

1998

Principles and practices of ESL teachers: a study of adults and children

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Principles and Practices of ESL Teachers

a study of teachers of adults and children

M.P.Breen

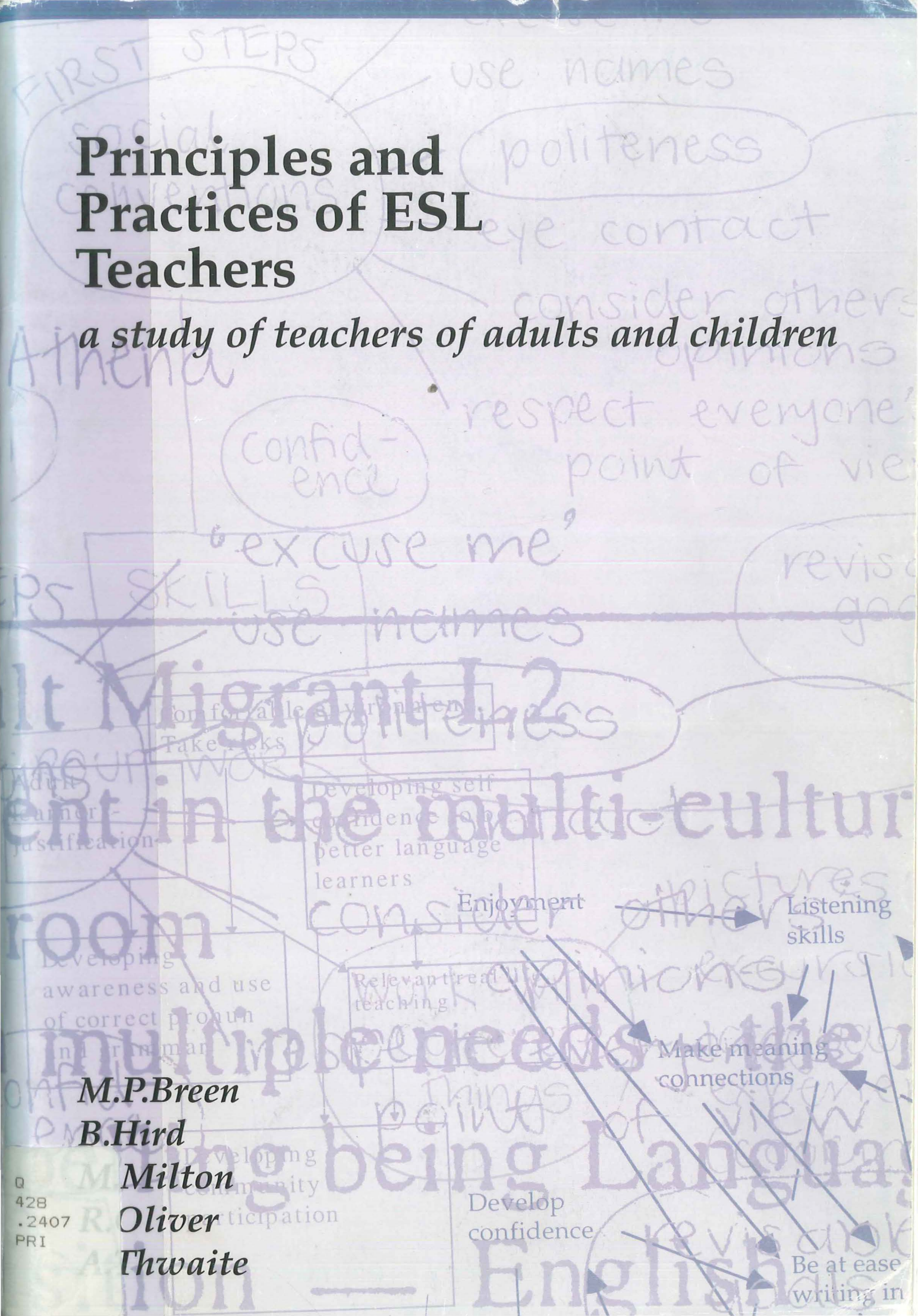
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Principles and Practices of ESL Teachers

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& A.Thwaite.

Acknowledgments

We are especially grateful to the teachers who participated in this study. They welcomed us into their classrooms, devoted their care in undertaking a number of reflective tasks, and talked with us for several hours, often in their own time. This study has benefited in ways we never anticipated from their helpful cooperation and detailed consideration of our questions. We hope that what we have written is of value and interest to them in particular.

We also acknowledge the significant support we received from the different institutions in which the teachers worked. We were made to feel very welcome.

This research project was made possible by a grant to the Centre for Applied Language & Literacy Research from research infrastructure funding of Edith Cowan University. The views expressed in this report are the responsibility of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Centre or the University.

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ISBN 0 7298 0425 9

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Chapter One

Introduction & Background to the Study

Rhonda Oliver, Marion Milton & Michael P. Breen

Investigating language teaching

The recent detailed investigations of Burns (1993), Gimenez (1995), Freeman (1991), Johnson (1989), and Woods (1996) signal a rapidly growing interest in how language teachers conceptualise their work. These studies have been largely inspired by a number of influential accounts during the 1980s of the beliefs and knowledge of novice and experienced teachers across subject areas and levels in the education system (Calderhead 1987; Clandinin, 1986; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Elbaz 1983; Shavelson & Stern, 1981; Shulman, 1987; *inter alia*.) Several researchers in the field of second language teaching see their work as informing teacher education (Flowerdew *et alia*, 1992; Richards & Lockhart, 1994).

On the surface, teachers appear to be eclectic in their practice. Over time they build up practical skills that involve dealing with the interaction of a complex array of factors (Anning, 1988). These factors include a detailed knowledge of the language being taught, the course content, their understanding of how students learn a language, the characteristics of the learners, and their perception of how best to teach language. Cognisant of their need to be good at classroom and time management, as well as their need to solve problems on the spot, teachers adopt a variety of strategies, often on the basis of what they believe work well. In turn, they integrate these skills into a complex set of teaching practices which are readily observable by other teachers and researchers.

It is more difficult, however, to determine **why** teachers teach the ways they do: their theoretical frameworks or guiding principles which shape and justify their classroom practice (Calderhead, 1988). The terms 'beliefs', 'principles' and 'theories' often seem to be used interchangeably in studies dealing with the way teachers think about their classroom practice. In overviews of research into teacher thinking, Pajares (1992) and Pope (1993) identify the variety of theoretical constructs that have been proposed by

researchers. Terms range from 'teachers' understandings', to 'intuitive or implicit theories' to 'professional craft knowledge'.

This study adopts Breen's concept of pedagogic principles from his study of 167 experienced teachers of English as a second or foreign language (Breen, 1996). Such pedagogic principles **mediate between** a teacher's beliefs or theories and the teacher's on-going decision-making and actions in a language class. Principles are shaped by beliefs which encompass views about learning, learners, the classroom, the language being taught, and how a teacher might best enable an effective interaction between these things. Such beliefs tend to be deeply held, broad in focus, and largely context-independent. The pedagogic principles which derive from these more abstract beliefs will determine how the teacher actually orchestrates the teaching-learning process in a particular classroom context. They become accessible to the outsider through the reasons or justifications which teachers provide for particular things they may actually do during a specific lesson.

A teacher's principles are therefore embedded in their practice. Discovering what these may be and, crucially, how they relate to each other may be seen as a means to understanding teaching. With this aim in mind, Breen suggests four major reasons for investigating the pedagogic principles of language teachers:

- They can generate alternative frameworks for language pedagogy
- They are a source of experientially-based professional wisdom and as such can serve as a focus for initial language teacher education and ongoing language teacher development.
- They enable the researcher to go beyond what teachers do in language lessons towards understanding and explaining why.
- A teacher's greater awareness of their own principles can facilitate harmony between a particular innovation or external curriculum for language teaching and the teacher's enacted interpretation of it in the classroom.

(Breen, 1996: p. 2-3).

The links between principles and practices

There are at least three main influences upon a teacher's pedagogic principles which they will endeavour to put into practice in a particular teaching situation. These are: their own direct experience as learners, the theories of learning to which they may have access during their own

education as teachers, and the particular situation as they define it in which they are teaching. Interestingly teachers' pedagogic principles may or may not be related to specific theories of second language learning. In preservice education, student teachers encounter a number of theories about teaching and learning in general and, at least for some, more specific theoretical background information relating to second language acquisition. It may be thought that once they obtain a teaching post, novice teachers endeavour to put those theories into practice in an explicit way. However, several researchers have suggested that this is not the case.

Teachers hold many beliefs that come primarily from their own learning experiences and they tend to identify with theories that align with these experiences. For example, many of the ESL teachers in the present study have learned other languages. It is possible that those learning experiences will influence their beliefs about how a person learns another language, which in turn will impact on the principles that guide the way a language should be taught.

Anning (1988) claims that teachers develop their theoretical perspectives both through experience and reflection on these experiences. Any new theories, taught in pre-service and professional development courses, are often accommodated to fit in with these existing beliefs. Even contradictory theories may be used as a means of confirming already held beliefs. It also seems that teachers' principles become more entrenched in their practice with increasing experience (Munby, 1982; Clark & Petersen, 1986).

However, in a study of teachers' assumptions about how children learn to read, Westwood (1997) found that these assumptions could be changed through a course which updated their professional qualifications. Westwood also found that teacher training or professional development that encourages reflection on practice and the articulation of their own theories can open up teachers' principles to alternative ways of conceptualising their work (Westwood, 1997). The relationship between this re-conceptualisation and actual changes in practice may, of course, be less straight forward. It remains possible that professional development will have an impact to varying degrees on teachers' principles. All the teachers in the present study either hold specialist qualifications in the teaching of English as a second language or are currently undertaking such studies and all have undertaken some form of professional development in the area. We may anticipate that these kinds of professional development may shape both their principles and their practices.

Teachers are usually constrained by institutional, governmental or funding body dictates, such as specified curricula, assessment and reporting requirements. They may adapt their own principles and practices to comply with these constraints, or they may meld these requirements to fit their existing principles (Burns, 1996). For example, the teachers in the present study work in a variety of settings with different system requirements. Some of the ESL teachers of adults worked within a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system and they taught students who were permanent residents in Australia. Others were teachers who were teaching overseas students on temporary visas who were enrolled in special short term courses. While the teachers of school-age learners were all working in reception centres for newly arrived migrant children. Of these teachers, five were located at one school with a long tradition in ESL teaching while three were located in a relatively new centre. Therefore we might further anticipate that the teachers' principles and the practices which they regarded as appropriate may also be influenced by the particular circumstances in which they teach.

It is very likely that the characteristics of the learners (e.g., adults or children, proficiency level, language background, migrant status) will affect the teachers' choice of classroom practices. Hence, if our assumptions are correct, these differences will also influence the teachers' pedagogic principles. Therefore, as the present study looks at teachers working with learners at two distinct age levels coming from variety of backgrounds, it provides the opportunity to explore the relationship between the learner characteristics and teachers' principles and practices.

In addition to their experience as learners, their education as teachers, and the particular situation in which they work, it is possible that teachers will think about their work mainly through direct and often spontaneous reflection upon more immediate teaching experiences. In other words, what they actually do in the classroom and the on-going decisions they make will test out and, in turn, further refine their principles. Therefore, while it has been suggested that principles are implicit in practice (Calderhead, 1988), just as they may be regarded as guiding classroom practice, it can be claimed that they can also emerge from the trying out of practices (Breen, 1996). The relationship between practices and principles is very likely to be interactive; each will influence the other as the teacher works from day to day. This argument is supported by Kumuravadivelu (1994) who indicated that teachers construct classroom-oriented theories of practice, which he termed as "principled pragmatism", from their direct experience of what has been possible to do in certain classrooms. Such principled pragmatism may serve teachers as a way of accommodating and

dealing with the actual complexities of language teaching in real situations. For Kumaravadivelu, a teacher's own principled pragmatism or set of principles may make more sense to them in their daily work than a currently fashionable theory.

The present study

The study reported here aimed to identify the particular practices and uncover the particular principles of a group of ESL teachers. Some of the teachers were working with adult learners and some were working with young children. The research aimed to answer three main questions:

1. What are the classroom practices of this group of language teachers?
2. What principles do they identify as underlying their work in the classroom?
3. What is the relationship between the principles they held and the practices they adopted?

The study also aimed to find out if there were similarities or differences between teachers of adults and teachers of children in both the practices they adopted and the principles which motivated their work. In other words, we wanted to know whether teachers' thinking and behaviour in the classroom were influenced by the age of the learners whom they taught. The study further aimed to consider if variation among the teachers in their practices and principles was due to the teachers' professional experiences, their own language backgrounds, and the different institutional contexts in which they were teaching.

Method of research

The Participants

Eighteen ESL teachers and their intact classes participated in this study. Ten were adult classes and eight were classes for primary school children. There were 14 female teachers (even distributed as teachers of children and teachers of adults) and four male teachers (one teaching children and three teaching adults).

The teachers had varying degrees of general teaching experience ranging from 5 to 33 years. The least experienced in ESL teaching had only taught in the area for 3 years, whereas the most had been in ESL teaching for 26 years. Most of the teachers had undertaken further study and/or completed post-

graduate qualifications. These included RSA diplomas, B.Ed (TESOL major), post-graduate certificate in TESOL, and one teacher had a Masters degree in Applied Linguistics. All the teachers had participated in some form of professional development related to ESL. Table 1.1 summarises the characteristics of the teachers in the group.

Table 1.1: The teachers' qualifications and experience

Teacher	Child/ Adult	ESL Experience	Total Experience	TESOL Quals	Current Study	Languages Spoken
Mary	Child	14	33	RSA	N	N
Sue	Child	6	27	N	P/ Grad	N
Leng	Child	5	8	Masters	N	Cantonese
Amy	Child	5	6	Y	Masters	Italian
Kerry	Child	8	17	N	Grd Cert	Greek
Belinda	Adult	20	22	Grd Dip	N	French German Italian Spanish
Marjory	Adult	3	11	BEd (Tesol)	N	Indonesian French
Graham	Adult	15	28	BEd major	plan to start Masters	Spanish
Nathan	Adult	5	5	N	Grd Dip Arts	N
Athena	Child	12	21	2 units	N	N
Peta	Child	12	12	Y	BEd	N
June	Child	13	17	BEd 4 units	N	French
Iris	Adult	7	9	Yes	N	Bahasa Indonesian Spanish
Adele	Adult	17	18	Grd Dip RSA	N	Italian
Karen	Adult	16	20	BEd major	N	N
Dean	Adult	26	26	Grd Cert, RSA	N	Dutch French German
Ngaire	Adult	8	10	RSA, Grd Dip	N	Hungarian
Kate	Adult	11	14	Grd Cert	N	French

As Table 1.1 indicates, the majority of teachers speak at least one other language. This is more prevalent in the ESL teachers of adults group where only two of the eight teachers did not speak another language, whereas for the teachers of children, half had another language.

The students they taught came from a very wide range of language backgrounds and these are indicated in Table 1.2. In the primary school classes the range of language backgrounds varied from 5 to 12 different languages in a class. In the adult classes the range was 4 to 13. The students were in Australia for a variety of reasons reflected in their migrant status (refugee, business, temporary or student residency). The number of students in the classes ranged from 10 to 23 ($M = 16.68$). Table 1.2. following indicates the range of languages spoken by child and adult students in the teachers' classes:

Table 1.2: Languages spoken by adult and child learners in the classes

Afghani	Croatian	Indonesian	Polish	Swahili
Amheric	Danish	Iranian	Portuguese	Swedish/ Danish
Arabic	Dinka	Israeli	Romanian	Tagalog
Bosnian	Dutch	Japanese	Russian	Tamil
Bosnian/ Croat*	Farsi	Khmer	Serb/Croat	Thai
Bulgarian	Filipino	Korean	Serbian	Tigerina
Burmese	German	Latvian	Shona	Turkish
Cambodian	German/ English	Kurdish	Slovenian/ Serbian	Urdu
Cantonese	German/ Polish	Macedonian	Somali	Vietnamese
Catalan	Hindi	Mandarin	Spanish	Visayan
Chinese		Marathi	Sri Lankan	
		Persian		
		Pharsee		
*/Speaks both				

Research approach

Teachers' professional knowledge (including principles) becomes embedded in their action and this 'knowledge-in-action' is not always directly accessible to them (Calderhead, 1988, p3). Teachers may find it hard to articulate the principles underlying their practice. In order to access teachers' beliefs and principles, research studies have used a range of techniques including interviews, repertory grids and critical incident reports to encourage the teachers to reflect on and articulate the things that guide their pedagogy.

In the current study, data was collected through a range of methods so that triangulation could be achieved. Throughout the period of intense data collection over an average of five weeks, a dialogue was undertaken between a teacher and a researcher so that the teacher's interpretations of their own observable actions were sought rather than relying upon researcher observation and interpretation. Although the researcher observed classroom practice and took field notes, the main purpose here was to reflect these back during interviews as a stimulus for teacher commentary and explanation. Teachers were asked to talk about what they did in the classroom and why they did it. Videos of the teachers' lessons were also made so that the teachers could select and point out what they regarded as significant in the ways they worked.

In addition, a confirmatory process was undertaken throughout wherein any views expressed by them, and any observations recorded by the researchers which were subsequently included as data, were first checked by the teachers to ensure the validity of what was written on their behalf. For instance, towards the end of the data gathering process, the researchers wrote a third-person description of the particular teachers with whom they worked based upon interviews, observations, a critical incident reflection by the teacher, their own bio-data questionnaire, their written advice to a new teacher, and the information derived from a repertory grid of practices and their reasons for them. This third-person account was then given to the teachers for them to make any additions and changes or for further clarification before being shared and analysed by the research team.

Research procedures

Basing data collection on a variety of techniques, on a dialogic process, and on confirmation of researcher deductions by the teacher, data was obtained from the 18 teachers and their classes by a team of five researchers. One researcher collected data from five and another from three primary school ESL teachers. The three remaining researchers collected data from ten ESL teachers of adults. The researchers undertook at least four interviews of about an hour each with each of their teachers and observed their lessons three times, including once when the teacher was video-recorded working with the class.

After the initial contact was made with each teacher, the researcher observed a lesson. Following this the researcher interviewed the teacher asking them to describe a number of their own practices or things they required students to do during the observed lesson. Each separate practice was written in the teacher's own words upon cards. Taking each of these

practices in turn, the teachers was asked for their reasons for such a practice. Each reason given was also recorded on separate cards. At the end of this session the teacher was left with a bio-data form to complete and return to the researcher. This was used to ascertain professional and personal background information. It also included a section where the teachers were asked to write five recommendations they would make to novice ESL teachers about the task of teaching language.

The uncovering of the teachers' principles built upon the personal construct theories of Kelly (1955) and was based upon procedures used by Munby (1984), Cronin-Jones & Shaw (1992) and Day (1996) in their work with teachers of maths and science. Prior to the second interview the researcher drew up a repertory grid using the information from the cards. The teachers' practices were listed on the vertical axis and their reasons listed on the horizontal axis. At this second interview the researcher worked with the teacher eliciting information as to whether the teacher saw a relationship between each action and reason. (A strong relationship was rated "1", a weak relationship "2" and no relationship "3".) Subsequent to this, the researcher analysed the grid to trace correlations between particular patterns of relationships.

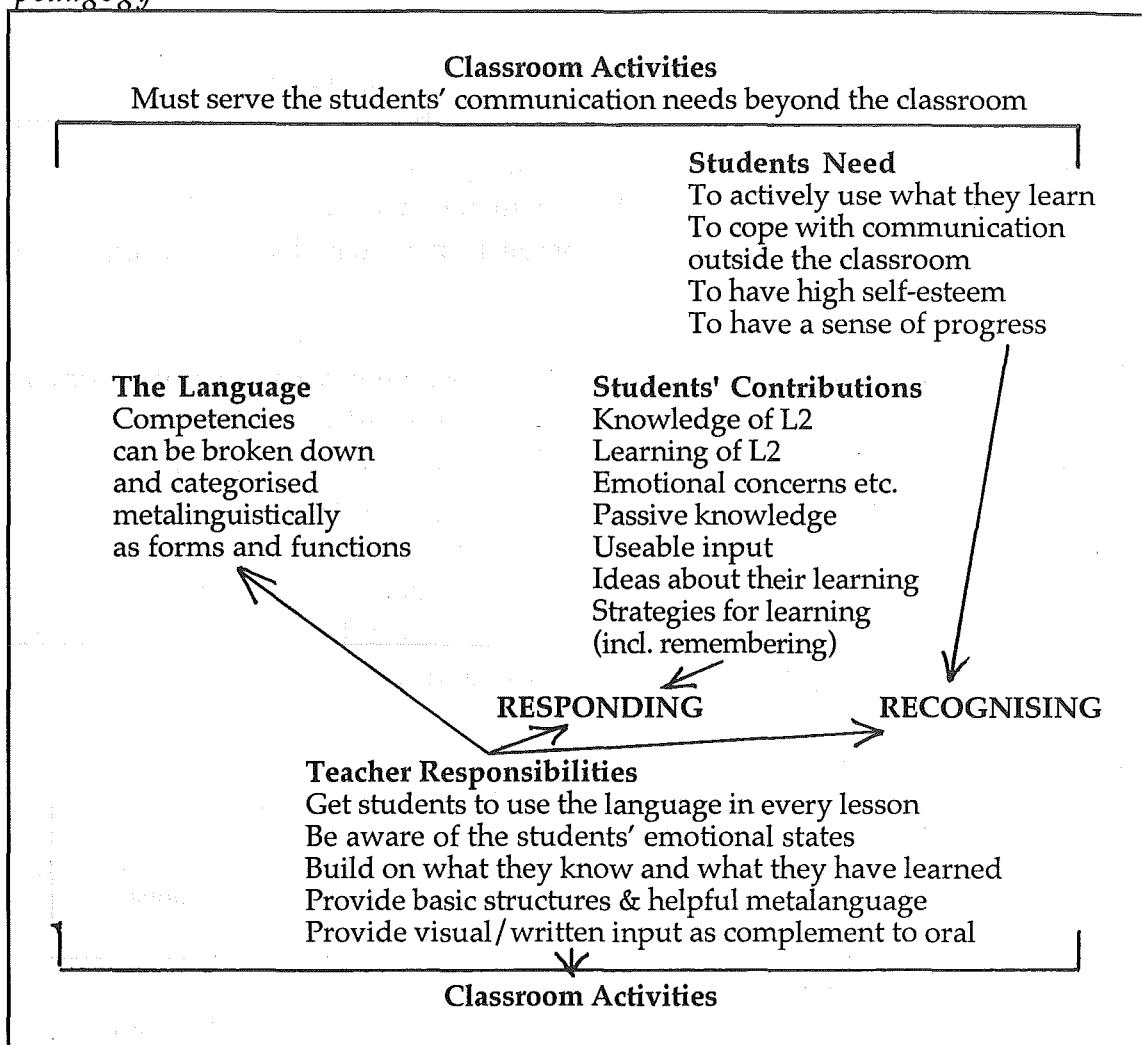
Once patterns of relationships between actions and reasons had been ascribed by the teachers, those actions with similar reasons were placed together and the teacher was asked to give a word or phrase to describe or thematise this cluster of actions and reasons. **The teacher's articulation of the relationships between observed classroom behaviours and the reasons which they gave for them expressed the teacher's pedagogic principles.** Figure 1.1 on the following page illustrates how one of the teachers thematised clusters of actions and reasons in this way. Her principles are listed in the order of priority which she gave to them:

Figure 1.1: A particular teacher's pedagogic principles

	Students need to use the language which they have learned	
Everything we do in class must have a purpose/be useful in the students' daily lives		It is important to be alert to the emotional states and self-esteem of these particular students
Basic structures and metalanguage provide learners with something to build on outside the classroom		Because there is so much to learn, the language needs to be broken down and categorised for ease of mental processing
I must draw upon their passive knowledge so I can build on their contributions if/when they offer something	Students' ideas about their own learning are valid because they are taking responsibility for their own learning	The students and I must adopt strategies that aid remembering such as writing down for visual as well as oral input
	Students need to get a sense of progress in their work	

Therefore the original grid was used to generate the teacher's pedagogic principles as enacted in classroom practices. These principles then became the basis for a model of classroom pedagogy drawn up by the researcher and presented to the teacher in the third interview. The teacher discussed the model and made any changes to it which they felt were important. The model was later included in the researcher's third person description of the teacher. Figure 1.2 on the following page illustrates such a model drawn up in discussion with the researcher and the teacher whose principles were identified above:

Figure 1.2: A model of a teacher's principles for language classroom pedagogy



Before the third interview the teachers were asked to consider and write about a "critical incident" in their teaching careers that typified for them what teaching ESL is all about. A critical incident was described to them as an important incident or occurrence that can be related to your teaching or to student learning. Examples of types of incidents given to the teachers included: "An incident where your action really made a difference in the learner's outcome, either directly or indirectly"; "An incident where things did not go as planned", or "An incident that was typical and rewarding". They were also asked to nominate what they wanted the researcher to watch out for in the second lesson to be observed.

During the observation of the next lesson, the researcher took notes on those aspects nominated by the teacher, and according to the themes that emerged from the analysis of the grid results. In the third interview these notes were discussed with the teacher, as were the pattern of results from

the grid. At this time the teacher shared his or her critical incident with the researcher.

In the last stage of data collection, a video recording was made of a lesson nominated by the teacher. Each teacher viewed this recording, first by them self and then with the researcher. At this point the key moments were discussed and described by the teacher. During this, the researcher checked back with the teacher some of the principles on which the lesson appeared to be based.

Finally from the data so far collected, the researcher wrote a third-person account of each teacher in terms of how they worked in the classroom and the principles which had guided the work. This account, with the model of the teacher's principles and their relationships, was taken back to the teachers in the final interview and they were encouraged to change any aspect of it to ensure that the account was an accurate reflection of the way they saw their own classroom practice. The research procedure we have described is summarised in Figure 1.3 below and overleaf:

Figure 1.3: The research procedure

	Researcher		Teacher	
	With teacher or in class	Alone	With researcher	Alone
<u>Observation</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe lesson. • Biodata form distributed 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete biodata form
<u>Interview</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record actions and reasons on cards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw up grid listing actions and reasons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominate actions and reasons 	
<u>Interview</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss grid, have teacher rate relationship • Distribute 'critical incident' sheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for patterns in teacher's grid responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete grid • Nominate what you would like observer to watch for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete critical incident sheet
<u>Observation</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe lesson taking notes on theme and aspects nominated 			

<u>Interview</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss themes from the grid • Discuss observations of lesson 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss themes from grid • Discuss critical incident 	
<u>Video lesson</u>	Video lesson			
<u>Interview</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss key moments from video 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss key moments 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a third person account of teacher 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rewrite/ change aspects of third person account and send back to researcher

Analysis of the data

The research procedure itself required each researcher to analyse the data from lesson observations and interviews as the dialogue with each teacher proceeded. Construction of the grid of teaching practices and the reasons given for them, thematising relationships between these to uncover principles, drawing up a model of the teachers' principles which guided their pedagogy, and writing the third person description of the teacher all entailed analysis of the teacher's work.

Subsequent to this dialogic process between researcher and teacher, the team of researchers exchanged all third person accounts which included the models of principles. What became immediately obvious was the distinctiveness of each of the teachers in the study. Researchers also exchanged data on the practices of each of their teachers which had been observed and those which had been reported on by the teachers themselves. The data provided almost 300 individual practices, a good proportion of which appeared similar but were described in different terms. A first task was to deduce the most appropriate way of categorising these practices for ease of analysis.

Researchers exchanged the data on the teachers' principles which were recorded in each of the third person descriptions of the teachers and in the models of their teaching within these descriptions. This initial analysis

revealed over 200 principles and, again, a good proportion of these seemed to be similar but were worded in different ways.

Each researcher then drew up a listing of the principles of each of their teachers within the deduced categories of practices and, alongside these, listed those practices which the teachers had identified with each particular principles. In this way the researchers drew up a profile of each teacher indicating their principles and related practices. Each individual profile therefore revealed the particular relationship between the principles and related practices of each teacher.

In order to trace the nature of this relationship across the whole sample of teachers, all the profiles were analysed by one of the researchers. From this analysis, the most commonly shared principles could be related to the practices which expressed them. Similarly, the most commonly adopted practices were identified and the principles motivating them were traced. From this, the relationships between prevailing principles and practices across the group of teachers could be deduced.

Organisation of the report

Each of the chapters that follow address, in turn, the three major questions which the study aimed to answer. **Chapter 2** focuses upon the classroom practices of the 18 teachers and provides a categorisation and exemplification of these. This chapter also explores the similarities and differences in the practices of the teachers of adults as compared with those of the teachers of children.

Chapter 3 explores the principles which the teachers identified as underlying their work. The apparent similarities and differences between the two groups of teachers in terms of their pedagogic principles are also examined. In addition to differences between the two groups of teachers being possibly influenced by the age of their learners, Chapters 2 and 3 also consider the extent to which differences in practices or principles may be due to the teachers' relative teaching experience or their own language backgrounds.

Chapter 4 addresses the key issue of the relationship between the principles which the teachers hold and the practices they adopted in the classroom. The analysis offered here considers this relationship both within the work of the individual teacher and across all the teachers who participated in the study.

In **Chapter 5**, the main findings from each of the previous chapters are summarised and general conclusions about the study are offered.

Chapter Two

Teaching ESL to Children and Adults: Are there Differences in Practices?

B. Hird and A. Thwaite

Categories of teaching practices

The following analysis of the patterns of practices used by ESL teachers in their lessons is organised into five categories. These categories classify the teachers' practices into those that:

- Help the individual learner achieve his/her language learning.
- Treat each student as an individual with a unique background and with particular social, physical, emotional and cognitive learning needs.
- Exploit the significance of the classroom environment for language learning.
- Deal with the content being taught in language lessons.
- Express key features of their role as language teachers.

The categories can be summarized by the following questions:

1. How does the learner do the learning?
2. Who is doing the learning?
3. How can the classroom be used for optimum learning?
4. What is being learnt/taught?
5. How do I exercise my role as a teacher?

The patterns of practices included below describe practices that were used by at least half of the teachers in their lessons. Any practices that were used by less than half of the teachers were not included.

Does the age of the learner make a difference?

Overall there were many similarities in the lesson practices used by the teachers regardless of the age of the learners being taught. However

significant differences between the practices used by teachers of adults and teachers of children were also noted.

Practices which demonstrate teachers' attitudes to how students learn.

One practice that was used by almost all teachers was the organisation of students into pairs/small groups so that interaction between peers could take place. Most of the lessons observed involved at some time students working together in small groups without direct teacher input or presence on exercises such as, jig-saw activities, language games, problem-solving tasks of different types. For example, Sue had the children working collaboratively to reconstruct a text. Peta had groups in her class finding the answers to questions written by other children in a previous lesson. One of the teacher's comments are interesting on this point:

I tend to put the class into situations where they'll be talking to themselves rather than me leading the discussion . . . I think students learn best in a communicative setting rather than listening, I feel that they'll learn best from talking amongst themselves and using language themselves. I often feel that teachers talk too much and that a language classroom should be more about talking and using language, than just listening. So I'm a fairly big believer in group work and information gap kinds of things. (Nathan)

A second practice shared by most teachers was that which provided models of correct English language use for the learners. Generally the modelling was done by the teacher and was associated with explicit demonstrations and direct explanations of appropriateness in language use. Both sets of teachers seemed to be operating from a prescriptive model of English where they believed students learn most effectively through exposure to correct English and by being given explicit information about correctness and appropriateness.

Interestingly these two sets of practices used by both groups of teachers are complementary in that they are together inclusive of both teacher-centred and student-centred techniques in language learning/teaching. Most teachers used practices that encouraged students to take responsibility for their own learning rather than being over-dependent on the teacher to supply solutions and procedures. For example, Leng encouraged children "to ask someone else" if they had difficulties with the classwork. Obviously the teachers saw the development of learner autonomy and self-management skills as key elements in the process by which students learned a second language. Understandably the teachers of children were more

explicit in modelling and explicitly explaining strategies for independent learning.

There were, however, some differences in the practices used by the two sets of teachers. These included the teachers of children giving more emphasis to practical and multimodal activities in their lessons. This may have been due to the notion that primary school should be 'fun' but it was noted by more than one teacher (of children) that 'hands-on' techniques and a multisensory approach were key elements in language learning. Also, teachers of children used practices that encouraged their learners to 'have-a-go' and experiment with language to a greater extent than did the teachers of adults. Drilling/Repetition/Rehearsal of language was one practice that was more common with teachers of adults. These differences in the practices of teachers of adults and children suggest that the teachers see learner age as a factor affecting the methods by which language is best learned. It could be that children are perceived by teachers to have more time to achieve mastery of a second language and thus are freer to 'explore' and 'discover' in their routes of language learning while adults need to learn in a more time efficient manner.

Practices revealing attitudes towards students themselves

Most of the teachers used practices that encouraged the promotion of positive feelings and confidence in their students. These practices indicated the realisation by the teachers of the significance of a positive state of mind in the students as a factor in successful second language learning. One teacher's remarks about the sensitivity that needed to be shown illustrates the emphasis given by teachers in these practices:

Accept all responses and do not tell students they are wrong. Instead say, 'You would be understood, but a better way to say that, is . . .'
(Iris)

However, teachers of children and adults did differ in the practices they used when catering for the individual backgrounds and needs of their students. The teachers of adults showed a greater tendency to use practices that recognised the differing proficiency levels in English included in their classes and they also were more likely to consider different learning styles in the nature of the tasks given to students. Age may be a factor in the importance given to the range of English proficiency in the classes of the adults, as, at least theoretically, the older the students are the more scope there would be for variation. Similarly, the older the students the more the

likelihood that diverse learning styles would have had time to become established.

One difference that was evident in the lessons of the teachers of children was that far more use was made of the students' home languages and there were more practices used which allowed students to draw on their L1 cultural knowledge.

Practices that use the classroom for optimum learning

The development of a positive classroom environment was a goal promoted in the lesson practices of almost every teacher in the study. Clearly a supportive affective classroom climate was recognised as crucial in maximising the language learning potential of students of all ages. Teachers consistently encouraged students so that they participated in an atmosphere that was relaxed and supportive with a minimum of tension and competitiveness. For example, both Kerry and Mary used humour in their classrooms. Kerry said that this was to help the students relax and to encourage them to get to know their teacher. Mary recounted funny incidents about the things her students said and wrote. One teacher spoke about these practices in this way:

Learning and settling into a new country is stressful . . . when people laugh, they relax and then they learn . . . Some of the students are poorly educated and poorly motivated and have not been in a classroom for years so humour is a great leveller . . . People must be confident to regularly make mistakes . . . people afraid of failure are tense and tense people do not learn. (Graham)

The practices that contributed to the development of a safe and secure classroom environment appeared to be motivated in some cases by teachers' desires to compensate for students' prior negative experiences. More than one teacher mentioned that they had students who had suffered a great deal of trauma in their home countries.

Practices relating to the content being taught.

Practices that emphasised the structure and conventions of standard English usage were used by all teachers in the study regardless of the age of the learners. The attention to correctness and accuracy was done often through modelling and sometimes done informally by teachers as they circulated around groups while at other times it was done in direct fashion to the whole class through explicit presentation of rules/generalisations. For

example, Amy displayed rules of English grammar and information about English around the room.

All aspects of language - phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics - were considered in these practices. Teachers clearly interpreted the content of what they were responsible for teaching as language teachers as the acquisition by their students of 'standard English' as no instances of practices involving discussion of dialectal variations were recorded. The following comments are indicative of the significance given to correctness in the teachers' practices:

(One needs to) provide students with metalanguage to help them recognise aspects of language they are learning and to explain conventions to them. (Kate)

Students know how to use English, but they need to know the correct forms for future study. (Dean)

While acknowledging the unanimity that characterised the way all the teachers defined correctness as an important part of the content of what they were teaching, it is also the case that there were clear differences between the two groups of teachers in how the language to be taught was conceived and organised in their lessons. The teachers of adults used practices that allowed them to treat the content as specified by the competencies of the nationally designed adult Certificate in Spoken and Written English (CSWE). The following comments from teachers show the influence of the competencies on how the content was approached in the adult classes:

Tell students whether each piece of work would pass the competency. If it would not pass tell them what is needed to pass. (Karen)

Focus on competencies, taking each one as an overall aim, but build each lesson on particular functions of language or particular genres. (Ngairé)

(Place) overall focus on competencies, but base lessons on forms and especially functions underlying more than one competency. (Kate)

Integrate the competency tasks into interesting topics. (Adele)

The organisation of the language content taught by the teachers of children was not, of course, attuned to the CSWE and consequently quite a different framework for practices emerged in their lessons. The practices used in the children's classrooms showed a focus on the four modes of speaking, listening, writing and reading. Sometimes lessons/activities concentrated on one particular mode, at other times two or more modes were linked

(listening and speaking as a basis for reading and writing) while there were also practices that addressed the integration of the four macro-skills.

A further difference between the two groups of teachers was the use of practices by the teachers of children that focussed on the non-linguistic or non-verbal conventions of student behaviour. These practices were concerned with having students follow classroom procedures and conventions, such as, one person to speak at a time, doing neat work, waiting patiently to use the paper punch, being punctual, etc. The teachers of children, too, used practices that emphasised the paralinguistic, sociocultural aspects of interacting in standard English (no bullying, respect differences between people, remember manners, look people in the eyes when speaking to them). These aspects were not mentioned or practised by teachers of adults due, no doubt, to an expectation by the teachers that their students by that time had learned about such matters.

Practices in which the role of the teacher is exercised explicitly

The practice of checking/monitoring the work of individual students was the aspect of the teacher's role that was shared by both groups of teachers. This was done in a variety of ways including the marking of written work, questioning in whole class situations and while circulating around working groups.

While both the teachers of children and adults used practices of a checking/monitoring nature, there appears to be a difference in emphasis between the two groups of teachers. Perhaps because of the necessity to verify clearly defined 'competencies', teachers of adults primarily used the practice for assessment, especially of the correctness/accuracy of student work. The teachers of children, on the other hand, used the practice for broader monitoring purposes, including the checking of levels of student understanding of concepts and content, their wider learning and assessing their current progress so that planning could be done for future lessons. The following remarks from two teachers of children illustrate the breadth of the feedback sought from the practice:

Discover what the children can do (and give them) the scope to take the next step. (Peta)

Understand the children and where they're at. (Athena)

It may be that the different emphasis in the teachers' use of the monitoring practices reflects differences in their perceptions of the time available for their students to learn English. Perhaps the teachers of children feel that they have more scope to allow their students to learn in a relatively

developmental manner and thus can be patient about the mastery of such elements as accuracy in the forms of English. Conversely the teachers of adults may feel subjected to greater pressure to have their students produce accurate and correct English in the minimum of time. Certainly one teacher (of adults) expressed clearly the constraints associated with teaching within the 510 hours limit where things needed to be done 'to save time' and 'a sense of urgency' was present 'as students seek to get down and do the English. "Get as much English as you can before you move out"' (Belinda). A summary of the major differences between teachers of adults and children is provided in Figure 2.1:

Figure 2.1: Comparison of the practices teachers of adults and children

Type of practice	SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES	
		Adults	Children
How is learning done?	Promoting interaction between peers Demonstrating 'correct' 'appropriate' English	More drilling and rehearsal.	More often observed to do this. More practical and multimodal activities. More explicit modelling and discussion of managing own learning.
Who does the learning?	Considering students' feelings and fostering self-confidence	Dealing with a range of English proficiency and learning styles.	Using students' experiences of other cultures and languages.
How use the classroom?	Developing a positive classroom environment.		
What is being taught?	Structures and conventions of 'standard' English.	Content mainly defined by competency requirements.	Non-linguistic behavioural conventions. Speaking, listening, reading and writing.
What is explicit role of the teacher?	Monitoring/ checking what individual students do.	Focus on the outcomes and linguistic variables.	Focus on the students. More emphasis on providing models of 'correct' 'standard' English.

Two Teachers

To illustrate some of these differences between teachers of children and adults, two cases studies have been selected. Kate is considered the most representative adult teacher. Extracts from her third-person account, constructed by the researcher with her input, appear below:

Kate's Teaching Context

Kate presently teaches adult migrant students. She teaches the class every day from Monday to Friday. The class has 20 students who have recently arrived in Australia from the following countries:

'Yugoslavia' (Serbo-Croatian) - 13 students
El Salvador - 4 students
plus one student from Portugal, Turkey & Syria

The students vary in levels of proficiency from Beginner to Low Intermediate. They are working within Phase 2 of Level 1 in the Certificate of Spoken and Written English and Kate's aim is to help them attain Level 2 of the Certificate. In general, Kate sees the class as very diverse in levels but most of them progressing quite well.

Kate has been teaching ESL for 12 years, 11 of which have been devoted to working with adult learners. She has a Graduate Certificate in TESOL in addition to her first degree and a graduate teaching qualification.

Kate's General Teaching Approach

Kate described the three particular lessons which were focused upon during the study as fairly typical of her overall approach. She described this approach in more detail when discussing the lesson that was videoed. **Kate bases her work upon the competencies** as outlined in the Certificate of Spoken and Written English. However, she adopts as her focus in each lesson the forms and, particularly, the functions of language which she regards as preparing students for more than one competency. The three lessons therefore adopted the following points of focus:

- Lesson 1: Descriptive language through the development of students' knowledge and use of adjectives.
- Lesson 2: Serving students' construction of recounts, appropriate use of verbs in the past tense through talking about the past and giving explanations for past actions/events.
- Lesson 3: The appropriate linguistic realisations of requesting with particular reference to degrees of politeness.

This metalinguistic and functional focus of classroom work is the usual basis for Kate's approach with the students.

Kate's Lessons

A typical pattern of work in Kate's lessons begins with a detailed review of work undertaken in the previous lesson after which the students are expected to undertake an appropriate revision homework. Kate will call upon certain students, particularly those whom she regards as relatively more proficient, to orally re-present the particular forms or utterance types worked upon in the previous lesson and for homework. She sees this review phase as serving three purposes: (i) to consolidate previous learning of all the students through hearing the input of more proficient students; (ii) to provide her with feedback on the relative success of the students from their previous work and to provide further input on aspects that remain unsure; (iii) to signal to all the students that **she expects them to have done the homework** and, thereby, to come to class prepared for the next step in their development of appropriate language for the attainment of the competencies.

Following the review phase, Kate provides detailed input on the particular focus of the lesson usually with reference to a **handout which contains examples of the forms and functions of the language** to which the lesson will be devoted. She gives the students time to read the handout and mark with highlighters any words or phrases that prove immediately problematic for the students. At this point, she will write the problematic words or phrases on the board, seek explanations from other students in the class or, where necessary, provide these herself.

The major input phase involves Kate in reading and elaborating upon and explaining the items, utterance types or dialogue in the handout. Kate is keen to enable the students to become familiar with appropriate metalanguage - such as parts of speech or labels for different language functions - so that she can explain conventions and so that the students can acquire the metalanguage as an aid to their own learning. During this, the students often write things down - which Kate allows but does not really approve of - or will repeat some of the items or utterances after her.

The main part of the lesson for Kate is the activity which the students undertake. Typically she chooses **activities that involve students interacting** and using the relevant aspects of language **in pairs** and students will often do this for the whole class taking turns. Such activities would include describing each other (lesson 1), telling each other what they did the previous day and having to give a reason for it (lesson 2), or undertaking a dialogue in which they make a request using particular linguistic realisations (lesson 3). For Kate, it is important that the students orally interact even though they may sometimes prepare their spoken language on the basis of written versions or directly use the language given in written dialogues in the teaching materials.

Kate believes that students can contribute much to their learning. A crucial aspect which they bring to the classroom, and which Kate believes she must account for, is their emotional state as recent arrivals endeavouring to adapt, often from traumatic

circumstances, to the demands of surviving in a new environment. She also seeks to build her input upon and around what they contribute in terms of prior knowledge or recent learning. Relating to her strong concern with the students' self-esteem, she also encourages them to produce language in class and to give them feedback, both of which provide the students with a sense of progress in their learning.

The reasons for Kate being regarded as a fairly representative teacher of adults are:

- Her practices involve drilling and rehearsal.
- She deals with a range of English proficiencies and learning styles.
- She was not observed to draw on students' experiences of other cultures and languages.
- Content was heavily influenced by competency requirements.

In comparison, Athena can be seen as having many characteristics shown by other teachers of children. Her third-person account is given as follows:

Athena's Teaching Context

Athena has been a teacher for 21 years, 12 of which have been in ESL. She works in an Intensive Language Centre, currently teaching Phase 2 children. The children in her class are from the following language backgrounds:

Arabic: 3 children
Bosnian
Bulgarian
Danish/Swedish
Dinka
Mandarin
Romanian
Serbian/Slovene
Tagalog
Turkish
Vietnamese: 2 children

Athena's Principles & Practices in her Teaching (her own words are italicised)

- Using a whole language approach to teach vocabulary, structures, skills and strategies. *Recycling and revision are very important. It is crucial not to cover too much.* Athena believes that *Students need to be focussed on various language forms, skills and strategies.* There seems to be quite an emphasis on vocabulary. New vocabulary is introduced gradually and is "recycled" using different activities. Athena advises: *Think carefully of the vocabulary you're going to cover that week, stick to the same vocabulary*

and use it in many different ways. Recycling helps to develop students' confidence with the lexical items. Spoken language is presented and practised *in as many different ways as possible*.

- *Speaking is more important than writing.* While Athena believes in the primacy of spoken language, she is sometimes constrained by accountability requirements which mean that she must produce evidence of students' written work. Monitoring and evaluation are necessary, but Athena sees this as an ongoing task carried out by constant observation.
- *Using different groupings and a variety of teaching strategies, such as team teaching.* Groups are monitored for functioning and regrouped when necessary. Usually students at a similar level are grouped together. Athena teaches *to the top level*, then sends them away and re-teaches *to the next level*. Students are involved in a wide range of activities, eg problem-solving, *cooperative learning* in groups and pairs, excursions. Materials are chosen to *reflect the students' level of language ability and understanding of the subject*. Lessons are planned to target specific vocabulary and concepts. Athena feels that lessons always need a goal, and that the goal needs to be examined and re-examined to see if it will develop particular skills.
- In monitoring her own talk, Athena is conscious of using explicit and comprehensible directions, paraphrasing, repetition and emphasis. She believes that *Students need to be exposed to language that is comprehensible and relevant to their own interests and understanding of the world*. She favours using pictures and demonstrations to support talk: *If you don't have something concrete, children will become noisy, specially in Phase 1*. She feels it is important to provide *a variety of language stimuli* and to use *students' own experience and understanding as a stimulus* for their learning: *children need to be interested in what they're doing*". She also thinks that *we do too much talking: teachers should talk less*.
- Encouraging students *to develop and use communication strategies*. Examples of this are repetition, asking for clarification and opinion-sharing. Athena notes that *Students need to be provided with opportunities to participate in communicative and reflective use of the language* and also that they *need to be provided with opportunities to manage their own learning*. During my visits I observed a lesson in which students were involved in sharing their opinions, and Athena was particularly pleased at the way they managed this. To develop their skills, she encourages students to *take risks in language use* and to *take some responsibility for their own learning*.
- Developing students' confidence, eg by giving them responsibility. For example, this can be done by using *reverse psychology*. Athena explained to me how she had given a leadership role to a student who was having some behavioural problems in class, and how well this had worked. Athena also feels that confidence comes from

understanding of, and practice with, the language. It is important not to *stress* the students, but to create *an atmosphere where students feel encouraged to participate and use English.*

- Developing *social conventions* and *manners* in the students. For example, Athena explained one aspect of this to me, *how to speak to adults:*
Look the person in the eye; say their name; wait till they have finished speaking; say 'excuse me.'
The emphasis on 'politeness' was very clear to me in my observations of, and interactions with the class. Athena also associated these spoken social conventions with neatness and presentability of written work, in terms of the impression these make on people who interact with her students. She showed me some beautiful examples of the students' work, and also related a recent incident where a former student had favourably impressed a stranger with his excellent manners.
- Helping the students who need the most help. Athena is very conscious of the different levels and needs of the students. For example, the most able student was given the task of taking messages to other adults. Athena believes that all students have different needs, in terms of time and in terms of the encouragement they need to talk. With some students it may be the opposite; they may need encouragement to be quiet so that others can have a turn.
- When I asked Athena what the most important principle for her was, she said, *Understand the children and where they're at.*

The reasons for regarding Athena as fairly representative of the teachers of children are:

- She made use of practical and multimodal activities.
- She explicitly modelled and discussed with children how they should manage their own learning.
- She emphasised non-linguistic behavioural conventions.

Interestingly, Athena also mentioned the range of English proficiencies and learning styles in her class as something that she dealt with; this set of practices is more typical of the teachers of adults.

Thus the two teachers described here illustrate that, even for the most prototypical teachers of adults and children respectively, there was overlap in some of the practices used in their classes.

The language backgrounds of the teachers

It could be expected that the history of their own second language would have some impact on language teachers' practices and that teachers who had themselves learned a second language would teach differently from those who had not. Indeed one researcher (Numrich 1996) confirmed that the teaching practices used in a teacher's own second language learning do have an effect on that teacher's language teaching practices. Numrich actually found a dual effect in that some of the practices were replicated while others were purposely avoided.

When the language backgrounds of the teachers in this study were considered, interesting variations in teaching practices were identified. Ten teachers in the group had the experience of learning/studying a language other than English (LOTE) beyond childhood. There were eight teachers who had no experience of learning a language other than English. Within these two sub-groups, there was almost an even distribution of teachers of adults and teachers of children.

It was found that the practices of the LOTE-experience teachers differed in two important ways from those used by the non-LOTE group. The LOTE-experience teachers tended to make far more use of practices that recognised the knowledge and experience of the students' home cultures. Discussion and sharing of the students' L1 cultures were more common in the lessons of LOTE-experience teachers. For these teachers, diversity in cultural experiences was an important characteristic of the students and a way to *Recognise who they are and where they are from* (Leng). Other examples of how the students' cultures were incorporated into lessons are provided in the following practices, when the LOTE-experience teacher:

- Asked the students how things might be done in other cultures after explaining the way they were typically done in Australia (Dean).
- Explained how in some eastern European languages and cultures imperative verb forms could be used with a level of politeness that was not possible in English (Graham).
- Encouraged students to provide information about their countries of origin regarding the topic (water resources) being studied (June).

It appears that the LOTE-experience teachers were far more conscious of the experience and knowledge from the students' L1 culture that was available to be utilised. The teachers' awareness of this resource could be attributed to their own experience of having access to additional knowledge through the contact with another culture that is inevitably associated with learning a second language.

In addition, the LOTE-experience teachers showed a greater use of practices that demonstrated sensitivity to the emotional pressures that can be felt by students in their efforts to cope with a new language. These teachers were more likely to value learners' attempts and to encourage them to take risks in using English even when they were tentative about trying. Interestingly, too, the LOTE-experience teachers were more likely to use small group work as a way of reducing the anxiety of the students than were the non-LOTE teachers. One LOTE-experience teacher, for example, explicitly referred to organising activities *Where children work in a group with no pressure (June)*, while another stated that *In the group situation all achieve, no one fails (Graham)*.

The teachers with previous LOTE learning experiences implemented practices that were intended to diminish the level of tension commonly felt by students learning a second language. The personal experience of learning a second language appears to have contributed to the teachers' capacity to empathize with the anxiety that can be felt by second language learners and to have led them to try to do something about it in their lessons.

The length of teaching experience

Research into teachers' practices has found that length of teaching experience does make a difference in what teachers do in their lessons. For example, inexperienced teachers tend to devote more attention to the selection of materials and the organisation of their classes around subject matter activities in what could be described as a 'subject-orientation'. On the other hand, experienced teachers are more responsive to the needs and abilities of the students in what could be seen as a 'student-orientation' (Schempp *et alia*, 1998; Rodriguez and Sjoström, 1995). Russell and Munby (1991) found a similar pattern in their fifteen case studies of teachers where length of teaching experience did affect developments in the teachers' attention to the class, to individual student differences and needs, and to a pedagogic approach that attended to such things..

We decided to relate the length of ESL teaching experience to the practices of teachers in this study. Teachers in the group who were at the extremes in length of teaching experience were chosen for this analysis. The "experienced" group consisted of three teachers who had been teaching ESL students for more than 16 years. Four teachers who had been teaching ESL students for five years or less formed the "inexperienced" group.

When the teaching practices of these two groups of teachers were compared one major difference emerged. In the lessons of the experienced teachers, practices that required the students to take responsibility for the solution of their linguistic/communication problems were common. For example, one experienced teacher (Dean) used the practice of obtaining multiple answers to questions dealing with linguistic matters and requiring students to work out which was correct and then explain why this was so. Two other experienced teachers (Karen, Adele) were careful to place students with different L1s in pairs and groups so that the students themselves had to use their initiative and solve the problem of how to communicate with each other. Significantly, no practices which required students to use this type of independent behaviour (relating specifically to linguistic/communication problems) were utilised by the inexperienced teachers. They seemed more concerned with direct teacher intervention in these matters.

It appears that the experienced teachers recognised that a key aspect of their students' work was that they should develop independence and autonomy when dealing with communication and linguistic difficulties and it was important to give students opportunities to learn and practise such responsibility within language lessons. It seems that the identification and response to this aspect of student language learning requires a level of awareness and expertise that can only be attained through longer teaching experience in the ESL field.

This comparison of the practices of teachers with varying lengths of teaching experience supports the view that the level of attention given to the individual needs of students in classrooms appears to depend on the length of teacher's own teaching experience with the particular type of learner.

Conclusions

Several of the practices mentioned by these teachers, such as those which maintain a supportive classroom environment, would be common to all teachers, although some of the teachers mentioned the very specific needs of their students in this area; those who are refugees, for example.

The emphasis on 'correct' English in classroom practices appears to be very strong among all the teachers. While this may be the case for many teachers of English as a second language, it seems that the teachers in the study set particular store by it. The notions of imparting and expecting students to use 'correct' and 'standard' English appeared to be uncontested. The ways in which 'correct' English is taught and learnt vary among the teachers, with

the teachers of children favouring modelling while the teachers of adults also use much explanation and explicit discussion.

Accountability requirements of external assessment frameworks of language 'competencies' shape many of the practices of teachers of adults, while the teachers of children are somewhat freer in their choices of content and ways of evaluating progress. The practices of the teachers of children give the impression of being more holistic in nature, with greater use of interaction and multimodal approaches to learning. Teachers of children, at least from the evidence gathered here, appear more encouraging of children's other languages.

Finally, there are some differences in practices between groups of teachers which can be ascribed to whether they have learnt a second language and to the length of their ESL teaching experience.

Chapter Three

ESL Teachers' Principles

Marion Milton & Rhonda Oliver

Discovering teachers' principles

In this chapter we discuss the aspect of the research that sought to discover precisely which principles underpin TESOL teachers' pedagogic practices. We also explore whether there are similarities or differences in the type of principles held by the teachers according to the age of their learners, the context in which the teaching was occurring, the teachers' relative professional experience, and their own language backgrounds.

In order to determine teachers' principles various data sources were examined. Repertory grids were analysed for patterns in order to find relationships between actions and reasons and in order to help uncover teachers' guiding principles. For example, Karen identified a strong relationship on her repertory grid between four of her practices of *encouraging students to take risks and have a go, giving and marking students' homework, students writing as a small group, the teacher conducting an error analysis* and her reason: *to help them identify errors*. Once this kind of strong relationship had been identified, the teacher was asked to thematise or provide a word or phrase to describe it. Karen said that *Students have to make mistakes to learn*. This is one of the principles that appears to guide many of her practices.

Iris provides another example. There was a strong relationship for her between the activities of *using group and pair work, getting lots of student input, linking class work to past and future excursions, and correcting the grammar as she writes a student response on the board*, and her reason that *it gives them a chance to create the language as they go along*. The pedagogic principle which Iris deduced from this relationship emerged as: *they need to use language and to create language*.

All the other data were also analysed to be synthesised as the third person account of each teacher. The teachers' accounts of critical incidents in their work often elucidated important principles. Teachers tended to choose an incident that typified an aspect of learning that they felt was crucial to learning a new language. For example, Adele's critical incident was about a student who realised that she wrote the way she spoke and that it was not correct English. Adele indicated that the student would in future monitor

her spoken language. She said, *Her ears can hear the difference* and this related to one of Adele's guiding principles that *students need to be able to hear the difference between correct and incorrect English*.

Similarly, the advice to new teachers written by the teachers on their biodata forms provided further insights into teachers' guiding principles. Several of them wrote that teachers need to be aware of the cultural backgrounds of students and make allowances for them. This embodied a principle that was not easily observable in classroom practices, but nevertheless was considered of utmost importance by the majority of teachers. The teachers described the sort of things they did to take culture into consideration, such as understanding the different attitudes that students' may have toward women and to the role of women in society.

Classifying teachers' principles

Each researcher listed all the principles of each of their teachers, from the confirmed third person accounts and models, then the principles of all the teachers were grouped so that similar ones were put together and classified according to commonalties. This grouping resulted in five classifications or categories. These categories are listed as follows with examples of teacher's particular principles provided:

- How does the learner do the learning? This category relates to how the teacher believes the learners' mental processes function in learning another language. Examples of these principles include: *Breaking information down makes it easier to understand, remember and produce later* (Ngaire); *They need to reason and work it out for themselves* (Dean).
- Who is doing the learning? This category takes into account learner needs and background. The learner as a person, and their affects: *It is important to be aware of cultural differences and make allowances for them* (Karen); *Slow paced learners need lessons that are centred around life skills with no abstractions.* (Marjory).
- How to use the classroom for optimum learning. This category relates to the atmosphere in the classroom. For example: *Peer support helps them feel comfortable to take risks* (Iris); *Positive atmosphere, a non-threatening and secure environment* (Kerry).
- What is being learned/taught? This category relates to language as form, language as use and using correct language. Examples include: *Students need to know the correct forms and uses* (Adele); *Language cannot be separated from context/meaning* (Graham).

- How do I explicitly exercise my role as a teacher? This category of principles relates to monitoring, feeding back and providing input. For example: *Helping them to take responsibility for their own learning* (Dean); *Monitor and reinforce language learning* (Amy)

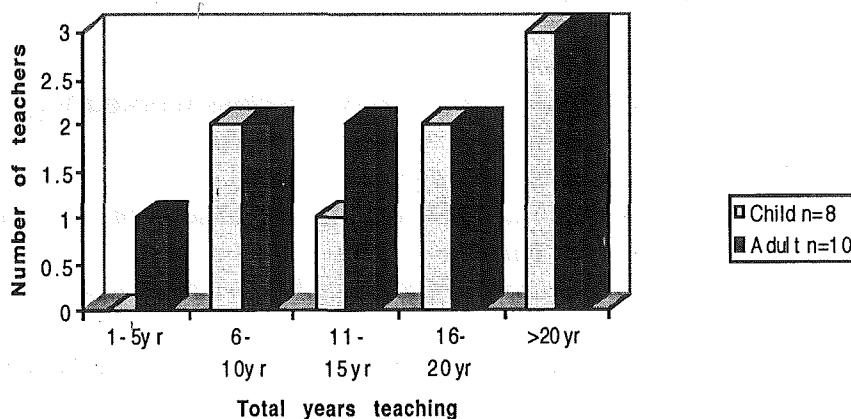
Finding similarities and differences between teachers

Overall there were many similarities between all the teachers in the principles that guided their pedagogic practices, regardless of their teaching circumstance. However, some differences were apparent, although these mostly related to whether the teachers taught adults or children. The factors of situational context, professional experience, and language background seemed to contribute in a small way to the variation that did occur between the teachers.

All the teachers had undertaken professional development in teaching ESL. The majority of teachers also hold specialist qualifications in the TESOL field while the three teachers who do not are all currently undertaking such studies. Also the majority of teachers speak at least one other language. Only two of the eight teachers of adults do not speak another language. Among the teachers of children, half speak another language.

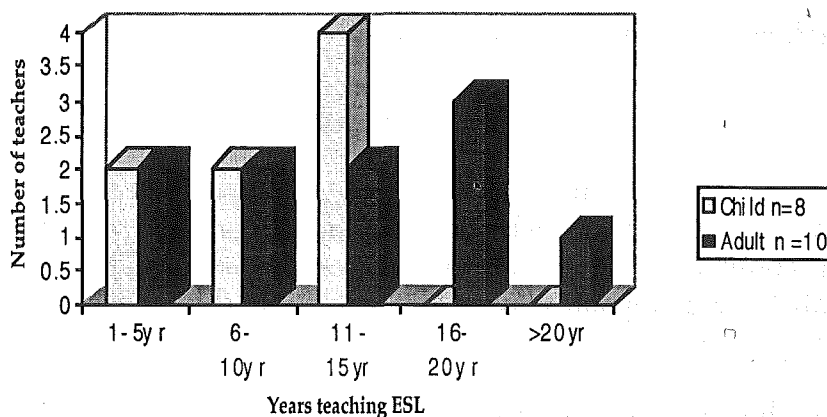
The majority of teachers had at least five years experience teaching ESL with many teachers having more than ten years experience in the particular field. The least experienced teacher in the group had five years overall teaching experience, whereas most had more than ten years and several had twenty or more years teaching experience which included their ESL work. Figure 3.1 summarises their experience:

Figure 3.1. Total teaching experience of teachers of adults and children.



While overall years of teaching experience is similar for teachers of adults and children, teachers of adults had more experience in teaching ESL learners as is indicated in Figure 3.2:

Figure 3.2: Years of experience teaching ESL learners comparing teachers of adults and children



Teachers of adults and children

One of the most common principles for all the teachers, regardless of the age of their learners related to creating a positive, supportive and non-threatening classroom environment. Examples of these occurred under the principle categorised as 'How to use the classroom for optimum learning'. For example:

Teachers of children:

- Provide support for newly arrived and traumatised students (Leng).*
- Positive atmosphere, a non-threatening and secure environment (Kerry).*

Teachers of adults:

- Develop a positive atmosphere (Graham).*
- Indicate support for the students (Dean).*

Most teachers held principles related to the way the class worked together:

- Collaboration: Learning to work together (Mary).*
- Provide activities where children work in a group with no pressure; Everyone needs to join in (June).*
- Establish positive peer relationships (Kerry).*

However, some teachers of adults also mentioned the need to consider class bonding or group dynamics:

- It is important for the class to bond (Iris).*
- Build positive group dynamics (Dean).*
- Important to have dynamics in the class working well (Marjory).*

Class is close knit; need to maintain the bonding including the teacher-student partnership (Nathan).

There were examples from both sets of teachers of the need for them to be aware of cultural differences. For instance, under the category of 'Who is doing the learning?' were the following examples:

Be culturally sensitive. Recognise who they are and where they come from (Leng - teacher of children).

It is important to be aware of cultural differences and make allowances for them (Iris - teacher of adults).

Both sets of teachers also indicated the need to cater for individual difference. However, teachers of children tended to indicate the need to treat learners as individuals and cater for their uniqueness whereas teachers of adults discussed the need to cater for adults as adults and for their different learning styles.

Most teachers described the need to encourage risk taking in students. They also indicated the need to encourage students to be independent learners and take responsibility for their own learning.

Concerning what is taught in the classroom, again there were more similarities than differences between teachers of adults and children. Both groups also felt that it was important for the students to hear and see good models of English and most of the teachers included principles related to the need to focus on form and meaning.

With regard to how teachers saw their roles as teachers, regardless of the age of their learners, the teachers included the necessity for good modelling, assessment and feedback to students. However, two teachers of adults indicated that they saw their role more as a facilitator than an up-front teacher and two indicated that part of their role was to encourage and show interest in their students' use of English out in the community. Also, two teachers of adults described two roles of a teacher in ways that differed from the role descriptions of all the other teachers. Graham said that: *The teacher needs to be an entertainer, motivator, performer*, while Karen indicated that she needed to: *Use paralinguistics including tone and body language to increase access to meaning*.

The most apparent difference between the teachers of children and the teachers of adults was the factor of behaviour management. While six of the eight teachers of children asserted principles related to this factor, none of the teachers of adults did. Most of these principles could be identified in relation to the focus upon subject matter or 'What is being taught?' and they included the following:

Develop acceptable behaviour (Sue).

Social conventions and manners (Athena).

(Reinforcing rules for) social interaction goes hand in hand with language (Peta).

*Positive and appropriate social and classroom behaviour (Leng),
Social skills, e.g. tolerance, patience; Socio-cultural rules, e.g. valuing
what others have to say (June).*

However, they also occurred within the focus upon 'How I exercise my role as teacher?', for example: *Monitor on-task behaviour (Mary).*

It was noticeable that some teachers of children mentioned the need for enjoyment or happiness in the classroom such as: *Students need to feel happy and secure in order to learn English (Sue) and Make sure both teacher and learners enjoy the learning experience (Mary).* In contrast only one teacher of adults mentioned students' happiness and this was for a very different reason than that suggested by the teachers of children: *Students are the first ELICOS paying clients for AMES thus there is a need to keep them happy (Nathan).*

Situational context

Very few differences were apparent according to the context or system within which the teachers operated. However, most of the teachers of adults had recent professional development on using a competency based approach and most also revealed principles related to teaching competencies. Therefore the system requirement that students be able to pass the English competency tests was reflected in the principles of the teachers: *Competencies are part of my job; Getting through the competencies (Graham); Students need to pass the competencies (Karen).*

Professional experience

It was apparent that further study and professional development in the TESOL area influenced both the teachers' practices and principles. In their descriptions of the reasons for their actions they used the type of terminology that comes out of such courses. For example, teachers described how they used a *communicative approach*. They also used terms such as *focus of form, cognitive processing, risk taking and needs analysis*. Such terms suggest the teachers' awareness of concepts prevalent in recent second language acquisition literature. At times the way such concepts were interpreted in their classroom practice varied to some degree from definitions in the literature, but this demonstrated the pragmatic way teachers adapt their beliefs to match the actual demands of classroom practice.

One such example comes from Dean who described how he plays music while students are doing seat work. He says that music helps the students to relax and think clearly and describes it as *My own version of suggestopaedia*. Like the other teachers, he has also adapted theory to fit in with his own

beliefs about language learning and how these are translated into principles to fit the realities of his classroom.

Language background

Like professional experience, language learning experiences also contributed, at least in a small way, to shaping the principles that the teachers employed. For those teachers who had learned a second language beyond childhood some reported that they used this experience to inform their current practices. For example, Iris has learned several languages and believes that "*you need to understand to learn*". She therefore uses synonyms, repeats phrases slowly, writes all new words on the board and makes sure that everyone understands.

Adele has been learning Italian for some time but said that only one of the four teachers she has had was effective at teaching language. As a result of her negative experiences, Adele believes it is very important to *keep everyone interested and busy* and she makes sure that *no-one ever sits with nothing to do*. Adele enlists student input into choosing topics and provides material on each topic to suit different levels of ability.

As originally a non-English-speaking migrant himself, Dean is aware of *the psychological pressures of learning a new language and integrating into a new culture*. He believes, therefore, that teachers need to be *non-critical, patient and appreciate different rates of acquisition*.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter presented the outcomes of our research into ESL teachers' principles. It was found that:

- The principles which the teachers voiced could be categorised into five main points of focus ranging from how they believed language was learned to how the teachers saw their role as a teacher.
- It appeared that most of the principles that guided their practice were pragmatic principles, that is principles which, for them, were particularly sensitive to their day to day classroom realities.
- It was also apparent that very specific situational factors such as the characteristics of their learners and assessment constraints influenced some of the principles held.
- Other factors, such as professional development and derived knowledge of theory and actual teaching experience appeared to have some influence upon principles, but to a lesser degree.
- Overall it seems that the development of teachers' principles do not necessarily precede practice, but can also **emerge from** what happens during lessons over time and in relation to perceived opportunities and constraints in the situations in which they work.

Chapter Four

The Relationship Between Teachers' Pedagogic Principles and Their Classroom Practices

Michael P. Breen

Introduction

Do teachers of English as second language put into practice the principles which they identify as underlying their classroom pedagogy? More broadly, are the teachers' ways of working with ESL learners congruent with that particular set of principles which constitutes what may be described as their language teaching philosophy? This chapter addresses these issues by examining the data obtained during the four focused interviews with the eighteen teachers in the study and from researcher observations of three of their lessons.

In research devoted to the investigation of the beliefs and pedagogic principles of language teachers much of the work is based upon questionnaires or interviews which require teachers to provide a rationale for the ways they work in classrooms and, occasionally, their own descriptions of how they prefer to work. Tracing the links between teachers' stated pedagogic principles and their actual practices in the classroom is unusual in the research on language teachers. The present study aimed to investigate such links by working with the teachers in ways that explicitly traced the interface between teacher thinking and action. Figure 4.1 of the following page summarises the sequence of data-gathering procedures and indicates that teachers' identification of principles were initially triggered and later refined by reflections on their own teaching practices which were also observed by the researcher. The links between teacher thinking and action were constantly explored in the investigative dialogue (for details of the research procedure see Chapter 1).

Figure 4.1: Tracing the relationships between classroom practices and pedagogic principles.

Observation 1:	Researcher focuses on practices adopted by the teacher in terms of their ways of working and tasks required of the students.
Interview 1:	Teacher describes what they did and what the students did during the lesson. Teacher then identifies c10 of their key classroom practices which they regard as particularly important. Some of these derived directly from the lesson, others were those that the teacher claimed to be an important part of their usual classroom practice.
Interview 2:	The classroom practices data forms the basis for this interview which uncovers the teacher's reasons for such practices. Tracing the strength of the relationships between practices and reasons on a grid, the teacher's underlying constructs of their teaching are deduced.
Observation 2:	Researcher focuses upon a practical aspect of the teacher's work identified by the teacher for discussion together in interview 3.
Interview 3:	From the relationships between practices and their reasons for them derived during Interview 2, the teacher explains or thematises these relationships in terms of those significant principles which appear to guide their pedagogy. Researcher and teacher discuss the practical aspect of the observed lesson.
Observation 3: (Video-recorded)	Teacher identifies key features/incident(s) in lesson in order to describe and discuss these with the researcher.
Interview 4:	Researcher shows teacher a model which indicates the principles derived from interview 3 and how the principles appear to be prioritised by the teacher. Teacher changes, adds to, or confirms accuracy of the model. Teacher discusses with the researcher key features/incidents in video-recorded lesson. Researcher explores with the teacher how the lesson itself reveals the principles on which the teacher bases her/his work. Researcher gives to the teacher a 1-3 page written description of that teacher based upon both the particular principles they have prioritised and some of the main or recurring practices which were observed in lessons.
Subsequent to Interview 4:	Having read the written description, the teacher later makes changes, adds, or confirms its accuracy in consultation with the researcher.
Subsequent to All Data-gathering:	Researcher draws up a profile the teacher's principles and, alongside each principle, indicates those practices which the teacher has identified as most directly expressing their principle in action. This profile is based upon all previous data obtained with the teacher.

Given that principles were derived initially and mostly from instances of observed practice and subsequently used as a window to interpret later examples of practice, we would expect a high degree of congruence between them. Turning this assumption into a more precise question, we can ask: do teachers' day to day practices correlate with such principles in the sense of each implying the other? If we found a strong relationship, we may therefore be able to predict a good part of a teacher's repertoire of classroom practices from the particular permutation of principles which they attribute to themselves - *and* vice versa. To confirm whether or not this is the case, the present chapter will examine the relationship with reference to three particular questions:

1. Do individual teachers' pedagogic principles correlate with their observed classroom practices?
2. Is there a correlation between a particular **principle** which is shared across the whole sample of teachers and the specific practices through which they express or implement the principle?
3. Is there a correlation between a particular classroom **practice** adopted by the whole sample of teachers and the principles which motivate it?

Questions 2 and 3 address the possibility of ESL teachers revealing a common pattern of correlations between particular principles and particular practices. If this was the case, we could deduce that ESL teachers, regardless of the differences between students whom they teach, share a collective pattern of principle and practice relationships. Again, we might assume this to be the case given similarities in the subject they teach and the language learning process which they are facilitating. In addition, they are members of a particular branch of the teaching profession which, like other professions, has developed its own culture and beliefs and they are likely to share similar experiences of professional development which will have been based upon currently dominant theories, research and exemplification of language teaching practice.

However, it may also be the case that the individual teacher may reveal a principle and practice relationship based upon very particular experiences and personal interpretations of theory and research thereby expressing particular subtleties which may be hidden in a broader analysis across a sample of teachers.

The principles and practices of the individual teacher

Do individual teacher's pedagogic principles correlate with their observed classroom practices? Does a guiding principle imply a specific practice or practices, and vice versa? To begin to explore this issue we will compare four teachers from the larger sample, two of whom teach adult students and two of whom teach children. The comparison will be based upon the description of each teacher by the researcher who worked with them. A draft of this description was originally given to the teacher to amend, extract or add to so that the teacher accepted it as a fair account of them. The comparison will also be based on any additional observed practices which the researcher may not have referred to directly in the description.

Belinda is one of the most experienced teachers in the sample having worked with adult ESL learners for 22 years (average ESL teaching experience across the sample is 11.4 years not including other teaching experience). This is the researcher's description of Belinda:

Belinda's class was seated in a rectangular formation with one side of the rectangle occupied by the whiteboard and a couple of desks used to place her notes and other equipment needed for the lesson. Belinda used the position at the front of the class a great deal during the lesson and made frequent use of the whiteboard during her teaching. When the students worked in pairs, Belinda circulated around the rectangle usually remaining inside the desks.

The contents of the lessons observed were as follows:

1. Students working on worksheet practising spelling rules associated with long/short vowels.
Students filling in Enrolment Form.
Dictation passage dictated by Belinda.
Whole class listening activity using tape of a telephone appointment at a doctor's surgery.
2. Further practice on spelling rules and suffixes.
Memory exercise where medical objects are displayed and identified.
Listening activity from a tape of a doctor/patient conversation.
3. Collaborative whiteboarding of Recount, using Lady Di's car crash.
Worksheet on uses of 'for, since' and 'already, yet'.
4. Recount writing about Father's Day.
Recount (oral/written) about class excursion where photographs were distributed around the class.

A consistent feature of Belinda's teaching is her close attention to linguistic detail in her lessons, for example, particular words are often treated in detail through miming and whiteboarding, pronunciation carefully rehearsed and drilled with the whole class, attention drawn to structure and spelling rules affecting the words.

The key principles that emerged from Belinda's discussions of her teaching practices were:

1. A major role and responsibility of the teacher is to provide appropriate and correct English language models for students.
2. The teacher's modelling role incorporates the adoption of a direct and deductive methodology towards most aspects of students' learning. This procedure saves time and also responds to adult students' demands for clear and logical generalisations that can be applied to their learning of English.
3. The explicit presentation of rules/generalisations allows students to apply their understandings and so become independent and autonomous learners in the future.
4. Out-of-class experiences and contacts (excursions, coffee breaks, etc.) are a significant component of Belinda's teaching and the major way in which the affective dimensions of students' learning can be addressed.
5. Students need to be shown/given strategies of learning that they can use as independent learners. These strategies include being able to segment and divide tasks into manageable pieces and applying techniques of memory, repetition and writing.

Particular observed practices employed by Belinda in the classroom, in addition to those referred to the above description, included the following:

- Student choral repeating of Belinda's inputs
- Drilling of pronunciation.
- Student multiple-listening to audio-tape.
- Repeating students' oral responses and providing further models or reformulations as feedback.
- Focused emphasis upon particular vocabulary items.
- Students copying words from the board. ("Don't let the little words go. If you don't learn them now, it will get harder later").
- Explanations of rules, generalisation, exceptions.
- Demonstrations on the board of how spelling rules work.

- Recapitulation of aspects of previous lesson & homework.
- Memory testing.
- Pairs/groups used to practice language already mastered.

In general terms it may be fair to summarise Belinda's principles and related practices as being primarily focused upon both the formal nature of English and students' cognitive processes during learning. In other words, Belinda sees explicit attention to formal features as a central principle guiding her own practices in addition to making the formal nature of language as manageable as possible for students to internalise and remember through the activities she requires of them.

Like Belinda, Iris also teaches adult ESL students and has been doing so for about 7 years. She is one of those teachers in the sample who have *relatively* less experience in the particular field. There follows the researcher's written description of Iris:

During the time I spent in Iris's class I noticed that some of the students seemed to have a limited grasp of English, while others could carry on a conversation. Iris always took time to make sure that everyone understood what she was saying, through repetition, using a synonym along with a new word and writing all new words on the board as she said them. She often pronounced the new words several times, both slowly and at the regular speed, explained the meaning and demonstrated several usages. She explained to me that she wanted everyone to be able to understand, even if they had limited English, so she took the time to explain.

Iris also displayed personal interest in her students and how their use of English out in the community was developing. For example she explained how a person could go about taking out a book from a local library. She was also very accepting of student responses and never told them they were wrong. She said something like, "You would be understood, but a better way to say/write that would be..." . She modelled the correct form of written and spoken English frequently.

The above factors were typical of the three observed lessons, including the videoed lesson:

- Lesson 1: Followup on language experience excursion to the library. Modelled writing on the board. Students copied sentences then wrote their own. Emphasis on using correct grammar. Explanations given for why one form is preferred over another.

- Lesson 2: Preparation for the language experience outing. Reading and following a map of Perth city. Emphasis on giving and following directions. Words used were: turn left, right; at the next corner; after the bus stop; beside the church.
- Lesson 3: Writing up the language experience. Emphasis on sequencing and the use of appropriate words to signal time order (eg First, then, after that).

Iris believes that the most important principle that guides her teaching is that students need to have an opportunity to create language and to use the language.

Iris believes that the learning has to be relevant and that in order to encourage participation she needs to build some prior knowledge of the context. Therefore they go on excursions, use real life materials such as a map of Perth city, and Iris models the language orally and on the board.

Iris also believes it is very important to be aware of cultural differences and to make allowances for them, and to be sensitive to the students' feelings as some students have suffered traumas in the recent past and "are in need of TLC". She therefore encourages peer support in class and feels "it is important for the class to bond" so that students feel comfortable to take risks. To aid this process, she incorporates lots of group work and small projects in which students have to rely on and support each other.

She also believes it is important for them to have "the metalanguage to be able to discuss and understand the structure of the language" and why one form is preferred over another. For example, a student asked someone if a word in a sentence was an adjective or a noun. The reply was that it was a noun. He said "Are you sure its not an adjective?" At which point Iris came along and clarified the matter by stating "It's an adjectival noun". The majority of students know and understand the grammatical terms and feel this knowledge helps them to learn English.

The Adult Migrant Education Service has moved to competency based teaching, and when I asked Iris about a number of things that she taught while I was observing, she indicated that they were needed for the competency test, so it appeared to me that the course was competency driven. However, Iris felt that the competencies were not the central element in her teaching. She indicated that many of things she teaches don't relate to the competencies she has to test, but are related to helping students make their way around in a new country and to make themselves understood, eg giving and following directions, using comparatives and superlatives when shopping. However, the students need to pass the competency test before they can advance to the next Certificate level, so much of the work is included because it relates to competencies. Even so, Iris always tries to make it relevant to real life and contextualises grammar by using a language experience type of approach, by linking class work to past or future excursions and life skills.

The researcher observed the following practices employed by Iris in the classroom in addition to those mentioned in the foregoing description:

- Repetition and speaking slowly with new input.
- Writing all new words on the board, explaining them, providing synonyms and demonstrating different uses of each.
- Modelling orally and on the board using different coloured markers for verb inflections.
- Explanations relating to tense and form class of words.
- Modelling on board the structure of written genres.
- Using a variety of data resources: videos, audio-tapes & workbook exercises.
- Relating vocabulary, grammar and common use of English to students' daily experiences & challenges - e.g. taking a book out of the local library.
- Students brainstorm ideas & suggestions to be written on the board.
- Whole group discussion on topics.
- A great deal of small group and partner interaction tasks.
- Asking for students opinions and when they wanted a break.
- Pairing more advanced learners with one who has less developed English.
- Asking about student's personal lives: e.g. a sick relative.
- Accepts all students' responses, rarely overtly correcting them.
- Tasks in which students work together towards a common/shared outcome.

Summarising in general terms, Iris's principles and practices reveal a strong interest in where the students are coming from in terms of background knowledge and experiences and also in terms of their contributions during language learning work. She shares with Belinda a concern with making the language manageable for learning and adopts a wide range of practices in how she presents it in order to achieve this. While Belinda is very keen for the students to master the language in efficient ways, Iris appears to give some priority to contextualising formal aspects of the language in relation to the students' immediate and longer term social needs. She also appears to differ from Belinda in the extent she relies upon student contributions of various kinds, both to the class as a whole and to each other during group tasks.

In what ways might Belinda and Iris think and act, as teachers of adult ESL learners, in ways similar to or different from teachers of child learners? Again we will consider two teachers to represent the latter group. Peta has 12 years' experience of teaching ESL - almost exactly the same number of

years as the average for the whole sample of teachers. The researcher's written description of Peta was as follows:

Peta has been an ESL teacher for twelve years. She works part-time in an Intensive Language Centre, where she teaches Phase 1 children. Her students are from 13 different language backgrounds

Some of the principles and practices Peta follows are:

Be flexible!!!!; Seize the moment.

Language and experiences can be either planned or unplanned. Some of the best ones can be the unplanned ones.

Discover what the children can do and give them the scope to take the next step.

Children *need to extend themselves*. They *don't like to be wrong*. They should be encouraged to *look for errors* and will be *more objective about others' errors* than their own. It depends on the children's level to what extent errors on their written work should be marked. For spoken errors, Peta repeats what the children have said with correction incorporated.

A little bit goes a long way. Revisit/recycle the language many times.

As a Phase 1 teacher, Peta introduces but also recycles language. Using the language in many different ways allows *understanding and mastery*. Language skills should be reinforced *in a lot of real ways*. Language can be revisited:

- *orally through listening and speaking activities*
- *in written form through reading and writing activities*
- *through using different visuals*
- *non verbally, ie expressing ideas in art, drama, music*

In Peta's case, revisiting language is quite a complex issue, as she only has the class for two days a week and another teacher is with them for the rest of the time.

Relate verbal and non-verbal activities (experiences). Use themes.

Language is not an isolated phenomenon; *there's always an activity that the language is hanging on., always something visual happening so that children can understand better*. For example, language can be related to art, students can talk and write about photos. Language and experiences need to be "real". *Activities are structured to focus on and elicit language forms or functions*. Activities should be *open-ended*. Peta referred me to a principle she had found in a textbook: "ESL students learn English best when they are provided with opportunities to participate in communicative and reflective use of the language in a wide range of activities." Peta showed me several principles she endorsed in this textbook, which she described as *very much on the ball*.

Encourage children to work both in groups/pairs and individually.

Children should be encouraged to cooperate with each other to learn. This fosters social interaction and social skills, peer teaching and a "less threatening situation". Social interaction *goes hand in hand with language*.

Small groups/classes allow for:

- *monitoring of individuals.*
- *timely and individual feedback to students.*
- *individualising and adaptation of activities/programs to many levels.* There is a range of children but they are all learning English.
- *more teacher-child contact and more teacher accessibility*
- *think time for children to process language*
- *risk-taking*
- *time for children to adjust to the new school, country, culture, language.*
- *everyone to be kept involved, at their own level. They could be talking, - or they could be just observing.*

Peta's textbook said: "ESL students learn English best when they are exposed to language that is comprehensible and relevant to their own interests and understanding of the world around them."

Teachers need to be sensitive/supportive and understanding of past experiences.

Encourage the children to *have a feeling of self-worth and a positive self-esteem*. Teachers are teaching *the whole child: language, social, physical, emotional, etc..* Again Peta referred me to a textbook principle: "ESL students learn English best when they are treated as individuals with their own needs and interests."

Being in an ILC is a positive experience for the students.

Children in an ILC are more *confident to have a go because they are with kids that are similar*. ILC children are *different from mainstream children*. The ILC is like a *cocoon*.

However, we're part of the system.

The Intensive Language Centre is *attached to a primary school*, with its consequent *routines and socialisation mechanisms*. Peta mentioned the *practicalities of institutional life and time constraints*. She noted that *both children and teacher need a break*. However, from what I observed in her classroom, the children seemed to need to be encouraged to take a break at recess and lunchtime, and looked like they would have been happy to keep working! When I commented on this she told me that this was indeed the case.

When I asked Peta what was most important to her, she said that *flexibility* would have to be very high on the list.

The researcher observed some practices adopted by Peta in addition to those identified in the above description. These included:

- On arrival in the morning, students greet each other and have brief exchanges in their own languages.
- On arrival students asked to recall the days of the week in English.
- New arrivals placed near someone with a similar language background.
- Avoids contractions in own speech when inputting to whole class.
- Provides initial sounds of words as cue (e.g. 'pr' for 'protect')
- Mimes the meaning of certain words.
- Uses photographs, pictures, story maps, as visual support.
- Students look for grammatical errors in each others' written answers.
- Students encouraged to "have another go".
- Reinforces class rules about one person talking at a time.

Peta, like a number of the teachers working with children, does not see herself as only focusing upon their learning of English. She shares with her colleagues in schools and the teachers of adults an attention to the longer term needs of her students, although the longer terms needs of the adults and those of children appear to be quite distinct. Peta's principles and practices often address the social nature of learning and acting in the school context because she is conscious of the specific requirements upon students once they enter the mainstream. She relies a good deal on group tasks particularly their potentially collaborative nature that enables students to work in cooperative ways. She also supports language input with a range of non-verbal cues and embeds students' language work within broader early-learning activities and content. In general terms, Peta's priorities in both principles and practices appear to be to address and involve the students' linguistic, emotional and, especially, their social needs. However, she also focuses in a range of ways upon quite precise features of the language and appears keen for students to notice and master these.

The final illustrative example is Leng, also a teacher of children but having less experience than Peta as a teacher of ESL in particular. Leng has worked for five years in an Intensive Language Centre. The researcher working with her provided this written description:

Leng was exposed to a variety of languages in both her home and early school experiences. While English is her predominant language she describes herself as having an intermediate level of proficiency in Cantonese and minimal proficiency in Hokkien and Mandarin. During her early school years she was also exposed to Malay and Arabic, and French at high school, but she says she has now forgotten most of these.

From my observations it seems that her own language learning experiences and cultural background make her particularly sensitive to the needs of individual students in her class. It is also interesting that her 'critical incident' described the experiences of one of her current students as she adjusted to Australia and worked to overcome the trauma of settling into a new country.

The "individual" appears to play an important part in the principles governing Leng's teaching. I saw her use tasks that were useful for developing both the children's English language and their sense of self-awareness and self-esteem. She also encourages respect for each other and reinforced "positive behaviour" - a reflection perhaps of the developmental level of her students. Leng also described the reasons for some of her activities as "catering for individual differences and difficulties". Through our discussions, Leng came to label this aspect of her teaching as providing the opportunity for "individualised learning". Certainly from my observations I saw her extend and challenge the 'advanced' children, while at the same time supporting the learning of the less capable children.

It was also interesting to see how this support and extension was provided. At times it was from Leng herself, but in many instances it came about in other ways. One way was by peer support. Leng often managed the class so that the children worked collaboratively in pairs or groups. If they had difficulties they were encouraged to "ask someone else". Another way the children overcame problems or met new challenges for themselves was through the strategies promoted in the class such as 'risk taking', 'cognitive processing' (problem solving - "working it out for themselves") and more general language learning strategies. Leng also suggested that she promoted the use of all these strategies by employing open-ended tasks in her teaching.

This 'development of independence' emerged as the cornerstone of Leng's teaching. She suggested the students needed to be able to be independent so that they could take responsibility for their own learning as she felt that having language/literacy skills was not sufficient to ensure success in mainstream classes.

This is not to say that Leng ignored literacy & numeracy skills, rather these were taught within a language development framework. She often developed skills in the four macro areas by using known vocabulary or reinforcing new language. I saw this applied equally in listening and speaking tasks, as well as writing and reading tasks. Hence even her skills development work had a real "language focus".

Another key principle contributing to Leng's approach to teaching was evaluation. This included both the evaluation of the students - so that she could recognise their individual differences, and an evaluation of the teaching tasks - so that she could assess whether or not she was catering for these differences. Thus in a very cyclic way

her evaluation process informed her not only about her students, but also about her own teaching.

Leng was also observed to adopt particular practices of the following kinds:

- Selects tasks for group and pair work that students can work on without supervision.
- Provides a wide range of tasks covering discussions, writing, reading, information gap, problem-solving, etc.
- Sets tasks that enable students to achieve and “feel good” about themselves and to appreciate they knew and could do different things.
- Gives instructions, demonstrates task procedures, checks understanding before, during and on completion of tasks.
- Students encouraged to share & discuss background knowledge.
- Organises peer support activities.
- Encourages collaborative work.
- Accepts contributions of all the students at their own levels.
- Provides verbal and other rewards for appropriate classroom behaviour.
- Continually checks to make sure students know what they are doing, how they’re doing it, and their outputs.
- Provides regular feedback.

Leng shares with Peta principles and practices that address the broader objective of preparing her students to meet the demands of mainstream learning. She also relies a good deal upon group and pair activities that encourage collaboration and mutual support among students. Leng and Peta also share a sensitivity to the differences between their students. However, for Leng, the progress and achievement of the individual learner is clearly a high priority. A guiding principle appears to be to encourage independence and responsibility for one’s own learning and several of her prevailing practices are likely to convey this message to her students. Being particularly alert to the individual’s effort in learning, providing a diversity of task types, and recurrent monitoring of individual understanding and progress are practices of Leng that exemplify such a priority.

We can now return to the first question raised at the start of this chapter: Do **individual** teacher’s pedagogic principles correlate with their observed classroom practices? The foregoing, relatively brief sketches selected from the data on the four teachers help to illustrate a pattern that applies to all the teachers in the study. The teachers shared some principles but not others. Similarly, some practices were common but not others. Each individual teacher expressed their own priorities among a set of principles which

represented a personal configuration of guiding principles. This configuration was expressed and turned into action in the classroom through a particular repertoire of things which they did and things which they required their students to do. In essence, it appears that **an individual teacher's principles and practices are internally coherent although they may be different from another teacher's in both emphasis and relationship**. The actual relationship between principles and practices for each individual teacher appears to be both integrated and relatively unique. On the surface, from the researcher's or other outsider's points of view, it may be hard to recognise a clear correlation in terms of a particular principle implying very specific practices - and vice versa. However, the data strongly suggest that individual teachers act in ways that they regard as consistent with their own principles.

The above conclusions concerning the individual teacher may not be surprising given the diversity of the prior teaching experiences and the perceived differences in the learning groups for which they were responsible. On the other hand, all the teachers are working with ESL learners and have received some form of professional development in this particular field and many of them are working in quite similar teaching contexts. We may therefore expect that the 18 teachers **as a group** are likely to reveal an overall pattern of relationships between their principles and practices that will be less idiosyncratic.

From a shared principle to particular practices

Is there a correlation between a particular principle which is shared across the whole sample of teachers and the specific practices through which they express or implement the principle? To explore this question, we will consider in turn two of the principles which the teachers most often identified as underlying their classroom work. The first, although sometimes voiced by the teachers in different terms, can be summarised as: *taking account of individual differences between students and/or the specific characteristics of individual students*.

Not all the teachers in the study identified this principle as guiding their work, but many did and some regarded it as a high priority in their pedagogy. Figure 4.2 on the following page lists all those practices which the teachers identified as implementing this principle. It reveals that, across the sample of teachers, over 30 seemingly different classroom practices were motivated or justified by a concern with individual differences.

A reading of the listed practices reveals that, although some may be similar in nature, the majority appear to be quite different despite being identified by the teachers with a particular concern for individual differences. The range of practices in Figure 4.2 make clear that most of the teachers differentially operationalised this concern in the actions they undertook or required of their students in classroom work.

Figure 4.2: Observed teachers' practices identified with the teachers' stated principle of accounting for individual differences.

Practices of teachers of adults

- Shows interest in students' personal lives; e.g. asked about a student's relative who was sick.
- Accepts all students' responses without saying they're wrong: "You would be understood, but a better way to say that is"
- Integrates within lessons items needed for competencies to be covered in the term.
- Assesses students individually when they say they are ready.
- Goes from individual to individual during desk work to check understanding or correctness.
- Makes worksheets on same topic but at different levels.
- Links vocabulary/concepts back to students' culture/experience. (e.g. 'gnome': do they have similar creatures in their culture?).
- Models orally and on board as visual support.
- Uses colours to mark inflections of words on board.
- Uses variety of resources: video, tapes, & workbook exercises.
- Accompanies oral input with written, pictorial, diagrammatic, input using colour coding.
- Uses videos, real experiences, tapes, gesture, mime, groupwork.
- Listens to everyone, asks their opinions. asks when they want a break.
- Incompleted homework, inability to do a task, or being late to class not admonished by the teacher(s).
- Pairs stronger person with one with less developed English..
- Negotiates breaks and outings.
- Explains detailed rules, exceptions, generalisations
- Much input to whole class, especially feedback when groups reporting back.
- Chooses topic that is seen as relevant to students' daily lives ('fast foods').
- Corrects sentences in students' writing.
- Uses students' names to illustrate comparative/superlative forms of adjectives.
- Chooses topics that are 'jazzy/groovy' to suit 18-20 age group.
- Video replay of students' own oral presentations.
- Adopts informal, non-authoritarian manner.

continued

- Explains how a person could take a book from the local library.
- Gets feedback from students on their community involvement (e.g. conversations with other parents at their children's school).

Practices of teachers of children

- Encourages risk-taking; 'having a go'.
- Values learners' different attempts.
- Provides much positive feedback to all contributions from students.
- Uses humour in approaching / talking about individual students.
- Extends the contributions of more advanced students & organises peer-support activities so more advanced help less advanced students.
- Modifies program to work at appropriate level for each student's needs.
- Provides individual attention as required.
- Encourage students to share & discuss background knowledge.
- Students encouraged to input about their countries of origin (e.g. about water supply).
- Public attention given to a student - addressing by name & praising him.
- Assesses students informally during desk work in each lesson to check understanding of the language &/or concepts.
- Constantly circulates around class working with each learner.
- Checks students' understanding & production to make sure students know what they are doing & also provides feedback.

There appeared to be a partial variation between teachers of adults as compared with teachers of children in how individual differences were articulated. Not all the teachers of adults regarded attention to individual differences as a high priority, whilst most of the teachers of children did. Whilst sharing an alertness to the emotional experiences of new arrivals, both in terms of the conditions they may have left behind them and the challenge of becoming members of a new culture, teachers of adults tended to see difference in terms of cognitive aspects of language such as proficiency levels and learning styles. Teachers of children, on the other hand, regarded ESL children as a distinct group from mainstream non-ESL students with additional emotional and educational needs that were assumed by the teachers as specific to each child. Therefore some of the variation in practices adopted by the two groupings of teachers may be explained by the age of the students whom they teach. Nevertheless, across the whole sample, practices claimed to take account of individual differences reveal a diverse pattern.

In order to confirm such a diversity, we can consider a second commonly articulated principle and trace the actions the teachers undertook in

honouring it in during their lessons. Again, although expressed in a range of ways, many teachers asserted the pedagogic principle of *enabling their students to remember and recall new information (of any kind)*. In other words, the teacher should maximise the likelihood that what is to be learned will be made easier for students to store in memory either by their own actions or those of the teacher. Figure 4.3 identifies such actions observed during the lessons of the sample of teachers.

Figure 4.3: Observed teachers' practices identified with the teachers' stated principle of enabling students to remember and recall new information.

Practices of teachers of adults

- At start of lesson explains explicitly form & functions of language to be focused on.
- Exemplifies appropriate vocabulary/ sentences working step by step from word to sentence.
- Provides and explains handouts which list & exemplify vocabulary & sentence or utterance types.
- Students encouraged to write down oral input from the teacher and supportive visual input from the board.
- Reviews previous lesson at start of current lesson by hearing input from students.
- Students undertake homework for consolidation of the lesson.
- Students told to mark with highlighters any problems identified in handout.
- Students advised to write things down that they'll need in later dialogue/role play activity.
- Students encouraged to chorally repeat & drill pronunciation.
- Students do dictation.
- Requires repeated listening to tape.
- Gives memory test of particular objects dealt with in previous topic..
- Repeats new input & students orally rehearse it.
- Students share oral responses/ dialogues with whole class after group task.
- Teacher uses repetition and emphatic intonation on focused input.
- Provides synonyms alongside new word.
- Writes all new words on board.
- Explains meaning & several usages of new word.
- Makes explicit links to homework/ recapitulates previous lesson.

Practices of teachers of children

- Provides opportunities to hear & practice correct usage.
- Points out recurrence in new input material of previously learned vocabulary ('metamorphosis'; 'proboscis').

continued

- Encourages students to use previously learned words in new activity.
- Uses mainstream content but calls upon students' knowledge of concepts from L1.
- Monitors students' understanding and production.

It needs to be emphasised that the listing refers only to those practices which teachers identified with students' memory processes. Other principles and practices were related to other cognitive processes assumed to be involved in language learning, such as attention, internalisation or accommodation, and understanding or comprehension, etc.

Although the data derive from 10 teachers of adults as compared with 8 teachers of children, the former adopted both more practices and a wider diversity of practices which they claimed to address students' memory processes. Again, **some** practices appear to be similar, but the overall pattern of diversity of action which was earlier revealed in relation to a particular principle is confirmed here, and particularly by the adult data. The answer to the second question which is the focus of this chapter appears to be that, among this group of teachers, **there is not a clear correlation between a shared principle and a particular set of classroom practices.** A principle shared among a group of teachers is turned into action through a range of different practices.

However, a further pattern seems to be revealed by comparing the practices listed in Figures 4.2 and 4.3. Of the 24 practices in Figure 4.3 relating to enabling students to remember and recall new information from the data only about 6 appear very similar to practices identified earlier as teacher actions that aimed to account for individual differences. This pattern is confirmed if we trace practices motivated by other shared principles in the data. Of course, whether or not a principle is shared across the group is a matter of degree and some principles were common only to a few of the teachers. But the pattern holds true for those principles that were shared by the majority of the group. In other words, the apparent diversity of practices disguises a degree of correlation between a particular principle and associated practices. Across the sample of teachers, **a shared principle will be realised through a cluster of practices which will be mostly different in type and permutation from another cluster of practices realising a different shared principle.** Within the seeming diversity, therefore, a measure of coherence between a principle and how it is put into practice seems to exist.

A further and complementary way of uncovering the pattern of relationships between teachers' conceptualisations of their pedagogy and their actions in the classroom is to look at the other side of the coin, so to

speak. Here we can identify from the data a common classroom **practice** and trace the principles which the teachers regarded as their key justifications for it.

From a common practice to particular principles

Here we will address the third focus question of this chapter: is there a correlation between a particular classroom practice which was observed in the work of the whole sample of teachers and the principle which motivated it? In order to explore this question, we can begin with a very common practice which was observed in virtually every classroom and, at some point, in almost every lesson in the study. Perhaps due to the impact in recent years of aspects of communicative language teaching and to professional development programmes influenced by this movement, pair and group work appears to be part of every teacher's repertoire of classroom activities. The question remains, however, whether or not teachers have a personal rationale for their own implementation of this kind of joint student endeavour. Figure 4.4 identifies the principles derived from all the teachers in the sample which they believed to affirm the need for pair and/or group work during lessons.

Figure 4.4: Teachers' stated principles identified with their own practice of using pair and group work.

Principles expressed by both teachers of adults and children

- Students learn better through communicating/interaction in English.
- Students need to develop the skills and language in order to learn for themselves.
- Peer support helps students feel comfortable, confident and willing to take risks.

Principles expressed by teachers of adults

- Students must adopt strategies to make themselves understood.
- Students need to have their psychological/ affective needs catered for.
- Need to enable students to modify their previous educational experiences which led to over-dependence on the teacher and teacher input.
- Students need to be stimulated, motivated & engaged.
- Develop a positive, non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom wherein the group dynamics work well.
- Need bonding, close-knit student-teacher relationship.
- Students learn actively by working together.
- Practice of new language and rules and structures is of key importance.

continued

- Students need to build vocabularies and see differences in meaning.
- Teacher needs to be more of an organiser/facilitator rather than being an up-front presenter.
- Teacher needs to help students become aware of correct and appropriate English.

Principles expressed by teachers of children

- Teacher needs to cater for individual & cultural differences.
- Teacher needs to help students develop confidence and encourage risk-taking.
- Students need to develop & use communication strategies such as repetition, asking for clarification, sharing opinions, etc.
- Students learn by developing independence, tasking responsibility, and learning how to learn.
- New arrivals need time to adjust to a new school, country, culture, & language.
- Students benefit from a variety of class organisation/participation.
- Students need to work collaboratively/on cooperative activities; to learn to work together; to establish positive peer relationships.
- Teacher needs to provide activities where students can work in a group with no pressure.
- Students need social skills such as tolerance, patience, working with different people.

At first sight, some of the principles in the above listing appear to be similar in terms of their main concern. However, of the 23 principles, most are distinct and range from a primary concern with the nature of language, its use or its formal features, or with aspects of the learning process, or with students' affective, psychological, or social needs. Different pedagogic justifications are therefore called upon by teachers for the common practice of group and pair work.

Again, some differences in rationalisation exist between teachers of adults and teachers of children. Some of the former appear to place a high value on what they regard as contributory group dynamics in the classroom whilst others see pair or group work as a means of consolidating the learning of the more formal aspects of the language. Teachers of children never explicitly mention this whilst, for them, joint student activity has a significant socialising function. For most of the teachers of children in the study, collaborative student activity serves longer term educational and social goals whilst several of the teachers of adults see it as addressing more immediate language learning needs in the classroom group.

In general, however, the pattern of relationship we discovered earlier between a single principle and how teachers variously expressed it in their practices is paralleled here also.

A further very common practice appeared to be motivated by an even greater range of principles. Most teachers were observed to explicitly model and/or carefully explain aspects of language or its use. Figure 4.5 below identifies those principles through which the sample of teachers explained this particular teacher behaviour.

Figure 4.5: Teachers' stated principles identified with their own practice of explicit teacher modelling and/or explaining.

- Principles expressed by both teachers of adults and children***
- Students need various language forms: vocabulary, structures, skills, strategies.
 - Teacher needs to provide input and good/correct models of English.
 - Teacher needs to present material in an ordered, systematic way.
- Principles expressed by teachers of adults***
- Students need to know how to interpret paralinguistic information as an aid to meaning.
 - Students learn through connecting language and context.
 - Language needs to be broken down/categorised for ease of mental processing.
 - Students need a metalanguage to understand and discuss the structure of language.
 - Students need to learn to 'drive' English, becoming autonomous learners because most learning will occur after class.
 - Students must hear input more than once.
 - Students must understand what they hear.
 - Teacher needs to be aware of the socio-psychological pressures of integrating into a new culture.
 - Students need to be informed about the reasons for the things that are done in the course/lesson.
 - Teacher needs to account for different learning styles.
 - Students request an explicit method and want access to explanations, rules and generalisations because this is most time-efficient.
 - Slow-paced students need lessons based on life-skills - no abstractions.
 - Students need to know the correct forms uses of language in our society; as language is rule-based, rules & generalisations are crucial.
 - Language is inseparable from context and meaning.
 - Language is inseparable from culture; e.g. politeness conventions.
 - Teacher needs to help students participate in their local community.
- continued*

- Students need to achieve the competencies/pass the competency test.
- Teacher also acts as an entertainer, performer and motivator.
- Feedback/corrections need to be explicit and focused to help students identify errors.

Principles expressed by teachers of children

- Students need to be at ease with written English.
 - Students need a lot of aural input to hear, notice and remember.
 - Students need help to identify their errors.
 - Classroom should provide metalinguistic information - e.g. about the patterns of English.
 - Students learn by being exposed to language that is comprehensible and relevant.
- continued*
- Students learn by developing independence, taking responsibility, and learning how to learn.
 - Students need to develop acceptable classroom behaviour.

The above range of principles justifying a single common practice echoes what we discovered when considering pair and group work. The answer to the third question which is the focus of this chapter appears to be that a **single practice commonly adopted by the group of teachers is most often based upon a diverse range of principles**. However, of the 29 principles motivating overt teacher modelling and explanation, only 9 appear to be very similar or identical to principles which were seen previously to underlie pair and group work. Whilst we saw several primary concerns among the teachers within the principles motivating such work, the primary concern focused upon in the principles in Figure 4.5 justifying overt modelling and explanation is, perhaps not surprisingly, the subject matter of lessons; the language and its use and how these aspects may be best learned.

Comparing the principles listed in Figures 4.4 and 4.5 there is, therefore, a very strong similarity between only about a third of them. This further confirms our earlier finding that the relationship between practices and principles is not as random as at first sight. Across a group of teachers such as those in the study, a **particular common practice will tend to express a set of principles which will be mostly different from the set of principles that justify some other common practice**. This pattern was also confirmed when we traced the principles which the teachers provided as justifications for common classroom practices other than the two we have examined here. Of course, whether or not a particular practice is common among the group is a matter of degree and some classroom practices were implemented only

by a minority of the teachers. But the pattern holds true for those practices that were adopted by the majority. Therefore, the degree of coherence which we identified earlier between principles and practices appears to be confirmed for this group of teachers. Therefore, it can be claimed that a group of ESL teachers, having a similar background experience and working in a similar context to that of the teachers in this study, are likely to reveal a collective coherence between certain principles that are widely shared and a diverse but particular range of classroom practices.

If we extrapolate from this finding and return to the individual teacher, the internal consistency between the individual's principles and practices can be further explained. Whilst a seemingly diverse set of principles will represent a teacher's justifications for a particular practice, another diverse but mostly different permutation of principles will underlie a different practice. Expressing this argument in another way, a teacher's pedagogic principles selectively interacts with their repertoire of classroom practices in ways that the teacher regards as congruent. Although it appears that a teacher's principles are more resistant to change as they become established, a repertoire of practices may increase or refine. Nevertheless, we might conclude that, over time, the relationship between an individual teacher's principles and practices may become more even more consistent and, thereby, relatively predictable.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has focused upon the issue whether or not teachers of English as a second language put into practice the principles which they regard as underlying their classroom teaching. More specifically, we first considered if an individual teacher's pedagogic principles correlated with or directly implied particular classroom practices. We then explored the actual relationship between the principles and practices of all 18 teachers in the study by asking if a particular principle correlated with observed practices and, looking at the other side of the relationship, if a particular practice implied a specific principle or specific set of principles. The data from the teachers in this study revealed that the actual relationship appears to be seemingly unpredictable and quite complex. We can summarise this relationship in the following ways:

- The individual teacher will have a personal configuration of pedagogic principles which interacts in selective ways upon a particular repertoire of favoured practices. There appears to be a fair degree of internal coherence

between these principles and practices so that, for the teacher, there will be a strong implied relationship.

- Individual teachers are likely to differ to varying extents from each other in both the principles and practices in their work. The actual relationship between principles and practices for the individual teacher is, to some extent, idiosyncratic or unique.
- A group of language teachers, working with ESL students similar in experience and working contexts similar to the sample of teachers in this study will implement a common principle through a diverse range of different practices.
- Some of this diversity may be due to differences in the age of the students whom the teachers work with. Teachers of adults and teachers of children in the study appeared to have different priorities among the principles they espoused and this seems to have led to a reliance on some distinct practices.
- An apparent diversity of practices disguises a degree of correlation between a principle which is widely shared among teachers and an associated range of practices. Across the sample of teachers, there appeared to be a range of particular practices deriving from a shared principle that was different in type or permutation from another range of practices motivated by a different shared principle.
- Again, as a group, the teachers adopted a certain common practice, such as pair and group work or explicit modelling and explanation, in order to serve a diverse set of pedagogic principles.
- However, a practice commonly adopted by the teachers will tend to express a set of principles which will be mostly different from the set of principles that justify a different practice.
- Therefore, despite superficial randomness in the links between principles and practices across the group of teachers, it appears that there is some degree of coherence between **particular** widely shared principles and **particular** commonly adopted practices.
- It remains the case, however, that some very similar practices adopted by even the same teacher may be motivated by more than one principle. Similarly, a single principle expressing a teacher's pedagogic priorities may be turned into action through several distinct practices.
- It also remains the case that, if we investigate the principles and practices of a group of teachers, whilst there may appear a degree of consistency in the relationship between some widely shared principles and some commonly adopted practices, relative unpredictability typifies this relationship even among a relatively small group of ESL teachers sharing similar teaching experiences in similar working contexts.

In general, therefore, the study reveals a complex interaction between teacher thinking and classroom behaviour. These findings represent a challenge to research on teachers' classroom behaviour. We can not infer the reasons why teachers work in the ways they do only from observations of classroom practice. The findings also represent a challenge to research on language teacher thinking. We can not predict the actual classroom behaviour of teachers from the rationale they provide for the ways they prefer to work. It is also doubtful that the researcher can describe practice on the basis teachers' own accounts of how they work without reflecting with them upon actual instances of classroom practice. The present study set out to derive data on the conceptualisations and actions of language teachers precisely through this kind of reflective dialogue.

The findings also raise challenging questions for teacher education. To what extent does initial teacher training relatively focus upon practices and principles? In what ways might the trainer's rationale for a particular practice coincide with the trainee's own principles relating to teaching derived from their experiences as a learner? To what extent might trainee's principles be mobilised as a basis for interpreting and adopting appropriate practices? Given that pedagogic principles are likely to be deeply held and often resistant to change, what should be the focus of in-service professional development aimed at facilitating change in teachers' classroom practices? This study confirms that, during teaching, principles and practices constantly interact in selective and complex ways. It may be that forms of reflective dialogue between trainers and trainees and between the providers and recipients of in-service professional development of the kind adopted in our research could be one way of approaching questions such as these.

Finally, two observations on the limitations of the present examination of the relationship between teacher thinking and classroom behaviour. The particular research procedures adopted in the study may be seen as enabling a strong degree of congruence between the teachers' practices and principles not least because, for each teacher, the profile of practices may have been only a selective picture. The principles were uncovered initially from a close consideration by teacher and researcher of practices adopted in the first observed lesson. Although these were supplemented by the teachers' specification of other favoured practices and from a lesser number practices observed in two further lessons, they represent a mere snapshot of the teachers' potential repertoire. This implies that even the wide range of practices revealed in the data was not as diverse as it may have been if we had identified practices across a larger number of lessons. However, it remains likely that more data on practices would further confirm the patterns discovered in the study.

Similarly, our research procedure may not have provided access to the full range of principles that guide the pedagogy of each of the teachers. We were dependent on what they chose to say at the time and the particular ways in which they articulated their own rationale for their actions. In our defence we may fairly argue that the principles uncovered by the particular research process enabled us to check and confirm with each teacher what they regarded as their pedagogic priorities. In other words, it seems that we got close to the finite set of principles which each teacher regarded as central to their work, and each teacher had the opportunity to indicate to us the actual relationship between these principles in terms of their relative significance.

To balance these concerns, across the sample of 18 teachers, we were able to identify over 200 principles from the interview data and almost 300 practices from observation. Only a relatively small proportion of each of these were identical or very similar as between individual teachers. This leads us to a major conclusion from the study. It is not only that the pattern of relationships between teachers' pedagogic principles and their classroom practices is a complex matter. The particular group of 18 teachers of ESL in the study also revealed that any grouping of teachers is likely to be relatively heterogeneous in how they think about their work. They will also be heterogeneous in how their thinking shapes and is shaped by the actual ways in which they meet the day to day challenge of helping people to learn a new language.

Chapter Five

Conclusions from the Study

Anne Thwaite & Michael P. Breen

In this study, we investigated the teaching of 10 teachers of English as a second language (ESL) to adults and 8 teachers of ESL to school-age children. The investigation aimed to provide answers to the following main questions:

1. What are the classroom practices of this group of 18 language teachers?
2. What principles do they identify as underlying their work in the classroom?
3. What is the relationship between the principles they hold and the practices they adopt in the classroom?

Practices

At first sight, the notion of a 'practice' would appear to be much more clearly defined than that of a principle. However, we soon found that, although it was not difficult to observe what teachers were doing, both from visiting their classrooms and viewing their videos, the classification of these practices was by no means clear cut. The task was complicated by there being nearly 300 practices observed, although a fair proportion of these appeared similar to one another. To some extent we made use of the teachers' own words as provided on their 'action and reason' cards (see the research procedure in Chapter 1). In grouping practices together it was necessary to extrapolate from these data. The associations we came up with are just one possible way of describing what was going on in the classrooms.

Nevertheless, we did deduce with some general findings which are strongly supported by our data. These can be summarised as follows:

- The most common practices across all eighteen teachers involved them attending to 'correctness' and 'accuracy' in using English. This is not surprising given the teaching context, but it is interesting that these notions did not appear to be open to question by the teachers in any way.

- Practices that developed a supportive or positive classroom environment were also very common across all the teachers. Of course, this is an aspect of practice that would not be unique to ESL teachers.

Of the other practices documented, the clearest differences between teachers that we found were between the teachers who taught adults as compared with those who taught children. Such differences can be summarised as follows:

- Teachers of children were found to use group activities more often which promoted interaction between peers. The teachers of adults also used this strategy but not to the same extent.
- Teachers of children were more likely to explicitly model the language and they appeared to place more emphasis in describing their practices upon independent learning.
- Teachers of children drew more often on students' experiences of other languages and cultures.
- Teachers of adults adopted more practices which dealt with a range of English proficiencies in the class.
- Teachers of adults used more drilling and rehearsal. Teachers of children used more practical, hands on, and multimodal activities.
- Teachers of adults appeared to be quite strongly influenced by competency requirements as criteria of learner achievement as derived from the national reporting system. Teachers of children, on the other hand, appeared more concerned in their practices in preparing their learners for mainstream studies.
- In monitoring and checking, teachers of children focussed more on the individual child and their abilities. Teachers of adults focussed on linguistic competencies as seemingly objective criteria to be applied to everybody.

Some differences were also found in the practices used by teachers with many years ESL experience as compared with those with fewer. There were also some differences between those teachers who had experience of learning other languages as compared with those who did not.

Therefore, from this study, it would appear that it is the age of the class which has a strong effect on the teacher's choice of particular practices. However, this is of necessity confounded with the teacher's reaction to the institutional setting within which they are working (primary school, further education, adult migrant education, or a centre providing short courses for international students). A teacher may adopt particular practices which are seen to be appropriate to the specific culture and ethos of the teaching

situation. It remains the case that there were a range of very common practices which were adopted by all the teachers regardless of the age of the students.

Principles

Teachers were asked to state their principles in their own words. To avoid the problems of there being many different definitions of the word 'principle' and of teachers finding it relatively difficult to articulate the particular principles which guided their individual classroom work, they were asked to say why they carried out particular practices which had been observed by the researcher. Their principles were also extracted and often confirmed from their critical incident descriptions and that part of their biodata forms in which they were asked to offer their recommendations on the basis of their own experience for a novice ESL teacher (see research procedure in Chapter 1). Altogether over 200 principles were identified in the study. We tried as far as possible to retain the teachers' own wording of their principles during the collation of these different data sources. Our findings regarding the teachers' principles support the fact that, as one would expect, the situational context in which the teacher is currently working has an effect on what they say is important to them.

Two of the major findings concerning the principles of the 18 teachers were:

- Teachers' principles may or may not be related to specific theories of second language learning or of teaching in general. Some of the teachers quoted or paraphrased recognisable theoretical sources. However, most of their principles appeared to be 'pragmatic' ones, i.e. principles that were grounded in their experience and the immediate context of practice.
- Many similarities were found across the group in the principles asserted by the teachers as important to them. For example, there was a very common concern with the social relationships in the classroom, although this may have been expressed in slightly different terms, such as *Develop a positive atmosphere; (Providing) support for the students; Positive group dynamics*. Other common concerns across the group included the need to account for individual differences or the intention to make the new language manageable for learners' internalisation and memory.

There were also some differences in the principles of different teachers. These could be mainly identified between teachers of adults and teachers of children. Most of the teachers of children mentioned behaviour

management as a significant priority, while none of the teachers of adults included this in their identification of principles. Teachers of children were also much more likely to mention the need for enjoyment or happiness in the classroom. As mentioned previously, this age of learner variable is confounded with that of institutional context. Professional development experience and language background also appeared to have a slight effect on how teachers gave priority to different principles.

Relationships between principles and practices

A major aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between individual teachers' professed philosophies and what they actually did in their classrooms and whether this relationship was a congruent one. We also looked across the sample of teachers to see if there were any relationships between particular groupings of principles and practices which all the teachers shared. The main findings here were that:

- An individual teacher's principles and practices appear to be internally coherent, although they may be different from another teacher's in both emphasis and relationship.
- Across the whole group, a single shared principle is likely to be expressed through a particular cluster of different practices. For example, for teachers of adults a large cluster of practices was associated with the principle of "accounting for individual differences". A smaller cluster, with some overlap, realised this principle for the teachers of children.
- Across the group of teachers, a different principle will be expressed through a different cluster of practices. However, for any individual teacher, it will not be possible to predict which of practices they will choose to implement even though they may share a principle with another teacher. Individual teachers will implement a particular principle in different ways.
- Conversely, a single common practice is used by different teachers to serve a diverse range of principles. For example, the practice of pair and group work was used by almost all teachers but was differently justified by different teachers. An example of one associated principle was that *Students need social skills (a teacher of children)* while another one was *Students need to build vocabularies (a teacher of adults)*.
- Across the group of teachers, a different practice is likely to be motivated by a different grouping of principles. However, again it is not possible to predict from observation of an individual teacher's use of a common practice upon which principle the teacher bases it.

Therefore, even from our relatively small sample, our findings reveal significant diversity among teachers in how they relate their thinking and their classroom behaviour. While clusterings and patterns occur in the data as a whole, the way in which each teacher constructs and enacts their working life is unique. Thus, it appears essential that future research which seeks to investigate language teaching should take full account of what teachers do, what they say they do, and why they say they do it. It will also need to recognise that the relationship between these things is highly complex, both in the case of the individual teacher and especially so when studying groups of teachers.

Limitations of the present study

We would not seek to claim that our findings will apply to other language teachers working in other contexts. We are a diverse group of researchers and, as we proceeded with our investigation, it became very clear that we were working with a very diverse group of teachers. The sample of eighteen teachers could be differentiated according to the age of the students taught, and the teacher's experience, language background and gender, the actual teaching situation, among several other variables. In addition, although we followed an agreed research procedure, individual relationships between researchers and teachers will have affected the nature of the data obtained. With such a small and varied sample it is not possible therefore to make a generalisable claim that there will be a very strong relationship between a particular teacher's identity, the context in which they work, the principles they uphold, and the practices they employ in the classroom. Nevertheless, we identified almost 300 classroom behaviours, a good proportion of which were commonly adopted by the sample of teachers. We also obtained many varied and informative comments from the teachers about why they worked in the ways that they did.

On the whole, the methodology used in this study meant that the profiles of the teachers were very much constructed through the researchers' eyes. The findings from the study may have been quite different if the teachers had been left to their own devices to present a view of their work. The third person descriptions of each teacher written by the researchers were, however, verified by the teacher. One of the most useful sources of data was the responses to the last question on the biodata form: "If you were advising a teacher who was new to ESL, what would you say are the five most important things about teaching ESL students?" This question tended to tap into a teacher's underlying principles which were later elaborated upon by the other data sources.

After the data gathering phase, the analysis and collation of the data for this report meant that we were sometimes writing about teachers we had never met and whose classrooms we had not observed (videos were only viewed by one of the researchers working with a particular teacher). Such analysis clearly distances the findings from their original source. However, our search for any patterns across all the data made this inevitable.

A major limitation of the study was that it was undertaken at a very particular moment in all of the teachers' working lives. We worked with each of them for an average of only about five weeks. Although the interaction between researcher and teacher was quite intense during this period, we could only obtain a snapshot of a teacher's work. Just as they are located in a particular teaching situation with a particular class of students, classroom practices are located in real time. It may be possible that, in exploring these practices with the teachers, we were able to uncover principles that possibly guided much of their teaching at other times also. This remains only a possibility, however.

All 18 teachers did adopt some classroom behaviours and sometimes required their learners to do things that appeared to us to be very similar. However, they also differed widely in many of the other practices they adopted and, importantly, in how they sequenced and organised all these classroom practices in the rhythm of their lessons. Our sample of teachers shared some principles that sounded to us to be very similar although they may have been voiced in slightly different ways. But they also articulated a wide range of principles that were clearly different across the group.

When we examined the actual relationships between practices and principles, even those which appeared to be quite common across the group, the picture became even more complicated. A major conclusion from this fairly small investigation is that we should not infer **specific intentions or motivations** for an observed classroom practice without discovering such things directly from the teacher. Nor should we anticipate that a teacher will act in a **specific way** on the basis of a pedagogic principle which they assert to be important to them without also studying the ways in which they actually work in the classroom. These claims, which have significance for research on language teaching and for teacher education, seem to us to be plausible and important generalisations from the present study.

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