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Teacher and student attitudes towards recent methods of teaching and learning

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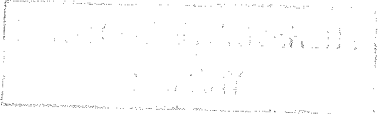
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**TEACHER AND STUDENT ATTITUDES
TOWARDS RECENT METHODS OF
TEACHING AND LEARNING**

by

Nguyen Thuy Hoang

B.Ed., Post Grad. Dip. TEFL.Stud.

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Award of**

Master of Education

**at the Faculty of Education,
Edith Cowan University.**

PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

1995

Abstract

The idea of implementing a variety of teaching and learning activities to the teaching and learning of the Language Teaching Methodology Unit at the Department of English, Ho Chi Minh City Teachers' College has been proposed as a contribution to motivate the students in learning this Unit. These various activities, for example, guided reading, diary keeping, action research or task-based learning are quite new to the teachers and students and considered to be the recent methods of teaching and learning. This study has been carried out to let the teachers and students know what the recent methods are and see whether they think the methods are acceptable at their institution. It investigated the opinions of these teachers and students towards the various methods of teaching and learning to discover if they prefer the recent methods or the traditional ones. Their attitudes are the basis to work out effective strategies for the implementation of the new methods which will enhance their teaching, learning and professional development.

The research method is descriptive and the report includes the qualitative analysis of data collected through evaluation forms and interviews, as well as the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire.

The findings indicate that all students and most of the teachers are aware of the benefits of the various ways of teaching and learning and find them acceptable in their situation. Only one of the three teachers expressed some beliefs about the appropriateness of the traditional methods in the teaching and learning situation in Vietnam.

The report provides an insight into the attitudes of these teachers and students and prepares for the introduction of the various teaching and learning activities which are beneficial to the teaching and learning of the Methodology Unit and their language teaching profession.

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and beliefs it does not contain any material previously published or written by any person except where due reference is made in the text.

NGUYEN THUY HOANG

May, 1995

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INTRODUCTION

This project is a study of the attitudes of the students and teachers of the Department of English at Ho Chi Minh City Teachers' College towards recent methods of teaching and learning in the Language Teaching Methodology Unit at this institution. The project is divided up into 6 chapters:

Chapter 1. Purposes of the study.

In this chapter, I will state the aims of the study and my research question, then explain why I think the issue is important with reference to the review of the literature.

Chapter 2. Context of the study.

In this chapter, I will describe the institution where the study was focused and took place, the relevance of the research topic to the situation and the importance of the research issue in this situation.

Chapter 3. Methods.

This chapter concerns the sample of the study, instruments of data collection and how the actual treatment experiment was carried out.

Chapter 4. Findings.

In this chapter, I will present the data analysis and the results derived from this process.

Chapter 5. Discussion.

This chapter contributes some explanation to the findings in section 4.

Chapter 6. Conclusion.

This chapter contains a summary of the findings, implications for research and implications for pedagogy.

CHAPTER 1

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, I will present the purposes of the study, the research topic and explain why the topic interests me as well as review the literature related to the study.

1.1. Purposes of the study.

The target of this study was to investigate the opinions of the teachers and students of the Department of English at Ho Chi Minh City Teachers' College and determine whether a variety of teaching and learning activities were seen as effective in the Language Teaching Methodology Unit. The study sought the answer for the research question: "Do the teachers and students of the Department of English believe a variety of teaching and learning activities is acceptable in the Methodology Unit?" The research is the basis for the implementation of the various activities, first to the Methodology Unit and then other Units taught at the Department as well. These activities will enhance the teaching and learning of these teachers and students and lead them to their professional competence .

1.2. The reasons why the research issue is interesting.

When attending the classes at Edith Cowan University, I realized that the lecturers always engage students in different learning activities which require

their active participation, independent thinking and the ability to apply theory to practice. I myself find these activities very beneficial to my study because I not only gain profound knowledge, experience and professional development but learn new ways of teaching and learning. Since the teaching and learning at my institution is restricted to only a limited range of activities which cannot fully enhance the study results of the students, I think it could be a good idea to apply the teaching and learning methods I learned at Edith Cowan University to my institution. The new methods could improve the situation and bring benefit to my students. Being a member of the Methodology staff, I first would like to apply the different methods to the Methodology Unit only. As careful consideration is a crucial aspect of any changes, I think, it is necessary first to get to know the opinions of the teachers and students at my institution about these methods before planning the implementation.

1.3. Literature review.

1.3.1 The importance of recent methods.

Wallace(1991) states that "... a variety of ways of teaching and learning should be used in teacher education courses". (p 29) He explains why it is necessary to involve a wide range of ways (modes) of teaching and learning in teacher education:

1. ... trainees' learning styles vary, and this should be reflected in teaching strategies.

2. ...trainees ought to be encouraged to experiment with a variety of learning strategies.
3. ...in most other aspects of life, variety adds spice and stimulus to the learning process.
4. Variety makes teaching more interesting to the tutor also: too much predicability in teaching situations leads to mechanical teaching.
5. The tutor gets to know the trainees better and is better able to evaluate them fairly by seeing them operate in a variety of learning situations.
6. Different learning experiences are more appropriate to different learning purposes. (Wallace,1991. pp. 29-30)

As we move from a period of 'teacher training' which views teacher preparation as familiarising student teachers with techniques and skills to apply in the classroom, to 'teacher education', which involves teachers in developing theories of teaching, understanding the nature of teacher decision making, and strategies for critical self awareness and self evaluation, it is essential for teacher educators to equip student teacher with both low- inference, readily learnable classroom skills as well as higher level principles and decision making skills as Widdowson (1993) indicates: "teacher education...., while indicating the relevant parameters, leaves them open, and so encourages enquires." (p.269) With this idea in mind, Allwright (1983) discusses the need for teachers to adopt more of a research attitude to their ordinary lives as teachers. In the article reporting on 2 studies of the effects on teachers of doing self- directed classroom- based research as a means for Teacher and school development, Roberts (1993) states that "there have been clear benefits at an individual level, largely in terms of revised perceptions, perspective and attitudes. These can have a profound effect on a teacher's practice, and on later performance in more senior posts." (p. 7)

He suggests "doing reseach can lead to a development in the way teachers tackle problems, because they have acquired additional models of how to act."

(p.16)

In contribution to the discussion, Ramani (1990) suggests some of the ways in which theory can be made interesting and relevant to teachers, for example 'reading projects' in which groups research and read up different areas. In his opinion:

... this may be an interesting way of coping with the problem of 'no time for reading'. Trainees could think up ways of reviewing books, and of consolidating, preserving, and distributing the results of their reading projects. The important thing is to keep alive the dynamic link between teachers' intuitions and the ideas preserved in books. (p.203)

With an aim to develop teacher students' decision-making skills, Gebhard, Gaitan and Oprandy (1990) propose a multiple- activities approach to teacher preparation through which student teachers are provided with opportunities to investigate their own teaching and the teaching of others, to carry out investigating projects in their own classrooms and to discuss teaching in a range of contexts. Among the activities they suggest are observing the teaching act, conducting investigating projects and discussing teaching in several contexts. Ellis (1990) also examines activities on teacher education in detail and provides an analytical framework for describing and developing activities. He distinguishes between experiential and awareness-raising, and offers a list of

tasks that takes the form of a number of 'operations' which the student teachers can be asked to perform on whatever raw data are provided, for example, comparing, preparing, evaluating...(see Appendix 2).

In considering that autonomy in education and language learning is very significant, relating more to exploration of the self concept and to the realisation of personal and group potential, Kenny (1993) wrote an article examining this hypothesis and concludes:

Education is about empowerment and what it empowers is people's autonomy. This allows their opportunities to generate knowledge....What learners must do is initiate, plan, organise and carry out work of their own. This is autonomy in practice and can lead to the challenge of innate belief systems and assumption. This in turn begins to unblock peoples' capacities for independent thought and action. (p.431)

Also interested in this issue, Crabbe(1993) discusses how teachers might bridge the gap between public classroom activities and private learning activity. His paper mentions that " learning tasks in the classroom is an important signal of expectations of a learner's role in learning" and " to achieve the goal of fostering autonomy, teachers need to examine critically all classroom practice from the perspective of independent learning." (p.443)

In another focus on the development of teacher-self awareness, Underhill (1992) highlights the importance of the facilitative role of groups which can play

a decisive role in helping teachers to mobilize their resources for change. And in one of his publications, Nunan (1990) encourages teachers to link theory and practice through an action research cycle of observation, identification of problem or issue, intervention and evaluation. Suggesting useful research tools for self- observation in teacher development, Bailey (1990) presents the use of diaries and journals in teacher education programs. He also mentions a five-step procedure for carrying out a study, and makes a number of practical suggestions to guide the potential diarist.

We have discussed the importance of investigating principles and techniques involved in teacher education programs and have seen that teacher education programs can not prepare student teachers for self- awareness, self development, autonomy, critical attitudes, decision- making skills and other requirements of qualified teachers without a range of different teaching and learning activities. These activities can be considered as recent methods of teaching and learning, especially at my institution. (See the activities in Appendix 3). The review of the literature makes it clear that these activities, for example, diary keeping, action research, case study, jigsaw learning, journal assignments and task- based learning, etc., are particularly effective in involving higher- level cognitive process which can not be taught directly. They will help teachers and students to adopt a research orientation to their own classroom and their own teaching, to go on developing their professional competence even when the teacher education program is no longer around.

Another reason highlighting the importance of a range of different teaching and learning activities in a teacher education program is that the teaching and learning experience in a College or Department of Education ought to reflect, in an appropriate way, the teaching and learning experience of the schools that the students are going to teach in. Widdowson(1993) comments" Why should they allow a degree of autonomy to others when it is denied to themselves." (p.262) And in many cases, we teach as we have been taught, so if student are being encouraged to break up large classes into small groups for group interaction, then, periodically they ought to find themselves part of a larger class being organised in this way, or if we want student teachers to develop autonomy and self direction in high school students, then autonomy and self direction should be gradually introduced to the teacher education program. From his study, Mok (1994) shows that teachers' beliefs and theories of and about teaching are guided by their previous experience as learners and as a teacher." It is, therefore, necessary for teacher educators to create opportunities for their student teachers to reveal and reflect upon their previous experiences so as to establish a link between theory and practice." (Mok, 1994, p.109)

The arguments provided clarify the idea that engaging different methods of teaching and learning in a teacher education program is quite crucial. But it is not clear whether the students and teachers at the Department of English will believe these activities to be effective and acceptable in their situation where the

traditional methods of teaching and learning, for example the duck-feeding style of teaching and rote-learning style, still dominate most of the teaching and learning contexts. As Brown (1990) states "belief systems contribute heavily to the teacher's behaviour at the level of 'approach', 'method' and 'technique'."

(p.85) It is clear that:

...beliefs and assumptions have a large part to play in how any individual teacher perceives his 'approach', his 'method' or his 'technique'.... What, why and how a teacher teaches will depend on what he believes to be right, or on what those in charge of him believe to be right.(p.85)

Therefore, if teachers and students believe the variety of ways of teaching and learning activities are essential, their approval of the implementation of these methods is quite possible.

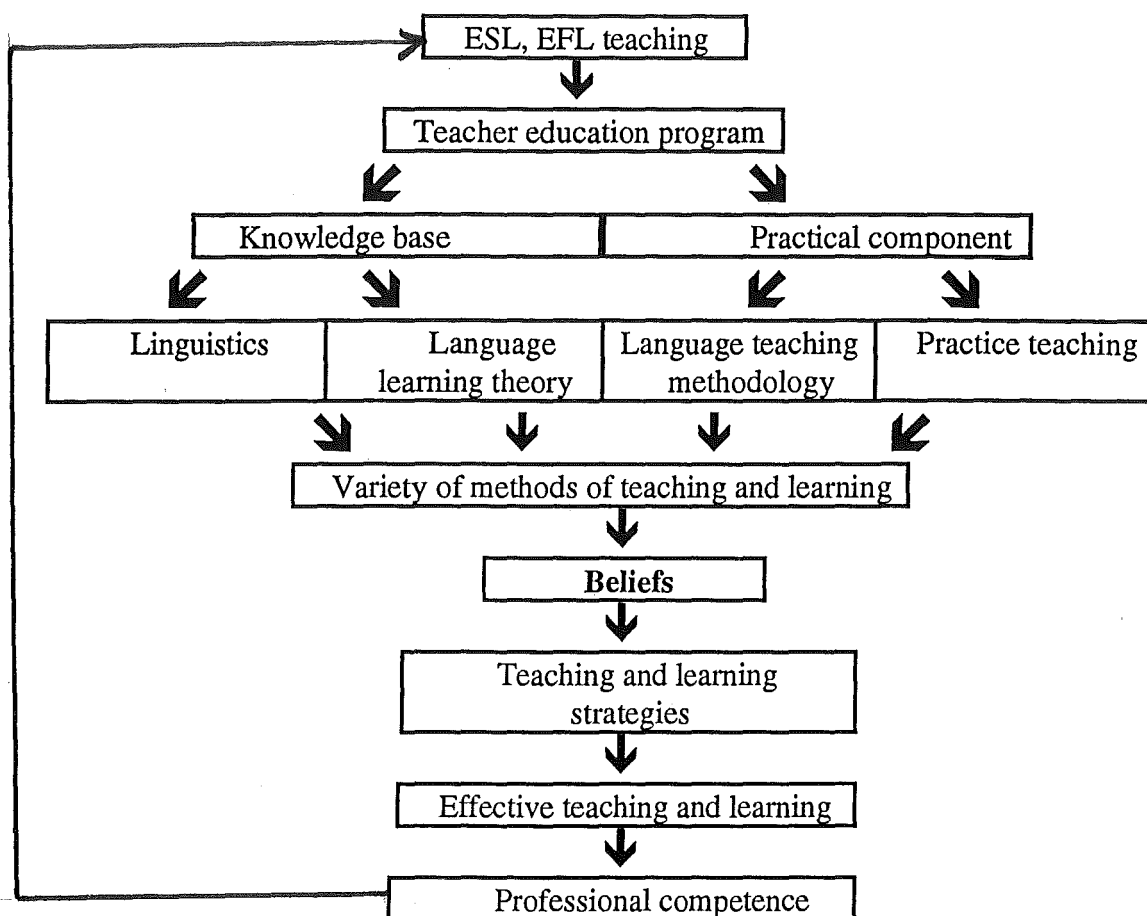
1.3.2. The importance of studying student beliefs.

A number of studies have proved that students' beliefs about ways of teaching and learning can have a strong impact on their success in learning. If they think independent study is essential at university level and for their professional development, they will actively involve themselves in any 'project' or a kind of task-based activity which requires extended amounts of independent work. And if they do not know the importance of collaborative learning, they will not like to take part in any 'seminar', or a form of group activity in which all of the participants have to contribute something to the discussion. The arguments explain that what teachers and students think about teaching and learning

methods can affect how they go about it. Horwitz (1988) points out "... student beliefs about language learning can influence their language learning strategies.... Therefore, knowledge of student beliefs about language learning is an important step toward understanding the etiology of learning strategies." (p.132) The teacher's insight into what students think about their ways of teaching, why they prefer this method and not that one may enable them to determine effective strategies and help students adopt more productive learning procedures. Furthermore, when the teachers understand student beliefs, they will also see the interaction of beliefs with other learner variables such as motivation or cognitive styles and thus better understand why and how these variables impact on learning. It is the beliefs of learners that cause such researchers as Horwitz and Christison and Krahnke to contribute to the literature of ESL teaching and learning. Horwitz (1988) reports the responses of one group of ESL students to an instrument (BALLI- a questionnaire) to assess student beliefs about language learning. It aims to sensitise teachers to the type of beliefs students hold and to the possible consequences of these beliefs for second language learning and instruction. The article concluded "...that a systematic assessment of student beliefs would greatly facilitate learning in the ESL class." (Horwitz,1988, p.139) Christison and Krahnke (1986), using interview technique, finds out that the study was one more way to understand the language learning process and "...studies of learner belief and attitude are valuable sources of insight into language learning."(p. 78)

The literature reviewed above has identified the importance of involving various activities in teacher education programmes and investigating student beliefs in facilitating teaching and learning. Consequently, I think, it is essential to get to know the attitudes of the teachers and students at my institution toward a variety of ways of teaching and learning which are new to them and referred to as recent methods of teaching and learning in this study. If they think these methods are acceptable, based on their opinions, effective strategies will be sought to implement them to their situation. As stated in 1.1, this implementation will enable them to achieve their professional competence and educational purposes.

Following is the theoretical framework related to the study.



In this chapter, we have looked at the purposes of the research and the review of the literature revealing the importance of the research issue in EFL teacher education. In the next chapter, we will have another look at the context of the study.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, I am concerned with the institution where the study is focused, the students, teachers, the situation and the importance of the research issue in this situation.

The Department of English, one of the ten Departments of Ho Chi Minh City Teachers' College is the institution that trains teachers of English for high schools in South Vietnam. This Department offers students not only linguistic competence but pedagogic competence as well. It is the Language Teaching Methodology teaching staff who are responsible for familiarising students with language teaching theory and practice. Due to the lack of their appropriate training and reference materials, the teachers are not well- informed of the recent methods and techniques in teaching. All students have to do in this Unit is to take notes from long lectures, learn them by heart for the end -of- unit examination or make simple lesson plans for their teaching practice using particular techniques without being required to understand the theoretical assumptions underlying them. They can not see the integration of theory and practice because these two components are likely to be treated separately. The teachers can not motivate their students in the subject as their way of teaching is traditional and constraining in terms of the activities they ought to engage their students in. The principles and techniques of language teaching and learning are

explained only in the form of lectures without handouts, tutorials, discussions or guided readings that may provide guidelines for the subject. The observation of student peer teaching is not seen as a tool for understanding the teaching - learning process in a lesson but only a focus on student performance. The teachers are not enquires but a source of data. They never ask students to do anything beyond the lessons or the classroom. The students have nothing to do with raising their critical awareness or self evaluation of recent approaches and methods. They are merely the practitioners of language teaching techniques. They are not prepared to become reflective, autonomous teachers who possess investigating ability, decision- making skills or be sensitive to collaborative learning, reflective teaching and self improvement because, in fact, their teachers are not concerned very much about these issues.

As the result of these problems, the teachers can not expect desirable qualities from their students and the subject does not interest students at all. Though they are teacher students, they do not pay enough attention to or fully realise the importance of Language Teaching Methodology in the education program. They tend to the view that one who can speak a language can teach it and lay more emphasis on the linguistic or language skills components of the program.

However, if the teachers think the Methodology Unit is essential, they must find ways to help students learn it better. Grounded on this idea and the situational analysis, I think an introduction of a variety of teaching and learning methods

to the Unit can somewhat change the situation for the better. The effective exploitation of the new methods can arouse both teachers and students' interest and involvement in the subject. But Marsh (1988) states

commitment only comes after a person recognises, understands and appreciates a particular innovation. It may take quite a long time for a person to familiarise himself with a project. Only after a certain level of confidence and understanding has been reached will the person exhibit a definite commitment to it. (pp.52-53)

Taking into account this view, I think it is quite necessary to let the teachers and students at my institution have an idea of what the recent methods are and see whether they prefer the traditional methods or think the new methods are acceptable in their situation. These reasons explain why I should carry out a study focusing on these issues. Their opinions would be considered as the basis for the implementation of the change.

In this chapter, we have seen the context of the research and understand the reasons why the issue is significant in this situation. In the next chapter, we will see how the research was carried out in this context.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This chapter deals with the description of sample, instruments of collecting data as well as how the data collection was carried out.

3.1 Sample.

As the students of the English Department start the Language Teaching Methodology Unit in year 4 and finish it in year 5 and there is merely one class at each level, consequently, subjects of the study were the students of these two classes (13 students of year 4 and 15 students of year 5). Since most of teacher students are females, there is no wonder why only one student subject is male. Together with these students are three teachers of the Methodology staff, one of whom has got a Graduate Diploma in TESOL from Australia (the Head of the Unit). The students are all Vietnamese with their ages ranging from 22 to 25 and familiar with the traditional ways of teaching and learning.

3.2 Instrument.

Data were collected from the students and teachers by means of an evaluation form, (See p.26) a questionnaire (See Appendix 1). and individual interviews

(See p.28) These three instruments were triangulated to ensure the validity and accuracy of the results. The instruments were designed to gather information of the following attitudes:

- *teacher and student attitudes towards traditional methods.*
- *teacher and student attitudes towards recent methods.*
- *their preferred methods of teaching and learning in Methodology Unit.*

The instructions and the answers to the evaluation form, questionnaire and the interviews were all in Vietnamese to ensure the validity and reliability of data.

Below are the descriptions of the instruments

3.2.1. The experimental classes.

Due to the fact that most of the recent teaching and learning methods are unfamiliar to the teachers and students, I thought there would be a need for familiarising them with these concepts so as to enable them to become reliable informants. Therefore, first of all, I conducted 2 experimental Methodology classes as the substitution for the 2 usual non- experimental ones. The main characteristics of the 2 treatment classes were the new activities they involved as the introduction to the recent methods though they still used the teaching materials of the Methodology Unit. The student subjects were class participants and teacher subjects class observers. Following are the description of the content and procedures of the 2 experimental classes.

CLASS 1. YEAR 4

Teaching Content : Errors and mistakes.

Aims: To make students aware of :

- the significance of learners' errors.
- what we can learn from examining errors in detail.
- what attitude and policy to adopt towards errors when they occur.
- techniques for correcting errors.

Steps:

a. Guided Reading.

Students were given two readings (See appendixes 4 and 5) to read in advance and individually chose one of the following statements and prepared arguments to defend it in the coming class:

* *"Errors and mistakes are an important part of our learning; we have to make them in order to learn. "*

* *" Correcting errors that students make when they speak or write can be one of the most difficult tasks in language teaching."(Gower and Walters, 1983)*

* *" We have to make a distinction between genuine errors and unfortunate mistakes."*

* *"Teachers will also have to allow errors to go uncorrected on many occasions. "(Hubbard et al , 1983)*

b. Crossover Group Discussion.

- i. Students who chose the same statement, e.g, statement 1, form one group, so 4 statements made 4 groups. Each group discussed and modified the chosen statement so that every group member agreed with one another.
- ii. Two members of one group, together with the other twos from the other 3 groups, made a new group in which each member, again, presented his/ her ideas of what the previous group agreed upon. S/he also answered questions of the new group members and defended her/ himself from attack

c. Feedback.

Individuals or groups reported back to the class on what they had been discussing or the tutor could help them explore pedagogical implications of the reading and the discussion.

d. Task- Based Learning.

Task 1

This task established the difference between mistakes and errors.

Steps.

- i. In groups, students recorded a couple of their peers talking to each other.
- ii. They noted down which inaccuracies of forms they thought were merely slips and those which were ingrained errors.
- iii. They passed the list to a partner and tried to see if the 2 lists were similar.
- iv. They then compared what they could and what they could not do with their original list and discussed some of the individual language problems.

Task 2.

This helped with the anticipation of errors when teaching new structures.

Steps.

- i. In groups, students drew up a list of 4 structural areas, e.g, regular past tense, the present perfect or the third conditional.
- ii. In pairs, they listed as many potential problem as they could under the heading of the following grid:

ERRORS OF			
Form	Meaning	Pronunciation	Reasons?

- iii. The list was then compared among the students and the common errors were listed.
- iv. Students then prepared a remedial lesson on one of the areas of errors.

CLASS 2. YEAR 5

Teaching Content: Checking whether students have understood what is going on.

Aims

- to develop awareness of different types of questions in checking student understanding.
- to make students aware of different possible strategies for asking questions .
- to give practice in writing questions and deciding on the usefulness of each kind of question at different stages of a lesson.
- to show students some other means of checking comprehension.

Steps

a. Guided reading and jigsaw learning

Students were asked to read the guided reading (See appendix 6) in advance and prepare a list of 3 controversial statements about questions, eg, "*comprehension questions need to be organised and serve a clearly thought out purpose.*" etc.

b. Cross over group discussion.

i. Individual student gave his/ her list to the group and asked group members to modify the statements so that they could agree with him/ her.

- ii. Individual student modified the statements again.
- iii. In pairs, they compared the modified statements and modified them again so that both of them could agree with each other.
- iv. The above step was repeated in group of 4.
- v. The groups were then doubled up until the discussion involved the whole class.

In this way, ideas from different groups were shared without the need for a feedback session.

c. Task based learning.

Task 1. This task gives practice in writing questions to check that students understand new language.

- i. Students were asked to write concept questions to check presented language items, eg.

** I wish he'd come.*

** He used to go fishing every week.*

** She must have gone out.*

- ii. Individual students found a partner and compared the list.
- iii. In 2 minutes they came up with a new agreed list by adding and deleting.
- iv. Then they found another pair and did the same thing and with other pairs until the whole class finished brainstorming the topic.

Task 2. This task gives practice in deciding on the usefulness of comprehension questions.

i. Students were given a piece of dialogue, eg.

A. So I said I didn't want to go.

B. What on earth did you do that for?

C. Well, I didn't really like him.

ii. In pairs, students wrote down as many questions as they could about what was in the dialogue and what it implied. They did this quickly without worrying how good or bad the questions were.

iii. Students divided the questions they had into : Easy- Less easy- More difficult and discussed in what ways they thought the questions might be of use.

Task 3.

To give practice in other means of checking comprehension. Students read the attached text.(See appendix 7). They discussed whether they could check student understanding by asking them to tick boxes, write in single word answers, label diagrams or write sentences. They should decide on the advantages and disadvantages of each.

We have examined the content and steps of the 2 experimental classes which were considered the preparations for the responses to the three means of data collection. Next is the description of the three instruments

3.2.2. Class Evaluation Form.

The evaluation form was designed to seek for subjects' opinions about the differences between the traditional methods used in the non- experimental classes and the recent ones involved in the experimental classes. Subjects were asked to indicate the positive and negative aspects of the 2 types of classes and suggest some changes to each type. The differences pointed out between the classes were the basis for the subjects to supply reliable responses to the questionnaire and the interviews. The form looks as follows:

CLASS EVALUATION FORM

We are interested in your comments about the experimental Methodology class compared with the non-experimental ones . Please respond to the points below

Comments	The experimental class	The non- experimental class
1: Positive aspects.		
2. Negative aspects.		
3.Suggested changes		

3.2.3. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was a set of 20 attitude statements requiring teachers and students to indicate their agreement and disagreement along a 5- point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.(See the questionnaire in Appendix 1). Based on the 3 attitude categories stated in 3.2, the statements were ordered as follows:

- * Statement 1---8: Teacher and student attitudes towards traditional methods.
- * Statements 9---19: Teacher and student attitudes towards recent methods.
- * Statement 20: Their preferred methods.

All the questionnaire items were closed because they usually achieve greater uniformity of measurement and therefore greater reliability and the responses to this kind of question are easier to analyse. Certainly there were some limits with closed questions but they were later dealt with in the interviews in which open ended questions were asked. The questionnaire was piloted with a group of 5 students chosen from the sample before being administered. This helped me find out that item number 1 and 20 were ambiguous and hence correction was done immediately.

3.2.4. Interview

The interview was the last instrument of data collection. Subjects of the interviews were 13 students chosen randomly from the sample group and 3 male teachers of the Methodology staff. As mentioned previously, among the student interviewees, only 1 is male, the others are females. Each respondent

was given more or less than 10 minutes to answer the questions. The interviews were semi-structured since the method of asking structured questions, then unstructured questions following the responses given by the interviewee, leads to greater clarity and depth of responses. All the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese. Like other elicitation instruments, the interview questions were also piloted in a context close to the reality of the actual study to see if the questions would obtain the desired data and if they were clear and appropriate. The interviews were taped with the participants' permission for data analysis. There were 5 interview questions and they were built upon the questionnaire to provide subjects opportunity to express their opinions more frankly about the methods and see which methods they prefer. The following questions were asked:

1. What do you expect from an ideal teacher? (Do you think an ideal teacher should know how to engage students in different learning activities?)
2. What is your preferred way of learning? Why?
3. What are the advantages and the disadvantages of the old ways of teaching and learning?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the new ways of teaching and learning?
5. Can you suggest the difficulties or the favourable circumstances that might happen to the implementation of the new methods?

3.3. Procedure

At the beginning of each experimental class, a list of various ways of teaching and learning were handed out.(See Appendix 3). This list initially provided students and teachers with the idea of what the new methods were. Necessary explanations on the list were given to ensure that the subjects understood clearly the activities described on the list. Then they were told that the experimental class they were attending would involve some of these activities.

After the experimental classes, the evaluation form and questionnaire were administered to the subjects and they were asked to complete the evaluation form before the questionnaire since the former was the basis to answer the latter. They were told to give honest responses which were the focus of the study and not to worry about whether they were right or wrong. All their enquires about the requirements were explained carefully. Subjects were asked to complete the evaluation form and the questionnaire in one week and give them back to the researcher directly.

The individual interviews took place a week later, when the researcher had got back all the evaluation forms and the questionnaire. At the beginning of each interview, the informant was informed of the purpose of the interview and s/he could ask any question if s/he was not clear about the interview. During the interview, the informant was encouraged to discuss the topic further, explore

alternatives and think of possibilities s/he had not considered. Before the interview was closed, the interviewee was asked if s/he would like to put forward any further questions and the researcher would be ready to make them clear.

I have described the sample, the instruments and the process of collecting data for the study. The next chapter will focus on how the information collected through these instruments was analysed.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The focus of this chapter is the step by step analysis of the 3 kinds of data. It includes the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire data and the qualitative analysis of the individual interviews. Since the number of teacher informants was small, their opinions collected through the evaluation form were analysed qualitatively whilst the student opinions could be used for quantitative analysis. The data analysis took the same sequence as that of the data collection, namely the evaluation form first, the questionnaire after and finally the interviews. The results of each kind of data were followed by a summary which was also a brief discussion of the findings.

4.1. Evaluation Data Analysis.

To analyse the data collected through the evaluation form, I first divided the subjects into 2 groups, teacher group and student group, then listed the comments of each group in 3 categories:

- a. Positive aspects of recent and traditional methods.
- b. Negative aspects of recent and traditional methods.
- c. Changes they suggested to recent and traditional methods.

From this list, the students' most common positive and negative opinions about each type of method was quantified in tables to make them easy to follow. For the teachers' opinions, as the number was small, the qualitative analysis of the summary of their comments would be provided.

4.1.1. Students' and teachers' comments.

TABLE 1: Numbers of students' comments (out of 27).

Comments	Recent methods	Traditional methods
Positive	27	17
Negative	18	23
Suggested changes	5	8

Table 1 makes clear the idea that students were more interested in giving comments on the positive aspects of the recent methods than those of the traditional ones and they did not find as many negative ideas with the former as with the latter. Perhaps they thought the recent modes were too unfamiliar or perfect to be changed and therefore they proposed more changes to traditional methods which were so familiar for them or the weaknesses of which were so clear to comment on. Whatever the explanation may be, from their opinions, we can see that students showed more supportive attitudes to the recent methods than to the traditional ones.

TABLE 2: Numbers of teachers' comments (out of 3).

Comments	Recent methods	Traditional methods
Positive	7	6
Negative	5	5
Suggested changes	6	6

The result from this table shows that though these teachers were aware of the advantages of recent methods, they still found the traditional modes favourable. The summary of teachers' comments in 4.1.3.a and the discussion in Section 5 will explain this approval more clearly.

4.1.2. The students' most common positive and negative comments about the experimental class and the non experimental ones.

TABLE 3: Number of the students' positive comments about the experimental class.

COMMENTS	No (out of 27)
1.The class was interesting	11
2. The students were more active and motivated	10
3. The students were more involved.	5
4. The lesson was easier to understand and specific.	5
5.The class was advantageous	5
6. There was good interaction between peers.	4
7. There was good interaction between teacher and students	3
8.The atmosphere was enjoyable	3

TABLE 4: Number of the students' most common positive ideas about the non-experimental class.

COMMENTS	No (out of 27)
1. Students got more information from the lecturer	8
2. This type of class was suitable for Vietnamese students	3
3. Weak students felt more confident	2
4. Students could take careful notes for revision	2
5. The lessons were mainly theory - focused.	2

Comparing the positive ideas about the 2 methods in table 3 and 4, we see more students agreed on the strong points of recent methods. This agreement highlighted their insight into the prominent features of as well as their preference for the new methods.

TABLE 5: Number of the students' most common negative ideas about the experimental class.

COMMENTS	No
1. The class required much time.	11
2. The methods were strange to students	7
3. The class was difficult to control in terms of noise	5
4. The class required good knowledge of the teacher	2

TABLE 6: Number of the students' most common negative ideas about the non-experimental class.

COMMENTS	No of comments
1.The students were passive	9
2.The lesson was theoretical	8
3.There was too much information to remember	6
4. The class was boring	6
5. The teacher talked much	3

In tables 5 and 6, the students put forward almost the same number of negative opinions about the 2 methods. This similarity might be the consequence of their unfamiliarity with the recent methods as well as their insight into the weaknesses of the traditional methods they have been accustomed to. The results of the tables indicate that, possibly, in students' perceptions, every method had certain weak points. However, the result in table 3 shows their preference for recent methods as being more advantageous.

4.1.3. Summary of the teachers' comments.

4.1.3.a. The advantages of recent methods and traditional ones.

With regard to the recent methods, they all took for granted that students in the experimental classes were more involved, active and attentive. The activities helped them learn thoroughly with confidence, thus, the students found the class

interesting and suitable. It developed students' ability and the teacher was relaxed. These teachers also expressed the same amount of ideas about the advantages of the traditional methods. To them, the methods were familiar and suitable to both Vietnamese teachers and students. The students could depend on the lecturer for essential knowledge and information about the issues concerned and copy a lot. They did not feel the teaching time was wasted.

4.1.3.b. The disadvantages of recent methods and traditional ones.

In their thinking, most teachers and students had not become used to the recent methods. The time-constraints might not allow enough activities to facilitate student understanding of the issues or their proficiency was not suitable for some recent methods. That is why they worried that weak students could not become active participations. At the same time, they found the students in traditional classes very passive. The latter relied too much on the lecturers' resources and tended to be content with whatever knowledge or information was provided by the formers. They were not encouraged to think independently. There was too much boredom in traditional classes and much information given by the teachers did not mean good learning.

4.1.4. Changes the students and teachers suggested.

Only few changes were suggested by both teachers and students. This could be rooted in their passive ways of teaching and learning. Neither teachers nor students were trained to develop independent, critical thinking or express their

opinions. Consequently they were too timid or lazy to raise their voice when necessary. Thus, the number of changes they suggested were very limited, especially on the part of the students.

4.1.4.a. Changes suggested by the students.

TABLE 7: Changes suggested by the students.

Recent methods		Traditional methods	
Changes	No of Ss	Changes	No of Ss
Use more activities.	2	Change traditional methods into new ones	3
Remain and enrich the new methods.	1	Lectures should be more practical.	2
		Teachers should talk less.	2
		Encourage students to work independently.	1

In table 7 more changes were recommended to traditional methods than to recent ones and this means students were well-informed of the effectiveness of the latter.

4.1.4.b. Changes the teachers recommended.

i. To the recent methods.

- More time should be allocated to Methodology Unit.
- Students should be made acquainted with a number of different teaching and learning methods.

- Class size should be smaller.
- Train students to change learning habits.
- Better preparation.
- More teaching aids and materials.

ii. To the traditional methods.

- Lectures should be brief.
- More hands out should be given.
- A variety of tasks and activities should be introduced to supplement the lectures.
- Students have to be more active and ready to participate.
- Do not make use of blackboard too much.
- Taking notes is mentioned but not copying.

The teachers' recommendations show that these teachers could find the implementation of the recent methods a problem. This might explain why the traditional methods were still their favour.

4.1.5. Summary.

The evaluation data provides us with information which shows every teacher and student realised the benefit of recent methods in their teaching and learning though they still found some shortcomings which could spring from their ignorance or their unfamiliarity with these methods. The changes suggested by

the teachers might be considered as factors affecting their complete support and the successful implementation of the recent methods.

4. 2. Questionnaire Data Analysis.

Based on the three attitudes mentioned in 3.2, namely:

- teacher and student attitudes toward traditional methods,
- teacher and student attitudes toward recent methods,
- their preferred methods of teaching and learning,

the data collected through the questionnaire were reduced to a quantifiable form by listing and scoring on the basis of frequency distribution shown in the following tables:

4.2.1. Student attitudes towards the methods.

TABLE 8: Student attitudes towards traditional methods.

The numbers in 5 columns of frequency distribution stand for the numbers of students who chose the response. The total number of informants is 28. In the frequency distribution:

- (1). SA= Strongly Agree.
- (2). A = Agree.
- (3). C= Can't decide.
- (4). D = Disagree.
- (5). SD= Strongly Disagree.

STATEMENTS	FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION				
	(1)SA	(2)A	(3)C	(4)D	(5)SD
1. Formal lecture is the dominant method in this Unit.	2	6	2	12	6
2. Ts & Ss prefer the traditional methods.	0	0	5	22	1
3. Teachers prefer the traditional methods.	0	8	8	12	0
4. Students prefer the traditional methods.	0	2	2	17	7
5. Traditional methods are easy to organise.	6	16	2	4	0
6. Students like lectures and note-taking.	1	6	4	12	5
7. Traditional methods are inappropriate at University level.	13	13	2	0	0
8. Ts & Ss do not like like to adopt the recent methods .	2	10	3	11	2

Column 4 (Disagree) of the Frequency distribution provides the fact that most students disagreed with statements 1-8, which were about their preference of traditional methods. This disagreement expressed their disapproval of traditional methods.

TABLE 9 : Student attitudes towards recent methods.

STATEMENTS	FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION				
	(1)SA	(2) A	(3) C	(4) D	(5)SD
9. There are different methods.	19	9	0	0	0
10. Ts.do not like methods requiring preparation .	2	12	6	8	0
11. Ss do not like methods requiring self study.	1	4	5	13	5
12. The implementation of new methods is possible.	9	17	0	2	0
13. Teachers like recent methods.	3	9	13	3	0
14. Students like recent methods.	12	15	1	0	0
15. Ss should be exposed to a variety of methods.	18	8	2	0	0
16. New methods facilitate student participation.	9	16	2	0	1
17. Different methods create flexibility.	18	9	0	1	0
18. Ts & Ss like to investigate their teaching and learning	4	16	7	1	0
19. New methods provide skills for self-development.	13	14	0	1	0

In columns (1) and (2) of this frequency distribution, the number of students who expressed their agreements with statements about the positive aspects of recent methods is greater than the neutral opinions and the disagreements in other 3 columns. These greater numbers indicate their preferred opinions about these methods.

4.2.2 Teacher attitudes towards the methods.

TABLE 10: Teacher attitudes towards traditional methods.

STATEMENTS	(1)SA	(2) A	(3) C	(4) D	(5)SD
1 Formal lecture is the dominant method in this Unit	0	1	0	2	0
2. Ts & Ss prefer the traditional methods.	0	1	0	1	1
3. Teachers prefer the traditional methods.	0	1	0	1	1
4. Ss prefer the traditional methods.	0	1	0	1	1
5. Traditional methods are easy to organise.	1	2	0	0	0
6. Ss like lectures and note-taking.	0	1	0	1	1
7 Traditional methods are inappropriate at Uni level	1	1	0	0	1
8. Ts & Ss do not like to adopt the recent modes	0	2	1	0	0

From this table we realise that though they preferred the recent methods, one, sometimes 2, of the 3 teachers agreed with statements 1-8 concerning their preference for traditional methods. It means that traditional methods, to some extent, were still felt to be beneficial to them.

TABLE 11: Teacher attitudes towards recent methods.

STATEMENTS	(1)SA	(2) A	(3) C	(4) D	(5)SD
9. There are different methods.	2	1	0	0	0
10. Ts do not like methods requiring preparation.	0	1	1	1	0
11. Ss do not like methods requiring self study.	0	0	1	2	0
12. The implementation of new methods is possible.	2	1	0	0	0
13. Teachers like recent methods.	1	0	2	0	0
14. Students like recent methods.	1	2	0	0	0
15. Ss should be exposed to a variety methods.	1	2	0	0	0
16. New methods facilitate student participation.	3	0	0	0	0
17. Different methods create flexibility.	1	2	0	0	0
18. Ts & Ss like to investigate their teaching and learning.	0	2	1	0	0
19. New methods provide skills for self development.	1	2	0	0	0

Similarly to the student opinions in table 9, more teachers supported the recent methods by strongly agreeing (column 1) or agreeing (column 2) with statements 9-19 commenting on the advantages and necessity of recent methods at tertiary level.

Based on the score from the frequency distributions about their disagreements with the traditional methods and their agreements with the recent methods, we

can establish the subjects' opinions as favourable, unfavourable and neutral, shown in tables 12 and 13

4.2.3. Teacher and student attitudes towards traditional methods.

TABLE 12: Teacher and student attitudes towards traditional methods.

STATEMENTS (1)	Favourable (2)		Unfavourable (3)		Neutral (4)	
	S	T	S	T	S	T
2. Ts & Ss prefer the traditional methods.	0	1	23	2	5	0
3. Ts prefer the traditional methods.	8	1	12	2	8	0
4. Ss prefer the traditional methods.	2	1	24	2	2	0
5. Traditional methods are easy to organise.	4	1	22	2	2	0
6. Ss like lectures and note-taking.	7	1	17	2	4	0
7 Traditional methods are inappropriate at Unilevel.	0	1	16	2	2	0
8. Ts & Ss do not like to adopt the recent methods.	12	2	13	1	3	0

All the above statements are about traditional methods and column (3) contains greater numbers of teachers and students who were unfavourable towards these statements which also means they were not supportive of the traditional methods. This finding might also be considered as an indication of their preference for recent methods.

4.2.4. Teacher and student attitudes towards recent methods.

TABLE 13: Teacher and student attitudes towards recent methods.

STATEMENTS (1)	Favourable (2)		Unfavourable (3)		Neutral (4)	
	S	T	S	T	S	T
9. There are different methods.	28	2	0	1	0	0
10. Ts do not like methods requiring preparation	8	1	14	1	6	0
11. Ss do not like methods requiring self study.	18	2	5	0	5	1
12. The implementation of the new methods is possible	26	3	2	0	0	0
13. Teachers like recent methods.	12	1	3	0	13	2
14. Students like recent methods.	27	3	0	0	1	0
15. Students should be exposed to a variety of methods.	26	3	0	0	2	0
16. New methods facilitate student participation.	25	3	1	0	2	2
17. Different methods create flexibility.	27	3	1	0	0	0
18. Ts & Ss like to investigate their teaching and learning.	20	2	1	0	7	0
19. New methods provide skills for self-development.	27	3	1	0	0	0

The statements in table 13 refer to recent methods. In column 2, we see more students and teachers expressed favourable opinions toward these statements than the number of opinions in the other 2 columns which show their unfavourable or neutral responses. The greater favourable opinions in column 2 mean that there is support for the recent methods.

4.2.5. Teaching and learning methods the students and teachers prefer.

TABLE 14: Teaching and learning methods the students and teachers prefer.

Modes	No of Ss (out of 28)	No of Ts (out of 3)
1. Lecture	6	1
2. Taking notes	0	1
3. Rote learning	0	1
4. Examination	2	0
5. Group discussion	18	2
6. Tutorial	24	2
7. Seminar paper	6	0
8. Guided reading	11	0
9. Task-based learning	16	2
10. Workshop	7	1

Table 14 indicates that most students and teachers voted for tutorial (24), group discussion (18) and task-based learning (16) which all belong to the list of recent methods. Only one teacher and a few students chose the lecture form whilst none of the latter showed any interest in rote-learning and note-taking. The result of this table again shows their preference for recent methods.

4.2.6. Summary.

The analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire provides us with the following results:

- A majority of teachers and students realised the disadvantages and inappropriateness of traditional methods at University level. They disagreed with most of the statements about the preference of these methods.
- They were supportive of the recent methods and aware of the necessity of introducing such methods to their teaching and learning situation.
- The methods they were most interested in were tutorial, group discussion and task-based learning , the ones among recent modes of teaching and learning.

4.3. Interview Data Analysis.

As all the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, first, I had to listen to the interview record again and write down the responses, then translate them into English. After that I summarised the interviews, read them again and again so as to draw the findings from their opinions.

4.3.1. Summary of student interviews

Question 1. What do you expect from an ideal teacher?

Among 13 student interviewees, 10 students preferred a teacher with good, flexible methods. They said: " It is more necessary for a teacher to acquire a repertoire of methods than a good command of knowledge." Seven of them liked their teachers to train them in learning strategies, e.g, self-study or research methods so that they could improve their knowledge by themselves as in their opinions "what the teacher provides me is never enough." Four of them

realised that independent study and research methods were very crucial at University level. They would not become good learners and then good teachers without knowing these strategies. A good teacher, in their opinions, should be devoted, aware of student needs, have good methods, teach practical things and know how to involve students in different learning activities. One student mentioned: "The more practical the lessons, the more they motivate students and help them to achieve their study goals." Three students thought they could not know learning strategies by themselves or succeed without teachers' guide since they were inexperienced. Hence it was the teachers' job to provide them with recent learning modes. One student cited: " If I know how to study well, I will work well after graduation. The better I learn, the better I teach."

From their responses, we may come to the conclusion that nearly all of 13 students appreciated a teacher with good teaching methods, awareness of teacher- student interaction or co-operation and learning strategies.

Question 2. What is your preferred way of teaching and learning?

The followings are the learning methods that these 13 students often mentioned in the interviews:

Methods	No of Ss
1.independent study	4
2. lesson preparation followed by peer discussion	4
3. peer discussion followed by tutorial.	3
4. pair or group work	2

Besides the above methods, individual students also mentioned other methods such as reading and taking notes, doing research, learning about practical issues, holding seminars or being involved in different classroom activities.

The general view we get from the answers to this question is the students' consciousness of the learning modes effective to their study progress. It highlights their preference for the new teaching and learning methods.

Question 3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of traditional method?

Advantages: Most of them stated they did not worry much about lesson preparation since their teachers did not often ask them to do such things before class. Two students said teachers could and had more time for the lessons as the class was always teacher-directed. One student pointed out: "Passive students tend to think that they learn more from the conventional ways but they do not know how to put theory into practice". Two students remarked: "In traditional classes, students seem attentive and the lessons seem content-focused."

Disadvantages.

Four students expressed the idea that these methods only created passive students: Half of them stated they could not remember every thing teachers

offered them in class or which they got from the lectures for they were not really involved in the learning process. Two of them thought: " as the result of teacher- directed classes, teachers are always very exhausted after lessons and do not know whether students understand the problems." Nearly half of them felt bored attending and found it hard to understand such lessons as one student said teacher- talking time was always more than student- talking time. They all thought the traditional ways could not develop student ability or provide opportunities for them to work by themselves.

Their answers to question 3 show that only few students thought the traditional methods were beneficial to them whilst more indicated the disadvantages of these methods. The answers clearly indicate their disapproval of traditional methods.

Question 4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of recent methods?

Advantages. Nearly all the 13 the students stated that with the recent methods, they would become more active and involved in the discussions and therefore, understand the issues more thoroughly. Four students recognised these methods offered more opportunities for them to participate in class. One had the idea the more she worked in class, the better knowledge she gained. Another added "a variety of methods helped me learn better with practical ideas."

Disadvantages. Almost half of them agreed new methods required more time, more effort from both teachers and students and students should be more active. Two accepted that new methods would not be successful without a great number of reference books.

Few admitted that Vietnamese students were often timid, so they might be reluctant to adopt the new methods. Some did not think teachers could deliver as much information as when they used the traditional methods. And one student worried that the active students would dominate most of the activities in class, e.g, in group work. They also referred to the idea that the new methods required more preparation from both teachers and students but the results would certainly be better and enable teachers to see if students understood the problems.

Now we see that students had reasons to support the recent methods when they pointed out their advantages. The most prominent weakpoint of these methods was the demand of time and preparation for the activities.

Question 5. Can you suggest the difficulties or the favourable circumstances that might happen to the implementation of the new methods?

More than half of the student informants expressed their support toward the implementation of the new methods. Being teacher students, they were very interested in the Methodology Unit itself as well as any innovations concerning

this subject. One student said what she learnt from this Unit would be very useful for her teaching career. Half of them shared the idea that since recent methods was a fairly new concept at this institution, some preparation should be done to ensure the success of the implementation. Few agreed though they were not familiar with these methods, they were young and always preferred something new. Therefore the new methods would certainly attract their attention.

Generally speaking, the student interviewees, in one way or another, tried to state their approval of the new methods, though in their thinking, some weaknesses still could be found with them due to the specific situation in Vietnam.

4.3.2. Summary of teacher interviews

Question 1. What do you expect from an ideal teacher?

All 3 teachers agreed: " An ideal teacher is the one that possesses both good knowledge and good methods". They thought good methods brought success to the lessons. And one teacher added that a lesson could not be successful without the co- operation between teachers and students.

Question 2. What is your preferred way of teaching? Why?

Two of the 3 still used the traditional methods combined with some recent ones such as pair work, elicitation, group discussion, tutorial or feedback. The traditional methods were still in use since they were quite familiar with Vietnamese teachers. On the other hand, Vietnamese students seemed to prefer teacher -directed classes. These teachers had the idea that the students preferred note- taking as they thought the more notes they took, the better knowledge they gained .

Question 3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of traditional methods?

Advantages All 3 of them recognised these methods were well known to both teachers and students. One teacher said he could take time to talk as much as he could and students tried to take as many notes as they wished. In his opinion, teacher was an actor and students were the note- takers. Another teacher expressed the thought that though these methods were traditional, they seemed suitable for the teaching and learning situation in Vietnam where the class size was big, reference materials were short, curriculum was top- down and time was constrained

Disadvantages: Their over all opinion was that teachers suffered from talking much in class whereas students were very passive . One said these methods could not help develop student ability as well as their learning strategies.

Question 4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of recent methods?

Advantages. They all accepted students were more active in class, teachers talked less, hence, could save energy. These methods enabled the co-operation between teachers and students.

Disadvantages:

As these methods were new to Vietnamese teachers and students, they were not sure of the effectiveness of these methods. And one teacher said: " Students might think they did not learn much or even learnt nothing from interactive activities since they could not take any notes at all." Therefore, he thought, students'view about recent methods was not a good ground for their implementation yet. Generally, this implementation might encounter some obstacles in Vietnam.

Question 5. Can you suggest the difficulties or the favourable circumstances that might happen to the implementation of the new methods.

One teacher had the idea that most Vietnamese teachers based their teaching on their experiences. They would not believe the benefit of the new methods unless they saw how fruitful the methods were in particular situations. Therefore it was not easy to win their support. He suggested the problem could be solved with the help of some workshops to familiarise teachers with the new

modes and enable them to apply the new ideas beneficially in their own situation. Another teacher indicated the obstacle that most teachers were too busy with after- hour teaching at evening foreign language centres to save time for the new methods. As a whole, they agreed the implementation of the new methods needed careful consideration and organisation, otherwise it would result in failures.

From the interview summaries, we realised that all 13 student respondents preferred the recent methods and none of them showed any interest in the traditional methods. On the the teachers' side, 2 of the 3 supported only the recent methods whereas the other one preferred both traditional and recent methods .

4.3.3. Summary of interview findings: The interview data analysis once again repeats the result that all student interviewees and most of teacher respondents are supportive of recent methods. However, one of the 3 teacher respondents showed some positive ideas toward traditional methods while answering the interview questions. This might be a proof indicating that a minority of teachers still tend to stick themselves to the traditional ways of teaching, or were fairly reluctant to change to the recent methods.

4.4. Findings.

Over all, every teacher and student was really aware of the effectiveness of recent methods. They, especially the students, expressed supportive attitudes

towards and expressed the desire to be exposed to these methods in their teaching and learning. The students offered us enough information to answer the research question: "Do the teachers and students of the Department of English believe a variety of teaching and learning activities is acceptable in the Methodology Unit?" In general, the students found it acceptable but the teachers, though they are supportive of the recent methods, still somewhat thought of the traditional methods as effective and suitable for Vietnamese students.

I have described the detailed analysis which leads to the results stated above and offered a brief discussion on each finding. Certainly more thorough discussion of the overall results would be recommended, therefore, this discussion will be the content of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I will explain the reasons why we got the results as stated in chapter 4

The findings of the study indicate the approval attitude of the students and teachers towards the recent methods. This attitude also means the positive answer to the research question and supports the ideas discussed in the review of the literature. Though the experimental classes engaged only few new methods, to some extent, they provided enough evidence for the students and teachers to see the advantages of these recent methods in the teaching and learning of the Methodology Unit. Certainly, this was not the first time the new methods were exposed to these people. Some teachers learning TESOL in Australia or from the workshops in Vietnam held by Australian experts have been trying to introduced new methods to their classes focusing mainly on developing students' language skills. Such activities as groupwork or pair work, elicitation or discussion, however simple they were, facilitated the learning process and aroused students' interest in the subject matter. My experimental classes helped teachers and students understand that the new methods could be exploited at any class level, in any subject matter in order to improve either their language skill, knowledge about language, language teaching methodology or over all teacher development. In spite of some shortcomings there might be, the

benefits brought about by the new methods in the experimental class were obvious enough for the students and teachers to express their supportive attitude, first to the new methods, then to the implementation of such methods to their situation.

As some students stated in the interviews, they were young and always preferred innovative ideas, especially the ones benefited them. This was another reason explaining why every student subject favoured the new methods and considered them as effective ways of enhancing their learning.

Like the students, all the teacher subjects confirmed the benefits of the recent methods in the experimental class except one who somehow expressed beliefs in the effectiveness of the traditional method, especially in a poor country like Vietnam where teachers and students were suffering from the lack of teaching and learning facilities, for example, big class size, time constraints, dated textbooks, no hi-tech equipment and most important of all, lack of the opportunity for teachers to update their knowledge of language teaching and learning theory. Vietnamese teachers tend to think they are a source of data and classes should be teacher-centered with the teacher talking most of the class time. It is undeniable that some students taught in the traditional methods have become successful learners. These reasons keep the teachers, no matter how supportive of the recent methods they are, believing in the certain usefulness of the traditional methods in their situation.

I have suggested the explanations for the findings of the study. Now we will come to the conclusion in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This section contains the summary of the findings, the implications for research and the implications for pedagogy.

6.1. Summary of the findings.

When seeking the answer for the research question: "Do the teachers and students of the Department of English approve the recent methods of teaching and learning in the Methodology Unit?", I found out from the evaluation data that they were all aware of the advantages of the recent methods for their teaching and learning. Due to the unfamiliarity of the methods in their situation, they suggested some changes that I think I should consider when implementing the new methods.

The questionnaire data revealed that these teachers and students felt the need of to be exposed to a variety of teaching and learning methods and the inappropriateness of using only traditional methods at University level. Certainly they expressed the favourable attitudes to these methods, adding that they were more interested in such activities as tutorial, group discussion and task-based learning.

The outcomes which emerged from the interview data show that all the students and nearly all the teachers were the supporters of the recent methods. However, one of the teachers still showed belief in the effectiveness of the traditional methods. It was the evidence showing that to some extent, the traditional methods were still considered to be beneficial in my country.

6.2. Implications for research.

6.2.1. Strength of the study.

- The positive attitudes of the teachers and students towards the recent methods can initiate another study on "managing change" in which I would propose the step by step introduction and implementation of the new methods.
- After the recent methods have been implemented and the teachers and students have been familiarised with these methods, they themselves can focus on research-oriented teaching and learning activities, for example, diary keeping, seminar or case study and derive benefits from them.
- The study focused on a practical issue which also has been a problem at my institution for a long time. It provides me and my colleagues with the ideas to think of more problem-oriented research in this Unit and the other Units as well.
- This is my first research undertaking and after finishing it I feel more confident and have more experience to carry out other studies in my teaching career.

6.2.2. Weaknesses of the study.

- Due to the small number of the Methodology staff, the teacher sample size of the study was very small . This might affect the accuracy of their opinions.
- As mentioned previously, most of the teacher students at the Teachers College are female and hence, nearly all the interview informants were women.
- The time constraint reduced the introduction of recent methods in the experimental classes to only few activities whereas there are many others available in the literature.

The limitations of the study bring about the issues of variables and size of sample as well as allocation of time to be considered as the remedy for better research in the future. Also the planning of the experimental classes, the development of the questionnaire and the interview may need more care.

6.3. Implication for pedagogy.

This research is a contribution to the improvement of the present situation at my institution. As stated previously, the opinions of these teachers and students are the ground to work out effective strategies for the implementation of the new methods to the teaching and learning of the Methodology Unit. These methods will facilitate not only this process but benefit other Units as well. Teachers will teach better, students will study better and the new methods will empower them to manage their own professional development to become effective EFL teachers.

We have looked through the content of the study focusing on the attitudes of the teachers and students of the Department of English at Ho Chi Minh City Teachers' College towards recent methods of teaching and learning in the Methodology Unit taught at this institution. There may be weak points found in the study but its significance to my research skills and professional development is undeniable .

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

We are interested in your opinions about the following statements. There are no wrong or right answers. Read each item carefully and decide if you (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) can't decide, (4) disagree, (5) strongly disagree. Item 20 is slightly different and you should mark them as indicated.

Remember: (1) strongly agree.

(2) agree.

(3) can't decide.

(4) disagree.

(5) strongly disagree.

1. Formal lecture is the dominant way of teaching in Methodology Unit.

1 2 3 4 5.

2. Both teachers and students prefer the traditional methods of teaching and learning. 1 2 3 4 5 .

3. Teachers prefer the conventional ways. 1 2 3 4 5

4. Students prefer the conventional ways. 1 2 3 4 5

5. Traditional methods are easy to organise. 1 2 3 4 5

6. Teacher giving lectures and students taking notes are all students need.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Traditional ways of teaching are not appropriate at University level.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Teachers and students are too familiar with the traditional ways to adopt the recent methods. 1 2 3 4 5

9. There are different methods of teaching and learning.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Teachers do not like the recent ways because they are demanding in terms of knowledge required and preparation. 1 2 3 4 5

11. Students do not like the new methods because they require much independent study. 1 2 3 4 5

12. It is quite possible to introduce the new methods to the teaching and learning of Methodology Unit. 1 2 3 4 5

13. Teachers are interested in the recent methods. 1 2 3 4 5

14. Students are interested in the recent methods. 1 2 3 4 5

15. It is necessary to encourage students to experiment with a variety of teaching and learning strategies. 1 2 3 4 5

16. New ways of teaching facilitate student participation.

1 2 3 4 5

17. Different methods bring flexibility to the teaching and learning process.

1 2 3 4 5

18. Teachers and students like to investigate their own teaching and learning.

1 2 3 4 5

19. New methods provide teachers and students with the skills for self development. 1 2 3 4 5

20. Tick the methods you prefer:

- lecture.
- taking notes.
- rote learning.
- guided reading.
- examination.
- tutorial
- seminar paper.
- group discussion.
- workshop.
- task- based learning.

APPENDIX 2: ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHER PREPARATION

(From Ellis, 1990)

Different kinds of tasks

The list of tasks that follows takes the form of a number of "operations" which the student teacher can be asked to perform on whatever raw data are provided. An example of the kind of rubric needed for each operation is given to clarify what is involved in each task.

1. *Comparing*. E.g., "Look at the two lesson plans provided and decide which one you prefer and why."
2. *Preparing*. E.g., "Prepare a marking scheme that you could use to correct the attached sample of students' written work."
3. *Evaluating*. E.g., "After watching the video extract, evaluate the effectiveness of the teacher's treatment of oral errors, using the criteria supplied."
4. *Improving*. E.g., "Read the case study of a reading program, paying particular attention to the author's own evaluation. What suggestions can you make for improving the program?"
5. *Adapting*. E.g., "Adapt the following language exercise in order to introduce an information gap."
6. *Listing*. E.g., "Look through the transcript of the lesson provided and make a list of all the different kinds of errors the students make."
7. *Selecting*. E.g., "Now that you have listed all the different kinds of errors in the transcript, decide which errors you would choose to correct if you were the teacher and say why."
8. *Ranking*. E.g., "Look through the language teaching materials attached and then rank them according to how 'communicative' you think they are."
9. *Adding/completing*. E.g., "Read through the article, listing the principles for the teaching of reading. Are there any additional principles you would like to add?"
10. *Rearranging*. E.g., "Look at the video recording of a teacher organizing group work. Make a list of the different steps the teacher follows. What changes to the order of these steps would you recommend?"

APPENDIX 3: LIST OF RECENT METHODS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING MENTIONED IN THE STUDY

(From Wallace, 1991)

BRAINSTORMING: A kind of group activity intended to generate a lot of ideas. Participants are encouraged at the beginning to think up ideas no matter how unlikely or far-fetched. Every suggestion is recorded. Decisions about practicality are made later.

BUZZ GROUPS: A form of group activity in which groups of students have a brief discussion (for, say, five minutes) to generate ideas, answer specific questions, etc. Sometimes used as an activity during LECTURES.

CASE STUDY: Students study particular classes of individual teachers or students or of whole courses to collect data or raw materials to prepare for their teaching practice.

CROSS-OVER GROUP: A form of group activity in which the class is divided into groups which have a discussion. After sometimes, one or more members of each group move over and join one of the other groups. So two students from group A might join group B, two from group B might join group C and so on, and the discussion continues. In this way, ideas from the different groups are shared without the need for a FEED BACK SESSION.

DIARY KEEPING: Students develop individual account of their class experiences and the reflections on the teaching and learning process. They can keep a diary on their language learning or language teaching. Students must feel free to reflect, experiment, criticise, express frustration or raise questions. This helps them clarify their thoughts about learning or record their practice.

ELICITATION: Teacher can teach by question and answer gradually leading to the elicitation of certain truths. This technique can be used with discussions, tutorials, micro-teaching...

FEEDBACK SESSION. A class activity in which various individuals or groups report back to the class on what they have been researching or discussing. It may also mean a session in which a tutor reports back to students with an evaluation of their work (e.g. after an assignment has been corrected)

GROUP WORK. Any form of learning activity which is done by groups of learners working together. Often distinguished from class work, in which the whole class work together.

GUIDED READING: A form of teaching or learning in which students are encouraged to read specific articles or specific sections of book with a particular purpose in mind.

JIGSAW LEARNING: A form of teaching or learning in which different students cover different areas of a topic; they later pool their knowledge. (e.g. by means of SEMINAR papers)

JOURNAL ASSIGNMENTS: Students are encouraged to write about personal experiences as they relate to the content of the course. The journal is

assigned as an integral part of the course and the students are asked to write regularly and hand in their journals. Here are some examples of the topics they can write about:

- Relate readings or discussions to their own experiences.
- Argue for or against something they read or discussed.
- Describe the knowledge they have obtained.
- Explore pedagogical implications of reading or discussions.
- Fit new knowledge into what they already know.

LECTURES: A system of teaching where a tutor talks to the students for an extended period of time. (usually between 45 minutes and one hour)

PROJECT WORK: Students work as investigators. They can select an aspect of teaching or learning they would like to learn more about, get the directed questions from the teacher or get the questions read by themselves, do the research by reading in the library, conducting interviews or visiting sites and collect data. Then they write it up and present their findings in groups, class or in their college. The benefit of the project is the insights students gain into how they can investigate their own teaching or learning.

SEMINAR: A form of group activity in which one or more, and perhaps all of the participants has to contribute something to the discussion, usually in the form of a prepared paper or talk.

TASK-BASED LEARNING: Used to describe any kind of learning which involves the performance of a specific task or piece of work. The tasks can involve :

- comparing : e.g two lesson plans provided and students decide which one they prefer and why.
- preparing : e.g a marking scheme.
- evaluating :e.g the effectiveness of the teacher's treatment of oral errors after watching the video extract.
- improving : e.g. what suggestion they can make to improve the program .
- adapting: e.g adapt an exercise to introduce an information gap.and listing, selecting, ranking, adding, completing, rearranging...

TUTORIALS: A form of group activity, usually led by a tutor. Tutorials may take a whole variety of form, e.g workshops, discussions, etc.

WORKSHOP: A kind of task-based group activity which involves the completion of a certain specific task. It is expected that all members of the group will contribute something to the completion of the task.

**APPENDIX 4: GUIDED READING 1 FOR
EXPERIMENTAL CLASS
YEAR 4 - ERRORS AND MISTAKES**

(From Hubbard et al , 1983)

Points for discussion

*Mary knowed the answer.
He asked me where do I live.*

These errors are commonly produced by students learning English. What has caused them? Presumably the students have never come across sentences like these (unless they heard them produced by other students).

Try to find a commonsense explanation for these errors. Can they be explained by *L₁ interference* (the students confusing their mother tongue with the foreign language and transferring items from *L₁* to *L₂*)? Or is the process more complicated than this?

As practising teachers we know only too well that students make errors. Until recently, theorists and methodologists seemed chiefly concerned with who should accept responsibility, some regarding the student as mainly responsible, and others the teacher, depending on their standpoint. However, this sort of speculation seems to have missed the point. Naturally, teachers can be blamed for causing errors by sloppy or careless teaching or planning. On the other hand, if teachers blame the students (and we must accept the fact that they often do), their accusations are usually directed at lack of motivation, self-discipline or general intelligence. But however much truth there may be on either side, we must agree that even the most intelligent, conscientious and motivated students *do* make errors, even when learning under the best possible conditions. It is much more fruitful to analyse the cause of these errors and apply the knowledge we have gained from this analysis to the teaching process.

This chapter, then, is concerned with the following questions:

- 1 What causes our students to make errors?
- 2 What can we learn from examining errors in detail?
- 3 What attitude and policy should we adopt towards errors when they occur?

Learning strategies

Learning a foreign language is, of course, different from learning one's mother tongue. The learner is more mature, has already acquired a language and has probably developed strategies for learning in general. Present research on adults learning a second language as immigrants seems to indicate they employ a combination of instinctive language-learning capacity similar to that possessed by the child learning its mother tongue, and learning strategies more similar to those used for solving problems.

Human problem-solving ability seems to consist of the capacity to make theories or generalizations and then put these to the test. If the theory does not appear to work, we go back and start again.

To what extent can this cognitive process be applied to the learning of languages? Is this model of language learning superior to the behaviourist stimulus-response model?

There are no clear-cut answers to these questions. This will become clear if we examine three different areas of language: the three types of language items introduced on pages 10 ff.

Phonological items – the sounds of the language – may be best learned by a simple process of repetition and reinforcement. Certainly this is the attitude adopted by most teachers. It is, of course, possible that students develop their own personal strategies for remembering sounds or sound patterns, but it is unlikely that the teacher will suggest these for them.

Lexical items can be learnt by frequent repetition and exposure, but there is also a strong possibility that the students will adopt memorization strategies when learning these. Teachers can aid this process by teaching new vocabulary in relation to a particular topic. Students are more likely to remember seven lexical items which are all thematically related (e.g. items of furniture, adjectives for describing people's mood, etc.) rather than seven items which are not related in any way.

When learning *structural* items, there is much stronger evidence that students are adopting hypotheses, although this often appears to happen unconsciously: if you ask the student to explain the rule, he is often unable to do so. One simple hypothesis adopted at some stage may be that the structure is exactly parallel to that in the L₁. The result is L₁ 'interference'. However, the student's hypotheses may not have any connection with L₁: they may be based on the student's experience of structures previously taught in the L₂.

Let us look at an example of this process.

Structure 1: *It's a car.*

Structure 2: *It's a blue car.*

Student's response to question: *What colour is it?*

**It's a blue.*

The student's error here could be attributed entirely to his experience of the L₂ and have nothing to do with his L₁.

Exercises

- 1 Find examples of errors made by your students which are probably caused by L₁ – L₂ interference. One way to do this is to find errors which *cannot* be explained by L₁ – L₂ interference. Explain the probable cause of these errors.
- 2 Find examples of L₁ interference (also called negative transfer) which appear to cause errors in your classes, by comparing structures in your students' mother tongue with structures in English. List at least three types of structural error which this causes and explain why these occur.

Check to see if other teachers agree with the causes of these errors.

Competence and performance

It is worth remembering that the behaviourists regarded language learning as the acquisition of skills, comparable to the process of learning to do something practical, like driving a car. The complex skill was broken down into a series of *habits*, which were drilled until they became automatic and unthinking. The habits were taught in a series of small steps, so as to avoid errors. The mentalist would say that a speaker of a language *knows* his language; the behaviourist that he is *able to perform in it*. This distinction between *knowledge* and *performance* is a crucial one for teachers of foreign languages. Not only does it reflect the characteristic difference between the behaviourist and mentalist models of language learning, but also, even if we accept many of the mentalists' principles, we must still consider the role of performance alongside that of knowledge in the teaching process.

Noam Chomsky, the distinguished American linguist, pointed out that native speakers make many 'errors' when speaking (when performing), even though a native speaker has, by definition, a perfect command of his language – perfect knowledge of grammatical rules, lexis and the sound system. The native speaker's perfect knowledge Chomsky called *competence* and he therefore made a distinction between *competence* and *performance*. Competence is knowing what is grammatically correct; performance is what actually occurs in practice. Chomsky regarded performance as a faulty representation of competence, caused by psychological restrictions, such as memory lapses and limitations, distractions, changes of direction half-way through a sentence, hesitation and so on. To see

this distinction in action, let us look at a transcript of an English speaker 'performing':

'At the end of the road there was a..... a sort of..... Well, you know those ga..... gate..... Like a customs barrier, really. Well, yes, more like a barrier. Kind of a long..... um... pole across the..... the road. And anyway, by..... by this time..... we were, well, really.... yes, really going quite..... Ooh, we must of been doing.... what? Forty-five? Fifty? Something like that. And there was no..... no way we were going to well, you know..... stop in time.'

If this transcript were given to the speaker afterwards and he were asked to 'correct' it, he would have no difficulty in doing so. It would come out something like this:

'At the end of the road there was a sort of gate, like a customs barrier - a long pole across the road. By this time, we were really going quite fast. We must have been doing forty-five or fifty. Something like that. And there was no way we were going to stop in time.'

The relevance of this for language teaching is considerable. So far all incorrect forms produced by the student we have called 'errors'. Now we will have to make a distinction between genuine *errors* caused by lack of knowledge about the target language (English) or by incorrect hypotheses about it; and unfortunate *mistakes* caused by temporary lapses of memory, confusion, slips of the tongue and so on. If we are uncertain whether one of our students has made an *error* or a *mistake*, the crucial test must be: can he correct himself when challenged? If he can, probably it is a mistake; if not, it is an error.

Points for discussion

- 1 During a student-student question-answer practice activity, one student comes out with:
Did he went to the cinema?
What should the teacher do at this stage to find out whether this is an error or a mistake? Describe exactly what you would do in these circumstances. Do other teachers use the same procedure? Would you do the same thing every time an error/mistake occurred?
- 2 Imagine a teacher who corrected every error immediately it occurred. What are the advantages of doing this?
- 3 Do students in your classes ever correct one another? Do you encourage them to do this? What are the possible advantages of this? Are there any disadvantages?
- 4 When a student makes an error/mistake, how can the teacher indicate to him (and the other students?) the *place* in the sentence where it occurred, without supplying the correct form?

5 Is it possible that students make *mistakes* in their written work? If so, how would this affect our policy of correcting written work?

Teachers will also have to allow errors to go uncorrected on many occasions – something which the behaviourist would not feel happy about. If students are faced with the difficult task of sorting out the complexities of English, they will not be able to concentrate or control their performance on *every* aspect at the same time. As far as correction is concerned, teachers will tend to focus on one aspect of performance at a time. For example, if a new structure is being practised, the teacher will probably ignore minor pronunciation errors/mistakes provided that the target pattern is produced. Later, when the student is producing the pattern consistently and well, he might raise the level of challenge by insisting on accurate pronunciation as well.

Discussion points

- 1 If errors are not to be regarded as signs of failure, how can we make this attitude clear to our students? How can we encourage them to feel they are making progress even while they are making errors?
- 2 Presumably teachers should aim at a balance between making tasks too easy and making them too difficult. How can we know whether we have judged this correctly? It is not just a question of counting the errors which occur.
- 3 Give other examples of ways in which the teacher might focus on one type of error/mistake at a time.

Analysing errors

It is now time to look in detail at examples of errors which students produce. Careful thought about the cause of our students' errors can help us sort out their problems. It may also make us decide to modify our teaching policy. Let's begin this section by examining a few common student errors.

- 1 John is ill since four days.
- 2 What you doing now?
- 3 There are too many beautiful flowers in your garden.
- 4 He suggested me some good books.
- 5 She told she was on holiday.
- 6 I have a knife to mend the pencil.

- 7 Just drop in at my residence on your way to Jane's place.
- 8 He changed his dress before going out.
- 9 She in my chair sitting.
- 10 To school should have gone Maria.
- 11 She bought many new furnitures.
- 12 Mary is knowing the answer.
- 13 I've lost my ruler; can I lend yours?
- 14 She sent to me a lot of letters and I too.

Activities

- 1 Correct the mistakes by rewriting each sentence. That is, attempt a 'plausible reconstruction' by writing down what you think the learner was trying to say.
- 2 Compare your reconstructions with those of another member of your group. Discuss differences. Have you corrected more than is necessary? Have you tried so hard to find to find an unusual context that you have found some of the examples acceptable as they stand?
- 3 Single out what you consider to be the least serious mistake and, also, the most serious. Discuss your choices with a partner.
- 4 Attempt an initial classification of the mistakes by putting them into two sets. You might have one set containing the sentences which appear to be somehow similar to example 9, and the other set containing those which appear to be related to example 13.
- 5 Suggest useful labels for the two sets. Which examples are difficult to place?

You will have realized that it is necessary to indulge in a certain amount of guessing when attempting a 'plausible reconstruction'. The amount of guessing varies, of course. When dealing with isolated sentences without a real context, and when unable to discuss them with the learner, you may be forced to guess quite a lot. Take example 8, for instance. The error might be the use of a masculine pronoun instead of a feminine. It might involve a misunderstanding of the use of the noun 'dress'. If 'dress' refers to ceremonial or formal clothes, then the error does not exist.

What you have been forced to do so far is unrealistic, of course. You have been given no clues. Fortunately, teachers are not often required to assess and correct language in a vacuum as it were; they know their pupils and their limitations, and they are dealing with language that has some context. Often, there are opportunities for teacher and learner to discuss errors and, through discussion, for the latter to put things right for himself.

A Grammatical and lexical errors

Look again at example 5 and your own correction of it. There are two ways of dealing with the error:

- (a) She told ^{them} she was on holiday.
- (b) She ^{said} told she was on holiday.

The first correction is grammatical; it changes the pattern by indicating that the verb 'tell' requires an appropriate noun or pronoun (a grammatical object) after it. Our reconstruction suggests that the pronoun 'them' would be appropriate here, but it is no more than a guess when we have no information about who she was talking to.

The second correction is lexical; it merely substitutes a synonym that fits into the existing pattern.

Activities

- 1 Comment on the following correction of the same sentence:
She told us that she was on holiday.
- 2 Give a reason for preferring either the grammatical or lexical correction of example 5.
- 3 Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the following reconstructions of example 13:
(a) I've lost my ruler; can you lend me yours?
(b) I've lost my ruler; can I borrow yours?

Within the errors that we have classified as grammatical, there still appear to be differences. Let's look again at examples 10 and 12 and compare them. Example 10 obviously indicates that the learner has a chronic problem with the order of words in an English sentence. Or is it a problem with the order of *groups of words*? Example 12 seems to have the correct order or sequence of parts, but the use of the present continuous tense of 'know' shows an error in grammatical choice. You will almost certainly agree that the latter is a far less serious error than the former. We can say that example 10 illustrates an error in the chain of language and example 12 an error in choice.

B Chain and choice

It is useful to think of language both in terms of a linear sequencing of structures and in terms of choices or substitutions at various points. You are already familiar with the traditional substitution table which makes use of a key pattern or chain in order to allow the

learner to practise various choices within it. This is fine as far as choice is concerned but it does not help the learner who is having problems with the chain of language (or syntax). Such a learner might well profit from an activity that required him to put various choices into a correct chain – more or less, a substitution table in reverse. Here is an example:

in the park there yesterday well	played was playing should have played	tennis football games	he she Jack the boy
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The point we are making is that the learner who displays the sort of syntactic confusion exemplified by sentence 10 needs to go back to basic sentence building; he needs a substitution table related more to chain than to choice.

The concept of choice is both grammatical and lexical. In example 12 we see an instance of incorrect grammatical choice, and in example 7 we see an instance of inappropriate lexical choice. 'Residence' is not an appropriate choice when in the company of 'drop in' and 'place' – it is far too formal. Thus, looking at language as chain and choice gives us a very useful framework for error analysis.

Activities

- 1 Go back to example 9 and comment on it in the light of what we have said about chain and choice.
- 2 Do the same for example 14.
- 3 One choice, of course, is the zero choice. When we produce a sentence such as 'Birds fly', we have chosen *not* to use an article – we have made a zero choice. What is the zero choice in example 9? What is it in example 2? Bearing in mind that very young children, with English as their mother tongue, are quite likely to say 'daddy coming now', to what extent can we generalize about such zero choices?

One of the most useful things that a dictionary does is to give synonyms for the word we look up. In other words, it offers a number of other choices which might be used in that particular place in the chain. The danger is, however, that the foreign language learner is liable to use the dictionary in a rather indiscriminate way; he either needs to translate from his first language or wants to avoid the over-repetitive use of a word he already knows reasonably well. The result may well be the inappropriate use of a word such as 'residence' in example 7.

Activities

- 1 Look up the word 'residence' in the everyday dictionary you normally use. Does it simply list synonyms such as 'abode', 'home' and 'dwelling' or does it give some indication of the contexts in which the word is likely to be found? Now look up the same word in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* and comment on differences.
- 2 Another dictionary has the following entry for the word 'thrice': 'Adv. Three times'. Comment on this information, and on the sentence, 'I played football thrice last week'. Comment on the additional information given in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*.

It is not always easy to decide whether a wrong choice is grammatical or lexical, as we discovered when we examined example 5. It is tempting to treat the form 'furnitures' in example 11 as a lexical error, but it is a form that reflects an important grammatical contrast in the language. Remember that choices within words, such as 'smile/smiled' or 'face/faces', are grammatical. The learner who produced the form 'furnitures', in example 11, needed help with the grammatical distinction between countable and uncountable nouns.

Activities

- 1 Comment on the following three reconstructions of example 11:
 - (a) She bought much new furniture.
 - (b) She bought many new pieces of furniture.
 - (c) She bought a lot of new furniture.
- 2 Suggest two reconstructions for example 8, one lexical and the other grammatical. Which is the more likely? Suggest a reason for the less likely reconstruction.
- 3 Suggest a sentence containing 'his dress' used appropriately.

C Implausible reconstructions

Knowing what to correct and when to leave well alone is often a problem. Without knowing the level of the class and the teaching context within which pupils' responses are made, it is quite impossible to be dogmatic. More advanced pupils need to be aware of language style – just being correct is not enough. Less advanced, or less able, pupils should not be disheartened by over-correction. 'Yes, but can't you think of a better word, a more descriptive word, than "nice"?' may well be a fair comment in the first situation, but not in the second. Over-correction may well occur during oral practice because the teacher has an ever-present opportunity to 'improve' pupils' responses.

In error-analysis over-correction leads to implausible reconstructions. Don't go searching for errors that don't exist; correct all grammatical errors and those lexical forms that are obviously wrong ('lend' for 'borrow' in example 13) or obviously inappropriate ('residence' in example 7). You will, of course, still have a few problems as, for instance, having to decide whether to accept 'mend' for 'sharpen' in, example 6.

Activities

Comment on the following reconstructions and compare them with your own:

- 1 John is ill and has been for four days.
- 6 I have a screwdriver to mend that propelling pencil.
- 7 Just call at the residence on your way to Jane's abode.
- 9 She who is sitting on my chair ...
- 11 She bought many new chairs, tables, bookcases, cupboards, etc.
- 13 I've lost my ruler; can I lend yours to my partner?

Causes of error

Pit Corder claims that there are three major causes of error, which he labels 'transfer errors', 'analogical errors' and 'teaching-induced errors'. See J.P.B. Allen & S. Pit Corder (eds), *Techniques in applied linguistics*, Oxford University Press 1974. This extremely useful book is volume 3 of *The Edinburgh course in applied linguistics*. We shall use the same categories but give them different names.

A Mother-tongue interference

Although young children appear to be able to learn a foreign language quite easily and to reproduce new sounds very effectively, most older learners experience considerable difficulty. The sound system (phonology) and the grammar of the first language impose themselves on the new language and this leads to a 'foreign' pronunciation, faulty grammatical patterns and, occasionally, to the wrong choice of vocabulary.

Activities

- 1 Write down five examples of sentences produced by your students containing grammatical or lexical errors which you believe to be due to mother-tongue interference.
- 2 Comment on the errors in the light of your knowledge of the mother tongue. Use the minimum of grammatical terminology.
- 3 Discuss your examples and comments with other members of your group. You may find that what you have attributed to interference could be partly attributable to other causes that we shall go on to discuss.

Example 1 would be quite acceptable if translated into a number of other languages. And the child who produced example 9 was clearly translating from his own language. If we transposed its syntax into English we should have 'She + in my chair + sitting is'. Note that this does not account for the omission of the auxiliary form 'is' which has already been touched upon as a zero choice. We are not suggesting that all choices are deliberate. The auxiliary may well be omitted because the learner does not hear it clearly in the new language in its contracted form. E.g. 'I've finished' is heard as 'I finished'. Can you suggest a phonological reason for this? Consider also 'I'd better'

B Overgeneralization

The mentalist theory claims that errors are inevitable because they reflect various stages in the language development of the learner. It claims that the learner processes new language data in his mind and produces rules for its production, based on the evidence. Where the data are inadequate, or the evidence only partial, such rules may well produce the following patterns:

- 15 Where you went yesterday?
- 16 Where you did go yesterday?
- 17 She dranked all the lemonade.

Activities

- 1 Comment on the overgeneralization in examples 15, 16 and 17. Is there a progression from 15 to 16? Can you suggest an even earlier question stage than 15?
- 2 Look again at example 12. If we accept it as an instance of overgeneralization, what is being generalized? Consider other verbs such as 'understand', 'hear', 'realize', 'perceive' and 'think'. Do they form a class, and is this relevant?

C Errors encouraged by teaching material or method

Having related mentalism to overgeneralization, we can relate behaviourism to those errors which appear to be induced by the teaching process itself. Those who support the behaviourist theory, at least in its more extreme form, would deny that errors have any positive contribution to make to the learning of any skill, such as language. To them, error is evidence of failure, of ineffective teaching or lack of control. If material is well chosen, graded and presented with meticulous care, there should never be any error. It is fairly easy to accept this in the early stages of language learning when controls are applied in the shape of substitution tables, conversion exercises of a mechanical nature and guided sentence patterns, but more difficult at later stages. However, it might be salutary for us to bear in mind the possibility of some of our students' errors being due to our own teaching. Unfortunately, these errors are much more difficult to classify, and Pit Corder (*op. cit.*) admits this:

'It is, however, not easy to identify such errors except in conjunction with a close study of the materials and teaching techniques to which the learner has been exposed. This is probably why so little is known about them.'

Let's look at a few examples of teacher-induced error.

18 I'm go to school every day.

If a structural syllabus has placed great emphasis on one tense, such as the present continuous, there is the danger that the learners will over-use it when moving on to new patterns. The prolonged drilling of the 'I'm ...ing' structure is quite likely to produce 'I'm go'.

19 I did go to cinema. (not intended as the emphatic past)

In a brave attempt to persuade a reluctant student to use the simple past tense, a teacher may over-stress the auxiliary verb in his repeated question and then find it echoed in the response. Thus, example 19 might be the result of the following prompt from the teacher:

'Now, listen to the question. What DID you do yesterday?'

By this time, even the article has been frightened off.

The teacher can also induce errors by indulging in some overgeneralization himself. It is tempting to say that the third person singular of the present tense always ends in 's' (especially having listened to numerous sentences of the type 'He play football.') and forget about sequences such as: 'he can', 'does he play' and 'he doesn't play'. These forms together may well outnumber the 'norm' that the teacher is attempting to deal with.

Activities

- 1 Discuss within your group the extent to which the third category (teacher-induced error) is valid. Could it be argued that it is no more than a sub-section within the 'overgeneralization' category?
- 2 Discuss the extent to which you think teachers should be accountable for their students' errors.
- 3 What possible pronunciation errors might be encouraged by the teacher's correction of the missing articles in the following sentences:
 - 20 I got good book from the library.
 - 21 Where is pencil I gave you?
- 4 Comment on the correction contained in the following short dialogue:

Pupil: He said he'd come tomorrow.
Teacher: In indirect speech, adverbs of time have to change. 'Tomorrow' changes to 'the next day'. Now, try again.

The distinction between errors and mistakes should by now be clear. Let us examine a number of student errors in the light of this distinction.

Activities

- 1 Outline how you would deal with the incorrect form 'furnitures' in example 11 assuming that it is (a) a competence error and (b) a performance mistake.
- 2 Decide whether you think the incorrect forms contained in the following sentences are errors or mistakes:
 - (a) Baby broked it. (2-year-old English child)
 - (b) He going to school now. (1st year EFL learner)
 - (c) If I'll get through the exam, I'll be the happiest person alive.
 - (d) He just take the money and off he went.
 - (e) I'm looking at this picture and I'm seeing many children.
 - (f) He asked him to go their with him. (In written work.)
- 3 Discuss with other members of your group the extent to which the clues (either given in brackets or linguistic clues) helped you to decide.

The teacher's attitude to error

The teacher's attitude to error is of crucial importance. Nothing will undermine a learner's confidence as much as a series of derogatory comments on his language performance. Insensitive correction

during oral work can be particularly damaging because it encourages a withdrawal attitude in the learner; harsh written comments have an unpleasant permanence in exercise books and discourage revision. Nevertheless, the teacher must have a positive attitude to error and be prepared to do something about it. As with causes of error, there is a link here between attitude and underlying theory.

A The behaviourist attitude

We have already made the point that behaviourists view error as a symptom of ineffective teaching or as evidence of failure. They also view it as being due very largely to mother-tongue interference – interference that the teacher (which here must include course designer) has failed to predict and allow for. When errors do occur, they are to be remedied by a bombardment of correct forms. This bombardment is achieved by the use of intensive drilling or over-teaching.

Activities

- 1 Prepare substitution-type drills to remedy the following errors:
 - 20 Does the bus goes from here?
 - 21 I put the blue big book on the table.
 - 22 Didn't nobody help you?
- 2 Prepare a simple five-sentence conversion exercise to change statements into questions. Use example 20 as your model.

B The mentalist attitude

When dealing with errors arising from overgeneralization, we suggested that the learner processes the new data in his mind and comes up with a succession of rules that produce new patterns in the target language. The learner is constantly attempting to solve problems and make sense of the linguistic evidence around him. Consequently, error is inevitable; it is, in fact, an integral part of the learning process and developing competence. Students will produce errors because their hypotheses about the new language are wrong or incomplete. Errors are not, therefore, to be regarded as signs of failure, but as evidence that the student is working his way towards the correct rules. Nor are errors harmful to the learning process, as the behaviourists suggest. On the contrary, students learn by making errors and having them corrected.

This attitude to errors removes much of the over-anxiety caused by the behaviourist insistence on eliminating them from the classroom altogether. At the same time, it allows teachers to adjust the level of difficulty according to their students' progress,

motivation and so on. An effortless class is going to cause boredom: a sense of challenge must be included, as in any teaching task, but if a task is made challenging, errors/mistakes will be made.

The language teacher must be concerned about what is going on in the learner's mind and must be prepared to discuss language problems. He must be prepared to help his students to sort things out for themselves, and should not be too hasty in rejecting a controlled amount of grammatical terminology and mother-tongue explanation. Grammatical explanation alone, however, is most unlikely to be effective; it is better used as a back-up device or extra strategy at the revision stage.

Activities

- 1 Indicate to what extent, if any, you would use grammatical terminology and/or mother-tongue explanation when dealing with the following errors:
 - 20 Does the bus goes from here?
 - 21 I put the blue big book on the table.
 - 23 I've seen him yesterday.
- 2 Different languages have different grammatical systems. A learner may find the English pronoun system very difficult if, in his own language, possessive pronouns agree with the nouns they modify. Bearing this in mind, what grammatical and/or mother-tongue explanation would you give when attempting to remedy the following error:
 - 24 He told her sister about it. (that is, his own sister)

C An eclectic approach

As with other aspects of TEFL methodology, an eclectic approach is the one most commonly used in remedial work. Structural drills can be useful in attempting to eradicate error, but remember that the learner is doing his best to sort things out for himself and requires intellectual, as well as mechanical help.

Activities

- 1 Outline how you would attempt to deal with the following errors using an eclectic approach.
 - 3 There are too many beautiful flowers in your garden.
 - 4 He suggested some good books.
 - 25 The men all worked hardly in the hot sun.
- 2 Discuss the main disadvantages of relying entirely on a single non-eclectic approach.

D Errors of omission

Whenever we use language we find ourselves having to make choices, lexical and grammatical choices. Do we choose 'encounter', 'meet' or, perhaps, 'bump into'? Do we begin our classroom warning with 'If you don't ...' or with 'Unless you'...? The choices that our students make in free practice can be very revealing because they indicate stages in language learning. The neglected choices are just as informative. Some student compositions are lacking in linguistic ambition; their authors are preoccupied with 'playing safe'. There may be considerably more merit in attempting a phrasal verb construction and getting it wrong than in relying on a well-worn but safe alternative. (Following more closely the mentalist approach, there is some value in allowing learners to experiment with language, to play with new words and manipulate new patterns. They may, on occasion, be given activities which the teacher knows to be just a little too demanding for them, in the belief that the thinking, discussing and problem-solving processes are also language-learning processes – even when the final answer is wrong.) Check for language choices (sometimes called 'language contrasts') which seem to be conspicuous by their absence.

Activities

- In answer to the same comprehension question you get the following responses:
 - He couldn't tolerate such bad behaviour.
 - He couldn't put by with such bad behaviour.
 Discuss with other members of your group how you would react to (b) assuming (i) the pupil could have used 'tolerate' but was experimenting, and (ii) he was not able to offer an alternative to his attempted phrasal verb.
- How would you assess the following sentences both produced by students in the same intermediate-level class:
 - She said to the teacher, 'We went out to play and it rained and we got wet.'
 - She told the teacher we'd gone out to play and got wet when it rained.
 Assume that the pronoun 'we' refers to the same group of people in both cases.
- Comment on the sequence of tenses in (b) above. Compare 'She'd been to Athens and seen the Acropolis.'
- List some of the choices that your students try to avoid in free practice. Check the extent to which there is group agreement.
- Outline a strategy to encourage the use of one of these 'missing' choices.

Remedial strategies

In spite of this particular heading, there are no exclusive strategies for the correction of error that do not exist elsewhere. In other words, there is no separate methodology for getting things right. The avoidance of excessive error will inevitably be one of the chief aims in any lesson or teaching programme. There is nothing more certain to produce error than an exercise where students are required to write sentences with newly introduced words. However, what has already been discussed under *Useful classroom techniques* will go a long way towards minimizing the possibility of error, and will do so without depriving students of a sense of challenge. After all, we could devise a series of substitution tables that become progressively more complex but fail to give their users very much more than a mere promise of freedom. (We might finish with a rather rigid programmed-learning course.) Having admitted that a certain amount of error is as useful as it is inevitable, we must return to the problem of what teachers can do about those errors that persist and, in so doing, become an obstacle to learning.

A Errors of syntax

We have already used, and illustrated, the terms 'chain and choice' and introduced the technical term 'syntax' for the former. (See page 137.) If we look again at examples 2, 9 and 10, we can remind ourselves of the chronic nature of some errors of syntax, and consider ways of going right back to basic sentence construction for remedial purposes.

There are four basic structures in the English clause, or simple sentence, and they can be illustrated as follows:

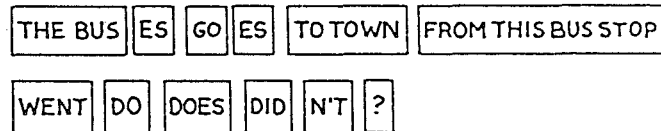
	<i>subject</i>	<i>verb</i>	<i>object or complement</i>	<i>adverbial</i>
1	John	is	ill	since four days
11	She	bought	many new furnitures	
2	you	(are) doing	What	now?
9	She	(is) sitting		in my chair
10	Maria	should have gone		to school

If the four structures are colour-coded it is not necessary to use any grammatical terminology at all. Learners can manipulate coloured cards to practise getting the structures, or sentence parts, into the right sequence. Intermediate errors will not be recorded and the physical handling of the structures will be an additional advantage. Note that we are making use here of a very simplified model of

systemic grammar. Should you be interested in this, you might refer to M. Berry, *Introduction to systemic linguistics* Vol 1, Batsford 1975. It contains a most useful section on 'chain and choice'.

Activities

- Using the same grammatical framework, analyse examples 3, 4, 6 and 12. Bear in mind that it is possible to have more than one object and more than one verb.
- If we include all conjunctions, or linking words, with adverbials, and give them the same colour coding, we can process more complex sentences. Now attempt an analysis of examples 5, 8 and 14.
- If we use cards with detachable grammatical endings (or morphemes) a number of important grammatical operations can be exemplified. Consider the following cards and discuss ways in which they might be used:



- Suggest a colour coding for the cards and give them grammatical labels.
Note that a key to these activities is given at the end of this section (on page 151).

B Other errors in oral practice

When a learner makes an error in oral work he has an audience. Some members of that audience will not recognize it as an error, but others will and will show an interest in the teacher's reaction.

Activities

What would your reaction be in the following situations:

- You are talking informally to a group of students and one of them says:
26 'What you think about that film we saw?'
- You have prepared an oral activity for the class and, after adequate preparation, a student says:
27 'There was much trouble in the town.'
- You have asked a class of advanced students to prepare a class discussion or debate. Would you encourage, tolerate or discourage

the use of the mother tongue at this preparatory stage? Give your reasons.

- Write a brief intervening dialogue, bringing in both teacher and second student.

Student 1: Does she plays the piano?

.....

.....

.....

Student 1: Does she play the piano?

- Discuss the role of the rest of the class in the correction of an individual student's error.

C Errors in written work

The student's usual audience here is just the teacher. Ideally, the teacher will check written work with the writer, but this gets increasingly difficult as the latter progresses beyond the elementary stage. It is very doubtful whether written corrections have much effect unless the writer is extremely well motivated. There is, of course, more than one way of indicating errors in written work.

Activities

- Compare the following approaches to the correction of written work:

A When his gard went for water, guard
James managed escaping by to escape
climbing on to his table and
squeezing through the bars, he .He ...
was freedom at last. free ...

B When his gard went for water, sp
James managed escaping by gram
climbing on to his table and
squeezing through the bars, he punct
was freedom at last. vocab

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches?
- In version B would it be more helpful for the teacher to indicate the position of the errors?
- How would you help a student apparently confused by the contrasting patterns: 'tried escaping' and 'managed to escape'?

- 2 Having corrected a piece of written work undertaken by the whole class, a teacher often feels it necessary to draw attention to, so-called, common errors. If, say, 20 percent of your students made the same type of error, how would you deal with it? What would you do with the 80 percent that got it right?
- 3 Discuss the extent to which we should give our students incorrect forms to be examined, discussed and corrected.

Reading assignment

Now read 'Correcting written English', article by Christopher Brumfit in *Problems and principles in English teaching* (pages 9-13), or in *Modern English Teacher*, volume 5, September 1977.

Extended activity

Handling a short text

Examine the following passage written by a student of below-average ability at an intermediate level of EFL:

It was my sister's birthday Monday and all we wanted having a picnic. My mother she didn't know to where to go so my father he told that the weather was too warm so we should go for swimming. We did put all things in our car early and straight went to beachside.

Now, use the text for discussion and practice purposes within your group. Here are some guidelines:

- General impression** What is your first reaction to it? Does it communicate reasonably well? How serious are the errors? Is the syntax (sequence of structures) about right? Would you be likely to get this kind of writing from one of your students?
- Plausible reconstruction** Attempt a reconstruction and compare it with others. Compare, and comment on, the following alternative reconstructed fragments:
 - ... and all we wanted was to have a picnic.
 - ... and we all wanted to have a picnic.

Has your reconstruction caused you to modify your initial assessment in any way?
- Detailed examination** Comment on individual errors, either by relating them to grammatical categories such as subject, verb, object and adverbial and their structure, or dealing with them as they appear in the text. Whichever way you choose to deal with the errors, you might like to give some attention to the following issues:
 - Is it obligatory to have a preposition in front of 'Monday' here? Is there a difference between informal speech and more formal writing?
 - Are there other patterns which might encourage the structure 'wanted having'? e.g. 'start'?

- In what circumstances might we use a double subject? e.g. 'Mr Smith, he's a fine teacher.' Can we accept the double subjects in this text? (Your reconstruction will have answered this question, but elaborate on it a little.)
- To what extent is the use of 'too' for 'very' a common error in your situation? If it is a problem, outline a strategy for dealing with it.
- The preposition 'for' is often used to indicate intention. How would you deal with the confusion that might exist between the structures 'go for a swim' and 'go swimming'? Which is the more helpful reconstruction?
- Comment on the structure 'did put' in the light of the writer's handling of other past tense forms.
- The vocabulary of a modern language changes and develops. Are you prepared to accept the form 'beachside' (ignoring the lack of article for the moment) in this particular pattern? Have you ever seen the word? Would you accept it in the following pattern?

There were some lovely beachside restaurants.

4 Assessment

Give the short passage a score, a mark out of ten, and compare scores within your group.

(We are not, of course, suggesting that it is a good procedure to score small samples of work in this way; we are proposing it here simply as a convenient means of comparing assessment.)

Key to activities (page 148)

Activity	Example of error	Subject	Verb	Object or complement	Adverbial
1	3	There	are	too many beautiful flowers	in your garden.
	4	He	suggested	me	
	6	I	have to mend	a knife	
2	12	Mary	is knowing	the pencil.	
	5	She	told		on holiday.
		she	was		
	8	He	changed going	his dress	before out.
	14	She	sent	a lot of letters	to me and too.
		I			

CORRECTION
(From Gower & Walters, 1983)

5.2 Correction

Correcting errors that students make when they speak or write can be one of the most difficult tasks in language teaching. General questions that need to be asked are:

- 1 Has the student made a simple slip or does he in fact not know what the correct form should be?
- 2 At what stages of a lesson do I correct?
- 3 How much correction should I give?
- 4 How can I get to the root of the student's problem?
- 5 How can I correct in such a way as not to discourage the student?
- 6 What should the other students be doing while I'm correcting?
- 7 How can I follow up my correction so that the student will get the form right next time?

Error correction is usually thought of as relating to the form of the language but obviously students can say something incorrectly because they have misunderstood the meaning of something or they choose an inappropriate thing to say on a particular occasion. Students can equally get things wrong (i.e. they misunderstand or misinterpret) when they listen or read a text. For advice on how to check whether students have understood correctly or not see 4.4.

How do you decide whether the student has made an error or a mistake?

A mistake is really a slip of the tongue or the pen. The student is able to correct it himself, either completely unprompted or with the guidance of the teacher and other students. Native speakers make mistakes all the time even though the correct form is usually known.

An error is much more deeply ingrained. The student might:

- believe what he's saying is correct
- not know what the correct form should be
- know what the correct form should be but can't get it right.

Errors are usually produced regularly and systematically, so asking the student to try again is often the best way of helping you decide whether the incorrect form is an error or a mistake.

Very little time need be spent on mistakes but errors will need attention at certain stages of the lesson.

Oral correction

In one way, oral correction is more difficult than written correction because decisions usually have to be made quickly about **what to correct**, **when to correct**, **how to correct** and **how much to correct**. Without experience, you may not even recognize the error, particularly if you're not relaxed and not really listening to the students!

One way of helping yourself cope with errors that come up in the classroom is to try to *anticipate* any errors that *might* come up by:

- 1 Familiarizing yourself with all aspects of an item of language you are presenting or practising (e.g. likely pronunciation problems can often be worked out by writing out the item in phonemic transcription in your lesson plan beforehand: so *should have* in a taped model might be transcribed /ʃʊdɔv/, revealing a contraction, a weak vowel for *have* and an absent /h/!)
- 2 Familiarizing yourself with the typical grammatical and pronunciation problems associated with the nationality of the students in your group (this is obviously easier in monolingual classes than multilingual classes).
If you know what *might* come up you are likely to be more alert to the errors that *do* come up.

A useful exercise to develop your awareness is to play a tape of your students speaking time and time again and to try and make a list of their errors, under such headings as:

FORM Grammar/Pronunciation/Word choice/Word order and *MEANING*

Although it's easier said than done, in the classroom, try and get so involved with your students that you relax and worry less about yourself. However, don't spend too long thinking about what they're saying. You need to process it and respond very quickly.

When do you correct?

In general, the principle is: if the language is controlled by you and the student is practising forms you have presented, then errors should be corrected. The tighter the control, the lighter the correction. If, however, your aim is to get students to

produce a lot of language quickly and fluently, rather than a small amount; accurately, then correction will be less because the students' main aim will be to communicate meaning and correction of form by you will be an unwelcome intrusion. So, looking at the stages of Presentation and Practice:

Presentation

When you give the students an example of a new item of language and you want them to repeat it so as to practise the pronunciation and memorize the form, correction is absolutely essential. Students must be given the maximum opportunity to get it right, although you will of course have to balance the amount of correction any individual in the group needs with what the group needs as a whole. If, however, you are eliciting ideas for a context through which you will present the item, then correction need only be of very typical and persistent errors unless a useful word comes up and you want to practise the pronunciation.

Practice

In a drill, if the students have choices about which language to use, and they are not merely repeating a given form, then other types of errors can creep in such as tense endings (*he go*) or word order (*he speaks very well English*) although you will need to make sure that the students are not making errors because your prompts are not clear. In activities where the language is semi-controlled by you (e.g. when you ask the students to reconstruct a story) the amount of correction will depend on the aim of the activity, the time you've got, its relevance to the other students etc. You might wish to work on a typical problem briefly (e.g. the way a Japanese student misuses the /l/ /r/ sounds) without necessarily expecting to clear it up in one go.

Communication activities

During communication activities you will probably be allowing the students to use any language they like in order to communicate, in which case the students will usually need to learn how to do it for themselves and experiment with any language they've learnt.

Many students are contradictory about correction at this stage. If they've got something to say (i.e. some meaning to communicate) they can't usually take in a correction of form unless you completely disrupt the activity. On the other hand they often feel they wish people would correct them when they are speaking freely. (It is after all, a marvellous opportunity for you to note what their errors are.)

Guidance and correction, however, can't be given during the act of communication, only afterwards. It might consist of:

- 1 Going over a tape or a video of the interaction (though this can be dull and discouraging if done too meticulously and too often).
- 2 Asking them to repeat what they said, with the focus this time being on how correct the language is (not a very convenient approach for role-plays or discussions!).
- 3 Giving individual students notes of errors they have made with instructions on how to correct them.
- 4 Providing the class with remedial sessions on errors common to the majority (particularly fruitful for monolingual groups).

How much do you correct?

Errors are usually made only by individual students, so correction usually has to be on an individual basis too. Even more problematically, in multilingual classes, the types of errors vary according to the students' different mother tongues. The problem for you is how to spend enough time on any one error with any one student without alienating the rest of the group. To reduce that likelihood:

- 1 Involve the whole class as much as possible in the correction process.
 - 2 Spend less time correcting what is only a problem for one student and more time on problems common to the whole group.
- There is such a thing as over-correction. That is, the more you try to correct something, the worse the student gets. So, often, it is worth spending a short time correcting some items and not trying to get everything perfect at one go, and coming back to them the next day. Correction of major errors is perhaps best considered as something that should be done as quickly as possible but is likely to be a long-term process over a series of lessons.

How do you correct?

The basic principle is that students learn more effectively if they are guided in such a way that they eventually correct themselves rather than if they are given the correct version of something straight away. The struggle to get it right also helps them understand *why* they are wrong. The main stages in the process are as follows:

- 1 *The student must know something is not accurate*
But first let him finish the utterance. Students find it disconcerting to be interrupted mid-stream, even if you can stop them from shooting on regardless. Then make some gesture, like a wave of the finger, or give some not too discouraging word, like *nearly*. You must be gentle. Errors and mistakes are an important part of our learning; we have to make them in order to learn. So, 'black looks' or shouts of *No, you idiot!* will only serve to reduce the students' desire to try out the language!
 - 2 *The student must know where the error is*
So you need to isolate for the student the part of the utterance that's wrong. If the student says *I see John yesterday* and he meant *I saw John yesterday* then telling the student to try again might be of no use. He's put the word *yesterday* in to indicate past time so he may think he's made a correct utterance. What he needs to know is that the word *see* is incorrect. You can say *the second word or not 'see' but ...?* More effectively, you can use your fingers or a row of students to represent each word. When you get to the word that's wrong, indicate that that is where the problem is and see if they can get it right.
 - 3 *The student must know what kind of error it is*
He'll need to know whether the problem is grammatical (e.g. wrong tense), syntactic (e.g. a missing word) or phonological (e.g. a wrongly-stressed word). Common gestures used to indicate the type of error can be found on pp 11–12. Another might be:
A word is missing: with fingers representing each word and the students speaking slowly, the finger for the missing word is tucked behind the palm of hand and then produced at the end.
- You can no doubt think of other useful gestures. However, it is important that the students understand them and that you use the same gestures each time to represent the same thing.

Until you get confident in using gestures to help you correct students, you might find it easier to use the board. So if a student says *'She buy some apples*, you can write the word *buy* on the board, cross it out and write up the word *Past*. See then if the student can tell you what the correct form should be.

The basic steps then probably go something like this:

- (a) Indicate that an error has been made.
- (b) Show the student *where* the error is.
- (c) Indicate *what sort* of error it is.
- (d) Get him to try again and see if he can get it right (it might have been a simple slip). Possibly give him some clues. (If it's not a very serious problem or you're in a hurry, then simply give the correct version and get the student to repeat it. However, he hasn't had to work for the correct version and may not have fully absorbed what he has got wrong).
- (e) If the student still can't get it right, it's probably because he doesn't know how to. So, with a hand gesture, hold his attention and get another student to help out. This has the advantage of:
 - (i) involving all the students in the correction process
 - (ii) making the learning more co-operative generally
 - (iii) reducing the students' dependence on your models
 - (iv) increasing the amount the students listen to each other
 - (v) giving the better students something to do.

However, such student-to-student correction, as it is known, needs to be done carefully. Not *Oh, no! Wrong again, Juan. Go on, Sami. Tell him.*; but *Not quite, Juan. Do you know, Sami?* Alternatively, do the whole thing by gesture. Indicate 'not quite' with your face or hands and gesture another student to help.

- (f) If that step fails, you must assume that either the student hasn't understood what you're getting at or he doesn't know what the correct version should be. If it's an important point and the others don't know it either, you may have to teach it from scratch (i.e. present and practise it). If not, and the meaning of the item is clear, your simply saying it and getting the students to say it should be enough.
- (g) No matter how you have done the correction get the student to say the correct version, if possible in its original context. This is a vital part of any correction process. You can do this by gesture or saying something like *OK. Again. The whole thing.*
- (h) If the student makes the same error later in the lesson, a quick reminder, perhaps by making an appropriate facial expression, should be enough.

Further suggestions

- 1 *Don't let any student think he's being picked on*
Maintain a co-operative working atmosphere. Correction can seem threatening if done badly.

- 2 *Try not to 'echo' the errors, even in a mocking, astonished way*

Some teachers find this an easy way of indicating an error but although the humour can be beneficial it tends to reinforce the teacher's superior relationship and inhibit the student's ability to work things out for himself.

Written correction

The principles behind correcting written work are basically the same as those behind correcting oral production.

When?

Controlled writing (e.g. copying) : correct tightly

Cued writing : correct less

Free writing : either react to it as communication (e.g. *Oh, really. I didn't know you thought that.*) or evaluate it as communication (e.g. *Well argued*) rather than quibble over grammar or points of syntax and spelling. The aim is fluency and comprehensibility rather than strict accuracy, unless (e.g. for exam purposes) that is the reason the writing has been set.

How much?

Smothering a piece of written work with corrections can be defeating. Even if students look at them they probably won't learn much. 'Free' writing at the low levels will inevitably be full of inaccuracy and as such should only be set for communicative purposes (i.e. how well the meaning has been got across) and not be marked and corrected on the basis of correct form.

When correcting cued writing, it is often worth focusing on a particular area (e.g. punctuation or spelling) and ignoring the rest. You can then work remedially on that area with the students.

How?

With some modifications in procedure, the principles again are the same as for oral correction.

- 1 Make sure students write on every other line and leave a margin.
- 2 Depending on the aim of the exercise, underline the errors you wish to focus on so that students know *where* they occur.
- 3 To show them what type of errors they are, put symbols in the appropriate place in the margin (e.g. *P* might represent punctuation, *S*: spelling, *WO*: word order, etc.) If the students don't understand the symbols, teach them.
- 4 Give the piece of writing back to the students to see how much they can correct for themselves.
- 5 Sometimes written work may be exchanged with other students or discussed in groups so that they all correct each other's.
- 6 Correct their corrections (or the corrections of their colleagues).
- 7 Mark, or comment, according to the aim of the written work. If communication is the aim, don't mark according to spelling. Always decide whether marks are to be quantitative (e.g. a mark for punctuation might be arrived at by deducting the number of errors from 100) or based on a general impression. Sometimes it's worth giving different marks for different things within the

same piece of written work as well as an overall mark based on its communicative worth..

- 8 Get the student to write up a neat copy and hand it in.
- 9 Set follow-up exercises for bad errors, perhaps giving appropriate page number references in exercise books.
- 10 Note down errors that are common to the group and prepare a remedial lesson for them.

This procedure may seem heavy and slow as it is thought of as forming part of a series of lessons (obviously it will be adapted to the class and the occasion) but one piece of written work, properly done, will achieve far more and give a far greater sense of achievement than a hundred badly-done 'free' essays covered with red ink! In such cases the teacher sweats and frequently it's all for nothing!

WHAT IS GOING ON

(From Gower & Walters, 1983)

3: Checking whether the students have understood what is going on

Understanding of other more general features of a context also often needs to be checked, not only who is talking to whom, the place and the occasion but also what they are talking about and what's happening. It needs to be done:

- during Presentation, any time a textual environment is needed for new items of language. This may be a dialogue or a newspaper article.
 - during skills work, when a text is used (e.g. a listening text such as a station announcement or a reading text such as a letter).
 - when setting up 'creative' activities such as role-plays, when characters and their relationships are being introduced.
- What types of questions should be asked?

Comprehension questions need to be organized and serve a clearly thought-out purpose. You will need to ask yourself: *What do I want the students to understand? What is this question really asking? Does it ask what I want them to understand?* Different types of questions expect different types of answers, e.g.:

- look at the following dialogue from *English in Situations* by O'Neill (OUP) where the overall teaching aim might be to give further practice to the frequency adverbs *often, never, and always*.

Tony and Susan are a young married couple. Tony writes advertisements for a large advertising agency and Susan teaches French. They are at home now, it is evening and they are sitting in the living-room.

Tony: You know, Susan, I think we're becoming vegetables ... cabbages!

Susan: What a strange thing to say! What do you mean!

Tony: Well ... just look at us! You're sitting there and I'm sitting here ... we aren't talking ... or reading ... we're just staring at the wall!

Susan: Turn the television on if you're bored!

Tony: Television! That's the trouble. We never go out in the evenings. We always watch television. It's terrible.

Susan: All right. What do you want to do then?

Tony: Hmm ... I don't know ... the Academy cinema is showing a new Swedish film this evening.

Susan: Swedish films! Ugh! I don't like them! All that sex and religion.

Tony: How do you know? You never see them!

Susan: Oh all right! We can go to the cinema this evening if that's what you want. Where's my coat?

Tony: Oh! just a second. It's Thursday today isn't it!

Susan: That's right. So what?

Tony: Well ... I want to watch the boxing on television this evening. I always watch it.

(In the following sections try to answer the questions yourself.)

1 'Gist' questions or 'detail' questions?

(a) 'Gist' gist questions check the general context and the general content

- Are they watching television while they are talking?
- Is Tony happy watching television every night?

(b) 'Detail' - Does Susan suggest they turn the television on?

- Does Susan like Swedish films?

Gist questions are normally asked first, to check general understanding, before you break a text up and try for a full understanding of its parts. They are sometimes asked before the students are given a text so that they keep them in mind while they are listening or reading in order to give them something to listen and read for. Sometimes *only* gist questions are asked (e.g. when you want to exploit the topic, or when you use a difficult text with elementary students) or *only* easily-answered 'detail' questions, where the students are expected to recognize only certain *outstanding facts* rather than understand the whole text fully (e.g. when using a news broadcast with beginners).

2 Questions which can be answered from the surface of the text and those which cannot.

- (a) Information which is directly retrievable from the text:
i.e. obvious facts about the context or content
- *What are the names of the two people?*
 - *How often do they go out in the evenings?*
- (b) Information not directly retrievable from the text:
i.e. where the students interpret what is happening, make inferences and speculate what will happen. The 'answers' won't be obvious and students may disagree and want to discuss alternatives:
- *Does Tony change his mind often?*
 - *Do they love each other?*
 - *Will they go to the cinema or watch television?*
 - *What sort of person is Susan?*

Type (a) questions often involve the students giving straight repetitions from the text and as such can often be replied to without real understanding of the content. Comprehension checking should not often involve too many such questions

although a certain amount of direct retrieval is necessary. However, because students will have to think and draw upon on their own language, questions of type (b) are more demanding and more interesting. It's as well to get on to interpretative work as soon as you are sure the students have understood the text reasonably well.

The two broad categories above (gist/detail; directly retrievable information/not directly retrievable information) are the most valuable way of dividing up question types. However, you should also consider the following:

3 What are easy questions and what are difficult questions?

- (a) *Easy*: Since the students might find the replies they are expected to make to questions often more difficult than understanding the text itself, you will need to grade your questions in terms of how easy or how difficult they are to answer. 'Easy' questions might expect the students to answer simply *yes* or *no* (*yes, they do; no, they don't*) or to give a one-word answer to an *either/or* construction:
- *Do Tony and Susan watch television?*
 - *Are they watching television now?*
 - *Does Susan teach French or Spanish?*
 - *Is she teaching French now?*

These questions, though, might be constructed using a form of *do* or *be* or *have* or a modal such as *can* or *should*, all of which your students may find difficult to understand, so be careful! (The question *Should he have told Susan they are becoming cabbages?* is easy in the sense that all students have to say is *yes* or *no* – or *Yes, he should/No, he shouldn't* – but the form of the question is not easy to understand at all and demands the students have an opinion about what is happening in the text.)

- (b) *Less easy*: These might be questions beginning with a question word (*What, When, Where, Why, Who, Whose, How, Which*) where the answers can be found in the text. These clearly relate to 2 (a) in the previous category.
- *What do Tony and Susan do every evening?*
 - *How often do they go out in the evenings?*
 - *Why doesn't Susan like Swedish films?*
 - *Who decides to stay at home tonight?*

Although the last question in this case is effectively only a choice between two alternatives, this type of question is usually felt to be slightly harder than those in (a). Obviously, though, there can be degrees of difficulty within the category and some will in effect be easier than those in (a).

- (c) *More difficult:* These questions might be those where the student has to draw upon his own language rather than the language of the text. Obviously, they overlap with 2 (b) above. Such questions often begin with *Why* or *How*.
- *Why does Tony think they're becoming cabbages?*
 - *Why do you think they never go out in the evenings?*
 - *How often do you think Tony sees Swedish films?*
 - *Why does Susan agree to go to the cinema?*

Clearly these categories are not rigid. The important thing is to ask yourself *Is the question I am asking easy or not?* and, probably, ask the easy questions first.

4 Which questions give short answers and which give long answers?

- (a) Questions giving short answers:

Clearly this category overlaps with the 'easy' questions above but it could also include

- *What's the name of the cinema showing the Swedish film?*

- (b) Questions giving long answers:

This category overlaps with 3 (c) above and 2 (b) above. They might expect interpretation or description, where the students are expected to draw upon their own language and ideas.

- *What sort of person is Tony?*
- *How differently do they feel about television?*

This distinction is important when you are deciding how far you want the students to use the language. Obviously, particularly at the higher levels, questions which encourage long answers help to keep your own talking time down. However, 'speaking prompts' such as *Tell me about Describe* are often better for this e.g.:

Describe the relationship between Tony and Susan.

The students will have to be able to interpret the text, and recast it in their own words in a reasonably long flow.

To summarize, then, the scales are:

- | |
|--|
| (a) Gist → Detail
Information retrievable from text → not retrievable from text |
| (b) Easy → Difficult
Short answers → Long answers |

Scales of questioning should not be rigidly translated into a teaching order. They can quickly make your teaching mechanical and predictable. You will need to vary the types of questions asked according to:

- the aim of the lesson
- the stage the lesson is at and what level or type of understanding you expect
- what your students are capable of at any one point.

It is important at all times to be aware of what a question expects and to be sensitive as to how much a student needs it to be asked. So:

- be flexible
Don't stolidly wade through all the questions you've written out on your lesson plan if you find they're not necessary
- grade within the types
generally you should ask easy questions before you ask difficult questions, but mix them up and vary the types. On your lesson plan it's well worth breaking them up into categories for easy reference but don't just read through a list in the classroom.

– deal with the text differently at different stages of a lesson

So while a first exposure to a text often demands easy gist questioning, subsequent exposures, say to small segments of it, can be dealt with in different ways with these questions on this segment expecting short answers and those questions on that segment expecting interpretation.

Remember, asking questions *after* a text is a checking process not a teaching process. If you wish to *teach* listening and reading you will need to give students a reason for doing so. In which case you will have to set the questions beforehand geared to the type of listening or reading you expect (e.g. listening for gist or detail). Other tasks such as chart-filling (see below) are often more suited to the purpose.

Can you get students to ask the questions?

Yes. It is a way of passing the checking process across to the students once the basics have been covered by the teacher. It removes you from the limelight a little and gives the students extra practice in question formation. It might develop like this:

T *What are they doing now?*

S1 *Staring at the wall.*

T *Good. OK. Moktar. Ask Juan a question with 'Why' and 'Swedish films'.*

S2 *Why doesn't Susan like Swedish films?*

S3 *Because they have too much sex and religion.*

Can you check understanding without asking questions?

Again, yes. You can ask the students to fill in forms, compose charts and the like. The aim is for the students to transfer some of the relevant information from the text you are dealing with to a simple graphic format, something they can't do properly if they don't understand it; e.g. read this letter:

Saturday
Dear Mary,
Well, we arrived on Thursday evening. We travelled all day. We were very tired so we went to bed early. On Friday we went shopping in the market. That was in the afternoon. In the morning John went fishing and I went to hire a car for the week. After shopping we drove into the hills to a little restaurant for supper. Very good it was, too.
This morning we're not doing very much, just writing postcards and planning the rest of the week.
I'll write again soon.
Love,
Martha.

Now, in the right space write down what Martha and John did.

	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Morning			
Afternoon			
Evening			

They take quite a lot of thinking up and examples can be found in many modern materials (e.g. *Exchanges* by Garton-Sprenger et al, Heinemann). Of course, they are mainly used to *teach* the skills of listening and reading. In the early days of TP you might wish to stick to two other simple techniques:

1 *True/False statements:*

Write some statements on the board or OHP, or give them out on a work sheet

e.g.:

Susan likes boxing

Susan changes her mind about going to the cinema

Tony is bored

Tell the students to write 'True' or 'False' next to each.

2 *Multiple-choice statements:*

Write up choices such as the following:

Susan doesn't like Swedish films because

she never sees them

she doesn't like the Academy cinema

they are full of sex and religion

(there should be a maximum of five alternatives).

Then tell the students to tick the statement they think is correct.

Such exercises perform a vital function in providing variety to the type of work done, particularly if they are in worksheet form and the students are given the opportunity to compare their results. Where and how often you use them will depend on what you want the students to be able to do. If you are assessing how well the students have understood something, you might give the students such exercises *after* they have read or listened to the text but if you wish to concentrate their minds in order to help develop that understanding then you might well get them to do them *while* they are listening or reading. (You must check that the students have understood how to do the exercises first – and be careful not to include unnecessarily difficult language in the task itself).

How do the principles of checking relate to the stages of Presentation and Practice or new language?

1 *During the presentation of new language you should*

– prevent the students from being forced to repeat language they don't understand by checking whether they have or not (roughly at least) understood the 'concept' (i.e. the meaning) of the language you are presenting. If they don't understand have another go at getting it across

– assess how well the students are following the logic behind any inductive presentation by checking their full understanding of the context and what's happening within it

– generally assess how well the students can speak and how much they know when you elicit information, ideas or language

2 *When giving controlled practice*

– for example during a drill, check that students have understood the language they are practising and assess how well they can reproduce it. Remember, though, you cannot at this stage judge how far they can select it appropriately in a situation outside your control

– if you are trying to develop the students' listening and reading skills or giving less controlled language exercises such as narrative and dialogue building (see pp 110–119 and pp 121–132) you will need to check comprehension of what is happening as well as check language concepts when unfamiliar and important items come up.

3 *When the students are communicating freely during an interaction activity*

– you should assess the students' ability to use the language accurately and fluently, as well as note how well students get across what they want to say and how well they understand each other.

– assessment is likely to be 'diagnostic' rather than lead to immediate correction (see pp 133–134); what you discover may modify what you do with them in the future.

APPENDIX 7: READING FOR TASK 3

EXPERIMENTAL CLASS YEAR 5

Hi there,

Just a short note to let you know who we are and what we do. Our names are Melody and Winston and we are part of the AQIS "Beagle Brigade", employed as Quarantine Detector Dogs.

We went through heavy training to learn to sniff out items of prime quarantine concern - you know the sort of things we mean - fruit, meat and lots of other foodstuffs. Our sense of smell is so great (up to 1,000 times better than yours) that we can also detect plants and many items of animal origin, as well as eggs and live birds.

AQIS — Declare it for Australia
AUSTRALIAN QUARANTINE & INSPECTION SERVICE

Our job involves working around baggage carousels at international airports where we sniff suitcases and hand luggage to make sure that any items which could bring diseases or pests into Australia are detected. So, if you are bringing any prohibited items through the international terminals, dump them in the Quarantine bins - and declare any other goods of quarantine concern. We don't want to have to catch you!

Thanks for your help in caring for Australia.

Your pals,
Melody & Winston

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