation with a purpose' (Burgess, 1984, p.102), 'professional conversations' (Kvale, 1996, p.5) focused on trying to better understand the workings of the setting in terms of ELT.

Further details of the interviews carried out are given in Appendix 5, with an example of a transcribed interview in Appendix 6.

#### *Maintaining caution in collecting and interpreting interview data*

I became aware, both when conducting the interviews, and later when analysing the interview data, of my own influence on this data, and recognised, as Holliday (2016, p.19) puts it:

that the researcher and participants in interviews co-construct what is being said and that the researcher is therefore implicated in the subjective power relations of the event.

Further, I was mindful of the concern of Richards (2003, p.80) in relation to interview technique that:

however refined this [the interview technique] may be it does not guarantee access to the interviewee's 'real' self. The interview is a constructed event in which those involved have parts to play, and our approach to analysis must respond to this.

However, in early interviews in particular, I am aware that I may have unwittingly encouraged the interviewees to support my own ideas. For example, as discussed in Section 6.1, when starting the study, I had certain ideas about what 'good teaching' in ELT classes entailed, such as including plenty of opportunities for students to be actively involved, and through our conversation I may have inadvertently led interviewees towards showing support for such views.

Further, as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.176) note, how interviewees perceive the research and the researcher can strongly influence what they say. It needs therefore to be recognised that we can't always take what people say at face value as there may be particular reasons why they are responding in particular ways. For example, there is a possibility that interviewees may be feeding cultural stereotypes (Grimshaw, 2001), which may in turn be important to them in constructing their cultural identity. In terms of this study, there is therefore the possibility that those interviewed may have wanted to construct themselves as users of certain approaches to ELT in order to come across as professional and in touch with current developments in the field.

Along similar lines, I was conscious of tending to be drawn towards interviewing 'knowers', people who were able to talk about, for example, different approaches to ELT in terms I could understand or who interpreted things in recognisable ways, who I came to see as key informants. I began to question whether I was putting too much trust in and relying too much on these 'knowers'. Equally, I wanted to make sure that the voices of those who remain peripheral to the 'key informants' were heard. However, while inevitably some voices are 'louder' than others within the study, I believe that, through

the use of 'thick description', and by including a range of different data sources, a reasonable cross-section of perspectives is provided.

In any case, because of the above risks, I always tried to keep in mind Baker's (1997, p.131) point that interview responses should be treated as accounts more than reports, and to interpret what was said with caution, taking Murray's (2009, p.59) advice that 'researchers must be sensitive to the co-constructed nature of these stories if they are to avoid misrepresenting the participants' experiences'.

When it came to transcribing interviews, I followed the guidance of Richards (2003), Dörnyei (2007) and Silverman (2010), opting for a basic transcription style to maximise the readability of the transcription, for example using three dots to indicate pauses rather than timing every pause. In particular, I took on board Silverman's (2010, p.201) point that 'there is no 'best' method for transcribing interviews: so transcribe in a way that is appropriate to your research problem', along with Dörnyei's (2007, p.247) view that if 'we are interested in the content rather than the form of the verbal data, we can decide to edit out any linguistic surface phenomena but we are not advised to make any content selection/editing'. Therefore, I opted to simplify 'linguistic surface phenomena' by, for example, reducing or removing word repetition, stammering and fillers such as 'um' and 'er', with the aim of making the content of the transcription more readable, while at the same time being careful not to omit or edit any content.

Issues relating to the trustworthiness of the data are considered in Section 2.5.

#### **2.2.4. Field notes**

When I refer to field notes, I am referring to any notes taken in the field except notes taken during classroom observations that I have classified separately as observation data. Notes from the two interviews that were not recorded were included in my field notes.

The field notes were mainly written during six of the seven visits to the setting during the study, but also added to with comments on previously written notes between visits.



As Richards (2003, p.,137) describes, 'field notes can take different forms', as well as 'writing what is observed', they need to consider 'analytical issues' such as 'analytic insights, possible connection with theory, methodological points, and so on' and 'relational issues' such as 'personal reflections and resonances'. In constructing my field notes, I included a combination of observational notes about my experiences, methodological notes about the types of data I was collecting and still needed to collect, theoretical notes connecting my thoughts and ideas back to theories, and personal notes containing subjective comments about my feelings on the research process.

Because of this 'constant interplay between the personal and emotional on one hand, and the intellectual on the other' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.151), the physical act of constructing my field notes helped the research process along by encouraging preliminary analysis and facilitating 'precisely the sort of internal dialogue, or thinking aloud, that is the essence of reflexive ethnography' (ibid.).

At a practical level, I took on board the suggestions made by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.143) regarding when, how and on what to take notes, for example jotting down thoughts and ideas as soon as I could in order that they could be 'worked up, expanded on and developed' after the event. As with my observation notes, the field notes were initially handwritten in note form, and 'written in a loose fashion' as they were 'documents not intended - at least initially - for any audience, other than the researcher' (Emerson et al, 2001, p.358). An example of my typed-up field notes is given in Appendix 7.

The way the field notes were written changed as the study progressed. Initially, they were a means of gaining a better general understanding of the setting. However, over time, they became a way of stimulating reflection and analysing the setting, and finally, towards the end of the study, served as a means of reviewing how my thinking had changed over the course of the study. Indeed, it was only when I began review field notes and other data collected during earlier parts of the study that I realised that I had changed the way in which I was seeing the setting. The field notes also therefore served as a means of critiquing my own description, reflection and preliminary analysis of the

setting, allowing me to interrogate my own *distant eyes* stance and the way that this had shifted during the study.

Finally, it should be noted that many of the critical incidents used in Chapter 6 to describe the autoethnographic dimension of the study were generated from field notes. A discussion of the use of critical incidents can be found in Section 3.3, within the wider discussion of the autoethnographic dimension of the study.

## **2.3. Data analysis**

This section describes the data analysis process, first giving an overview and then describing how different themes were generated.

### **2.3.1. Overview of the data analysis process**

As Nieuwenhuis (2007, pp.99-100) notes, rather than being a distinct stage:

qualitative data analysis tends to be an ongoing and iterative process, implying that data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined, and not necessarily a successive process.

It was, as Heigham and Sakui (2009, p.102) describe, both ‘cyclical’ and iterative’, moving back and forth between reading through the data and creating analytic notes, coding the data and interpreting the data.

As a whole, my approach to making sense of the data combined what Dörnyei (2007, p.244) refers to as ‘formalized analytical procedures’ and ‘subjective intuition’. The formalized procedures, as described below, gave structure to the data analysis process and further, by applying them in a transparent manner, they were intended to help convince audiences of the trustworthiness<sup>9</sup> of the study. Using subjective intuition recognises:

---

<sup>9</sup> The trustworthiness of the study is discussed in section 2.5.

the inherent importance attached to the subjective and reflexive involvement of the researcher in the analysis ... and the need to maintain a fluid and creative analytical position that is not constrained by procedural traditions (ibid.).

This perspective was particularly important in the autoethnographic dimension of the study, discussed in Chapter 3.

### **2.3.2. Coding the data and generating themes**

In terms of coding the data, I followed the guidance of Richards and Morse (2007), who distinguish between three types of coding - descriptive, topic and analytic.

'Descriptive coding' (Richards and Morse, 2007, p.138) was used to store basic factual knowledge about the participants in the study, the research sites within the setting, the timing of particular events that took place during the study. Following their approach, I took the view that 'you should store as much information as you need, but no more' (ibid.) and so tried to keep the coding simple. In terms of describing participants in the data chapters of this study, I therefore coded as follows: participants interviewed were coded simply by using numbers in square brackets, e.g. Interviewee 1 is simply [1]; participants who completed the questionnaire were coded by using the letter Q and a number in square brackets, e.g. the first completed questionnaire is identified as [Q1]; classroom observations were coded by using the abbreviation Obs. and a number in a square bracket, e.g. the first observation is identified as [Obs. 1]; and field notes were coded according to when the field notes were made, again in square brackets, e.g. field notes made in August 2010, are denoted as [Field notes, August 2010]. Finally, a response gained from one of the participants interviewed via email after the interview was coded as email communication with the date given, i.e. [Email communication, August 2013].

Having collected the questionnaire data as well as some observation, interview and field note data, and typed it up into Word documents, I read carefully through this data and annotated it with 'analytic notes' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.150) in the margins of the Word documents. At this stage, the comments were a combination of

comments relating to my research questions, general reflective thoughts, possible issues to think about and possible further lines of inquiry. Following this, I began 'topic coding' (Richards and Morse, 2007, p.139) the data, that is, labelling 'passages within the text which express a particular idea or refer to an event' (Murray, 2009, p.51). Because the volume of data was initially quite small, I did this manually by highlighting different parts of the data as referring to broad topics, such as 'communicative approaches' or 'pre-service teacher education'. As the amount of data collected increased, I began using the NVivo qualitative data analysis software to support the coding process.

As the data analysis process developed and themes began to emerge, the coding became more akin to what Richards and Morse (2007, p.141) refer to as 'analytic coding'. This process of developing themes was an undeniably messy one. It is perhaps best described as one of gradual approximation, starting off with loose themes, what Blumer called 'sensitizing concepts' (Blumer, 1954, cited in Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.164), suggesting directions to look in, which were then developed and refined into more specific themes and subthemes, gradually moving towards moving towards 'definitive concepts' (ibid.). In this phase, I developed a number of themes, such as 'traditional' versus 'modern' approaches to ELT' and 'the role of informal professional development'. The developing and refining of these themes continued into and during the writing up process.

Holliday (2016, p.103) description of the formation of themes also resonates with the way they were developed in this study:

The formation of themes thus represents the necessary dialogue between data and researcher ... arriving at the themes can be the result of formal data analysis, but can also be born from what was seen during data collection. Often the themes have been growing within the researcher's mind through the whole research process ... Furthermore, the way in which the researcher sees the data will be influenced by her own background.

This description again gives the sense of part formal data analysis, part subjective intuition, that I felt was happening while analysing the data for this study.

Further, in developing themes, I was mindful of Holliday's warning that:

researchers need to be aware and honest about the influence they bring to their thematic analysis from their original preoccupations, where the themes themselves, although emergent, are also influenced by questions or issues that the researcher brought to the research (Holliday, 2016, pp.105-106).

I tried therefore to keep in mind that I was dealing with the reality of interviewees' professional lives from their perspectives, not mine, and to 'let the data speak', allowing themes to come out of the data rather than using the data to support my own ideas.

The themes that were eventually developed form the basis of the data chapters, chapters 6 to 8.

## **2.4. Writing up the study**

As described in Section 2.3, the data was analysed into themes, with these themes emerging from the data. Grouping together different themes, the data was then organised into chapters.

In writing about the data, my aim was to create a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973), which Holliday (2010a, p.99) describes as 'a narrative of what has been found that shows the full complexity and depth of what is going on'. Denzin (1994, p.505) similarly suggests that thick description 'gives the context of an experience, states the intentions and meanings that organised the experience, and reveals the experience as a process'.

My attempt to provide a thick description which included data from a number of different sources, overlaid with my attempt to write myself into the study, was also influenced by Coffey's (1999, p.118) view that:

By incorporating, fragmenting and mingling these texts, and by reinforcing the intertextuality of ethnography, the claims to authenticity may be strengthened rather than weakened. Writing the self into ethnography can be viewed as part of a movement towards greater authenticity.

I have tried to write up the study with a sense and growing understanding of the effects my own presence in the setting, and to continue to engage in reflexivity, in terms of 'the way in which researchers come to terms with and indeed capitalise on the complexities of their presence within the research setting, in a methodical way' (Holliday, 2016, p.146), during the writing up process.

Another feature of the writing up process was the interplay between writing up and further analysis of the data. Indeed, I would agree with Holliday's (2016, p.128) assertion that 'a key part of postmodern view of qualitative writing is the realisation that writing is itself part of the process of qualitative investigation'. Rather than analysing data then writing about data, I tended to switch from one to the other depending on what felt appropriate at a particular point in time.

Indeed, as with the processes of data collection and data analysis, the messiness of the writing up process should not be understated. However, particularly when writing up the autoethnographic dimension of the study, much of which is focused on in chapter 6, I took note of Muncey's (2010, pp.73-76)'s framework suggesting a broad five stages in the autoethnographic writing process: cognitive, scribbling, serious, polishing, and relishing. This provided a framework for writing myself into the findings part of the study. Applying it to the writing of chapter 6, there was a 'cognitive phase' of realising that I felt it important to write the changes that had taken place within me as a researcher and as an education professional during the research process, and the effect of this on the study, into the thesis, not just in terms of mentioning reflexivity in the methodology but also in the findings of the study. There was then a 'scribbling phase', a 'messy phase' of writing notes about events or moments that had affected the way I was interpreting the setting, followed by a 'serious phase' of trying to get the notes into some kind of order and create critical incidents, supported by field note and other data. There was then a 'polishing phase' of rereading, revising, getting feedback on and trying to improve what I had written, and finally a small 'relishing phase', knowing that, whilst what I had written could no doubt be improved or written differently, I had achieved my aim of writing myself into the thesis.

There were also a number of practical issues in writing up process. For example, as has already been mentioned, I struggled to decide where to place the bulk of the discussion around the rationale for the autoethnographic dimension to the study, before finally opting to outline my reasons for including it in the introductory chapter and to discuss it in more detail as a separate chapter after the main research methodology chapter. I also decided to put both the main research methodology chapter and the chapter discussing the autoethnographic dimension ahead of both of the literature review chapters to foreground that this dimension underpinned the thesis as a whole.

## **2.5. Trustworthiness**

The intention of this section is to demonstrate that, of the many possible interpretations of the data collected, the interpretation given here provides a convincing, credible, accurate and clearly communicated representation of the data, and further that the procedures and processes undertaken during the study are justifiable.

In line with a number of authors (e.g. Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Starfield, 2010), I feel that using terms other than 'validity' and 'reliability' is helpful in getting away from quantitative perceptions of how research outcomes should be viewed, and believe the term 'trustworthiness' to be more suited to qualitative studies.

A starting point for ensuring trustworthiness relates to what Maxwell (1996) calls 'descriptive validity', the accuracy and completeness of the account. He notes that:

The first concern of most qualitative researchers is with the factual accuracy of their account - that is, that they are not making up or distorting the things they saw and heard. If you report that an informant made a particular statement in an interview, is this correct? Did he or she really make that statement, or did you mis-hear, mis-transcribe, or mis-remember his or her words? (ibid., pp.285-286)

In a similar vein, Silverman (2010) talks about the importance of an open and honest account of the research, providing full descriptions of what was done in terms of choosing your participants and methods, collecting and analysing data, and explaining and justifying your decisions.

Related to this, Dörnyei (2007, p.60) talks about 'research integrity' in the research process in terms of, for example, avoiding fabrication, falsification and misrepresentation, and highlights the need for researchers to build up their integrity as a means of ensuring the trustworthiness of their studies. He suggests this can be done by strategies such as 'leaving an audit trail' by giving a detailed and reflective account of procedures used, providing 'contextualisation and thick description' through 'presenting the findings in rich contextualized detail', and 'identifying potential researcher bias' (ibid.).

In this study, I have tried to address these issues and build integrity through various strategies, for example audio recording and verbatim transcription of all interviews in which the interviewee agreed to be recorded, and wherever possible asking the interviewee to confirm that the transcription was an accurate record of the interview, 'leaving an audit trail' as outlined throughout this chapter of the study, 'proving contextualisation and thick description' in the data chapters, and 'identifying potential researcher bias' throughout the study. Indeed, the latter has become a focus within the study.

Beyond this, in terms of working towards credibility in a broader sense, Ely et al (1991), drawing on the work on Lincoln and Guba (1985), highlight the importance of 'prolonged and persistent observation', 'triangulation', and 'peer support groups'. Maxwell (2005) talks similarly, though using the term 'validity', about ruling out specific threats to validity through, for example, 'intensive long-term involvement', "'rich" data', 'respondent validation', and/or 'triangulation'. Further, Rallis and Rossman (2009, p.265) consider trustworthiness in terms of 'standards for competent practice', focusing on 'the credibility of the study, its rigor, and its potential usefulness to others'. To help to ensure credibility, they suggest 'prolonged engagement', 'triangulation', 'participant validation', 'using a critical friend' and 'using your community of practice' (ibid., p.269).

For this study, I use the Rallis and Rossman's framework to demonstrate how I have tried to ensure credibility, as described below:



‘Prolonged engagement’: I spent a total of 15 weeks in the setting, over a period of six years, keeping in touch with a number of participants in the setting when I was not there. Though the time spent in the setting is not as long as for many ethnographic studies, I would suggest that the overall time spent considering the issues within the setting, alongside the time actually spent there, makes my engagement with the setting prolonged.

‘Triangulation’: I obtained data using different methods at different points in time that enabled me to build my understanding of the setting and in turn helped me to construct a ‘thick description’ of my findings. Further, though not suggested as a measure of trustworthiness in itself, the ‘thick description’ provided is intended to show the depth of the data as well as my own struggles to interpret the data, in particular to take into account the autoethnographic dimension.

‘Participant validation’: After preliminary analysis of the data, four participants that I had interviewed were given the opportunity to give feedback on the points I was making.

‘Using a critical friend’: In the case of a doctoral dissertation, the critical friends were my supervisors, who commented on my emerging analysis when my work was reviewed and at other times.

‘Using your community of practice’: During the data collection and initial data analysis stages, I engaged in critical discussions with trusted participants in the setting, which helped me to check and validate my developing impressions while in the field. During the writing up phase, I engaged in similar discussions with colleagues in my normal work setting and with fellow research students, which helped me to make more sense of data, and in particular my own impact on the data.

To help to ensure rigour, I followed the advice of Rallis and Rossman (2009, p.284) and endeavoured to make my own positioning clear by providing a clear conceptual framework, details of my research approach, details of the data collected, and details of how the data was analysed, and by aiming to be transparent about the whole research process.

To help to make the study potentially useful to others, following the advice of Rallis and Rossman (2009, p.285), I have tried to provide detailed description of the setting for the study, the research process and the findings of the study.

## **2.6. Ethical considerations**

As Guillemin and Gillam (2004) note, it can be useful to consider ethics on two levels, 'procedural ethics' and 'ethics in practice' where procedural ethics are the formal procedures required, such as approval by university ethics committees, to carry out research, and 'ethics in practice' concern the issues that arise in the practice of doing research. Highlighting further the practical considerations surrounding ethics, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.221) take an 'ethical situationism' view, recognising that 'what is appropriate depends upon the context to a large extent'. Along similar lines, Dörnyei (2007, p.72) concludes that 'what we need is a contextualized and flexible approach to ethical decision making, relying more on the researchers' professional reflexivity and integrity in maintaining high standards', while Richards (2003, p.139) observes succinctly that 'the ultimate arbiter of what is right and decent is your own conscience'. I have tried to follow these guidelines, following ethical procedures while at the same time recognising that the setting itself and practical considerations may affect some of these procedures in practice.

At the outset, I followed standard university procedures to gain ethical approval to carry out the study. I also tried to keep in mind from the start the broad ethical issues of 'consent', 'honesty', 'privacy', 'ownership' and 'harm' (ibid., p.140), and manage these issues in an ethically appropriate way in the setting. During data collection, for example, I always sought to apply standard procedures of 'informed consent'. That is, I made sure everyone involved in interviews or who completed open-ended questionnaires or was observed was informed about the purpose of the study, of confidentiality, that data would be anonymised, and of their right to withdraw at any stage if they did take part.

In terms of practicalities of gaining informed consent, I obtained written consent before conducting the interviews or giving out open-ended questionnaires. However, in the case of classroom observation data, I often obtained this data from visits to schools as

part of the project I was working on at the time and it was very difficult in practice to inform teachers of my research purpose prior to the observation, so I took a pragmatic approach and gained consent to use the observation data for this study after each observation had been completed.

In terms of explaining the purpose of the research during data collection, I deliberately kept the explanation broad, applying Cowie's (2009, p.177) advice, which in his case concerned how much information to give to participants before observations, to 'be as open as you can but, without being duplicitous, avoid giving away all the reasons you have for doing the observation'. This meant telling prospective participants I was researching ELT in Kerala, without going into detail about what exactly I was looking at or unnecessarily revealing any of my own thinking on the subject.

I was also aware of the need to ensure that no participants came to harm 'as a result of the actual process of doing the research and/or through publication of the findings' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.213). I interpreted this, beyond assurances of confidentiality, in terms of, for example, reassuring participants that my research was not evaluating them but seeking to understand the setting from their point of view, avoiding making any judgmental comments during interviews, and in the write up of the study ensuring that no participant could be identified by anonymising the data.

## **2.7. Limitations of the research methodology**

There are of course aspects of the research methodology that may have limited this study.

One possible limitation is that I was in the setting for a number of short periods rather than for a sustained period. Though there are advantages to such short periods, in particular allowing data to be collected over a longer total period and providing time to reflect between visits, traditional views of ethnographic work tend to advocate '*prolonged engagement in the natural setting*' (Dörnyei, 2007, p.131, italics in original). In fact, Dörnyei (ibid.) suggests that 'a minimum stay of 6-12 months is usually recommended to achieve the necessary prolonged engagement', though this is perhaps

referring to doing an ethnography rather than working in ethnographic mode as I was. Indeed, as Holliday (2016, p.14) notes:

There is a difference between doing an ethnography (which usually involves a sustained engagement with a particular setting), and employing an ethnographic approach.

Further, a number of scholars (e.g. Holliday, 1997; Bax, 2006) have argued strongly that an ethnographic approach can be taken even for relatively small studies, without the need for prolonged engagement.

The research methodology could also have been developed in other ways. For example, additional methods of data collection, such as the use of participant journals or more structured and more frequent email contact with key participants when I was not physically in the setting, may have produced further insights into the setting.

I could also have video recorded some or all of the classroom observations. This would have allowed me, in addition to reevaluating my own observation notes at a later date, to review the classes themselves. More broadly, I felt that as technology was developing so quickly during the course of the study, I might have made more use of this to maintain and develop contacts, and possibly collect data, between visits to the setting. However, although if I was starting the study again now, I would organise data collection differently and make more use of technology, I did feel that the data I was able to collect was sufficiently 'rich' as it was.

Another limitation within the study was the need to carry out some of the data collection opportunistically, which meant that it was sometimes rather hurried. As mentioned earlier, while collecting the observation data, it was often not possible to speak to the teachers involved at any length before the observation took place, and so, apart from the fact that informed consent could only be gained after the event, there was often not time to discuss issues that came up in the class or to offer any feedback on the lesson should it have been desired. Unfortunately, this was something I was not in control of

at the time, though in a future study I would try to build in more time around observations.

Another concern I had during the study relates to not following up enough on the interviews. There was often a time lag between the interview taking place and being able to transcribe it, and then often another one between transcribing it and attempting to analyse it. Therefore, by the time possible follow up questions had occurred to me, it felt too late to go back to some interviewees, in particular those who I had not maintained contact with between the time of the interview and the time when follow-up questions might have been asked. In future studies, I would aim to reduce this time lag and to endeavour to maintain better contact with all interviewees, at least for the duration of the study.

Another possible issue with the data collected is that, because the study was spread over several years, some of the data is several years old. However, I do not see this as an issue, principally for two reasons. Firstly, the thesis is about the sense I am making of this data now, after re-evaluating it, having carried out an autoethnography of my own professionalism. Secondly, having spent time in the setting and more widely in the region, I know from experience that the pace of change tends to be quite slow, and things are unlikely to have changed significantly since the data was collected.

Finally, while not exactly a limitation, the fact that the autoethnographic dimension of the study only became apparent during the study itself certainly added to the degree of messiness in the study and to the struggle to analyse and organise the data, and to write up the study. Whilst perhaps there is no easy solution to this, what I have learned would be to think more carefully about what the research process is likely to involve and what impact I might have on that process before I start.

### *Summary*

This chapter has given an overview of the research methodology used for the study. It located the study within the postmodern qualitative research paradigm and discussed

the ethnographic approach was taken, focusing in particular on how the data, providing accounts and descriptions of independent and unrecognised professionalism, was collected.

In the next chapter, the autoethnographic dimension of the study that emerged during the initial analysis of this data will be discussed.

### **3. The Autoethnographic Dimension**

This chapter goes into more detail on the rationale for including the autoethnographic dimension, which helped uncover independent and unrecognised professionalism within the setting, in the study.

During the initial data analysis phase of the study it became clear that in order to be able to try to understand the unrecognised professionalism that seemed to be present in the setting, I first had to acknowledge the impact my own 'Western TESOL' professional background, an overview of which I have provided at the end of this chapter in Section 3.5, was having on the study. I therefore used an autoethnographic approach to help me to interpret, and in some cases reinterpret, the data collected, and through this managed to uncover the independent and unrecognised professionalism that I had not previously been able to see.

Although this chapter could have been placed within the research methodology chapter, I am placing it here, as a chapter on its own and ahead of literature review chapters, in order both to emphasise its importance within the study and to allow the reader to see the literature reviewed in chapters 4 and 5 in the light of this and to see the thesis as a whole in terms of my shifting perspectives as I struggled to make sense of the data.

In terms of the structure of the chapter, Section 3.1 discusses my rationale for including an autoethnographic dimension, Section 3.2 explores in some detail and with reference to relevant literature how I position myself within the autoethnographic field, Section 3.3 discusses the use of critical incidents to help me to understand this autoethnographic dimension in a practical sense, and finally Section 3.4 discusses trustworthiness in the context of autoethnographic studies.

#### **3.1. Rationale for including an autoethnographic dimension**

As I have said, I did not begin the study with an autoethnographic dimension in mind. Indeed, as Muncey (2010, p.2) notes:

I rarely come across people who set out to do autoethnography but I do rather meet many people who resort to it as a means of getting across intangible and complex feelings and experiences that somehow can't be told in conventional ways.

In my case, rather than 'resort to it', I chose to include this aspect of the study because, as the study progressed, the ways that my own perspectives were changing and influencing my interpretations of the data became an integral part of the study. The process through which this happened is discussed below.

During the study, I began to notice, particularly when looking through and analysing data for a second or third time, that the way I was viewing the data had changed since I had first read through it. Additionally, I found myself questioning certain aspects of the data, in particular the classroom observation and field note data, where what I had written in the notes appeared to be based on certain assumptions or beliefs that, with a greater understanding of the setting, I had since begun to question. Although initially I treated this as an interesting aside that was outside the scope of the study, it developed into a growing realisation that what I was noticing was, or should be, part of the research data, not just in a reflexive sense as would be the case in most ethnographic texts, with the researcher needing to be aware of their potential to affect the data, but in the sense that beyond this, the changes in me as a researcher and teacher/teacher trainer, and the ways that these changes were interacting with the study as a whole, were integral to the way I was understanding the data being collected and therefore the setting.

Alongside this, it became clear to me that my position/role in the setting had changed from detached outsider/observer at the start to partial insider/participant. My perspective had also changed from having what I can only describe as a fear of subjectivity in the research process to one embracing subjectivity as not only inevitable but also as something which could be used as a resource. However, this is not to suggest that subjectivity should not be treated in a careful and thoughtful manner, or that there is no benefit in cultivating and maintaining a level of detachment from the setting and participants.



It had become clear that many of my experiences, both inside the immediate setting and beyond, were impacting on the study. For instance, the fact that the study was undertaken on a part-time basis and over a longer time period than is typically the case and that I was working on and being influenced by other projects at the same time, allowed more time for outside experiences to influence my thinking during the study. As a result, the way I interpreted the data from this study also changed over time as my own understanding of the issues underpinning the study, in particular in relation to ELT methodology and teacher education, as well as my understanding of the research process itself, developed.

My intention then became to continue with the study as a fundamentally ethnographic one, but incorporating an autoethnographic dimension. This is in line with Denzin's (2014, p.15) definition of ethnography as a 'written account of a culture or group' and of autoethnography as an 'account of one's life as an ethnographer', with the autoethnographic dimension facilitating 'reflexively writing the self into and through the ethnographic text' (ibid., p.22). This approach also facilitated the display of 'multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural' (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.739).

From a theoretical perspective, autoethnography fits with the postmodern orientation of the study. As Wall (2008, p.42), drawing on Bochner (2000) and Walcott (1999), notes:

Postmodernists believe that the methods and procedures that are employed in research are ultimately and inextricably tied to the values and subjectivities of the researcher. ... any efforts to achieve objectivity are foiled from the outset because ethnographers always come with ideas that guide what they choose to describe and how they choose to describe it.

Including an autoethnographic dimension as a part of the data, rather than completely refocusing the study, echoes the view of Wall (2006, p.3) who suggests that:

the freedom of a researcher to speak as a player in a research project and to mingle his or her experience with the experience of those studied is precisely what is needed to move inquiry and knowledge further along.

This approach is also in line with Doloriert and Sambrook (2011, p.590) who put forward that 'autoethnography uses self-experiences to extend ethnographic insights into particular ethnos contexts, arrangements, and relationships.

Further, in line with Barnes (2014, p.161), I felt the need for an autoethnographic dimension both because it best 'reflects the shifting sands of self-understanding' and 'because it best allays my personal fears about the distancing tendencies of traditional research' (ibid., p.163). Further, I wanted to try to reduce what Ellingson and Ellis (2008, p.450) describe as 'the alienating effects on both researchers and audiences of impersonal, passionless, abstract claims of truth generated by ... research practices'. Even though my study was ethnographic in nature and I had written a section on 'reflexivity', this did not seem to fully represent my own involvement in the study. Indeed, as Wall (2006, p.3) suggests, autoethnography can 'challenge the value of token reflection that is often included as a paragraph in an otherwise neutral and objectively presented manuscript'.

Clair Doloriert and Sally Sambrook expand upon this point in their research, noting that:

Sally had to settle rather incompletely and frustratingly for terms such as reflective researcher and reflexive approach. But something was missing. She felt that these terms did not fully account for her own role and learning within research process and how she had shaped and been shaped by it. Autoethnography, therefore, enables the researcher to acknowledge the often powerful and significant role of the self within the research process, connecting the self to the research topic ... She [Clair] did not view herself and her role as distanced and detached from that of her research subjects. Like Sally, she saw her role and her interactions as subjective and reflexive. Clair recognized that her personal journey of learning and entrepreneurship was inextricably interwoven

with her research into learning and entrepreneurship (Doloriert and Sambrook, 2011, p.586).

The autoethnographic dimension more fully reflected, as Muncey (2010, p.8) points out, that:

We are observers and participants of our own experiences: you cannot separate who you are from what you do ... subjectivity doesn't infect your work, it enhances it. Making links between your own experience and your work is healthy.

These views resonated with the way I had come to view my own study and my role as researcher and increasingly as participant in the study.

Initially, I was concerned about being overly introspective, but have tried to keep in mind the view of McCormack (2012, p.183) that:

Far from being either self-indulgence or simplistic storytelling, this genre [autoethnography] works to enhance layered and nuanced reflexive capacities, increasing self-understanding and, by extension, offering resources for understanding of others.

Having decided to incorporate an autoethnographic dimension, I set about trying to understand and to position myself within the autoethnographic field.

### **3.2. Positioning myself in the autoethnographic field**

My survey of the field of autoethnography is described below. After attempting to narrow down what it is, and then looking at two distinct forms, *analytic* autoethnography and *evocative* autoethnography, I discuss adopting a 'middle way' in my own study.

### 3.2.1. Exploring autoethnography

Exploring autoethnography proved more complex than I had foreseen, not least because the term itself is somewhat contested. There are two broad positions, a more analytical approach towards autoethnography favoured by, for example, Anderson (2006a), Atkinson (2006) and Walford (2009), and a more evocative approach championed by, for example, Ellis (2004), Ellis and Bochner (2000, 2006), Denzin (2006, 2014) and Muncey (2010).

Several writers (e.g. Reed-Danahay, 1997; Chang 2008; Ellis, 2009; Canagarajah 2012) have discussed autoethnography by breaking the term down into its three constituent parts. Focusing on the 'auto' part, Canagarajah (2012, p.260) highlights that autoethnography:

is conducted and represented from the point of view of the self, whether studying one's own experiences or those of one's community ... autoethnography values the self as a rich repository of experiences and perspectives that are not easily available to traditional approaches. ... It frankly engages with the situatedness of one's experiences, rather than suppressing them.

More broadly, the following three descriptions of autoethnography influenced my thinking.

Ellis and Bochner (2000, pp.739-740) argue that:

it seems appropriate now to include under the broad rubric of autoethnography those studies that have been referred to by other similarly situated terms, such as personal narratives ... lived experience, critical autobiography ... evocative narratives ... reflexive ethnography ... ethnographic autobiography ... autobiographical ethnography, personal sociology ... [and] autoanthropology.

This suggested to me that autoethnography as a term had a broad reach, embracing terms that I was already more familiar with such a 'personal narrative' and 'lived

experience'. This reach helped to convince me that the field was wide enough and open enough to accommodate what I wanted to write in the way I wanted to write it.

A more precise description of what autoethnography involves is given by Denzin (2014, p.20), drawing on the work of Holman Jones, Adams and Ellis (2013), who specifies autoethnography as:

the use of personal experience and personal writing to (1) purposefully comment on / critique cultural practices; (2) make contributions to existing research; (3) embrace vulnerability with purpose; and (4) create a reciprocal relationship with audiences in order to compel a response.

Again, this more detailed description of autoethnography resonated with the type of experiences I was having whilst in the setting.

Meanwhile, Muncey (2010, p.2) highlights the potentially evocative nature of autoethnography, defining it as:

an artistically constructed piece of prose, poetry, music or piece of art work that attempts to portray an individual experience in a way that evokes the imagination of the reader, viewer or listener.

In contrast to the previous two descriptions, this one has a more artistic focus. Although, I was not intending to use poetry, music or art work to illuminate my experiences, in the way other autoethnographic work, such as Barnes (2012), does, and also doubted how 'artistically constructed' my piece of prose might be, I could nevertheless see that there was room within autoethnographic writing for different ways of expressing oneself, which again felt positive.

Effectively, my explorations of autoethnography had led me to the debate between analytic and evocative autoethnography, which I discuss in more detail in the following two sections.

### 3.2.2. Analytic Autoethnography

Anderson (2006a, p.378), proposes the term ‘analytic autoethnography’, suggesting that:

The five key features of analytic autoethnography ... include (1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher’s self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis.

Anderson uses several ethnographic texts to exemplify his points, although at the same time admits that the examples he gives often only partially cover some of the five points. I make this point here as I shall also draw on Anderson’s analytical approach to autoethnography even though, like the examples Anderson gives, my own study does not comply fully with all five of his points above, in particular his first point as I did not consider myself a ‘complete member researcher’ (as discussed in Section 1.3.1 and in more detail in Section 6.3.1). However, his other four ‘key features’ did resonate with my study, and in particular his second feature of ‘analytic reflexivity’ confirmed to me that incorporating an autoethnographic dimension was a closer fit with what I was doing than simply being reflexive. In discussing ‘analytic reflexivity’, he draws on the work of Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont (2003 p.62), who suggest that autoethnographers:

frame their accounts with personal reflexive views of the self. Their ethnographic data are situated within their personal experience and sense making. They themselves form part of the representational processes in which they are engaging and are part of the story they are telling,

to make the point that ‘the autoethnographic interrogation of self and other may transform the researcher’s own beliefs, actions, and sense of self’ (Anderson, 2006a, p.383). In reflecting on the data I was collecting during this study through classroom observations, interviews and field notes, I came to realise that the process was working in two different ways: the intended way, where I was collecting data from the setting for my original proposed study focusing different perspectives on ELT methodology and

teacher education within the setting, and an unexpected way, where the data was forcing me to reflect back on my own biography and experiences. Anderson (ibid.) refers to these dual processes of understanding experiences in a research setting while at the same time learning about oneself as 'mutual informativity'.

Also advocating a more analytic form of autoethnography, Duncan (2004, p.5) emphasises the need for rigor in terms of research methodology, making the point that autoethnographic research 'does more than just tell stories. It provides reports that are scholarly and justifiable interpretations'.

### **3.2.3. Evocative Autoethnography**

In contrast to the above, in what is described as 'evocative or emotional autoethnography' (Ellis 1997, 2004), autoethnography is seen in terms of a journey, focusing on 'caring and empathizing ... (and) the flux of lived experience' (Ellis and Bochner, 2006, p.431), with 'emphasis on evocation as a goal ... writing narratively' (ibid., p.432).

They (ibid., p.433) go on to state their belief that:

Autoethnography shows struggle, passion, embodied life, and the collaborative creation of sense-making ... Autoethnography wants the reader to care, to feel, to empathize, and to do something, to act. It needs the researcher to be vulnerable and intimate ... it shouldn't be used as a vehicle to produce distanced theorising.

Richardson (2000, p.11) supports this viewpoint, seeing autoethnographic texts as:

highly personalized, revealing texts in which authors tell stories about their own lived experience, relating the personal to the cultural ... holding back on interpretation, asking the reader to emotionally "relive" the events with the writer.

Responding to Anderson (2006a), Ellis and Bochner (2006, p.436) suggest that many autoethnographies are 'both evocative and analytical', believing that they 'use stories

to do the work of analysis and theorizing'. They also believe Anderson's use of the term analysis is in any case restrictive and that his:

paradigm of 'analytical autoethnography' ignores or overlooks how stories work. He presumes there is only one main form of sociological analysis and implies that an analysis produces some sort of propositional or explicit statement or explanation of what things mean or how they should be interpreted, akin to the discussion section of traditional research reports (ibid., p.438).

Their desire is 'to make a narrative and an anecdotal style unobjectionable as a form of sociological discourse' (ibid., p.439), believing that researchers should think of themselves 'not as reporters or analysts but as storytellers and writers' (ibid., p.440).

#### **3.2.4. My approach to autoethnography - a 'middle way'**

The positions given in the accounts of Anderson (2006a) and Ellis and Bochner (2006) could be said to represent two extreme positions, and there has been a move to compromise and accommodate both positions within both descriptions of and specific accounts of autoethnography.

Ellis and Bochner (2006, p.444) conclude that 'analysis and story also can work together. There's no reason to preclude adding traditional analysis to what we do, as long as it's not treated as necessary to legitimize our stories'.

Anderson (2006b, p.454) also suggests there could be some common ground between the two approaches in his response to Ellis and Bochner where he comments that:

Although I share the frequently voiced concern that social science writing should not slip into narcissistic self-absorption, I believe that realist ethnographers can benefit from observing the ways in which evocative autoethnographers bring self and other into their texts, and that in some cases we can find it useful to follow their lead. Especially in research that shares an autoethnographic dimension.

Indeed, more recent autoethnographic accounts have consciously combined approaches. For example, Williams and Jauhari (2016, p.34) 'question the assumed



dichotomy between analytic and evocative autoethnographic forms' and through their work attempt to 'highlight how autoethnography may be written by imagining the power of evocative story-telling while keeping an analytic focus' (ibid., p.54). Stanley (2015, p.143, my italics) also uses an approach that 'exemplifies a suggested *middle way* between Anderson's evocative and analytic dichotomy in autoethnography'. She describes (ibid., p.150) this middle way as:

an evocative, verisimilitude-seeking, firmly "auto"- ethnography that focuses squarely on one's own lived experiences but that also applies critical analysis and aims to formulate theoretical understandings, with the aim of creating understanding beyond the data itself ... This is neither evocative nor analytic autoethnography, following Anderson's dichotomy, but is, perhaps, the best of both worlds. Instead of seeing analytic and evocative autoethnography as opposites, I suggest combining strengths of each: an evocative, creative, *testimonio* of lived experience that is critically analysed with the aim of grounding theory in the data to produce broader understandings that may inform people in conceptually comparable, but distinct, situations.

In this study, I seek to take this middle way, incorporating elements of both evocative and analytic approaches, feeling a connection with both, using a more evocative approach in the sense of telling a story as a means of inviting personal connections rather than analysis (Frank, 2000) combined with a more analytic approach in the sense of seeking to evaluate my own actions (Duncan, 2004). The evocative aspect of my approach takes the form of critical incidents, key moments in the study that were in some way pivotal in guiding my thinking. My rationale for using critical incidents, in particular in the autoethnographic dimension of the study is given in Section 3.3 below. The analytic aspect of my approach comes, for example, through the use of other sources of data - from classroom observations, interviews and field notes in particular - to lend support to the critical incident data, and create a thick description. The use of these other forms of data and the creation of a thick description were discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

### **3.3. Using critical incidents to underpin the autoethnographic dimension**

I have used critical incidents to underpin the creation of the autoethnographic dimension in this study. The rationale behind the use of critical incidents and the approach taken to the collection of critical incidents are discussed here.

In using critical incidents, I was guided by Tripp's (1993, p.8) view that 'a critical incident is an interpretation of the significance of an event', and that critical incidents can help professionals understand how they operate by enabling them 'to be more aware of the nature of their professional values ... to question their own practice, and to concretise their generally abstract notions of values such as social justice' (ibid., pp.17-18).

In his view:

The vast majority of critical incidents, however, are not at all dramatic or obvious: they are mostly straightforward accounts of very commonplace events that occur in routine professional practice which are critical in the rather different sense that they are indicative of underlying trends, motives and structures. These incidents appear to be 'typical' rather than 'critical' at first sight, but are rendered critical through analysis (ibid., pp.24-25).

He also comments that 'critical incidents are not simply observed, they are literally created ... incidents only become critical because someone sees them as such' (ibid., p.27). He suggests they are typically created via a two-stage process, firstly producing a description of the incident and suggesting what this might mean within the immediate context, and secondly finding a more general meaning for the incident by seeing it in a wider social context.

To express similar ideas, Denzin (2014, p.12), uses the term 'epiphanies' to refer to both 'key turning-point moments' that shape lives and 'interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people's lives' (ibid., p.52). He also differentiates between four kinds of epiphany (Denzin, 2001, pp.34-38): the major epiphany, the cumulative epiphany - reactions to experiences that have been happening for a period

of time, the minor or illuminative epiphany - but one that represents an important moment in a person's life, and the relived epiphany - where meanings are given when reliving the experience.

In the present study, the key moments I shall refer to were a combination of all of the four different types of epiphany Denzin describes. However, for consistency, I shall refer to all such 'epiphanies' or key moments as 'critical incidents', though recognise in particular that some of these 'incidents' were undoubtedly gradual realisations over a period of time, or 'cumulative epiphanies', rather than being single momentary 'incidents'.

These critical incidents occurred throughout my engagement in the research setting and during data analysis. They informed the study in different ways and at different points during the research process. For example, in the data collection phase, they helped to focus the interview process, both in terms of content and in terms of who to interview, and in the data analysis phase, they helped me to gain insights into myself as a researcher and into how I was changing during the research process.

Tripp (1993) refers to this latter type of critical incident, dealing with one's own experiences, as an 'autobiographical incident'. He highlights that the usefulness of such incidents in a number of ways, suggesting they can: expose contradictions between practices and espoused values; facilitate reflection on our past experiences and professional biography; provide major turning points, changing our view of ourselves and transforming our practice and/or professional lives generally; and allow us to examine the influence of others on our practice. Relating this to the present study, the more autobiographical incidents provided turning points, helping me to change the way I viewed myself as a researcher, but were also useful in each of the other ways suggested above.

Tripp also highlights a number of issues, such as reliance on memory in some cases, possible subjectivity and lack of corroboration, as being threats to the 'validity' of critical incidents, though, as discussed in Section 3.4 below, this depends on how 'validity' is being judged.

### *Collecting, analysing and writing up critical incidents*

In this study, critical incidents were initially part of the field notes collected during the study, and then following Tripp's (1993) advice, I created a 'critical incident file', which took the form of a Word document. Once the critical incident file had been set up, further incidents were added during the data analysis phase of the study. In developing the file, I tried to follow Tripp's guidance in terms of systematically developing the incidents, making them personal but also writing them for a wider audience, providing sufficient detail with sufficient precision, organising the incidents into themes, and developing these themes over time. There are broadly two types of incident in the file, those relating more to the autoethnographic dimension of the study, focusing on how I saw myself changing as a researcher as the study progressed, and those relating to ELT methodology and professional development in the setting.

Tripp (1993, pp.51-59) further suggests a number of approaches to analysing critical incidents, two of which have guided my approach in this study: 'personal theory analysis' and 'ideology analysis'. He suggests that by analysing of our 'personal theories' which he describes a 'set of beliefs that informs our professional judgement and thereby our action in the material world' we can better understand how these personal theories inform our professional judgement. He then goes on to discuss in some detail carrying out 'ideology analysis' of critical incidents. Referring to ideology as 'to do with the way in which certain ideas represent the world to us and make us think and behave in certain ways' with ideas often 'instilled into us without our active participation or learning' and noting that ideologies 'legitimate what we do or is done to us by others and they inform our judgement about what is normal, necessary and right', he expresses concern that ideologies may also mean that certain ideas 'pervade our thinking', 'become uncritically accepted' and 'control our behaviour by suggesting and favouring certain courses of action over others'. He therefore suggests a four-step approach to ideological analysis: analysing the accepted or dominant view, analysing that view for inconsistencies, rationalising the dominant view, and suggesting alternative possibilities. Both of these approaches to analysing critical incidents have informed the way I have tried to analysis the critical incidents used in this study.

In terms of positioning the critical incidents within the write up of the study, although there were different types of incident, I have placed many of the incidents in a single chapter, Chapter 6. I felt that by having most of them together in one place, at the start of the data chapters, it would allow a more concentrated focus on the autoethnographic dimension of the study at that point, and allow this dimension to inform the two data chapters that follow it. However, there are exceptions to this; for example, two critical incidents are included in the introductory chapter of the thesis to help set the scene for the study, and several critical incidents focused on ELT methodology and professional development are placed in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 respectively.

In writing up the critical incidents, I have tried to preserve the critical incidents in a relatively raw form, for example transferring earlier incidents from my field notes verbatim into my critical incident file, as these relatively unmediated forms felt both authentic and evocative. I took the view this approach would be appropriate in terms of meeting the criteria for judging the trustworthiness of autoethnographic work, discussed in Section 3.4 below, such as needing to engage the reader and immerse them in the flow of the story, and not, as Wall (2008) cautions against, trying to produce a more theoretical version, but ending up with a version which loses some of its power to emotionally engage the reader. Having said that, I did at times feel the need to add further detail into the incidents so as to allow readers who may not have familiarity with the setting to fully understand them, realising that at times my field notes, although sufficiently detailed to allow me to recall and understand particular incidents, having been there at the time and having acquired a certain level of familiarity with the setting, may lack the details necessary for other readers to be able to understand and interpret them.

### **3.4. Trustworthiness and autoethnography**

The trustworthiness of the study as a whole and strategies used to increase its trustworthiness were discussed in Section 2.5. In this section, trustworthiness is briefly discussed with respect to the autoethnographic dimension of the study. As is explained at the start of Section 2.5, the term 'trustworthiness' is preferred to 'validity' as talking in terms of validity evokes more quantitative interpretations of how research should be

judged. Having said that, several of the quotes below use the term 'validity', but at the same time suggest that traditional criteria for judging it are inappropriate in autoethnographic work.

Criticisms of autoethnography include that it can be:

nonanalytic, self-indulgent, irreverent, sentimental, and romantic ... too artful ...  
having no theory, no concepts, no hypotheses ... not being sufficiently rigorous,  
theoretical, or analytical (Denzin, 2014, pp.69-70).

However, those favouring more evocative approaches to autoethnography argue that 'traditional criteria for judging validity cannot be and need not be applied to autoethnographic writing' (Wall, 2006, p.9). Richardson (2000, p.11), for example, would prefer that narratives to be judged against the 'literary criteria of coherence, verisimilitude, and interest'.

Along similar lines, Denzin (2014, p.70) suggests that, for autoethnographic accounts, 'validity means that a work has verisimilitude. It evokes a feeling that the experience described is true, coherent, believable, and connects the reader to the writer's world'. Denzin (2014, pp.72-74) further suggests that work should be judged in terms of 'interpretive sufficiency' - for example, providing sufficient depth, detail and coherence, 'representational adequacy' - for example, being free from racial or gender stereotyping, and being 'authentically adequate' - for example, enhancing moral discernment or promoting social transformation.

Muncey (2010, p.91) highlights that autoethnographic work should resonate with the reader, believing that it 'must be seen to be plausible and trustworthy' where 'resonance is an appropriate criterion for evaluation and this can only be achieved by connecting with the audience through reading, performance or critical review' (ibid., p.107).

Ellis (2000, p.273) offers a further perspective for judging autoethnographic work, suggesting she wants:

to be immersed in the flow of the story, lost in time and space, not wanting to come to the end (as in a good novel), and afterwards unable to stop thinking about or feeling what I've experienced.

In terms of criteria for autoethnographic work, Bochner (2000, pp.270-271) suggests seven criteria based on the work being of sufficient detail, structural complexity and credibility, demonstrating 'transformation from who I was to who I am', respecting ethics, being moving and being authentic, while Richardson (2000, p.937) proposes five criteria for reviewing 'creative analytical practices': substantive contribution to an understanding of social life, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, emotional and intellectual impact, and a clear expression of cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of reality.

Central to the trustworthiness of autoethnographic work is maintaining credibility and verisimilitude, as is important in all ethnographic work, while at the same time engaging and connecting with the reader in a personal way. I have tried to develop the autoethnographic dimension of this study with these points in mind.

### **3.5. An overview of my 'Western TESOL' professional biography**

In this section, I provide an overview of my professional biography in terms of qualifications and career as an education professional. It is primarily teaching-focused and seeks to explain where my *distant eyes* 'Western TESOL' perspective comes from and what may have contributed to what I refer to in this thesis as my 'professional baggage'.

*Teaching qualifications:* In terms of teaching-related qualifications, In November 1995, I completed a 'CTEFLA' (Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults), now called a 'CELTA' (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults), and in June 1999 completed a 'DTEFLA' (Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults), now called a 'DELTA' (Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults). In May 2005, I completed an M.A. TESOL programme. All of these programmes were completed

in the U.K. and, in each of them, the underlying and often unspoken emphasis was on teaching English in a 'communicative' way.

*Early teaching career (January 1996 - June 2002):* Between January 1996 and June 2002, I spent 18 months as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher in Moscow, Russia (January 1996 to July 1997) and 5 years as an EFL teacher in the south of Spain (September 1997 to June 2002). In Russia, I was working for a private language school, mainly teaching young adults. In the south of Spain, I worked for a private language school for 2 years, then set up a private language school of my own, which I taught at and managed for 2 years, before in my final year in Spain, working as a Director of Studies at another private language school. During this period, I also worked at private language schools in the U.K. in the summers of 1999, 2001 and 2002, on the first occasion as an EFL teacher and on the later two occasions as a Director of Studies. Additionally, in August/September 2001 and 2002, I worked as an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) lecturer at a university in the U.K. In all of these eight institutions, the expectation was that my colleagues and I would teach using what I would broadly term a 'communicative approach'.

*Teaching/Working in Canterbury - phase 1 (September 2002 - 2009):* Returning to permanently live in the U.K. in 2002, I began working in Canterbury Christ Church University, where at the time of writing I still work. I describe this as 'phase 1' to highlight that at this time I was principally teaching 'General English', an EFL-based language programme for international students, and from 2004 onwards teaching and directing the 'International Foundation Programme', an EAP-based preparation programme for international students wishing to study on undergraduate programmes at the university. Again, the emphasis, often an unspoken presumption, was that English would be taught in a broad sense 'communicatively'.

*Teaching/Working in Canterbury - phase 2 (2009 - present):* Although there was not a precise point at which this happened, there was a gradual shift in my workload from teaching EFL/EAP-based classes, to teaching on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and on short-course teacher education programmes. This shift took place between 2006 and 2009. In particular, I was heavily involved with a Malaysian B.Ed.



'TESL' (Teaching English as a Second Language) programme between 2009 and 2014, and continue to be involved with the B.A. English Language and Communication and the M.A. TESOL programmes at Canterbury Christ Church University. I have also been teaching on the short course initial teacher training programme, CELTA, at the university since 2006. Other short course programmes I have been involved in include courses taught in Canterbury for groups of international teachers and teacher trainees from China, Sweden, Spain and Azerbaijan, and courses taught in country for teachers from Bahrain and Jordan. The majority of the programmes mentioned above are teacher education programmes for English language teachers, and during these programmes the presumption again is that English should be taught in broadly 'communicative' way, though only on the M.A. TESOL programme are ideas of what 'communicative' really means to some extent problematised. Alongside the classroom teaching aspect of my job, I have become more active in related areas such as coordinating a materials writing project funded by the British Council in Bangladesh and presenting papers at international conferences, most recently in Malaysia, Bangladesh and Spain.

### *Summary*

In terms of incorporating an autoethnographic dimension into this study, my aim is to combine elements of both the evocative and the analytic approaches discussed in Section 3.2, taking a 'middle way' (Stanley, 2015), employing a more evocative approach in the sense of using critical incidents to tell stories about key moments in the study as a means of inviting personal connections rather than analysis (Frank, 2000) and using a more analytic approach in the sense of seeking to evaluate my own actions (Duncan, 2004).

Having in this chapter explored the autoethnographic dimension of the study and outlined my approach to this dimension of the study, the next chapter reviews literature relevant to one of the key themes of the study - ELT methodology. The literature in Chapter 4 and in Chapter 5 should be read in the light of the above discussions.

## 4. Exploring ELT Methodology

This chapter is intended, along with Chapter 5, to show how the literature has helped me to understand the impact my 'Western TESOL' perspective was having on the study and to seek out alternative professional narratives, and as a result to uncover the independent and unrecognised professionalism within the setting. Adding the autoethnographic dimension to the study not only allowed me to see the data in a different way, but to think about the literature, and the way I was looking at the literature, in a different way.

At the heart of the *local perspectives* aspect of the study is ELT methodology, which is the focus of this chapter. However, it should be noted that the precise focus of the chapter has been influenced by my own *distant eyes* perspective. For example, having written the bulk of the chapter, I realised that I had chosen to start off with a more global, *distant eyes*, perspective, problematising different concepts such as 'method' and trying to understand issues such as 'complexity in the language classroom' in a global sense in Section 4.1, exploring 'communicative language teaching' and related concepts, again in global sense, in Section 4.2, and exploring the issues involved with implementing and managing methodological change in Section 4.3, before taking a more *local perspectives* look at 'methods' and 'methodology' in the setting in Section 4.4. In effect, I am trying to understand the setting through the prism of a global, *distant eyes*, view of particular concepts and issues. Furthermore, Section 4.4 itself initially takes a broad view of the setting, looking briefly at the current status of 'English in India', and then narrows the focus to look at the current situation with ELT, firstly in India and then in Kerala in particular. Again, it takes the more global country-wide perspective first, before looking at the local state-wide perspective.

What I had not initially realised was that this 'global' perspective was, to a large extent, a 'Western TESOL' perspective, with most of the literature quoted coming from those working in 'Western TESOL' settings. However, it has become clear to me now that reading literature mainly coming from this 'Western TESOL' standpoint would have influenced my own perspective, a perspective that was already, subconsciously at the time, privileging 'Western TESOL' views because of my own professional background.

For example, I note that I have used the broad phrases ‘English in India’ and ‘ELT in India’. I would like to be able to say simply that in doing so I was never suggesting or assuming that they are monolithic entities, and fully recognise the variations of the position and role of English across India and the diversity of approaches to ELT across India. However, whilst this may be true now, I cannot say that this was the case at the outset of the study.

This chapter reflects the ongoing tension between my initial ‘Western TESOL’ led perspective on what was important for the study and a revised perspective influenced by the autoethnographic dimension to the study. Although early drafts of this chapter were in place before the autoethnographic dimension to the study was included, the chapter has been redrafted to take this dimension into account. For example, the discussion of terminology and concepts such as ‘method’, ‘communicative approach’ and postmethod’ was initially a briefer one, but was extended when it became clear that I was understanding these and related terms in different ways than the participants, who in turn were seeing them in different ways than other participants. More specifically, I was initially constructing local practices in quite definitive ways, using terms such as ‘communicative’, ‘method’, ‘traditional’, ‘modern’, ‘teacher-centred’ and ‘student-centred’, and assuming these terms to be unproblematic and commonly understood. However, as I began to offload some of this ‘professional baggage’, realising that my ‘Western TESOL’ understanding of these terms did not necessarily match local participants’ understandings of them, and began to view the early data collected in a different way, I also felt the need to explore in more depth how terminology and concepts were discussed in the literature.

#### *A note on terminology*

As discussed in Section 1.5, I generally place terms such as ‘method’, ‘communicative’ and ‘communicative language teaching’ in inverted commas to indicate that their meanings have the potential to be ambiguous, and that, in using these terms, I am aware that they will mean different things to different people and possibly different things to the same people at different times. There are discussions of how particular terms are understood in both Section 4.1 and Section 4.2.

## **4.1. Exploring some key concepts**

This section explores a number of key concepts relevant to this study: 'approach', 'method', and 'methodology' and then goes on to discuss in more detail issues surrounding 'method' in ELT.

### **4.1.1. 'Approach', 'method' and 'methodology'**

In recent years the terms 'approach', 'method' and 'methodology' have, at least by theorists, received a great deal of attention, and the concept of 'method' in particular has been problematized extensively. This section attempts to clarify these terms and discusses in more detail the concept of 'method'.

In distinguishing between the terms 'approach', 'method' and 'technique', Anthony (1963, pp.63-67) noted that:

an approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning, ... Method is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach' and 'within one approach, there can be many methods ... [and] A technique is implementational – that which actually takes place in the classroom ... techniques must be consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well.

More recently, Brown (2007, p.17) has attempted to give precise definitions to the terms 'method', 'methodology' and 'approach'. He defines 'method' as:

a generalised set of classroom specifications for accomplishing linguistic objectives. They tend to be concerned primarily with teacher and student roles and behaviors and secondarily with such features as linguistics and subject-matter objectives, sequencing, and materials,

'methodology' as:

pedagogical practices in general (including theoretical underpinnings and related research). Whatever considerations are involved in 'how to teach' are methodological,

and 'approach' in terms of:

theoretically well-informed positions and beliefs about the nature of language, the nature of language learning and the applicability of both to pedagogical settings.

In differentiating between the terms 'method' and 'methodology', Kumaravadivelu (2006a, p.84) describes 'method' as referring to 'established methods constructed by experts' and 'methodology' to 'what practising teachers actually do in the classroom to achieve their stated or unstated teaching objectives'. Similarly, Thornbury (2006, p.131) sees 'methodology' as 'a general word to describe classroom practices ... irrespective of the particular method the teacher is using'.

It should be noted however that such distinctions have become blurred with discussions about 'method' hampered by the fact that, as Kumaravadivelu (2006b, p.60) puts it, 'in the practice of everyday teaching as well as in professional literature the term *method* is used indiscriminately to refer to what theorists propose and to what teachers practice'.

Recognising the different uses of the term 'method', Bell (2003, pp.326-327) offers three perspectives on 'method':

First, he considers 'method' as a 'smorgasbord of ideas', referring to a broad collection of classroom practices, essentially a more pragmatic practice-led definition. This definition is reflected in the point made in a further study by Bell (2007, p.141) that most teachers 'are open to any method that offers practical solutions to problems in their particular teaching context', and suggests that teachers favour a more flexible eclectic approach rather than being wedded to a particular fixed set of ideas. It is also in line with Andrewes (2011, p.12) view that teachers' perceptions of 'method' are based on pragmatism:

Teachers are pragmatists and inherently anti-method. Eschewing comprehensive methodologies ... their classroom practice, although shaped by an imposed methodology (usually known as 'following the book'), adapts that methodology towards the perceived needs of the class.

Second, Bell (2003) considers 'method' as a 'prescription of practice', referring to a prescribed set of classroom practices, essentially a theory-led definition. This definition is very much the sense in which Kumaravadivelu (1994, p.29) defines 'method' as consisting of 'a single set of theoretical principles ... and a single set of classroom procedures directed at classroom teachers'.

Third, Bell (2003) considers 'method' as 'organizing principles', effectively 'an umbrella term comprising approach, design and procedure', reflecting Richards and Rodgers (2014, p.22) view that 'a method is theoretically related to an approach, is organizationally determined by a design, and is practically realised by a procedure', though Brown (2007) cautions that this interpretation is closer to how we might define 'methodology' than 'method'.

Perhaps because of my own professional background being relatively classroom-based, the first, practice-led, definition resonates with my own view of 'method' as set of techniques that offer practical solutions to classroom problems, though there seems to be a tendency among theorists to think of 'method' in the second 'single set of classroom procedures' sense.

#### **4.1.2. Arguments against and for 'method'**

There have been ongoing debates concerning the usefulness of the concept of 'method'.

Considering 'method' in the 'prescriptions of practice' sense, Prabhu (1990a) suggests there is 'no best method', with the idea that there are good and bad methods being a misguided one. He argues that more fundamental than any choice between methods is a teacher's subjective understanding of what they do, based on factors such as their previous learning experience, previous teaching experience, training and awareness of different methods. He proposes that a teacher should be making decisions about what

to do in the classroom based this understanding, which he calls the teacher's 'sense of plausibility' (ibid., p.172). He likens an engaged active sense of plausibility, as opposed to a static one, with 'real' versus mechanical teaching, and suggests it may be a more useful concept to pursue than searching for a 'best method'.

Indeed, dwelling for a moment on the differing cultural contexts, socio-economic factors, political policies and institutional constraints that prevail around the world and even within different countries, it intuitively, though admittedly with the benefit of hindsight, seems naïve to believe in a 'one-size fits all' view of 'method', at least if we are defining 'method' in the narrow 'prescriptions of practice' sense. The problems with trying to adopt a 'one size fits all' prescribed 'method' across a range of different settings are discussed in Section 4.2.3 with reference to 'Communicative Language Teaching' (CLT).

Several writers have discussed the need to move away from reliance on a 'method' as a prescription of practice. Richards (1990) talks of ELT being 'beyond methods' and Brown (2002) discusses 'the death of methods', while Kumaravadivelu (2006b) suggests that there is a growing awareness among teachers about the limitations of particular methods. More widely, he questions why teachers have relied on having a method for so long, rather than thinking in terms of, for example, developing their own 'sense of plausibility' or describing themselves as 'postmethod' practitioners (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001, 2006b). This is discussed further in Section 4.1.4.

The importance of the particular setting in determining the approach taken in the classroom has also come to the fore, with Bax (2003) suggesting the need for 'a context approach to language teaching', first looking at the needs of the setting and only then deciding on the approach to adopt, and Howatt and Widdowson (2004, p.369) suggesting that this 'shift to localization' was already happening, with ELT practices being developed according to the needs of local contexts.

However, the case for the concept of 'method' still receives considerable support. As Larsen-Freeman (2001, p.5) suggests, the concept of 'method' is being misrepresented

and argues for a non-prescriptive view of 'methods', similar to the first of Bell's definitions of 'method' above:

People who say we are beyond methods are making more of a political statement than anything else. I think they misconstrue what a method can be. They're saying there is no room in language teaching for formulas, for prescriptive practices to be imposed on teachers worldwide. Certainly I have no quarrel with that. But I think it's a big mistake to mix up method and its implementation or how a method is used. I wouldn't want to impose a method on anybody, but it seems to me the more methods we have, the more we see the variety of human experience, the more we have a bigger palette from which to paint our picture. We have more choices ... I hope methods are here to stay but not methods as formulaic, prescriptive practices. I don't think many teachers do adopt a whole method. I don't think that it really is a question of striving for the ideal, best method. It is a question of expanding, revising one's thought-in-action repertoire.

She also expresses concern that a desire not to export or impose 'methods' in a colonial sense could in fact lead to the holding back of ideas, suggestions and 'methods', when it might be preferable to offer them and then let teachers decide at a local level on their suitability.

Bell (2007) also supports the view that the concept of 'method' remains relevant, his study reporting that 28 out of the 30 teachers surveyed disagreed with the statement 'methods are dead', the majority considering their approach to teaching to be eclectic.

It is perhaps worth dwelling on this theory versus practice point, as far as attitudes to the concept of 'method' are concerned. Theorists proclaiming that ELT is 'beyond methods' or 'postmethod' can feel rather abstract compared with the realities of classroom practice, and so may be serving to further widen the perceived gulf between theory and practice. As Block (2001, p.72) puts it:



Despite applied linguists' claims to the contrary, we are surrounded by the concept of method, as it appears to be term which for many individuals captures what teachers do in classrooms.

Rajagopalan (2008, p.85) concurs with this view, noting that:

a good deal of academic discussion about the usefulness or otherwise of language teaching method is taking place in the other-world of theory where there is little or no concern with what goes on the classroom.

He goes on to note the 'indispensability' of 'methods' for teachers.

Kumaravadivelu (2003, p.28) sums up the way theorists often view 'method' as problematic while teachers see it as useful, suggesting the differing perspectives stem from the inadequacies of the concept of 'method' itself. He points out that:

The disjunction between method as conceptualized by theorists and method as conducted by teachers is the direct consequence of the inherent limitations of the concept of method itself. First and foremost, methods are based on idealized concepts geared toward idealized contexts. Since language learning and teaching needs, wants, and situations are unpredictably numerous, no idealized method can visualize all the variables in advance in order to provide situation-specific suggestions that practicing teachers sorely need to tackle the challenges they confront every day of their professional lives.

Adding to this, Kumaravadivelu (2006a, p.165) also notes that:

Method is too inadequate and too limited to satisfactorily explain the complexity of language learning and teaching. By concentrating on method, we have ignored several other factors that govern classroom processes and practices - factors such as teacher cognition, learner perception, societal needs, cultural contexts, political exigencies, economic imperatives, and institutional constraints, all of which are inextricably linked together.

Kumaravadivelu (2003, pp.29-30) also points out that what teachers say about the 'method' they follow does not necessarily relate to what they do in practice. Citing various studies, he notes that:

Teachers who are trained in and even swear by a particular method do not conform to its theoretical principles and classroom procedures; teachers who claim to follow the same method often use different classroom procedures that are not consistent with the adopted method; [and] teachers who claim to follow different methods often use same classroom procedures.

A further issue with 'method' is the degree to which a 'method' is used as a means of maintaining power and control. Hall (2016, p.217) explores this issue, highlighting that:

the idea of method and the development of methods have created and sustained power imbalances between (largely male) theorists on the one hand and (largely female) teachers in classroom on the other.

Drawing on the work of Phillipson (1992) and Holliday (1994), Hall (2016) also notes that:

methods have created and maintain specific patterns of power and control within ELT, favouring 'Western' 'one-size-fits-all' approaches to learning over non-western and localised practices.

This issue will be discussed further later in this chapter with particular reference to 'CLT' and to 'Western TESOL' imposing new approaches to ELT on 'non-Western' settings.

#### **4.1.3. An eclectic approach?**

One commonly expressed view is that, in practice, most teachers are eclectic in their approach to teaching, incorporating what they feel is appropriate from particular methods. Griffiths (2012, p.473), for example, reports, based on a survey of teachers' views on methods, that:

Although the need to be aware of a variety of methods was acknowledged, several respondents also stressed the need to be able to choose methods

appropriate to the needs of their students. Overall, the preference of teachers in this study seemed to be for an eclectic approach to methodology, which leaves the teacher free to choose from a variety of methods in order to help their students achieve success in language learning.

Along similar lines, Bell (2007, p.136) notes that 21 of the 30 teachers involved in his study either described their teaching as or implied their teaching was 'eclectic', believing that a knowledge of different methods can 'empower teachers to respond meaningfully to particular classroom contexts' (ibid., pp.141-142). Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) and Richards and Rodgers (2014) also note the potential of a knowledge of methods to empower teachers.

This practical reality has perhaps encouraged discussion of, for example, 'informed eclecticism' (Brown, J.D., 1995, pp.17-18), 'principled eclecticism' (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p.229) and 'an enlightened, eclectic approach' where 'you think in terms of possible methodological options at your disposal for tailoring classes to particular contexts' (Brown, H.D. 2007, pp.42-43). These have provided a certain level of theoretical legitimacy for eclecticism, suggesting that eclecticism can be coherent and desirable, with teachers choosing elements from a range of different methods, based on their experience and according to what they feel is most appropriate in a particular setting.

However, Kumaravadivelu (2003, p.30) questions such an approach, highlighting that:

While there have been frequent calls for teachers to develop informed or enlightened eclecticism based on their own understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of established methods, teacher education programs seldom make any sustained and systematic effort to develop in prospective teachers the knowledge and skill necessary to be responsibly eclectic.

Stern (1992, p.11) also expressed concern that:

The weakness of the eclectic position is that it offers no criteria according to which we can determine which is the best theory, nor does it provide any principles by

which to include or exclude features which form part of existing theories or practices. The choice is left to the individual's intuitive judgment and is, therefore, too broad and too vague to be satisfactory as a theory in its own right.

Nevertheless, despite the term 'eclectic' being unpopular with some theorists for the reasons discussed, it nevertheless remains a term used by many teachers to describe their approach to teaching, pointing again to a gap between what theorists say and what practitioners say.

#### **4.1.4. The 'post-method era'**

This section discusses the 'post-method era' in English language teaching. The inclusion of this section also represents the struggle I was having, throughout the study, to come to terms with the effect I was having on the research process. I was initially not sure if I was wanting to include the section because 'postmethod' was a 'current' area of discussion, particularly among 'Western TESOL' academics<sup>10</sup> and I was showing 'Western TESOL' bias in my choice of literature, or because I saw it as of a more global significance, a way forward apparently without many of the constraints of a particular 'method'. In the end, perhaps for a combination of these reasons, I included this section, which can be linked to some of the ideas participants suggested about ways forward in the setting, as covered in particular in Section 7.4.

As Richards and Rodgers (2014, p.16) summarise:

Since the 1990s, many applied linguists and language teachers have moved away from a belief that newer and therefore "better" approaches and methods are the solution to problems in language teaching. Alternative ways of understanding the nature of language teaching have emerged that are sometimes viewed as characterizing the "post-methods era".

Kumaravadivelu (1994, pp.27-31) claims that 'recent explorations in L2 pedagogy signal a shift away from the conventional concept of method toward a "postmethod

---

<sup>10</sup> I realise this in itself is potentially contradictory given that Kumaravadivelu, who first wrote about 'the postmethod condition', was born and completed his studies until Masters level in southern India.

condition”’, arguing that this ‘postmethod condition enables practitioners to generate location-specific, classroom-oriented innovative practices’, ‘signifies a search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method’, ‘signifies teacher autonomy’, and involves ‘principled pragmatism’. He goes on to explain how this ‘principled pragmatism’ differs from eclecticism, noting that ‘eclecticism at classroom levels invariably degenerates into an unsystematic, unprincipled, and uncritical pedagogy’, whereas principled pragmatism ‘focuses on how classroom learning can be shaped and managed by teachers as a result of informed teaching and critical appraisal’ by, for example, teachers developing their ‘sense of plausibility’ (Prabhu, 1990a).

Kumaravadivelu further suggests (1994, p.32) a strategic framework to underpin ‘the postmethod condition’ which:

comprises the following 10 macrostrategies: (a) maximize learning opportunities, (b) facilitate negotiated interaction, (c) minimize perceptual mismatches [between teacher intention and learner interpretation], (d) activate intuitive heuristics, (e) foster language awareness, (f) contextualized linguistic input, (g) integrate language skills, (h) promote learner autonomy, (i) raise cultural consciousness, and (j) ensure social relevance.

Kumaravadivelu (2001, 2006b) then attempts to further conceptualise a ‘postmethod pedagogy’, noting that the above framework:

is shaped by three operating principles: particularity, practicality, and possibility. Particularity seeks to facilitate the advancement of a context-sensitive, location-specific pedagogy that is based on a true understanding of local linguistic, social, cultural, and political particularities. Practicality seeks to rupture the reified role relationship between theorizers and practitioners by enabling and encouraging teachers to theorize from their practice and to practice what they theorize. Possibility seeks to tap the sociopolitical consciousness that students bring with them to the classroom so that it can also function as a catalyst for identity formation and social transformation (Kumaravadivelu, 2006b, p.69).

Mercer (2016, p.477) further suggests that discussions of appropriate methodology for particular settings and in particular of 'postmethod pedagogy' should recognise the complexity of what is happening in the classroom, as will be discussed in Section 4.1.5, and that such approaches:

point to the inability to easily predict what will happen in classrooms and thus also the difficulty of making pedagogical prescriptions applicable in all settings. Instead, collectively, they suggest the value of proposing a series of principles to guide pedagogic practice, thereby recognising some of the patterns in teaching encounters and yet the ultimate uniqueness of each experience and setting. They also ascribe a central role to teachers, who are encouraged to critically engage with and evaluate 'global' or 'public' principles and theories in relation to their own specific practice.

'Postmethod pedagogy', however, has not been without criticism. Akbari (2008, p.642) believes that it makes excessive demands on teachers and ignore the realities in which they work, arguing that:

Teachers, in the postmethod paradigm, should be able to practice their profession with competence and confidence (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) and ensure that their practice results in social transformation and the improvement of society by taking into account the life histories of their students. ... Now that the method is gone, the question is how teachers are going to develop the competence demanded of them in dealing with pedagogical and social responsibilities assigned to them. ... By making too many demands of teachers, the postmethod pedagogy has, in practice, turned a blind eye to the social, political, and cultural realities of language teaching contexts and the limits within which teachers operate.

He goes on to conclude (Akbari, 2008, pp.649-650) that:

Postmethod must become more responsible and practical to be able to win the trust of practitioners. By responsible I mean it needs to come up with a teacher

education system which is capable, in practice, of overcoming the limitations within which teachers work. It must be able to provide guidance as to how inflexible, top-down administrative systems can be convinced to grant teachers the autonomy that postmethod demands of and accords to them. It must also become more practical in adopting the language of practice, not academic discourse, as its point of departure.

Other dissenting voices include Liu (1995) who suggests that 'postmethod', rather than being an alternative to 'method', is an addition to it, and Larsen-Freeman (2005, p.24) who similarly argues that 'Kumaravadivelu's macro-microstrategies constitute a method', while Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001, p.2) put forward the case that 'the communicative approach' is already:

explicitly a post-method approach to language teaching ... in which the principles underlying different classroom procedures were of paramount importance, rather than a package of teaching materials.

Bell (2003, p.334) has another view, believing that 'method' and 'postmethod' can coexist, suggesting that 'postmethod need not imply the end of methods but rather an understanding of the limitations of the notion of method and a desire to transcend those limitations', and further that 'method' and 'postmethod' can be viewed as:

necessary dialectical forces: the one imposing methodological coherence, the other deconstructing the totalizing tendency of method from the perspective of local exigencies. In other words, method and postmethod together can liberate our practices.

The fact that debates surrounding 'the postmethod condition' have taken place between theorists, while classroom practitioners are continuing to use the term 'method' to describe their teaching highlights again a disconnect between theory and practice.

#### **4.1.5. Complexity in the language classroom**

Another area of note from relatively early in the study was that I began to see greater complexity in the setting and in language classrooms in the setting than I had envisaged prior to starting the study. This section sets out to explore this complexity.

The language classroom can be viewed a complex setting where ‘people are interacting in a multiplicity of complex ways’ (Allwright, 1988, p.51), so thinking about language teaching in terms of a ‘best method’ or even any single all-encompassing ‘method’ seems misguided. Senior (2012, p.39), drawing upon the work of Breen (1985), also acknowledges the complexity within language classrooms, noting that they are:

multifaceted, constantly changing learning environments and that classroom language teaching and learning are complex processes involving interaction between an infinite number of personal, interpersonal, learning, pedagogic and social variables.

She therefore suggests, in terms of approach, that teachers ‘use their intuitive ability and experiential knowledge to decide what works’ (ibid.), which links to Prabhu’s ‘sense of plausibility’ discussed above.

Meanwhile Freeman (1996, p.107) cautions that ‘the complexity of teaching cannot be cleaned up simply by pretending it is not there; order cannot be forced on to it by writing and talking in a detached manner about its messiness’, though, as Tudor (2003, p.8) notes:

acknowledgement of the complexity of language teaching does not promise neat, unambiguous solutions or paths of action. It does, however, point our energies in the right direction.

Indeed, Tudor (2003, p.3) attempts to move in this ‘right direction’ by distinguishing between ‘technological’ and ‘ecological’ perspectives towards language teaching and learning, pointing out that:



if it could be assumed that learners were “simply” learners and teachers were “simply” teachers, and that one classroom was essentially the same as another, there would probably be little need for other than a technological approach to teaching.

Explaining that the reality is more complex than this, he then goes on to advocate taking an ecological perspective, ‘exploring language teaching and learning within the totality of the lives of the various participants involved, and not as one sub-part of their lives which can be examined in isolation’ (ibid., p.4) and focusing ‘on the actual realities as they are lived out in particular contexts’.

He situates this ecological perspective as very much in line with a number of trends and developments in teaching and learning such as ‘learner-centredness’ (e.g. Tudor 1996), individual differences and learner style preferences (e.g. Skehan 1989; Williams and Burden, 1997), the role of sociocultural factors (e.g. Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf and Poehner, 2008) and the need to develop ‘appropriate methodology’ (Holliday 1994).

Mercer (2016, p.475), drawing on the work of van Lier (2004) and Kramsch (2008) relating to taking an ecological perspective, further adds that taking such a perspective underscores the complexity involved in understanding what is happening inside a language classroom, highlighting the importance of paying attention to:

contextual diversity, the interaction of individuals and contextual factors and the dynamism of those relationships and characteristics of factors across time and place. In particular, the foreign language classroom is seen as an ecological system nested within a hierarchy of other larger/broader systems such as school, educational system and national and societal cultures ... and it is the interactions of all these layers of systems that generate unique conditions and settings.

In terms of the practical realisation of an ecological perspective, Tudor (2003) suggests this should be via a localised approach to pedagogic decision-making in terms of, for example, methodological approach and materials choices. He also usefully distinguishes ‘between methodology as theoretical principle and methodology as pedagogical reality

in the classroom' (ibid., p.9), where the latter relates to the meaning particular methodological choices assume for local participants.

This technological-ecological distinction can also be related to the application of particular methods in the classroom. 'Methods' are often presented as, or at least assumed to be, simple packages, in Tudor's language, they encourage a 'technological' perspective on teaching, rather than making allowance for the reality of a complex, dynamic and multifaceted language classroom, and encompassing what Tudor called the 'ecological' perspective. Furthermore, this simplistic view of methods seems to have permeated its way into many teacher education programmes, where methods and approaches are delivered to teacher trainees as pre-packaged 'one-size-fits-all' formulae.

Palfreyman (2006, p.356) relates the use of language learning resources to Tudor's ecological perspective. He discusses both material and social resources, and within social resources, draws upon the concept of 'a social network: a system of relationships between individuals which channels, and is constituted by, social interaction'. He believes these networks to be essential for long-term learning, with networks varying, for example, in their size, and in the strengths of the ties between and the roles taken by participants at different times. He further highlights that perceived expertise and accessibility are key factors in the use of such support networks.

Having explored various terms and concepts relating to ELT methodology, and considered the complexity of the language classroom setting, the next section considers one approach of significant interest within this study, 'the communicative approach'.

#### **4.2. A more 'communicative' approach**

The initial impetus for the study related to the perceived local need for a more 'communicative' approach. Although the study itself is looking at ELT in the setting more broadly, this perceived need for more 'communicative' teaching was a frequent topic of conversation.

#### **4.2.1. 'Communicative' and 'communicative competence'**

This section consider how the terms 'communicative' and 'communicative competence' are understood.

There are issues with these terms in that, in relation to ELT, neither have firmly established or universally agreed definitions. As Van Patten (1995, p.931) suggests, 'the term "communicative" is not a mutually shared construct between scholars and practitioners. We share the word but not its meaning', with practitioners often seeing 'communicative' as referring mainly to spoken communication and to the application of learned material, while scholars see it as not limited to one skill and as relating to purposeful use of language.

Whilst the term 'communicative competence' can be defined in a general sense, Thornbury (1999, p.18), for instance, asserting that 'communicative competence involves knowing how to use the grammar and vocabulary of the language to achieve 'communicative' goals, and knowing how to do this in a socially appropriate way', it has been the subject of a great deal of discussion in terms of precisely what it involves and how people understand it.

In terms of what it involves, the much-referenced 'standard' framework suggested by Canale and Swain (1980), and extended by Canale (1983), breaks down 'communicative competence' into grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic competence, where grammatical competence relates to grammatical and lexical capacity, discourse competence to the ability to form meaningful written and spoken and written texts, sociolinguistic competence to understanding of the social context where communication is taking place, and strategic competence to strategies used to facilitate communication.

Stelma (2010) challenges this 'standard' definition of 'communicative competence' on several fronts, questioning how realistic it is to represent the complexities of language use in a range of contexts via a few abstract constructs, also questioning this representation as something quite fixed when in reality the ways in which we

communicate change and therefore what is required to achieve 'communicative competence' must also change, and finally pointing out the challenge of defining an aim for language teaching in these terms when learners may have widely differing or even no clearly-defined future 'communicative' needs.

Alternative views of 'communicative competence' include Savignon (1997) stressing both the dynamic and context-specific nature of 'communicative competence', Brumfit (2001) calling for a more 'learner-centred' concept of 'communicative competence', Alptekin (2002) arguing that the target for language learners should be the development 'intercultural communicative competence', and Richards and Rodgers (2014, p.89) suggesting that:

Sociocultural learning theory has replaced earlier views of communicative competence in many current accounts of second language learning ... because of its more comprehensive understanding of the role of social context in discourse.

In terms of what teachers understand by the term 'communicative competence', a study by Nazari (2007) contends that teachers' in-class activities demonstrated a somewhat narrow view of it, focusing on grammatical competence at the expense of other aspects of 'communicative competence'.

#### **4.2.2. 'The communicative approach' and 'communicative language teaching'**

The terms 'communicative approach' and 'communicative language teaching' (CLT) have become convenient labels to describe an approach to teaching that aims to develop 'communicative competence'. However, these terms can give the false impression of a well-defined concept, underpinned by a commonly agreed set of principles. As Richards and Rodgers (2014, p.86) note, 'no single text or authority on it ['communicative language teaching'] emerged, nor any single model that was universally accepted as authoritative'.

Dörnyei (2010, p.33) similarly argues that despite 'CLT' becoming a 'real buzzword in language teaching methodology ... the extent to which the term covers a well-defined and uniform teaching method is highly questionable', further adding that 'since the

genesis of CLT in the early 1970s, its proponents have developed a wide range of variants that were only loosely related to each other', while Littlewood (2011, p.541) is more direct, suggesting that 'a recurrent comment about communicative language teaching is that nobody knows what it is'.

Indeed, as Hall (2011, p.93) comments, even 'discussing CLT is in some ways problematic as the term means different things to different people and everyday classroom practices can appear to be quite different when CLT principles are applied in differing social and educational contexts'.

More recently, Littlewood (2014, p.349) has reflected that 'CLT now serves not so much as a label for a specific approach as an umbrella term to describe all approaches that aim to develop communicative competence in personally meaningful ways'.

Despite this lack of clarity surrounding precisely what 'CLT' is, it nevertheless, as Richards and Rodgers (2014, p.382) note, 'continues to be considered the most plausible basis for language teaching in many contexts today'.

Furthermore, there have been a number of attempts to define the key principles behind 'CLT'. Several of these are briefly described below.

Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011, pp.119-121) list sixteen principles behind 'CLT', including:

- Wherever possible, authentic language - language as it is used in a real context - should be introduced.
- Students should be given the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions.
- Errors are tolerated and seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills.
- Communicative interaction encourages cooperative relationships among students. It also gives students an opportunity to work on negotiating meaning.
- The social context of the communicative event is essential in giving meaning to the utterances.

- The teacher acts as a facilitator in setting up communicative activities and as an advisor during the activities.

Dörnyei (2012) is more concise, seeing the key features of 'CLT' as:

- Activities promote real communication, that is, engage learners in the authentic, functional use of language.
- Classroom communicative situations should resemble real-life communication as much as possible.
- Fluency is more important than accuracy.
- Typical communicative activities are role-plays, discussions, problem-solving tasks, simulations, projects and games.

Richards and Rodgers (2014, p.105) give five principles underpinning 'CLT':

- Learners learn a language through using it to communicate.
- Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities.
- Fluency is an important dimension of communication.
- Communication involves the integration of different language skills.
- Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error.

Mitchell (1994, p.33) is perhaps more pragmatic in describing 'CLT' as:

not a tightly structured 'method' of teaching ... Rather, it is a broad assembly of ideas from a range of sources ... which have together come to be accepted as good practice by many contemporary teachers',

and later as 'a fluid and changing body of ideas, not a fixed package (ibid., p.41).

Harmer (2007, p.70) is perhaps even more pragmatic in his view that 'CLT':

has become a generalized 'umbrella' term to describe learning sequences which aim to improve students' ability to communicate.

Nevertheless, the temptation to attach a singular meaning to the label 'CLT' and so envisage it as a single and well-defined entity remains.

Looking from the teachers' point of view, Klapper (2003) points out that the lack of precisely specified classroom techniques has helped keep 'CLT' 'fuzzy' in terms of teachers' understanding. Along similar lines, Thompson (1996) discusses four ways in which 'CLT' gets misinterpreted, namely that it means not teaching grammar, means only teaching speaking, means pair work - which means role play, and means demanding too much from teachers, while Little *et al.* (1994) also highlight the misinterpretations that 'CLT' is indifferent to grammar and that it is only concerned with speaking. Although these misconceptions were noted around twenty years ago, it is evident from this study that such misconceived views of 'CLT' continue to be held, as will be seen in Chapter 7.

The steady stream of writing on 'CLT' over the last few decades lends support to Mitchell's 'fluid and changing body of ideas' interpretation of 'CLT', with different perspectives on what constitutes 'CLT' given at different times. For instance, Howatt (1984, p.287) distinguished between a 'strong' and a 'weak' form of 'CLT':

The "weak" version, which has become more or less standard practice in the last ten years, stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes ... The "strong" version of communicative teaching, on the other hand, advances the claim that language is acquired through communication.

As Hall (2011, p.94) notes, 'it is the weak form of CLT that has dominated, and perhaps still dominates, thinking in Western ELT'. I also want to note here that this is one of a relatively small number of authors quoted to date that have acknowledged that what is being said refers specifically to 'Western' TESOL. This point will be returned to in Section 4.2.3.

In terms of shifting interpretations of 'CLT', Richards (2006) refers to 'classic communicative language teaching (1970s to 1990s)' and 'current communicative language teaching (late 1990s to the present)', where the former is characterised by the

type of overarching principles mentioned earlier and the latter allows for more recent variants of 'CLT' such as content-based instruction, task-based instruction, text-based instruction and competency-based instruction to fall under the broad umbrella of 'CLT'. Richards does not make any reference to the possibility that this interpretation of 'current communicative language teaching' appears to be a 'Western TESOL' based interpretation.

Evidence that 'CLT' has been far from a static entity over the years can also be seen from journal articles discussing 'a turning point in communicative language teaching' (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell, 1997), 'rethinking communicative language teaching' (Gatbonton and Segalowitz, 2005) and even 'the end of CLT' (Bax, 2003). There has also been discussion concerning the movement 'beyond communicative language teaching' (Savignon, 2007), perhaps reflecting the developments within the ELT profession concerning methods in general, with Wedell and Malderez (2013, p.99) asserting that:

it is no longer possible to believe that all contexts can use a single method ... [and] (in principle at least) that it is natural for teachers to base their classroom decision-making on their own understandings of a shared approach, and so natural for there to be a wide variety of context-dependent classroom practices.

Changing perspectives on 'CLT' have also been highlighted by Hall (2016, p.215), who suggests that:

in the early twenty-first century, a unified version of CLT has given way to an examination of 'strong' and 'weak' CLT, of whether CLT is appropriate for all contexts and cultures, and the development, or perhaps fragmentation, of CLT into related methods such as *task-based language teaching* (TBLT), and content-based approaches such as *content and language integrated learning* (CLIL), both merging content and language-teaching in ways arguably similar to 'strong' forms of CLT.



However, Hunter and Smith (2012, p.430) suggest that the lack of consensus surrounding the precise nature of 'CLT' has been present since the 1980s, and question whether 'there was ever a wholly distinct, unitary or 'classical' CLT'.

The current position of 'CLT' in ELT is perhaps reflected by Richards and Rodgers (2014, p.107) who note that:

By the twenty-first century, the assumptions and practices of CLT seem on the one hand to be commonplace and part of a generally accepted and relatively uncontroversial cannon of teaching theory and practice ... On the other hand, language teaching today is a much more localized activity, subject to the constraints and needs of particular contexts and cultures of learning, and the use of global and generic solutions to local problems is increasingly seen as problematic. Research and documentation of local practices is needed.

However, the use of certain terms such as 'commonplace' in the first part suggests a 'Western TESOL' bias, and the underlying assertion in the second part that 'the use of global and generic solutions to local problems is increasingly problematic' suggests a bias towards the views of academics over those of practising teachers. That is to say, although 'the assumptions and practices of 'CLT'' may be 'commonplace' in particular, mainly 'Western TESOL' settings, it seems an over-generalisation to suggest that this is true in all settings, and whilst in academic circles it may be problematic to suggest the use of global or generic solutions to local problems, it is unclear whether practising teachers also consider this as problematic.

#### **4.2.3. Criticisms of 'CLT'**

As Thornbury (2016, p.230) notes:

Almost since its inception, CLT has been challenged on a number of grounds, not only in terms of the principles underpinning it but also with regard to its actual practices, including not only their (global) appropriateness and applicability but the way that they might have been (locally) misappropriated and misapplied.

He goes on to note (ibid., p.231) that:

Over the years there has been a steady stream of articles ... challenging CLT's exportability to contexts beyond those in which it was originally developed.

This has led to the belief that 'CLT represents some form of cultural imperialism' (ibid.) where, as Holliday (2005, p.2) argues:

a well-resourced, politically and economically aggressive, colonising, Western 'Centre' imposes its values, standards and beliefs on 'an under-sourced, colonised 'Periphery'.

This is supported by Kumaravadivelu (2006b, p.64) who asserts, based on its failure in a number of different settings that 'CLT offers perhaps a classic case of a center-based pedagogy that is out of sync with local linguistic, educational, social, cultural, and political exigencies'.

However, Thornbury (2016, p.234) concludes that 'given the appeal that still attaches to the word 'communicative', CLT will continue to prosper as a brand, even though its original ingredients may have long since been reconstituted'.

Looking more specifically at particular settings, attempts to use 'CLT' across in different settings have met with limited success. Littlewood (2007, p.244), for example, raises concerns over the usefulness of 'CLT' in East Asian classrooms, highlighting potential problems with classroom management, failure to 'stimulate the rich use of the target language that is claimed by proponents' of 'CLT', 'incompatibility with assessment demands' and 'conflict with educational values and traditions'.

Indeed, looking into a wide range of studies of 'CLT' in different settings - Chick (1996) in South Africa; Shamim (1996) in Pakistan; Rao (2002), Hu (2005), and Liu (2009) in China; Li (1998) and Jeon (2009) in South Korea; Hiep (2007) in Vietnam; Hiramatsu (2005), Sakui (2007), and Nishino and Watanabe (2008) in Japan; Saengboon (2006) in Thailand; Hasanova and Shadieva (2008) in Uzbekistan; Bataineh, Bataineh and Thabet (2011) in Yemen; Chang (2011) in Taiwan; and Ansarey (2012) in Bangladesh - the

practical problems in implementing 'CLT' come across strongly. These problems are summarised in Littlewood (2014, pp.352-353):

- Classroom management is demanding, especially with large classes, and teachers may fear losing control.
- Unpredictable communication may make excessive demands on the language skills of teachers who themselves have had limited experience of communicating in English.
- Pair or group work requires teachers to develop new organizational skills and adopt a less overtly dominant role in the classroom.
- In such work, without constant monitoring, students may communicate in the mother tongue or use only minimal English, rather than extending their English competence.
- The holistic learning that occurs in communicative activity contradicts common conceptions of school-based learning as involving item-by-item progression through a syllabus.
- These conceptions also support the traditional view of teachers as transmitters of knowledge rather than facilitators who try to develop learner independence.
- Teachers often face a contradiction between an official public policy which advocates CLT and a pencil-and-paper examination system which tests discrete items.
- As a result, they often face resistance both from students and from parents, for whom examination results are understandably of paramount importance.

A particular issue overarching several of the points made above is the question of what the teacher-student relationship should be. 'Communicative' methodology places emphasis on the teacher being a 'facilitator'<sup>11</sup>, guiding students towards their goals through, among other things, offering plenty of practice opportunities and focusing on

---

<sup>11</sup> I place the term 'facilitator' in inverted commas to show that it is not a commonly understood term. In particular, what 'Western TESOL' refers as a 'facilitator' may be different from the way a 'facilitator' is seen in 'non-western TESOL' settings.

authentic communication. This is somewhat at odds with the view of the teacher's role in certain parts of the world. Referring to south Asia for example, Chowdhury (2003) suggests that the teacher is seen as an authoritarian figure who should lead the class and control any teacher-student interaction, with the use of first names or close physical proximity likely to make things uncomfortable. This again points to the fact that any application of 'communicative' principles within Kerala would need to be done in a context-sensitive manner, taking into account existing expectations of teacher-student relationships.

It should be noted that there are a small number of studies that more strongly advocate the use of 'CLT' in particular settings, albeit in a form adapted for the setting. For example, Li (1998, p.696) suggests that 'South Korea and other EFL countries with similar situations should adapt rather than adopt CLT into their English teaching', while Samimy and Kobayashi (2004, p.258), writing about Japan, believe that 'English education should embrace CLT in a culturally sensitive and appropriate way, yet maintain its own contextual autonomy'.

From the above discussion and that of the previous section, it is clear that, if 'CLT' is to be implemented, then it should be implemented cautiously and according to the needs of a particular setting, adapting the principles of 'CLT' to fit the particular setting or integrating specific aspects of 'CLT' into the existing approach, adopting what Hiep (2007, p.196) calls 'the spirit of CLT' rather than feeling the need to adopt it in a particular form or an obligation to use particular techniques.

#### **4.2.4. My own developing interpretation of 'CLT'**

It is clear then that the meaning of 'CLT' has changed over time, with for example a wider range of interpretations and an increasing range of variants, and that it means different things at different times and to different people, all of which make it difficult to talk about 'CLT' as a single entity. However, rather than focusing on 'CLT' or its variants, it may be more appropriate to think 'beyond method', as discussed in Section 4.1.4 above.

However, in spite of the comments above, there may still be a case for using 'communicative language teaching' or 'the communicative approach' as generic terms to refer to teaching which exhibits certain broad traits such as having a focus on meaning over form and a tolerance of errors, and which is flexible enough to allow for the different emphases and procedures to be applied in relation to the broad traits.

My own view of 'communicative competence' and 'CLT' was, at the start of this study, very much based around the types of principles outlined by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) and Richards and Rodgers (2014) described above.

Over time, I began to realise that my view was very much a kind of pre-packaged, static and context-free view of 'CLT'. For example, principles such as 'the teacher acts as a facilitator in setting up communicative activities and as an advisor during the activities' (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p.121) was something very much ingrained in my own philosophy on teaching, reinforced as it had been during my own teacher training and development, and subsequently as a teacher trainer myself. However, spending time in the setting allowed me to see that principles such as this do need re-evaluating and that any application of 'CLT' needs to take context into account. My view therefore became more in line with Weddell and Malderez (2013, p.102) who highlight the central role of context in any interpretation of 'CLT', stating that 'teachers in a context can be said to be following a broadly communicative approach if their teaching is based on a contextually appropriate interpretation' of a particular set of beliefs about language and language learning.

Recognising the difficulty in pinning down what 'CLT' actually means, Littlewood (2013, p.3) suggests that 'we should aim to develop principles which help each teacher to develop a form of communication-oriented language teaching (COLT) suited to his or her own specific context'. Littlewood (2014) believes COLT could encompass a range of communicative approaches to language teaching such as task-based approaches. He further develops these ideas (ibid., p.355-359), exploring COLT in relation to five areas that have been the subject of recent debate, at least in 'Western TESOL' and academic settings: 'postmethod pedagogy'; 'linking practice with theory and research'; 'optimal combinations of analytic and experiential strategies' - an issue 'at the heart of the

distinction between the 'weak' and 'strong' versions of CLT'; 'ways to deepen and personalise the content of L2 communication in the classroom'; and 'the role of the mother tongue in the language classroom'.

Drawing on the work of Schuerkens (2004), Littlewood (2014, p.359) concludes by noting that, whereas 'CLT' was perceived and developed at a time when methods tended to flow from the 'centres' of ELT to the 'periphery' and to ignore the local context, COLT reflects a world in which 'innovation and diversity reflect local conditions, as they result from a creative mixture of global elements with local meanings and cultural forms'.

Although this more flexible idea of 'communicatively-oriented language teaching' remains appealing, at the same time I have become more questioning, struggling to understand the impact of background and biases when considering what might be suitable approaches in given settings. In particular, with the setting for this study being Kerala, a 'non-Western TESOL' setting, but much of the literature discussed above written by 'Western' academics, who have espoused, for the most part, 'Western TESOL' led views, both on 'CLT' and more generally on 'methods', it feels difficult to quantify the effect of this on my own thinking.

An example of this 'Western TESOL' bias in the literature would be the fact that there is a relatively little focus on the use of L1 in the language classroom within 'CLT', or even within wider discussions of 'method' and 'postmethod'. However, as Kerr (2016, p.515) notes:

outside of contexts where students come from multiple language backgrounds or where the teacher does not share the students' language, some degree of own-language use on the part of the teacher appears to be the norm.

Indeed, as Hall and Cook (2012, p.16) assert, it is 'a part of many teachers' everyday classroom practice', although they also point out that 36% of teachers feel guilty when using their own language (Hall and Cook, 2013, p.41).

Having surveyed a number of studies on the topic, Kerr (2016, p.523) concludes that 'there is a very clear consensus that some own-language use can support the learning of a new language'. He goes on to suggest (ibid.) that:

a move away from own-language use as a 'crutch' towards more principled practices will be facilitated by two changes within English language teaching. The first is the incorporation of own-language issues in teacher training and development .... Secondly, the appearance of more practical suggestions in published form will provide teachers with more options to explore.

The point to make here is that this issue, though a very relevant one for many English teachers around the world, is not one that is particularly widely discussed in much of the literature covering 'recent approaches' to ELT'. It is also not, in my experience, something covered in teacher training programmes. It is also not something that, until recently, I have spent much time considering in my own teaching or when reflecting on my own views on ELT methods and methodology generally or on 'CLT' in particular.

In the light of the above discussions, my own interpretation of 'CLT' has become a more flexible one, taking into account the needs of particular settings.

#### **4.3. Educational change**

The notion of introducing new approaches in ELT cannot be discussed without considering this in relation to the process of making educational change happen.

When changes in educational policy require teachers to adopt a new approach in the classroom, there is often a misconception that, with a little training, teachers will be able to adapt to accommodate any new requirements. This is not necessarily the case. As Lortie (1975) notes, not only have teachers spent many hours in the classroom as teachers, they have also spent many hours in the classroom as students and this 'apprenticeship of observation' can produce beliefs about teaching that are difficult to change.

As Hayes (2012) points out, attempts to improve English by focusing on learner-centred education via 'CLT' often meet with little success for various reasons related to the change process. These reasons include the nature of change being too great, the speed too fast, the resources and/or infrastructure inadequate, the fact that the pedagogy is imported, that the change is driven by those who do not have to implement it, and that there is a lack of joined-up thinking with, for example, assessment systems not reflecting the change. In terms of importing pedagogy, he draws on the debates around linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) and the influence of 'Western' ideologies on pedagogy (Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday, 2005) in suggesting that:

though there may be something to be learnt from others' experience, the attempt simply to transfer 'best practice' in education from one country to another is a cause of failure in much innovation (Hayes, 2012, p.50).

This section considers a number of issues involved in implementing change and managing the change process.

#### **4.3.1. Implementing change**

Change within ELT can happen for a variety of reasons. It can be driven by, for example, changes in government policy, trends within the teaching profession, developments in technology, guru-led innovations, value-driven changes and/or influences from other disciplines (Burns and Richards, 2012).

According to Hayes (2012), successful change is more likely if it is systemic in nature, it has grassroots stakeholder involvement, there is adequate support during the implementation phase, and there is strong and supportive leadership. He highlights, in particular, the need for joined up thinking, with a change in one part of the educational system needing to be matched by changes in related areas, for example making sure there are adequate numbers of well-trained teachers, appropriate materials, adequate time to prepare new materials, appropriate INSET and advisory support, appropriate evaluation procedures in place, sufficient financial resources and consideration given to any wider impacts such as fitting with local pedagogic norms.



Murray (2013) also discusses the effect of context on innovation and change, suggesting three local factors contribute to their introduction and diffusion: whether the organisational structure is integrative - with good communication, being forward-looking, emphasising long-term planning, aiming for the same goal, and building sense of community - or segmental; whether or not the leadership has the managerial skills and understands the change process; and the degree to which the change is acceptable to those involved in implementing it. Along similar lines, Waters and Vilches (2013) suggest that implementers or 'change agents' need to not only embed the change into existing practice but to integrate the change by managing any ripple effects to other parts of the education system, which may in turn require 'secondary innovations' such as changes in the teacher education process.

Kennedy (2013, p.21) suggests an 'ecological' model of change involving interaction between participants at all levels rather than being top-down and:

a strategy of deconcentration ... devolving responsibilities to the most appropriate level of implementation, though not to the degree that classroom innovations will not have any impact on the system as a whole.

Similarly, Stoller (2009, p.75) advises involving stakeholders at different levels of any change process, pointing out that:

top-down innovations are rarely successful without teacher enthusiasm and endorsement. Similarly, bottom-up innovations rarely sustain themselves without the support of the administration.

Waters and Vilches (2013) similarly emphasise the need to involve those who are being asked to accept a change, highlighting the benefits of fostering 're-invention', the degree to which a change is modified by the user in the process of adoption, as this gives adopters opportunities to explore what the change involves and encourages them to gradually take more responsibility for and ownership of the change, while Derewianka (2013, p.170) points out that 'bottom-up, incremental change is, in the long run, more

likely to result in real change than accepting low-fidelity, superficial, mandated compliance by the masses as an indication of success',

Hyland and Wong (2013, p.2) also highlight 'the importance of teacher-initiated innovation', though at the same time warn of 'the practical difficulties associated with fostering this kind of bottom-up perspective', while Rinvoluceri (2007) suggests that teachers often decide not to incorporate certain ideas into their teaching because the ideas fail to get through their filtering process. He believes that new ideas need to get past various 'filters' before they can become part of the teacher's repertoire, including the 'personal likes and dislikes' filter, the 'perception of students' filter, the 'teacher's professional beliefs' filter and the 'cultural' filter.

Hayes (2012) expresses concern over the support provided for teachers during the implementation phase, suggesting that INSET following a cascade model of training can often have little or no impact and/or dilutes the change. He also advocates a more cyclical and ongoing approach to INSET, rather than it being one-off in nature, and therefore meeting the goal of 'developing supportive conditions and establishing professional learning communities amongst teachers in all schools ... (that) are vital if innovations are to succeed' (ibid., p.57). More generally, Ingvarson et al (2005, p.17) suggest that unless the 'considerable gap between the conditions that research indicates are optimal for professional development and those that are provided' in the majority of schools is reduced, successful innovation is unlikely to happen.

Meanwhile Freeman (2013) contrasts the more visible and observable aspects of a change, such as public documents or teacher behaviour relating to the change, with the more hidden, context-based and subjective elements such as teacher thinking, making sense of the change process and the effect of the change on professional identity, positing that these latter elements are more important to the success of the change process. In a similar vein, Kiely (2012) suggests that any change needs to acknowledge 'informal orders' - which Holliday (1992) refers to as the processes that keep an existing system stable, coherent and locally accepted, despite any deficiencies that may exist within it - of the existing system and move forward from these.

### **4.3.2. Managing change**

Within the setting for this study, there is a great deal of discussion of the need for change in ELT methodology, but there is much less discussion on or awareness of how to manage that change. This issue is discussed below.

In terms of the management of change, Bolitho (2012) highlights the gulf between strategic planning for educational change and what actually happens in the classroom. He calls for more joined-up thinking in terms of planning change, for example recognising that assessment needs to be changed in line with any curriculum change or change in teaching approach. He notes also that in any 'reculturing' (Fullan 2007, p.25) - the process by which teachers change their beliefs and habits - resistance is likely and any change can get diluted, particularly where the change is imposed. He therefore believes that empowerment of local stakeholders is essential if change is to be sustainable. This again highlights the need for engagement with stakeholders at all levels, without the approach being either top-down or bottom-up.

Woods (2012) draws together twenty-one case studies relating to managing change, and from these comes up with a number of key issues in change management. These include: the need for support for implementers and therefore a positive context for 'reculturing' (Fullan, 2007); creating opportunities for development and empowerment of those involved; avoiding mismatches in perception, for example between teachers and policy makers; integrating different aspects of the change such as new textbooks, teacher training and development, assessment and wider educational reforms; staying focused on classroom realities, for example including classroom-focused training; allowing time for the embedding of new ideas, such as by building in time for reflection and in-school follow-up on in-service training; and identifying and/or creating catalysts, or agents of change, who might co-ordinate local support groups, model good practice and/or attend state/national events; and ensuring sustainability via, for example, ongoing support.

Two of the case studies reported in Woods (2012) relate specifically to settings in India. O'Donahue (2012), in a study based in Tamil Nadu, suggests that for effective implementation of change, the key factor is engagement, the buy-in from key players.

She also highlights the need for training programmes that allow reflection and sharing of ideas, and for materials to be adapted to suit the local context. Mathew (2012, p.196), in a curriculum implementation study across India, highlights the risks of washback from the assessment system in terms of creating a barrier to innovation, noting that ‘completing the syllabus, i.e. the prescribed textbooks, was seen by teachers and principals as a main measure of teacher competence’. The suggestion here then is that ‘teaching to the test’ was stifling the change process. Having said that, in an earlier study, Mathew does highlight that there are silent innovators working without the support of the wider education system to make change happen (Mathew, 2006).

Having now explored approaches to ELT in a more general sense and more specifically ‘communicative’ approaches, along with my own changing interpretation of ‘CLT’, and considered the process of educational change with respect to ELT, the next section attempts to relate this discussion to the setting for the study.

#### **4.4. English in India and in Kerala**

From the outset of this section, I should point out that it is influenced by my outsider status in and *distant eyes* perspective on the setting, with the choice of literature, the decisions on what might be the more relevant points to make and the emphasis given to particular issues all affected by this. Further, as with this chapter as a whole, this section moves from a more global to a more local perspective, looking first at India and then at the setting for the study, Kerala.

The section explores some of the issues surrounding the status of English and current state of ELT in India generally and in Kerala specifically to attempt to shed light on the perceived need to change ELT methodology, and in particular to focus on the emphasis being given to adopting a more ‘communicative’ approach to ELT, as discussed in Chapter 1. In order to do this, it will briefly look at the role of English and the position of ELT in India as a whole before narrowing the focus to concentrate on Kerala, ELT classrooms within Kerala, and possible ways forward for ELT in Kerala.

In addition to providing an overview of the position of English and ELT in India, and in particular within Kerala, the section highlights that ELT in this region has developed in a different way, on a different timescale and with different issues and trends than those that tend to get discussed in relation to 'Western TESOL'; for example, as will be discussed, ELT in India did not follow the trend towards 'CLT' in the 1970s or 1980s.

#### **4.4.1. The status of English in India**

Since the arrival of English in India, and in particular because of Britain's former role as a colonial power in India, English has played a fundamental role in Indian society, and by the start of the 20th century was established as both the official and the academic language of India. Further, whereas in the decades after independence in particular, English tended to be seen as a colonial language, a language for the privileged, it is now viewed by many in a more pragmatic sense in terms of its usefulness, and increasingly perhaps its necessity, not only to access higher education, but also to gain employment and facilitate social mobility. Furthermore, whereas it used to be a so-called 'library language', necessary for the academic work and administrative jobs, it is now seen as a language of mass communication, a means of facilitating communication both within India between speakers of different languages and with other parts of the world.

Over the last few years, developments in international communication, science and technology, and global trade, and ever-increasing use of the internet, have resulted in a greater awareness and acceptance within India of the importance of English, in particular in terms of finding employment (Gupta 2004, 2005). As Nayar (2008) points out, English continues to play a number of roles in Indian society, in particular as the language of higher education, as a 'link language' for communication nationally, and as the key to participation in the global economy. He suggests there is now a general country-wide consensus in the way English is used in India, though at the same time recognises that its presence is clearly more overt in urban than rural areas and in the south than in the north of the country, is more prevalent among the upper classes, and continues to symbolise power, prestige and social mobility.

The continued use of English post-independence has not been without controversy, with many questioning the need to rely so heavily on the language of the ex-colonial power, particularly in the years immediately following independence, and highlighting the risk of maintaining an English-speaking elite. However, as Tsui and Tollefson (2007, p.16) note, 'the increasing importance of English in the globalization process ironically has legitimized the hegemony of English over all Indian languages'.

Indeed, the long association of English with power is now leading to an expansion in the demand both for English as a subject and for English as a medium for education. As Agnihotri (2007, pp.195-196) notes:

Those who receive education only through their regional languages lag behind socioeconomically and are deprived of social mobility. ... There is a widespread desire to study English as a subject from early years of education. English-medium schools are mushrooming in every town and village ... English has retained its colonial color and continues to be associated with the elite that occupy positions of power in education, administration, the judiciary, international relations, and now the global corporate world. The gates of employment, social mobility, and power are open only to those who are proficient in English or both in English and their regional language.

The trend towards English has been happening for many years now, with Gupta (1995, p.76) noting, over 20 years ago, that:

[Indians] secretly believe, if not openly say, that competence in English makes a considerable difference in their career prospects ... politicians and bureaucrats denounce the elitism of [English-medium] schools but surreptitiously send their children to them.

More recently, in discussing English in India, Graddol (2010, p.64) points out that:

English is changing its status in India - from a bureaucratic and elite language, to one which plays an increasing role in the lives of all citizens. ... Economic growth means that more jobs require English; the expansion of education means that

English is needed by more people for study; and for a growing, globalised, urban middle class English is playing a greater role in both their work and personal lives.

He further observes (*ibid.*, p.65) that:

The politics around English have shifted in the last decade. Where populist politicians once secured rural votes by promising to banish English, now there is a powerful grass-roots lobby to extend English to the masses.

He later adds (*ibid.*, p.124) that:

Throughout India, there is an extraordinary belief, amongst almost all castes and classes, in both rural and urban areas, in the transformative power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill, but as a symbol of a better life, a pathway out of poverty and oppression.

Sheorey (2006, p.17) suggests that the arguments concerning linguistic and cultural imperialism have, in a practical sense at least, somewhat faded into the background, noting that:

even the most vociferous pro-English and anti-English voices have been quietened considerably, if not totally silenced, by a sense of indispensability of English in the national interest.

Mishra (2013, p.186) agrees, suggesting that terms like 'cultural colonialism and linguistic imperialism in relation to the spread of English have started losing their validity in the age of globalisation', and further that 'caste, class, ethnicity, linguistic affinity and national or regional sentiments become secondary when it comes to learning English for economic reasons' (*ibid.*, p.190).

Given the increase in recent years in terms of the employment opportunities that an ability to communicate effectively in English can potentially provide, the belief in the need for English as an essential tool for enhancing employment prospects is now widespread. As Graddol (2010, p.33) notes:

Many public sector jobs require applicants to pass English language exams - for over a century, English has been seen as a passport to a pensionable government job. Now, the private sector also requires English - but often of a different kind.

He goes on to highlight that the growth of technology and in particular business process outsourcing 'has also opened a new possibility for social mobility, by providing well-paid jobs based on merit rather than social background - but only for those who can speak English' (ibid., p.40).

Among his conclusions, he notes (ibid., pp.14-15) that: there has been a shift towards English driven by three factors - education (via both English-medium schools and higher education through the medium of English), employment and social mobility; spoken English skills in particular are needed though school curricula are not emphasising them; sustained economic growth requires more people who speak English well; and nationally the rate of improvement in English is too slow because of, among other things, the shortage of English teachers and fact that the wider education system has problems which also affect English language education. ... Finally, he recommends using a diversity of approaches to teach English, with particular approaches used to fit particular settings.

Mathew (1997) suggests that a multilingual approach to education in India is needed in order to allow for both the preservation of diverse cultures and participation in the global economy, a point which echoes Phillipson (1996, p.165) who comments that:

multilingual schooling is a complex topic ... but the important issue is that in a multilingual society, education should be multilingual rather than 'X-medium' or 'Y-medium', terms which implicitly exclude or subtract languages.

However, more recent debates have also focused, not on whether English should be emphasised within the education system, but on the variety of English that should be taught and whether Indian English (IE) should be considered as a 'native' variety of English. Detailed discussion of these issues are beyond the scope of this study, though they are considered in some detail in Agnihotri and Singh (2012), where of particular note is the initial paper by Singh (2012, p.38), who sets out his view that there are 'no



linguistic reasons for classifying systems such as IE as ‘non-native varieties’, and arguing ‘against the position that sees IE as ‘non-native’ for putative reasons of local language ecology for it is clear that IE is an integral part of the language ecology of contemporary India’.

#### **4.4.2. ‘ELT in India’**

This section aims to focus on current debates about ELT methodology in India. It first problematises the term ‘ELT in India’ and then discusses the current interest in adopting a more ‘communicative’ methodology for ‘ELT in India’.

##### *‘ELT in India’*

There have been a number of publications in recent years focusing on ‘India’ and what it is to be ‘Indian’. For example, Varma (2005) discusses different aspects of ‘Being Indian’ while French (2011) similarly discusses traits of life in India in his book entitled simply ‘India’. There have also been a number of publications focusing specifically on the current state of ‘ELT in India’ such as Gupta (2006) and Dutt (2010). In these publications, there is often an implicit assumption made that ‘India’ and ‘ELT in India’ can be considered as single and uniform entities, which although convenient may be somewhat misleading. As Graddol (2010, p.28) notes:

The states of India vary on almost every dimension considered so far: demographic, religious, degree of urbanisation, and perhaps most of all, sheer size. ... Kerala, for example, has the highest literacy rate in India, and remittances from its many English-speaking overseas workers provide an important development resource.

Discussing the state of ‘ELT in India’ and implying English to be in some sense uniform across India is similar in many ways to discussing the state of ‘English in Europe’ and implying similarities across Europe. There are parallels between the linguistic mix in India and in Europe; for example, there are 22 officially recognised languages in India compared to the European Union with its 23 officially recognised languages.

Given the vast geographical areas involved, the number of different first languages spoken across India, the variations in social, economic and cultural backgrounds, as well as differences within India in terms of the way English is perceived and taught, there needs to be an awareness of the risk and potential danger of over-generalisation when discussing the concept of 'ELT in India'.

Nayar (2008), for example, suggests that there are some common features of ELT across much of India, such as the fact that English is generally seen as a subject rather than a 'communicative' tool, that it is taught within a somewhat bureaucratic education system with limited scope for teacher initiative, that the objective is more about fulfilling academic requirements than creating language users, and that the teaching style tends to be 'teacher-centred' with large classes, with many teachers inadequately trained for ELT. It is unfortunate perhaps that these features all appear to be, or at least are intended by Nayar to be seen as, negative features, and further that they are seen by Nayar as negative features in relation to India in particular, even though they are applicable to a wide range of educational settings. There is also the sense that the negative features of the Indian system are being implicitly contrasted with a utopian alternative where, for example, English is seen as a communication tool rather than a subject, is taught in a non-bureaucratic system in small 'student-centred' classes by well-trained teachers who are given plenty of scope to use their own initiative.

In a similar vein, Sheorey (2006) discusses the problems facing 'ELT in India'. He highlights issues such as a lack of resources, very large classes, exam-led teaching, teacher-centred classes, an inflexible and conservative administrative system, classes often being literature-focused rather than language-focused and the limited opportunities for students to speak in class. However, these issues are applicable to many settings outside India whilst at the same time not applicable to certain settings within India. Further, most of them are pertinent to the wider education system rather than being specific to ELT. Again, several of these issues implicitly contrast a deficient 'ELT in India' with an imagined and idealised 'Western TESOL' alternative.

Sheorey also highlights a small number of 'pockets of hope': the curricula gradually becoming more ELT-based, textbooks gradually becoming more language-focused

rather than literature-focused and a greater number of teachers are taking training courses specifically concerned with ELT. However again, these 'pockets of hope' imply that approaches traditionally used in many Indian settings such as placing emphasis on learning language through literature are somehow less valid than more overtly language-focused approaches. Similar views, describing 'pockets of hope', are apparent in the data collected. These are discussed in chapters 7 and 8.

### *'CLT' in India*

Without linking their view to particular settings, Jacobs and Farrell (2003, p.10) suggest that 'CLT' and related approaches such as task-based learning have 'led to eight major changes in approaches to language teaching', these changes relating to: placing greater emphasis on learner autonomy; the social nature of learning; curricular integration; meaning over form; individual learner differences; thinking skills; alternative forms of assessment; and teachers as co-learners. In terms of ELT methodology more broadly, Burns and Richards (2012) emphasise the role of context in shaping the nature of teaching and learning, while Levy (2012) discusses the role of technology in language classroom.

However, across India and specifically in Kerala, while these areas are to greater or lesser extents discussed, other issues, not necessarily seen as important in a global sense, are considered as equally if not more important. These issues include the role of literature in language teaching and how to adapt particular approaches for use with larger classes.

There has also been an ongoing debate on the particular issue of how to teach English using more 'communicative' approaches within the setting for this study, despite the fact that in other settings, 'Western TESOL' settings in particular, this is perhaps less debated than it was several decades ago. Indeed, in discussing 'ELT in India', it may initially seem curious as to why 'communicative' methodology is of particular interest in India now, given that the discussions around 'CLT' were at their height in many parts of the world, certainly among academics, in the 1970s and 1980s. The reason is that India seems to a large extent to have been bypassed by the principles and ideas surrounding

'communicative' methodology at that time, despite its introduction and spread, in one form or another, around certain parts of the globe.

There were however some attempts to introduce more 'communicative' approaches to ELT in India during the 1980s. One of these attempts was the so-called 'Bangalore Project', (Prabhu, 1987). Prabhu observed that his students struggled to communicate in English outside the classroom even after several years studying it at school using a structural approach and so 'developed a version of the communicative approach with an emphasis on teaching learning *through* communication'. (Baleghizadeh, 2015, p.111, italics in original). This project ran between 1979 and 1984, and involved 8 school classes with children aged between 8 and 13. It is somewhat unclear how successful the project was. Greenwood (1985, p.268) makes a 'plea for more appropriate and illustrative evidence of the methodology and materials used in the Project, together with some specific evaluation of the learners' performance', while Beretta (1990, p.321) notes that "regular' teachers failed to come to terms with the demands of the project' and also that the implementation of the project was inadequately monitored. Prabhu (1990b, p.338) however counters this later point, pointing out that:

The project team saw the work on the project as being primarily developmental ... [but] this developmental effort was apt to be misconstrued ... as the result of a premature over-concern with a possible subsequent implementation of the method on a large scale. It was therefore stressed repeatedly that the project was an attempt at exploration, not at propagation.

In spite of the issues above, the project is often cited as a forerunner to the development of task-based language teaching.

Another attempt to introduce a form of 'CLT' in India is described by Gupta (2004). She outlines a case where, in 1989, a Communicative English paper was introduced in a particular Indian university. The result at the time was that the teachers, untrained in using and unfamiliar with the concept of 'CLT', were unable to handle the demands of a 'CLT'-based course, and as a result little really changed in practice, i.e. the teacher-centred, lecture-based, exam-focused classes continued, but with teachers somewhat

embittered and discouraged as a consequence. Gupta goes on however to discuss how the scenario has changed since the turn of the century. In particular, she highlights: the growth in the Indian economy to include multinational companies, call centres and shopping malls, all of which require fluent English-speaking personnel; the fact that the internet has had a major effect in increasing exposure to English; and that there are increased travel and work opportunities overseas in countries where English is the *Lingua Franca*. This has broken the 'deadlock that CLT had found itself in' (ibid., p.268) and teachers have become more empowered, although this empowerment may not have permeated its way through the Indian education system as a whole, as will be seen in the data in chapters 7 and 8. Nevertheless, it does appear that the role of English has been changed by economic developments and the increase in employment opportunities, particularly for those willing to move away from their family base in order to take advantage of these opportunities.

Interestingly, in Gupta's discussion there seems to be an unspoken presumption that in order to improve students' communication skills in English, 'CLT' as opposed to any another broadly 'communicative' approach, which might be more appropriate for the setting, should be used. This is also evident in the first part of Lal (2010) where he first discusses his students' problems in communicating in English, then quickly moves on to discuss a 'CLT'-based approach as the way to solve the problem, despite the fact that, as highlighted by a number of writers (see Section 4.2.3), transferring an approach, such as 'CLT', wholesale from one setting to another is unlikely to be successful. Indeed, as Tickoo (1996) highlights, attempts to introduce methodologies from other settings into India have failed because they have not taken account of local linguistic, sociocultural and political factors.

Gupta (2005, p.200) points out that the 'developments that have taken place in ELT methodology in the West took some time to reach Indian classrooms', suggesting this to be for three main reasons – the slow start in recognising the importance of English in the first place (partly for historical/political reasons), the lack of teacher education programmes specialising in ELT, and the lack of emphasis on communication in the examination system. However, reflecting on this, the implicit assumption in the above

that developments in ELT methodology 'in the West' *should* 'reach Indian classrooms' seems questionable.

Nevertheless, Gupta (2005) goes on to suggest that the impetus for change at the present time is coming from private sector academies that tend to be reasonably well-equipped and to experiment more with methodology. This, she argues, is causing a 'ripple effect' into undergraduate and postgraduate classrooms, and into private schools, and, albeit more slowly, into government-aided (semi-private) and finally government-run schools. Alongside this, she suggests that parents and the learners themselves are more aware of the need to acquire communicative skills in English in order to take advantage of the new opportunities now available in India and beyond, a view substantiated by Sheorey (2006).

In terms of 'CLT', Gupta (2005, pp.202-205) suggests the issue was about creating a context where it could be accepted. As she puts it 'when communicative language teaching was introduced in India in the 1980s, it was a dismal failure for the first few years because of the lack of the right context', adding that 'the Indian context was not ready for CLT. Hence, it took around two decades to gain acceptance among learners and teachers'. She suggests that India is moving towards a learner-focused 'Communicative Approach oriented' methodology, but one which recognises the importance of context. A key word here is 'oriented', suggesting that the changes taking place are taking on board ideas from other contexts, but without necessarily adopting a specific approach piecemeal. Thus, while still advocating that an approach developed in 'the West' should be adopted, it suggests at the same time that local contextual factors need to be borne in mind. This is to be broadly in line with Mitchell's (1994, p.41) view of 'the communicative approach', discussed in Section 4.2.1, as 'a fluid and changing body of ideas, not a fixed package', an approach which is sufficiently flexible to work in different contexts. It also fits with Littlewood's (2004, 2013, 2014) description of communication-oriented language teaching, discussed in Section 4.2.4.

In recent years then, the perceived role of English in providing opportunities in education and employment, and in facilitating social mobility, as discussed in the previous section, has broadened the interest in English, in particular the kind of English

needed for social interaction, with attention focused on how English should be taught in schools and colleges across India in order to produce users of English who are able to communicate, nationally and internationally, and therefore able to benefit from the economic growth that India is currently enjoying. This has led to initiatives at national, state and local levels and resulted in, for example, revised syllabi, revised materials and restructured teacher education programmes, such as the 'retraining program [that] trained teachers to adopt Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles' described by Sreehari (2012), aiming to reflect the perceived 'communicative' needs of learners. It has also led to a profusion of both English-medium schools and private language centres advertising 'Communicative English' courses, purporting to improve communication skills of English language learners.

It is worth noting here that there is a danger of thinking of teacher-centred or book-based classes as the traditional or old-fashioned way and therefore perceiving them as in some sense not the best way, not the way things should be done, not modern, and even somehow 'wrong'. This is also a parallel danger in thinking that so-called 'modern methods', often developed in and for totally different contexts, and often appearing to be more 'student-centred', are somehow 'right'. Indeed, looking slightly more widely in geographical terms for a moment, in a paper discussing the impact of 'Western' teacher training and 'communicative language teaching' in Bangladesh, Chowdury and Ha (2008) note the dangers of encouraging or in some cases requiring teachers to adopt 'communicative' techniques unquestioningly, principally because of their cultural inappropriacy. They also point out that despite an increasing emphasis on training programmes in recent years, 'grammar-translation is ... still the norm of ELT in Bangladesh and [there is] considerable friction between policy-level expectations and actual practice' (*ibid.*, p.306), an observation which resonates with the views expressed by several participants in the present study. Furthermore, as discussed in Section 4.2.3, several recent studies into the efficacy of piecemeal attempts to apply 'communicative' methodology in different contexts supports the idea of needing to create a context-sensitive variant of 'the communicative approach' if it is felt that a communication-oriented approach is desirable in a particular setting.

#### **4.4.3. ELT in Kerala**

This section briefly considers distinctive features of the wider education system in Kerala before discussing particular features surrounding ELT. Nayar (2008, para.1) notes the need to look at ELT in India at state level, expressing concern that India is often 'generalised deceptively as one entity' and advising of:

the need to underscore the significance of internal diversity ... [which] becomes particularly pertinent when looking at engagement with English, particularly in matters of literacy, education, communication and public participation.

He goes on to point out that, because state governments have the main responsibility for education in each state, there is a great deal of scope for variation at policy level and in terms of the emphasis placed on different aspects of education from state to state.

Particular features relating to education in Kerala include, according to Nayar (2008), the literacy rate in the state being the highest of any state in India, most likely stemming from the fact attendance in schools in the state has been compulsory and free for many decades. It also has a relatively high proportion of workers going overseas, particularly to the Middle East, in search of greater economic prosperity, and is a state where women enjoy comparative freedom in terms of educational opportunities and potential employment. The caste system is also less pronounced in Kerala with only the top and bottom castes clearly distinguishable. Furthermore, Kerala has a mix of religious groups, with significant numbers of Christians and Muslims as well as Hindus, its own festivals, and its own language. Indeed, as Graddol (2010, p.56) notes, 'no state in India is wholly monolingual. The nearest is probably Kerala, in south India, where over 96% of the population speak Malayalam (according to the 2001 census)'.

Schools in Kerala today can either be government funded, privately funded or privately owned but government aided. In terms of languages taught, they generally follow the so-called 'three-language formula' with Hindi and English learnt in addition to the local language Malayalam. The majority of schools are government-funded schools and these tend to use Malayalam, the local language, as the language of instruction, with English



taught from the third year of school, while private schools traditionally tend to use English as the language of instruction from first year of school.

In terms of educational policy in Kerala, as Nayar (2008) highlights, there have been attempts in recent years to revise the school curriculum, improve teacher training and test communicative skills in examinations. However, he also points to the crowded classrooms, unmotivated teachers, exam-driven students, assessment based on rote learning and a bureaucracy-heavy system.

Against this background of high literacy rates and the relative importance given to English in the state education system, a much-debated issue is the perceived poor performance of Keralites in job interview situations. The apparent concern from employers is over a lack of communication skills in English, which brings back us to the way English is taught, with Lal (2010), based on his own experiences, suggesting that teachers in Kerala tend to 'resort to' a grammar-translation approach because of a lack of belief in or understanding of other approaches.

Lal (ibid.) suggests, however, that the need for change to a more 'communicative' syllabus is now generally accepted and further that this change is needed not because it reflects what is happening in the supposedly more methodologically enlightened 'West', but because it is appropriate for the changing local context and in particular the changing the job market. He goes on to describe a project where adult learners in Kerala were introduced to 'communicative' methods and suggests that 'CLT' needs to be adapted to suit the backgrounds - cultural, social and emotional of - and needs of local students.

Within higher education institutions in Kerala, English is used as the medium of instruction for all programmes, and within undergraduate programmes, there are specific and compulsory English courses. These courses tend to include both literature and language, and often involve very large classes. However, although there may be shortcomings in the way English is taught at tertiary level, such as the very large classes, Nayar (2008), referring to Kerala, suggests that, having come through the system themselves, many lecturers are unwilling to make substantive changes to this system.

It is also worth noting here that, on particular issue of large classes, Shamin (2012, p.99) suggests that some of the difficulties associated with large classes can be overcome. While conceding there are 'virtually no curriculum models or materials or pedagogical approaches designed especially for large class-teaching', she advises teachers to adopt a 'learner-centred' approach to learning, such as by giving responsibility to students for their own and the group's learning, including small-group work, encouraging collaboration, and promoting learner autonomy, learner training, and peer assessment and feedback. She also highlights that teachers need a positive attitude and more specifically training in developing an appropriate methodology for large-class teaching.

#### **4.4.4. A context-sensitive approach to ELT in Kerala**

This section explores what might be an appropriate way forward in terms of approaches to ELT in Kerala.

There has for some time now been some concern over the idea of introducing 'Western' language teaching methods into non-Western contexts. Holliday (1994), for example, argues that methodologies generated in 'BANA' (Britain, Australasia, North America) may be of little or no use in other contexts, suggesting more locally-generated context-sensitive methodologies to be more appropriate, while Canagarajah (1999) expresses concern over the potential for imported methods and materials to promote postcolonial values and as a result continue the dominance of Western 'centre' over the 'periphery'. He also advocates a locally-based approach, suggesting 'local teachers have to adopt creative and critical instructional practices in order to develop pedagogies suitable for their communities' (ibid., p.122).

Given these concerns, and the fact that the idea that the same single neatly-packed 'method' can be used to teach English in a variety of different contexts is, at least in a theoretical sense, no longer thought to be appropriate, with for example Richards (1990) suggesting that we were 'beyond methods' and Brown (2002) proclaiming the 'death of methods', this again leads us to question why there is currently such an interest in 'communicative' methodology, and in particular 'CLT', in India and in Kerala.

Perhaps this is where terminology, at least to a certain extent, comes into play, and in particular the use of the terms 'communicative' and 'communicative approach', which have come to be interpreted in a variety of ways. As Dubin and Olshtain (1986, p.69) put it:

as with the tale about the five blind men who touched separate parts of an elephant and so each described something else, the word 'communicative' has been applied so broadly that it has come to have different meanings for different people.

Indeed, unless there is some initial consensus in terms of understanding what is meant by a 'communicative' approach within different Indian contexts, it is questionable whether a coherent and well-understood way forward can come out of this renewed emphasis on communication and 'communicative' methodology. However, despite the lack of clear and consistent guidelines on what exactly 'CLT' involves and what it aims to do, beyond perhaps the very general goal of preparing learners to communicate in real-life situations, it is still considered by many Indian educationalists to be central to improving communicative skills in English.

Bringing this together, one possible way ahead might be to develop a more context-sensitive version of 'the communicative approach', along the lines of the 'communicatively-oriented language teaching' suggested by Littlewood (2004, 2013, 2014) and discussed in Section 4.2.4. Along these lines, Kramsch and Sullivan (1996), describe an instance of a group of teachers in Vietnam adapting 'communicative' materials to suit the needs of the local context. Another approach might be to take a 'postmethod' perspective as advocated by Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2001, 2006b) and which was discussed in Section 4.1.4. Possible context-sensitive approaches in Kerala will be further discussed in Chapter 7 in the light of the data from this study.

### *Summary*

This chapter has reviewed literature related to ELT methodology. Through this literature, I have attempted to shed light on the backdrop against which, as a 'Western TESOL' professional, I was interpreting different accounts and observations of ELT methodology

within the setting. It was only as I came to realise that I was interpreting these accounts and observations against this backdrop and in terms of my own 'Western TESOL' based experiences that I began to uncover independent and unrecognised professionalism within the setting.

The next chapter reviews literature related to second language teacher education with a similar motive.

## 5. Exploring Second Language Teacher Education

This chapter explores one of the key issues that needs to be considered alongside the discussions surrounding ELT methodology in the previous chapter, second language teacher education (SLTE). It is intended, along with Chapter 4, to show how the literature has helped me to understand the impact my 'Western TESOL' perspective was having on the study and helped me to seek out alternative professional narratives.

As with the previous chapter, the issue dealt with in this chapter, teacher education, lies at the heart of the *local perspectives* aspect of the study. However, again as with the previous chapter, it needs to be acknowledged at the outset that the detail within the chapter has been influenced by my own *distant eyes* perspective. For example, looking at the bulk of the draft chapter, I realised that I had written about teacher education mainly from a global, *distant eyes*, perspective, rather than focusing on teacher education within the setting, possibly because at the time of reading around the topic of teacher education, I had not taken on board the degree to which my own positioning and interests were affecting the literature I was choosing to read. Having realised that there may be a bias towards a more *distant eyes* perspective, in developing the chapter I have tried to provide *local perspectives* as well.

The chapter itself considers the nature of teacher learning in Section 5.1, the knowledge base of SLTE in Section 5.2, professionalism and expertise in language teaching in Section 5.3, collaboration in SLTE in Section 5.4, and SLTE in India in Section 5.5.

### *A note on terminology*

As discussed in Section 1.5, although there are a number of overlapping terms used in discussions concerning 'teacher education', for consistency, I have generally tried to keep to the terms teacher training, professional development and (second language) teacher education. I use 'teacher training' to refer to training prior to starting a job, 'professional development' to refer to development activities for practising teachers, and 'teacher education' or 'second language teacher education' ('SLTE') as a broader term to encompass the training and development of teachers, both pre-service and in-

service. Having said that, where literature quoted in this chapter, or participants in the study as a whole, use other related terms, I have not changed them.

## **5.1. The nature of teacher learning**

In order to better understand the current state of SLTE in the setting, this section considers the nature of teacher learning.

Traditionally, teacher learning has been viewed as a process of acquiring knowledge and putting theories into practice. However, there is now more emphasis given to the 'situated' and social nature of learning (Lave and Wenger 1991), with learning taking place through interaction and participation in a particular context, and teacher learning is viewed as constructing new knowledge through participating and engaging in particular activities and processes in a specific context, sometimes called 'practitioner knowledge' (Hiebert et al, 2002). As a consequence, teacher learning is now viewed from a more sociocultural perspective 'as a form of socialization into the professional thinking and practices of a community of practice' (Burns and Richards, 2009, p.2), with SLTE programmes placing more emphasis on communities of learners and collaborative construction of meanings, and with learning emerging through social interaction within a community of practice (Burns and Richards, 2009).

As Johnson (2009, p.21) puts it:

L2 teacher education programs no longer view L2 teaching as a matter of simply translating theories of second language acquisition (SLA) into effective instructional practices, but as a dialogic process of co-constructing knowledge that is situated in and emerges out of participation in particular sociocultural practices and contexts.

Johnson (2009) also outlines a number of trends that may lend support to this change of emphasis in SLTE including a wider view of what should form the knowledge base of SLTE, as discussed in Section 5.2 below, and a change in the nature of what constitutes professional development, moving from traditional workshops towards more self-directed, collaborative, inquiry-based alternatives, more directly relevant to teachers'

classrooms and recognising 'teachers' informal social and professional networks', such as peer coaching, cooperative development, and critical friends.

It should be noted that this appears to be a 'Western TESOL' led view of the nature of teacher learning, with the literature available focusing predominantly on 'Western' settings or making no mention of any setting. Further, 'current debates' around the social nature of learning seem distant from what I was observing in the setting for this study. Instead, the 'traditional' view of teacher learning as described at the start of this section as the 'process of acquiring knowledge and putting theories into action' and the use of 'traditional workshops' aimed at facilitating professional development both resonate with what is happening in the setting at the present time.

## **5.2. The knowledge base of SLTE**

In order to better understand what teacher education in the setting is made up of, this section explores the knowledge base of SLTE.

The knowledge base of SLTE has traditionally been thought of as knowledge about language and general pedagogic skills. However, more recently, this knowledge base has been expanded. In particular, Richards (1998) considers the knowledge base as theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, subject matter knowledge, pedagogic reasoning and decision-making skills and contextual knowledge. Along similar lines, Roberts (1998) considers the knowledge bases as combining content knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, general pedagogic knowledge, curricular knowledge, contextual knowledge and process knowledge, the latter covering, for example, interpersonal skills and language analysis skills. Clearly, both of these go considerably beyond knowledge about language and general pedagogic skills. Richards (1998) also suggests that goals should be developed for each aspect of the knowledge base and that these goals should form the basis of SLTE programmes.

Drawing on the work of both Richards (1998) and Roberts (1998), Graves (2009) explores this widening conceptualisation of the knowledge base of SLTE incorporating interrelated factors such as the role of context, the role of teachers' prior knowledge

and consideration of how teachers make sense of practice. An implication highlighted by Graves is that SLTE programmes should place increased emphasis on the practice element of the programmes, both in the sense of classroom practice and participation in the community of practice, and in terms of developing the tools necessary to continue development once programme ends, such as promoting reflective practice, as advocated by Schön (1983, 1987) and more recently by Farrell (2012, 2014, 2016).

Graves (2009) also highlights issues that need to be explored in order to further develop our understanding of the knowledge base for SLTE, such as, in terms of subject specific knowledge, what exactly learner teachers need to know, what level of proficiency is necessary and how much knowledge is required in areas such as second language acquisition.

Making use of Clandinin's (1992, p.125) description of personal practical knowledge as:

knowledge that reflects the individual's prior knowledge and acknowledges the contextual nature of that teacher's knowledge. It is a kind of knowledge carved out of, and shaped by, situations; knowledge that is constructed and reconstructed as we live out our stories and retell and relive them through the processes of reflection,

Golombek (2009, p.157) explores how teachers' personal practical knowledge has impacted on teacher education, suggesting that pre-service teacher education in particular often now includes greater 'use of language learner autobiography, personal narratives, reflective journals, and classroom-based research.'

Further, Borg (2009) asserts that examining what pre-service teachers think and believe should be an important part of pre-service SLTE, highlighting the impact of pre-service teachers' prior language learning experiences or 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975) on their thinking and beliefs. More specifically, this 'apprenticeship of observation', defined by Borg (2004, p.274) as the 'phenomenon whereby student teachers arrive for their training courses having spent thousands of hours as schoolchildren observing and evaluating professionals in action', can in Lortie's view



lead to a number of preconceptions in terms of pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching.

It should again be noted that this appears to be a 'Western TESOL' perspective, a view of the knowledge base of SLTE taken from 'Western' academia. In the setting for the study, the knowledge base of SLTE seems *currently* to be thought of as knowledge about language plus general pedagogic skills, rather than this being a 'traditional' view of the knowledge base.

### **5.3. Professionalism and expertise in language teaching**

During the course of the study, consideration was given to what professional development meant in practice for teachers and how teachers in the setting developed their professional expertise. This section looks at 'current perspectives'<sup>12</sup> on what it means to be a language teaching professional and on gaining expertise as a language teacher. In doing so, it focuses on the particular issues of the role of practice in pre-service SLTE and the role of collaboration in SLTE.

#### **5.3.1. Professionalism in language teaching**

As noted in Section 1.5, Leung (2009) distinguishes, in terms of professional development, between 'sponsored professionalism', development through for example institutions or professional bodies, and 'independent professionalism', development coming from teachers themselves through social and political awareness of professionalism, suggesting that both can inform teacher practice, and that SLTE programmes should therefore aim to facilitate the development of both.

Leung (ibid.) points out that the form that sponsored professionalism takes may differ over time, in different types of institution and in different places, and so has a localised context-sensitive nature, but that it may or may not resonate with teachers as useful

---

<sup>12</sup> I have put the 'current perspectives' in inverted commas as a caution that they may be 'Western TESOL' led 'current perspectives', though at the same time I do believe that they are relevant to the setting for this study.

and/or important. He also highlights the value of sponsored professionalism in providing a syllabus and content for teacher education programmes. He then contrasts this with independent professionalism, which he characterises as individual practitioners 'engaged in reflexive examination of their own beliefs and actions .... [who] will be receptive to alternative perspectives on routinized practice, and they will seek to update and modify their knowledge and work in ways that are consistent with their developing views' (ibid., p.53).

Richards and Farrell (2005) examine eleven procedures that can 'facilitate professional development in language teaching: workshops, self-monitoring, teacher support groups, journal writing, peer observation, teaching portfolios, analysis of critical incidents, case analysis, peer coaching, team teaching, and action research' (Preface ix-x). Many of these have the potential to develop teachers' independent professionalism in the sense Leung (2009) describes above. Specific ways in which teachers in the setting developed in this sense are discussed in Section 8.3.

### **5.3.2. The role of practice in pre-service SLTE**

As suggested in Section 5.2 above, there has been a move towards a greater focus on practice with pre-service SLTE.

Legutke and Schocker-v.Ditfurth (2009) highlight the importance of integrating practical school-based experience into teacher education programmes in order to allow teacher-learners to better understand themselves as teachers, what teaching involves and what learning involves, and to participate in a community of practice, all of which helps them to develop a critical perspective on their teaching. They put forward three principles for designing teacher education programmes based around a research approach to learning to develop multiple perspectives on the second language classroom, experiential learning, and experimental learning. At the same, they highlight the organisational challenges with direct classroom-based school experience and that classroom-based learning can be perceived as lower status than learning through academic study.

Gebhard (2009, p.251) sees the:

practicum' element of teacher education programmes as development rather than training, where 'the teacher-learner can continue to grow, adapt and explore teaching as a career-long process,

rather than the practicum being fundamentally concerned with mastering techniques or behaviours, advocating a need for learning to teach to be seen 'not as transferring knowledge, but rather as building identity through social practice' (ibid., p.255).

Richards and Crookes (1988) suggest goals for teacher-learners of gaining classroom teaching experience, applying theory and ideas from the teacher education programme, learning by observing experienced teachers, enhancing lesson-planning skills, gaining skills in selecting, adapting and developing materials, expanding awareness of how to set personal goals, reflecting on personal teaching and learning philosophies, and learning how to make informed teaching decisions through exploration of own teaching. Gebhard (2009) suggests that these goals can be achieved via activities such as teaching, self-observation, observation of other teachers and keeping teaching journals.

### **5.3.3. Developing expertise**

As Zeichner and Liston (1996, p.6) note, 'no matter how good a teacher's education programme is, at best it can only prepare teachers to begin teaching'. Kiely and Askham (2012, p.496) further suggest that at the point of entering the workplace after training, novice teachers have a 'furnished imagination' which they define as 'the combination of knowledge, procedural awareness and skills, dispositions and identity which teachers take from the course as the conceptual toolkit for work in TESOL', going on to suggest that the imagination can be 'furnished through the intense, iterated cycles of input, observation, performance, and feedback as well as through interactions with admired teacher educators'. As teachers' careers develop, Berliner (2004) believes that their professional development goes through a five-stage continuum - from novice to advanced beginner to competent to proficient to expert - leading towards becoming autonomous teachers.

However, although these authors are not context-specific in making their points, they seem more relevant to 'Western TESOL' SLTE than to teacher education in 'non-Western TESOL' settings.

Looking at teacher expertise, Tsui (2003, p.245) suggests that novice and expert teachers differ in the 'ways in which they relate to their contexts of work, and hence their conceptions and understandings of teaching, which is developed in these contexts'. More specifically, she points out that expert teachers have a more elaborate knowledge base, are more intuitive, integrate different kinds of knowledge, have a deeper understanding of learners, learning and learning strategies, and a greater awareness of institutional objectives and of the learning context. Richards and Farrell (2005, p.9) draw upon this to highlight the usefulness of novice and expert teachers working together in order to develop, highlighting the value of enabling 'teachers with different levels of expertise to work together through peer observation, team teaching, mentoring, group discussion, joint planning and problem solving'.

Tsui (2009) discusses different perspectives on teaching experience. Firstly, she considers 'expertise as a state', characterising expert teachers as possessing qualities and skills such as being able to exercise autonomy in decision-making, plan lessons efficiently, draw upon both content and pedagogic knowledge, and make appropriate on-the-spot decisions. She then discusses 'expertise as a process', suggesting teacher expertise involves aspects such as continuous renewal of teacher knowledge through interaction between theoretical and practical knowledge, as well as being able to transcend contextual constraints, tackle problems at deeper levels and push boundaries to develop new skills. She points out also that teacher educators face the issue therefore of needing to understand 'the processes that facilitate the development of expertise in teaching' (ibid., p.195).

The former conceptualisation, 'expertise as a state' resonates more with what is happening in the setting for this study than 'expertise as a process', as for example there seemed to be limited scope in terms of teachers having the time, inclination and/or possibility to engage in the 'continuous renewal of teacher knowledge' described above. However, I wonder if my own biases are coming into play here, as on reflection it might

be argued that teachers working in a number of settings lack the time, inclination and/or possibility to engage in ongoing development.

Related to developing expertise, Richards (2010, pp.101-102) offers 'ten core dimensions of language teaching expertise and practice' to 'help conceptualize the nature of competence, expertise and professionalism in language teaching', suggesting characteristics relating to language proficiency, the role of content knowledge, teaching skills, contextual knowledge, the language teacher's identity, learner-focused teaching, pedagogical reasoning skills, theorizing from practice, membership of a community of practice, and professionalism. At the same time, he acknowledges that 'conceptions of good teaching differ from culture to culture' and also the characteristics he describes appear 'to be at the core of expert teacher competence and performance in language teaching, *at least from the perspective of a 'western' orientation and understanding of teaching*' (ibid., p.103, my italics). Here, Richards recognises that conceptualisations of expertise and good teaching are not universally applicable, but will vary in different settings and according to who is doing the conceptualising.

#### **5.4. Collaboration in SLTE**

The way teachers collaborate in different ways in order to develop professionally became of interest during this study, and so different perspectives on this area are explored here.

Johnston (2009, p.241) suggests that collaborative professional development:

arises from, and reinforces, a view of teacher learning as a fundamentally social process ... supports a view of teachers both individually and as a community as producers, not just consumers, of knowledge and understanding about teaching ... (and) arises from a belief that teaching can and should be a fundamentally collegial profession.

It can take place in different ways, such as via teacher study groups (Clair, 1998; Sato, 2003), dialogue journal writing (Burton and Carroll, 2001), mentoring (Malderez and Bodocsky, 1999), team teaching (Field and Nagai, 2003; Stewart and Lokon 2003), and

increasingly through long-distance collaboration (Edge, 2006). These kinds of practice can reduce professional isolation, though collaboration can also add challenges, such as dealing with power imbalances that may exist within the collaboration or gaining institutional support for collaboration.

This section first explores more formal collaborative professional development and then considers more informal collaborative professional development through associations with peers and through critical friendships.

#### **5.4.1. Formal collaborative professional development**

Working collaboratively in SLTE is very much in line with the discussion of the nature of teacher learning in Section 5.1 as a social activity. In this section, I focus on two situations in which collaboration in a more formally organised manner may be beneficial to teacher learning, during pre-service teacher education and during the transition period when novice teachers begin working in schools. These relate to the study in the sense that the way teachers collaborate in order to develop professionally became a focus of the study.

##### *Working collaboratively in pre-service SLTE*

Singh and Richards (2009, p.201) argue that creating a sense of community and working collaboratively can be beneficial in pre-service SLTE. They suggest that pre-service SLTE often tends to be designed around the teaching content followed by practicum model, rather than 'how human learning is emergent through social interaction, and where context and identity play crucial mediating roles'. They see teacher learning for pre-service teachers in terms of 'learning as situated social practice, induction to a community of practice, development of a new identity, acquiring of professional discourse, and developing a personal theory of practice' (ibid., p.202), and conceptualise the SLTE classroom as an emerging 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) with teacher-learners negotiating their identity through the social interaction within the community (Miller 2009).

### *Socialisation and mentoring of novice teachers in schools*

Farrell (2009) considers the experience of novice teachers in their first year of teaching, concluding that three major influences on their experiences during that year are previous schooling ('apprentice of observation'), the nature of the teacher education programme and the socialisation experiences in institutional culture such as the level of collegial support.

Relating to this latter point, Malderez (2009, p.260) defines these socialisation experiences as a:

process of one-to-one, workplace-based, contingent and personally appropriate support for the person during their professional acclimatization (or integration), learning, growth and development.

As Malderez and Bodocsky (1999, p.4) highlight, mentors can help model, acculturate, sponsor (through, for example, facilitating introductions), support and educate novice teachers through the settling in process. Malderez (2009, p.262) also advocates the use of mentors 'to train or develop their mentee's professional thinking skills ... and support mentees in aspects of the processes of professional decision making'.

Farrell (2009) suggests that teacher education programmes could do more to help prepare novice teachers for their first year of teaching, both through the inclusion of specific courses dedicated to the transition into the first year of teaching, focusing on specific issues for novice teachers such as classroom management and maintaining discipline, and through the development of school-teacher-education partnerships involving, for example, a reduced teaching load during the first year and mentoring from teacher educators or experienced teachers.

Although collaboration in this formal sense did not seem to be happening to any great extent in the setting, there was evidence of more informal collaborative professional development taking place. This is discussed in the next section.

#### **5.4.2. Informal collaborative professional development**

Beyond the issues of formal teacher education, and more structured professional development processes such as mentoring, another generally less structured means through which teachers develop is through associating with their peers in groups or with critical friends.

In terms of associations with peers, this less formal approach to professional development is considered briefly from a 'communities of practice' perspective (Lave and Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998). There is also a link between these perspectives and the formation of 'social networks' (Palfreyman, 2006) discussed in Section 4.1.5.

Lave and Wenger (1991, p.1) suggest that learning 'is a process of participation in communities of practice, participation that is at first legitimately peripheral but that increases gradually in engagement and creativity', where communities of practice refer to:

groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002, p.4).

In educational settings, such communities of practice may take the form of, for example, teachers' associations and, less formally, more loosely bound groups of teachers.

In terms of understanding how informal professional development can occur among small groups of peers, viewing the interactions and the activities of these small groups from a 'community of practice' perspective might facilitate greater understanding of what is happening within the groups.

Related to the above, another means of facilitating informal and collaborative professional development is through associations between 'critical friends'. Costa and Kallick (1993, p.50) define a critical friend as:

A trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critiques of a person's work as a friend. A critical



friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward.

Vo and Nguyen (2010, p.210) highlight how small critical friend groups can create 'opportunities to exchange professional ideas, opportunities to learn from colleagues' and facilitate 'the development of good work relationships and a professional community'.

Informal, and unrecognised, approaches to professional development will be further discussed in Chapter 8 in the light of the data from this study.

## **5.5. SLTE in India**

Overall, the impression given by the literature concerning SLTE in India is not a particularly positive one.

Graddol (2010, p.81) sees some systemic challenges in teacher education, noting that:

now the priority is for speaking skills, and to start the business of English teaching in primary schools. This will require well-trained and qualified teachers, using communicative methods to engage young learners, but introducing the teaching of English into schools where trained teachers and suitable textbooks do not exist will magnify educational failure.

He expresses concern (*ibid.*, p.111) that:

English teachers tend to be in especially short supply. Anyone who can speak English can usually find a much better-paid job elsewhere in the economy, making both recruitment and retention of English teachers difficult, particularly in rural areas,

and further notes (*ibid.*, p.112) that:

Existing English teachers who have spent their careers teaching grammar and literature may not have the skills to teach spoken English - now regarded as the starting point for most English curriculums.

This point is further supported by Wedell's comment (cited in Graddol, 2010, p.123) that:

It's a big challenge for a teacher to move from the familiarity of a more transmission-based classroom to the much more unpredictable world of being a facilitator. ... the transition has often been thought to be: 'Okay. It's just a matter of training. We just need to train the teachers'. Training them appropriately would be hard enough, but ... there are also invisible changes that need to take place in many minds if teachers are going to be supported to make that transition. The changes to societal assumptions about what a good teacher is, what the classroom should be like, and how good learners behave.... I would say that it really represents a professional culture change.

These last two points do however assume that moving from a more transmission-based model to a model based on facilitation and with more emphasis on speaking skills is inherently a good thing, which reflects a 'Western TESOL' influenced way of looking at the situation.

Others raise more specific concerns, for example, Meganathan (2011, p.83) suggests that improving the language proficiency of English language teachers is a fundamental task for second language teacher educators, noting that:

the English language proficiency of English language teachers in quite a number of schools is questionable. Consequently, teacher education is one major area which needs drastic changes if quality teachers are to become available.

Giving an overview of SLTE in India, Bolitho and Padwad (2013a, p.7) suggest that:

In terms of the three stages of preparation, induction and CPD<sup>13</sup>, teaching in India scores poorly as a profession. Professional preparation consists of short pre-service teacher education courses with limited field exposure and practical relevance. There is no formalised system of induction and normally a teacher is required to handle responsibility independently and autonomously right from their first day in the profession. Ongoing professional development, i.e. CPD, can be seen in a very restricted, narrow sense and there are limited opportunities and support for the CPD of serving teachers.

In terms of pre-service training for English language teachers in India, a negative assessment is also given by Prince and Barrett (2014, p.24) who note that:

Pre-service training at the moment is very theory-based and teachers come out ill-equipped to handle day-to-day classroom reality and receive no encouragement to personally invest in their own development.

They further note that 'Indian teachers are trained (if at all) largely in a theoretical way and, once qualified, the perception is that there is no need for any further learning to take place' (ibid., p.35).

Tasildar (2013, p.48-49) takes a similarly negative view, raising concerns over: the 'linguistic competence of prospective teachers of English'; 'confusion over the status of English' and whether it should be treated as a language or a subject; a 'lack of training in teaching the basics of English'; a lack of training focusing on 'teacher training for +2 level', that is for teaching students typically aged 16 to 18; an 'inadequate practicum' and a 'neglect of the needs of prospective teachers of English' in terms of raising awareness about interactive approaches, dealing with large and mixed-ability classes, using the most up-to-date materials, and understanding different approaches to assessment.

---

<sup>13</sup> Much of the literature in this section uses the term 'CPD', continuing professional development, so I have also used that term in this section.

Padwad and Dixit (2014, p.251) stress the need for CPD to make up for the poor quality of pre-service training, noting that:

The teaching profession is characterised by inadequate and ineffective pre-service education, poor teacher preparation and lack of induction support ... In such circumstances CPD assumes added significance, because it also has to compensate for teacher professional learning missed during pre-service education and at induction.

However, they go on to suggest that there are a number of issues to be addressed within CPD in India, highlighting the need for a shared understanding of what CPD involves, the importance of taking a broad view of CPD, the need for support for CPD, that it should involve 'volunteerism' from teachers, be personalised by teachers and be integrated into teachers' regular work lives (*ibid.*, p.258).

In terms of what CPD involves, Bolitho and Padwad (2013a, p.7) highlight that:

Different agencies and stakeholders seem to hold different or narrow views of CPD. It is very common to see CPD equated with in-service training (INSET) programmes, which are normally one-off, isolated, short-term and infrequent training events. Teachers, too, seem to perceive CPD in terms of formal INSET programmes designed and delivered by external agencies. Even the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE), a key policy document of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), uses INSET and CPD interchangeably.

They further add that:

Because of the restricted view of CPD as INSET, only official INSET programmes receive recognition and support, while other forms of CPD activities such as attending conferences, acquiring additional qualifications or forming learning communities are, by and large, not recognised (*ibid.*).

Padwad and Dixit (2014, p.252) further comment that INSET programmes are organised by national, state and other officially recognised teacher training agencies, mostly based on a one-off training sessions which assume that what is covered in such sessions can be transferred into classrooms.

Woodward, Griffiths, and Solly (2014, p.227) sees this kind of INSET as an issue common in developing countries, suggesting that:

The complex multiplicity of systemic, geographical, political and other challenges often mean that out-of-school in-service provision, in particular, has to be delivered en masse and away from the local school environment. Teachers may take little of practical value back to their classrooms from this kind of in-service programme.

NCTE (2009, p.71-2) also takes a narrow view of CPD, seeing it as provided by the state, recognising and approving specific universities and teacher education centres as sites for CPD.

The suggestion then is that the professional development is viewed in a narrow top-down sense in terms of attending compulsory training sessions rather than in a broader sense as including more bottom-up types of activity such as participating in teachers' groups or mentoring schemes in a school or group of schools. This top-down view of CPD does not encourage teachers to take responsibility for their own CPD.

As Padwad and Dixit (2014, p.251) note:

In such a view, informal and voluntary contributions to teacher learning are rarely recognised, teachers' role, responsibility and agency in their own CPD is disregarded, and the state is seen as the sole provider of CPD. Consequently, only officially sanctioned CPD events receive recognition and support, though they may not be relevant to teachers, while other kinds of CPD activities emerging out of teachers' own initiatives, needs and interests are neither recognised nor supported.

This lack of recognition of informal and voluntary professional development activity comes from the teachers themselves as well as from official bodies. Padwad and Dixit (2013, p.12) suggest that:

the overall CPD environment seems to suffer from a dual problem – on the one hand, schools, administrators and the system do not seem to encourage and support CPD activities beyond participating in the mandated INSET programmes, while on the other, teachers themselves seem to lack enthusiasm and initiative for doing more than what is mandated or taking responsibility for their own professional development.

However, this lack of 'enthusiasm and initiative' from teachers is perhaps unsurprising given, as Padwad and Dixit go on to note, that:

Some commonly cited problems faced by the teachers in their CPD were: lack of time; heavy teaching workload, with further addition of non-teaching work like election duty and census work; large classes; lack of resources; lack of support from the institution; poor salaries; lack of opportunities of development (ibid., p.15).

More positively, Pandit-Narkar (2013, p.31) argues that top-down imposed training can lead to bottom up initiatives, describing a study in which the top-down introduction of a new resource and training centre:

brought teachers together, improved their proficiency, aided their CPD and gave them a platform for discussion, experimentation and collaborative learning ... [which lead to] independent bottom-up initiatives like the formation of support groups, the establishment of an English teachers' association, and publication activity.

Related to this, Hayes (2014, p.9) notes that there are teachers who, in spite of any systemic challenges, seek to develop professionally, but that at the same time, top-down support is needed:

Even in conditions which seem hostile to CPD there will always be teachers whose sense of vocation and whose desire for self-improvement will push them to overcome obstacles in their path. Yet ... teachers' commitment needs to be complemented by enabling conditions that take account of contextual constraints and provide forms of engagement which fit the pattern of their everyday lives. ... [highlighting] the importance of top-down/bottom-up synergy for effective CPD.

Hayes (2014, p.12) further believes that communities of practice have an important role to play in CPD in linking bottom-up initiatives to top-down support:

Communities of practice are crucial in enabling teachers to collaborate and make the best of professional development opportunities offered in another form. ... the need to engage with and secure the support of other stakeholders in the education system - head teachers and other local and national-level administrators - is also important in developing facilitative, positive attitudes to innovative CPD for teachers.

Shivakumar (2013, p.78) sees teachers' groups, one form of a community of practice, as examples of 'grassroots initiatives' towards professional development. She believes that:

Every opportunity for networking should be exploited whether it is between teachers within/across colleges, teachers' clubs, online communities or different teacher organisations and State Boards of Education.

Further, Padwad and Dixit's (2008) study looks at the impact of teachers' groups on teacher thinking and on the way they deal with classroom problems, suggesting that participation in such groups can provide a means of dealing with changes imposed on teachers such as a new curriculum or new assessment systems, and further that it can improve teachers' performance in terms of their belief in self-agency and ability to find pragmatic solutions to problems.

Indeed, there have been a number of studies in recent years relating to professional development for English language teachers in India based a wider perception of what CPD can involve, such as those highlighted in Bolitho and Padwad (2013b), Powell-Davies (2013), Powell-Davies and Gunashekar (2013), Pickering and Gunashekar (2015), Pickering and Gunashekar (2016). Bolitho and Padwad (2013), for example, includes studies on different types of professional development activities that teachers have engaged in, such as teacher portfolios (Chakrakodi, 2013), diary writing (Mathew, 2013), teachers' groups (Shivakumar, 2012), online communities of practice (Menon, 2013), m-learning (Bedadur, 2012), and mentoring (Kapur, 2013).

These studies tend to view CPD as:

a planned, continuous and lifelong process whereby teachers try to develop their personal and professional qualities, and to improve their knowledge, skills and practice, leading to their empowerment, the improvement of their agency and the development of their organisations and their pupils (Padwad and Dixit, 2011, p.10).

This view of CPD sees it as an:

ongoing process of learning, both formal and informal, after teachers enter the profession, and involves both their personal initiatives and externally planned and mandated activities (Padwad and Dixit, 2014, p.251).

However, from the literature as a whole, it appears that this kind of wider conceptualisation of professional development is not commonplace in India.

### *Summary*

This chapter has reviewed literature related to second language teacher education. As with the previous chapter, I have attempted through this literature to better understand the backdrop against which, as a 'Western TESOL' professional, I was interpreting events related to SLTE within the setting. It was only as I came to realise that I was interpreting these events against this backdrop and against my own 'Western TESOL' based



experiences that I began to uncover independent and unrecognised professionalism within the setting.

Having discussed literature related to SLTE in this chapter and ELT methodology in the previous chapter, the following three chapters discuss the findings of this study. The next chapter, Chapter 6, focuses on the impact of my own shifting perspectives on the way I was interpreting the data collected in the setting. The realisations outlined in this next chapter allowed me to see the independent and unrecognised professionalism in the setting that, without this autoethnographic dimension, may have remained hidden.

## 6. *Distant Eyes: Changing Perspectives*

As a result of looking at the setting and the data in the light of an autoethnography of my own professionalism, discussed in this chapter, which allowed me to put aside my own preoccupations with 'Western TESOL', I have been able to uncover independent and unrecognised professionalism in the setting. This professionalism is generally unrecognised by local ELT professionals in the setting because of their belief in 'Western TESOL'.

This chapter is the first of three chapters that introduce and discuss the data from the study. It discusses the ways in which my perspectives as an education professional and a researcher changed and developed over the course of the study. It focuses on the autoethnographic *distant eyes* dimension of the study outlined in Chapter 3.

As discussed in Section 1.4, the positioning of this particular chapter within the thesis is something I struggled with before finally placing it as the first of the three data chapters. The reason for positioning it here is to show how some of the changes in my own perspectives during the study influenced the rest of the data analysis. It therefore seeks both to foreground the centrality of the autoethnographic dimension to the study and to allow the other data chapters to be interpreted in the light of this.

The findings discussed in this chapter relate to realisations about how I was understanding my own positioning as a 'Western TESOL' education professional and researcher, and the impact of this growing understanding on how I was evaluating the data collected in the setting. The chapter demonstrates how, as I gradually managed to offload some of my 'Western TESOL' 'professional baggage', I was able to see previously hidden aspects of the setting.

When I started the study, I had not initially managed to sufficiently bracket my previous experiences and had entered the setting without acknowledging my ingrained 'Western TESOL' 'professional baggage'. This caused me, for example, to struggle to disentangle 'good teaching' in the setting from 'Western TESOL' perceptions of 'good teaching', and steered me towards seeing 'problems' through a 'Western TESOL' lens, such as seeing

'large classes' as a problem when participants in the study were seeing these *large* classes simply as *classes*.

As the study progressed, through gaining a better understanding the potential influence of my 'Western TESOL' background on the study, I began to see and evaluate the setting in terms of local norms and expectations, rather than in terms of deficit in relation to 'Western TESOL' norms and expectations, for example seeing the appropriacy of local-developed approaches to ELT in the setting, rather than seeing these approaches as evidence of a deficiency in comparison to 'Western TESOL' approaches.

I was also getting to grips with my own changing role in the setting, both in the sense of moving from outsider to partial insider, and in the sense of being seen at different times as a teacher, teacher trainer, researcher, research student, 'expert' and so on. In particular, I was becoming aware that this was influencing both the data collected and how I was evaluating the data. This awareness helped me to see alternative explanations for what was happening in the setting. Related to this, I was able to appreciate the complexity within the setting to a much greater degree than I had been able to do at the start, gradually getting past the 'us'- 'them' focus, and seeing the setting in its own right.

Critical incidents are used alongside classroom observation and interview data to highlight the changes in my perspectives on the setting and the data collected over time. Section 6.1 discusses how I came to realise that I was shaping the study in terms of my own 'Western TESOL' background rather than attempting to see the setting in its own right. Section 6.2 then focuses on my developing understanding of the learning environment and of ELT classroom methodology in the setting. Section 6.3 then deals with my own positioning, both in the sense of insider versus outsider perspectives, and in the sense that I had different roles in the setting at different times, which affected how I was seen by participants in the study and the data I was able to collect. Following this, Section 6.4 considers how I gradually came to accept the complexity that existed within the setting.

The use of critical incidents to illustrate moments in the research process when an experience triggered a change in my own viewpoint is particularly prevalent in sections

6.2 and 6.3. In Section 6.2 for example, I describe how my views about the learning environment, the ELT methodology within the setting and the inappropriacy of 'Western TESOL' led communicative approaches changed quite significantly because of various incidents, generally centering around something that my 'Western TESOL' bias told me should be helpful or useful in the setting but which turned out not to be, or vice-versa. One particular instance of this, as will be described and discussed in more detail in Section 6.2.2, was when, during an ELT conference in southern India, I watched a DVD of a 'Western TESOL' based language class with teacher being quite informal with a small group of young adult students in a well-resourced classroom. What I saw was a well-taught class, but what many of the local conference participants saw was a class quite unrecognisable to them as the teacher, the students and the classroom were nothing like what they were used to. The discussion among these local participants was about how far removed and irrelevant watching the DVD had been to their daily working lives. This incident instantly made me rethink the way I was seeing ELT methodology within the setting as well as helping me to see the way in which my own 'Western TESOL' baggage was colouring my perceptions of the setting.

Finally, I should note that I am aware that the open-ended questionnaire and interview data used in this chapter and subsequent chapters does not describe the situation in the setting, but how participants were perceiving and constructing it.

#### *Key to the codes used to describe the data*

Details of the 'descriptive coding' of the data can be found in Section 2.3.2. However, in summary: [1] = interviewee 1, [Q1] = open-ended questionnaire 1, [Obs. 1] = classroom observation 1, [Field notes, August 2010] = field notes taken in August 2010 and so on.

### **6.1. Getting rid of (some) of my 'Western TESOL' 'professional baggage'**

It is important to put any preconceptions aside before entering unfamiliar settings. As a result of incorporating an autoethnographic dimension within this study, I was able to put some of my preconceptions, which I refer to as my 'Western TESOL' 'professional baggage', to one side, and uncover aspects of the setting that had initially remained hidden.

This section highlights the influence that this 'Western TESOL' 'professional baggage' was having on the study, particularly in the early stages, and the ways in which I began to question and challenge this influence over time.

### **6.1.1. 'Western TESOL' as a reference point**

As the study progressed, I was able to identify ways in which I was using 'Western TESOL' as a reference point and to see how it was influencing my understanding of the setting.

A specific example of the 'professional baggage' I brought with me to the setting is the ingrained 'Western TESOL' perspective I had, and to a certain extent still have. This section looks in more detail at my, initially at least, somewhat fixed 'Western TESOL' influenced views on 'communicative' approaches to and related aspects of ELT, and the impact of this on the study.

At the outset of the study, I held specific views on what it meant to teach communicatively, embracing a broadly 'weak version' of 'the communicative approach', as discussed in Section 4.2. Within this view, I labelled 'student-centred' as good and 'teacher-centred' as bad, without necessarily having a precise idea about what I understood these terms to mean, and considered the use of the L1 in the classroom as useful but at the same time not something that should be overly encouraged. I also had certain predetermined views on how things worked in the research setting, such as mentally labelling the general approach to ELT and teaching more broadly as 'traditional', again without fully understanding what I meant by 'traditional'.

Investigating the extent to which 'CLT' was being used in classrooms in Kerala, I made the following notes during [Obs. 2]:

Very teacher dominated, little pair or group work. No personalising. Students not really engaged - boys muttering among themselves ... the teacher comes over to me to say she's using the 'discussion method', but the discussion is almost all in L1, though it is done in groups, with students turning around on benches to make groups of about ten. These groups then seem to self-divide into smaller sub-groups.

Here, I am describing the setting through a 'Western TESOL' lens, reflecting my perception of what a 'Western TESOL' class should look like, with an underlying expectation that teachers *should* be following a broadly 'CLT' or other 'Western TESOL' approach, and an underlying belief that such an approach was the most appropriate one for the setting. This was something I was only able to acknowledge in later analysis of the observation notes where I commented that 'I have my 'CLT' hat on here, I'm not sure why I'm trying to apply this to classes here [in the setting]'. I was taking my experiences and presumptions about what a ('Western TESOL') class should look like as a starting point to view the class in the research setting. I was clearly expecting a more 'student-centred' lesson, with pair and group work, personalisation and students discussing things in the target language rather than their L1. I also seem to be assuming that 'student-centred' was a context-free term, and therefore that what 'Western TESOL' considers 'student-centred' would be the same as what those working in TESOL in Kerala consider to be 'student-centred'. I return to the concept of student-centredness later in this section and in Section 6.4.

This use of what I perceived as 'Western TESOL' classroom traits as a reference point can be seen in a number of other observations. For example, I noted:

The students are keen to participate, but opportunities seem limited to the teacher interacting with the students, i.e. there's no pair work. ... The teacher sets up a 'role-play' involving drafting a notice, though they don't seem to have 'roles' as such. The teacher gives the students two minutes' rehearsal/thinking time. Four students come to the front to 'role-play' a conversation about drafting a notice. This is repeated with three more groups of four students. ... The teacher monitors the groups' performances, but often interferes mid-performance to correct or improve their language, so what I expected to be quite a free activity was in fact highly controlled. [Obs. 6]

Students prepare a poster-style advert in groups. The group work is all carried out in L1. The teacher doesn't try to get them to speak English. [Obs. 9]

These comments suggest a somewhat fixed view of what a 'communicative' approach should look like, irrespective of context, highlighting aspects such as a need for student participation through pair and group work. They also suggest fixed views in terms of what particular activities such as a role-play should look like within a 'communicative' approach and fixed views on the use of L1. My views on the role of the teacher are also firmly located within my perception of what a teacher working with 'Western TESOL' would be doing, expecting monitoring but not interference by the teacher in the role-play activity described above.

At the same time, I am equating classes that resemble my 'Western TESOL' interpretation of 'communicative' teaching with good teaching. As I noted during [Obs. 22]:

Elements of 'CLT' - Students do mock interviews after reading a text about an astronaut. This seems to have been partly prepared previously. One pair comes out to the front to perform, then another two pairs do the same.

I then commented in field notes after the class that:

There was a performance element to this class. Is this an example of the pockets of progress that several interviewees have mentioned recently? ... with the teacher doing activities that seem untypical of what I'm seeing generally. [Field notes, August 2010]

Checking back on who these 'several interviewees' were, [10] mentions 'pockets of progress' while [12] mentions 'in small pockets, lots of teachers are doing lots of good things'. However, in my field notes above at least, the word 'progress' was being used to indicate a shift towards what I perceived as a more 'Western TESOL' approach to teaching. I began to realise that my initial *distant eyes* perspective, to a large extent subconsciously favouring this approach, was in conflict with my attempts to try to understand the setting for the study.

Related to this, in [Obs. 9], I noted:

The class is based on a reading passage about advertising. The teacher explains/exemplifies vocabulary connected with the passage – all in English! The class also feels more student-centred than other classes observed.

This comment, viewing features such as teaching English using English and classes being ‘student-centred’ as being inherently good, is indicative of my initial ‘Western’ TESOL’ led view of ‘good teaching’. In suggesting that ‘all in English’ is a good thing, I also overlook the fact that there can be a number of benefits in the judicious use of L1. Further, the second part of my comment referring to the class being more ‘student-centred’ shows my lack of awareness at the time both of the fuzziness of the term and that the concept of student-centredness itself has been questioned. For example, Holliday (2005), drawing on the work of Anderson (2003), questions how ‘student-centred’ things really are when it is the teachers that choose what Anderson (2003, p.204, italics in original) describes as ‘the *what, how, when* and *with whom* of the teaching’.

Looking back at these observations, I can now see the contradictions in my views. On one hand, from the outset of the study I was conscious of coming from a different background and setting to that chosen for the study. Further, from the very start of the study, as discussed in Chapter 1, I had taken a view that a ‘Western TESOL’ ‘communicative’ approach was not necessarily appropriate in this setting, though at the time not labelling the approach as ‘Western TESOL’. On the other hand, during the observations, I was subconsciously judging the classes and the teaching I was observing in the setting in terms of this very same ‘Western TESOL’ ‘communicative’ approach that I already suspected not to be appropriate. Further, I was equating some of the traits of this approach, such as using pair and group work, providing opportunities for students to use the language, emphasising meaning over form and so on, with ‘good teaching’ or ‘best practice’, considering a ‘Western TESOL’ ‘communicative’ approach as some kind of ideal to be aspired to.

Over time, I came to adopt a more pragmatic perspective, seeing ‘good teaching’ in terms of what encourages learning as opposed to seeing it in terms of following a particular approach. This is not to say that particular ideas or techniques, including those



imported from 'Western TESOL', cannot be suggested as possibilities, simply that particular ways of teaching should not be seen as inherently more desirable, whatever the context.

### **6.1.2. 'Western TESOL' or just good teaching?**

Teaching in a particular setting should be viewed and judged in relation to local rather than external norms and expectations. More particularly, teaching in 'non-Western' settings should not be viewed and judged against 'Western TESOL' norms and expectations.

In [Obs. 10], I saw more traits of what I perceived as a 'Western TESOL' 'communicative' approach, noting:

The teacher writes the title 'a stormy night' from a story in the students' textbook on the blackboard. He elicits from the students what they think the story will be about, based on the title. He links the lesson to today's real-life storm. It's quite a noisy class so far - the teacher's presence, personality, facial expression and the way he's using his voice are all playing a part. The teaching is directing most of the lesson from the front, but the students are involved and engaged. ... A good teacher, a good class.

At the time, I considered this as example of a teacher adopting a more 'modern', by which I meant 'Western TESOL', approach and, I believe because of this, considered it 'a good class'. However, looking again at this, it is an example of a teacher trying to generate interest in a text, prior to asking students to read it. There is not anything particularly 'Western TESOL' about this. Indeed, the teacher maintains a high level of control by leading most of the class from the front, which would not naturally fit with my view of 'Western TESOL' 'communicative' teaching. It is perhaps more a case of the teacher simply understanding the potential benefits of stimulating interest in a text before asking students to read it.

Further, my description of 'a good teacher, a good class' is skewed by the 'Western TESOL' 'professional baggage' I was carrying, not only as a result of my past experiences

as a practicing teacher, but also as a result of much of the theory and discussion on what constitutes 'good teaching' emanating from 'Western TESOL' settings. For example, as noted in Section 5.3.3, Richards (2010, pp.101-103) offers '10 qualities or characteristics of exemplary teachers', but acknowledges that these characteristics come 'from the perspective of a "western" understanding of teaching'.

Returning to the theme of engaging students, another class where students were engaged was [Obs. 17], where I noted:

The teacher writes 'are rich people happy?' on the blackboard. She asks the students what they think. Some individual students respond. The teacher asks them to open their books. She reads a poem about being rich, then asks students to read silently and underline any difficult words and then explains them in English. ... She puts students in groups and gives each group two cards with questions on. Students in each group generally help each other to answer questions and the teacher monitors. She checks early finishers' work, and then checks the whole class' work. ... The teacher introduces a game with words on cards, played in pairs, to practise some of vocabulary covered earlier. Students have to say the synonym, which is on the back of the cards.

In field notes after this class, I noted, 'One of the best classes I've seen - students engaged, plenty of pair and group work, almost everything in English' [Field notes, August 2010].

In these field notes, I am interpreting student engagement in a 'Western TESOL' sense, believing that if the students are active through being given lots to do in pairs and in groups, and if the lesson is conducted mainly in English, then the students will automatically be engaged. At the same time, I do not consider the possibility that students might be engaged in other ways, and that they do not necessarily need to be 'active' in the sense of working in pairs and groups the whole time to be engaged.

I can now see that I was gradually coming to view the classes observed in a different way. I was not so easily judging them in terms of preconceived 'Western TESOL' or

'communicative language teaching' ideals of what a 'good class' should look like, instead appreciating that characteristics that may not be typically seen as coming from 'Western TESOL', such as the teacher-led aspect of the class described above, can also result in 'good teaching'. This suggests a move away from linking 'good teaching' to a particular approach or 'method', seeing it in a more inclusive sense where 'good teaching' can potentially be seen in classes taught using any number of different approaches, regardless of whether a particular approach is viewed as coming from 'Western TESOL' or 'non-Western TESOL' settings. There is also a growing realisation that what constitutes 'good teaching' in terms of ELT will vary in different settings, rather than there being some kind of universal standard, constructed by 'Western TESOL' 'experts'.

### **6.1.3. Large classes or just classes?**

My initial view of large classes as a problem to be overcome in the setting contrasted with most participants' views of large classes simply as a practical reality of their everyday working lives.

A further example of my 'Western TESOL' influenced way of seeing the setting, again particularly in the earlier parts of the research, was in my preoccupation with 'large classes', eventually seeing that what I was considering as large classes were, for those working in the setting, just classes. Looking back, it must have appeared strange to some of my interviewees that I referred to 'large' classes as what I considered as 'large' was for them just the normal class size. As the extract from the interview with [4] below suggests, teachers see large classes as a reality of their situation and find ways of dealing with them, rather than seeing them as an insurmountable problem:

Me: ... what about the large classes, is it possible to teach in a communicative way in large classes?

[4]: ... it is a very difficult one but if we want to, we can help them by dividing them into different groups and, what, making them group work and so on, because it is what I do in my classes. So in their syllabi also there are a group of activities that is to be done as group work, so I insist all the students to do it as

group work in the class itself, so they are doing it. ... We should not always complain that this is a large class so we could not do that. I have divided them into different groups and even the assignments I give them are group assignments. Seven or eight people, eight students, they form a group and they, together, will submit an assignment.

[12] also focused on what *can* be done with large classes, rather than what cannot be done, noting that for such classes:

You do simple things like ... even if it's a question of four students turning a bench and putting their feet on the other side, make a group, get them to write in groups, get them to re-draft in groups. The teaching and the learning will happen even if you're not correcting 70 students, so you'll end up doing 20 and you get that 20 re-written three times, you can still manage. You see, where there's a will there's a way. Or you can take one student's answer, write it up on the blackboard and the whole class can discuss that composition, and every week a different student's answer can go up.

Along similar lines, [15] noted, 'you can divide those classes into groups ... you can bring in collaborative learning, peer tutoring, so many things like this'.

[4], [12] and [15] are seeing the class size as a practical reality to work with and work around, rather than a constraint on the teaching process. This again highlights the way in which my own preconceptions were driving the research process. 'Large classes' were, initially at least, an issue I was perceiving as important, one that made classroom teaching more difficult and one that made the use of particular approaches more difficult, whereas participants were just seeing classes as classes.

This is not to say that class size was not seen as a problem by any of the participants. [14], for example, saw the number of students in the classes as a problem, but only as one of many problems, and not as the fundamental issue that I was seeing it as, while [5] raised a concern about controlling large groups, noting that:

in bigger classes, if you are talking to one student, the rest all will be shouting, they will be talking, they won't even listen to you, even if it is something serious is going on.

This however is perhaps more about classroom management than large classes per se.

Overall then, teaching 'large classes' was not seen as the major issue that I, through my 'Western TESOL' lens, had presumed it would be.

#### **6.1.4. A lack of deliberate bracketing**

In the early parts of the study, I was not consciously acknowledging and putting aside my preconceptions. It is only as I began to do this that I began to look at the data with a more open mind.

Coming in as an outsider to the setting, I had not realised the amount of 'professional baggage', such as that described above, that I was bringing with me, and because of not realising this, I was also not putting it aside in order to fully focus on the setting in its own right. Instead, in the early parts of the study in particular, my focus was on the differences between 'Western TESOL' settings that I had experienced and the research setting, and the differences in application of 'communicative' approaches in the two settings, tending to view the research setting in a negative sense.

I later came to see this in terms of a lack of deliberate bracketing. As Holliday (2016, p.183) notes:

Bracketing forces the researcher to think again and hold back from the explanations that most easily spring to mind. It requires her to recognise where her particular prejudices lie and to discipline herself to put prejudices aside. This is a very difficult task and of course is never totally possible. However, the disciplined attempt to uncover and put aside one's research prejudices does make an important difference.

This is not to say I was not bracketing at all. Tufford and Newman (2010, p.86-87) highlight various methods of bracketing including writing memos and a reflexive journal during data collection and analysis. As they note:

Memos can take the form of theoretical notes which explicate the cognitive process of conducting research, methodological notes that explicate the procedural aspects of research, and observational comments that allow the researcher to explore feelings about the research endeavour ... The maintenance of a journal can enhance researchers' ability to sustain a reflexive stance. Aspects to explore in the reflexive journal include: the researchers' reasons for undertaking the research; ... the researcher's place in the power hierarchy of the research; ... potential role conflicts with research participants.

I was both writing memos of this type and maintaining a journal, within my field notes, of this nature as I collected and analysed data. What was missing in the early stages of the study was the 'disciplined' approach to bracketing that Holliday refers to above.

It was only during the data analysis process that I became conscious of this and began to re-evaluate the data I had collected, starting to make sense of different discourses with a more open and critical mind. Although I am not suggesting that the influence of my past experiences could or should be removed from the research process, this heightened level of awareness, acquired over time, of their possible impact on my interpretation of the data collected during the study has I believe allowed me to look beyond the most obvious explanations for particular events. For example, I initially focused mainly on data specifically mentioning 'communicative' approaches, being more familiar with this area. However, as the study progressed, I began to see beyond this and explore themes that were less familiar to me at the outset, such as the way several of the participants in the study spoke in a kind of 'development discourse', as will be discussed in Section 7.2, and the way participants were managing to develop themselves professionally in informal ways, alongside more formalised structured professional development activities, as will be discussed in Section 8.3.

Further evidence of this lack of bracketing can also be seen in the reminder of this chapter.

## **6.2. Developing my understanding of the setting**

As a result of incorporating an autoethnographic dimension within the study, and considering my own positioning, in terms of expectations about the learning environment and about ELT methodology, I was better able to understand the learning environment in the setting and the need for appropriate ELT methodology in the setting. Because of this, I was able to uncover independent and unrecognised professionalism in terms of ELT methodology in the setting, as will be discussed in Chapter 7.

This section highlights some of the critical incidents, supported by other data, that affected my thinking in terms of developing my understanding of the setting. Many of the critical incidents occurred during the earlier parts of the study, though realisations about their significance often came later.

The first part of the section relates to changes in my understanding of the classroom environment, the second to changes in my understanding of the ELT methodology being used in the setting and the third to changes in my understanding of the appropriacy of a 'communicative' approach, as I understood it, within the setting.

### **6.2.1. The learning environment**

The learning environment in a setting needs to be interpreted in its own right, rather than be compared with or judged against other more familiar settings.

There were a number of incidents that led to the realisation that the learning environment in the setting was very different from the one I was used to in my usual working environment. Though I had a general awareness of this before starting out on the study, it was the incidents described here, as well as the two incidents described in Section 1.1.1, which I referred to as 'The listening workshop' and 'How do you punish your students when they make mistakes?', that brought this home to me. These events also made me realise that, rather than making comparisons between the research

setting and my usual working environment, I needed to be looking at the research setting in its own right.

One area that I found intriguing within the learning environment was the apparent level of formality in the setting and apparent social distance between the teacher, or anyone seen as an authority figure, and the students. The two incidents below relate to this.

*'Standing up'*: The first time I visited the setting, prior to starting this study, I was taken to visit schools and colleges, and given the opportunity to observe classes. For these observations, the immediate thing that struck me was the fact that all students stood up when their teachers or when I walked into the classrooms.

*'Mr. Kevin'*: On the same visit, I was struck by the use of 'sir' or 'ma'am' when students were addressing teachers or visitors. The sense of formality and perception of social distance were also exemplified in other ways, such as students being expected to run errands for their teachers including carrying the teachers' bags or resources and delivering messages to other parts of the institution.

(Adapted from field notes, June 2008)

Although these differences initially manifested themselves in terms of more overt status differences between the teacher or presumed authority figure and the students in the setting than I was used to, what they helped me to see more broadly was the degree of difference between my own usual work setting and the research setting, and by implication, that my existing knowledge and ways of thinking about ELT and ELT methodology may not be applicable in the research setting. I had doubts, for example, about whether 'Western TESOL' influenced 'student-centred' approaches, which in my own usual work setting I saw as requiring the teacher to have what 'Western TESOL' might describe as a 'close relationship' with the students in terms of social distance, or a 'good rapport' with the students, could be applied in the research setting.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> In this example I am, as stated, taking a 'Western TESOL' view of a 'close relationship' between teacher and students, which often involves first names and seemingly less formality. However, this does not



Related to this, expectations concerning students' behaviour were clearly different in the research setting compared with my usual work setting, as the following incident further illustrates.

*'She's a sloucher'*: This incident concerns a group of teacher trainees and their lecturers at a teacher training college for secondary teachers, and came about during the second visit to the institution in August 2010, at which time I facilitated a workshop at the college based around teaching English communicatively. During this workshop, one teacher trainee stood out as particularly well-informed on the topic, and I commented to her lecturers afterwards that she must be doing well. However, I was told that she was not well thought of within the institution because she was 'a sloucher'. That is, rather than sit up straight during classes, she tended to lean back in her chair, a position that was seen to imply disrespect. Although I would have considered this a minor issue with body language, the implication here seemed to be that the lack of respect that this teacher trainee was perceived as showing outweighed the fact that she had acquired a significant amount of subject knowledge. (Adapted from field notes, August 2010)

This made me question my own preconceptions and prejudices, and helped me to understand the need to try to put to one side my own feelings about how things ought to work. It again served to focus my mind on seeing the research setting and the ways in which people behaved in that setting in their own right, rather than in terms of how they differed from my usual work setting, which I had been doing, to a large extent subconsciously, at the outset of the study.

Another area where my own prejudices surfaced was in my classroom observation notes. Having collected data from a total of 15 observations by the end of the second visit to the setting after starting the study, I wrote the following field notes on 'the observation sites':

---

necessarily mean greater closeness in reality, as it may simply be that hierarchies are more hidden within 'Western TESOL'.

*The Observation Sites:* These generally share a number of common features:

1. School classrooms are approximately the same size as in the U.K., though class sizes are typically larger, with typically between 35 and 45 in school classes, more in college classes, making the classrooms appear cramped.
2. The seating arrangement, except at the teacher training college, involves students sitting in rows on benches facing the front. At the teacher training college, students sit in movable chairs, though still in rows.
3. Where possible, boys sit on one side of the classroom and girls on the other. When there are slightly uneven numbers, this division still remains but with the extra numbers of one sex necessitating squeezing up on benches rather than moving to the other side. When there are students predominantly of one sex in the class, some boys or girls move to the other side of the classroom, but still cluster together, with an empty row (or several rows) separating one sex from the other. There is more mixing in the college and teacher training college classes, though the division between the sexes in terms of seating choices is still apparent.
4. All but one of the classrooms I've observed has been open to the elements in that they have doorways but no doors and openings for windows but no glass, so classes are generally open to outside noise. In three cases, different classes have been taught in the same physical space as another class with no partition between them, so one class could see as well as hear the neighbouring class being taught.
5. Electricity has only been present in two of the classrooms observed. This has meant that classrooms have not generally been well-lit.

[Field notes, July 2009]

Reviewing these notes during data analysis, I could see that I was perceiving the classroom settings as 'not the norm' and for the most part in a negative sense - large classes, students sitting in rows on benches, boys on one side and girls on other, no doors or glass in the windows, outside noise, a lack of electricity. However, within the

setting, this *is* the norm and, for those working in the setting, these features are not seen as negative, just as different aspects of their everyday working lives.

Again, I had come to realise that my own preconceptions may be clouding my judgements concerning the classroom environment. I was focusing on differences between the research setting and my own usual work setting, rather than focusing on the classroom environment in the research setting in its own right. Further, I was focusing on the most common teaching situation I experience in my usual work setting, which involves small groups sitting in a horseshoe-shaped seating arrangement around the teacher, as is often advocated in 'Western TESOL'. In doing this, I was ignoring the fact that on some occasions my classes are similar to the classes described above - quite 'large', with students sitting in rows, probably feeling that the classroom is quite crowded.

### **6.2.2. ELT methodology in the setting**

ELT methodology needs to be appropriate for the setting.

As discussed earlier, I first came to the setting because of my involvement in a small-scale project aimed at helping English language teachers to teach in more 'communicative' ways. However, one incident in particular led me both to question my role as someone who was supposedly there to develop teachers in the local area, and more generally to question the extent to which it was useful to export methodology and methodological 'expertise' from one setting to another, specifically from a 'Western TESOL' to a 'non-Western TESOL' setting. I describe this incident below:

*The DVD:* At a conference held in Chennai in southern India, I watched a talk given by a well-known ELT methodology textbook writer from the U.K. During this talk, the speaker shown a clip from the DVD that accompanied his latest publication. The clip showed a small class of about 15 mixed nationality young adult students, sitting in a 'horseshoe' set up around the teacher in a well-furnished well-lit well-equipped classroom. The students all seemed able and willing to interact with one another in English and to actively participate in the

class without much prompting. The class was in my view lively, with plenty of humour, and the teacher and students seemed to get along well, perhaps helped by the fact that she, the teacher, was of a similar age to several of the students. She managed and facilitated rather than controlled the learning process. The topic of the lesson was about relationships and finding a partner, and did not appear to be a part of any curriculum. It might be described as a typical 'Western TESOL' 'communicative' class in a typical 'Western TESOL' private language school setting.

As I watched the clip, my initial reaction was that it provided useful models of different aspects of a broadly 'communicative' methodology. However, the reaction from local conference participants, as observed in questions to the speaker after the talk and in conversation during the rest of the day, was for the most part questioning the relevance of the clip to their own situations. This seems understandable when a more typical scenario for the conference participants, based on my own classroom observations, would be classes of around 40 students in school classes, more in college classes, with students seated in rows, in classrooms which are often poorly lit and somewhat run down. The students would generally be from the same state (Kerala), though in some cases multilingual, and would typically participate only when directly nominated to do so by the teacher. Most of the interaction within the classroom would be teacher to student, with the teacher controlling the class and classroom activities from the front. The learning environment might typically appear serious and the classroom atmosphere subdued. The topics would be more subject-based, focusing on, for example, historical figures or literature, and teachers would be expected to adhere to a curriculum. (Adapted from field notes, August 2010)

Given the differences between the situation in the clip and the situation in the setting in which I was researching, it became clear to me that, on personal level, I needed to think very carefully before suggesting that ideas and approaches from my own setting might be applicable in the research setting. Further, in a broader sense, I needed to consider TESOL in the setting in its own right as opposed to considering it as a form of

TESOL that was deficient in some way and that should unquestioningly aspire to follow a more 'Western TESOL' type approach to classroom teaching.

In later observations, I began to focus more on what particular approach, if any, was being taken in classes within the setting, noting in [Obs. 18] that:

The teacher immediately asks questions about a poem in the students' books. I assume they read this either in the last class or for homework. She asks mainly comprehension questions, though also asks students for their favourite lines, pairs of rhyming words and similes. ... Students individually write four-line poems in a similar style to the one in the book, the four students who finish first read out their completed poems to the class. ... Working in groups, students write dialogues between characters in the poem, to be finished for homework and acted out in the next class.

Following this class, I made the following notes:

This class reminded me of literature classes when I was at school, but looking at the textbook, as well as literature-based comprehension questions, there were several pages of grammar and vocabulary exercises. ... The part where they had to create and perform a dialogue seemed quite task-based, or perhaps the 'weak version' of the communicative approach, but maybe just combining bits of different methods and approaches, so eclectic? [Field notes, August 2010]

Again, considering the methodological approach, in [Obs. 20] I noted:

The teacher starts by asking students about a text about obesity that they read in their last class. The students prepare a dialogue in groups, giving advice to a friend about obesity. This activity seems to work quite well, students seem engaged, the teacher monitors. ... Three groups read out their dialogues to the class, though the rest of the class don't seem to listen.

Following this class, I commented that:

Overall, there seemed to be a reasonably communicative/task-based approach adopted throughout the class, or is this just a 'follow the book' approach? [Field notes, August 2010]

The data above from [Obs. 18] and [Obs. 20] indicates that elements of what could be called a 'communicative' approach, such as actively involving students and using group work, have been incorporated into some ELT classrooms in Kerala, perhaps in line with what Littlewood (2004, 2013, 2014) calls 'communication-oriented language teaching'.

However, it might equally be argued that a localised approach is being applied, for example using literature in classes as a basis for teaching language, and that this approach had 'communicative' elements incorporated within it. Such a 'context approach', putting the needs of the context first, ahead of methodological approach, is advocated by Bax (2003).

A further way of looking [Obs. 18] and [Obs. 20] would be that the teachers were focused on making an effort to involve students in the class, without seeking to align themselves with any particular 'method' or 'approach', perhaps - albeit for the most part subconsciously - operating in a more 'postmethod' sense, as described by Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2001, 2006b).

These thoughts led me to think more deeply about what was happening in classrooms in the setting in terms of approach. At the start of the study, I was trying to explain 'methods' and 'approaches' in concrete terms, and wanting to label classes both as following a particular 'method' or 'approach' and in terms of binary opposites such as 'traditional' or 'modern' and 'teacher-centred' or 'student-centred'. However, as the study progressed, and through greater awareness of my own positioning, I began to see the classroom in more complex ways, as discussed in, for example, Breen (1985), Allwright (1988), and Senior (2012) among others, and to realise that ELT methodology used in the setting needed to be appropriate for the setting.

I discuss these issues further, with specific reference to the limited appropriacy of 'the communicative approach' in the next section, with specific reference to complexity in

Section 6.4, and with specific reference to a localised approach to ELT in Chapter 7, particularly in Section 7.4.

### **6.2.3. The (in)appropriacy of ‘the Communicative Approach’ in the setting<sup>15</sup>**

The communicative approach does not seem appropriate in the setting.

Over the course of the study, there were a number of incidents concerning use of ‘communicative’ approaches in the setting, highlighting the limited appropriacy of such approaches. Although I was already aware of the dangers of trying to import particular approaches in theory, the incidents described below helped me to become more aware of my own positioning and so more aware of these dangers in practice.

On my third visit to the setting after commencing the study, I had an experience that I described in my field notes at the time as a ‘really awkward’ in connection with using inappropriate ELT methodology in a particular situation I found myself in. Although awkward at the time, with the benefit of hindsight, the experience, described below, might be better described as enlightening.

*Uncommunicative English:* A local teacher, [19], asked me to teach his evening ‘Communicative English’ class. He explained that this class was outside his normal work responsibilities and also an extra class for the students in the sense that they were choosing to come after their studies or work had finished for the day. There were 16 students between the ages of 18 and 60, 9 women and 7 men. The classroom was cramped, dingy, not particularly clean, and not what I would have considered to be a pleasant learning environment. The students had only had three classes together before I met them and so did not know each other particularly well.

As the class was billed as a ‘Communicative English’ class, I went along with a number of ‘communicative’ activities that I had used in my own usual work

---

<sup>15</sup> This section focuses on my own realisations concerning the limited appropriacy of communicative approaches within the setting. Section 7.3 focuses on the participants’ views on the applicability and use of communicative approaches in the setting.

setting, intending to use what I considered as typical communicative activities and techniques, in particular wanting to encourage students to speak and interact with one another.

For about an hour, I tried to use these activities and techniques, tried to get students to interact in pairs and in groups, and tried to get them interested and involved in what I thought were engaging activities - there was a discussion, a role-play and a survey task, among other things. I tried to facilitate, tried to stay upbeat, cheerful and encouraging, and tried to teach in the way I normally did. However, it was a very uncomfortable hour. None of the students were willing to speak to each other in English. They would speak to me, but only in response to a direct question, and in most cases only with a very brief response, and so unless I was interacting directly with a student, pair or group, no verbal communication occurred, not even in L1. There was just silence. (Adapted from field notes, August 2010)

Reflecting on this experience, it made me realise how, despite having read about the dangers of importing methods and approaches, I had tried to do exactly that, and failed. I had not taken into account the environmental factors. I had not allowed, for example, for the varied social backgrounds or age and gender differences, or for the previous learning experiences of the group, most of whom were clearly not familiar or comfortable with either the types of interaction or the activities they were being asked to take part in. Linked to this, I also failed to appreciate the students' expectations about how learning happens, which based on their previous learning experiences, was probably based around the teacher 'teaching' in the sense of imparting knowledge, rather than the teacher 'facilitating' in the sense of managing the activities and the learning process. As a result, there was a feeling of discomfort among the students as well as for me.

I was aware of a similar feeling of discomfort when I was working with groups of local teachers, as the following incident illustrates.



*Uncomfortable Pairwork:* On my third visit to the setting after starting the study, I ran a series of three workshops for local teachers and the same workshops for a group of teacher trainees from the teacher training college in the setting. I was guided on what to include in the workshops and by a local college teacher prior to the visit, and though the precise nature of these workshops varied, the common theme was based around how teachers might incorporate more 'communicative' techniques into their classes.

For the workshops with the local teachers, several of the activities I was suggesting involved working in pairs or groups, and it became apparent that the teachers were not used to, and in some cases felt uncomfortable, doing this. This discomfort had something to do with it being a mixed group of primary, secondary and tertiary level teachers, with varying levels of teaching experience. Whilst I was seeing them as a homogenous group in the sense that they were all teachers and all part of the same workshop, within the group itself there was, as I later came to understand, an unspoken hierarchical structure, with certain members of the group seeing themselves as more senior than others through, for example, being more qualified, more experienced, more proficient speakers of English, or simply coming from a different socioeconomic background. Even ignoring the discomfort, there was a lack of familiarity with the idea of working with peers on tasks rather than being told how to do things. Given this, it seemed unlikely that pair and group work would be happening to any great extent in the schools and colleges that these teachers were working in, a view that was backed up by my own classroom observations at the time.

However, the teacher trainees, with whom I did the workshops separately, seemed much more open to working with their peers. This may have been because the hierarchical issues were not present or because their trainer had been modelling more student-centred approaches with the group, or simply because these teacher trainees had known each other for several months and were already comfortable in each other's company. (Adapted from field notes, August 2010)

This extract highlights a number of false assumptions I had made. I had thought that, even though the students in the earlier incident were uncomfortable with ‘communicative’ techniques such as working in pairs or groups or the teacher taking on a more ‘facilitating’ role, the teachers at the workshop would be able to cope with this, and also that they would be willing to work with any of the other participants there. Further, I had assumed that I could conduct workshops in the same style as I would for similar events in my usual work setting. For example, I introduced ‘communicative’ techniques and activities primarily by getting participants to do them, and then discussing them and outlining the broad principles behind them, but without going into much detail about related theories or making a great deal of reference to background literature.

I also realised from the above experience that although my initially quite fixed ideas on how ELT should be carried out were gradually changing, the influence of my ‘professional baggage’ still remained quite strong. In particular, although I quite quickly realised that wholesale exporting of ‘Western TESOL’ type ‘communicative’ approaches to ‘non-Western TESOL’ settings was unlikely to be successful, as borne out by the literature discussed in Section 4.2.3, I still seemed to believe that certain principles behind such approaches, such as the teacher acting as a ‘facilitator’, were somehow universal, and so would be applicable in the setting.

However, the dangers of considering ‘communicative’ approaches or particular aspects of such approaches as easily applicable in a wide variety of settings was further highlighted to me by the following incident, taken from field notes made after [Obs. 14]:

*Teacher as ‘controller’:* Again, a very teacher-controlled class, the teacher did almost all the talking. No extended contribution from any student in nearly 40 minutes. The students seem to accept this, or at least they seem well-behaved and not outwardly bored, but as it seems to be like this in all subjects, why wouldn’t they accept it? It also seems unrealistic to think that teachers can easily change their teaching style, even if they wanted to, to make lessons more interactive and get the students to do more. [Field notes, July 2009]

At a classroom level, teachers tend to act very much as the 'controller' of the class, as opposed to taking, for instance, a more 'facilitating' role. This seems to be what all parties have come to expect, and so teachers taking a different, less controlling role and students taking a different, more active role may not be something that comes easily. Further, at an institutional level, there would need to be support from the institution's management and acceptance of other changes as a consequence, such as possible increased noise levels during pair and group work. However, as [20] pointed out, this support may not be easily forthcoming:

Using the communicative approach would cause a school management problem as the rest of school has lessons with a different set up, which can lead to problems with the head teacher and with other teachers. ... Basically, teacher as facilitator doesn't work here. The mind-set needs to change - teachers' mind-set, head teachers' mind-set, school administrators' mind-set, all of them. Otherwise, the communicative approach won't work here.

In addition, there are high stakes, state and national level written exams placing considerable emphasis on grammatical accuracy, reading and writing skills, and little or no emphasis on speaking and listening skills. The priority for students is generally to pass these exams, which in turns seems to lead teachers towards an exam-oriented rather than a communication-oriented approach. As [4] unambiguously put it:

Most of the students who come to this college, they learn English just to pass the degree examination, so what we focus on is to make them pass this examination.

Further, at a societal level, there would need to be a reassessment of why English is being learnt if more 'communicative' approaches are to be employed more widely in Kerala. Currently, there is a high status associated with, for example, knowing English so as to be able to read and appreciate literature, and a lower status associated with using English simply as a means of communication. This is reflected in the way English is taught at both school and college level, with a strong emphasis on learning and improving English through literature, as will be discussed in Section 7.2.1, rather than learning English so as to communicate.

In terms of my thinking as an ELT professional and as a researcher, I had moved from thinking that adopting some aspects of a 'communicative' approach would be reasonably achievable to seeing this as something that would be problematic in a number of ways, as discussed above. Further, I was now seeing the classroom and the methodological approach used within it as a far more complex issue than I had previously. Issues concerning ELT methodology in the setting will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 7.

As well as highlighting the dangers of assuming approaches and techniques used in one setting can easily be applied to another, the above experiences also made me more aware of my own position within the setting, particularly during the early stages of the study, as an outsider. This is an issue I discuss in the next section.

### **6.3. Understanding my positioning and role within the setting**

By problematising my status as a researcher in the setting and positioning myself as a partial insider/partial outsider, and by considering the effect of the multiple roles I was perceived as having within the setting, I became better able to interpret the data collected.

In Section 6.3.1, I consider my positioning initially as an outsider but eventually becoming what might be described as a partial insider. In Section 6.3.2, I consider how my role within the setting changed depending on where I was and who I was with, and question my perceived role as an 'expert' in the setting.

#### **6.3.1. Outsider or insider research?**

The positioning of the researcher in terms of insider and outsider status can affect the type of data that is collected and how it is interpreted.

Without wanting to overplay what Styles (1979) called outsider and insider myths, that is, that only outsiders can have the necessary objectivity or only insiders can understand the true character of the setting, an ongoing concern that I had throughout much of the study was over my own positioning. I felt as though, in order to understand the setting

better, I needed to become more of an insider. However, initially I had relatively little experience of the setting and felt very much an outsider, as the following incident, taken from my field notes, illustrates:

*Problems with protocols and hierarchies:* I had an uncomfortable discussion at dinner with the Principal of a TTI [Teacher Training Institute] about the appropriate procedure/protocol concerning who I should inform about my day-to-day plans [relating to the study]. Although I was under the impression that my plans had been arranged and agreed with my local contact, it seems I had caused offence by not personally informing the people at the very top, the overall head of the group of schools and colleges I was visiting and the principal of each institution, even though they had already agreed to my schedule via the local contact. I was told that unless I did this next time, my access to the schools and colleges would not be granted. [Field notes, July 2009]

In my own usual work setting, although my line manager and appropriate research committees may need to be informed of any research plans, I would not generally consider that personally informing ‘the people at the very top’ about a piece of research would be necessary. Indeed, my feeling would be one of not wanting to bother such people, but in the research setting, expectations were different. Just as my ‘professional baggage’ was colouring my judgement about classroom-based events in the setting, it was similarly affecting how I behaved in the setting more broadly. At that stage at least, I felt as if I had only a surface level understanding of the way things worked in the research setting.

This incident made it clear to me that although, initially at least, I wanted to focus more on the classroom context, which itself was more complex than I had imagined, I would not be able to escape further layers of complexity because of factors beyond the classroom and, in particular, would have to arrange my data collection in a more formalised and bureaucratic manner than I would have liked. The incident also led to a heightened my awareness of my outsider status in the setting.

Indeed, an apparently stark reminder of that position as an outsider was provided by [9], a teacher trainer, who pointed out that:

Scholars or teacher trainers like you, people who come to India, come in a very benign mood. If they were actually to teach in India in the same benign ... with the same benign attitude, they would fail because here they are strangers.

However, although this quote appears negative, it had a positive affect on my thinking in the sense that it helped me to accept the fact that, whilst I could better understand the setting over time, this would and could not be through becoming a complete insider within the setting.

Having said that, I also realise it would be naïve to assume that insiders necessarily know more about everything within the setting as clearly outsiders have a perspective which can allow them to see things that insiders cannot. Indeed, as Holliday (2010b, p.21) notes, it would be 'too simplistic for me to presume that he knows better just because he is some sort of "insider"'. Nevertheless, there were further surprising incidents that continued to remind me of my outsider status, such as the one described below:

*Dismissal of a key contact:* One of the most shocking events during my time in the setting was the sudden dismissal of one of the two key people in terms of facilitating my visits to local institutions. She was a teacher trainer at the teacher training college in the setting and someone who I had got to know quite well over several visits. Her dismissal apparently happened because she had given low marks to one student whose family had some political influence in the local area. She was told to increase these marks, but refused and so was dismissed. (Adapted from field notes, December 2011)

This was shocking on a number of levels, but above all, on human level, it was, to my way of thinking, an unjust way to treat people, though again my 'it wouldn't happen where I'm from' 'Western TESOL' lens was clouding my judgement. Indeed, similar things probably do happen in my own setting, though perhaps in less overt ways.

This event also caused me a practical problem in terms of the study. Through this person, I had gained access to several local schools. I could have tried to continue to gain access through the replacement teacher trainer, but I could not strike up the same level of personal connection with this person, and at the time felt uncomfortable working with this teacher training college and particularly the principal of that college who I viewed as responsible for the situation. I therefore made the decision to cut ties with this college and to rely more on the other key contact. With hindsight, this decision was probably a mistake as I was probably not fully aware of the complexities of the situation. I later realised that I had reacted based on how I would have done in my own setting, and had taken an outsider's view of the situation, rather than attempting to understand the workings of the setting from an insider's point of view. At the same time, this incident made me realise that it was possible to get too involved, for example too close to participants on a friendship level, which may lead to situations of potential conflict such as this one. In this sense, it felt safer to maintain a more marginal role in the setting.

Another more classroom-focused incident that reminded me of my relative outsider status happened when interviewing [5], and discussing the 'Spoken English' modules she taught as part of a B.A. programme called 'Communicative English'. As I noted in field notes after the interview:

[5] is teaching on a B.A. 'Communicative English' undergraduate programme. As part of that programme, there are several modules designed to develop students' spoken English. I was surprised to discover that the content of the modules seemed designed principally to develop phonological knowledge and awareness in a theoretical and analytical sense rather than to develop speaking skills on a more practical level. Furthermore, it seems odd that these 'Spoken English' modules are all assessed via written examination, though in some sense it could be argued that it is the module titles, 'Spoken English 1' and 'Spoken English 2', that are misleading as the analytically-focused content itself could justifiably be tested via a written examination. [Field notes, August 2010]

The interpretation of 'Spoken English' as meaning teaching phonological awareness and, to my way of thinking, the incongruous idea of assessing 'Spoken English' modules via

written examinations again served as reminders of the limitations of my understanding of how certain aspects of ELT were understood in the setting.

The result of above incidents in terms of my positioning as a researcher was both a greater awareness of my situation as a relative outsider, or perhaps *partial* insider, and a need to use this relative outsider position as a means of keeping an element of distance and avoiding potentially complex local situations. Further, contrary to my initial beliefs and aspirations, I realised that aiming to become increasingly an insider as the study progressed was not necessarily desirable or advantageous, and made the decision to aim to take a more balanced partial insider/partial outsider position within the setting.

Indeed, over time there was some level of movement towards this more balanced position, as the following incident highlights:

*Part of the furniture:* Because my engagement with the setting was for a number of short periods rather than one extended period, I had, in the early stages of the study in particular, doubted whether I could be sufficiently an insider to gain a sufficiently deep understanding of what was going on in the setting. Although my doubts were to an extent resolved simply through awareness of this situation, accepting my position, gradually gaining greater understanding of the setting and becoming a partial insider, a point of clarity on this issue came for me when the principal of School A, which I had visited frequently, described me to another colleague as 'part of the furniture'. Of course, this was an exaggeration, nevertheless it did seem to show acceptance of my presence at some level and that I was being treated as more of an insider than I had previously imagined. It also suggested that at least some level of integration into the setting was possible and that I had gained sufficient insider status to be able to move beyond superficial understandings of the setting. (Adapted from field notes, February 2012)

Indeed, as I spent more time in the setting over several years, I came to consider myself as a partial insider/partial outsider. This positioning resonates with Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p.123), who suggest that the qualitative researcher's perspective:



is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others - to indwell - and at the same time to be aware of how one's own biases and preoccupations may be influencing what one is trying to understand.

In my case, this involved getting close enough to access different participants' views without getting too immersed to see what was happening or too close and risking the data becoming skewed because of, for example, over-familiarity with certain participants.

Although this issue of insider versus outsider status was one that I feel I came to terms with during the study, it remained a struggle to achieve and maintain what felt like the right balanced position between the two.

### *Questioning my classroom observation data*

A further realisation occurred in respect of starting the study as an outsider in the setting when it came to analysing observation data. Based on observations that took place during the first two visits to the setting, I came to realise several things about my approach to observation, which I believe stemmed from the fact that I was an outsider with limited prior knowledge of the setting, and also to some extent that I was a relatively inexperienced researcher.

Firstly, my observations notes concentrated on what I thought of at the time of the observations as negative features of the classes. To highlight this, I discuss in some detail my notes from a single observation, [Obs. 1], which took place during the first visit, though I could have chosen any of the observations from this visit as they tended to note similarly negative points. I have numbered the points to facilitate the discussion that follows.

#### *Observation 1:*

Classroom: benches, a few pictures, girls one side and boys the other, a little squashed, students all stand any time a teacher/visitor/adult comes in, room acoustics not good, outside noise (1)

Very old-fashioned looking textbook. (2)

Very teacher-centred, i.e. teacher → class, class → teacher (3)

Teacher very controlling, students mainly silent, but they seem to be listening to the teacher. (4)

No checking of understanding (except for one 'do you understand?') (5)

The teacher nominates one student to orally summarise what she's heard - this seems a very difficult task, and the teacher has to strongly pressure, even bully, the student into doing it. This turns out to be the only opportunity for freer speaking during the class. (6)

Looking at notebooks, the students write well, and some speak well too - when given the chance. (7)

Some of these points are more obviously negative, for example the comments suggesting the students were 'a little squashed', the 'room acoustics not good', a 'very old-fashioned looking textbook', and 'the teacher has to strongly pressure, even bully, the student'. For other points, although it may not always be obvious to another reader from the words written, when I read back what I wrote, I can see my own negative thoughts: 'girls one side and boys on the others' implying this to be in some sense outdated; 'very teacher-centred' and 'teacher very controlling, students mainly silent' implying there is a particular way the teacher should be acting, that this should not be in a 'controlling' way and that students should generally be active and speaking during classes; and 'no checking of understanding' suggesting there is a certain approach to teaching that this teacher should be but is not following.

These broadly negative points reflect the fact that my view of ELT in Kerala was indeed quite negative at the outset of the study. However, while reviewing these observation notes, I began to see other interpretations of what I had written and possible alternative explanations for the apparent negative events. I also realised that my own professional biography, detailed in Section 3.5, was having a strong influence on what I was choosing to see and note down, and on how I was interpreting what I saw in the classroom. I now look more specifically at my observation notes (1) to (7) above and attempt to reinterpret what I wrote.

Point (1) above mentions the classroom and students being 'a little squashed', the 'room acoustics not good, outside noise', but this is all relative. There may be some truth in

these comments for particular outsider observers like myself, but for others this classroom situation might be the only situation they have known, or just a typical classroom, or perhaps relatively comfortable one. The outside noise, for instance, would be something to be coped with and quite possibly not even noticed as anything but normal. Indeed, in the nine observations, [Obs. 16] to [Obs. 24], carried out during the third visit after commencing the study, I rarely mention such environmental distractions, concentrating more on classroom methodology.

Points (2) to (5), with the benefit of hindsight, reveal an expectation on my part that classes, in very different settings to my own, should be taught in ways that I was familiar with. These points further suggest that I viewed deviations from teaching in ways I was familiar with as evidence of deficiency. It should perhaps also be noted at this point that there may have been some level of the so-called 'observer effect' happening here, with students more reticent to speak than might usually be the case because of the presence of an observer, particularly one who was clearly an outsider. The focus of comments (3) and (4), teacher-centredness, is discussed further in Section 6.4.

Point (6) relates to the teacher's relationship with the students, which I suggest involves bullying a student at one point. However, this is again imposing the norms I am accustomed to in terms of the teacher-student relationship on a different setting. With hindsight, this is likely be related to my own professional biography, which has mainly involved teaching young adult learners, where my approach, while still teacher-student in the sense of it being a learning environment, has tended to involve building relationships with the learners and attempting to create a positive atmosphere in order to facilitate learning in a more negotiated sense. I also now realise that my view of what that 'positive atmosphere' should look like - for example, smiling students, willing to participate in different activities, in a cosy well-equipped classroom, with first names used between teacher and students, is coloured by my 'Western TESOL' background. It is also a somewhat idealised view in the sense that as I am sure there are many 'Western TESOL' classrooms where the atmosphere is far from positive in this sense - with the students neither smiling nor willing to participate and so on.

The final point (7), whilst on the face of it a positive comment, contains an underlying element of surprise that, in spite of all the obstacles described above, some students write and speak well, particularly as it finishes with the reproachful caveat 'when given the chance [to speak]', suggesting that students are rarely allowed to speak and should be given more opportunities.

At the time, I was unconsciously displaying characteristics of what Holliday (2005, pp.19-20) and others have described as 'the unproblematic self', thinking of myself as, for example, 'independent', 'modern', and 'involved in genuine teacher-student interaction' while seeing the teachers in the classes I was observing as 'the culturally problematic Other', thinking of these teachers as, for example, 'undemocratic', with a 'need to be trained', and with a preference for 'frontal teaching'.

However, although I did not recognise this at the time, I began to do so during the data analysis process. For example, reflecting on the phrase 'the teacher has to strongly pressure, even bully, the student into doing it' in point (6), I commented that 'this may just be a different teacher-student dynamic than I'm used to', suggesting the beginnings of a new awareness of the possibility of other explanations and of less negative reasons behind particular actions. Similarly, for point (7), on reviewing the phrase 'the students write well, and some speak well too - when given the chance', I noted that 'teachers must be doing something right ... or is this in spite of teacher/method'. Whilst this comment is not unquestioningly positive, it is at least opening up the possibility that 'something right' is happening, even if also hinting that this might be because of factors beyond the classroom setting.

The point to make here is that a change had occurred in the way I, as a researcher and as an education professional, was seeing the situation. Through a combination of becoming a partial insider and being able to see that my perspective on the setting was being influenced by my 'Western TESOL' professional background, I was seeing things in different ways. What I had initially seen and interpreted rather negatively, I was viewing in a different light, and realising the possibility of alternative interpretations.

### *Questioning my interview data*

Another part of my data I began to look at more critically at the analysis stage was my interview data. I was concerned that, because of my initial outsider status, I had not asked the right questions to interviewees, as the following incident describes:

*Asking the wrong questions?* During an annual review, when referring to one aspect of my data, I expressed disappointment that I may not have asked the right questions to maximize the amount of data I had on one particular aspect of the study, the way teachers might be developing in a professional sense in more unstructured and informal ways. This led to a discussion of the fact that as an outsider researcher, not permanently based in the setting being studied, it takes longer to understand the workings of a particular group of people to a level where the questions asked in interviews might generate sufficiently pertinent data, and therefore facilitate understanding of the complexity of the setting. (Adapted from field notes, May 2013)

To elaborate, during the data analysis phase of the study, certain *general* themes came out of the data, such as a focus on teacher education, while more *specific* themes were less obvious. For example, one specific theme is this study concerns the ways in which teachers in the setting were adding to top-down imposed 'professional development' by using their own informal, mainly localised, networks to facilitate more independent learning. As this independent professional development was not as obviously visible as other forms of professional development, it took me until the later stages of data collection and analysis to realise that this was happening. This perhaps highlights a potential difficulty with being an outsider researcher and also of working in ethnographic mode but without having prolonged periods of engagement in the setting.

Although there is data to support the arguments I make in terms of informal networks facilitating independent professional development, and a full discussion on this is provided in Section 8.3, perhaps these arguments could have been further elaborated had I realised more quickly that such networks existed.

This led me to reflect on why it had taken me so long to notice this independent professional development and whether someone with more insider knowledge would have noticed it more quickly. This in turn caused me to return to the issue, discussed in Section 2.1.2, of the period of time that should be spent in the setting during ethnographic studies. As noted by a number of scholars (e.g. Holliday, 1997; Bax, 2006), ethnographic research does not necessarily mean spending extended periods in the research setting and an ethnographic approach can be taken even for relatively small studies. However, there may be an argument that, at least for relatively inexperienced researchers working in unfamiliar settings, spending extended periods in the setting is potentially advantageous as it may increase the possibility of unearthing less obvious themes. This is not to suggest that such extended periods will *necessarily* lead to a greater understanding of what is going on in the setting as clearly length of engagement does not necessarily lead to a higher quality of analysis. Nevertheless, particularly for those less accustomed to carrying out ethnographic studies, time may be needed to begin to see beyond any easy answers to questions the researcher has and, as in my case during this study, to better understand how their own prejudices may be affecting the data that is being collected.

### **6.3.2. Multiple roles within the setting**

Different types of data can be forthcoming depending on the wider role the researcher is perceived as having within a setting.

Another area of tension during the research process was the multiple roles attributed to me as I engaged with different institutions within the research setting. Whilst in the setting, I was combining data collection with work-related activities such as organising and running workshops for teachers, and attending and presenting at conferences, which meant I was perceived in different ways in different parts of the setting at different points in time. During the study, I was variously perceived as a researcher, lecturer, teacher trainer, teacher, doctoral student, visiting academic, presenter at a conference, 'expert' on language teaching pedagogy who had come along to explain how things should be done, 'expert' in an unspecified academic sense, friend (of whoever had brought me) and simply visitor from overseas. Further, the delineation

between these roles was never clear and there was often a tension between the role I perceived myself as having at a particular time and the role I was seen as having within the setting.

As my data collection progressed, I became aware that how I was being perceived might be effecting the kinds of conversation that I was having and therefore the data I was collecting. For example, when I was seen in the role of a teacher trainer, the discussion within interviews would tend to centre around problems with the way teachers were trained or the formalised but ineffective in-service professional development in the setting. As I was most often seen in this role within the setting, this may perhaps explain why there is a relatively high volume of data, and a whole chapter (Chapter 8), dedicated to the topic of second language teacher education.

As a consequence of having different roles within the setting, I realised the importance of clarifying my own position before starting each interview in terms of, at that moment, being a researcher, as several interviewees would have seen me a short time before in another role, such as facilitating a workshop or presenting at a conference.

One role I had a particular problem with was being described as an 'expert' in the setting. As I noted:

At [School A] today I was introduced in the teachers' room as a visiting 'expert' from the U.K. This made me feel uncomfortable and also seemed to make the teachers uncomfortable with me. [Field notes, August 2010]

Although I had never considered myself as particularly 'expert' in general, my discomfort was increased in the research setting because, whilst I may know something about teacher education or language teaching pedagogy in my own setting, I knew relatively little about it in the research setting. Indeed, I was already firmly of the view that it was those working in and with detailed knowledge about the setting who were the experts in the setting.

This misplaced view, positioning me as an 'expert', to have an impact on my data collection as I felt, for example, that I had not got the kind of in-depth answers I was

hoping for from the open-ended questionnaires I was giving to teachers working in schools, particularly those working at primary level. Further, some teachers appeared reluctant to complete the questionnaire as, I believe, they did not want to show any lack of language proficiency or pedagogic knowledge in front of a visiting 'expert'.

As I noted, concerning the teachers working in schools that I was meeting:

I can't seem to get past their view of me as an 'expert' and that I have either come to help them or to check what they know. I feel a kind of teacher-student relationship with them, perhaps not helped by the fact that I am older than most of them. They seem to feel the same, at least when I try to engage them in discussion about teaching, either individually after observing their classes or as a group, I don't feel I'm getting beyond superficial responses. [Field notes, August 2010]

By contrast, I did believe that I was getting what I considered as more perceptive responses from those in more senior or more academic positions, such as school principals, teacher trainers, lecturers and 'college teachers' (those teaching English to undergraduate students), noting that:

I'm beginning to realise that I'm getting more in-depth responses from higher-level ELT professionals and am less likely to get useful information from school teachers, particularly primary school teachers. [Field notes, August 2010]

These 'higher-level ELT professionals' perhaps saw me in some sense as a fellow academic with whom they were more than happy to discuss what they saw as the key issues in the setting, and indeed to educate me on them.

Because of this, I tended to interview these types of people, though, with hindsight, I could perhaps have found a way to access the views of those working more 'at the chalk face' in primary and secondary schools.

I was also conscious of the risk of favouring informants who said things that I agreed with. As I noted after meeting [17] for the first time:



Met a sessional lecturer, who's recently completed a PhD on pair/group work. She had some very interesting thoughts on ELT methodology here [in Kerala]. Perhaps the most enlightened/enlightening person I've met on this visit. Could be a key informant. [Field notes, January 2012]

Reading this back later, I realised that I may be equating 'enlightened' with broadly sharing opinions and views that I had, and with those who were using the 'development discourse' referred to in Chapter 1 and discussed in more depth in Section 7.2.

On a professional level, I began to question the extent to which my supposed 'expert' knowledge could be transferred from one setting to another. As the study progressed, and as I spent more time in the setting, often facilitating workshops as part of the visits I was making to the setting, I began to make connections between what I was finding through the research and my own experiences as a teacher and teacher trainer, as the following incident, taken from my field notes, exemplifies:

*Questioning the project:* I'm not sure what we can really achieve by coming over for a week or two here and there, quite apart from the question of whether we're appropriate people to be developing teachers here, without the in-depth familiarity with and experience of working here. Our work needs to focus on what value we can add, sharing and comparing rather than importing and prescribing ideas and methods. [Field notes, August 2010]

This kind of questioning of my professional role seems to go hand-in-hand with the way in which I was developing my understanding of the setting through this study. In particular, observing classes and beginning to interpret these observations in different ways influenced how I saw my professional role, as the following incident illustrates:

*Questioning my own approach/methodology:* My workshop 'Making Coursebooks Communicative' seemed to go down well with two of the three groups, but not so well with group of the primary teachers. This seemed to be largely due to the fact that they had a lower level of English and so the session was perhaps too demanding for many of them in terms of language proficiency.

In any case, I again find myself questioning the value of this kind of one-off or occasional development when we as ‘trainers’ have little/no experience in this setting, be it in teaching large classes or, in the case of primary teachers, of teaching that age group. Our strategy seems to be to offer general ideas based on a notion of communicative teaching, but perhaps we should place more emphasis on adapting the ideas to local conditions. [Field notes, August 2010]

The first point I was making above expresses doubt as to whether the ideas I was suggesting, based around ‘communicative’ teaching, would be possible, particularly at primary level, due to the generally low level of the teachers’ English, an issue also raised by Graddol (2010). Graddol also notes that they are unfamiliar with more ‘communicative’ approaches to teaching English (ibid., p.112). The second point made above suggests that, as outside ‘experts’, we should pay more attention to the local setting, and adapt outside ideas to local conditions, and more specifically perhaps encourage movement towards a localised version of ‘communicative’ teaching. Reflecting on this further since writing the above field notes, I would now be advocating a local approach to teaching as a starting point, without the ‘communicative’ element necessarily being there at all.

#### **6.4. Appreciating complexity**

As has been suggested throughout this chapter, as the study progressed I began to better understand the influence of both my ‘Western TESOL’ background and my partial insider/ partial outsider positioning within the setting on the way I was interpreting different events in and different perspectives on the setting. Because of this, I began to think in less simplistic ways about a number of different issues relevant to the setting. This helped me to uncover the independent and unrecognised professionalism that exists within the setting.

Section 6.4.1 explores further my growing understanding of the complexity of the setting over the course of the study. Section 6.4.2 then goes on to discuss how I initially tended to get caught up in binary opposites in trying to understand ELT in the setting. For example, I was initially considering the classes I observed as either ‘teacher-centred’

or 'student-centred', whereas as the study progressed I was more conscious and accepting of the complexities of what was happening in a particular class.

#### **6.4.1. Understanding complexity in the setting**

It is easy to jump to quick and simplistic conclusions with an unfamiliar research setting. As my understanding of the setting grew, I began to understand the setting in more complex ways.

Based on observations during the first two visits to the setting, and discussions held with teachers and teacher trainers at the observation sites, I noted the following points with regard to professional development of teachers in the setting:

*'Professional development - issues to explore:*

1. Reducing the focus on the teacher, maybe via group work and project work.
2. Encouraging teachers to focus on students' needs and student engagement rather than uncritically following the textbook.
3. Encouraging appropriate use of L1.'

[Field notes, July 2009]

However, from reviewing these field notes during data analysis, I would add several further comments to the three points above.

Reflecting on point 1 above, I would question how familiar and comfortable either the teachers or the students would be with working in groups, as for example it may not happen in other classes and it may not be seen as the best way to prepare for the exam-based grammar-based assessments that the students need to pass. Further, I am apparently advocating a more 'student-centred' 'communicative' approach via group work and project work, without giving consideration to other factors that may be important, or the fact that any such change in approach, even if considered appropriate, would need to be implemented in a structured way, with all elements of the change, such as the need for appropriate textbooks, for the assessment process to reflect the teaching approach, for ongoing support for existing teachers rather than one-off training

and for appropriate pre-service teacher education. I would also now question whether recommending a more 'Western TESOL' based 'communicative' approach is an appropriate starting point in any case, and would suggest a more localised perspective, as discussed in Section 7.4.

Further, I would now question my own overly-simplistic 'Western TESOL' led understanding that group work and project work are necessary features for a so-called 'communicative' classroom. As Holliday (2005, p.144, italics in original) argues, the 'Western TESOL' interpretation of 'communicative' teaching, prioritising oral skills and group work:

is simply *one application* of communicative principles and is appropriate only for specific English-speaking Western TESOL contexts ... [and therefore] the primacy of practising oral skills and group work ... does *not* have to feature in *other* communicative methodologies.

He goes on to give an example (ibid., p.154, italics in original) of:

a successful application of communicative principles *without* taking the form of 'standard' English-speaking Western TESOL methodology, ... there was no group work, and ... classroom talk was incidental to the requirements of language research.

Reflecting on point 2 in the above field notes, I would now add that the expectations of teachers and students, as well as the expectations of school managers and parents, in the setting, may in fact be that the textbook *should* be followed. Similarly, reflecting on point 3 in the field notes, I realise that I am implying that there are fixed rules for when L1 should be used in classes and that I was basing this on my own experiences of 'Western TESOL'. I now realise that the expectations of teachers and students in the setting are far more relevant here than my own expectations, and that the expectations of those working and studying in the setting should be the starting point for any discussion of use of L1 in English classes.

There does appear in these comments to be a growing realisation that it is difficult to talk in black and white terms about issues surrounding ELT methodology and professional development, and that complexity, both within ELT classrooms and in terms of the professional development process, is something that needs to be accepted and worked with.

#### **6.4.2. Looking beyond reductive interpretations**

Over time I began to acknowledge the possibility of more complex interpretations of particular situations, for example rather than rushing to label classes as ‘teacher-centred’ or ‘student-centred’, trying instead to understand why the classes might appear this way.

The role of the teacher was one area that came to the fore in observation data, in particular the apparent high level of teacher control in classes and my interpretation of classes, particularly in earlier observations, as teacher-centred. For example, as mentioned earlier, in Section 6.3.1, in [Obs. 1] I noted:

Very teacher-centred, i.e. teacher → class, class → teacher.

Teacher very controlling, students mainly silent.

In [Obs. 7] also, I noted the teacher kept quite firm control of the class, as can be seen through the following observation notes, taken over a 25-minute period:

*The teacher* stands at the front. *She* says ‘what is bank?’ The students answer in unison along the lines of ‘a place where people keep their money’. *The teacher* asks for words connected with bank. 5 or 6 students offer suggestions, such as deposit, interest, savings, they all stand up when answering. *She* then uses the ‘unfinished sentence style’, saying for example in a loud voice ‘we put our money in a ...’ and the students complete the sentence. *She* recaps all the words covered at the end of this part. ... *The teacher* is still [after 15 minutes] at the front leading/controlling everything. The students are told to stand up and try to

recollect for themselves the words they've covered in the class so far by muttering them to themselves. *The teacher* tells them that if they can recall 'fully' the words covered they can sit down. The students seem very compliant. *The teacher* gets individual students to recap the words for the class. *She* asks if there are any doubts and explains the word 'interest' again. A very teacher-centred class.

As can be seen from this description, the teacher is leading and directing every part of the class and, as for [Obs. 1], I interpreted the class as 'very teacher-centred', at no point during the observation considering that the students were doing anything that was not tightly controlled by the teacher. Indeed, reading back the description, I can understand this interpretation as almost every sentence starts with what the teacher did, rather than what the students did, and there seems to be little opportunity for students to make their own choices or work out things themselves in their own time.

This typifies how I was initially tending to judge classes in this manner, in terms of there being too much teacher control and teacher-centredness, and too little student engagement and participation, looking to label classes either 'teacher-centred' and viewing 'teacher-centredness' as 'deficient' based on my 'Western TESOL' led understanding of 'teacher-centredness'. Indeed, the majority of the classes I observed in the earlier part of the study came across as 'teacher-centred', and therefore in my view at the time 'deficient', though I now appreciate that this was only relative to my expectations based on my own past experiences.

However, my thinking on this changed over the course of the study. I moved away from seeing approaches I was less accustomed to as necessarily deficient and began to consider the different influences on what was happening in the classroom time, such as the new textbooks that were being used at that time. This can be seen from the discussion following the observation notes below:

The class starts with the teacher asking students to review a reading text they'd read for homework. She then asks the class to say what it was about, (the 'profile'

of an Indian astronaut), then elicits the information that should be given in a 'profile' of someone and writes it on the blackboard. Students are designated as 'astronauts' or 'interviewers' and are given 7-8 minutes to prepare themselves for 'mock interviews' based on the headings on the board. They seem to regroup themselves to do this, and are clearly familiar with this type of activity. The students then carry out the 'mock interviews' in pairs with one student as the astronaut and the other as the interviewer. After approximately 5 minutes, the teacher brings the activity to a close by asking 3 pairs (one after another) to come to the front of the class to perform the interview. [Obs. 13]

'The students prepare a poster-style advert in groups. The group work (making the poster) is all in L1.' [Obs. 15]

Following these observations, I noted:

'I'm not sure if I saw more student-centred teaching today, or if it was just teachers following the textbook, which just happens to more closely resemble what I consider as more student-centred teaching.' [Field notes, July 2009]

These textbooks were in turn based around what were being packaged as new approaches, such as the 'activity method' that the next quote from observation notes refers to:

The teacher tells the students that they're going to write a diary entry for the main character in the story they read yesterday. She elicits how they might begin the diary and introduces words they might want to use. The students start writing diaries. The teacher comes over to chat with me and tells me this is an example of the 'activity method' of teaching that they now use. The students get on quietly, asking for help where necessary from their classmates in L1. The teacher speaks mostly in English with a very small amount of L1, mainly for translating vocabulary ... Four students read the diaries they've written to the

class. ... This class feels more student-centred and 'communicative' than most classes I've watched. [Obs. 13]

In this class, the students are guided towards working on diary entries and were then left to get on with constructing them, getting help from the teacher or their peers if and when they needed it. For these reasons, I interpreted the class at the time as being more 'student-centred' and 'communicative' than others I had seen.

However, I would question whether this was a deliberate attempt to prioritise 'student-centred' 'communicative' teaching or whether, as with the previous examples, the teacher was simply following the textbook.

There is a kind of textbook-imposed 'student-centredness' happening in the sense that the textbook is encouraging students to be active and work in groups and the teacher to 'facilitate' and monitor.

The above comments illustrate how my own position moved from a more polar opposites way of thinking, labelling a class as either 'teacher-centred' or 'student-centred', towards a less reductive perspective on what I was seeing, trying to be more cautious about quickly or simplistically labelling classes in this way.

More broadly, they illustrate how I was appreciating the complexity of the teaching situation that I was observing, moving from a binary 'teacher-centredness as deficiency' versus 'student-centredness as the goal' way of seeing the classes to considering what I meant by 'teacher-centred' and 'student-centred' as well as the many other factors that might be affecting the degree of 'teacher-centredness' or 'student-centredness' in classes, such as the assessment systems, the expectations of the different stakeholders involved including school management and parents, and the textbooks being used.

### *Summary*

This chapter has discussed ways in which my perspectives as an education professional and as a researcher changed and developed over the course of the study, focusing in



particular on the autoethnographic *distant eyes* perspective of the study outlined in Chapter 3. It has provided details and examples of how I came to realise that my own 'Western TESOL' background was influencing the study, how my understanding of the learning environment and of ELT classroom methodology in the setting developed during the study, and how my own positioning changed during the study, both in the sense of starting as an outsider and gradually becoming a partial insider and in the sense that I had different roles in the setting at different times which affected how I was seen by participants in the study and also the data I was able to collect. It then considered how over time I came to appreciate the complexity of the setting rather than accepting the most simplistic or obvious ways of interpreting what was happening.

These considerations, taken together, allowed me to better understand how my 'Western TESOL' background was causing me to interpret the setting in particular ways, often negatively in comparison to 'Western TESOL', and, with this understanding, to look for alternative ways to interpret the data I was collecting. As a result, I began to uncover the independent and unrecognised professionalism happening within the setting. For example, I was able to see that some ELT methodological practices used in setting, which are often considered by 'Western TESOL' as outdated, may, contrary to my initial views, be appropriate for the setting. I was also able to identify informal professional development happening within the setting that I had not initially been able to see.

The next chapter focuses on *local perspectives* on ELT methodology in the setting in the light of the issues discussed in this chapter.

## **7. *Local Perspectives through Distant Eyes: ELT Methodology***

This chapter discusses findings related to *local perspectives* on ELT methodology, as seen from my *distant eyes* perspective.

More specifically, as a result of looking at ELT methodology in the setting in the light of an autoethnography of my own professionalism, discussed in the previous chapter, I have been able to uncover independent and unrecognised professionalism in the setting. In terms of ELT methodology, 'independent' refers, for example, to teachers using approaches and techniques that they feel are appropriate in the setting, even though they may not be the officially prescribed ones, and also to teachers going beyond the officially prescribed approach. It is 'unrecognised' as professionalism by local ELT professionals in the sense that the efficacy of methods and approaches traditionally used in the setting is not considered or appreciated because of a belief in 'Western TESOL' 'communicative' approaches.

During data analysis, I came to realise that in many of my own classroom observation notes, particularly in the earlier observations, I seemed to be trying to support a 'deficit model' view of what was happening in the setting, comparing it negatively to an idealised view of what I perceived to be happening in 'Western TESOL' settings that I was more familiar with. Further, I was tending to interpret views expressed by participants in open-ended questionnaires and interviews as evidence of a deficit in the setting in comparison to 'Western TESOL' settings. This led to a shift from seeing my observation notes and participants' statements as validation of a deficit view of the setting to appreciating how participants were choosing to construct their situation and to express their concerns and preoccupations within the setting. This in turn led me to re-evaluate many of my own initial interpretations of the data and to identify previous hidden aspects of the setting.

In terms of the structure of this chapter, Section 7.1 relates to how participants describe methods and approaches in the setting, and Section 7.2 discusses the way in which participants consider certain locally-established approaches and techniques as 'traditional' but see imported 'Western TESOL' approaches as 'modern'. Section 7.3 then

discusses the applicability of ‘communicative’ approaches in the setting and Section 7.4 brings out features of a more localised approach that exemplify the independent and unrecognised professionalism that exists in the setting in terms of methodological knowledge and understanding. Finally, Section 7.5 explores the implementation of change and the ‘pockets of progress’ happening within the setting.

I should again point out that I am aware that the open-ended questionnaire and interview data given in this chapter does not describe the situation in the setting, but how participants were perceiving and constructing it.

## **7.1. Describing methods and approaches**

There is not a shared understanding of the term ‘method’ in the setting. Despite this, teachers attach importance to the concept of ‘method’, and the idea of following a ‘method’ provides reassurance for them that there are established principles and ideas underpinning their teaching. Further, there seems to be only a limited awareness of the problematic nature of importing approaches from ‘Western TESOL’.

As well as discussing these findings, the broader purpose of this section is to begin to build up a picture of the way ‘method’ and related terms are understood in the setting, and of ELT methodology more generally within the setting, and so help to provide a context against which the independent and unrecognised professionalism, discussed later in this chapter, can be seen.

### **7.1.1. The term ‘method’**

‘Method’ tends to be understood in either a theory-led ‘fixed set of ideas’ sense or a practice-led pragmatic sense in terms of suggesting ways to solve classroom problems.

Considering both interview and open-ended questionnaire data, responses to the question of what respondents understood by the term ‘method’ fell into two broad areas, those describing ‘method’ in a more ‘fixed set of ideas’ sense, akin to the theory-led definition of ‘method’ offered by Bell (2003), discussed in Section 4.1.1, and those describing it in terms of the individual teacher’s approach to teaching and something

which the teacher has some agency over, akin to the practice-led definition of ‘method’ offered by Bell (2003), also discussed in Section 4.1.1.

*‘Method’ in a ‘fixed set of ideas’ theory-led sense*

Understanding the term ‘method’ in the ‘fixed set of ideas’ theory-led sense is illustrated by [Q7] who stated that ‘teaching method refers to the way English is taught, for example whether it is through interactive method, lecture method etc.’, and similarly by [Q16] who suggested that ‘teaching method, as I understand, is the various ways by which English can be taught. For example, the translation method, the direct method etc.’

A wide range of ‘methods’ were highlighted in responses to the question of what was understood by the term, several of which I had not previously considered as ‘methods’. For example, in addition to discussion of ‘communicative’ approaches, there was mention of the ‘interactive method’ [4, Q7], ‘lecture method’ [Q5, Q7, Q9, Q10, Q16] ‘discussion method’ [14, Q9, Q22], ‘structural method’ [4, 11], ‘translation method’ [7, 11, 12, 15, 19, 20, 21, Q3, Q5, Q16, Q29], ‘direct method’ [4, Q16, Q24, Q30], ‘activity method’ [6, Q18], ‘narrative method’ [Q23], ‘thematic approach’ [Q18], and ‘bilingual method’ [4, 5, Q20, Q25]. What all of these have in common is the fact that ‘method’ is being seen in the ‘fixed set of ideas’ sense.

This is not to say, however, that each participant had the same fixed set of ideas about each particular ‘method’. For example, it appeared that respondents were generally referring to different things when they referred to the ‘(grammar) translation method’ and ‘the bilingual method’, with ‘grammar translation method’ generally used in a narrow sense to refer to sentences translated from one language to another, and ‘the bilingual method’ used in a broader sense to refer to making use of both the target language and the native language in the classroom, such as via code-switching. However, this distinction was not consistently applied, as the comment from [19] suggests:

When we talk about the bilingual method, we would mean using L1 along with L2 for language learning. Translation method would be similar, but less creative,

where the teacher translates most of the L2 content to L1 to ease classroom management ... but some people use bilingual method as a kind of catchall term for any teaching where L1 is used to teach L2.

Thus, the distinction between the two 'methods' has become to some extent blurred.

There is also a desire to simplify 'methods' into concrete and easily understandable units, with neat labels such as 'the interactive method', 'the discussion method' and so on. It may be that these labels provide reassurance that there is some 'method', and therefore some kind of validation, behind what happens in the classroom.

#### *'Method' in a practice-led sense*

Understanding the term 'method' in a practice-led sense, in terms of the individual teacher's approach, can be exemplified by [Q3] who wrote:

it is the method which a teacher adopts in teaching English and it varies in different contexts based on the age group of the students and the material which they have to teach,

and [Q30] who wrote simply that 'it means teaching English according to the situation', while [4] combines a 'fixed set of ideas' view of 'method', with a need to adapt this to particular teaching situations, as she explained:

When I was doing my B.Ed., I did my practice at a government school in the city and it was a boys' school and all the boys were of eighth standard and they, how to say ... they were not that brilliant students at all, so they wanted bilingual method, they cannot follow the direct method of teaching English. Also, how can we make them into a communicative group for those students who cannot follow English? So what I did was, I taught in the bilingual method and I also gave them group work.

Here, she demonstrates a pragmatic attitude in choosing a 'method' to suit her teaching situation, reflecting Bell's (2007, p.135) finding that:

teacher interest in methods is determined by how far methods provide options in dealing with particular teaching contexts ... teacher attitude towards methods is highly pragmatic.

### **7.1.2. The myth and simplification of 'method'**

There is to be an affection for the term 'method' and a perceived need for there to be a 'method' to provide the required guidance, though in practice teaching appears to be eclectic rather than to follow a particular 'method'.

As suggested above, there are varied interpretations of the term 'method', which makes it difficult to define precisely. Perhaps at least in part because of this, there seems to be a level of myth surrounding the efficacy of following a 'method', which continues to thrive, despite pronouncements of the 'death of methods' (Brown, 2002) and the like. The sense that a 'method' is necessary for the classroom teaching process to function effectively and the apparent reliance among teachers on feeling that they are following a 'method' is illustrated by the number of 'methods' supposedly being employed, as detailed above. Indeed, neither for those understanding 'method' in a more theory-led sense nor for those understanding it in a more practice-led sense was there any evidence that teachers were anti-'method' or that they were seeing the limitations of 'method' as a concept. In fact, rather than, as Kumaravadivelu (2006b) suggests, there being a growing awareness among teachers of the limitations of particular 'methods', teachers are using the term 'method' in their own ways to suit their own purposes.

There is also a suggestion that less proficient teachers tend to opt for more so-called traditional approaches. For example, [15] believed that:

In a sense what is convenient is using the translation method, so when the teachers themselves are not very adept at using the language, they want to see that their students pass the assessment, so what they do is easy ... just go in for the translation, and this is still ... most of the teachers are seen to use it, especially in the government schools.

Making a similar point, but in a more disparaging manner, [11] noted that ‘some of the teachers are clueless, they’ve been teaching the old structural method or the translation method still goes on over here’. It is also worth noting here that [15] and [11] are implicitly assuming that there is little use or benefit in continuing to use ‘old’ methods such as these.

However, the overriding point here is the sense that practicing teachers believe that they are using some kind of ‘method’, though what exactly is meant by the term ‘method’ will vary from teacher to teacher. Interestingly, it is generally unnamed others who are seen as using more ‘traditional’ and apparently less fashionable methods. The idea of ‘traditional’ versus ‘modern’ methods is discussed in Section 7.2 below.

Along similar lines, the idea that there is a current, modern and somehow correct ‘approach’ that should be used in the classroom was being promoted at the teacher training college I visited, as I noted in my field notes during one visit:

Chatting to these trainees, it’s clear that they feel they were being taught to teach in a student-centred way, following an activity-based approach. To me, it seems to be a question of perception and understanding of the terms, and also possibly a little brainwashing, i.e. there seems to be constant reinforcement of the idea that the syllabus *is* student-centred and *is* activity-based and that this *is* the best way, seemingly leading to unquestioning acceptance that this must be true. Indeed, if trainees are told this, why wouldn’t they assume it’s true? [Field notes, July 2009]

The above findings and discussion can be linked to the idea of a ‘development discourse’, the idea that the current way is the ‘modern’ way and the best way, and older ‘traditional’ ways needs to be replaced. I return to this in Section 7.2 below.

However, in spite of many participants believing that teachers are following particular ‘fixed set of ideas’ type methods, this may be more presumption than classroom reality. Indeed, there is a contrast between what teachers say about ‘method’, where they tend to state quite precisely which ‘method’ they or others are following, and what is

observed in the classroom, which is rather more fuzzy and varied. For example, during visits 1 and 2 to the setting, I was told on several occasions by teachers that they were following the 'activity method' or doing 'activity-based' teaching and so was looking out for this, and hoping to understand what exactly it meant, beyond students being involved in activities. However, observing classes during these visits I noted:

Teacher reads story aloud. No task given. Students seem to be listening and reading. No evidence of the 'activity method'. [Obs. 12]

Teacher reads part of a text and asks comprehension questions. Teacher reads some more and asks more questions. I can't see any 'activity-based' method here. [Obs. 15]

Moreover, even when there was something that might resemble 'activity-based' teaching, it was often unclear to me exactly what this meant, as the following observation notes suggest:

The students are keen to participate, but opportunities seem limited to the teacher interacting with the students, i.e. there's no pair work. Students suggest ideas for a notice about a science fair. Is this an example what they're calling the 'activity method'? [Obs. 6]

Students read their letters aloud ... Teacher then tells me the syllabus is 'activity-based', though from her description, 'activity-based' seems primarily to mean less teacher-centred. [Obs. 11]

Students work in groups and write dialogues between characters in the poem, to be finished for homework and acted out tomorrow. The dialogue writing part seems quite communicative, while the performing part could be linked to task-based learning, or is it just an eclectic approach? [Obs. 18]

I was struggling to see a cohesive 'fixed set of ideas' type 'activity method' being implemented in practice, beyond the approach taken generally involving some kind of activity among the students, though this was not consistently the case. Indeed, as Bell



(2007) suggests, it is perhaps more likely that most teachers teach in a more eclectic manner, taking what they want to from different 'methods' and 'approaches' depending on their own preferences and the setting in which they work, akin to what Prabhu (1990a) called 'a sense of plausibility'.

### **7.1.3. Importing 'Western TESOL' methods and approaches**

There is little awareness of the problematic nature of importing 'Western TESOL' methods and approaches into the setting.

In the data, there is little reference to any potential downside of attempting to apply methods and approaches from 'Western TESOL' to the setting, except for a comment by [12] criticising the fact that ELT in India had 'jumped onto the CLT bandwagon', and one by [18] lamenting the fact that the Indian expertise was not promoting itself globally, when she commented that:

While it is true that most pedagogy in ELT is created in the West, India has a lot to give the world in terms of a talented body of learners and teachers ... in terms of sheer innovation in the face of difficult teaching and learning situations and in terms of the naivety of experts here who do not have the time or inclination to publish their real-time, practical findings that can give a lot to ELT globally.

Even in explaining that 'India has a lot to give', however, [18] still feels the need to begin with the caveat that 'most pedagogy in ELT is created in the West' which itself suggests that she believes 'pedagogy' is 'created' elsewhere and that she, to some extent at least, goes along with the idea that this pedagogy created elsewhere can be imported to other contexts. That is, even for this participant who was keen to promote what India has to give, English language teaching is still viewed as a non-context specific, 'one size fits all' type activity, where new approaches are predominantly generated in 'Western TESOL' settings and then exported to other settings, rather than being developed locally.

The section below discusses one idea commonly seen as imported from 'Western TESOL', the need for the role of the teacher to shift from being the source of knowledge

and controller of the class to being more of a 'facilitator', supporting the students' learning.

#### **7.1.4. The role of the teacher**

The importance of the teacher in facilitating learning and motivating the class is commonly recognised in the setting, though these roles do not seem to be associated with a particular method or approach.

Commonly used terms for the role of the teacher when discussing 'Western TESOL' approaches are 'facilitator' and 'guide'. However, it is interesting to note that, when commenting on the role of the teacher in the open-ended questionnaires, twelve of the thirty-one respondents mentioned the words 'facilitator' or 'guide', *even though at that point in the questionnaire no mention of any particular approach had been made*. These comments can be summed up by [Q29] who suggested that 'nowadays the role of the English teacher is as a facilitator'. Furthermore, seven respondents used the words 'motivator' or 'motivation' in describing the teacher's role.

There were also a number of comments pointing to the fact that teachers should be engaging in an interactive 'student-centred' process. For example, [Q20] suggested that 'teaching should be student-oriented' and [Q28] believed that 'the teacher must be with children always and interacting with them always. They must discuss their viewpoints with them. They must listen to their views.' There appears to be an understanding then, from the questionnaire data, that an important role of the teacher is as a 'facilitator' and 'guide' as well as in motivating students, *regardless of the methodological approach being employed*.

At first, this seemed to be at odds with what I was observing in classes, where I would write comments such 'very teacher-centred' [Obs. 1] and 'very teacher-dominated, little pair or group work' [Obs. 2], which initially seemed to indicate that the teacher adopted a more controlling role. However, when I came to analyse this data, I changed my view on this, realising that it was not that the teachers were not 'facilitating' or motivating, rather that my 'Western TESOL' influenced view of what constituted 'facilitating' or

motivating differed from their views. For example, in terms of being ‘facilitators’, many of the questionnaire respondents saw themselves as ‘facilitators’ of learning, but believed that this could happen while retaining what my ‘Western TESOL’ eyes were interpreting as tight control of the teaching and learning process. Similarly, they seemed to take the view that they could motivate students without relinquishing too much control of the learning process.

These different understandings and interpretations of language relating to particular approaches to ELT add an extra layer of difficulty in terms of both discussing and applying different approaches, particularly those originating outside a particular setting.

## **7.2. The traditional-modern dichotomy**

There is a ‘development discourse’ operating in relation to ELT within the setting. This discourse manifests itself in positive attitudes to aspects of ELT methodology that are seen as ‘modern’ and negative attitudes to aspects seen as ‘traditional’. Furthermore, methods and approaches seen as coming from ‘Western TESOL’ are generally seen as ‘modern’ and to represent the way forward for ELT, while those approaches that have developed within the setting, such as learning language through literature or grammar and translation-based approaches, are seen as ‘traditional’ and out-of-date.

In spite of this, the data suggests that these ‘traditional’ approaches are still widespread in the setting. Teachers believe these ‘traditional’ approaches to be useful for their students. This points towards an independent and unrecognised professionalism operating in the setting - independent in the sense of not following an officially sanctioned approach such as the ‘activity-based’ approach, and unrecognised in the sense that teachers not being given credit for teaching using such ‘traditional’ approaches.

The negativity surrounding so-called ‘traditional’ approaches and even the word ‘traditional’, compared to the positivity surrounding terms such as ‘communicative’ and ‘communicative approach’ was a recurring theme in the data. ‘Traditional’ approaches

were seen as undesirable and something to be changed, with the label 'traditional' acting as a repository for any approach or technique deemed unfashionable.

The need to change the 'traditional' approach was exemplified by [21] who pointed out:

English teaching largely follows the traditional grammar translation method. There is a growing awareness of the need to introduce communicative strategies in the classroom and in most cases we see a lopsided mix of both methods.

Here, [21] notes the 'growing awareness of the need to introduce communicative strategies', making the implicit assumption that these 'communicative strategies' represent a more 'modern' and more enlightened way forward. She also uses the phrase 'lopsided mix of methods', again contrasting the less desirable 'traditional' method with the more desirable 'communicative strategies'.

Similarly, suggesting that 'communicative' teaching was not happening to any great extent in Kerala, [15] commented:

I don't think it's happening in ... I mean to the extent the *visionaries* of that particular ... you know they had something in mind when they thought that out, they had good intentions but I don't think it's coming up to the level expected.

Here, [15] labels the architects of 'communicative' approaches as 'visionaries', while at the same time suggesting that in her own context the 'good intentions' of these 'visionaries' have not led to the expected improvements, expressing both a tacit acceptance that the ideas of the 'visionaries' should be accepted and an underlying disappointment that they, in her view, have not been.

Along similar lines, discussing whether Kerala should adopt a more 'communicative' approach to ELT, [4] commented, 'Yes, it is necessary because we should not *lag behind* anything', suggesting that she sees 'communicative' approaches as 'modern' and the current approaches used in the setting as lagging behind.

Furthermore, during the interview with [1], I used similar discourse in setting up a question as I noted:

There's certainly a lot of talk now among the ELT profession in India about more communicative approaches, seemingly *slightly behind* the rest of the ELT profession.

In using the phrase 'slightly behind', I also fall into a 'development discourse', implicitly assuming that discussions around adopting more 'communicative' approaches should have already happened because adopting such approaches would represent progress in terms of ELT methodology in the country. Furthermore, I fell into this discourse in spite of the fact that, from the very early stages of this study, I had realised that the types of 'communicative' approaches used in 'Western TESOL' were not particularly suited to Kerala - indeed, as discussed in Chapter 1, it was this lack of suitability of 'Western TESOL' approaches that was part of the impetus for this study in the first place. This did however make me realise how easy it can be to get drawn into using such loaded and potentially misleading language, and more broadly get drawn into adopting this kind of 'development discourse'.

These negative connotations associated with so-called 'traditional' approaches are unhelpful in that the result is to summarily dismiss a range of teaching approaches and techniques, some of which have met with some success over a period of time. For example, possibly influenced by 'Western TESOL', the use of the students' first language in more 'traditional' approaches such as the 'bilingual method' was viewed as something to be avoided by several interviewees [5, Q20], while communicating in English only in class was seen as 'modern' [8, Q22]. This contrasts with a significant body of opinion that now regards the use of the students' first language in the language classroom, not only as a useful pedagogic tool, but also as very much in line with more recent views on language teaching, such as those which take a critical pedagogy perspective and those that advocate teaching English as an International Language (see, for example, McKay, 2012). However, these latter views on first language use did correspond with several interviewees views, with [6, 9] commenting on the use of students' first language as a

useful pedagogic tool, and [12] raising concerns about the social cost of promoting English at the expense of L1, when she stated:

The major problem that I have with the teaching of English is that we are stuck with a colonial rule that says avoid use of the L1 ... but we are not exploiting the use of that first language, which is available for all of us in this country and ... in India, English is never going to replace the mother tongue or the L1. ... It's the birth right of every child I think to get English ... social mobility, economic mobility, all of that stuff, but it cannot be at the cost of L1.

There are therefore some, albeit a minority, who appear not to be getting caught up in the 'development discourse' or in the case of [12] fighting against it. The issue of a 'development discourse' is discussed further in Section 7.2.3.

### **7.2.1. Teaching language through literature**

Literature can continue to play a role in English language classes, though more care needs to be taken in selecting appropriate literature.

One topic that frequently arose as part of the 'traditional' - 'modern' dichotomy was the fact that (English) language is often taught as a by-product of teaching (English) literature, or at least taught through literature.

This was something I noted during several observations:

Literature and language are taught together. [Obs. 5]

More of a literature class than a language class. [Obs. 15]

Reminds me of literature classes when I was at school, but looking at the textbook, as well as literature-based comprehension questions, there are several pages of grammar and vocabulary exercises. [Obs. 18]

Then later, in reviewing these observation notes, questioning my own views on this, commenting:

But why do I think it's a bad thing that they [language and literature] are taught together. [Field notes, December 2011]

This is another example of the way my own perspectives changed over time, as was discussed in Chapter 6. In this case, I had gone into the setting already thinking that learning language through literature was not a good thing, or at best, that literature was something to be used occasionally in language learning. Influenced by my own 'Western TESOL' background, I was seeing language and literature very much as two distinct subjects that needed to be kept separate, though came to realise that there can be some overlap as well as becoming more accepting of the idea that something might be appropriate in particular settings even if it might be less common in settings I was more familiar with.

Among the participants interviewed, opinion was divided on the role of literature in language teaching, with [21] referring to a 'cold war between literature and language people, leading to an unhappy marriage'.

Several interviewees felt that the literature-language link needed to be broken, [17] for example noting that:

As a teacher who believes in communicative approaches to language learning, I cannot perceive the link as a good one. Because literature is actually a product of language. So when language is taught through literature, the finished product is being used to teach about the raw material, which will not help in understanding the properties and features of the raw material.

Others felt literature not only to be a valuable source of language, but to be central to second language learning, as [9] commented:

Literature's the only place in a second language situation ... it's the only place where you find language in all its avatars, all its manifestations, from quarrels and romantic situations and shopping and arguments and murder and everything. Business too. Nobody stops you from reading business-related novels, for example.

Literature was also seen as:

a means of bridging the rural-urban divide, which many modern topics such as the internet cannot do as a learner in a very rural area of India may never use the internet. [11]

Others went for more of a compromise approach, advocating the use of literature but with 'more accessible locally-relevant texts ... literature with a small l' [12], and with 'texts that engage ... redefining what we understand by literature' [13]. Even those less keen to have literature as a core element of language teaching still felt there was a place for it 'as a dessert ... like an icing on a cake' [17].

Overall, these views suggest that literature, although perceived as a 'traditional' way to teach language, can still be a part of language classes, but perhaps with a greater focus on texts which are more accessible and relevant to the setting.

### **7.2.2. Teaching language with a strong focus on grammar and translation**

The use of grammar and translation-based approaches seems firmly embedded in the setting, in spite of being seen by many as 'traditional' and outdated.

Putting an overt and central emphasis on grammatical structures and translation in ELT classes often gets labelled as 'traditional' and discussed in a negative sense. For example, [19] suggests that 'most teachers *end up* using the grammar and translation methods because they don't know any other way or they don't understand other methods'. He is saying that teachers use 'grammar and translation methods' as a kind of default option because of a lack of knowledge of or ability to use other approaches.

[13]'s use of language is interesting in his comment:

They've started talking about communicative language teaching and things like that, but we are still following *our age old traditional*, you know, the *old translation methods*'



His choice of words, 'still following our age old traditional ... old', positions these methods in an historical context, and to imply that they are in need of updating.

Similarly, [Q19] commented that 'to some extent this method [communicative language teaching] is used but at times we *slip into* the translation method also'. Here, her use of 'slip into' suggests a sense of falling back into bad habits.

The above three quotes view grammar and/or translation-based methods as being an implicitly undesirable thing. There is a perception that much of what are considered as traditional approaches and techniques should be discarded, though given the way that they are ingrained in the existing system, it is questionable whether this would be possible, at least in the short term, even if it is believed by some participants in this study to be desirable.

Against this, there were concerns raised about this movement towards 'modernity', albeit among a minority of those interviewed, for example [12] expressed concern that:

Unfortunately, we have not only jumped onto the communicative ... CLT bandwagon but today it happens to be the call centre corporate bandwagon and if you do not have the quote-unquote soft skills, it's assumed that you won't get jobs.

She clearly has reservations about blindly adopting new approaches without careful consideration. This again links to the impetus for this study, where it was suggested that inappropriate solutions to problems with English language teaching and learning were perhaps being sought, and in particular 'Western TESOL' type 'communicative' approaches were gaining favour, with guidance sought from outside 'experts', rather than looking for solutions within the setting itself, based on what is currently in place, as discussed below in Section 7.4.

The traditional-modern dichotomy also obscures potentially innovative local practice. For example, the recent growth in the number of English-medium schools and English medium streams within government schools in India (Graddol, 2010), where most

subjects are taught in English, might, in other parts of the world, be regarded as innovative and forward-thinking.

### **7.2.3. Development discourse**

There is a 'development discourse' operating within the setting that promotes the views of the 'Western TESOL'.

It reflects the point made by Wang (2011, p.43, *my italics*) that:

TESOL-related theories and pedagogy developed in the West are increasingly dominating the field of English language teaching worldwide, including in Asian countries. Their global relevance is firmly believed by many mainstream researchers and language educators in the West, and *this belief is increasingly shared by education professionals in non-Western countries*. Such a trend is clearly seen in the efforts to transplant language teaching methodologies developed in the West to various Asian countries, ... [including] more recent vigorous promotion of communicative language teaching (CLT) as a key component of ELT reform.

As discussed at the start of Section 7.2, there is among many participants a relatively uncritical acceptance that certain practices within ELT are outdated and in need of change, while others are seen to embody what should be happening or needs to happen in order to improve and develop English language teaching and learning in Kerala. This often revolves around the view that many of the existing local practices should be replaced by more 'Western TESOL' based 'communicative' approaches, and the discussions themselves form part of a 'development discourse' where new ideas are viewed as modern, enlightened and inherently superior, while practices that have existed in the setting for many years are seen as traditional, ill-informed and inherently inferior.

This discourse creates a kind of progressivist mythology, favouring new 'modern' 'communicative' ideas and approaches over 'old' 'traditional' ones, even though this may be based on false beliefs. It tends to promote the views of dominant groups over

more marginalised groups, both as part of a broader top-down discourse used by those in positions of power to influence those with less power, such as classroom teachers, and as part of the discourse of the 'Western TESOL' community used to influence those in 'non-Western TESOL' settings. Further, it promotes the idea that the ELT profession should constantly be looking forward, trying to change and trying to eradicate the 'mistakes' of the past. It also links to concerns over the power of English and linguistic hegemony, mentioned in particular by [12], with 'Western TESOL' portraying itself as 'modern' and promoting English as an essential part of the 'modern' globalised world. This 'development discourse' can be seen in the data mentioned earlier in this section, with [4], for example, suggesting that English should be taught 'in a communicative way' in the setting so that it did not 'lag behind' and [Q19] apparently lamenting 'but at times we *slip into* the translation method'.

The concern here then is that the 'old' and 'traditional' may get swept away by this 'development discourse'. This could happen through the unquestioning adoption of particular more communication-oriented approaches, or through reducing the emphasis on particular techniques when teaching language, such as using literature or translation-based approaches.

Finally, in this section, I should add that much of this debate was not apparent to me at the outset of the study. Whilst I had some familiarity with ideas around ELT methodology needing to be appropriate for particular settings, I had not realised that this 'development discourse' was operating. Looking back, I had not initially noticed the detail of the language being used by participants in the study, possibly because my own 'Western TESOL' 'professional baggage' meant that I was seeing this language as in some sense normal, as evidenced by my use of the phrase '*slightly behind* the rest of the ELT profession' to describe ELT in India's apparently belated discussions around 'communicative' approaches.

### **7.3. 'Communicative' approaches in Kerala**

There are different understandings within the setting about what it means to teach communicatively. Nevertheless, 'communicative' approaches are felt to be applicable

and are being used in the setting to some extent, though in practice there are a number of issues that make their use difficult, except in very particular circumstances.

Again, there is an independent and unrecognised professionalism happening. Those teaching in the setting are making decisions about what is appropriate for the setting based on local considerations. They are prepared to include officially promoted more 'communicative' approaches such as the 'activity-based method' or 'discussion method', but adapt them to what they feel is appropriate for their teaching situation and their students' needs.

After briefly suggesting possible reasons why people from Kerala might struggle to communicate effectively in English with those from outside the state, this section discusses what 'teaching communicatively' is understood to mean in the setting and considers the extent to which 'communicative' approaches are applicable and the extent to which they are currently being used in the setting.

### **7.3.1. Why do Keralites struggle to communicate in English?**

There is less of a perceived need among Keralites to improve their communication skills in English than among those in some other parts of India.

A recurring theme in this study was the idea that, although Kerala has the highest literacy rates of any state in India, when it comes to getting jobs requiring English, applicants from Kerala perform less well during interviews than applicants from some other parts of India, primarily because of difficulties communicating in English. The reasons suggested for the problems communicating in English may to a large extent be geographical, Kerala being a relatively isolated state, without a major urban centre or the level of transport links to other parts of India and the world that several other states have. As [9] noted:

Kerala is the only state without a single metropolitan city. Not one, it only has towns. We are very highly educated, literate and so on, but there are only towns. We are not so well-connected with the rest of the world.

[14] expressed a similar view:

Kerala is a very secluded state, or the southernmost state, we don't have many people from other states coming and residing here, so if you know Malayalam [the local language] well, you can survive in Kerala, no problem here at all.

This, it was suggested, creates a more 'insular' population. As [18] notes:

Keralites are very bright, well-educated, no doubt about that, but two factors hold us back: 1. Often, we can be very insular and would focus on our narrow world, making no attempt to belong to a country, world or globe. 2.

And as [9] put it:

Across the country and across the globe, the people must pass through the portal of English. ... Here in Kerala, people will not speak English if they can help it, they will speak in Malayalam, but the problem is that the minute they wish to get English-based jobs, either in Kerala or outside, their disadvantage shows up.

This lack of need to use English to communicate combined with a strong sense of the importance their language has led to a situation in which many learners do not have, and do not believe they will have, any need for English in their daily lives since they can 'comfortably get your things done by speaking in Malayalam' [13].

This also creates an issue with Keralites lacking confidence to speak in English. As [6] noted, 'in Kerala ... they hesitate. If they are not that confident that they can speak correct English, they won't venture to do it'.

It seems to be the case that, because Kerala is relatively isolated within India, with its own language, without a so-called megacity, and without a perceived need for English in the everyday lives of the majority of local people, English is viewed as a school subject rather than as a language for global communication. There is perhaps a need therefore for English teachers in Kerala to be more outward-looking, and think about their

students' needs in terms of English being a tool for communication in inter-state or even international contexts, rather than as an academic subject.

A further issue is the greater perceived L1 interference between the local language, Malayalam, and English, compared with other Indian languages, with [18] suggesting that in Kerala 'English is not standardised enough to be understood beyond their state' and [21], an IELTS examiner, noting that 'Keralites need to work on their pronunciation - most often in the IELTS speaking test they procure high band scores under all parameters except pronunciation'.

[19] also suggested that, in terms of Keralites not getting jobs across India, 'it is not just a lack of language skills; there are also problems with what has come to be blanketed as soft skills'.

Set against this background, the extent to which participants felt that 'communicative' approaches are applicable in Kerala is discussed below.

### **7.3.2. What does it mean to teach communicatively?**

There is a lack of shared understanding in the setting about what it means to teach communicatively. In particular, the term 'CLT' is understood in different ways by different people in the setting.

This lack of a shared understanding among participants about what 'CLT' means can be illustrated by the comments of [11] and [12], both experienced teacher trainers. [11] associated it with putting 'students in pairs and groups and you think of creating your own activities', at the same time emphasising that this did not fit well with the fact that 'classrooms mostly are discipline-oriented', whereas [12] was concerned that 'CLT often gets reduced to 'I will do pair-work and I will do group work'', seeing 'CLT' more as a tool for getting away from structure-focused classes.

From the above, and as was discussed in Chapter 4, it can be seen that terms like 'CLT' are not defined consistently or commonly understood, either within the setting or more widely, with the amount of emphasis placed on different aspects of what it might mean

varying considerably. This reflects the view of Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011, p.115) that 'there is no one single agreed upon version of CLT'.

However, despite this, 'CLT' did seem to be a meaningful concept to the participants in the study. They tended to respond in a positive manner to the concept of 'CLT', emphasising its focus on spoken language but also the opportunities for students to express their ideas. For example, [Q1] suggested that 'CLT' 'means to create ample opportunity for students to express their ideas in good English under the guidance of a teacher who can strengthen their abilities', while [Q10] believed it was concerned with:

giving chances to students to actually use the language and develop their communication skills by involving them in a lot of activities like group discussions, debates, pairwork etc.

The idea of increased student involvement in the learning process was also highlighted by [Q5] who commented that 'it is more student-oriented with classroom activities, group discussions, role-plays etc.' while [Q7] noted that the 'stress is more on making the student use the language. Casual interactions between teacher and students are encouraged. Student involvement is stressed'.

However, there were some apparent misunderstandings, or at least non-standard interpretations, of what teaching in a 'communicative' way might entail. For example, [Q3] felt that it meant that 'only the speaking and listening are developing, writing and reading skills are completely ignored', while [Q6] interpreted it to mean that 'there's no need for a complete sentence. A word or two should do, as long as it is understood.' This is very much in line with the kinds of misconceptions Thompson (1996) describes, which were discussed briefly in Section 4.2.2.

Meanwhile, others took the opportunity to express their own underlying concerns with teaching communicatively. For example, [Q9] stated that 'it is a good method but a basic understanding of the grammatical structures is a must. By learning literature also, we can improve our proficiency in the use of language', expressing a desire not to discard some of the more 'traditional' aspects of ELT in the setting.

Overall, despite the tendency to pare down and simplify 'CLT' into one or two easily understandable guiding statements, the term was used in a positive sense. This relates to the idea of a development discourse, discussed in Section 7.2.

### **7.3.3. The applicability of 'communicative' approaches in the setting**

A 'communicative' approach is felt to be applicable in principle in Kerala, though in practice there are a number of issues that make implementation difficult. Further, there are features of existing, generally less 'communicative', approaches that are felt to be important by many teachers in the setting.

Respondents to the questionnaire clearly believed that 'communicative' approaches were applicable in Kerala, with twenty-nine of the thirty-one teachers suggesting they were applicable or at least to some extent applicable. However, there were a number of caveats put forward within the broadly positive responses, for example [Q5] was of the view that 'in schools where the standard of English is good, yes [they could be used], but in rural schools they may not give the desired effect', and similarly [Q14] suggested that 'in urban areas they are applicable, but in rural areas they are not applicable'. Meanwhile, [Q17] thought 'they are only partially applicable because of the lack of trained English language teachers' and [Q16] suggested that social issues were at the root of the problem, saying that:

The majority of students come from very poor social, economic and educational backgrounds. The basic knowledge of English will be very poor with these students, and some don't care about acquiring language skills, so this approach is not practical in our context.

In addressing the issue of the appropriacy of 'communicative' teaching in Kerala, some teachers also expressed more fundamental concerns with 'communicative' teaching generally, as they understood it, a common concern being that the importance of particular aspects of language such as grammar, vocabulary and spelling should not be forgotten. [Q4], for example, suggested that 'grammar needs to be emphasised. Also idiomatic expressions and the finer aspects of a language' - though she did not specify



what these 'finer aspects' were - and [Q22] wanted to highlight that we should 'give importance to grammar, and give importance to spelling and to the structure of sentences', while [Q6] was concerned about 'the decline of correct spellings as text message script is very common'.

Focusing on grammar, [6] lamented:

Earlier it was that grammar should be taught in a fixed way, enforced grammar was there, now ... if they are communicating correctly, it's ok, well and good, and we are not interested that much on the grammar part. ... When writing, they are writing without any proper grammar, earlier it was not like that, the Keralite people, when they write they would write proper full English grammatical sentences only. Now they lack grammar ... and they lack the rules of grammar.

[4] more succinctly suggested that 'they [her students] do not know the basics of English grammar or the English language, they just want this subject to pass the examination'.

These points may have been made as a reaction against the emphasis being placed on communication and skills work, which some teachers perceived as happening at the expense of placing emphasis on the more structural aspects of teaching English. Nevertheless, they do point to the fact that certain existing teaching strategies and approaches may need to be respected and retained, even if it is felt necessary to broadly change the approach to teaching English, if the broad change is to be accepted by teachers in the classroom.

This perhaps reflects a broader resistance, particularly among more senior staff, to changing the status quo. In informal discussions with one teacher trainee doing teaching practice in a secondary school, she said that:

she couldn't use a more communicative approach, or any 'fashionable method', because it wouldn't be accepted by the school hierarchy. From visits to other schools, I can see how this could be a problem as many school principals and senior members of staff seem to believe more teacher-centred grammar-based approaches should be used. [Field notes, August 2010]

There was also a suggestion that teaching communicatively is seen as an extra burden on top of all the other things that teachers feel they need to do such as finish the syllabus, prepare students for examinations and perform the necessary administrative duties. This can be seen with reference to the need to focus on examinations in the previous quote from [4] above, and from the comment below by [14] who, referring to both the demands of the syllabus and the large mixed-ability classes, noted that:

the curriculum is so heavy that you won't have time to complete it, you know, to deal with all the texts that are prescribed, so you won't have that much flexibility in teaching. You have to deal with so many texts, very tough texts, and then the classroom is heterogeneous ... and you have so many numbers, a hundred plus students, so many students there, you won't be able to make all of them speak in the classroom.

An implication here is that, with all the other things she has to deal with, being asked to teach in a more 'communicative' way is perhaps a step too far.

Summarising this, although it was felt possible to implement a more 'communicative' approach to teaching English in Kerala at least to some extent, at the same time, a number of issues make this implementation difficult to achieve in practice.

#### **7.3.4. The use of 'communicative' approaches in the setting**

Communicative approaches are being used within the setting, but mainly in specific teaching situations, such as in small classes, in 'better' schools and in urban centres.

Views expressed in the questionnaire data about whether or not 'communicative' approaches were currently being used in Kerala were mixed, although twenty-three of the thirty-one teachers suggested they were, at least to some extent, being used. The respondents often added information about particular locations (urban areas), particular institutions (private schools), particular situations (smaller classes) or other particular cases, such as particular teachers being keen to implement more 'communicative' approaches, where such approaches were more likely to be used. For example, [Q2] said 'communicative' approaches were not used much as 'students are

too many in number', while [Q6] noted that those schools following 'The Central Board of India [syllabus] follow it'. Another respondent, [Q10] said that 'we use it here in high school classes. On the whole, I don't think communicative methods are used much except in the high-profile private schools'. [Q15] suggested that 'it depends on the teacher', while [Q19] was of the view that 'in some classes it is used, in some classes it is not used completely because students are poor in English.'

This idea that there are particular situations in which a more 'communicative' style of teaching is happening is borne out by my field notes written after from [Obs. 16]:

This is one of the 'better' schools in the area, i.e. one of the more expensive private schools ... observed a class. The observation was of a very competent teacher teaching very competent and motivated students. The teacher seemed knowledgeable and had a higher level of English ... the students also asked me questions, they clearly spoke very good English themselves ... it might be that more communicative methods are applicable to a much greater extent in 'better' schools, such as this one, than they are in other schools, because of a combination of environment, class size, teacher's language proficiency, teacher's pedagogic knowledge and the students' proficiency in English. [Field notes, August 2010]

Furthermore, taking on board comments made in previous sections, it may be that the 'communicative' approaches being used are incorporating a strong grammatical and structural element. While 'communicative' approaches might aim, at least in theory, to develop different aspects of 'communicative competence', paying attention, in Canale and Swain (1980) and Swain's (1983) terms, to sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence as well as grammatical competence, and more recently perhaps might also aim to include additional competences such as intercultural competence (see, for example, Byram, 1997), ELT in Kerala seems keen in practice to emphasise grammatical competence.

Looking at this another way, rather than trying to relate what is happening back to a 'Western TESOL' generated view of what 'communicative competence' and a

'communicative' approach to ELT ought to look like, it may be more prudent to consider existing local practices in the setting in their own right. Indeed, over the course of this study, I have come to realise that my tendency was, and to some extent still is, to relate, compare and often judge the setting in relative to the 'Western TESOL' settings that I am more familiar with. In the next section, I attempt to put this 'Western TESOL' bias to one side, and discuss a more localised approach to ELT in Kerala.

#### **7.4. A localised approach to ELT in Kerala**

Any change in approach to ELT needs to be grounded in local considerations such as the existing approaches, the resources available and expectations of the wider educational system. Placing greater emphasis, in terms of ELT methodology, on local conditions would help to give recognition to some of the independent and currently unrecognised professionalism that exists within the setting.

This section considers the extent to which developing the existing localised approach might be a possible way forward, and what some of the features of such an approach might look like. It then discusses how this might fit with more recent literature on ELT methodology.

##### **7.4.1. Towards a localised approach to ELT**

The starting point for any way forward for ELT in Kerala should be the existing and established local practices. Any changes to ELT methodology in the setting need to be embedded into these local practices.

There tended to be a pragmatic view taken in the setting in terms of what was or was not possible in practice in ELT, and in education more generally, accepting constraints such as the fact that teacher-student relationships and other relationships within institutions tended to be quite hierarchical [19], that classes tended to be large, and that the syllabus was prescribed and teachers were expected to follow it closely. Within these constraints, teachers found their own ways of helping their students, such as [4] who discussed focusing in particular on getting weaker students to the required

standard, and [12] suggesting that teachers needed to develop a ‘where there’s a will there’s a way’ attitude.

Against this backdrop, there were a number of suggestions concerning ways in which ELT methodology could be changed or adapted. These suggestions generally involved adaptations to existing approaches, working from and making adjustments to the existing situation rather trying to change it completely.

One suggestion for adapting existing approaches was to continue to use literature to teach language but, as discussed in Section 7.2.1, to use it in more accessible and engaging ways [11, 12, 13]. Indeed, as I noted in field notes:

The idea that literature is a part of language teaching and learning seems (rightly or wrongly) quite ingrained in the thinking of most teachers and teacher educators I meet. [Field notes, August 2010]

Given this, it seems reasonable to continue to use literature in language teaching, though perhaps modifying the way it is used, rather than discarding it, and more widely to recognise that what is good about the existing approaches needs to be preserved.

I made a similar point in my field notes:

Students seems to have a reasonable level of English again, making me even more curious to know how it all works in the sense that there are so-called ‘backward’ teaching methods and very large class sizes in a distracting setting, yet the students still seem learn, so on one level I wonder why any change is necessary. Even with existing approaches, there seems to be a degree of freedom to adapt classes to students’ needs, and to make use of particular strengths of particular teachers, such as the teacher in [Obs. 10] genuinely interacting with the students throughout the class and the teacher in [Obs. 14] using visual aids, in particular posters, to get students more engaged in the class. [Field notes, July 2009]

The first sentence in this extract suggests that if existing approaches are working, at least to some extent, then wholesale changes would be inappropriate, while the second sentence suggests that teachers can work effectively within the existing system, again cautioning against making wholesale changes.

The overall emphasis on developing the existing localised approach to ELT is perhaps summed up by [10], who commented that:

Fifteen or twenty years ago, there were CLT-type things suggested, but it's recognised now that you can't just adopt an approach from outside, so you have to find an Indian way. India has to find its own way for its own context.

In terms of encouraging a localised approach *and* a 'communicative' perspective, one speaker at a conference I attended in Kerala suggested that:

We need to encourage local initiatives and use local culture, local legends and local history to build the communicative pressure to use English. [Field notes, February 2012]

This suggests that if there is to be a more 'communicative' focus in ELT in Kerala, then it needs to be embedded into local approaches, customs and traditions. Indeed, these local considerations are perhaps a good starting point for further developing an approach to ELT appropriate to the setting, though at the same time this should not preclude being open to and potentially adopting new ideas originating outside the setting.

#### **7.4.2. Features of a localised approach to ELT**

Possible features of a locally-initiated way forward for ELT in then setting include, as was discussed earlier in the chapter, retaining the use of literature in teaching English language, though selecting the literature more carefully, and keeping a prominent focus on grammatical and structural aspects of the language. They also include encouraging the appropriate use of the students' first language, using text-based materials, basing the approach used on the limited resources available and on established classroom

routines, and operating in line with what happens in the wider educational system, for example, in terms of preparation for examinations. Locally-based approaches can also include features originating outside the setting, such as different features of 'communicative approaches', but these need to be adapted to suit the setting rather than accepted uncritically.

Some of these features are considered below.

The use of the students' first language (L1) in English classes is already established in the setting, as I noted in several observations:

The class is a mixture of L1 and English, mainly L1. [Obs. 4]

Students prepare a poster-style advert in groups. Group work (making the poster) is all in L1. The teacher doesn't try to get them to speak English. [Obs. 9]

Although in these examples, it does not appear that L1 is being used in a particularly considered manner in terms of developing English language skills, the use of L1 is nevertheless an established part of ELT in the setting, and is perhaps something that should be retained within a localised approach. Accepting that L1 will and should be used, then teachers' awareness can be raised of when and how L1 can be used most effectively in ELT.

Another feature of many of the classes I observed was that they had an established, formulaic structure, generally led by a textbook, as the following observation notes suggest:

It seems that many classes have a very similar pattern, i.e. 'do a text', as every unit in textbook is set out in the same way with a text followed by a mix of comprehension, interpretation, grammar and vocabulary-based exercises. The texts seem rather dated. [Obs. 2]

This is perhaps simply a reflection of the fact that text-based materials are an integral part of the approach taken to ELT in the setting, perhaps arising out of the historical links

between literature and language teaching as was discussed earlier in Section 7.2.1 and in Section 7.4.1 above.

A localised approach is also by implication likely to be more in tune with what is possible in terms of the resources available and the quality of those resources. As I noted:

Very old-fashioned looking textbook. [Obs. 1]

Very few resources in the classroom - just textbooks in fact - very few resources in the whole school for that matter. [Obs. 3]

Given the scarcity of resources, what seems to be needed are activities that don't need resources. [Field notes, July 2009]

What these comments indicate, to an extent self-evidently, is that the approach taken needs to be rooted in the resources available locally. In this case, the resources available were generally limited. Even the textbooks were only available to the teacher in some of the classes observed, as the following observation notes illustrate:

The teacher reads story aloud. Is she doing this because of the lack of textbooks? ... The teacher makes a point of mentioning a local short story writer and says they are going to read one of his stories that has been translated into English. Most students don't have textbooks and need to share, one between three or four. [Obs. 12]

This comment also draws attention to the value of context-specific material as part of the localised approach.

A localised approach also more easily allows established classroom routines and behaviours to continue, such as when students stand up to answer questions or when the teacher or other adults enter the classroom. Whilst in my own teaching in 'Western TESOL' settings, it may be appropriate to have a more overtly friendly dialogic relationship with students, this is both less likely and less appropriate in Kerala, whether in secondary or tertiary settings.



Even where there was evidence of more 'communicative' approaches being incorporated into classes, these approaches were adapted and carried out in a distinct local style, perhaps allowing the teacher to feel more comfortable with the approach in terms of, for instance, maintaining a certain level of control. For example, pair and group work were not used in the manner envisaged by many 'Western TESOL' advocates of 'communicative' approaches. As I noted during [Obs. 8]:

Students go on to the 'discuss' section of their coursebooks. The discussion is done as a whole class with students standing at the front to give opinions to the whole class about the topic (space travel).

A discussion did happen, but not in the manner that might be expected in a typical 'Western TESOL' class, where typically students might first discuss things in small groups before the teacher gets feedback from the class as a whole.

Linked to this, there is also a need for the approach taken to meet students' expectations of what learning involves and mirror what happens in the rest of the school or college. Teachers were expected to behave in certain ways, such as controlling and leading the class from the front, and students were expected to behave in certain ways back, such as by being attentive and self-disciplined. As noted several times during observations:

Teacher very controlling, students mainly silent, but they seem to be listening to the teacher. [Obs. 1]

The bell goes, but most students carry on writing into their break time. [Obs. 6]

The teacher reads the story aloud. No task is given, though the students seem to listen and read when they're expected to, and are very well-behaved. [Obs. 12]

Everything is teacher-led and a high level of control maintained. The students are attentive. There seems to be a high level of self-discipline among the students ... the students seem genuinely keen to learn. [Obs. 15]

Indeed, it would be harsh to be too critical of this local approach or any approach when the students 'seem to be listening to the teacher', where students 'carry on writing into their break time', 'are very well-behaved', 'are attentive' and 'seem genuinely keen to learn'.

Another factor of local relevance is examination washback. Although, during an informal discussion with one lecturer at the local university, he suggested that there was a need to 'privilege teaching rather than examinations' [Field notes, February 2012], local teachers were generally rather more pragmatic in their acceptance that some students needed English simply in order to pass examinations. As [4] noted:

Let me tell you frankly that English is ... English is not coming into the daily application of any of the students here ... so most of the students who come to this college, they learn English just to pass the degree examination, so what we focus on is to make them pass this examination.

Given all of the above, it would seem sensible to work with and from the existing local situation and existing approach, supplementing this localised approach with judicious additions from new approaches and as new resources become available.

Furthermore, accepting the need for a localised approach to ELT, it would also seem appropriate to build the professional development of teachers around different features of this localised approach such as focusing on how to use literature effectively to develop language or how to use L1 effectively in classes. Grounding professional development in the realities of the setting is likely to help teachers feel secure, and to encourage their development based on what they already know and understand in their own environment. This is also more likely to be useful in the classroom than professional development aimed at encouraging teachers to adopt new 'Western TESOL' based approaches. Indeed, as I noted during [Obs. 9]:

This is similar to what I saw in earlier observations, where teachers seem unsure how to apply the 'new' methods they've been told to use, like the so-called 'activity method' or 'discussion method'. They also seem unclear on how to apply

the techniques that form part of these methods, such as using group work, in practice. But is it a question of training and/or hands-on observed practice, or is it a wider issue with trying to implement new but unsuitable approaches?

Issues of teacher training and development are discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

### **7.4.3. A localised approach to ELT and recent literature on ELT methodology**

Taking a localised approach to ELT can be supported by a broad range of recent literature on ELT methodology.

In terms of connecting a localised approach to ELT back to theoretical understandings on ELT methodology, Bax (2003, p.286), as discussed in Section 4.1.2, advocates a context approach to language teaching, viewing the needs of the setting, and the learners in that setting, as ‘the key factor in successful language learning’, and giving this priority over consideration of which methodological approach to adopt, while Howatt and Widdowson (2004, p.369) suggest that there is already a ‘shift to localization’ happening, with ELT practices developing based on the needs of particular settings.

A more localised approach can also be linked to ‘postmethod pedagogy’, discussed in Section 4.1.4, and in particular one of the three operating principles Kumaravadivelu (2006b, p.69) refers to, that of particularity which:

seeks to facilitate the advancement of a context-sensitive, location-specific pedagogy that is based on a true understanding of local linguistic, social, cultural, and political particularities.

It could also be argued that a localised approach based on some of the above features could fit within a broader view of communicative teaching. As Nunan (2004, p.10) notes, it is possible to find ‘text-based syllabuses’ and even ‘essentially grammar-based curricula that fit comfortably within the overarching philosophy of CLT’. The more flexible ideas around communicatively-oriented language teaching (COLT), suggested by Littlewood (2004, 2013, 2014) and discussed in Section 4.2.4, can also be encompassed

within a localised approach. For example, Littlewood (2014) highlights that L1 can be play an important role in the English language classroom within any setting.

What I have come to understand here is that it is not where ideas come from, for example from 'Western TESOL' or otherwise, but whether they are appropriate in a setting, given existing conditions and approaches used in the setting, that is important. It could indeed be that ideas from 'Western TESOL', espoused by 'Western TESOL' 'experts', can be appropriated into an existing localised approach, though of course this does not necessarily mean that they should be.

## **7.5. Implementing Change**

There are a number of factors which act as barriers to changes in ELT methodology in the setting. However, there are also a number of bottom-up locally-instigated changes in ELT methodology happening, which provide further evidence of independent and unrecognised professionalism within the setting.

Underlying much of this chapter has been the theme of change in ELT practices and how to make change happen. This section discusses barriers to change, the need for joined-up thinking when implementing change and the bottom-up teacher-led changes happening within the setting.

### **7.5.1. Barriers to change**

There are a number of factors that are likely to limit both the volume and the speed of any changes in ELT methodology in the setting. One major factor is resistance to change among more senior teachers and other more senior staff in educational institutions.

Several participants noted that there was greater enthusiasm for change and greater openness to new approaches and ideas among younger teachers, while senior teachers were, or at least were viewed as, resistant to change, in particular towards more 'communicative' approaches:

It was with younger teachers or those that were not yet teachers, they were still going through their university, they seemed to be the most open and excited about trying different kinds of things. [1]

Maybe senior teachers might not welcome it [change] that much because they're used to certain ways of doing things. They like their classes as it is, but when there is young blood round, they love to experiment. [5]

Usually the senior teachers resist change when they find that they have to reframe all that they have been trained to do. [17]

The senior teachers continue to be sceptical and resisting, while the new recruits who have been trained differently are willing to give the new methods a try. In the long run, there is the risk of these people also falling into the rut. [19]

Change is almost always viewed with suspicion and, as far as teaching methodology, goes the heads of institutions and senior teachers are often guilty of not moving with the times. A bright young teacher with radical ideas is often viewed as a threat to the establishment. [21]

Along similar lines, discussing the recent emphasis on communication skills and greater use of technology in schools in Kerala, [6] commented that:

Especially the youngsters, they are very supportive and they are in for the change actually. They like the change and they are involved in so many projects whenever we are approaching them.

Younger teachers also valued closer, less formal relationships with their students. [5], a college teacher in her late twenties or early thirties, commented that:

I try to be a very good friend of my students because I think if they are afraid of me or if we have just a formal relationship, they won't be able to communicate with me, they won't come to me with their doubts or whatever.

Set against this is that many teachers, and particularly younger teachers, felt they were not listened to when changes were being suggested and that they had limited autonomy to incorporate new ideas into their classes, with [11] suggesting that new ideas can only be implemented:

provided the authorities allow the teachers to do that. The teachers, unfortunately, don't have the autonomy to do so. So, any amount of training that is provided to them remains mostly theoretical. Very few teachers have the opportunity to go back and try the technique that they've been trained in in the classrooms.

This is not to say that resistance to change is solely found among more senior teachers. Referring to the level of support among teachers for moving towards a more 'communicative' approach, [17] suggested that:

Only a minority support this approach because in general teachers tend to stick to familiar habits. Here, learning English through literature has been the norm, written exam with essays has been the tradition, so moving to new territories is usually resisted.

Further, as [17] continued, 'communicative' parts of the curriculum may be avoided:

In the new state curriculum, there is lot of scope for the teachers to include communication skills ... they can give the students something like role-plays, discussions, debates etc., but they're not doing that - that is all set in the curricular but they don't do that, so even though we have included communication skills in the syllabus, we are not successful in implementing it.

Of course, there are many other factors, apart from the teachers themselves, that might explain why change does not happen in practice, as [21] noted, 'the culprit here could be outdated textbooks, or lack of textbooks at all, as well as poor access to new ideas, poor exposure in short'.

In spite of the comments above, gradual methodological change is happening, among older as well as younger teachers, such as greater emphasis being put on students being active in the classes, less emphasis being placed on grammar and not all texts being literature-based.

There is also evidence of change happening in certain types of school, as I commented in my field notes after [Obs. 19]:

This is clearly a well-resourced private school, the second most expensive in the southern part of Kerala I was told. I was particularly surprised by the second class I saw with technology being used in the lesson in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. While I was suspicious that this may have been partly for my benefit in the sense of showing what a 'good' school it was, with good teachers, good students and good facilities, it was nevertheless the first time I've seen any form of technology at all in any school. I haven't seen even a CD player in a classroom so far, or for that matter a socket for a plug. [Field notes, August 2010]

Looking beyond the possibility that the school wanted to impress me, as a visitor to the school, through their use of technology, it was clear that things were slowly changing, even if only in small pockets.

Some participants viewed such small pockets of change positively. For example, asked for her view on a British Council funded ELT project that was at the time happening in Kerala and across India, [12] took the view that 'anything that can help us is going to work because we're looking at large numbers and ... every little helps, as straight as that'.

However, such gradual change was not considered enough by others, with [9] suggesting that:

Yes, bit by bit, drop by drop, differences do occur, but if you look at the situation in Kerala and in India, ... we can't use the model of addition, we have to use the model of multiplication. So bit by bit effects don't achieve very much in a country like ours where the numbers go up phenomenally every year, of students and

the teachers you require, the books you require, the teacher trainers you need and so on.

The suggestion here is that the current pace of change is insufficient to keep up with the growing pressures on the education system.

This also touches on the issue of the need to integrate different aspects of the change, which is discussed below.

### **7.5.2. The need for joined-up thinking**

There is to be a lack of appreciation in the setting of the fact that to make change happen in ELT methodology there needs to be parallel changes in other areas.

There was little evidence of joined-up thinking when discussing change, in the sense, for example, of making sure that a change in approach to ELT is accompanied by any necessary changes in textbooks, teacher training and development, and assessment, and that it fits with wider educational norms. This is perhaps apparent in some of the views expressed above which suggest that some teachers, particularly senior teachers, are to blame if changes fail to happen in practice, rather than seeing wider reasons for the failure, such as assessment procedures not changing in line with methodological changes.

The focus of the participants interviewed in the study was on what needed to change rather than how to make this change happen, and in particular, on the need to change particular aspects of pedagogy rather than on the process of implementing and managing any change. In other words, change was considered in terms of changing discrete aspects of practice, such as the teaching approach, rather than taking a more holistic view of change. Understanding of the complexity of the process did not come across in the interview data, and there was certainly no sense of a 'spider's web' (Bowers 1983, cited in Hyland and Wong, 2013, p.61) view of change, with a change to one part affecting other parts of the 'web'.



Having said that, some interviewees did understand the need for joined-up when making changes. As [19] put it when discussing the possibility of implementing a 'communicative' approach to ELT in Kerala, 'there is no chance for CLT unless there are wider system changes'.

[14] also noted that rather than thinking about changing one aspect of ELT, such as the methodological approach used in the classroom, other factors, and in particular the assessment system, needed to change too:

The main handicap is that, even though we teach English for the first, you know, ten years of school, we don't have any test or assessments given to them for speaking of English. They just have to write, they have to listen, they have to understand ... You end up speaking for half the time in English, ... then you are not giving them any assessment or any evaluation of the speaking faculty.

There was also recognition of the importance of other related factors in facilitating a change in teaching approach, for example [6] highlighted the need to continue to improve the links between teacher education and classroom practice and [15] highlighted the importance of effective leadership.

Several interviewees also mentioned change happening in particular circumstances, largely because of the efforts of particular individuals. These 'pockets of progress' are discussed below.

### **7.5.3. Pockets of progress**

One way in which change is happening in the setting is through the efforts of individual teachers who go beyond what might be expected of them and do what they feel is right for their students, often working to a large extent independently of official guidance and support, with their work seemingly unseen and unrecognised in an official sense. These pockets of progress exemplify one type of the independent and unrecognised professionalism that is operating within the setting.

Although there has perhaps been a negative discourse running through much of the discussion to date about making change happen, negative in the sense that it has focused on what is preventing change, rather than highlighting more positive influences on change, there is frequent reference in the data to individual teachers, who I am labelling as 'tall poppies', that are engaging in practices that are having a positive impact in terms of making change happen in the setting.

Within this study, two participants stood out as two 'tall poppies', [7] and [19].

When I first met [7], she was a teacher trainer in her first year of teacher training. On a professional level, she was interested in learning about different approaches to teacher education as she felt she had a great deal to learn in this area. On a personal level, she had close family members living overseas and had lived in different parts of India throughout her life, which perhaps helped to make her more open to different perspectives.

When I first met [19], he was an established college teacher, having spent sixteen years in the same college. On one occasion while visiting his college, I noted that '[19] has started an English Club, aiming to focus on communication, a voluntary extra-curricular activity. It seems very popular' [Field notes, August 2010]. He was later instrumental in setting up a teachers' group in the setting. He had a high level of curiosity to learn about the approaches to ELT used overseas and was open to finding ways to include some of these in his own teaching. For example, in spite of the apparent lack of technological resources for ELT in Kerala, he sought out ways in which technology could be used within the setting, even presenting at several conferences on the topic. During the course of this study, he completed a doctorate and started working in a local university. This gave him a greater level of autonomy and freedom to pursue his own interests, which in turn seemed to make him a more central figure among his professional colleagues in the setting.

It was unclear to me why these two participants were more receptive to change and more willing to try out new ideas than a number of others I met. I would tentatively suggest that on a professional level it could be connected to a desire for autonomy and

on a personal level it might have to do with a sense of curiosity and openness to new ideas.

Further comments in the data point to other 'tall poppies' making 'pockets of progress' in terms of what is being achieved in the setting. As [12] noted:

I'd say there are problems, but I do think that, in small pockets, lots of teachers are doing lots of good things ... Individuals are managing to do lots because of their own interest and capability.

Here, [12] highlights the 'small pockets' of 'individuals' who because of their 'own interest' are making a difference. [10] similarly suggests that there are 'very severe problems, but pockets of progress'.

Meanwhile, [11] eluded both to the potential for individual teachers to change things and the apparent lack of support for such teachers:

I strongly believe that a teacher can bring about a lot of change in the attitude of the learners, even the parents, so if the teachers work towards it, they can do wonders, some of them are doing ... they're doing it, but they need a lot of support.

It may be the case that these 'tall poppies' are acting as change agents, instigating bottom-up change within, and to some extent despite, the constraints of the educational system.

There is also evidence of 'tall poppies' in the observation data. The following extract from [Obs. 10] points to an individual teacher making a difference. As I noted:

There is no L1 being spoken by the teacher ... the teacher monitors, encourages and helps while the students work in groups. Some L1 spoken in groups. Each group of students chooses a spokesperson for feedback. The teacher makes sure all the students listen to each other's answers during feedback. Students are smiling ... the students' attention has been held throughout despite noise from

surrounding classes. I haven't seen this more involving style of teaching here before. Pockets of progress?

At the time, this was the tenth class I had observed, but the first in which the teacher had tried to involve and engage the students, and teach in, at least from my 'Western TESOL' perspective, a more 'student-centred' way.

In terms of my own language in pondering whether the way this class was taught represented 'pockets of progress', I have come to understand that my conceptualisation of the term 'progress' at that time, equating it with a movement towards a more 'Western TESOL' style of teaching, is one that is potentially problematic, as was discussed in Chapter 6.

However, the point I would make here is that some teachers are doing things beyond the norm, not simply doing what they are told, but doing what they think is right for their students, be it by creating an English club, finding a way of holding the students' attention despite the potential distractions, speaking only in the target language or making students not only listen when the teacher is speaking but also when other students are speaking. These actions exemplify how certain individuals find ways to work independently, led in part at least by their own beliefs about what will benefit their students' rather than following prescribed rules about how they should teach. They highlight the kind of independent professionalism present within the setting - independent in the sense that it was not following a particular officially sanctioned approach.

### *Summary*

This chapter has highlighted independent and unrecognised professionalism within the setting by exploring different perspectives on ELT methodology. It has considered the methods and approaches used in the setting and how these are labelled as 'traditional' or 'modern', the use of communicative approaches in Kerala, what a more localised approach to ELT in Kerala might look like, and what implementing a change in approach might involve. It does this primarily by giving *local perspectives*, but at the same time, I

recognise that the way I have chosen to represent these perspectives has been influenced by my own *distant eyes* interpretation of these perspectives.

The following chapter discusses second language teacher education in the setting.

## **8. *Local Perspectives through Distant Eyes: Second Language Teacher Education***

This chapter discusses findings related to *local perspectives* on second language teacher education (SLTE) and conceptualisations of professionalism, as seen from my *distant eyes* perspective.

As a result of looking at SLTE in the setting in the light of an autoethnography of my own professionalism, discussed in the Chapter 6, I have found that SLTE tends to be conceptualised in a narrow sense in terms of top-down imposed theory-led training programmes, with these programmes viewed as having little connection to classroom practice. In terms of the professionalism of English language teachers, one specific area of particular concern is their language proficiency. However, in a more positive sense, there are examples of independent and unrecognised professionalism happening within the setting. In terms of SLTE, 'independent' professionalism refers, for example, to teachers developing themselves professionally outside of officially sanctioned SLTE programmes or other top-down imposed professional development activities, such as via informal networks of teachers within the setting. This is unrecognised by local ELT professionals in the sense that only the top-down imposed type of professional development seems to count in an official sense. For example, being able to apply for promotions can depend on having attended imposed in-service SLTE programmes and professional development workshops. This suggests that the current narrow view of SLTE and of professionalism in the setting needs to be broadened.

In terms of the structure of the chapter, Section 8.1 discusses a common concern among many participants, the language proficiency of English language teachers, while Section 8.2 discusses wider concerns with both pre-service and in-service SLTE in the setting. Section 8.3 then focuses on the informal teachers' networks and teachers' groups that have developed and that are providing a form of independent and unrecognised professionalism in the setting.

Again as with the previous two chapters, I am aware that the questionnaire and interview data does not describe the situation in the setting, but how participants were perceiving and constructing it.

## **8.1. Teachers' language proficiency and SLTE**

A high level of language proficiency is seen as an essential part of the professionalism of an English teacher. However, there are concerns about the language proficiency of English teachers in the setting.

### **8.1.1. Concerns over teachers' language proficiency**

Teachers lack the required level of language proficiency to teach English, particularly those teaching in primary schools.

Several participants were concerned that many English teachers lacked the necessary proficiency in English, as [15] noted:

I would say the majority are not really equipped to handle English language, in the sense that we expect them ... we expect certain things from an English teacher.

There were a number of other similar references to perceived language deficiencies among English teachers, with [12] for example stating simply, 'You see, our teachers' proficiency is not fantastic', and [7] that 'teachers don't have the language proficiency or comfort when using the language'.

The perceived lack of communication skills in English was highlighted by [16], who also suggested that this had implications for SLTE:

Those who teach in English, they don't communicate well. First, we have to bring in some programmes where we can train them to speak good English and give it to their students. ... They [English teachers] have to acquire that language capacity or that communication skill properly. ... only 10%, I don't even think

10%, of the teachers are good communicators, they have to be properly given training, proper training.

Underlying these comments is an assumption that in order to be a good English language teacher, a high level of English language proficiency is a basic and essential requirement, and that developing this proficiency should be a core aim of any SLTE programme. This is in contrast to the majority of my own experiences of being involved on teacher education programmes, both as a participant and as a 'facilitator', where language proficiency has been taken as a given, having been verified prior to the programme, or is downplayed, with any emphasis on language during the programme being more about language awareness than language development, and with any language development aspects, if there at all, being dealt with incidentally or as an added extra rather than as a core part of the programme.

The perceived lack of English language proficiency among teachers was felt to be most problematic at primary level, as [12] noted:

The children are supposed to start English in class 3 of primary school ... our primary school teachers don't have the wherewithal to teach the language, but they have to teach it. Solutions are being found ... [but] because you cannot say, "I'll wait five years until my teachers are trained and then start", so now what's happening is the teacher and the students are both learning the language together.

[9] supported this view of an inadequate level of language proficiency among English teachers at primary level:

Think about the language you need in primary school classes. 'What's wrong with you my dear, why are you crying?' Do you think they can say that? No, they can't.

[17] was also of the opinion that 'especially at the primary level, teachers should be properly and thoroughly trained', though it was not clear what this 'proper' and 'thorough' training would involve.



My field notes also suggest a problem, as I noted after visiting a primary school:

At the school today, I was going to give the questionnaire to the teachers but decided against it as only one of them seemed to speak much English. Given what I've been hearing about wanting to introduce English in the first year of primary school, language development would be useful for these teachers, and probably for others working at primary level. [Field notes, July 2009]

The problem with the lack of language proficiency among primary teachers is exacerbated by the lower status given to teaching in primary schools compared to teaching at secondary or tertiary level. It is possible to become a primary school teacher in Kerala without an undergraduate degree, whereas an undergraduate degree is normally necessary to teach at secondary or tertiary level. Therefore, those who are more qualified in terms of academic achievement, who also tend to be more proficient in English because of having completed higher education programmes taught in English, tend to teach at secondary or tertiary level institutions, both because they are seen as of higher status and because they generally offer better pay and conditions than primary institutions. As [10] noted:

There is a primary teacher scale, then they have a trained graduate teacher scale and then they have a postgraduate teacher scale. I said there were one or two of us who can go to the lower classes and teach the children, but they said I was appointed as a high school teacher so I couldn't teach in the lower school. We need to overcome this problem, the problem of the status of primary schools.

Set against this, from questionnaire data, all 31 of the teachers surveyed thought English should be taught in the setting from the beginning or near the beginning of primary education.

Therefore, any general lack of proficiency in English among primary teachers is an issue that needs to be addressed. Within the teacher education of primary teachers, there needs to be a greater focus on developing the English language skills of teacher trainees.

More broadly, if English is to be taught effectively at primary level, the issue of the lower status accorded to primary school teaching may need to be addressed.

The discussion here resonates with the concerns of Graddol (2010, p.81) who notes, with reference to India more widely, that:

Now the priority is for speaking skills, and to start the business of English teaching in primary schools. This will require well-trained and qualified teachers, using communicative methods to engage young learners, but introducing the teaching of English into schools where trained teachers and suitable textbooks do not exist will magnify educational failure.

### **8.1.2. Language proficiency and professionalism**

Professionalism is often judged in a very narrow sense in terms of language proficiency.

Within the setting, links were made between teachers' language proficiency and their ability to teach. As I noted in my field notes after the interview with [9]:

Language proficiency seems to be of paramount importance in terms of judging the professional ability of the teacher. Several interviewees seem to be more concerned with this than with developing other aspects of teachers' professional knowledge like classroom teaching skills or keeping up-to-date with current developments. What English teachers need to know seems to be seen in a rather narrow sense in terms of language proficiency, rather than in a broader sense as including areas such as pedagogic knowledge or understanding the context in which they're teaching. [Field notes, August 2010]

This language proficiency-based view of the knowledge base that English language teachers are expected to have seems to be a very narrow conceptualisation, focusing principally on knowledge of and proficiency in the language, with less concern about other areas covered by the literature. As discussed briefly in Section 5.2, Richards (1998), for example, sees the knowledge base for language teaching as including theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, pedagogical reasoning and decision-

making skills, contextual knowledge, all in addition to knowledge of the language, which he calls subject matter knowledge. By contrast, within the setting, it appears that knowledge of the subject matter, the English language, takes precedence.

This may also suggest a rather narrow view of what is expected from SLTE programmes, a view which prioritises a focus on language development over taking a broader view of SLTE as ‘developing professional identity through social participation’ (Burns and Richards, 2009, p.17). Of course, it may be that this ‘narrow’ view is the most appropriate starting point for thinking about SLTE programmes in the setting, rather than trying to apply ‘broader’ ‘Western TESOL’ perspectives on SLTE.<sup>16</sup>

## **8.2. Pre-service and in-service SLTE**

SLTE programmes in the setting seem to be top-down imposed theory-based and lack connections to classroom practice.

Throughout the interview data, there is a great deal of discussion about the perceived shortfalls of SLTE programmes; for example, their lack of emphasis on classroom practice, the top down imposed nature of the programmes, the lack of follow up after the programmes and the need for more school-based SLTE programmes. These issues are discussed below.

### **8.2.1. SLTE and classroom practice**

There needs to be clearer connections made between SLTE programmes, which are theory-based, and classroom practice.

There were concerns expressed about the efficacy of both pre-service and in-service SLTE programmes, highlighting problems of a lack of coverage in terms of equipping trainees to teach different levels of student and a lack of opportunity to apply theories and techniques in practice. This lack of practical training was highlighted by [4]:

---

<sup>16</sup> Although not discussed here, it is nevertheless interesting that I seem to be interpreting ‘Western TESOL’ as taking the more open and positive-sounding ‘broader’ view and the setting as taking the closed more negative-sounding ‘narrow’ view of SLTE.

In a B.Ed. course, actually we are given all the theories, all the theories of the communicative approach, bilingual approach, direct approach, every approach and every way is argued, every method is taught there without any what, examples or practical side.

Along similar lines, [16] commented on the lack of clarity about the impact in-service training has on practice:

They may go for the training but how far they learn from it, we don't know, ... nobody knows, there are no statistics on it, how many are making use of the training they get and practising what they learn in their schools.

There is therefore a disconnect between what is taught on SLTE programmes and classroom practice, with training programmes imparting knowledge about, for example, teaching methods and approaches or classroom techniques, rather than offering practical guidance in applying this knowledge.

[16] further suggested that most teachers did not implement the more 'communicative' parts of the syllabus, both because of a lack of communication skills in English among the teachers themselves and because of a lack of appropriate training in how to incorporate 'communicative' activities into their classes:

The [Kerala state] government are saying in the new curriculum ... there is lot of scope for the teachers to include communication skills in the lesson ... [but] many of the teachers are not able to communicate in English. ... so even though communicative skills are included in the new curriculum, we are not successful in implementing it ... we are not getting proper training to do that.

This lack of 'proper training' in terms of emphasis on 'communicative' approaches became evident to me when, during [Obs. 4] at the teacher training college, I was given the course material for the methodology part of the SLTE programme, and noted at the time that:

There are 15 'units' of material here, one mentions 'the communicative approach', describing it in a historical/theoretical sense rather than offering any practical guidance. In fact, the material as a whole looks like a history of ELT methods book rather than providing practical guidance in terms of ELT methodology.

[13] viewed the content of many SLTE programmes as lacking a reflective element and opportunities for trainees to interact with the trainers, with their peers and with the training material, commenting that:

Teacher trainees are shown demonstration lessons so what they end up doing is just replicating what they've seen in these demonstration lessons, which is not a process of teacher education, I mean for me it [the purpose of teacher education] is to make you think in different ways, like how to deal with the same text in different ways, that kind of interaction is not happening.

This view of SLTE at least partially sees it in a broader sense as needing to involve reflection on the process, recognising that becoming a competent teacher requires more than simply attending and completing a training programme, and that the training process should involve more than simply raising participants' awareness of theories and replicating classroom techniques.

This perceived lack of connection between the theory of SLTE programmes and classroom practice is something that needs to be addressed.

### **8.2.2. Sponsored professionalism**

Professional development is perceived in terms of top-down imposed teacher education programmes, what Leung (2009) calls 'sponsored professionalism'<sup>17</sup>. Teachers lack the power to exert influence over this professional development and further lack the

---

<sup>17</sup> As discussed in Section 1.5, Leung's definition of 'sponsored professionalism' is slightly narrower than mine, though this does not affect the arguments in this chapter.

autonomy to freely apply what they learn on these programmes to their classroom practice.

In-service teachers at government colleges are obliged to attend 'orientation' and 'refresher' courses in order to be able to apply for promotions, though these were often not seen as beneficial in terms of professional development. As [5], a college teacher, noted:

We have to do orientation and refresher courses and there we are told about all these various theories and everything, but in capsule form of course. ... Orientation's like around twenty-five days and refresher's like around twenty days. Orientation, every teacher who enters into service has to do that, preferably within one year. Refresher, you can do after one year of completing your orientation. You need to have one orientation and one refresher course certificate if you want to apply for your first promotion, so it's compulsory. ... After that, for your second promotion you have to have another refresher course.

There is a perception of professional development as an institutional requirement, one that the teachers themselves have no control over, with the way teachers are allowed to develop restricted by the power that those in authority exert over them. This emphasis on top-down imposed professional development also underlines the comment by [8], a school principal, that:

Here we are following the system of the [state] government and once they are changing the methodology of teaching, they will be arranging different teacher training courses and we have to send our teachers to attend those courses.

This comment suggests both that the government is imposing training on the schools, and that the schools then impose the training on the teachers. This enforced and formalised approach to professional development was not viewed as helpful.

### **8.2.3. Follow up after SLTE programmes**

There is a perceived lack of classroom-based follow up after in-service SLTE programmes.

[13] commented on the lack of follow-up support given to teachers who attend in-service SLTE programmes:

Teachers, I mean they attend some workshop or training programmes, but after that, if they want to develop their skills, they're on their own.

[16] supported this view, noting that:

Teachers are getting the opportunity to go for the training, but after acquiring the training, the skills, they are not coming and practising that in the school.

In addition to this, [1], a teacher trainer, who at the time of the interview was 'facilitating' a two-week in-service SLTE programme focused on teaching using more 'communicative' approaches, when asked about whether she felt teachers were able to use what she did with them, indicated that any follow up to her courses was informal, unstructured, and given at a distance. She commented:

I've heard from a few of them that they have, they emailed me that they've actually used the stuff in their classes, but I don't know how much above them, like how much their authority figures above them let them do things.

This again suggests a need for a more systematic link between any training in the form of sponsored professionalism provided and the application of what is learnt during the training process to classroom practice.

### **8.2.4. School-based SLTE programmes**

There is perceived need for more ongoing school-based in-service SLTE programmes, but these need to be realistic in terms of what they demand from teachers.

[10] highlighted the need to 'train some trainers and then send them to all the schools to spend time and then get feedback and then go there time and again'. This emphasises both the need for more practical classroom-based training and the fact that it should be of an ongoing rather than one-off nature. At the same time, she also cautioned against making impractical and unrealistic demands on the teachers' time for professional development activities, given their high workloads, and poor pay and conditions, as the following comments illustrate:

The quantum of work is too much. They are not given any free time for their own private study. They are also asked to do administrative work and of course do corrections. There's a school in Kerala that I've been going to for the past five years, they are all very keen and earnest, but they say they have so much other work that they don't have time to read. They also have to commute, sometimes great distances. Unless this situation is changed and their workload is reduced, their commute is reduced, and they are given better salaries, expecting teachers' to willingly take part in extra professional training is unfair. ... These are external problems and I don't think schools will be able to handle them unless the government helps a lot.

The suggestion then is that, although from a training and development perspective things would improve if the approach taken was practical and school-based, there would still be barriers likely to impinge on the effectiveness of any change in this direction, particularly if the change is going to demand more in terms of time and effort from teachers.

Similar points concerning, on one hand, the need to bridge the gap between theory and classroom practice, while on the other, recognising the lack of incentive for teachers to change the way they teach, were made by [1]:

I had to do a lesson with them to show them how it worked in a class ... I think somehow that has to be involved in the training. And I think what would help is offering extra money to attend the training ... it's financial but I think if they have



more motivation ... why should they use these methods, because that's another key point I've noticed in a lot of teachers - there's no motivation.

This suggests not only that a more hands-on school-based approach is needed, but also that teachers need some kind of inducement, perhaps financial, to encourage the development of a mentality among teachers where professional development is prioritised.

### **8.3. Independent professionalism**

Independent and unrecognised professionalism is happening within the setting in the form of informal teachers' networks and teachers' groups, suggesting a need to reconceptualise what professional development involves within the setting.

Having discussed SLTE mainly in terms of sponsored professionalism so far in this chapter, this section considers teachers' independent professionalism. In terms of what Leung (2009) calls 'independent professionalism'<sup>18</sup>, where individual or groups of ELT professionals decide for themselves what and how to develop professionally, my initial impression was that there were very few individuals or groups actively seeking out professional development. There was no explicit reference, for example, to specific types of professional development activity apart from attending workshops. Other potentially more teacher-led bottom-up professional development activities, for example those mentioned in Richards and Farrell (2005, preface ix-x)) such as 'self-monitoring, teacher support groups, journal writing, peer observation, teaching portfolios, analysis of critical incidents, case analysis, peer coaching, team teaching, and action research' were not explicitly mentioned in discussions of professional development.

Participants in the study appeared to view professional development in the more traditional sense of workshops, rather than recognising, as Johnson (2009) discusses, the changing nature of what constitutes professional development, and considering

---

<sup>18</sup> As discussed in Section 1.5, Leung's definition of 'independent professionalism' is slightly narrower than mine, though this does not affect the arguments in this chapter.

more self-directed, collaborative, inquiry-based alternatives to workshops as professional development, even though such alternatives may be more directly relevant to their classroom teaching and recognise the 'informal social and professional networks' (ibid., p.25) that they were part of. However, although these aspects of professional development were not explicitly mentioned and did not appear to be considered by participants as part of their professional development, there was nevertheless evidence of independent professionalism happening in practice.

This section initially develops earlier discussions to further consider the sense of powerlessness many teachers feel in certain aspects of their work, and then moves on to suggest that, despite this pervading sense of powerlessness, some teachers are finding ways to empower and professionally develop themselves through loose and informal networks. It then examines the role of key individuals or 'tall poppies' within these informal networks, looks at how these informal networks can indirectly facilitate professional development, explores the role teachers' groups are playing in this independent professionalism, and finally provides a discussion on how professional development should be conceptualised.

### **8.3.1. Sense of powerlessness**

Many teachers feel a need to conform to the 'system', to use, or at least be seen to use, the 'method' they are told to use and to attend the professional development programmes that they are told to attend, regardless of whether they consider them appropriate for their teaching situation. As was discussed in Section 7.5 and in Section 8.2.2, there seems to be a feeling of powerlessness among teachers, a feeling of not being listened to, and of new approaches, syllabuses and associated training programmes being imposed on them. As [5] suggested:

I have gone to workshops, before this syllabus came there was a workshop, a five-day workshop, to design the syllabus. There we begged of them, please don't overburden the students, this is not going to work out. But still the syllabus came into existence. None of our pleas were heard.

There also seems to be an acceptance of this authority, or at least no obvious sense of classroom teachers having the power to openly deviate from the prescribed path, as [4] explained:

It all depends on our systems ... we can follow only what our syllabus says or what our college says. We cannot deviate from the norms of the college.

This conditioning, or expectation, that the 'system' is there to be followed is also apparent in training programmes. As [13] put it:

Generally, what we are shown or taught or trained as part of the education programme, is to fall into a kind of a system ... teachers don't have that freedom to experiment inside the class.

[14] described this lack of freedom:

We [the school where she works] receive aid from the government, which means that we have to follow certain restrictions and regulations that are implemented by the government. ... The syllabus is heavy ... The kind of freedom that a teacher can take is limited to the method that he is using to teach this particular syllabus.

The lack of power teachers have to implement what they learn on SLTE programmes in their classes was highlighted by [11], who commented that:

Teachers can only try out new techniques provided the authorities allow them to do that. Unfortunately, they don't have the autonomy to do so. So, any amount of training that is provided to them remains mostly theoretical. Very few teachers may have the opportunity to go back and try the technique that they've been trained in in the classrooms.

Moreover, when asked whether it might be more interesting if teachers could have some say in how they teach their classes, she responded:

Look at it from a teacher's perspective, does the teacher have autonomy to choose ... she doesn't. So there is a fixed curriculum, a textbook to follow

religiously, if that is not followed, the students, the parents come back to the teacher and question why you haven't done this for us, that's why I say for a teacher it's more like, "I've completed this poem put a tick mark, I've done this chapter put a tick mark".

Therefore, there is not only the issue of a lack of connection between the theory in SLTE programmes and classroom practice, but also an added barrier in that even an enthusiastic teacher wanting to try to apply newly acquired theory to practice may not have the autonomy to do so.

This sense of powerlessness, and pressure to conform and follow the 'system', for example, by following the imposed syllabus or teaching using the imposed 'method' or attending imposed teacher education programmes, or by not feeling able to try out new ideas, clearly make it more difficult for individual teachers to act autonomously.

However, some teachers are nevertheless finding ways engage in independent professionalism, as discussed below.

### **8.3.2. Informal networks and teachers' groups**

There is evidence of independent and unrecognised professionalism happening within the setting in the form of informal teachers' networks and teachers' groups.

English language teachers in the setting were developing professionally in less structured and less imposed ways than initially appeared to be the case. This was happening through informal networks of ELT professionals, with these networks sustained to a significant extent because of certain individuals, the 'tall poppies' described in section 7.5.3, who stand out within the local ELT community, acting both as key participants within the network and as a kind of glue to hold the network together. They were striving to develop themselves and as a result often act as catalysts in the professional development of others. This created loose networks of teachers supporting each other in unstructured and informal ways, for example acting as informal mentors for less experienced colleagues in other institutions.

I began to notice these networks through effectively becoming involved in one of them myself, albeit in a peripheral sense, as the following extracts from my field notes explain. These field notes refer in particular to two of the participants in the study, who I previously described in Section 7.5.3 as ‘tall poppies’:

I feel so fortunate to have [7] and [19] arranging my visits [to schools, colleges, and teacher training institutions]. It seems they can get things organised at very short notice, with a few phone calls. They seem to have contacts everywhere – good contacts too, professional friendships, not just acquaintances. This was particularly noticeable today where the contact at the local school, seemed immediately to be on the same professional wavelength as [19]. It turned out that they’d attended several workshops together in the past and were now part of the same teachers’ group.

[7] really helped again me today. She took me to a school this morning, her children’s school, where she introduced me to one teacher who she knew on both a professional and personal level, who then arranged for me to observe two classes. Then, in the afternoon, she took me to a teacher training college, where the principal was her former teacher. She also seemed to know several of the other staff.

[Field notes, January 2013]

In this instance, these participants were able to facilitate my data collection by using their networks. I was benefitting directly in terms of gaining access to different educational institutions because of well-connected organisers. As I further noted in my field notes:

There’s a sense of a connected *cross-institutional* network of professionals, appearing on the same ‘professional wavelength’ as each other, helping each other out where they can. The impression given is of relaxed and informal relationships, professional but also social relationships, contrasting with what I’ve seen *within* individual institutions, where there’s the sense that teachers feel

restricted by the more formalised structures within particular institutions. Even [7] and [19], when in their own institutions, seem to act in a more constrained manner. [Field notes, February 2013]

Thus, although within their own institutions, these teachers felt a sense of powerlessness, as discussed in Section 8.3.1, once outside of these institutions, they felt less restricted.

This network of teachers therefore appeared to be operating within the confines of the educational system in the setting, but outside the confines of the normal places of work of those involved and therefore without the top-down pressure to conform to expected institutional behavioural norms.

It was only towards the end of my data collection that I began to realise that local teachers operating in these loose informal networks were, while on one level just helping each other out, actually facilitating their professional development, as the following extract exemplifies:

Spent the day with [19]. He took me first to a school and then to a college. Apart from carrying out two interviews, what struck me about today was the number of phone calls he received - six or seven during the course of one car journey. Almost all of them seemed to be work-related, but not related to his main job [in a government college], most of the time, he was advising his peers, generally less experienced teachers working in different local institutions, about various matters, generally of a pedagogic nature, but sometimes administrative. Some conversations took place in English, others in Malayalam, others in a mix of both. After a while, we started talking about these conversations. A common, though by no means the only, theme was the new assessment system that had just been put in place in government colleges to assess students' competence in English, and the fact that neither the teachers nor the students were well-prepared for it. In fact, [19] had been involved in designing and writing some of the new assessments, though this didn't seem to be the reason why he'd been contacted. It appeared that he was contacted because of his central position within the

group and the fact that he was viewed as a key source of knowledge and advice for those in the group. [Field notes, June 2013]

In this extract, I noted that he was 'advising his peers' and that a common 'theme was the new assessment system'. I would argue that through the conversations he was having, [19] was assisting in the professional development of the network of teachers around him, albeit on an informal basis. In other words, he was facilitating the development of the independent professionalism of these teachers.

This was in fact a critical time in the study as the events described here, particularly those described in the previous field notes extract, also helped me to crystallise my own thinking and to pull things together in terms of the unrecognised professionalism happening in the setting. These events provide a further example, in addition to the discussion in Chapter 6 and in particular in Section 6.4, of how I was able to appreciate the complexity of the setting once I had gained a greater understanding of the influence of both my 'Western TESOL' background and my partial insider / partial outsider positioning within the setting. They also made me realise that the conceptualisation of professional development in the setting was quite narrow and based mainly around more formal workshop-type professional development. This is discussed further in Section 8.3.3. More broadly, these events helped me to read between the lines and to see things that were not specifically stated in conversations around professional development during the study, and so to develop my thick description in terms of providing 'a narrative of what has been found that shows the full complexity and depth of what is going on' (Holliday, 2010a, p.99).

Returning to the above field notes, I asked [19] about the extent to which he felt part of an informal network of teachers and educators. He responded that:

I would say that I am very much a part of such an informal network. I have been mailing groups consisting of English literature teachers and English language teachers depending on their interests and we share information online. This is more so because as part of my work I need to bring in teachers from outside my institution for various purposes like material writing, evaluating and taking

classes. I am also involved in teacher training and feel part of that big community of teachers whom I have met during training sessions. [Email communication, August 2013]

Here, he talks about his informal network in terms of 'mailing groups' and 'sharing information online' and being part of a 'big community of teachers who I have met during training sessions', but also connects this to his work within his own institution.

Referring to his role within the informal network, he wrote:

My role varies. Often I have initiated discussions and caused people to come together. Other times have seen me taking on something already formed and carrying in on. I am a participant, recipient, coordinator, and often a passive observer. This is about informal, often online, interaction. [Email communication, August 2013]

Here, [19] makes the point that his role can vary greatly within the network and also highlights that the activity can often take place though online interaction. In the different roles he mentions, he engages in or engages others in professional development.

This professional development is happening in a more bottom-up, more informal, and often more collaborative way than is possible in the kind of top-down imposed SLTE programmes discussed above. It is also likely that this professional development is, to a certain extent, subconscious in that it is gained in part as a result of immersion within this informal professional networks within the setting, hence it may not be explicitly labelled or packaged as 'professional development'. Because of this, it may not be recognised as part of professionalism, either by those taking part or by those imposing more formal, top down and recognised forms of professional development. Nevertheless, teachers in the setting are accessing and making use of this informal network to deal with specific issues and, as an indirect result, are developing professionally.



As well as being cross-institutional, the network involves people at different levels in their respective institutions and at different stages in their careers, but who generally live and work in the same broad geographical area. Further, it includes central characters, who are often 'tall poppies' in the setting, and, between face-to-face meetings and activities, it holds together through mobile phone and online communication.

Those involved are connected in different ways, such as through having attended the same training programmes or through having worked together, hence the network is built around localised though not necessarily institution-specific relationships. That is, socialisation into the network happens at a broader than institutional level. Indeed, this idea of broad interconnections within the local community is something I had noted earlier in my data collection:

There's more of a sense of community here than back home. Wherever I ask to go, to schools, colleges, teacher training institutes and colleges in the city or outside, they [referring to participants [7] and [19]] always seem to know someone. [Field notes, June 2010]

This informal network resembles what Lave and Wenger (1991) call a 'community of practice', albeit involving a loosely bound community of teachers, with more established members of the community having more central and influential roles.

Although the kind of professional development described here might be seen as haphazard and as an unintended consequence of interacting with the network, nevertheless the network does seem to be a valuable means of acquiring new professional knowledge and, on a practical level, of helping teachers to find ways of dealing with particular issues. In effect, through the network, these teachers are finding informal ways to develop their 'personal practical knowledge', which, as highlighted in Section 5.2, recognises the contextual nature of a teacher's knowledge and that a teacher's knowledge is continually reconstructed as that teacher lives out their professional life (Clandinin, 1992).

Along similar lines, slightly less informal but still largely unrecognised professionalism also is happening in the setting through teachers' groups. [17] pointed out that these are being set up in the setting, commenting that 'slowly things are changing and teacher groups and all are getting done'. She had been involved in setting up a teachers' group herself and noted that, 'we wanted to set up a group so that we could all meet up once in a while, to share ideas and to share our troubles'. This was clearly a more bottom up and voluntary undertaking, independent of the control of the management of particular institutions and so it could presumably operate with a reasonable level of autonomy.

It is also likely that meeting in this group was not considered, either by those involved or by institutional managers, as part of what was recognised as professional development, both in the sense that it did not fit within the narrow conceptualisation in the setting of what professional development involved and in the sense that it did not qualify as the type of professional development teachers were expected to do in order to, for example, apply for promotions.

It could be argued that such informal networks and teachers' groups can help to provide the 'intellectual scaffolds that build towards fully competent professional participation', developing 'professional identity through social participation' (Freeman 2009, p.17). Further, it may be that the activities that take place in these networks and groups provide a way of mediating between the more formalised training and development activities that take place, and classroom practice.

### **8.3.3. What counts as professional development?**

There is a need for what professional development involves to be reconceptualised in order to recognise the importance more independent forms of professionalism, such as those discussed above.

Despite the above discussion around more independent professionalism, the majority of those interviewed in this study conceptualised professional development predominantly in terms of more formal and top down sponsored professionalism, generally focusing on its inadequacies, for example:

Teachers are not given any proper training; they just learn things by heart without understanding anything. [3]

Teachers often only have a textbook; they tend to lack the training or in-service support to adopt new ideas and approaches. [7]

I don't even think 10% of the teachers are good communicators, they have to be given training, proper training. [16]

Training must be given to teachers in order to enhance their creative ability. [Q3]

These comments focus on *giving training* to teachers, with only [7] recognising that 'in-service support' was also important. Other comments focused explicitly the lack of or limited effect of in-service SLTE programme.

The point here is that, even though this kind of sponsored professionalism was generally criticised by the participants, they still see this as what professional development is all about. Therefore, in discussing what needed to change, the emphasis was on the need for improvements in this type of professional development as opposed to thinking in terms of more independent professionalism, such as via the informal networks and teachers' groups discussed above. Independent professionalism was not a part of the schema the participants used to talk about professional development.

Having said that, a small number of participants were aware of the potential value different forms of independent professionalism. For example, [13] noted that:

Instead of considering one teacher, we may ... we can think of teacher groups and give support to them. If the teacher wants to do something for the next month, let's say a couple of teachers come together, discuss the things, do things together, prepare some material, go to the class, get back, that kind of collaborative approach is still yet to find space here.

It may be that the possibilities for this and other types of independent professionalism are increasing. For example, there are increasing numbers of ELT journals as well as

other ELT and general teaching publications, many available online and free of charge, which can widen the reach of current developments in ELT in ways that were not possible even 10 years ago. More specifically, given the increasing availability of and access to new technology, there is certainly potential for informal networks of teachers, like that described above, to grow in importance as a means of helping teachers to embed themselves into the local teaching community and as a result to develop professionally.

### *Summary*

This chapter has discussed different perspectives on SLTE in the setting. It has considered the approaches used for SLTE and uncovered independent and unrecognised professionalism in the form of a loosely connected network of teachers and a teachers' group organised in a relatively informal way. As with the previous chapter, it offers *local perspectives*, while at the same time, recognises the influence of my own shifting *distant eyes* perspective in interpreting these local perspectives.

The final chapter summarises some of the key findings coming out of the study and offers implications for local practice, for practice in 'Western' supported projects in non-'Western TESOL' settings, and for research practice.

## 9. Conclusions and Implications

This study has attempted to add to existing knowledge about local practices within the research setting by uncovering independent and unrecognised professionalism. These were not apparent at the start of the study, but were uncovered through an autoethnography of my own professionalism and, in the light of this, re-evaluating my own positioning with respect both to the setting itself and to issues related to ELT methodology and teacher education to the setting. This allowed me to give credit to different perspectives on the data collected, particularly the data from classroom observations and teacher accounts of practice, and so turn my initial ‘Western TESOL’ *distant eyes* perspective into one that could better understand *local perspectives*. As a result, I have been better able to see possible ways forward for ELT and for second language teacher education in the setting, based on this understanding of local perspectives.

The study further endeavours to add to existing knowledge in the sense of making TESOL professionals, whether researching or practising, more attentive to the need to understand unfamiliar settings, and more mindful of jumping to easy and simplistic conclusions about what might be happening in these settings. In particular, it attempts to add to the discussions around ‘Western TESOL’ professionals working and researching in ‘non-Western TESOL’ settings, and to caution against the risks involved when these ‘Western TESOL’ professionals bring with them their ‘Western TESOL’ ‘professional baggage’ to such settings.

This has implications for practice, in terms of both local practice itself and the support given by ‘Western TESOL’ teacher educators working in unfamiliar ‘non-Western TESOL’ settings. It also has implications for research practice, both for local researchers and for ‘Western TESOL’ researchers working in unfamiliar ‘non-Western TESOL’ settings.

In terms of the structure of the chapter, Section 9.1 gives the conclusions and considers the implications of the study in terms of research practice, and Section 9.2 considers the implications of the study in terms of ways forward for ELT in Kerala, based on *local*

*perspectives* as seen through my *distant eyes*, but informed by a greater understanding of my own professionalism.

## **9.1. Conclusions and implications for research practice**

This section relates to different ways in which I was able to develop as a researcher and so put myself in a better position to be able to uncover independent and unrecognised professionalism in the setting. The first part of the section highlights some of the ways in which my understanding of the setting changed during the study, while the second part focuses on the implications of this for research practice, and in particular for ‘Western TESOL’ researchers in unfamiliar ‘non-Western TESOL’ settings.

### **9.1.1. Understanding the setting**

This section focuses briefly on some of the ways in which I was able to develop my understanding of the setting during the study.

#### *Shedding ‘Western TESOL’ ‘professional baggage’*

At the start of the study, because of my ‘Western TESOL’ professional background, my tendency was to consider different aspects of ELT in the setting in relation to this, tending to see ‘Western TESOL’ as an idealised goal to aim for and the setting for the study as deficient in comparison to ‘Western TESOL’ in the sense of not practising ELT in the same more ‘modern’, more ‘enlightened’, more ‘correct’ way.

As I began to understand and offload some of my ‘professional baggage’, I began to see the setting in its own right, rather than through a ‘Western TESOL’ lens. For example, I was initially judging classes as ‘good teaching’ based on my ‘Western TESOL’ view of good teaching, but gradually began to see that there were examples of good teaching in the setting that did not follow the kind of ‘Western TESOL’ teaching style that I was used to.

More broadly, I was judging professionalism in this same sense, relative to ‘Western TESOL’, but gradually began to uncover professionalism in the setting that had remained hidden from me because of my belief in ‘Western TESOL’. This professionalism was also

to a large extent hidden from participants in the study, in part because many of them had also come to believe that they should adopt 'Western TESOL' approaches.

Over time, I began to judge the setting in its own terms. To continue the example above, I began to disentangle 'good teaching' from 'Western TESOL' teaching, and see that, for example, what appeared to be a 'teacher-centred' class could also be an effective and engaging class, rather than being constrained by the common 'Western TESOL' view that classes that were not 'student-centred' could not be engaging. Another example of seeing the setting in its own right was the realisation that my initial preoccupation with 'large classes' was in essence a 'Western TESOL' influenced preoccupation. Among participants, there was little concern about teaching what for me were large classes, probably because, within the setting, the classes were not considered as large but as typical classes. Indeed, as discussed in Section 6.1.3, when asked about this 'problem' of large classes, [4], [12] and [15] answered by saying what *could* be done in a positive sense rather than dwelling on the supposed problem.

#### *Putting the setting first*

Related to the above, I began to give primary importance to what was currently happening in the setting, making local norms the starting point for any discussions about the learning environment, ELT methodology, teacher education and related matters.

For example, in terms of the discussing the learning environment, the above comments on 'large classes' would be one instance of understanding that the setting itself should be the starting point. I also began to see other features of the learning environment, such as the fact the boys would sit on one side and girls on the other, or that classrooms would have no lights and in most cases no electricity and could therefore be quite dark at times, as local realities around which to anchor discussions.

In terms of ELT methodology, during the early parts of the study, I was in a position where, although I did not consider the uncritical application of 'Western TESOL' led approaches such as 'the communicative approach' as appropriate in the setting, I was still subconsciously using them as a reference point from which to judge classes. I was

also seeing *aspects* of such 'Western TESOL' approaches as potentially applicable as a means of dealing with perceived 'deficiencies' in the way English was being taught. Over time, I was able to move to a position where considerations of appropriate methodology would begin with the current approaches and techniques used in the setting. This does not mean that I would be against applying any aspect of 'Western TESOL' approaches, indeed there are aspects of the more flexible 'communication-orientated language teaching' that Littlewood (2004, 2013, 2014) advocates that would be compatible with a locally-based approach. However, this became a secondary consideration, the primary reference point being what was already happening in the setting itself.

### *Understanding my own positioning*

Over the course of the study, I was able to develop my understanding and awareness of my own positioning within the setting.

For example, I was aware of how I had gradually moved from being an outsider to becoming a partial insider. This helped me to see alternative interpretations of particular events, moving from making a comparison with 'Western TESOL' to understanding particular events as a partial insider. For example, I began to see that the supposedly 'traditional' approaches being used in the setting were having some success in terms of the English level of many of the students, and came to appreciate that this success might be because of and not in spite of such approaches.

I also came to understand how my background and the roles I was perceived as having within the setting, such as teacher, teacher trainer, or indeed researcher, were affecting the type of data collected. For example, during interviews with those who saw me as a teacher trainer, particularly when the interviewees were teacher trainers themselves, the conversation would lean towards a discussion of the problems with teacher education in the setting.



### *Appreciating complexity*

Underpinning much of the above discussion is a greater appreciation of the complexity that exists within different settings. As I became more aware, for example, of my own 'Western TESOL' 'professional baggage' and its influence on both my data collection and my work within the setting, of the unhelpfulness of comparing the setting in a deficient sense to 'Western TESOL' settings that I was more familiar with, and of the fact that the easy and obvious explanations were not necessarily the only or the best ones, I was able to see the complexity that existed within the setting.

As part of this, I tried to avoid thinking in a black-and-white sense and came to appreciate the shades of grey that existed. For example, I began to question my own understanding of particular terminology commonly used in ELT, particularly in 'Western TESOL', seeing that terms such as 'teacher-centred' and 'student-centred', 'method' and 'postmethod', or 'insider' and 'outsider', should not be interpreted in simplistic and binary ways. Further, I came to appreciate that my understanding of terminology such as this was strongly influenced by my 'Western TESOL' background and that I needed to consider how such terms were applied within the setting, rather than trying to apply my 'Western TESOL' understanding of them to the setting.

#### **9.1.2. Implications for research practice, particularly in unfamiliar settings**

In this study, the way I was seeing the setting as a 'Western TESOL' researcher in an unfamiliar 'non-Western TESOL' setting became fundamental to the study. The following implications came out of this.

##### *A necessary struggle to offload 'professional baggage'*

It seems to be the case that *the struggle* to understand how a researcher in an unfamiliar setting is him/herself influencing the data, as described in this thesis, is a necessary part of any study of this type, particularly for relatively inexperienced researchers. As part of this, and in order to 'challenge the value of token reflection' (Wall, 2006, p.3), awareness needs to be raised concerning the importance of interrogating your own

professionalism, perhaps through disciplined and ongoing bracketing or perhaps through the more autoethnographic approach taken in this study.

An important point here is that a researcher needs to understand and put aside his/her own prejudices in order to understand unfamiliar research settings. As Holliday (2016, p.183) notes, 'this is a very difficult task and of course is never totally possible'. Indeed, in this study, I feel the issue was that, although I had *some* understanding of my own prejudices, I was not initially able to apply this understanding to the setting in terms of, for example, disciplined bracketing.

Related to this, a further implication is that researchers and teacher educators need to appreciate the complexity of particular settings. This involves avoiding reductive interpretations of particular situations or events, acknowledging that there may be something else going on than what is immediately apparent, and developing an awareness that there may be different ways of seeing and interpreting the same situation or event.

*The need to raise awareness among inexperienced researchers in unfamiliar settings, in a practical sense, of concepts such as reflexivity and bracketing*

Inexperienced researchers may not be aware, as they begin studies, of concepts such as reflexivity or bracketing. However, even if they are aware, they may not be able to apply these concepts in practice. This can lead to problems where the researchers are in unfamiliar settings, such as 'Western TESOL' researchers in 'non-Western TESOL' settings. For example, in relation to the early parts of this study, although I had a loose awareness of what bracketing was in theory, I had never tried to actively apply it in practice. This meant that I was neither recognising nor putting aside prejudices, and instead letting them influence my data collection and broader thinking related to the study. More specifically, although I had an awareness, even at the start, that what worked in my own 'Western TESOL' setting was not necessarily appropriate in the research setting, and that I needed to find a way of working in the setting that recognised this, I was still judging the setting, for the most part negatively, in terms of

what it lacked in comparison to the 'Western TESOL' norms and expectations I was more familiar with.

The implication here concerns researcher development, and the need to focus, not just on different aspects of research methodology in a theoretical and research-methodology-literature sense, but also on how particular aspects apply or can be applied *in practice* in specific situations. It is unclear to what extent this practical application of research methodology is something which can be taught in a more formal sense, as opposed to something that needs to be learned once in the unfamiliar setting, however the broad point here is that, for inexperienced researchers in unfamiliar settings, awareness of these methodological issues needs to be raised,.

#### *Understanding researcher positioning takes time*

A further implication of this study is that, again particularly for less experienced researchers in unfamiliar settings, the researcher needs time to understand their positioning and how this positioning might be changing during the study, and the impact of this on the research process. As suggested above, over the course of the study, my positioning moved from being an outsider to being a partial insider, and additionally, I was perceived as having different roles by different people at different times. These factors affected the data collection process and how I was interpreting the data. However, as a less experienced researcher in an unfamiliar setting, I needed time to understand my own positioning in the setting and the effect of this positioning on the research process.

I was helped in this sense by the fact that this study developed over several years and several visits to the setting. I believe that this was more beneficial than a single more prolonged period in the setting as the extended time span of the study allowed relationships with participants to develop over time, as well as creating the time and space to reflect on my experiences in the setting and to carry out preliminary analysis of the data.

### *The need for research by local researchers*

As has been said at several points in this thesis, the independent and unrecognised professionalism in the setting was not only unrecognised by me at the start of the study, but unrecognised, or least not recognised in a positive way, by those working in the setting. In terms of ELT methodology, for example, those choosing to follow more 'traditional' approaches were seen as resistant to change. In terms of professional development, only more formal top-down imposed professional development was recognised by those in official positions as a necessary part of the job, with other more independent forms of professional development either unseen or not considered as professional development.

There is perhaps an implication here that more research needs to be done *by local researchers* into the kind of independent and unrecognised professionalism discussed in this study. The act of studying and writing about this kind of professionalism may help it to gain recognition, both within the setting and beyond.

## **9.2. Conclusions and implications for ELT methodology and teacher education**

This section looks at ways forward for ELT in Kerala, given the *local perspectives* expressed and in the light of the discussions about how my *distant eyes* perspective changed during the study. It considers the implications of the study in terms of ELT methodology and teacher education.

### *The term 'method' is to be useful for teachers in practice*

In terms of describing their 'method' or 'approach' in the classroom, some participants adopted a theory-led 'fixed set of ideas' view of the 'method' they thought they were using, while others took a practice-led view of their 'method', adopting whatever 'method' or 'approach' they felt appropriate to a particular teaching situation, without feeling constrained to stick to a fixed set of ideas. However, although there was a lack of consistency in the use of the term 'method', it was clear that all participants felt they were following some kind of 'method'.

The implication here is that, even though those working in the setting may define 'method' in different ways, they still believe in the concept of 'method' and there is a role for 'method' in a loosely-defined sense. Indeed, in spite of the view of several theorists (Brown, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001, 2006b; Richards, 1990) that the term is outdated and unhelpful, it offers reassurance for practising teachers that there is some kind of rationale behind the approach they are taking in the classroom.

*ELT professionals need to be aware of the potential influence of a 'development discourse' on the way they look at ELT methodology*

There was a development discourse influencing the views of a number of participants, with terms such as 'communicative' or 'activity-based' or 'student-centred' seen as 'modern' and as providing guidance for what should be or needed to be happening in classes. By contrast, more traditional features of the way English is taught in the setting, such as 'teacher-centred' classes, teaching language through literature, placing a strong emphasis on teaching grammar and using translation, were viewed by some participants as undesirable features of ELT that needed to be removed from English language classes or at least reduced in terms of their importance in these classes.

This development discourse has perhaps arisen because of the influence of 'Western TESOL' on 'non-Western TESOL' settings over a number of years. By this I mean that if it is repeatedly suggested that particular ('Western TESOL') approaches or techniques are 'modern' and will improve the quality of English language teaching, then this message will be gradually become the established discourse.

Further evidence of a development discourse within ELT in the setting can be seen in the suggestion by some participants that there was some, albeit small scale, 'progress' happening. This 'progress' often referred to individuals or small groups of teachers trying to make change happen, and initially I took the term at face value. However, looking more carefully at the use of terms such as 'progress', they were generally used to describe a shift towards a more 'Western TESOL' type approach, the implication being that this type of movement represents 'progress'.

Some teachers in the setting do however resist this development discourse. They seem to decide what methodology to use based on their own experience and beliefs and based on an understanding of the setting in its own right rather than through the prism of what 'Western TESOL' says is the appropriate way to teach. In this sense, they apply their own 'method' and ideas in the classroom and in doing so demonstrate an independent and unrecognised professionalism. It is 'independent' in the sense that they are not blindly following the officially-prescribed approach and, if they are following it to some extent, they are making adaptations according to their own beliefs about teaching. It is 'unrecognised' in the sense that it is not necessarily considered as the 'correct' way, and also in the sense that teachers may try to keep it hidden or at least downplay it if they feel the approach they are using does not fit with the development discourse.

An implication for teacher education is that a more critical approach is needed, both within pre-service teacher education programmes and in terms of the professional development of practising teachers, to encourage teachers to reflect on ELT in their particular teaching setting, highlighting the need to consider what is important for ELT in the setting in its own terms rather than relative to what is happening in other settings, and so making those involved aware of the dangers of uncritical acceptance of particular practices and of the potential risk of being caught up in the type of development discourse discussed above. This might in turn encourage and empower teachers to adopt practices appropriate for particular settings, rather than feeling they obliged to keep up with what is perceived to be happening elsewhere.

*ELT methodology and second language teacher education in the setting should focus on local considerations, and acknowledge the independent professionalism that exists*

There were certain aspects of the existing situation within ELT in the setting that came to the fore over the course of the study. These included the widespread use of literature and texts generally, the use of L1 in classes, the text-based structure of locally-produced textbooks, and the way in which classroom routines such as students standing up when speaking to the teacher were followed. Further, these aspects of the way English is

taught in the setting were established and both teachers and students were comfortable with them.

The implication here is that, in line with much current thinking in ELT, decisions about ELT methodology need to appreciate and recognise both local conditions and the ways teachers operate within those conditions in terms of using ELT methodology that they feel is appropriate for their classes, often independently of official sanction. That is, decisions about ELT methodology should acknowledge teachers' independent professionalism. For example, using literature, and more widely texts, as a springboard for teaching language should not be abandoned, but recognised as a local condition and the independent professionalism of teacher's choosing to make use of literature in this way should be acknowledged.

Furthermore, SLTE should reflect local conditions and acknowledge this independent professionalism in the setting. Continuing the above example, this would suggest that, in terms of SLTE, there could be a focus on exploiting literature so as to make it more accessible and engaging for students. To take another example, the use of L1 was a persistent feature in classes, and so SLTE should recognise this and seek to encourage teachers to use L1 at appropriate times in order to promote learning effectively.

*More communicative approaches can be used in the setting in particular situations, though there are challenges with implementing such approaches*

Although it was suggested above that ELT methodology should focus on local considerations, this is not to suggest that ELT methodology cannot also be informed by 'Western TESOL' based practice.

Broadly 'communicative' approaches were, in particular situations, such as in private schools, with 'better' students and/or within cities, thought to be used in the setting. However, there were perceived barriers to the use of such approaches, such as teachers wanting to place strong emphasis on teaching grammar, not wanting what they saw as the extra burden of teaching in more 'communicative' ways, or the school management not being supportive of changes to the existing ways of doing things.

Furthermore, in terms of the implementation of more 'communicative' approaches, there was a sense that younger teachers were more open to and more willing to change their approach to ELT than their more senior colleagues, but at the same time they were not generally in positions to make change happen in practice. There was also little evidence of joined-up thinking in terms of making change happen. For instance, a number of participants suggested a need to make classes more 'communicative' or 'student-centred', but these suggestions did not seem to be linked, for example, to a need to change the assessments that the students had to do.

An implication of this for practice is that, if a more 'communicative' approach to ELT methodology in the setting is desired, then there needs to be a more consistent system-wide view taken of how English should be taught. For example, English teachers are being asked by official bodies, such as state education authorities, to teach using more 'communicative' approaches, for example via the 'discussion method' or 'activity-based approach'. However, unless these approaches are supported by the school management, reflected in teacher education programmes and the assessment system, and embedded into the wider educational system, it is unlikely that teachers will be able to teach in the officially sanctioned way or, even if they are able to, they may decide, given these other factors, that this is not the appropriate way in their setting. They are likely therefore to continue with the independent professionalism, in terms of ELT methodology, that they are currently engaging in. Whilst this in itself is not a bad thing, it does not promote a consistent approach to ELT across the setting. Further, as this professionalism is not recognised as such, teachers following their own approach based on their own beliefs can get labelled as 'traditional' or out of touch with 'modern' ('Western TESOL') approaches to ELT, which in turn is likely to have negative effects on these teachers' motivation.

*There needs to be a more practice-based emphasis within SLTE*

There were concerns expressed over the lack of a clear link between theory as learnt on SLTE programmes and classroom practice. There were further concerns that in-service professional development was generally provided in the form of top-down imposed events, which those attending often did not perceive as useful, and that the teachers



themselves lacked the power to control their own professional development trajectories. In addition to this, the lack of classroom-based follow up to in-service professional development events was seen as making it more difficult to support teachers in putting what they learned at these events into practice in their classrooms. On a more pragmatic level, there was a belief that, until practical issues such as high workloads and poor pay and conditions were addressed, it would continue to be difficult to persuade teachers to engage meaningfully with professional development.

The implication of this is that SLTE needs to be more practice-based if it is to be perceived as relevant and effective. Alongside this, there is a sense that any in-service professional development needs to be mindful of what can reasonably be expected of teachers with high workloads who are not particularly well compensated in terms of pay and conditions.

*A wider conceptualisation of professional development is needed, with more independent forms of professionalism recognised*

As has been discussed, although some teachers perceived a lack of power to control their own professional development, professional development was happening on an informal basis and in ways that the teachers themselves did not seem to count as professional development. During the study, I was able to observe the way teachers supported each other across institutions, via what I have described as an informal network, a group of education professionals who have informally connected with each other, independently of any official involvement. This independent professionalism, rather than individuals or groups actively and consciously seeking out professional development, involved a group of individuals seeking answers to problems and, as a result, almost as a by-product, developing professionally. This was needs-based and voluntary, and bottom-up in the sense of coming from the teachers themselves rather than being imposed on them from above. However, it did not appear to be recognised by participants or those in authority as professional development, perhaps because within the setting professional development is conceptualised in a narrow sense, in terms of the more top-down imposed workshop type professional development, akin to what Leung (2009) calls 'sponsored professionalism'.

There was also a slightly more formal teachers' group operating across institutions in the setting. This group was set up in a bottom-up sense where a group of individuals came together rather than being supported by the institutions in the setting. Furthermore, like the informal network, it was not generally recognised as 'official' professional development, either by participants or those in authority. More specifically, the participants saw this group as a place where they could go to discuss and get help with particular issues they were having, rather than recognising the group in terms of professional development. In an official sense, this group was not recognised as the type of professional development that counted in terms of needing to do a certain number of hours of it in order to apply for promotions.

The fact that the informal network and teachers' group were operating and helping their members to develop professionally, albeit without considering it as professional development, suggests that the value of independent local approaches to professional development should be recognised. More broadly, there is a need for a wider conceptualisation of professional development. Moreover, given that the activities of this network and group seem useful in terms of helping members to develop professionally, it would be sensible to create conditions that encourage them to flourish. This could be done, for example, by raising awareness of the potential to develop professionally in more informal ways, both on pre-service SLTE programmes and once in-service as part of the ongoing professional development activities. Alongside this, such independent professionalism needed to be supported and recognised as worthwhile by those in positions of authority within the setting.

Further, it could be argued that developing teacher agency in this way might be a way of creating an educational environment closer to what the teachers themselves perceive to be appropriate in the setting. Empowering teachers in this way such that they feel able to make the changes they feel necessary to improve standards in their schools or colleges seems likely to lead to more sustainable developments in ELT practice than would be the case if changes to practice are imposed on teachers.

Related to this, there is also room for further research in the area of unrecognised professionalism and, in particular, the ways in which teachers are developing

themselves professionally in less formal ways and in ways less traditionally considered as professional development that are not given recognition in an official sense. As was discussed in Section 8.3 and elsewhere, though it took time to get at, there was unrecognised professional development happening in the setting. It would be interesting to focus on uncovering more of this kind of professional development in the setting. For example, an area not explored in this thesis was the amount of (unrecognised) professional development that teachers might be engaging in online.

*There remains a role for Western TESOL 'experts' in unfamiliar settings*

'Western TESOL' professionals still have a role to play in 'non-Western TESOL' settings. Being an outsider to the setting can enable an educator, or a researcher, to see what local practitioners cannot, wherever the outsider comes from and whatever their starting position. The issue is that this outside 'expertise' should be used sensitively and appropriately, without, for example, judging the setting according to the norms and expectations of other, more familiar settings. Problems may arise if 'Western TESOL' 'experts' are not aware of the 'professional baggage' they are bringing with them into unfamiliar settings, as discussed in the first part of this chapter.

However, once 'Western TESOL' experts become sensitised to the setting, come to realise that watered-down 'Western TESOL' type approaches are not necessarily the way forward in 'non-Western TESOL' settings, come to understand that within the setting the 'experts' are the people working there day-to-day, and look to collaborate rather than impose ideas, then an outsider's *distant eyes* outsider perspective can be useful. Indeed, as Holliday (2005) points out, there are plenty of cases of positive outcomes from outsider-led projects in terms of, for example, establishing new centres or new programmes.

*Summary*

This thesis has attempted to describe a process as much as it has produced a final product. I set off looking for *local perspectives* on particular issues in the setting, not realising the impact my 'Western TESOL' influenced *distant eyes* perspective was having in shaping both the data I was collecting and the way I was in interpreting that data.

Over the course of the study, I became more questioning of the way my own 'Western TESOL' based experience was affecting the study and as a result was in a better position to understand *local perspectives* in the setting, and to uncover the informal and unrecognised professionalism that existed within the setting, but that had not been apparent to me until I had added the autoethnographic dimension to the study.

## **Bibliography**

- Agnihotri, R. (2007) 'Identity and multilinguality: The case of India', in Tsui, A. and Tollefson, J. (eds.) *Language policy, culture, and identity in Asian contexts*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp.185-204.
- Agnihotri, R.K. and Singh, R. (eds.) (2012) *Indian English: Towards a new paradigm*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.
- Akbari, R. (2008) 'Post-method discourse and practice', *TESOL Quarterly*, 42(4), pp.641-652.
- Allwright, D. (1988) *Observation in the language classroom*. London: Longman.
- Alptekin, C. (2002). 'Towards intercultural communicative competence in ELT', *ELT Journal*, 56(1), pp.57-64.
- Anderson, C. (2003) *The dominant discourse in British EFL: the methodological contradictions of a professional culture*. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Kent.
- Anderson, L. (2006a) 'Analytic autoethnography', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35(4), pp.373-395.
- Anderson, L. (2006b) 'On apples, oranges, and autopsies: A response to commentators', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35(4), pp.450-465.
- Andrewes, S. (2011) 'Communicative language learning: Communicating for what purpose', *Modern English Teacher* 20(2), pp.5-12.
- Ansarey, D. (2012) 'Communicative language teaching in EFL Contexts: Teachers attitude and perception in Bangladesh'. *ASA University Review*, Vol. 6(1) [online]. Available at: <http://www.asaub.edu.bd/data/asaubreview/v6n1sl6.pdf> (Accessed 14 January 2014).

- Anthony, E. (1963). 'Approach, method, technique', *English Language Teaching*, 17, pp.63–67.
- Atkinson, P. (2006) 'Rescuing autoethnography', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35/4, pp.400-404.
- Atkinson, P. and Coffey, A. (2002) 'Revisiting the relationship between participant observation and interviewing', in Gubrium, J.F. and Holstein, J.A. (eds.) *Handbook of interview research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp.801–814.
- Atkinson, P., Coffey, A. and Delamont, S. (2003) *Key themes in qualitative research*. Walnut Creek CA: AltaMira Press.
- Baker, C. (1997) 'Membership categorization and interview accounts', in Silverman, D. (ed.) *Qualitative research: theory, method and practice*. London: Sage, pp.130-143.
- Baleghizadeh, S. (2015) 'The procedural syllabus and the task syllabus: How similar, how different?', *HOW*, 22(2), pp.104-113.
- Barnes, J. (2012) *What sustains a life in education?* Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Canterbury Christ Church University.
- Barnes, J. (2014) 'Interdisciplinary, praxis-focused auto-ethnography: Using autobiography and values discussion to build capacity in teachers', *Advances in Social sciences research journal*, 1(5), pp.160-182.
- Bataineh, R, Bataineh, R. and Thabet, S. (2011) 'Communicative language teaching in the Yemeni EFL classroom: Embraced or merely lip-serviced?', *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(4), pp.859-866.
- Bax, S. (2003) 'The end of CLT: a context approach to language teaching', *ELT Journal* 57(3), pp.278-287.
- Bax, S. (2006) 'The role of genre in language syllabus design: the case of Bahrain', *International Journal of Educational Development*, 26(3), pp.315-328.
- Bedadur, N. (2013) 'A design-based study on using m-learning for CPD', in Bolitho, R. and Padwad, A. (eds) *Continuing Professional Development: Lessons from India*. New Delhi: British Council, pp.88-95.
- Bell, D. (2003) 'Method and postmethod: Are they really incompatible?', *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(2), pp.325-336.
- Bell D. (2007) 'Do teachers think that methods are dead?', *ELT Journal*, 61(2), pp.135-143.

- Beretta, A. (1990) 'Implementation of the Bangalore Project', *Applied Linguistics*, 11(4), pp.321-337.
- Berliner, D. (2004) 'Describing the behavior and documenting the accomplishments of expert teachers', *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society*, 24, pp.200-212.
- Block, D. (2001) 'An exploration of the art and science debate in language education', in Bax, M. and Zwart, J. (eds.) *Reflections on language and language learning*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp.63-74.
- Bochner, A. (2000) 'Criteria against ourselves', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6(2), pp.266-272.
- Bolitho, R. (2012) 'Projects and programmes: Contemporary experience in ELT change management', in Tribble, C. (ed.) *Managing change in English language teaching: Lessons from experience*. London: British Council, pp.33-46.
- Bolitho, R. and Padwad, A. (2013a) 'Introduction', in Bolitho, R and Padwad, A. (eds.) *Continuing Professional Development: Lessons from India*. New Delhi: The British Council, pp.6-10.
- Bolitho, R. and Padwad, A. (eds.) (2013b) *Continuing Professional Development: Lessons from India*. New Delhi: The British Council.
- Borg, M. (2004) 'The apprenticeship of observation', *ELT Journal*, 58(3), pp.274-276.
- Borg, S. (2009) 'Language teacher cognition', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.163-171.
- Breen, M. (1985). 'The social context for language learning – a neglected situation?', *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 7, pp.135-158.
- Brewer, J. (2000) *Ethnography*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Brown H.D. (2002) 'English language teaching in the "post-method" era: towards better diagnosis, treatment, and assessment', in Richards, J. and Renandya, W. (eds.) *Methodology in language teaching: an anthology of current practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.9-18.
- Brown, H.D. (2007). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. New York: Pearson Education.
- Brown, J. D. (1995). *The elements of language curriculum: A systematic approach to program development*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.

- Brown, J. D. (1997) 'Designing surveys in language programs', in Nunan, D. and Griffee, D. (eds.) *Classroom teachers and classroom research*. Tokyo: Japan Association for Language Teaching, pp.55-70.
- Brown, J. D. (2009). 'Open-response items in questionnaires', in Heigham, J. and Croker, R. (eds.) *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.200-219.
- Brumfit, C. (2001) *Individual freedom and language teaching: Helping learners to develop a dialect of their own*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burgess, R.G. (1984). *In the field: An introduction to field research*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Burns, A. and Richards, J. (2009) 'Introduction', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.1-8.
- Burns, A. and Richards, J. (2012) 'Introduction', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to pedagogy and practice in second language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.1-12.
- Burton, J. and Carroll, M. (2001) 'Journal writing as an aid to self-awareness, autonomy, and collaborative learning', in Burton, J. and Carroll, M. (eds.) *Journal writing*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL, pp.1-7.
- Bygate, M., Skehan, P., and Swain, M. (2001) 'Introduction', in Bygate, M., Skehan, P., and Swain, M. (eds.) *Researching pedagogic tasks. Second language learning, teaching and testing*. London: Longman, pp.1-20.
- Byram, M. (1997) *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Canagarajah, S. (1999) *Resisting linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Canagarajah, A.S. (2012) 'Teacher development in a global profession: An autoethnography', *TESOL Quarterly*, 46(2), pp.258-279.
- Canale, M. (1983) 'From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy', in Richards, J. and Schmidt, R. (eds.) *Language and communication*. London: Longman, pp.2-27.
- Canale, M. and Swain, M. (1980) 'Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing', *Applied Linguistics*, 1, pp.1-47.

- Celce-Murcia, M., Dörnyei, Z., and Thurrell, S. (1997) 'Direct approaches in L2 instruction: A turning point in communicative language teaching?', *TESOL Quarterly*, 31(1), pp.141-152.
- Chakrakodi, R. (2013) 'Teacher portfolios as a powerful development tool for CPD', in Bolitho, R. and Padwad, A. (eds.) *Continuing Professional Development: Lessons from India*. New Delhi: British Council, pp.47-58.
- Chang, H. (2008) *Autoethnography as method*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Chang, M. (2011) 'Factors affecting the implementation of communicative language teaching in Taiwanese college English classes', *English Language Teaching*, 4(2), pp.3-12.
- Chick, J. K. (1996) 'Safe-talk: Collusion in apartheid education', in H. Coleman (ed.) *Society and the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.21-39.
- Chowdhury, R. (2003) 'International TESOL training and EFL contexts: The cultural disillusionment factor', *Australian Journal of Education*, 47(3), pp.283-302.
- Chowdhury, R and Ha, P. (2008) 'Reflecting on western TESOL training and communicative language teaching: Bangladeshi perspectives', *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 28(3), pp.305-316.
- Clair, N. (1998) 'Teacher study groups: Persistent questions in a promising approach', *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(3), pp.465-492.
- Clandinin, D. (1992) 'Creating spaces for teachers' voices', *Journal of Educational Thought*, 26, pp.59-61.
- Coffey, A. (1999) *The ethnographic self: Fieldwork and representation of identity*. London: Sage.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2011) *Research methods in education*. 7th edn. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Coleman, H. (ed.) (1996) *Society and the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Costa, A. and Kallick, B. (1993) 'Through the lens of a critical friend', *Educational Leadership* 51(2), pp.49-51.



- Cowie, N. (2009) 'Observation', in Heigham, J. and Croker, R. (eds.) *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.165-181.
- Davison C. (2013). 'Innovation in assessment: Common misconceptions and problems', in Hyland, K. and Wong, L. (eds.) *Innovation and change in English language education*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp.263–275.
- Delamont, S. (2002) *Fieldwork in educational settings: methods, pitfalls and perspectives*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Denzin, N. (1994) 'The art and politics of interpretation', in Denzin N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds) *A handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp.500-515.
- Denzin, N. (2006) 'Analytic autoethnography, or déjà vu all over again', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35(4), pp.419-428.
- Denzin, N. (2014) *Interpretive autoethnography*. London: Sage.
- Derewianka, B. (2013) 'Change and innovation on primary education', in Hyland, K. and Wong, L. (eds.) *Innovation and change in English language education*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp.155-171.
- Doloriert, C. (2011) and Sambrook, S. (2011) 'Accommodating an autoethnographic PhD: The tale of the thesis, the viva voce, and the traditional business school', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 40(5), pp.582-615.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007) *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2012) *CLT in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* [PowerPoint Presentation]. Department of English Seminar Series, 20 January, Hong Kong Institute of Education.
- Dubin, F. and Olshtain, E. (1986) *Course design: Developing programs and materials for language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Duncan, M. (2004) 'Autoethnography: Critical appreciation of an emerging art', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3(4), pp.1-14.
- Dutt (2010) 'ELT in India: A reassessment', in David, C. and Lal, C.A (eds.) *Towards a student-centred pedagogy in English language teaching*. Kerala, India: CELLT, pp.13-20.

- Edge (2006) 'Computer-mediated cooperative development: Non-judgemental discourse in online environments', *Language teacher research*, 10(2), pp.205-227.
- Ellingson, L. and Ellis, C. (2008) 'Autoethnography as constructionist project', in Holstein, J. and Gubrium, J. (eds.) *Handbook of constructionist research*. New York: Guilford Press, pp.445-466.
- Ellis, C. (2000) 'Creating criteria: An ethnographic short story', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6(2), pp.273-277.
- Ellis, C. (2004) *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Ellis, C. and Bochner, A. (2000) 'Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject', in Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds.) *The handbook of qualitative research*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London: Sage, p.733-68.
- Ellis, C. and Bochner, A. (2006) 'Analyzing analytical autoethnography - an autopsy', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35(4), pp.429-449.
- Ely, M., Anzul, M., Friedman, T., Garner, D. and McCormack Steinmetz, A. (1991) *Doing qualitative research: circles within circles*. Oxford: Routledge Farmer.
- Emerson, R., Fretz, R., and Shaw, L. (2001) 'Participant observation and fieldnotes', in Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J., and Lofland, L. (eds.) *Handbook of ethnography*. London: Sage pp.352-368.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2009) 'The novice teacher experience', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.182-189.
- Farrell, T. (2012) *Reflective writing for teachers*. Sheffield: Equinox.
- Farrell, T. (2014) *Promoting teacher reflection in second language education*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Farrell, T. (2016) *From trainee to teacher: Reflective practice for novice teachers*. Sheffield: Equinox.
- Field, M. and Nagai, N. (2003) 'The "dead hand" project: Intercultural collaboration and professional development', in Murphey, T. (ed.) *Extending professional contributions*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL, pp.11-18.

- Frank, A. W. (2000) 'The standpoint of storyteller', *Qualitative Health Research*, 10(3), pp.354-365.
- Freeman, D. (1996) 'Redefining the relationship between research and what teachers know', in Bailey, K. and Nunan, D. (eds.) *Voices from the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.88-115.
- Freeman, D. (2009) 'The scope of second language teacher education', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.11-19.
- Freeman, D. (2013) 'Teacher thinking, learning, and identity in the process of educational change', in Hyland, K. and Wong, L. (eds.) *Innovation and change in language education*. London: Routledge, pp.123-136.
- French, P. (2012) *India: A portrait*. London: Penguin.
- Fullan, M. (2007) *The new meaning of educational change*. 4<sup>th</sup> edn. London: Routledge.
- Gatbonton, E. and Segalowitz, N. (2005) 'Rethinking communicative language teaching: A focus on access to fluency', *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 61(3), pp.325-353.
- Gebhard, J. G. (2009) 'The practicum', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.250-258.
- Gebhard, J.G. and Oprandy, R. (1999) *Language teaching awareness: A guide to exploring beliefs and practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Geertz, C. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Golombek P. (2009) 'Personal practical knowledge in L2 teacher education', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.155-162.
- Graves, K. (2009) The curriculum of second language teacher education, in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.115–124.
- Graddol, D. (2010) *English next India: The future of English in India*. India: British Council.
- Greenwood, J. (1985) 'Bangalore revisited: a reluctant complaint', *ELT Journal*, 39(4), pp.268-273.
- Griffiths, C. (2012) 'Focus on the teacher', *ELT Journal*, 66(4), pp.468-476.

- Grimshaw, T. (2001) *Discursive Struggle in Chinese Universities: English 'linguistic imperialism', appropriation and resistance*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Kent.
- Guillemin, M., and Gillam, L. (2004) 'Ethics, reflexivity, and "ethically important moments" in research', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2), pp.261-280.
- Gupta, D. (2004) 'CLT in India: context and methodology come together', *ELT Journal*, 58(3), pp.266-269.
- Gupta, D. (2005) 'ELT in India: A brief historical and current overview', *Asian EFL Journal*, 7(1), pp.197-207.
- Gupta, D. (2006) *Communicative language teaching: then and now*. New Delhi: Book plus.
- Gupta, R. (1995) 'English in a postcolonial situation: The example of India', *Profession*, 95, pp.73-78.
- Hall, G. (2011) *Exploring ELT: Language in Action*. London, Routledge.
- Hall, G. (2016) 'Method, methods and methodology: historical trends and current debates', in Hall, G. (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of ELT*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp.209-223.
- Hall, G. and Cook, G (2012) 'Own-language use in language teaching and learning', *Language Teaching*, 45(3), pp.271-308.
- Hall G. and Cook, G. (2013) 'Own-language use in ELT: exploring global practices and attitudes', *ELT Research Paper*, London: British Council.
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2007) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. London: Routledge.
- Harbon, L. and Shen, H. (2010) 'Researching language classrooms', in Paltridge, B. and Phakiti, A. (eds) *Research methods in applied linguistics*. London: continuum, pp.274-285.
- Harmer, J. (2007) *The practice of English language teaching*. 4<sup>th</sup> edn. Harlow: Pearson Longman
- Harmer, J. (2015) *The practice of English language teaching*. 5<sup>th</sup> edn. Harlow: Pearson Longman
- Hasanova, D. and Shadieva, T. (2008) 'Implementing communicative language teaching in Uzbekistan', *TESOL Quarterly*, 42(1), pp.138-143.

- Hayes, D. (2012) 'Planning for success: Culture, engagement and power in English language education innovation', in Tribble, C. (ed.) *Managing change in English language teaching: Lessons from experience*. London: British Council, pp.47-60.
- Hayes, D. (2014) 'Overview - Innovations in continuing professional development: sector-wide, institutional and personal perspectives', in Hayes, D. (ed.) *Innovations in the continuing professional development of English language teachers*. London: British Council, pp.5-17.
- Heigham, J. and Sakui, K. (2009) 'Ethnography', in Heigham, J. and Croker, R. (eds.) *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.91-111.
- Hiebert, J., Gallimore, R. and Stigler, J. (2002) 'A knowledge base for the teaching profession: What would it look like and how can we get one?', *Educational researcher*, 31(5), pp.3-15.
- Hiep, P. (2007) 'Communicative language teaching: unity within diversity', *ELT Journal*, 61(3), pp.193-201.
- Hiramatsu, S. (2005). 'Contexts and policy reform: A case study of EFL teaching in a high school in Japan', in Tedick, D. (ed.) *Second language teacher education: international perspectives*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp.113-134.
- Holliday, A. (1992) 'Tissue rejection and informal orders in ELT projects: collecting the right information', *Applied Linguistics*, 13(4), pp.403-424.
- Holliday, A. (1994) *Appropriate methodology and social context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Holliday, A. (1997) 'Six lessons: cultural continuity in communicative language teaching', *Language Teaching Research*, 1(3), pp.212-238.
- Holliday, A. (2005) *The struggle to teach English as an international language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Holliday (2010a) 'Analysing qualitative data', in Paltridge, B. and Phakiti, A. (eds.) *Research methods in applied linguistics*. London: continuum, pp.98-110.
- Holliday, A. (2010b) 'Submission, emergence and personal knowledge: new takes, and principles for validity in decentred qualitative research', in Shamim, F. and

- Qureshi, R. (eds.) *Perils, pitfalls and reflexivity in qualitative research in education*. Karachi: Oxford University Press Pakistan, pp.10-30.
- Holliday, A. (2016) *Doing and writing qualitative research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. London: Sage.
- Holman Jones, S., Adams, T., and Ellis, C. (2013) 'Coming to know autoethnography as more than a method', in Holman Jones, S., Adams, T., and Ellis, C. (eds.) *Handbook of Autoethnography* (). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, pp.17-47.
- Howatt, A. (1984) *A History of language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Howatt, A. and Widdowson, H. (2004) *A History of language teaching*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hu, G. (2005) 'CLT is best for China' –An untenable absolutist claim', *ELT Journal*, 59(1), pp.65-68.
- Hunter, D. and Smith, R. (2012) 'Unpackaging the past: "CLT" through ELTJ keywords', *ELT Journal*, 66(4), pp.430-439.
- Hyland, K. and Wong, L. (eds.) *Innovation and change in language education*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Ingvarson, L., Meiers, M. and Beavis, A. (2005). 'Factors affecting the impact of professional development programs on teachers' knowledge, practice, student outcomes and efficacy', *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 13(10) [Online]. Available at: <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v13n10> (Accessed: 24 June 2015).
- Jacobs, G. and Farrell, T. (2003) 'Understanding and implementing the CLT paradigm', *RELC Journal*, 34(1), pp.4-30.
- Jeon, J.H. (2009) 'Key issues in applying the communicative approach in Korea: Follow up after 12 years of implementation', *English Teaching*, 64 (1), pp.123-150.
- Johnson, K. E. (2009) 'Trends in second language teacher education', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.20-29.
- Johnston B. (2009) 'Collaborative teacher development', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.241-249.
- Kapur, K. (2013) 'The role of mentoring in developing reflective practices for CPD', in Bolitho, R. and Padwad, A. (eds.) *Continuing Professional Development: Lessons from India*. New Delhi: British Council, pp.96-107.

- Kennedy, C. (2013). 'Models of change and innovation', in Hyland, K. and Wong, L. (eds.) *Innovation and change in English language education*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp.13-27.
- Kerr, P. (2016) 'Questioning 'English-only' classrooms: own-language use in ELT', in Hall, G. (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of English Language Teaching*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp.513-526.
- Kiely, R. (2012) 'Designing evaluation into change management processes', in Tribble, C. (ed.) *Managing change in English language teaching: Lessons from experience*. London: British Council, pp.75-91.
- Kiely, R. and Askham, J. (2012) 'Furnished imagination: the impact of pre-service teacher training on early career work in TESOL', *TESOL Quarterly*, 46(3), pp.495-517.
- Klapper, J. (2003) 'Taking communication to task? A critical review of recent trends in language teaching', *Language Learning Journal*, 27, pp.33-42.
- Kramsch, C., and Steffensen, S. (2008) 'Ecological perspectives on second language acquisition and socialization', in Duff, P. and Hornberger, N. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of language and education: Language socialization*. Berlin: Springer Verlag, pp.17-28.
- Kramsch, C. and Sullivan, P. (1996) 'Appropriate pedagogy', *ELT Journal*, 50(3), pp.199-212.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (1994) 'The postmethod condition: (e)merging strategies for second/foreign language teaching', *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(1), pp.27-47.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2001) 'Toward a postmethod pedagogy', *TESOL Quarterly*, 35(4), pp.537-560.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003) *Beyond methods: Macrostrategies for language teaching*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006a) *Understanding language teaching: from method to postmethod*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006b) 'TESOL Methods: Changing Tracks, Challenging Trends', *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), pp.59-81.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: an introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Lal, C.A. (2010) 'Teaching English to adult learners in Kerala: a communicative approach', paper presented at Cutting Edges Conference, Canterbury, 2 July.
- Lantolf, J. (ed.) (2000) *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lantolf, J. and Poehner, M. (eds.) (2008) *Sociocultural theory and the teaching of second languages*. London: Equinox.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2001) 'The joy of watching others learn. An Interview with Diane Larsen-Freeman by William P. Ancker', *English Teaching Forum* 39(4), pp.2-9.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2005) 'A critical analysis of postmethod. An Interview with Diane Larsen-Freeman by Zia Tajeddin', *ILL, Language Teaching Journal*, 1, pp.21-25.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. and Anderson, M. (2011) *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Legutke, M. K. and Dittfurth, M. S. (2009). 'School-based experience', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.209-217.
- Leung, C. (2009) 'Second language teacher professionalism', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.49-58.
- Levy, M. (2012) 'Technology in the classroom', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *Pedagogy and practice in language teaching*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.279-286.
- Li, D. (1998) 'It's always more difficult than you plan and imagine: Teachers' perceived difficulties in introducing the communicative approach in South Korea', *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(4), pp.677-703.
- Lillis, T. M. (2006). 'Communicative competence', in Brown, K. (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Oxford: Elsevier, pp.666-673.
- Lincoln, Y. and Guba, E. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*. London: Sage.
- Little, D., Devitt, S. and Singleton, D. (1994) 'The communicative approach and authentic texts', in Swarbrick, A. (ed.) *Teaching modern languages*. London: Routledge, pp.43-47.



- Littlewood, W. (2004) 'The task-based approach: some questions and suggestions', *ELT Journal*, 58(4), pp.319-326.
- Littlewood, W. (2007) 'Communicative and task-based language teaching in East Asian classrooms', *Language Teaching*, 40(3), pp.243-249.
- Littlewood, W. (2011) 'Communicative language teaching: An expanding concept for a changing world', in Hinkel, E. (ed.) *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning volume II*. London: Routledge, pp.541-557.
- Littlewood, W. (2013) 'Developing a context-sensitive pedagogy for communication-oriented language teaching', *English Language Teaching*, 68(3), pp.3-25.
- Littlewood, W. (2014) 'Communication-oriented language teaching: Where are we now? Where do we go from here?', *Language Teaching*, 47(3), pp.349-362.
- Liu, D. (1995) 'Comments on B. Kumaravadivelu's 'The postmethod condition: (E)merging strategies for second/foreign language teaching': 'Alternative to' or 'addition to' method', *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(1), pp.174-177.
- Liu, N. (2009) 'When communicative approaches don't work', *Modern English Teacher*, 18(2), pp.64-69.
- Lofland, J. and Lofland L. (1995) *Analysing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and Analysis*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. London: Wadsworth.
- Lortie, D. (1975) *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Malderez, A. and Bođoczky, C. (1999) *Mentor courses: A resource book for trainer-trainers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mathew, R. (1997) 'English in India: a response to Mark Tully', *ELT Journal*, 51(2), pp.165-168.
- Mathew, R. (2006) 'Tracing the after-life of teacher development programmes: Reopening closed chapters', *English Language Teacher Education and Development* 9/Winter, pp.21-38.
- Mathew, R. (2012) 'Understanding washback: A case study of a new exam in India, in Tribble, C. (ed.) *Managing change in English language teaching: Lessons from experience*. London: British Council, pp.195-202.

- Mathew, R. (2013) 'Diary writing as a tool for reflective practice', in Bolitho, R. and Padwad, A. (eds.) *Continuing Professional Development: Lessons from India*. New Delhi: British Council, pp.59–70.
- Maxwell, J. (1996) *Qualitative research design: an interactive approach*. London: Sage.
- Maxwell, J. (2005) *Qualitative research design: an interactive approach*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London: Sage.
- Maykut, P. and Morehouse, R. (1994) *Beginning qualitative research*. London: Routledge Farmer.
- McCormack, D. (2012) Review of *Creating autoethnographies*, by Tessa Muncey. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 40 (2), pp.182-184.
- McKay, S. (2012) 'Principles of teaching English as an international language', in Alsagoff, L., McKay, S., Hu, G. and Renandya, W. (eds.) *Principles and practices for teaching English as an international language*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp.28-46.
- Meganathan, R. (2011) 'Language policy in education and the role of English in India: From library language to language of empowerment', in Coleman, H. (ed.) *Dreams and realities: Developing countries and the English language*. London: British Council, pp.57-85.
- Menon, M. (2013) 'CPD through social networking amongst Indian school teachers: an action research', in Bolitho, R. and Padwad, A. (eds.) *Continuing Professional Development: Lessons from India*. New Delhi: British Council, pp.80-87.
- Mercer, S. (2016) 'Complexity, language learning and the language classroom', in Hall, G. (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of English Language Teaching*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp.473-485.
- Miller, J. (2009) 'Teacher identity', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.172-181.
- Mishra, U. (2013) 'Learning English for development and economy in India: A socio-cultural perspective', in Powell-Davies, P. and Gunashekar, P. (eds.) *English Language Teacher Education in a Diverse Environment: Selected papers from the Third International Teacher Educators Conference, Hyderabad*. New Delhi: British Council, pp.186-191.

- Mitchell, R. (1994) 'The communicative approach to language teaching: An Introduction' in Swarbrick, A. (ed.) *Teaching Modern Languages*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp.33-42.
- Muncey, T. (2010) *Creating autoethnographies*. London: Sage.
- Murray, D. (2008) *Planning change, changing plans: innovations in second language teaching*. Ann Arbor, U.S.A.: University of Michigan Press.
- Murray, D. (2013) 'Higher education constraints on innovation', in Hyland, K. and Wong, L. (eds.) *Innovation and Change in Language Education*. London: Routledge, pp.186-199.
- Murray, D. and Christison, M. (2012) 'Understanding innovation in English language education: Contexts and issues', in Tribble, C. (ed.) *Managing change in English language teaching: Lessons from experience*. London: British Council, pp.61-74.
- Murray, G. (2009) 'Narrative inquiry', in Heigham, J. and Croker, R. (eds.) *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.45-65.
- Nayar, P.B. (2008) 'English in Kerala: Plus ça change?', *TESL-EJ*, 12(3) [online]. Available at: <http://tesl-ej.org/ej47/a1.html> (Accessed: 28 July 2012).
- Nazari, A. (2007) EFL teachers' perception of the concept of communicative competence', *ELT Journal*, 61(3), pp.202-210.
- Nieuwenhuis J. (2007) 'Introducing qualitative research', in Maree, K. (ed.) *First steps in research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik. Publishers, pp.47-66.
- Nishino, T. and Watanabe, M. (2008) 'Communication-orientated policies versus classroom realities in Japan', *TESOL Quarterly*, 42(1), pp.133-138.
- Nunan, D. (2004) *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Donahue, C. (2012) 'Change in Tamil Nadu, India', in Tribble, C. (ed.) *Managing change in English language teaching: Lessons from experience*. London: British Council, pp.153-158.
- Padwad, A. and Dixit, K. (2008) 'Impact of professional learning community participation on teachers' thinking about classroom problems', *TESL-EJ*, 12(3) [online]. Available at: <http://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/issues/volume12/ej47/ej47a10/> (Accessed 12 October 2012).

- Padwad, A. and Dixit, K. (2011) *Continuing Professional Development: An annotated bibliography*. New Delhi: British Council.
- Padwad, A. and Dixit, K. (2013) 'Multiple stakeholders' views of continuing professional development', in Bolitho, R. and Padwad, A. (eds.) *Continuing Professional Development: Lessons from India*. New Delhi: British Council, pp.11-22.
- Padwad, A. and Dixit, K. (2014) 'Continuing professional development policy 'Think Tank': An innovative experiment in India', in Hayes, D. (ed.) *Innovations in the continuing professional development of English language teachers*. London: British Council, pp.249-268.
- Palfreyman, D. (2006) 'Social context and resources for language learning', *System*, 34(3), pp.352-370.
- Pandit-Narkar, M. (2013) 'From top-down intervention to bottom-up initiative: Teacher development in Nellore', in Bolitho, R. and Padwad, A. (eds.) *Continuing Professional Development: Lessons from India*. New Delhi: British Council, p.31-39.
- Patton, M. (2002) *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Phillipson, R. (1992) *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Phillipson, R. (1996) 'Linguistic imperialism: African perspectives', *ELT Journal*, 50(2), pp.160-167.
- Pickering, G. and Gunashekar, P. (eds.) (2015) *Innovation in English Language Teacher Education*. New Delhi: British Council.
- Pickering, G. and Gunashekar, P. (eds.) (2016) *Ensuring Quality in English Language Education: Selected papers from the Fifth International Teacher Educators Conference Hyderabad*. New Delhi: British Council.
- Powell-Davies, P. (ed.) (2013) *Assessing and Evaluating English Language Teacher Education, Teaching and Learning: Selected papers from the Second International Teacher Educators Conference Hyderabad*. New Delhi: British Council.
- Powell-Davies, P. and Gunashekar, P. (eds.) (2013) *English Language Teacher Education in a Diverse Environment: Selected papers from the Third International Teacher Educators Conference, Hyderabad*. New Delhi: British Council.
- Prabhu (1987) *Second language pedagogy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Prabhu, N.S. (1990a) 'There is no best method – why?', *TESOL Quarterly*, 24(2), pp.161-176.
- Prabhu, N.S. (1990b) 'Comments on Alan Beretta's Paper 'Implementation of the Bangalore Project', *Applied Linguistics*, 11(4), pp.338-340.
- Prince, E. and Barrett, A. (2014) 'Continuing professional development in action: An Indian experience', in Hayes, D. (ed.) (2014) *Innovations in the continuing professional development of English language teachers*. London: British Council, pp.19-41.
- Rajagopalan, K. (2008) 'From madness in method to method in madness', *ELT Journal*, 62(1), pp.84-85.
- Rallis, S., and Rossman, G. (2009) 'Ethics and trustworthiness', in Heigham, J. and Croker, R. (eds.) *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.263-287.
- Rao, Z. (2002) 'Chinese students' perceptions of communicative and non-communicative activities in EFL classroom', *System*, 30(1), pp.85-105.
- Rapley, T. (2004) 'Interviews', in Seale, C., Gobo, G., Gubrium, J. and Silverman, D. (eds.) *Qualitative research practice*. London: Sage, pp.15-33.
- Reed-Danahay, D. (1997) *Autoethnography: Rewriting the self and the social*. Oxford: Berg.
- Richards, J. (1990) 'Beyond methods', in Richards, J. (ed.) *The language teaching matrix*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.35-49.
- Richards, J. (1998) *Beyond training*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. (2006) *Communicative language teaching today*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. (2010) 'Competence and performance in language teaching', *RELC Journal*, 41(2), pp.101-122.
- Richards, J. and Crookes, G. (1988) 'The practicum in TESOL', *TESOL Quarterly*, 22(1), pp.9-27.
- Richards, J. and Farrell, T. (2005) *Professional Development for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. and Rodgers, T. (2014) *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Richards, K. (2003) *Qualitative inquiry in TESOL*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Richards, K. (2009) 'Interviews', in Heigham, J. and Croker, R. (eds.) *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.182-199.
- Richards, L., and Morse, J. (2012) *Readme first for a user's guide to qualitative methods*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London: Sage.
- Richardson, L. (2000) 'Writing: A method of inquiry', in Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds.) *The handbook of qualitative research*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London: Sage, pp.923-948.
- Rinvolutri, M. (2007) 'Fighting the filters', *English teaching professional*, 49, pp.4-5.
- Roberts, J. (1998) *Language teacher education*. London: Arnold.
- Saengboon, S. (2006) 'CLT revisited', *NIDA Language and Communication Journal*, 11, pp.136-148.
- Sakui, K. (2007) 'Classroom management in Japanese classrooms', *JALT Journal*, 29(1), pp.41-58.
- Samimy, K., and Kobayashi, C. (2004) 'Toward the development of intercultural communicative competence: Theoretical and pedagogical implications for Japanese English teachers', *JALT Journal*, 26(2), pp.245-261.
- Sato, K. (2003) 'Starting a local teacher study group', in Murphey, T. (ed.) *Extending professional contributions*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL, pp.97-104.
- Savignon, S. (1997) *Communicative competence: theory and classroom practice*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Savignon, S. (2007) 'Beyond communicative language teaching: What's ahead?', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39(1), pp.207-220.
- Schön, D.A. (1983) *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schön, D.A. (1987) *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Schuerkens, U. (2004) *Global forces and local-life worlds* London: Sage.
- Senior, R. (2012) 'Class-centered teaching: a framework for classroom decision making', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to Pedagogy and practice in language teaching*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.38-45.

- Shamim, F. (1996) 'Learner resistance to innovation in classroom methodology', in Coleman, H. (ed.) *Society and the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.105-121.
- Shamim, F. (2012) 'Teaching large classes', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to Pedagogy and practice in language teaching*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.95-102.
- Sheorey, R. (2006) *Learning and teaching English in India*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Shivakumar, J. (2013) 'Teacher development groups: Nurturing continuing professional development', in Bolitho, R. and Padwad, A. (eds.) *Continuing Professional Development: Lessons from India*. New Delhi: British Council, pp.71-79.
- Silverman, D. (2010) *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. London: Sage.
- Singh, G. and Richards, J. (2009) 'Teaching and Learning in the Course Room', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.201-208.
- Singh R. (2012) 'Reflections on English in India and Indian English', in Agnihotri R. and Singh, R. (eds.) *Indian English: Towards a new paradigm*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, pp.15-46.
- Skehan, P. (1989) *Individual differences in second language learning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Spradley, J. (1979) *The ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Sreehari, P. (2012) 'Communicative language teaching: Possibilities and problems', *English Language Teaching*, 5(12), pp.87-93.
- Stanley, P. (2015) 'Writing the PhD journey(s): An autoethnography of zine-writing, angst, embodiment, and backpacker travels', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 44(2), pp.143-168.
- Starfield, S. (2010) 'Ethnographies', in Paltridge, B. and Phakiti, A. (eds) *Research methods in applied linguistics*. London: continuum, pp.50-65.
- Stelma, J. (2010) 'What is communicative language teaching?', in Hunston, S. and Oakey, D. (eds.) *Introducing applied linguistics: Concepts and skills*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp.53-59.

- Stern, H. (1992) *Issues and options in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stewart, T., and Lokon, E. (2003). 'Professional development through student and teacher reaction journals' in Murphey, T. (ed.) *Extending professional contributions*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL, pp.19-27.
- Stoller, F. L. (2009) 'Innovation and effective leadership', in Christison, M. and Murray, D. (eds.) *Leadership in English language education: Theoretical foundations and practical skills for changing times*. New York: Routledge, pp.73-84.
- Styles, J. (1979) 'Insider/outsider: Researching gay baths', *Urban life* 8, pp.135-152.
- Tasildar, R. (2013) 'Nurturing the Prospective Teachers of English in India: An Assessment', in Powell-Davies, P. and Gunashekar, P. (eds.) *English Language Teacher Education in a Diverse Environment: Selected papers from the Third International Teacher Educators Conference Hyderabad*. New Delhi: British Council, pp.45-52.
- Thompson, G. (1996) 'Some misconceptions about communicative language teaching', *ELT Journal*, 50(1), pp.9-15.
- Thornbury, S. (1999) *How to teach grammar*. Harlow: Pearson Longman.
- Thornbury, S. (2006) *An A-Z of ELT*. Oxford: Macmillan.
- Thornbury, S. (2016) 'Communicative language teaching in theory and in practice', in Hall, G. (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of ELT*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp.224-237.
- Tickoo, M. L. (1996) 'Forward from Bangalore', in Kenny, B. and Savage, W. (eds.) *Language and development: Teachers in a changing world*. London: Longman, pp.268-280.
- Tripp, D. (1993) *Critical incidents in teaching: Developing professional Judgement*. London: Routledge.
- Tsui, A. (2003) *Understanding expertise in teaching: Case studies of second language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tsui, A. (2009). 'Teaching expertise: Approaches, perspectives and charaterizations' in Burns, A. and Richards, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.190-197.
- Tsui, A. and Tollefson, J. (eds.) (2007) *Language policy, culture, and identity in Asian contexts*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.



- Tudor, I. (1996) *Learner-centredness in language education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tudor, I. (2003) 'Learning to live with complexity: towards an ecological perspective on language teaching', *System*, 31(1), pp.1-12.
- Tufford, L. and Newman, P. (2010) 'Bracketing in qualitative research', *Qualitative social work*, 11(1), pp.80-96.
- Van Lier, L. (2004) *The ecology and semiotics of language learning: A sociocultural perspective*. Boston: Kluwer Academic.
- Van Patten, B. (1995) 'Perceptions of and perspectives on the term 'communicative'', *Hispania*, 81(4), pp.925-932.
- Varma, P. (2006) *Being Indian*. New Delhi: Penguin.
- Vo, L.T. and Nguyen, H.T.M. (2010) 'Critical friends group for EFL teacher professional development', *ELT Journal*, 64(2), pp.205-213.
- Vulliamy, G., Lewin, K. and Stephens, D. (1990) *Doing Educational research in Developing Countries*. London: Falmer Press.
- Walford, G. (2009) 'For ethnography', *Ethnography and Education*, 4(3), pp.271-282.
- Wall, S. (2006) 'An autoethnography on learning about autoethnography', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(2), pp.1-12.
- Wall, S. (2008) 'Easier said than done: Writing an autoethnography', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 7(1), pp.38-53.
- Wang, Y. (2011) 'Eastern vs Western: Undertaking Asian ELT under a Framework of Relevance', *Asian Englishes*, 14(2), pp.40-55.
- Waters, A and Vilches, M. (2013) 'The management of change', in Hyland, K. and Wong, L. (eds.) *Innovation and Change in Language Education*. London: Routledge, pp.58-72.
- Wedell, M. and Malderez, A. (2013) *Understanding language classroom contexts: The starting point for change*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of practice: learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wenger, E., McDermott, R. and Snyder, W. (2002) *Cultivating communities of practice*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.

- Williams, J. and Jauhari, M. (2016) 'Rude boy subculture, critical pedagogy, and the collaborative construction of an analytic and evocative autoethnography', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 45(1), pp.34-59.
- Williams, M. and Burden, R. (1997) *Psychology for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wolcott, H. (1999) *Ethnography: A way of seeing*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.
- Woods, P. (2012) 'A summary of key lessons from the case studies', in Tribble, C. (ed.) *Managing change in English language teaching: Lessons from experience*. London: British Council, pp.233-246.
- Woodward, C., Griffiths, M. and Solly, M. (2014) 'English in Action: A new approach to continuing professional development through the use of mediated video, peer support and low-cost mobile phones in Bangladesh', in Hayes, D. (ed.) *Innovations in the continuing professional development of English language teachers*. London: British Council, pp.227-247.
- Zeichner, K. and Liston, D. (1996) *Reflective teaching: An introduction*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1: Data collected during each visit to the research setting

Appendix 2: An example of a completed open-ended questionnaire

Appendix 3: Classroom observations

Appendix 4: Example of my observation notes

Appendix 5: Details of interviewees

Appendix 6: Example of an Interview Transcript

Appendix 7: Example of field notes

## Appendix 1 - Data collected during each visit to the research setting

The breakdown of the data collected during each visit to the research setting is given in the table below. The visit labelled as 'Visit 0' happened before this study was officially started, nevertheless the observation data collected on that visit was useful in informing the direction of the study. In addition to the data shown in the table, additional data was collected through emailed follow-up questions after several of the interviews.

| <i>Visit number</i> | <i>Date of visit</i>  | <i>Length of visit</i> | <i>Year of study</i> | <i>Data collected</i>                                    |
|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|--|
| 0                   | November 2007         | 10 days                | 0                    | 4 Classroom observations                                 |
| 1                   | June 2008             | 10 days                | 1                    | 5 Classroom observations; 31 questionnaires; field notes |
| 2                   | July 2009             | 1 week                 | 2                    | 6 Classroom observations; 3 interviews                   |
| 3                   | July - August 2010    | 5 weeks                | 3                    | 9 Classroom observations; 9 interviews; field notes      |
| 4                   | December 2011         | 1 week                 |                      | 2 interviews; field notes                                |
| 5                   | February 2012         | 1 week                 | 3                    | 4 interviews; field notes                                |
| 6                   | January-February 2013 | 1 week                 | 4                    | 4 Classroom observations; 3 interviews; field notes      |
| 7                   | June 2013             | 3 weeks                | 4                    | Field notes  |

## Appendix 2 - Open-ended questionnaire<sup>19</sup>

### English Language Teaching Methodology in Kerala

This questionnaire is part of a research study into teachers' views on English language teaching methodology in Kerala.

You do not have to take part in the study if you would prefer not to.

If you do take part, all answers will be treated as confidential.

If your responses are used when the study is written up, then they will be anonymised.

*Please answer the questions below. There no right or wrong answers.*

1. When do you think children should start learning English in school?
2. What do you think about the way you were taught English in school?
3. In what way, if any, do you think your school English classes could have been improved?
4. What do you think about English medium schools?
5. What do you see as the role of the teacher in teaching English?
6. What do you understand by the term 'teaching method' in relation to teaching English?
7. What do you understand by the term 'communicative English'?
8. What do you think it means to teach English in a communicative way?
9. Do you think communicative methods are used in English classes in Kerala?
10. How applicable do you think a communicative approach is in Kerala?

Please add any other points you feel relevant to English language teaching and teaching methods in Kerala:

---

<sup>19</sup> The writing space between questions has been removed in order to fit the questionnaire onto a single page here.

### Appendix 3 - Classroom observations

The eight schools where the classroom observations took place were a combination of state government schools (C, G and H below), government-aided schools (A, D and E below), and private schools (B and F below). In addition, one observation took place in a teacher trainer college (marked TTC below) and one in a higher education college (marked HEC below).

For each classroom observation, the number of the observation, the location, the school year (or ages of the students for the two observations in colleges), the number of students in the class, the length of the observation and the date of the observation are given below. For the school year, the number '9', for example, refers to a class in 'Year 9' of school.

#### *Visit 0 (November 2007)*

| <i>Observation number</i> | <i>Location</i> | <i>School year (or age if a college)</i> | <i>Number of students</i> | <i>Length</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--|---------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1                         | A               | 9  | 42                        | 35            | 2/11        |
| 2                         | A               | 11                                       | 37                        | 30            | 2/11        |
| 3                         | A               | 8  | 43                        | 35            | 2/11        |
| 4                         | TTC             | Age 21-22                                | 30                        | 60            | 3/11        |

#### *Visit 1 (June 2008)*

| <i>Observation number</i> | <i>Location</i> | <i>School year (or age if a college)</i> | <i>Number of students</i> | <i>Length</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--|---------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 5                         | HEC             | Age 19-20                                | 60                        | 60            | 19/6        |
| 6                         | B               | 9  | 30                        | 35            | 20/6        |
| 7                         | C               | 8  | 42                        | 20            | 21/6        |
| 8                         | D               | 12                                       | 30                        | 25            | 22/6        |
| 9                         | D               | 9  | 34                        | 20            | 22/6        |

*Visit 2 (July 2009)*

| <i>Observation number</i> | <i>Location</i> | <i>School year</i> | <i>Number of students</i> | <i>Length</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 10                        | D               | 10                 | 28                        | 25            | 28/7        |
| 11                        | A               | 8                  | 50                        | 35            | 29/7        |
| 12                        | A               | 12                 | 37                        | 30            | 29/7        |
| 13                        | A               | 7                  | 37                        | 30            | 30/7        |
| 14                        | A               | 9                  | 41                        | 30            | 30/7        |
| 15                        | E               | 8                  | 45                        | 40            | 31/7        |

*Visit 3 (July-August 2010)*

| <i>Observation number</i> | <i>Location</i> | <i>School year</i> | <i>Number of students</i> | <i>Length</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 16                        | B               | 9                  | 32                        | 40            | 30/7        |
| 17                        | B               | 12                 | 33                        | 25            | 30/7        |
| 18                        | F               | 9                  | 41                        | 35            | 3/8         |
| 19                        | F               | 10                 | 38                        | 25            | 3/8         |
| 20                        | A               | 8                  | 44                        | 25            | 5/8         |
| 21                        | A               | 7                  | 43                        | 30            | 5/8         |
| 22                        | A               | 10                 | 38                        | 35            | 6/8         |
| 23                        | A               | 12                 | 37                        | 25            | 6/8         |
| 24                        | G               | 10                 | 31                        | 30            | 9/8         |

*Visit 6 (January-February 2013)*

| <i>Observation number</i> | <i>Location</i> | <i>School year</i> | <i>Number of students</i> | <i>Length</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 25                        | H               | 11                 | 28                        | 30            | 30/1        |
| 26                        | H               | 11                 | 24                        | 30            | 30/1        |
| 27                        | H               | 11                 | 22                        | 30            | 30/1        |
| 22                        | H               | 8                  | 22                        | 20            | 31/1        |

## Appendix 4 - Example of my observation notes

Obs. No.: 6    School: B    School year: 9    No. of students: 30

Length of Obs.: 45 minutes    Date: 20.6.08

| Time | Observations   |
|------|--|
| 0    | Teacher (T) asks 'what is a notice?' One student (S1) defines, T checks with other students (Ss) if this is correct. Concept check - 'where do we find notices?' Ss clearly seem to know this. T asks 'what is a circular?' and for differences between a notice and a circular. Individ Ss stand to answer, T clarifies. Format of notices elicited from Ss. T-style of expecting Ss to finish her sentences. High standard of English among Ss. Ss are keen to participate, but opportunities seem limited to T interacting with Ss, i.e. there's no pair work. Ss suggest ideas for a notice about a science fair. Is this an example what they're calling the 'activity method'?   |
| 12   | T sets up a 'role-play' involving drafting a notice, though they don't seem to have 'roles' as such. T gives Ss two minutes' rehearsal/thinking time. Four Ss come to the front to 'role-play' a conversation about drafting a notice. This is repeated with three more groups of four Ss. Very challenging for Ss. T seems to choose better Ss for this. Ss very imaginative/creative. T monitors the groups' performances, but often interferes mid-performance to correct or improve their language, so what I expected to be quite a free activity was in fact highly controlled. Everything stops suddenly when another T comes in to give a real notice about timetable changes next week.   |
| 25   | T at front again. More eliciting about formality of language in notices. One student (S2) comes out and reads the completed notice of his group. T tries to get other Ss to correct mistakes, both in language and in formality, and improve notice. T then suggests corrections herself and added some new language. T speaks at normal speed and uses high-level vocabulary. Ss draft their own notice based on a question dictated by T. T checks that instructions understood by asking sts what they have to do. T walks around commenting on notices and hurrying groups to complete their notices before the end of the period. Praise given for imaginative titles. The bell goes, but most Ss carry on writing into their break time. |



## Appendix 5 - Details of interviewees

| <i>Interview number</i> | <i>Job at the time of the interview</i> | <i>Date</i>   | <i>Notes</i>           |
|-------------------------|---|---------------|------------------------|
| 1                       | Teacher trainer                         | July 2009     |                        |
| 2                       | Secondary school teacher                | July 2009     | Interview not recorded |
| 3                       | Secondary school teacher                | July 2009     | Interview not recorded |
| 4                       | College teacher                         | August 2010   |                        |
| 5                       | College teacher                         | August 2010   |                        |
| 6                       | College teacher                         | August 2010   | Based in Tamil Nadu    |
| 7                       | School principal                        | August 2010   |                        |
| 8                       | School principal                        | August 2010   |                        |
| 9                       | Teacher trainer                         | August 2010   |                        |
| 10                      | Teacher trainer                         | August 2010   |                        |
| 11                      | Teacher trainer                         | August 2010   | Based in Hyderabad     |
| 12                      | Teacher trainer                         | August 2010   | Based in Hyderabad     |
| 13                      | College teacher                         | December 2011 |                        |
| 14                      | Secondary school teacher                | December 2011 |                        |
| 15                      | Secondary school teacher                | February 2012 |                        |
| 16                      | Secondary school teacher                | February 2012 |                        |
| 17                      | Sessional university lecturer           | February 2012 |                        |
| 18                      | Secondary school teacher                | February 2012 |                        |
| 19                      | College teacher                         | January 2013  |                        |
| 20                      | Secondary school teacher                | January 2013  |                        |
| 21                      | Teacher trainer                         | January 2013  |                        |

## Appendix 6 - Example of an interview transcript

### Extract from Interview [5]

I: So perhaps to start with you could just tell me something about your background in terms of your study, how long you've been teaching, what kind of college you teach in at the moment?

T: OK. I did my BA and MA in English - language and literature, not in Communicative English. I did my degree from University College, which is in Trivandrum, then I did a degree in Education from the University of Kalikut, that's in northern Kerala. After that I worked as a guest lecturer in two colleges, again in northern Kerala, both are Government colleges. After that, I did a short spell, very short, like two months perhaps, in a polytechnic, again in northern Kerala. Then I came here, this is my first permanent job.

I: Right. And is your family based southern or northern Kerala?

T: My parents are from around central Kerala, not proper central Kerala but still, around central Kerala. They came here and they got their jobs and settled down here. I was born and brought up here.

I: Ok. Just to start with some general thoughts about the way English language is taught in Kerala - I'm not talking about specifically a communicative English course, but English language generally, in schools, in colleges.

T: In Kerala, English language is taught around Malayalam. Actually, they are both different languages with different structures and basically everything is different, but still if you want to teach someone English here, you have to teach that via Malayalam. That's a ridiculous thing to do, but still, that's what we do here.

I: You say that's what we do, what about in English Medium schools?

T: Even there it happens. Look, I was convent educated. I did like, what fourteen years in a convent institution and there also are teachers, they use bilingual method,

basically, because you get every kind of student there. Not everyone comes from the city, some come from very rural background. Everyone might not be able to follow if you take class throughout in English. So that doesn't happen.

I: OK. What are your views more generally of English Medium schools? Because they've grown and grown in recent ...

T: I prefer English Medium schools but then again kids vary, you know. My outlook about teaching was different before I came here. Because earlier, even when I studied or when I worked, just like in colleges or schools that were closer to the city, the student level, when they come in, they can appreciate English much better, they understand English much better. But here it is a completely different scenario because kids here are from the ... background, they don't get to use English, they don't hear English. We had a PTA meeting a few days back and I begged of the parents to let the kids watch the television, some English programme or other, they simply sat there and smiled - what a ridiculous suggestion, that's what went through their mind, I know, because the kids were sitting there and they were begging me with their looks 'don't say that, don't say that' because they know their parents will never let them watch any English programme. That's the culture here. It's different.

I: OK. So, just on what's taught in the classroom - in most places I go to, language is taught through literature, really as a by-product of learning to appreciate literature, language is picked up on, rather than as a separate subject. What do you think of that as a way of teaching language?

T: I don't appreciate it because, you know, teachers said that's what is aimed at, you teach language via literature, that's a certain goal, that's just a dream. Actually what happens is here we are engaged in a rat race to finish off the syllabus. We just want to finish the syllabus, prepare the students for the examination where they are not really being tested on the language. The questions that are asked, like appreciate the character of Hamlet, they won't be concentrating on the language, they are mugging up the story and they are writing some rubbish which cannot be

acknowledged as English. This teaching of language through literature, I won't support it. I am a person who is interested in linguistics, not in literature.

I: OK. Changing the subject slightly, what...how do you see the role of the teacher in the classroom?

T: I try to be a very good friend of my students because I think if they are afraid of me or if we have just a formal relationship, they won't be able to communicate with me, they won't come to me with their doubts or whatever. My kids, they do take an effort to speak English, they take an effort.

I: And do they come to you with their doubts?

T: Yes, they do. We are very close, me and my students, we are really good friends. That's what I'm really proud of, not that I'm a good teacher. Maybe I do teach because they say I'm a good teacher, but I don't know about the teacher part but I am a good friend. I think this relationship is important.

...

I: Ok. So again about communicative language teaching again, to what extent do you feel communicative methods are understood by teachers a) in practice ... sorry a) in theory and b) in practice?

T: Maybe not much in theory because teachers who come to college, assistant professors, they...most of them don't have a professional degree in education. They come here, they see the syllabus, ok, they deal with it. Though it's not necessary in Kerala and I don't think even in India that you should have a degree in education to be a college lecturer, you just got to have good marks for your MA/PG and NET, UGC NET. You have to clear that test. If you do that, you can be an assistant professor in a college but to teach in school, you have to have a degree in education so teachers might not be that familiar with the theories. But they do practice stuff in college because once enter into service, we have to do orientation and refresher courses

and there we are told about all these various theories and everything but in capsule form of course.

I: Um, I can see from the numbers in your classes that it would be possible to use communicative approaches. What do you think about these really large classes, seventy-five/a hundred, is it possible in such classes?

T: No, it's not possible, you know. We can always try. In smaller classrooms, you can have better class control but in bigger classrooms, if you are talking to one student, the rest all will be shouting, they will be talking, they won't even listen to you, even if it is something serious is going on, even if somebody dies right in the front of them, they won't pay any attention.

I: Ok. What...you mentioned some teacher...developmental teacher training that you get once you start working. Can you tell me a bit more about what that involves and how often it happens approximately?

T: Well, they hold courses regularly but we can do only one per year.

I: One a year. How many days?

T: Orientation's like around twenty-five days and refresher's like around twenty days. Orientation, every teacher who enters into service has to do that, preferably within one year. Refresher, you can do after one year of completing your orientation. You need to have one orientation and one refresher course certificate if you want to apply for your first promotion, so it's compulsory.

I: Right, and what about after that?

T: After that, for your second promotion you have to have another refresher course.

I: Ok. How are things changing in India, as time goes along, maybe it's a little early for you to say but maybe since you were in school, at college, do you feel like things are moving forward, developing?

T: Yes. Technology has moved on and to ask it, you know when I was at school or even when I was in college, I was not used to the internet or googling or anything like that. But my students, my first year students, they come to class and they are well versed with things, when I tell them something, they go home and they do some research on the internet and next day they come back and we discuss. It happens. And also they can accept Western culture much better than we could, back when we were students. Many things were new to us, we couldn't accept it, we would say 'oh that's very odd'. My kids are different.

I: I was interested actually in one of the talks that we both saw a couple of days ago, the one about the film trailers, because ... it was interesting for me because I, as an outsider, would never have thought I could do that talk because I would have expected that question about cultural appropriacy. But from your point of view, would you agree with the speaker who said, kids watch this anyway, so why not show it in class?

T: Yes, I would agree with him. You know what's the point of protecting the kids? What are you protecting the kids from? TV or the internet, they're just media, that's all. We can't tell them what to telecast or what not to, and we can't really screen what the kids see. They're of a certain age, there are some things which they should know, even sex education is important. In this country, that doesn't happen. I agree with Praveen Sir, Bond films can be used.

I: I did too actually. Ok, let's talk a little bit more about 'change' – what do you think the attitudes of a typical teacher in a school or in a college is to 'change', when a new method comes along, a new approach comes along?

T: Maybe senior teachers might not welcome it that much because they're used to certain ways of doing things. They like their classes as it is, but when there is young blood round, they love to experiment.

...

## **Appendix 7 - Examples of field notes**

Names of people and places have been removed to preserve anonymity.

### *Extract from field notes from Visit 1 (June 2008)*

*Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> June – School [B]*

This is one of the ‘better’ schools in the area, i.e. one of the more expensive private schools. Issues such as good private vs. other private vs. govt. schools, and urban vs. rural schools arose in conversation here. According to the English teacher trainer at [the teacher training college], who look me to visit this school, less happens in English in more rural schools. The fact that the affluent Keralite parents seem to be sending their children to schools like this, where there’s a very strong focus on English seems to be creating a kind of self-imposed linguistic-imperialism-type situation where the imperialists are those who have a good command of English.

It is clearly a couple of levels above the other school I visited. It feels like, and seems to consider itself, an elite school. I arrived to catch some of the investiture of the new head boy, head girl and house leaders. Three secondary English teachers completed questionnaires and I observed a class. The observation was of a very competent teacher teaching very competent and motivated students. The teachers seemed knowledgeable and had a higher level of English and better pronunciation that I’ve encountered previously. I spoke with two classes and the students asked me questions, they clearly spoke very good English themselves. The only negative in the visit was the Principal going on rather a lot about me finding them links with schools in the UK and finding native teachers to come out and work for them.

It might be that more communicative methods are applicable in ‘better’ private schools such as this to a much greater extent than they are in other schools, because of a combination environment, teacher-level and quality of student.

Extract from field notes from Visit 4 (December 2011)

*Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2011 – Conference at the University of Kerala*

The most positive thing from the conference was meeting a small number of people interested in teacher development, and managing to interview two of them. Some good data I think, and as a result I'm feeling more positive about research generally.

At the conference, the paper presentations were rather chaotic and of mixed quality, often simply regurgitating theory in a non-engaging way, though some were thought-provoking and informative and there was some emphasis on more recent approaches. I found it odd that teachers, who must surely be more aware than most about presentation styles and how to structure presentations, were often so poor in this sense.

In terms of teacher development, there do seem to be 'pockets of development' among individuals who develop interests in certain areas (e.g. technology, drama). There seemed in some cases to be a lack of practical application or practical examples of the theories discussed. Certainly, the feeling of a very much coursebook-led approach to language learning (but isn't this the case everywhere?).

In general, development seems to come mainly from the university and 'college' teachers rather than school teachers, at least if this conference is anything to go by.

There is some technology in colleges, although this seems to be based around language labs, which seem to have reinvented themselves in India. Is this because of low or slow internet connectivity or for some other reason?

Another idea that struck me was of resourcefulness (and/or the need to be resourceful) in a resource-scarce environment.

Again the idea that terminology is understood in different ways by different people resurfaced. I need to explore this, e.g. the terms 'method', 'methodology' and 'communicative'.