

# **Early Career ESOL Teachers' Practical Knowledge of Teaching Speaking**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## Abstract

This thesis presents the findings of qualitative multiple-case study research investigating ESOL teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking. Although there has been increased recognition of the value of practical knowledge research in recent years, such research remains extremely limited and the practical knowledge and teachers in an ESOL context and in the curricular domain of teaching speaking skills were previously unexplored areas.

The four research participants were all early career ESOL teachers in the United Kingdom. Classroom observation data and interview data were generated at multiple points over the course of an academic year. This methodological approach introduced a longitudinal dimension to the research enabling any possible practical knowledge growth to be investigated.

The research identified the largely contemporary nature of the ESOL teachers' practices in teaching speaking. However, the teachers' practical knowledge was identified as being atheoretical: teachers did not refer to public theory in the explanations of their practices. Instead, the findings suggest that teachers may experience a process of socialisation (both institutional and sectorial) through which many practices are adopted without a theoretical basis.

A significant degree of commonality was identified amongst the teachers' practical knowledge. Individual differences appeared to be significant, however, and were identifiable both in teachers' practices and the beliefs underlying them. Teachers' exercising of significant agency in their practices meant that these differences were evident despite certain sectorial pressure on teachers, particularly through exam washback.

There was very limited evidence of growth in the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking. The research indicated a number of factors which appeared to inhibit such growth. The study discusses the implications of these findings for ESOL teacher development programmes. Recommendations for teacher development programmes include constructivist approaches to teacher engagement with public theory and institutional mechanisms for a sharing of practices amongst teachers.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

This study relates to the practical knowledge of teaching speaking which is held and developed by early career teachers in the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) sector in England. In this introductory chapter, I aim to orientate the reader within the thesis. I achieve this by first explaining the aims of the study, including the reasons why I chose it as a useful research area to investigate (1.1). I then briefly describe the methodological approach adopted for the research so that the reader understands the assumptions being made in order to meet the research aims (1.2). Finally, I provide a description of the chapters which make up the overall thesis so that the structure of the work is clear to the reader (1.3).

### 1.2 Aims of the study

The research uses the concept of practical knowledge as a means of exploring what teachers do in the classroom and the knowledge which guides those practices. I believe that this concept is important because of its central concern with the knowledge which informs and is informed by teachers' practices as opposed to the knowledge which is produced externally by experts to be given to teachers. Although the significance of this concept has been recognised by researchers in the field of teacher cognition, little research on practical knowledge has actually been conducted to date. As Borg (2006) states, this lack of such research is particularly evident for specific language domains and for certain contexts. This thesis addresses both the language domain gap (by focusing on the teaching of speaking skills) and the under-researched context of the ESOL sector.

The ESOL sector provides English language support to adult migrants in a country where the dominant language is English (Cooke and Simpson, 2008). My interest in conducting research in the ESOL context in England stems from my own teaching experience in the sector and an engagement with the policy decisions which have both shaped the sector and which form part of wider debates surrounding immigration and English language proficiency. I am particularly interested in how the ESOL context, with its unique characteristics, impacts on the teaching of language. The fact that oral communication is a primary concern for many of the

adult migrants who make up the student body (Baynham, 2006) was the principal factor in my decision to focus the research specifically on the teaching of speaking skills in this context.

This research, then, aimed to identify the practical knowledge of teachers in this specific teaching context. I was interested in investigating this knowledge to better understand the role that the ESOL context played in this practical knowledge. The degree of commonality amongst the teachers' practical knowledge was of additional interest in that it represented an opportunity to identify whether a body of shared practical knowledge existed for the teaching of speaking by ESOL teachers.

I was also very interested to learn how ESOL teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking develops over a period of time. There is a dearth of such longitudinal studies in language teacher development owing in part, no doubt, to the recognised challenges involved in engaging participants over an extended period of time. In the practical knowledge literature, there is a still more pronounced lack of longitudinal research. However, such research has the potential to facilitate greater understanding of the practical knowledge development process and factors which might influence practical knowledge growth. This thesis therefore seeks to address the current lack of research into practical knowledge growth by introducing multiple data collection points over the course of an academic year.

Whereas much of the existing language teacher development research has been conducted during pre-service or in-service teacher education courses, there is a strong need to also better understand language teachers' development outside these settings and the research participants in this research were not following either ITT or INSET courses. I decided to investigate the practical knowledge of early career ESOL teachers in order to add to the small but important body of research examining language teacher development at this early career stage. Although there have been a number of studies into the first year experiences of language teachers, there is very little literature which relates to a later period when teachers have already gained a certain degree of classroom experience but can still be regarded as relatively novice.

The research questions for this study are the following:

1. What is the practical knowledge of teaching speaking held by the ESOL teachers?
2. To what extent is the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking shared?
3. What (if any) growth takes place in the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking?
4. What factors appear to promote (or hinder) the growth of the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking?

Such research can be useful for understanding the ESOL teachers' own perspectives on the teaching of speaking and the influence of the ESOL context on their practices. In addition to adding to the body of practical knowledge research for both the language domain and context, such research also has significant implications for teacher professional development: a better understanding of the teachers' practical knowledge of speaking face in the ESOL context can inform the design of both pre-service and in-service teacher development programmes. Equally, an understanding of the factors influencing that development also has implications for institutions seeking to create favourable conditions for practical knowledge development to take place.

### **1.3 Research approach**

In this section, I briefly explain the approach which was adopted for the study as a means of further orientating the reader within the work. I discuss these areas in greater detail in the main methodology chapter and limit inclusion here to some of the key features.

- a) The research is situated within the interpretive-constructivist paradigm. Such a stance involves the construction of a *possible* interpretation of meaning based on the data generated.
- b) Multiple-case studies are incorporated in which the complexity and uniqueness of each teacher's practical knowledge of teaching speaking can be explored.
- c) In these case studies, an emic approach is adopted with a strong emphasis on teachers' own perspectives and their own interpretations of their practices.

- d) The data was generated both through observation of the teachers' normal timetabled classes and through a series of post-observation interviews. Such an approach allowed contextualised discussion of teachers' practices during the interviews and also facilitated the making of comparisons between teachers' practices and their stated beliefs.
- e) There were regular data generation points throughout the academic year to reflect the longitudinal dimension of the research.
- f) Provisional a priori categories were used for the early data generation process and these were refined in response to the themes which emerged from the data.
- g) The data is presented to foreground the teachers' actual practices and teachers' explanations of those practices. Thus, the findings for individual case studies are largely presented with descriptions of individual teachers' practices followed by relevant interview data.
- h) In order to situate the reader in the teachers' classrooms as early as possible in the case studies, the findings are sequenced from micro characteristics of teaching pedagogy to macro considerations of syllabus design.
- i) Tables are adopted where appropriate to aid the reading of the data and to clearly demonstrate the basis of the assertions which are made. In the rare cases where there is reference to teachers' stated practices, as opposed to observed practices, this is made explicit.
- j) Steps were adopted to ensure the quality of the research throughout the research process. The measures included sustained engagement with the teachers and the use of multi-method data collection to identify both the practices and cognitions of the teachers. The University of Leeds' ethical guidelines were also closely adhered to.

#### **1.4 Overview of the study**

The thesis comprises 11 chapters in total, including this introductory chapter. The overall organisation of the study is that Chapters 2-4 provide the background to the research, Chapters 5-9 present the findings for the study and Chapter 10 contains the discussion of the findings before the final, concluding chapter. Below, I describe the chapters in more detail:

Chapter 2 locates the research in the context of existing literature in the field of teacher cognition and, more specifically, in that of teachers' practical knowledge. The chapter identifies both the relevance of practical knowledge research and the existing gap in the literature in this field, both in the curricular domain of the teaching of speaking and in the context of ESOL.

Chapter 3 describes the context in which the research was conducted. The ESOL sector is defined and government policy affecting the provision of ESOL is identified. Characteristics of the student body which are significant to the teaching of speaking are also discussed.

Chapter 4 introduces the main research questions which the study aims to answer. It also describes the methodological approach of the research, including the use of multiple case-studies. A rationale and description for the research instruments is provided and an explanation of the data presentation.

Chapters 5 to 8 present the data for each of the four cases in turn. Although the emerging themes differ, resulting in some content differences, the main foci of pedagogy, teaching resources and teaching syllabus are consistently followed. Thick data is provided for each of the cases so that readers can arrive at their own conclusions regarding assertions that are made.

Chapter 9 provides a cross-case analysis of the data. This enables the main commonalities and differences in the data for the four individual cases to be illustrated. Tables are employed to represent the findings across the cases in the most accessible manner for the reader.

Chapter 10 discusses the themes which emerged in the data. It does this with reference to the main research questions. These findings include the degree to which there is commonality in teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking, the role which public theory plays in teachers' practical knowledge and the degree of agency which teachers exercise within the ESOL context.

Chapter 11 is the concluding chapter. It summarises the main outcomes of the study and highlights their significance. The findings related to the degree of practical knowledge growth (and the factors which appear to influence this growth) are then used to discuss the implications of the research for teacher professional development.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This section begins with a brief review of the literature exploring the experiences of early career teachers generally and the limited research on early career language teachers (2.2). I then focus on the development of language teacher cognition as an area of research and the significance of the field for this study (2.3). After this, the relationship between teacher thinking and teacher behaviour is explored. This is followed by an introduction to the concept of ‘practical knowledge’ and a review of relevant research in this area (2.4). The next section then examines available literature on how teachers’ practical knowledge develops (2.5) before the final section, which focuses specifically on the literature relating to the teaching of speaking (2.6).

### 2.2 Early career teachers

#### 2.2.1 Early career teachers in general education

The use of the term ‘novice’ to describe a teacher varies in literature in the field of education. A broad distinction which can be made is between its use to reflect lack of experience in the classroom and to refer to the lack of expertise demonstrated by the teacher. Although it may be argued that lack of one implies lack of the other, this is not always the case or at least the relationship may not apply equally to all cases. Barret *et al.* (2002), for example, found in their study of two first year teachers that one (who had experience as a teaching aide) soon demonstrated aspects of expertise in her teaching despite her relative inexperience (see Berliner, 1986 for a discussion of the ‘expert’ teacher).

Many researchers in education define a novice as a teacher who has not completed three school/college years of teaching (see, for example, Leinhardt, 1989; Huberman, 1993) though there is often a focus on the first year of teaching in research design. For the purposes for this study, I adopt the term ‘early career’ teacher in order to emphasize the teachers’ limited classroom experience whilst at the same time distinguishing the teachers from those who are entering classrooms directly following initial teacher training courses. (It should, however, be borne in

mind that it may be the case that teachers will have additional experience of teaching in other contexts.)

The challenges of having sole responsibility for classes in natural institutional settings can be formidable (Darling-Hammond, 1985). Furthermore, the realities of teaching rarely conform to pre-service teachers' expectations (Kagan, 1992) and early career teachers can experience 'transition shock' as they strive to deal with the many demands of their new teaching roles (Corcoran, 1981) and the struggle to manage as difficulties present themselves can be compounded by feelings of isolation (Lortie, 1975). The challenges for beginning teachers are multi-fold: Veenman's (1984) review of 91 studies published between 1960 and 1983 listed the most common problems cited by beginning teachers. In descending order of importance, they included the following: classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences among students, and assessing students' work. The classroom environment itself is highly complex (Doyle, 1986) and without well-established interactional routines which can be called upon by the inexperienced teacher, the number of spontaneous decisions required makes greatly increased cognitive demands on the teachers (Johnson, 1992). Furthermore, as Calderhead (1981) argues, not only do inexperienced teachers not possess a repertoire of instructional routines, but they also lack a developed schema (background knowledge and expectations of typical occurrences) to interpret and respond consistently to events which occur during instruction. Bullough also identifies more experienced teachers as being less 'compulsive consumer[s] of curriculum' (1989: 37) and more focused on student learning.

### **2.2.2 Early career teachers in second language education**

The experiences of second language teachers as they enter the teaching profession have been much less documented in the literature than for general education (Farrell, 2009). Most of the research which does relate to second language teachers consists of pre-service studies relating to the trainees' experiences on the teaching practicum of specific teacher training courses (see, for example, Almarza, 1996; Pennington and Urmston, 1998) rather than studies of teachers' development following the completion of their formal teacher training. This is despite the fact that early teaching experiences are recognised by language teacher educators as having an

enormous influence on the future development of language teachers (Freeman and Johnson, 1998).

Research conducted has also principally focused on teachers who have undertaken substantial initial teacher training programmes (typically full university undergraduate or postgraduate programmes). An example of such research is Spada and Massey's research, which investigated the influence of early career ESOL teachers' prior pedagogical knowledge on their practices (1992). Farrell's edited collection of research on novice language teachers (Farrell, 2008b) also includes a number of accounts of such teachers' first year teaching experiences, the majority of which were conducted after the participants had followed university level teacher preparation programmes (see, for example, Schmidt, 2008 in this collection).

The literature on those teachers who have undertaken shorter initial teacher training courses (such as the CELTA qualification awarded by the Cambridge examining board or the Trinity College equivalent) is extremely limited (see, for example, M. Borg, 2008; Ting and Watts, 2008). The research which has been conducted on novice teachers following their study on courses of this nature has also been limited to EFL teachers. These studies have tended to focus on the impact of the different contexts in which the EFL teachers find themselves, both geographically and institutionally (see 2.4.5 for discussion about the importance of context for early career teachers and a review of relevant research). There has been no research on the experiences of novice ESOL teachers, however, despite the distinctiveness of this sector with its own history, structure, funding arrangement and standardised practices (Rosenberg, 2007).

## **2.3 Teacher cognition**

### **2.3.1 Introduction to teacher cognition**

As Borg (2006) notes, there has been research interest in teacher cognition for well over 30 years. This research can be usefully identified as growing out of dissatisfaction with an earlier research tradition often referred to as the process-product approach (Driel et al., 2001). This previous research was based on technical rationality and focused exclusively on teacher behaviour, searching for 'effective' variables in teaching behaviour. Experimental-control methods were typically employed to identify the degree to which specific teacher behaviours corresponded positively with student achievement.

Critics of this approach, however, argued that it led to a view of teaching as being depersonalised, context-free, and mechanistic (see, for example, Clandinin and Connelly, 1987; Golombok, 1998; Freeman and Johnson, 1998). Teaching, they claimed, was a far more complex undertaking than this perspective had suggested and rather than prescribing what teachers had to know and do, a more useful focus would be to understand the knowledge that teachers build and use ‘in action’ (Schön, 1983). There was a growing recognition that by not accounting for teachers’ thinking, it was impossible to have a complete understanding of the teaching process (Shavelson and Stern, 1981). Exploring the mental lives of the teachers and the cognitions that underlie a teacher’s actions thus became central to understanding the teaching process (Carter, 1990). As Clark and Peterson explained when the field was beginning to develop, researchers into teacher thinking

...hope[d] to understand and explain how and why the observable activities of teachers’ professional lives take on the form and functions that they do. They ask[ed] when and why teaching is difficult and how human beings manage the complexity of classroom teaching (Clark and Peterson, 1986: 255)

Research then adopted a far more holistic approach to gaining a better understanding of teachers and teaching. Teachers were viewed as ‘active, thinking decision-makers who play a central role in shaping classroom events’ (Borg, 2006: 1) and whose beliefs, attitudes and knowledge influenced their practice. This development had huge implications for teacher education. There was a recognition of the fact that students on teacher education courses arrive with prior beliefs and attitudes about teaching and that ‘like other learners, [they] interpret new content through their existing understandings and modify and reinterpret new ideas on the basis of what they already know or believe’ (Kennedy, 1991: 12). In a seminal article for the field of language teaching, emphasizing the importance of this whole person approach to teacher education and the move away from seeing teacher education in purely technicist terms, Freeman and Johnson adopted the constructivist position that:

[teachers] are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with theoretical and pedagogical skills; they are individuals who enter teacher education programmes with prior experiences, personal values and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and shape what they do in their classrooms (Freeman and Johnson, 1998: 401)

This tradition also asserted that researchers should study the teaching process from the point of view of the practitioner: that teachers should articulate their own interpretations of their work based on their experience. In learning to teach, the teachers develop their own theories of teaching based on what they bring and how they respond to the teaching situation (Freeman and Richards, 1996). The different components of teacher cognition will be explored in more detail later in this chapter, but it is useful at this point to introduce Borg's definition of the term which will help to orientate that discussion:

Teacher cognition refers to the complex, practically-oriented, personalised and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs language teachers draw on in their work (Borg, 2006: 272)

This definition usefully emphasizes not only the interconnectedness of elements of teacher cognition, but their practical orientation and the fact that they develop in a manner which is both personal and situated in a specific context. These facets are central to the discussion of practical knowledge in 3.4.

### **2.3.2 Knowledge and beliefs**

A potential obstacle to focused study within the field of teacher cognition lies in the lack of clarity which surrounds some of the key terms which are employed (Borg, 2006), particularly the terms 'knowledge' and 'beliefs'. Indeed, as Meijer *et al.* (2001) argue, the concepts referred to by these terms are often extremely difficult to distinguish. Epistemologically, 'knowledge' should be demonstrably and objectively true, with an evidence base sufficient for it to be consensual (Fenstermacher, 1994). However, this interpretation is generally not applicable to research on education because, as Kagan (1992) argues, there is little that is scientifically 'correct' in education. Whilst it is true that subject matter and formal knowledge may meet objective criteria, most of what teachers 'know' will inevitably be based on their own judgements and evaluations (Richardson, 1996) and will therefore be held with varying degrees of conviction and be non-consensual (Thompson, 1992).

Pajares, in his review of literature on teachers' beliefs, found that most studies used the term *beliefs* to describe teachers' own interpretations of what could be asserted to be true and used the term *knowledge* for more objective fact (Pajares, 1992). As Meijer *et al.* (2001) note, however, 'in the mind of the teacher, components of knowledge, beliefs, conceptions and intuitions are inextricably interlinked' (Meijer

et al., 2001: 446). This PhD research will therefore avoid a separation of the two concepts along philosophical lines and instead adopt the distinction made by Meijer *et al.* (2001) that ‘beliefs are seen roughly as referring to personal values, attitudes or ideologies, and knowledge to a teacher’s more factual propositions’ (Meijer *et al.*, 2001: 172).

The nature of knowledge which is generated by teachers would seem to resist attempts to apply strict epistemological requirements of evidence (that would apply to formal knowledge, for example) to establish whether it constitutes ‘true knowledge’. As a result, Boyles (2006) suggests that ‘warranted assertibility’ is a way forward. He argues that the reasoning used by teachers to support their actions and knowledge should be judged according to the degree to which it is pragmatic and effective in the specific learning context and with specific students. Teachers’ arguments are therefore treated not as propositions to be treated as ‘true’ or ‘false’ but as indications of what they view as needing to be done in a situation to achieve their teaching objectives and are an integral part of who the teacher is and what he or she brings to the classroom.

### **2.3.3 Teacher cognition and teacher behaviour**

As will be argued at greater length in 2.4, teachers’ cognitions both guide and can be evidenced in teachers’ practices (see, for example, Carter, 1990). However, whilst a number of writers argue that behaviour and teacher thinking are inseparable and part of the same event (Zeichner *et al.*, 1987), others have suggested that the relationship between teachers’ cognitions and their actions is more complex than this statement at first suggests. Thompson (1992), for example, argues that we should treat the assumption of a simple linear-causal relationship between beliefs and practice with caution. Borg (2006) supports this position by pointing out that cognitions can change without behavioural change and similar behaviour can be underpinned by different cognitions.

Thus, cognitions and practices may not concur owing to the mediating influence of contextual factors (see 2.4.5) and/or the difficulties which novice teachers experience in putting ideas into practice. Previous research for the latter category has focused on the limitations of initial teacher training owing to trainees’ existing beliefs (Richards, 1996), the challenges of introducing new methodology because of preparation demands (Johnson, 1996b) and the initial focus on classroom

management as opposed to student learning (Fuller and Brown, 1975) but there has been little longitudinal research which has tracked the development of novice teachers' practical knowledge and explored the interplay between cognition and practice. The following section defines and discusses this concept of practical knowledge.

## **2.4 Practical knowledge**

### **2.4.1 A definition of practical knowledge**

The concept of 'practical knowledge' is included in a general framework of teacher cognition (Borg, 2003). Introduced by Elbaz (1981), it has made a useful contribution to the field of teacher cognition since it makes a distinction between knowledge *for* teachers (primarily known and produced by researchers) and knowledge *of* teachers (principally known and produced by the teachers themselves) (Fenstermacher, 1994). It can be viewed as the knowledge that teachers themselves generate as a result of their experiences as teachers responding to the teaching situation and their reflections on these experiences (Golombok, 1998). As Borg states, 'much of what teachers know originates in practice and is used to make sense of and deal with practical problems' (Borg, 2006: 13). The knowledge can therefore be seen to both inform and derive from what teachers do. Indeed, the definition that I adopt for this research clearly reflects this dimension:

Practical knowledge is 'the knowledge that is directly related to action . . . that is readily accessible and applicable to coping with real-life situations, and is largely derived from teachers' own classroom experience (Calderhead, 1988: 54).

A tension exists between a view of teacher knowledge as largely propositional - formal knowledge generated through research and which teachers learn and apply - and that where knowledge derives from and makes sense in relation to teachers' work (see also Meijer et al., 2001). Chapman emphasises this when he states that 'knowledge becomes practical only by virtue of its relation to the knower and the knower's environment' (2004: 136). Practical knowledge, then, is relevant to a teacher's personal context or classroom context. Crucially, Golombok (1998) argues, building on Freeman's (1996) ideas, that teaching is situated and interpretive, that L2 teachers' knowledge is, in part, experiential and constructed by teachers themselves as they respond to the contexts of their classrooms.

As Meijer et al (1999) argue, however, even those researchers who have adopted the term ‘practical knowledge’ have defined practical knowledge from different perspectives, usually as a result of the foci of their research. It becomes important, therefore, to focus on the commonality within this tradition in order for it to have value. The term can be argued to include elements of ‘praxial knowledge’; that is, knowledge which is learnt through the act of teaching and reflecting. In addition to how the knowledge is acquired, though, the function of that knowledge is important. For a teacher, knowing what to do in a certain teaching situation incorporates the sense of practicability (what can be done) and what is pragmatic (what makes a positive difference) (Gholami, 2007).

In the literature, there are many definitions presenting ‘practical knowledge’ in slightly differing ways (Gholami, 2007) but there are a number of important characteristics which can be seen to recur and which can be illuminating when undertaking research in this field. Driel et al. (2001) produced the following list of features, to which I have added additional explanations and references:

*1. It is action-oriented*

As the knowledge has been accumulated through experience and reflection of that experience, practical knowledge is held in a way in which it can be immediately used in the teacher’s own teaching practice practicalities (Elbaz, 1981; Carter, 1990). Practical knowledge thereby guides teachers’ practices by being available to manage teaching practicalities (Meijer et al., 1999).

*2. It is person-bound*

Because it is borne out of their teaching, practical knowledge also reflects teachers’ concerns about their own teaching experience and is therefore person-specific (Meijer et al., 1999). The knowledge allows teachers to achieve the goals which they personally value; this means that each teacher’s knowledge is to some extent unique (Carter, 1990).

*3. It is context-bound*

Practical knowledge is defined in and affected by teachers’ concerns about their own teaching context. The situation-specific nature of the knowledge can be evidenced in the way that it is adapted to a context which includes the students, the

learning materials, the curriculum and the institutional culture in which the teaching is situated (Meijer et al., 1999).

*4. It is largely tacit knowledge*

Teachers are generally not used to articulating their practical knowledge as they are more engaged in the practical activity of ‘doing’ than analysing the knowledge involved. As Clandinin (1986) argues, however, teachers may draw on their formal knowledge in order to interpret their classroom experience and therefore adopt the same terms of reference.

*5. It is integrated knowledge*

As teachers’ practical knowledge is constructed by teachers in the contexts of their work, it integrates experiential knowledge, formal knowledge and personal beliefs. This process of knowledge integration is guided by experiences which play a key role in the development or change of teachers’ practical knowledge, although there is little research to aid understanding of the actual process of integration (Zanting et al., 2001).

*6. In building practical knowledge, teachers’ beliefs play a very important role*

As part of practical knowledge, both beliefs and knowledge are closely interwoven, but the nature of beliefs makes them the filter through which new knowledge is interpreted and, subsequently, integrated in conceptual frameworks (Pajares, 1992). Beliefs therefore play a central role in organizing knowledge and defining behaviour. Such beliefs are influenced by, among other things, a teacher’s biography, their own teachers and their own disciplinary background.

Research on teachers’ knowledge has been carried out using different terms. As Gholami (2007) notes, the terminology in this research area has included ‘practical knowledge’ (Elbaz, 1981), ‘personal practical knowledge’ (Clandinin and Connelly, 1987), ‘scripts’ and ‘schemas’(Clark and Peterson, 1986) and ‘teachers’ talking and teachers’ walking’ (Mena Marcos and Tillema, 2006). Those employing these terms all operate on the common assumption that teachers can develop their individual knowledge bases for teaching but it is important for the purposes of this study that there is consistency in the use of adopted terms and clarity over how they are to be used. The concept of ‘practical knowledge’ as defined by the six characteristics above will be adopted throughout this study. A principal reason for this choice of

term is that it has been adopted and developed by many of the key researchers in this field (Elbaz, 1981; Fenstermacher, 1994; Meijer et al., 2001; Wyatt and Borg, 2011) and there is value in placing this PhD research within such a tradition and thereby indicating both the theoretical background that it is rooted in and where the contribution it intends to make lies.

#### **2.4.2 The content of practical knowledge**

Clearly, practical knowledge can relate to many aspects of teaching and can be thought of as practical knowledge *about* a range of matters. Much of the research conducted to date on practical knowledge has focussed on this content (Wyatt and Borg, 2011). As Elbaz (1981) suggests, this might include ‘practical knowledge of subject matter; of classroom organisation and instructional techniques; or students’ needs, abilities, and interests; of the social framework of the school and its surrounding community; and of [the teachers’] own strengths and shortcomings’ (1981: 47). Many such studies have followed the framework used by Elbaz (1981) which identifies teachers’ practical principles, rules of practice and the ‘images’ which guide their practice (e.g. Black and Halliwell, 2000; Clandinin, 1986; Golombok, 1998; John, 2002; Chou, 2008). Tsang (2004) explains that teachers’ practical knowledge is ‘operationalised’ principally through the first two of these: practical principles constituting broad, more inclusive statements regarding practices which teachers believe are appropriate whilst rules of practice are more specific applications of the practical principles. Chen’s (2005) research investigating 17 EFL teachers of young students in Singapore, for example, found that their practical knowledge contained a solid foundation in child development and a good understanding of their subject curriculum and that both practical principles and rules of practice revolved around respect for students and the nurturing of student development.

Within the literature on language teachers’ practical knowledge, there has been little written on teachers’ practical knowledge about specific curricular domains, however (Borg, 2006). Wyatt (2008) conducted a study on the growth of self-efficacy beliefs which included a focus on in-service teachers’ practical knowledge of reading. Wyatt and Borg (2011) have also written on the growth of practical knowledge in using communicative tasks in Omani classrooms. In addition, there have also been studies exploring teachers’ practical knowledge of teaching reading (Meijer et al.,

1999) and which compare the practical knowledge held by teachers in this subject area (Meijer et al., 2001). Other studies have examined aspects such as lesson planning (Morton and Gray, 2010) and adopted a broad approach to studying teachers' practical knowledge (for example, Chou, 2008). To date, there has been no comprehensive study on teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking to include the syllabus, teaching resources and pedagogy.

#### **2.4.3 Background influences on practical knowledge**

Prospective teachers do not enter teacher education as blank slates. Theory suggests that teacher socialization into educational values often begins far earlier than when the individual begins his or her teaching and that it is more likely to commence in infancy or early childhood (Bliss and Reck, 1991). Thus, teachers arrive with an extensive 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975) through thousands of hours as pupils at school. They will also typically have prior knowledge and beliefs about their subject areas as a result of their own educational experiences (Grossman, 1990). Johnston and Goetsch's (2000) research exploring the knowledge base of ESL teachers with a focus on grammar teaching, for example, concluded that teachers had been greatly influenced by their educational backgrounds (from middle and high school grammar classes to linguistics courses). Ariogul's (2007) cross-case study on the impact of the prior language learning experiences of 3 EFL teachers also found that there was an impact where negative experiences of being corrected were recounted by teachers and there was a resulting determination to avoid their students having similar experiences (see also Golombok, 1998). As Borg argues:

Teachers' prior language learning experiences establish cognitions about learning and language learning which form the basis of their initial conceptualizations of L2 teaching during teacher education, and which may continue to be influential throughout their professional lives (Borg, 2003: 88)

Experience of teaching in different contexts (whether different curricular areas or student group, for example) can also impact on practices. Research by Nespor (1987) suggests that novice teachers who have had prior experience of teaching in different contexts may have experienced 'critical episodes' which have had a strong impact on their present practices (see also Ulichny, 1996). A certain amount of the practical knowledge gained in an earlier context may also be transferred to the new context, particularly during the adjustment period (see the case of Imamura, 2009).

Teachers' whole belief systems and personal values are employed in the endeavour of teaching (Golombok, 1998; Clandinin and Connelly, 1987), reflecting the unique nature of each teacher's practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1983; Moran, 1996). Teachers' knowledge can therefore be seen to encompass the sum total of their personal and professional experiences (Clandinin, 1986) and teachers can draw on a range of sources of knowledge to confront the tasks and problems they encounter (Bailey et al., 1996; Johnson, 1994). As Meijer et al.(1999) argue, this makes the teachers' personal characteristics very relevant to their practical knowledge and research on teachers' professional identity has revealed the power of teachers' values systems on their practices (Callaghan, 2006).

As Kennedy (1990) observes, teachers acquire 'seemingly indelible imprints' (Ibid: 17) from their prior experiences. The enduring nature of these beliefs is such that writers such as Richardson (1996) have questioned the degree to which later formal teacher education can impact on practice. This is the subject of the following subsection.

#### **2.4.4 The impact of teacher education on practical knowledge**

Formal knowledge, that is 'understandings that have been agreed on within a community of scholars as worthwhile and valid' (Richardson, 1996: 106), clearly forms a central part of initial teacher training courses. As late as 1992, however, Spada and Massey (1992) noted the limitations of research on the effect of teacher education on the practices of novice teachers in second language learning. Kagan's (1992) review (in the same year) of the literature which was available on teacher education as an intervention concluded that initial teacher training courses often had a limited effect on teachers' development. Dunkin's (1996) response to the review, however, did question the extent to which the conclusions reached could be sustained.

Much of the later research on the effect of formal knowledge on teachers' practical knowledge has also identified variations in the extent to which classroom practices reflected the principles novice teachers were taught in their teacher education programmes. Peacock's (2001) longitudinal study of pre-service ESL teachers, for example, identified a distinct lack of change in the trainees' belief systems regarding various aspects of L2 learning at the end of their 3-year pre-service training.

Richards and Pennington (1998) also identified a lack of long term transfer of communicative approaches in their study of beginning teachers.

Individual beliefs are the filter through which teacher education courses are interpreted (Richardson, 1996) and a substantial body of literature argues that teacher education courses need to make trainees' beliefs explicit and to adopt constructivist approaches to developing teachers if courses are to have an impact (Freeman and Johnson, 1998). Johnson's (1992) study of the type of knowledge that teachers considered when they made decisions during initial teaching also suggests a range of considerations that mitigate against simple application of formal knowledge. Not only could there be a failure of the course to impact on teachers' cognitions by not fully engaging them and dealing with their values or prior knowledge, but there may be possible limitations in the course itself, the degree of practicality of the content and the degree to which it matches the reality of the context (Johnson, 1996b). Tsui's (2003b) research also indicates that a process of experimentation is required to create a 'fit' between formal knowledge, the teacher's personal style and the local context. The next section will focus on the last of these, the context in which teachers find themselves situated.

#### **2.4.5 The importance of context for teachers' practical knowledge**

Qualitative case studies in education purposefully include rich description of the teaching context in order that contextual variables, which can impact greatly on the study, can be properly understood (Yin, 1994). In the field of teacher cognition, the environment in which teaching takes place is similarly viewed as being central to a full understanding of the teachers' thoughts, beliefs and actions. As Borg argues, 'the social, instructional and physical settings in which teachers work have a major impact on their cognitions and practices' (Borg, 2006: 275).

It can be useful for us to distinguish between these levels and types of contextual influence which impact on teachers and Jordell's (1987) categories are useful in this respect. The first level in his paradigm is that of the classroom, in which it is the students and the immediate learning environment which influence the teacher's perspectives. This is followed by personal influences which exist outside the classroom, such as colleagues, line-managers and administrators that the teacher comes into contact with. The third category is that of structural influences, the rules

systems and goal systems which govern the institution as a whole. These will be discussed in turn with reference to additional literature.

The effect of the classroom, as the site where teaching is undertaken, on teachers' thinking has been the focus of research for some time (see, for example, Bulloughs, 1986 for a case study of an individual teacher's development and Richards and Lockhart, 1996, on the role of reflection on classroom practice). A substantial amount of practical knowledge research has also focused on the effect of the classroom environment (Chou, 2008; Wyatt, 2009) as the means through which practical knowledge is developed.

The second level of context (the socialisation process) in which a novice teacher is exposed to a professional culture with shared goals and values has been viewed by writers such as Bliss as 'the process by which an individual becomes a participating member of the society of teachers' (Bliss and Reck, 1991: 6). Thus, the argument is that 'those who inhabit a common world come to share the same definitions of the situation; the same perspectives' (Hanson and Herrington, 1976: 80). As Bullough puts it:

the first year teacher ...enters a set of established roles, relationships, ways of behaving, and understandings (including a language used to talk about the schools, students, teachers and the like) that give a particular [institution] its unique character (Bullough, 1989: 4-5)

However, whereas Hoy and Feldman (1968) assume that there is a homogeneous culture into which neophytes are socialised, writers such as Carew and Lightfoot (1979) and Metz (1978) have argued that cultures are often diverse and various subcultures can usually be identified. Equally, it may not be the case that there is ready acquiescence to institutional demands in teaching and Zeichner *et al.* argue that beginning teachers 'give some direction to the strength and quality of their socialization into teaching' (Zeichner *et al.*, 1987: 52).

Research on novice language teachers includes Hayes' (2008) study on a novice EL teacher's experiences of working in a Thai institution, which explores how the beginning teacher needs to deal with issues related to his or her colleagues and other people in the same organisation. Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) also provide examples of teachers who have been trained in using communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches but have faced resistance from other colleagues when they have introduced communicative innovations.

The structural influences on a teacher include the curriculum, administrative requirements and the degree of supervision and control exerted at an institutional level. Farrell's (2008a) research on a first year English language teacher in Singapore, for example, highlights the contrast between the teacher's learner-centred approach to teaching and the school's teacher-centred. A further example can be seen in the case study research conducted by Urmston and Pennington (2008), which identifies how the strong washback effect of the examinations system in Hong Kong constrained the teaching approaches of the novice teachers with the result that they became less interactive and innovative. Lack of institutional support can also be an influence as indicated in the research by Ting and Watts (2008) which describes the isolation experienced by a novice TEFL teacher who resorted to journal reading as a means of engaging with the EFL community when the institutional culture did not facilitate this. Borg (2008) similarly reports a lack of institutional support and developmental opportunities in different European contexts during novice teachers' first year of teaching following their completion of the CELTA teacher training qualification.

The three levels of context, then, can be seen to potentially impact on the practical knowledge of teachers. The process by which this practical knowledge develops is discussed in the following section.

## **2.5 Practical knowledge growth**

### **2.5.1 The concept of practical knowledge growth**

The term 'practical knowledge growth' is used in this study to indicate positive qualitative changes in a teacher's practical knowledge. Wyatt (2009) in his 3-year longitudinal study into a non-native speaker teacher's growth in practical knowledge of using CLT suggests that if a teacher's practical knowledge in any area can be described as 'well-developed', with the implication that growth has taken place, possible indicators would be: (1) the existence of internal consistency in reported beliefs about teaching and learning; (2) that reported beliefs are likely to draw upon public as well as personal theory; (3) that there is likely to be synergy between reported beliefs and classroom practice. I adopt these criteria for practical knowledge growth (which I use interchangeably with the term 'practical knowledge development') but recognise that they are not uncontested. Research by Phipps and Borg (2009), for example, suggests a number of factors which might result in a

reduction of consistency between beliefs and practices of experienced language teachers and a review of research by Buehl and Beck (2015) indicates that there are many ways in which practices and beliefs might be related.

Elbaz (1983) also views the integration of different elements of teacher cognition to be important. She notes that the formal knowledge introduced on training courses tends to be compartmentalised rather than applied to an understanding of teaching until there is interaction between that received knowledge and the teacher's own experiential knowledge. Chou's (2008) research on ELT teachers in Taiwan similarly showed the teachers' practical knowledge to be 'formulated through a process of reshaping their existing knowledge of English teaching and learning from training programs and their classroom practices' (Chou, 2008: 539). Given the lack of a longitudinal dimension to the study, however, the 'process' was not closely explored.

Together with the integration of aspects of practical knowledge, expert teachers demonstrate depth and scope in their practical knowledge. Chapman (2004) notes that explanations of the same content can differ as a result of the richness of a teacher's practical knowledge and Wyatt's research identified practical knowledge growth in an in-service Omani teacher's engaging in 'designing, teaching, and evaluating increasingly rich and sophisticated tasks' (Wyatt, 2009: 12). Similarly, Johnson (2003) views the complexity of the conceptualisation and planning of tasks as indicative of expertise and such development on the part of a teacher would constitute practical knowledge growth. The following section examines the factors which hinder or promote such growth.

### **2.5.2 Factors affecting practical knowledge growth**

As Freeman argues, 'the urge to change and the pull to do what is familiar create a central tension in teachers' thinking about their practice' (1991: 4). An important variable in practical knowledge growth would therefore seem to be the drive to change; that is, the teacher's motivation. Wyatt's (2008) study on in-service EL teachers in Oman, for example, suggests that teachers' desire to be able to act autonomously and effectively in the role of teacher (their self-efficacy) should be seen to be an important factor in participants' practical knowledge growth though other aspects of intrinsic teacher motivation may also be identifiable (Dörnyei, 2001).

The process of reflection can also be seen to be crucial. As Schön (1983) argues, teachers do not simply make reasonable decisions and judgements in their application of knowledge and techniques introduced in formal teacher education programmes; they also engage readily in reflection. Meijer *et al.*'s (1999) research, for example, which found variations in the sophistication of the practical knowledge of teachers, concluded that 'teachers whose practical knowledge seems to be limited seldom think about their teaching and therefore lack a deep understanding of what is going on in their classroom, in their students' minds, or in their students' environment' (Meijer *et al.*, 1999: 81). This would seem to be particularly the case where the skills concerned are less mechanical in nature (Wyatt, 2008).

Teachers' relations with colleagues have also been identified as having a potentially important effect on their growth. Clark and Yinger (1987) emphasize the importance of the 'reflective conversation' about practice which can take place between teachers. More formal relations such as mentoring can also be powerful means of developing the reflective skills of novice teachers (Malderez and Bodoczky, 1999). Other examples of supported opportunities for reflection would include collaborative action research (Driel *et al.*, 2001).

At an institutional level, an insistence of the delivery of a set curriculum (Farrell, 2008a) and the washback effect of examinations (Urmston and Pennington, 2008) can both be seen as potential obstacles to teachers' development; teachers are constrained in their practices and unable to develop skills that they might in other contexts. The availability of INSET and other CPD opportunities will also affect the degree to which teachers have the opportunity to examine and understand their current practices and to be aware of alternative approaches (Farrell, 2003). Such interventions can be expected to be more effective when they encourage teachers to make connections between what they already know (and do) and new experiences (Mann, 2005).

Formal knowledge can have a significant effect on a teacher's practical knowledge since it can stimulate the practitioner to re-examine his or her practice, can provide deeper insights into current practice and can offer the teacher alternative approaches (Richards and Nunan, 1990). Ting and Watts'(2008) research, for example, identified the importance of journal articles for a first year EFL teacher (formerly a biochemist) to engage with her new-found community of practice and to define

'good practice'. The impact of formal knowledge is not automatic, however, and there is a body of research indicating that in-service teacher teaching (INSET) needs to adopt a constructivist approach that engages with the whole person (Freeman, 1994). Chapman (2004) also argues that positive personal experiences with formal knowledge ideas may be necessary for teachers to develop 'meaningful PK' and Holliday (1992) highlights the need for teacher training to be culturally appropriate.

Wyatt and Borg's (2011) study of the practical knowledge growth of in-service teachers in Oman concludes that there are a range of variables that can influence the degree of practical knowledge growth of language teachers. The factors identified were contextual factors, relational factors, attitudinal factors, cognitive factors and pedagogical factors. In an ESOL context, however, there is little research to indicate which factors are more in evidence in this context and the role that they play in teachers' practical knowledge growth. There is also limited research regarding appropriate support at different stages in an ESOL teacher's development and a longitudinal study offers the potential to reveal teachers' responses to different potential stimuli for growth. Clearly, this may include compensation for the lack of such stimuli as in Ting and Watts' study of 2008 over the course of an academic year early in the participants' teaching careers.

## **2.6 Teaching speaking skills**

### **2.6.1 Introduction**

This section discusses issues in the teaching of speaking skills, drawing on the more abundant literature in the field of the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), whilst also referring to available literature on ESOL. The first part discusses the nature of speaking (2.6.2). This is followed by discussion of how second language speaking is learnt (2.6.3). The next part discusses the two main approaches to the teaching of speaking skills (2.6.4) and in the subsequent section I discuss how course aims can be represented in syllabus design (2.6.5). This is followed by a consideration of resources for the teaching of speaking (2.6.6). I then discuss pedagogy for the teaching of speaking skills (2.6.7).

### **2.6.2 The nature of speaking**

Speaking is a complex skill (Bygate, 2005). As Thornbury (2012) points out, '[it] involves a knowledge base plus the skills with which to mobilise this knowledge'

(Thornbury, 2012: 198). Thus, whilst grammar, vocabulary and phonology are key constituent elements in the process of speaking, the interlocutor needs to operate in real time and often to engage in face-to-face communication, monitoring listener response and interacting appropriately with interlocutors (Bygate, 1987). Speaking is not simply a case of the production of accurate language forms but requires that the speaker be ‘fluent, intelligible, interactive and contextually appropriate’ (Thornbury, 2012: 199). Similarly, Goh and Burns (2012) point out that ‘to speak effectively in a second language, learners have to combine relevant knowledge about language and discourse with speaking skills [...] to produce fluent and accurate output in a variety of communicative situations’ (Goh and Burns, 2012: 133).

Spoken discourse differs from written language in several key ways. Hatch (1992) identifies the key characteristics of spoken discourse as its being more unplanned, more socially contextualised and more informal than written discourse. The linguistic features of this spoken language include features such as hesitations and false starts with spoken discourse often consisting of sentence fragments instead of complete sentences (Flowerdew and Miller, 2005). In addition, spoken discourse exhibits speech acts (such as compliments and interruptions) as well as examples of interactive meaning negotiation (McCarthy and Carter, 1995). As Bygate (2005) reminds us, the many genres of speaking (such as public talks, telephone conversations, service encounters) also serve to underline the central role played by speaking conditions in explaining the occurrence of language features.

### **2.6.3 The learning of second language speaking**

This section introduces dominant theories relevant to the learning of second language speaking and I briefly introduce cognitive theory, socio-cultural theory and humanistic theory in turn. Cognitive theory views second language learning as a complex cognitive skill (Johnson, 1996a). Learners must consciously gain control of the language as a coherent and meaningful system which they can then use in real-life situations. There is a focus, therefore on the information-processing capacity of individuals. Levelt’s (1989) model of speech production, which consists of the three stages of conceptual preparation, formulation and articulation, is useful as a means of understanding the cognitive process involved. According to the model, once the speaker’s message has been conceived, its formulation involves long-term memory knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, register, and discourse in order to formulate

that message and then the use of pronunciation for articulation of the message. The speech production process also involves self-monitoring as speakers ‘[have to] monitor the production process so as to make adjustments as and when necessary according to what they judge appropriate to interlocutors’ comprehension and acceptance’ (Bygate, 1998: 26-27).

Cognitive skill learning theory highlights the need for the automatisation (or ‘proceduralisation’) of language in order to reduce the processing demands on the speaker given limited attentional resources (Johnson, 1996a). Skehan’s (1996) research into the relationship amongst complexity, accuracy and fluency as indicators of the quality of users’ spoken language, for example, provides strong indications of the cognitive processing demands of real-time communication. Where there is limited automatisation of language by the user, a focus on one component may compromise a learner’s performance in another (e.g. accuracy may be sacrificed to achieve communicative aims) in what is termed a ‘trade-off effect’ (Vercellotti, 2015). The implications for teaching speaking of a focus on conscious skill-getting are discussed in the following section (2.6.3).

Sociolinguistic theory situates the learning process firmly in its social context and adopts the position that learning is mediated through social and cultural activity (Block, 2003). Through experience with others (with a focus on group interaction), meaning is jointly constructed until learners are in a position to appropriate it. The performance of the learners is therefore supported (or ‘scaffolded’) to allow them to extend their current performance into the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). During meaningful interaction, learners use a range of communicative strategies which promote negotiation of meaning and consequently enhance second language acquisition. Awareness of the routines and typical scripts which occur in different settings together with an understanding of roles and appropriate register (all of which are essential aspects of interaction) are learnt in social settings (Duff, 2007). This therefore has strong implications for the quality and type of interactions between learners and teachers (and for language using opportunities outside the classroom). Comprehensible output also appears to play an essential role in the development of speaking proficiency (Swain, 1995). In situations where there is reformulated language in the form of feedback, language can be ‘pushed’ so that it becomes more comprehensible to others (Nation (2009).

Such a process indicates the importance of feedback for the user on his or her language to discontinue inaccurate or inappropriate usage; thus, negotiated meaning involves improved language control and better expression of meaning.

Humanistic psychology has also had a significant impact on the field of applied linguistics with its emphasis on the whole person and an individual's inner feelings, including the desire to learn (Stevick, 1990). The approaches to language teaching which have been inspired by insights in this field are based on constructivist ideas of learning as something which is not applied to learners but is created by them (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Affective factors have also been shown to be highly significant for the development of speaking skills (Goh and Burns, 2012). A possible effect of anxiety, which may be related to one or more of the three areas of conceptual preparation, formulation and articulation (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991), can be an aversion to speech production (see, for example, Horwitz and Horwitz, 1986; Tsui, 1996). Such a phenomenon is of particular concern as with insufficient speech production, the processing required for language proceduralisation (Johnson, 1996a) and language acquisition (Swain, 2000) may not be present.

#### **2.6.4 Direct and indirect approaches to the teaching of speaking**

In the historical development of the teaching of speaking, an earlier focus on grammar translation was replaced with a movement in which there was a focus on the language which was believed to approximate spoken English (as opposed to the written English of literary texts) and on providing opportunities for repetition of this spoken English language which would facilitate automaticity in this language use (Bygate, 2009). However, as Goh and Burns (2012) point out, the result was a strong focus at sentence-level on grammar and pronunciation which '[lost] sight of the fact that speaking is a social act and the fact that the way we speak will be influenced by many factors related to the social nature of speech' (Goh and Burns, 2012: 50).

Since this time, there has been ongoing debate around the adoption of approaches which have been termed 'direct' and 'indirect' (Burns, 1998; Richards, 1990). For Richards, direct approaches involve 'planning a conversation programme around the specific micro-skills, strategies, and processes that are involved in fluent conversation' (1990: 77). These would include teacher-led part-task activities such as drills, pattern practice and structure manipulation (Richards 1990). As Fulcher (2003) points out, the use of controlled exercises using dialogue scripts are also

common in this approach to the teaching of speaking. Direct approaches, therefore, are the opposite of spontaneous production (Willis, 2015) and involve the learning of institutionalised routines through isolated pattern practice which provides learners with control over discrete language elements.

With indirect approaches, on the other hand, ‘conversational competence is seen as the product of engaging learners in conversational interaction’ (Richards, 1990: 76-77). The view that learners can develop their communicative competence simply by participating in communicative speaking activities involves learners in whole-task activities such as project work, group discussions, role-play and information-gap activities (Burns, 1998). This approach has its origins in Hymes’ (1972) introduction of the notion of ‘communicative competence’, which emphasized the importance of users’ ability to use language effectively in actual communication. Canale and Swain (1980) developed the notion to include grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence in a way that was significant in that it drew attention to the need for learners not just to know about these elements but to be able to put them into practice through the development of key *skills*. This focus on communicative competence led to the introduction of communicative language teaching (CLT) (see, for example, Johnson and Morrow, 1981; Brumfit, 1984).

Advocates of an indirect approach argue that in order for users to develop their ability to use language communicatively in real-time, interactional settings, they should be engaged in the activity of communicative interaction in the classroom as a means of developing the necessary language knowledge and skills rather than focusing on discrete aspects of language which they then need to independently transfer to communicative contexts (Thornbury, 2011). As Bax (2003) notes, the CLT approach is well-established within the ELT sector and is a strong feature of many teacher education courses.

In the speaking pedagogy section (2.6.7), I describe in more detail the contested nature of these approaches and how elements of both are often combined in the classroom. First, however, in the following section, I describe issues surrounding syllabi and teaching resources for the teaching of speaking skills.

### 2.6.5 The speaking syllabus

Identification of learner needs has traditionally been divided into those which are *objective* (derivable from factual information about learners) and learners' cognitive and affective *subjective* needs (Nunan, 1998). Objective needs include consideration of learners' existing proficiency levels, their possible future language uses and formal assessments which they will need to take. One outcome of a focus on future language use contexts, for example, has been the development of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses focusing on the communicative acts for which speaking is required (Munby, 1981) and consideration of speech characteristics such as context-specific register and lexis (Hinkel, 2006).

For some time, there has been a prevailing view that teachers should also both be aware of and responsive to students' subjective needs (see, for example, Wright, 1987; Goh and Burns, 2012) and that language teaching should concern itself with more learner-centred curricula (Nunan, 1988, 2013). Participatory models involve greater localised action with collaboration between teacher and students in which the students are given greater ownership over the learning process (Dickinson, 1992) in contrast to the imposition of ends-means curricula (Auerbach, 1992). Brindley, however, reminds us that such a learner-centred system 'can only acquire the flexibility it needs to operate effectively if regular and ongoing consultation and negotiation between teachers and learners takes place' (Brindley, 1989: 64).

The rationalising principles of syllabi for the teaching of speaking skills can take a variety of forms and a syllabus may include one or more of a number of elements: language items, ideas and skills (Nation and Newton, 2009). Syllabi include those focusing on pure forms of CLT, which are designed on the basis that through the process of learners solving communicative problems, language learning will take care of itself (see Allwright, 1979; Prabhu 1987). Thus, Allwright was to claim that 'if communication is *the* aim, then it should be *the* major element in the process' (1979: 167). As I discuss further in the following section, this CLT was to take different forms, which were themselves translated into distinct tasks for the development of speaking skills.

The re-evaluation of syllabus objectives which arose from the CLT movement gave rise to sociolinguistic and strategic objectives in addition to the grammatical organisation of the syllabus which had preceded it (Thornbury, 2011). The result

was that ‘a creative compromise was to interweave several strands - grammatical, lexical, and functional - into one integrated course design, thereby offering a more comprehensive blueprint for communicative competence’ (Thornbury 2011: 189).

The Adult ESOL Core Curriculum (AECC) is the sector-wide standardised curriculum for ESOL. I discuss this curriculum in greater detail in Chapter 3 but it is worth mentioning here that the AECC was also designed to reflect the prevalent view in language syllabus design of an integrated-strand approach to the teaching of speaking (Williams and Williams, 2007). Whilst some view the curriculum as an enabling tool, especially for many new entrants to the profession (see, for example, Cara et al., 2008), the research indicates that others view it as being restrictive by narrowing what is taught (Ivanić et al., 2006) and under-representing the realities of immigrants’ everyday experiences, the diversity of students and their aspirations and needs (Cooke, 2006).

The role of pronunciation in the syllabus is worthy of particular focus in the context of current debates. Lack of knowledge of phonetic structure at the level of the individual word and at a supra-segmental level can result in a lack of comprehension on the part of the listener (Brazil, 1994; Fulcher, 2003). This seems to establish a case for the inclusion of pronunciation in the syllabus. However, the notion of ‘intelligibility’ (Jenkins, 2000) has gained increasing currency and with it a resistance to the imposition of native-speaker pronunciation norms on other language users (see also Seidlhofer, 2011).

### **2.6.6 Resources for the teaching of speaking**

Whilst many speaking tasks that teachers might introduce do not require teaching resources (Thornbury, 2012), it is useful to understand the principles which underlie those materials which are available to teachers. This is particularly relevant as the methodology adopted by teachers is often determined by the course book adopted (Goh and Burns, 2012) even though many course book chapters may lack a clearly identifiable theoretical approach and instead typically consist of ‘a series of activities linked together by a common theme’ (Goh and Burns, 2012: 138). I have already discussed examples of direct and indirect tasks which might be included in materials for the teaching of speaking (such as ‘indirect’ discussion activities and ‘direct’ sentence manipulation activities) and in this present section I shall focus principally on considerations of the degree to which natural language use is

represented in teaching materials and the extent to which materials are designed to meet the interests of the learners.

In 2.6.1, I identified key differences between the nature of spoken and written language but as Thornbury and Slade (2006) state, ‘for a long time spoken language was taught as if it were simply a less formal version of written language’ (2006: 2). McCarthy and O’Keeffe (2004) have similarly identified an under-representation of the features of spoken language in the language models presented in many speaking materials and argue, as Crawford (2002) does, that materials should present appropriate and realistic language models and that they should contextualise language activities. Burns (2001) also notes that scripted dialogues often fail to contain the unpredictable and truly interactive nature of conversation. Although there has been greater use of spoken corpora to increase our knowledge of spoken language (McCarthy and O’Keeffe, 2004) and this has potential for language which is more natural to be included in materials, arguments have also been put forward for the use of less authentic language to be incorporated in order to develop students’ use of new structures, to facilitate comprehension through vocabulary restriction, and to establish clear turn taking (Shumin, 2001; Crawford, 2002).

The choice of relevant materials to motivate students includes considerations of the degree to which they are of interest to the students (Harmer, 2003). Hughes (2011) aligns with this view and highlights the role of students’ cultural and social situation for the contextualisation of speaking activities. As many commercially-produced EFL course books make stereotyped assumptions about the (largely affluent) lifestyles and values of language users, Williams and Williams (2007) argue that such materials may not always appeal to the ESOL learners and therefore not generate the degree of pushed output required for language development (Swain, 1985).

### **2.6.7 Pedagogy for the teaching of speaking**

In 2.6.4, I introduced the notion of direct and indirect approaches to the teaching of speaking (Richards, 1990). This separation between direct and indirect approaches creates a false dichotomy, however, and the pure forms of each have been criticised as being inadequate in themselves for developing language speaking. Indirect activities, for example, can neglect a direct focus on elements of discourse and language and focusing solely on fluency through communicative activities may

result in fossilisation of the learners' interlanguage and in limited language complexity (Thornbury and Slade, 2006). With reliance solely on direct approaches, on the other hand, the development of knowledge and skills to negotiate, interact and to negotiate meaning may not take place (Bygate, 2009). As a result, neither approach in isolation would seem to be sufficient to facilitate the production of spoken discourse which meets the desired aims of being 'socially and interpersonally appropriate and grammatically accurate' (Goh and Burns, 2012: 136).

In practice, the two approaches are often combined in one of a number of possible ways. As early as 1976, Byrne (1976) proposed a presentation-production-practice (PPP) model which sought to follow controlled language practice with a freer practice stage to promote the development of fluency. Staged development from direct to indirect activities was also included in the framework proposed by Littlewood (1992), allowing for the 'pushed output' (Swain and Lapkin, 1995) to allow the structures to be acquired and used communicatively. A later model, still allowing for a combination of direct and indirect models but focusing on awareness raising, appropriation and autonomous use of language (including both direct and indirect approaches) in different contexts has also since been put forward by Thornbury (2005). Such a model recognises research suggesting that an explicit focus on aspects of language could encourage conscious 'noticing' of language features (Schmidt, 1990), akin to Cazden's (1992) 'instructional detours', which seek to focus on aspects of language in conjunction with indirect tasks in order to increase language accuracy. Nassaji (2000) explains the rationale for teachers focusing on linguistic forms as they arise in communicative activities as follows:

If the goal of second language learning is to develop fluency, as well as accuracy and complexity [...] and if accuracy is not achieved unless learners pay attention to form, learning may be more effective if learners focus on form while using language for communication. (Nassaji, 2000: 244)

The sequencing of combined direct and indirect activities has also been reversed in the case of task-based learning (TBL) (Willis, 1996; Ellis, 2003), in which learners are encouraged to first attend to meaning and to task completion before a (possible) later focus on learners' own language use and accurate language forms. Overall, then, developments have led Thornbury to sum up the current situation regarding teaching of speaking as 'reflect[ing] a theoretically eclectic approach, combining

elements, such as drills, that predate communicative methodology, along with information-gap tasks and informal discussions, conducted in pairs or small groups' (Thornbury, 2012: 203).

I have already indicated the value of accuracy alongside complexity and fluency as a criterion of the quality of learners' speech (see also Norris and Ortega, 2009). For both direct and indirect approaches to the teaching of speaking corrective feedback plays a potentially pivotal role in the development of this speech accuracy and questions arise of which errors should be corrected, by whom, the timing of the corrective feedback and the form the feedback should take (Ellis, 2009). The six categories of corrective feedback (Lyster and Ranta, 1997) can be divided into explicit correction, recasts (providing reformulations of all or part of an utterance) or prompts (where students are encouraged to self-correct) (Lyster and Saito, 2010).

Research suggests that corrective feedback overall can have a positive effect on language accuracy (Mackey, 2006) and that prompts can be more effective in bringing about the desired accuracy than recasts (Yang and Lyster, 2010). However, Ellis (2009) argues that the value of corrective feedback depends on how it is adopted within the different approaches, a position which is shared by Harmer (1991) in his assertion of the appropriateness of correction during accuracy activities but not those activities with communicative aims. Research also suggests that students want to be corrected but with sensitivity (Klapper, 2006; Murphy, 1986) for the affective reasons already outlined. Finally, Anderson et al. (2004) and Lynch (2007) also report positive results from students transcribing and correcting recordings of their own speech production rather than feedback being provided solely by the teacher, suggesting possibilities for more learner-centred approaches to correction.

In 2.6.3, I referred to sociocultural theory in the learning of speaking skills in which the need for learners to interact in a language to learn it underscores the value classroom interaction (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The social dimension of language learning can also be particularly important for ESOL students (Cooke and Simpson, 2008) and there are opportunities for teachers to promote the use of pair work and group work and to both scaffold learner development and create situations in which there is scaffolding of weaker students by stronger ones (Harmer, 1991). As Larsen Freeman (2000) states, the significance of students working together is emphasized

since ‘students can begin to feel a sense of community, which is particularly important for ESOL students who can learn from each other as well as the teacher’ (Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 97).

I earlier highlighted the need for comprehensible output (Swain, 2000) for the development of speaking skills. Thus, as Nolasco and Arthur (1987) argue, whereas the interactive short turn is useful for beginner learners, beyond this, activities facilitating extended chunks of speech are more appropriate. To this end, Yuan and Ellis (2003) report on the role that pre-task planning can play in supporting learners’ speech, particularly in the areas of fluency and complexity, with learners demonstrating a richer interpretation of the tasks and experimenting more with language to convey the greater complexity of their ideas.

As activities which do not motivate students may not facilitate the language production required for effective language development, there would seem to be a pressing case for teaching to be oriented to the interests of the learners in the classroom. One way that Baynham (2006) proposes this in the ESOL classroom is for the ‘bringing in’ of the outside into the classroom so that learners are engaged in narrating and discussing events and issues which are personally relevant to them. Cooke and Roberts (2007) also refer to the need to challenge adult learners intellectually with suitable topics that will stimulate participation (see also Dörnyei and Csizér, 1998 on creating an optimum level of challenge for the learner).

Creating a positive learning environment is also a concern for language learning as I indicated in the humanistic section in 2.6.3. Lessons can be conducted in a manner which fosters positive feelings towards the language and the learning process (Williams and Burden, 1997). Effective teachers also use motivational factors such as introducing students to the concepts of self-appraisal and self-evaluation, providing positive feedback and encouraging students to take pride in their achievements (Wright, 1987). As Brophy (1981) argues, however, it is important that there be principled use of praise as a response to noteworthy effort or success and encouraging internal attribution. For Oxford, ‘the affective side of the learner is probably one of the most important influences on language learning success or failure’ (Oxford, 1990: 140). Certainly, anxiety can affect students’ willingness to communicate in a second language (Yashima, 2002) and student achievement has therefore been found to increase where teachers ‘[are] understanding, helpful and

friendly and show leadership without being too strict' (Muijs and Reynolds, 2001: 58).

In the language teaching classroom, the teacher has to create the conditions under which learning can take place; this can refer to the managerial skills of setting up learning activities, modelling where appropriate and ensuring that they run smoothly whilst also including the social nature of classroom interaction (Wright, 1987). Effective teachers anticipate potential difficulties (Littlewood, 1981) and groove their students into routines that enable the smooth running of the class. The 'basics of teaching' such as providing clear instructions and establishing discipline are important (Muijs and Reynolds, 2001) but research suggests that as teachers become more expert, they increasingly focus on student learning as opposed to classroom management issues in their decision making (Tsui, 2003a).

To close this discussion of pedagogy, I draw on some of the main findings of the ESOL Effective Practice Project (EEPP) (Baynham et al., 2006). This is the only large scale research project to have been conducted on teaching in adult ESOL classrooms in England. The study took place between 2003 and 2006 with observational data collected from 40 classes across different geographical sites. One of the aims of the research was to identify effective practice by studying the correlation between classroom teaching and learners' progress and I summarise a number of key relevant findings below:

- a) Learners have few opportunities to speak English in their daily lives, so tend to favour classrooms which are interactive and have a strong focus on speaking.
- b) Interaction is important for second language socialisation.
- c) Effective teaching and learning was achieved through ways such as creating a supportive environment, employing direct teaching strategies such as modelling and repeating, planning, and creating balance and variety in lessons.
- d) The most effective teachers in the study also drew on learners' own experiences and lives outside the classroom - bringing the outside in and encouraging the students to speak from within. Where this occurred, longer and more complex stretches of talk resulted.
- e) Effective teachers raised awareness of linguistic structures.

- f) Many teachers adopted a ‘bricoleur’ (eclectic) approach in which they selected materials and activities from a range of sources to fit the needs of the specific class  
(Baynham et al., 2006)

It can be seen that the research emphasises direct *and* indirect approaches, together with the social and affective nature of the learning of speaking skills. It also recognises the value of eclecticism in response to the needs of individual learners in their specific learning contexts.

### **2.6.8 Literature review summary**

This literature review has argued that there is a dearth of research on early career English language teachers and that despite recognition of the value of practical knowledge research, there remains very limited research generally and none in the curricular area of the teaching of speaking or the ESOL context. There has also been little longitudinal research on the conditions which support or hinder the growth of such knowledge. The literature review has also discussed the issues relating to the teaching of speaking skills which will be used to inform discussion of the research findings in Chapter 10.

## Chapter Three: The ESOL Context

### 3.1 Introduction

ESOL classes can be defined as ‘those attended by adults who arrive in the United Kingdom expecting to settle for the medium to long term’ (Wallace, 2006: 75). Until relatively recently, ESOL provision in the UK was characterised by lower-level ‘survival’ English for migrants who were either settled or intending to settle in the UK (Ward, 2007). An underlying assumption in this provision was that immigrants requiring ESOL classes, in contrast to English as a foreign language (EFL) students, possessed only a rudimentary education. As a result, separate provision was developed for the two sets of students, each with distinct qualifications, teaching methods and materials (Barton and Pitt, 2003).

In practice, however, this historical distinction is no longer sustainable. As demographic profiles have changed, the range of educational and professional backgrounds to be found amongst ESOL students has widened (Kings and Casey, 2014) and the students’ increasingly heterogeneous aspirations have resulted in a higher degree of overlap between ESOL and EFL (Williams and Williams, 2007). Thus, classifying ESOL students as requiring only ‘survival English’ does not address the diverse needs of the students attending ESOL classes (Schellekens, 2001; Simpson et al., 2011). As global flows become more fluid (Vertovec, 2006), ESOL students’ period of stay in the UK may also be less predictable than suggested by earlier definitions (Paget and Stevenson, 2014).

### 3.2 ESOL and inward migration

It can be seen that ESOL is inextricably linked with inward migration, a phenomenon which has long been a feature of British demography (Cooke and Simpson, 2008). The drivers for this migration are numerous and include internal factors, such as the British labour market and government immigration policy, and external ones, such as the economic, social and political conditions which the migrant is leaving (Ward, 2007). A significant factor in recent years is that the increase in globalization has resulted in greater and easier movement of labour across national boundaries and has impacted on both the nature and scale of demographic changes (Zetter et al., 2006).

The patterns of inward migration are complex, but the government report ‘Breaking the Language Barriers’ (DfEE, 2000) usefully introduces discrete categories to aid discussion of the range of needs experienced by ESOL students. The first such category is that of the ‘settled communities’. These are principally the New Commonwealth immigrants who began to arrive in the UK in the 1950s, having been actively recruited in order to meet the British labour shortage. These workers were largely from the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean and were almost exclusively destined for low-skilled occupations. Many of the workers settled, often with their families, and the communities are now well-established in British society.

The second category consists of the fiancé(e)s, spouses and dependents that arrive in the UK to join family members or future spouses. Brides and bridegrooms from ‘home’ are often particularly valued because they reinforce old ties for the diasporic community (Windsor and Healey, 2006). The fact that this migration disproportionately involves wives and fiancées has implications in that these women can later experience difficulties in accessing mainstream ESOL provision (Ward, 2007).

The third group contains those individuals who are victims of forced migration owing to conflict, persecution and poverty in their own countries. The country of origin of these refugees changes as events unfold in different parts of the world. Thus, whereas East African Asians were forced to leave Uganda in the 1960s, and a sizeable number of Latin Americans fled from oppressive governments in the 1970s (Ward, 2007), more recent arrivals are predominantly from countries such as Pakistan, Iran, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Syria (Home Office, 2014), all of which have experienced recent conflict refugee (Refugee Council, 2013).

The broad category of ‘migrant workers’ includes those entering the UK under a range of different schemes and agreements. One of the most notable changes in recent years has been the addition of the A8 accession countries to the EU labour force as a result of the European Union enlargement of May 2004. Workers from these countries now enjoy freedom of movement, residence and employment in the UK alongside other EU citizens. It is worth noting that the type of work undertaken by migrant workers varies enormously from well-paid status positions, such as doctors, to low-skilled occupations, such as cleaners (Paget and Stevenson, 2014).

### **3.3 ESOL students**

The composition of the ESOL classroom reflects these shifts in the patterns of migration and settlement (Barton and Pitt, 2003) and is characterised by the diversity of students' cultural backgrounds, languages, religions and experiences of the world (Windsor and Healey, 2006). Indeed, nationality groups are themselves not homogenous as students differ in aspects such as class, age and family status (Dalziel and Sofres, 2005). Vertovec (2006), in his discussion of the superdiversity of British cities also includes a number of other significant variables which further differentiate students; these include the differences in their immigration statuses, their labour experiences and the rights and services that they are granted in the host country.

Of particular significance for the ESOL classroom are the diverse educational backgrounds work experience and literacy levels of the students (Roberts et al., 2007). Many ESOL students are professionals with successful careers and require the necessary demonstrable language proficiency to continue their work in a new country. There are also a sizeable number of students who do not bring such a strong literacy background and well-developed study skills to the classroom (Allemano, 2013). This educational disadvantage may be the result of a number of factors such as a lack of emphasis on education in the home culture, poverty or interrupted study as a result of conflict and displacement (Ward, 2007).

The aspirations of the individual students can also vary greatly depending on their life experiences, their personal circumstances and their individual disposition (Roberts et al., 2004). Thus, students may be motivated to study English by a desire to later access wider education courses and training, to enhance their ability to operate at a social level, to enter the workplace, for their own self-esteem or for a combination of these and other factors. Moreover, students' needs can change over time as, for example, students' ability to operate at a social level develops and they then prepare themselves for academic study (Paget and Stevenson, 2014).

A number of challenges can present themselves for students accessing ESOL provision. Funding changes, including the recent introduction of fees for certain groups of students (Skills Funding Agency, 2014), can be obstacles to formal learning. Low literacy skills may also make it difficult for students to follow the classes that they are placed in and it can take time for students to adapt to a study

environment if they have had limited previous schooling (Allemano, 2013). For refugees, the majority of whom were either working or studying before leaving their country of origin (Kirk, 2004), the experience of torture, deprivation and separation has mental health implications that can make it difficult to concentrate on their studies (Hodge, 2004).

### **3.4 ESOL before ‘Skills for Life’**

Alongside migration into the UK, there is an accompanying history of ESOL teaching which dates back to at least the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Windsor and Healey, 2006). Indeed, English language support for Jewish refugees was in place in the capital through municipal adult education from the 1870s (Rosenberg, 2007). ESOL provision, however, was often ad hoc and marked by a lack of consistency across different regions. Despite some local education authority (LEA) initiatives, much of the ESOL provision to the arrivals from the New Commonwealth, for example, was originally staffed by volunteers and untrained teachers with classes frequently taking place in people’s homes or in local adult community centres on the initiative of the voluntary sector (Hamilton and Hillier, 2009).

Central government financial support for ESOL was only provided for the first time in 1967 under section 11 of the Local Government Act of 1966 (Rosenberg, 2007). Later funding also came from the European Social Fund and in 1984 a major development was that ESOL came under the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit. Whilst this proved to be relatively ineffective in terms of developing ESOL provision it did highlight the need for investment in the sector and statutory funding was secured from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in the 1990s (Hamilton and Hillier, 2009). This funding, however, was inadequate for the scale of the provision required and policies were not in place to sufficiently address the challenge of a coordinated response to ESOL needs at a national level (Rosenberg, 2007).

### **3.5 Skills for Life**

A major development in ESOL provision came with the introduction of the ‘Skills for Life’ policy in March 2001, which was to fundamentally alter the ESOL sector. This policy came about as a response to a government report entitled ‘A Fresh Start’ (DfEE, 1999), which recommended the launching of a national strategy to deal with an identified lack of basic skills amongst the British population. Although ESOL

was not initially included in the strategy (which focused on adult literacy and numeracy), the publication of Breaking the Language Barriers (DfEE, 2000), which highlighted the pressing need also for a systematic approach to the language needs of a significant proportion of the population, led to its adoption as a strand within the Skills for Life strategy.

The integration of ESOL policy with adult literacy was a watershed development (Rosenberg, 2006) and led to the creation of a unit within the then Department for Education and Employment to oversee a national infrastructure to raise standards in the sector. Under Skills for Life, a process of heavy investment, rationalisation and standardisation followed which significantly raised the profile and scale of ESOL, and radically changed the environment in which ESOL teaching and learning took place.

Funding for ESOL under the Skills for Life strategy increased to unprecedented levels and in 2009 stood in the region of £300 million per year (DIUS, 2009). As a result, the number of students having the opportunity to access provision increased dramatically and the ‘ghettoisation’ of ESOL was prevented (Hamilton and Hillier, 2009: 7). The drive towards standardisation also saw the introduction of a statutory ESOL core curriculum (DfES, 2001) and related teaching resources; a national teacher training framework; and student qualifications mapped against national standards (Roberts et al., 2007).

The Skills for Life programmes, being publicly-funded, were routinely inspected as part of the auditing processes (Cooke and Simpson, 2008). As evidence of learning outcomes and the meeting of performance targets was increasingly required (NATECLA, 2009), there arose concern amongst some in the profession that this trend was not always in the best interests of the students. Practitioners and managers also frequently commented that the administrative burden had increased significantly with the introduction of Skills for Life (Callaghan, 2004).

A further cause for concern was the ‘yoking together’ of basic literacy and ESOL (Cooke and Simpson, 2008). Some writers have expressed concern about the extent to which the distinctive nature of ESOL and the diversity of ESOL students’ backgrounds were taken into account under Skills for Life (Ward, 2007). A more top-down, prescriptive culture with less focus on group work and group dynamics, it was argued, can result from an ‘ironing out of differences’ (Roberts et al., 2007: 27)

and a tendency can develop to focus on more easily measured skills and the deficit notions which form the basis of the core curriculum documents (Wallace, 2006).

In 2009, the New Approach to ESOL was introduced, which lowered ESOL's profile within Skills for Life and promoted greater coordination of ESOL at a local level (Simpson and Whiteside, 2012). Such a challenge to the cohesive Skills for Life framework has been predicted by Simpson et al. (2011: 5) as being 'likely to lead to a return to the fragmented picture of ESOL of previous times'. The movement away from Skills for Life has also been accompanied by other significant changes which I include in the section which follows.

### **3.6 The wider socio-political context**

Skills for Life policy reflected government priorities, which are themselves influenced by public debate regarding immigration. Media attitudes towards migrants, including the demonization of asylum seekers and refugees in certain quarters (Greenslade, 2005; Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008) are often in conflict with what many in the sector view as the *right* of newcomers to the UK to learn English (Cooke and Simpson, 2008). A National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) report, for example, identified 'a disturbing and disagreeable underbelly in British policy that blames foreigners for their 'foreignness', and fails to recognise the enrichment of our lives that cultural diversity brings' (NIACE, 2006: preface).

The focus of the previous government on cohesion and community integration can be seen to have involved a tightening of the relationship between language, immigration, citizenship and national security (Cooke and Simpson, 2008). The Cantle report emphasized the centrality of English to social cohesion (Home Office, 2001), with implications for the role that ESOL provision plays in this process. The last UK Census showed 850,000 people reporting an inability to speak English well or very well and the identified need for migrants to '[possess]the linguistic capacity to join British life and culture' (Office for National Statistics, 2011) although we might view language as 'a necessary, but not sufficient condition for cohesion' (NIACE, 2009). Since the introduction of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, a succession of language requirements have therefore been introduced, including points for language ability under the points-based immigration system, requirement for spouses or partners, and those looking to settle (Paget and Stevenson, 2014; Skills Funding Agency, 2015).

In addition, funding is under pressure, having been reduced over the last six years and with further reductions in funding planned (BIS, 2014; Skills Funding Agency, 2014). A growing focus on the economy in the funding policy has also been impacting on the ESOL sector. Government strategy aiming to increase the country's global competitiveness by improving the skills base was clearly outlined in the Leitch Review (2006) and this process has continued since with a strong focus on ESOL for employability (Skills Funding Agency, 2014). For some, this has created a tension between the more encompassing aims of English language education and a narrow employment-related pedagogic focus (Roberts et al., 2007; Paget and Stevenson, 2014). This positioning of ESOL as a means of increasing migrants' employability is also evident in the funding systems since, in 2011/12, fully-funded ESOL courses were limited by the government to migrants claiming 'active benefits' (BIS, 2014). In a similar vein, Jobcentre Plus clients who have low English language proficiency are now also referred to ESOL providers (*Ibid*) and there is a tendency towards short employability courses in provision (Hubbie and Kennedy, 2011). However, Paget and Stevenson (2014) argue that there are non-labour market-related benefits of students' linguistic development which '...range from so-called 'soft' outcomes such as independence, confidence and self-determination, to more tangible benefits such as better access to health care and education' (2014: 10).

### **3.7 The teaching framework**

As part of Skills for Life, the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum was introduced with the purpose of '...[clarifying] the skills, knowledge and understanding that students need in order to reach the national standards' (DfES, 2001: 2). The curriculum focuses on the four language skills and sets the language competencies at different levels with the intention of enabling teachers to assess students' starting points, language learning aims and to design learning programmes (Ward, 2007). Whilst some have viewed the curriculum as an enabling tool, especially for many new entrants to the profession (see, for example, Cara et al., 2008), others have viewed it as being restrictive by narrowing what is taught (Ivanič et al., 2006) and under-representing the realities of immigrants' everyday experiences (Cooke, 2006).

Skills for Life introduced five standardised levels of language study in mainstream provision, which were all mapped against the curriculum. In ascending order of

language proficiency, the levels are Entry level 1 (E1), E2, E3, Level 1 and Level 2. These levels correspond with the Council of Europe levels A1, A2, B1, B2 and C1/2 respectively (Schellekens, 2007). Given that E1 assumes a basic level of literacy and rudiments of the English language, many colleges also offer ‘pre-entry’ classes to prepare students for the main courses. However, with an increasing focus on accredited learning, many fear that funding for these courses is under threat (Paget and Stevenson, 2014). Since September 2004, qualifications have been available at each of the five levels for the skills of speaking and listening (as a single qualification), reading, and writing. This rationalisation of qualifications was offered to avoid the inconsistency of non-benchmarked qualifications which previously existed (DfEE, 2000). Although Skills for Life officially came to an end in 2009 with the introduction of the New Approach (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2009), the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum continues to be offered as a primary resource for teachers at a sector level (Excellence Gateway, 2015).

### **3.8 ESOL teacher development**

The development of ESOL prior to Skills for Life was such that there was little coordination of teaching standards at a national level and there were no mandatory teaching qualifications (NRDC, 2009). The result was that Rosenberg was to declare in 2006 that ‘there [had] been good quality assistance alongside poor practice for at least 25 years’ (Rosenberg, 2006). From the outset, a core component of the Skills for Life strategy, therefore, was to improve the quality of teaching through a new infrastructure (Cara et al., 2008).

As of September 2001, all new teachers in the lifelong learning sector were required to hold a generic teaching qualification endorsed by Standards Verification UK (SVUK). The requirements were increased in September 2003 and new ESOL teachers were expected to acquire an approved specialist qualification and a Certificate in Education (Cert Ed) or Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) based on the FENTO standards for teaching and learning at level 4. A further development came in September 2007, when a new framework developed by Lifelong Learning UK for Skills for Life teachers was introduced (LLUK, 2008). Since 2013, however, the requirement for ESOL teachers to possess (or be in the process of obtaining) such a recognised subject-specific teaching qualification has

been lifted and institutions are now able to decide the qualification requirements themselves (Talent, 2014).

At the time when the research was conducted, all new teachers were required to register with the Institute for Learning (IfL), which is the professional body responsible for the registration and ongoing licensing of teachers. In order to gain Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status, the teachers had to attain both a generic teaching qualification and a specialist ESOL qualification at level 5 (TALENT, 2010). Those with a generic teaching qualification were expected to do this within 2 years and other practitioners within 5 years (IfL, 2010) with the qualifications gained separately or within an integrated course.

When the research was conducted, there was also an Institute for Learning (IfL) requirement that all teachers and trainers took 30 hours of demonstrable continuing professional development per year (LLUK, 2008). ESOL teachers tended to be enthusiastic about CPD opportunities (Dalziel and Sofres, 2005) and Cara *et al.* (2008) found an average of 5 days of CPD activities for ESOL teachers over a period of one year. The requirement for teachers to declare their CPD activity each year ceased in 2012 when the further education workforce regulations were revoked (DBIS, 2012).

## Chapter Four: Research Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design of the study and provides a rationale for the research methodology adopted. As Calderhead argues

Making explicit the methodological and theoretical assumptions underlying the concept and methods used in research is not only essential to achieving a fuller exploration of the data we gather, but also to providing the research with higher levels of validity because assumptions guide the decision-making process as in any other cognitive activity and making them explicit will help others evaluate the research (Calderhead, 1987: 188).

The first section introduces the research questions for the study (4.2). The second section explains the ontological and epistemological positioning of the research (4.3). This is followed, in the third section, by a discussion of the adoption of a qualitative multiple-case study approach to the study (4.4). The fourth section describes the research setting and the strategy employed for sampling together with an explanation of the researcher's positioning towards the participants (4.5). The fifth section introduces the research methods and describes how the research instruments were employed (4.6). In the sixth section, there is then a description of the data analysis process which took place (4.7). This is followed by discussion of the steps taken to enhance the quality of the study (4.8). The final section explains how the data are presented (4.9).

### 4.2 Research questions

In the literature review (Chapter 2), I highlighted the importance of the concept of practical knowledge for our understanding of teachers' classroom practices. I also argued that practical knowledge is heavily influenced by the context in which teaching takes place and, in Chapter 3, I described the many distinctive characteristics of the ESOL sector to support the claim that it would be valuable to study the impact of this significant but under-explored context on language teachers' practical knowledge. The dearth of studies into the practical knowledge of specific domains of language teaching (Borg, 2006) has also allowed me to establish that there is a clear need for such research into the teaching of speaking skills. The lack of both longitudinal research into the development of language teaching practical

knowledge and of research exploring the practical knowledge of early career language teachers has also been presented to highlight a clear gap in the existing literature which warrants investigation.

The research questions for this study (which I first presented in Chapter 2) are as follows:

1. What is the practical knowledge of teaching speaking held by the ESOL teachers?
2. To what extent is the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking shared?
3. What (if any) growth takes place in the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking?
4. What factors appear to promote (or hinder) the growth of the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking?

These research questions will be explored in the context of four separate case studies (see 4.5.2 for information on the participants) with subsequent cross-case discussion of the research questions forming Chapter 10.

### **4.3 Research tradition**

The philosophy of the researcher and his or her understanding of the nature of reality and knowledge have important implications for research which is undertaken (Duff, 2008). The ontological positioning (relating to the nature of reality) and epistemological positioning (relating to the origin and acquisition of knowledge) which are provided here, I argue, together form a coherent research paradigm for the methodological choices detailed later.

#### **4.3.1 Ontological positioning**

The research adopts the ontological position that there can be nothing truly objective since that would involve it existing independently of the world of ideas in which we live (Pring, 2004). A constructivist stance is assumed in which it is posited that there are actually multiple realities which are filtered through our senses (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Individuals construct their own realities and will perceive a given social phenomenon in different ways (Cohen et al., 2007). This study places importance on this personal way in which individual teachers create meaning since the teachers' practical knowledge can only be experienced by the teacher (Black and

Halliwell, 2000). Equally significant is the need to recognise that the researchers themselves perceive the world subjectively (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

### **4.3.2 Epistemological positioning**

Given the above, the resulting epistemological positioning for this study is that the research aims to *construct* knowledge by means of the research process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Such a stance is intended to ‘[facilitate the creation of] meaning out of complex and problematic situations’ (Hopkins et al., 1989: 78), focusing on the subjective meanings that participants themselves assign through their own frames of reference (Bryman, 1984). The resulting interpretivist research paradigm views the social world as ‘not governed by law-like regularities but [...] mediated through meaning and human agency’ (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, cited in Duff, 2008: 29). The reality of the teachers’ inner worlds ‘cannot be discovered as it does not exist prior to being constructed’ (Hartas, 2010b: 43) and, in the case of interviews, the knowledge is instead co-constructed by the interaction between the researcher and interviewees (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). I discuss the process of data generation through interviews and classroom observation in 4.6.2 and 4.6.3 respectively.

### **4.3.3 Methodological implications of positioning**

The ontological and epistemological positioning described above have clear implications for the methodology adopted. As is further explained in the section on qualitative case studies (4.4.1), the individual manner in which we experience the world and create our own realities supports the adoption of an approach in which the participants’ own perceptions of their experiences are explored. The complex nature of such realities is also such that a multi-method approach might need to be adopted (as it is here) to construct them (Cohen et al., 2007). The difficulties posed by this data generation process, the subjectivity involved in the analysis of the data, and the lack of reproducibility of the data themselves, are explicitly acknowledged in this study and measures to increase the quality of the study are included in the trustworthiness section (4.8).

## **4.4 Research approach**

The study adopted a collective case study approach within the research paradigm described above. In this section, the rationale for the use of qualitative case studies is provided together with an explanation of how the use of multiple cases was approached.

#### **4.4.1 Qualitative case study**

A characteristic feature of case study research is that it enables more in-depth study of the phenomenon (Hamel et al., 1993) and this in turn can ‘capture its dynamic, complex and multi-faceted nature’ (Wyness, 2010: 161). This intensive research approach is particularly relevant for the current study given ‘the complexity of the knowledge and insights that underlie teachers actions in practice’ (Verloop et al., 2001). Therefore, in order to understand the individual nature of the participants’ practical knowledge, a relatively complete picture needs to be developed. Vital for the specific research focus on the ESOL context is also the fact that qualitative case study research generally places great emphasis on the natural context (Stake, 1995) with a view to better retaining ‘the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events’ (Yin, 1994: 3).

A further strength of the case study approach is that it allows for the use of a variety of methods depending on the circumstances and the specific needs of the situation (Yin, 1994). A number of sources of data can also be used or different methods to collect data to add depth (what Geertz, 1973, refers to as ‘thickness’) to the data. This multi-method approach is consistent with the constructivist paradigm described above. It recognises that there are multiple forms of interpretations (or multiple realities) at work and seeks to ‘clarify meaning by identifying different ways the case is being seen’ (Stake 2005: 454). The exploratory nature of this research and the fact that, as I have stated, the research sought to investigate the teachers’ practical knowledge of teaching speaking in all its complexity suggests that qualitative case study research would be appropriate.

#### **4.4.2 Collective case study**

Collective case study research involves focusing on a relatively small sample (such as the four cases in this study) and collecting substantial data on these cases selected rather than choosing a larger sample (Yin, 1994). This allows the uniqueness and complexity of each case to be explored in-depth but it also permits cross-case analysis to take place within the study. Whilst case study approaches are not centred on generalisability (Yin, 1994), themes can often be developed across the cases and common elements identified through cross-case analysis, leading to the making of cross-case assertions (Stake, 2006). The inclusion of a number of cases can thus make the arguments more compelling (Yin, 1994) and add robustness to the

conclusions reached about individual cases. This research, however, does not limit itself to the restrictions of common findings but also ‘celebrates the particular’ (Wyatt, 2009). The differences which emerge between cases can themselves be as significant as the commonalities (Silverman, 2000) and provide a deeper understanding of the contextual factors which are at play.

#### **4.4.3 Longitudinal research**

Two of the research questions for this study relate to development of the teachers’ practical knowledge of teaching speaking over time: Question 3 investigates the degree of growth that takes place over the academic year whilst Question 4 seeks to identify the factors which appear to be significant in facilitating or hindering such development. Tracking such growth implies longitudinal research in which there are multiple data generation points over the research period (Gorard, 2001). The longitudinal research then allows comparisons to be made between the different data sets within each case (Cohen et al., 2007). The aim of the research is not to measure change in a quantifiable way, however, but instead to identify change that takes place and to attempt to account for this change.

I chose the adoption of individual sample members as the focus of this longitudinal research approach in order to explore micro-level change where the focus of the change is the individual and such an approach has the potential to ‘catch the complexity of human behaviour’ (Cohen et al., 2007: 212). That is, this approach would enable me to track the unique differences in the practical knowledge of teaching speaking of the individual teachers.

A further advantage of a longitudinal study is that it can increase the credibility of the research through the prolonged engagement involved (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I was, however, acutely aware that the potential for participant attrition would be significantly increased by the longitudinal nature of the study (Duff, 2008) and that the lack of such studies is in part due to the extended period of time required for such data collection (Wyatt, 2008). The following section explains the settings for the field work and the research participants involved.

## **4.5 Research setting and the participants**

### **4.5.1 Research setting**

The chosen sites for the research were a number of further education colleges (main sites and related adult community learning locations) in the counties of West Yorkshire and Lancashire. The geographical choice was a pragmatic decision in that the proximity of the sites made regular visits for data collection feasible. Recognising what is possible, given available resources, is important to successful research (Silverman, 2005) and, according to Mason (2002), does not compromise the research as long as practical issues are dealt with in ways which are intellectually sound. In addition to this geographical convenience, senior staff in the chosen institutions were supportive of my study and facilitated access to potential participants, which was of great practical assistance.

### **4.5.2 Sampling strategy**

In October 2011, I circulated an electronic call for participants using my existing personal networks, contacts identified in local FE settings, and two ESOL professional networks: the ESOL-Research email list operated by James Simpson and the North-West branch of the National Association of Teachers of English and Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA). I decided that this would be the most appropriate point in the year to actively advertise for participants since colleges at this stage would have, on the whole, organised their staffing based on student recruitment. In a sector where a substantial proportion of the teachers work part-time, it seemed unwise to call for participants until the teachers' employment situation was clarified. It also seemed prudent to allow a further two weeks for the teaching term to be underway before asking teachers to take on the additional commitment of involvement in my research project.

It soon became apparent, particularly in communications with personal contacts within the sector locally, that retrenchment in the ESOL sector meant that the number of teachers entering the profession was extremely limited and many early career teachers (the group I was targeting) had been unable to secure employment. Of the responses that I initially received, many were in locations which were too geographically distant for the conducting of a series of classroom observations and interviews to have been feasible. Concerned at the difficulties in recruiting participants, I contacted local ESOL teacher trainers that I had come to know and

asked them to forward my call for participants to their former trainees. It is worth noting that three of the eventual sample initially contacted me as a result of such a suggestion from their teacher trainer that participation in my research might be useful for their professional development. The fourth participant received a similar recommendation from her line manager.

There were 13 expressions of interest in total by potential participants. Initial face-to-face meetings were then arranged by email with the six early career ESOL practitioners who had contacted me and who worked within a four-hour round trip by car of my home city. In the meetings, I discussed the rationale for the research and explained the contents of the informed consent forms (see Appendices 1 and 2) so that the teachers were fully aware of the voluntary nature of their involvement in the research, of the nature of the data generation, of how the findings would be used and of the fact that confidentiality would be preserved. I then invited the teachers to take the forms away and to reflect on them further before signing and returning the consent forms. All teachers were given a second copy for their own reference.

Two of these potential participants were unable to continue with the study. One of them had included the condition of a ‘quid pro quo’ arrangement of formal observation feedback in return for his collaboration. Such reciprocity is an ethical research consideration (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012) and whilst there are situations in which it might be ethical to offer something in return for teachers’ participation, I had concerns regarding this instance. Firstly, I felt that it would have been inappropriate for me to have offered the degree of feedback requested given the ethical implications of providing feedback that might affect the teacher’s practices when I was not a trained ESOL teacher trainer familiar with ESOL institutional inspection regimes. I was also anxious to limit my influence on the teachers’ practices and their cognitions about those practices (which Cohen et al., 2007 refer to as ‘reactivity’) during the period of the research and felt that agreeing to provide feedback for teachers’ professional development purposes would also compromise the research. The other potential participant who withdrew was unable to secure permission from his organisation for observations to be conducted given the potential intrusiveness for the student group, who were all female torture victims. I felt that it was highly appropriate that there be such ethical gate-keeping in place but was also aware that since the observations formed an integral part of the

research design, it would be impossible to include this participant in the sample as a result. Both this and the previous case are examples of ‘ethical dilemmas’ that Rallis and Rossman (2009) identify as accompanying methodological decision-making.

The four participants finally selected were all employed by further education colleges in the north of England. It can be seen that the degree of choice of participants was constrained by the availability of volunteers for the study. This convenience sample (Punch, 2009), however, is not inconsistent with the research design: the study was not seeking to choose a sample which was statistically representative of the wider ESOL teaching population and, additionally, it would simply not have been possible to have compiled information about the broader population of early career ESOL teachers.

The cases were reasonably heterogeneous in terms of personal characteristics (such as age, gender and linguistic background). Similarly, there was diversity in the institutional settings (main sites and adult community learning centres) and the courses taught (different levels, age groups and programme aims). Table 4.1 below summarises the information about the four participants in the study.

Table 4.1: Participant information

Pseudonyms	Nationality	Teaching qualifications	ESOL Teaching experience	Experience in current institution	Main site or in community
Alan	British	DT(E)LLS*	2 years	1 year	Main site
Diane	British	DT(E)LLS	2 years	1 year	Main site
Susan	British	DT(E)LLS	2 years	1 year	Main site
Rachel	Indian	DT(E)LLS	2 years	6 months	Community

\*Note that this refers to the Diploma in Teaching English (ESOL) in the Lifelong Learning Sector, which I discussed in the previous chapter.

#### 4.5.3 Positioning towards the participants

For any qualitative researcher there is a need to make positioning and methodological assumptions as explicit as possible throughout the work since the interactive nature of the research process is influenced by the researcher’s own worldview (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). For this research, my role was that of a ‘non-participant observer’ (Cohen et al., 2007) in that I was not professionally involved in any of the ESOL settings. Whilst being an insider brings a familiarity with the context and might help to create a degree of rapport (Creswell, 2009), I felt

that my outsider status enabled me to avoid initial assumptions about the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking to ESOL students.

#### **4.6 Research methods**

##### **4.6.1 A multi-method approach to data generation**

This research adopts a multi-method approach to data generation, employing interviews, classroom observations and audio-recording of classroom events. The use of different methods provided a variety of data sets with which to investigate the participants' cognitions and behaviour. In her review of methods for investigating teachers' cognitions, Kagan (1990) is rather critical of research designs in which only one method or instrument is applied, arguing that such designs are problematic because the complexity of a teacher's practical knowledge cannot be captured by a single instrument. Driel et al. (2001) similarly argue that

Teachers' practical knowledge [...] is constructed by teachers in the context of their work and integrates experiential knowledge, formal knowledge, and personal beliefs. To capture this complex type of knowledge, multi-method designs are necessary. (Driel et al., 2001: 137)

Thus, it was intended that adoption of a multi-method approach would be more likely to capture the complex, multifaceted aspects of teaching and learning. The use of interviews, classroom observation and audio-recording of classes are described in turn below.

##### **4.6.2 Interview data**

Interviews were adopted as a primary means of data generation in this study owing to their potential to access participants' lived experience (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). The emic nature of the research emphasizes the participants' own perspectives and interpretations of events. Observable data alone would not have sufficed for this purpose as we cannot infer teachers' beliefs about their teaching solely from classroom observation (Breen et al., 2001). Therefore, data collection methods were required which would allow in-depth analysis of the mental activity that underpins behaviour. Yin (1994) suggests that interviews lend themselves particularly well to generating interpretive data and the 'co-creation' of knowledge through the interview interaction (Walford, 2001) is also consistent with the constructivist interpretivist epistemological positioning of the study (Kvale, 1996).

I began the data collection with a priori categories for teachers' practical knowledge based on the knowledge domains identified by Almarza (1996). I treated the categories as tentative and exploratory (Zeichner et al., 1987) but they continued to be largely suitable for the research whilst allowing for adjustments to be made in the specific data generated for individual cases. As Borg and Burns (2008) argue, categories do not have to be fixed but can be refined over time.

Once the interview data was generated and transcribed, it was analysed to identify salient themes and patterns that could be further explored in subsequent interviews. This process was intended to allow the participants' views to come to the fore of the research (Drever, 2003) and to enable more focused insights into areas identified as being of interest. Delamont (1992), for example, discussing interview categories in qualitative research, warns against introducing a high degree of structure at an early stage and thereby introducing premature closure of what the key issues are.

All but one of the initial categories for the data generation were identical to those created by Elbaz (1983). These categories are sufficiently comprehensive to cover the different possible aspects of the teachers' practical knowledge and had proved to be effective during the pilot study I conducted (a copy of this initial interview schedule can be found in Appendix 3). The additional category explicitly focussed on teachers' cognitions about their own development vis-a-vis the teaching of speaking skills.

The interviewing began in October 2011, shortly after the commencement of the new academic year for the colleges. The initial interviews involved the collection of background information on the participants, including their educational backgrounds, classroom experience, motivations for entering the profession and their roles and teaching responsibilities within the college. There were then six additional interviews for each participant at reasonably regular intervals throughout the academic year. The interviews each lasted for approximately one hour, which allowed for a substantial amount of data to be collected without the process becoming too onerous for the interviewees.

The structure that was initially adopted for the interviews was that the first part of the interview was devoted to discussing the data from the previous observed lesson. These discussions aimed to explore related issues and to use the observation foci as a way into contextualised exploration of the research categories. Although I had

decided that video recording would be too intrusive and could therefore not use recordings for stimulus recall (Johnson, 1992), I was able to refer to incidents from my field notes. The second part of the interview involved discussion of any remaining research categories which could not be anchored in the observed class such as discussion of the wider institutional context and factors which might be relevant for the development of the teachers' practical knowledge.

The interviews were semi-structured (Cohen et al., 2007) and the relatively open nature of the interview allowed me to modify the sequence of questions to maintain a more natural flow to the interview process and to explore issues which had arisen during the classroom observations (Drever, 2003). The in-depth and semi-structured interviews that were used sought to facilitate the generation of teachers' own expression of their cognitions (Bogdan and Bilken, 1992). I was also able to explore the participants' responses as it is through such probing and clarification that qualitative research can produce detailed accounts of teachers' work (Lewis, 2003). This engagement with the participants, I felt, enhanced their ability to reflect on their work more deeply during the interviews and created the necessary rapport for the teachers' perceptions to be more fully explored.

I was mindful of the fact that, as Riley (1963) has highlighted, there is a potential 'control effect' of teachers becoming more sensitized to issues through their being repeatedly addressed and the effect this had on the data generated. I was also aware that the longitudinal nature of the research necessitated keeping the participants on board and that the opportunity for them to talk about issues relevant to them could increase their engagement with the study. Owing to the iterative nature of the research, the early interviews included broader questions and as the study progressed the questions became more focussed as I was able to refer back to concrete examples of practice and developing themes.

The interviews initially took place in the teaching institutions during normal working hours but demands on teachers' time led to other arrangements being made, including weekend interviews at suitable locations with two of the participants. The fact that these participants felt more relaxed in comfortable settings and without time pressures meant that we were able to explore themes more thoroughly: though interviews were still timetabled to last for a maximum of one hour to respect the participants' time, the teachers were often keen to continue once this period had

elapsed. The interviews were all digitally audio-recorded with the consent of the participants.

#### **4.6.3 Classroom observation data**

Classroom observations were also adopted for data collection purposes. There is a performative dimension to practical knowledge (Wyatt and Borg, 2011) which requires research on practical knowledge to collect data about teacher behaviour in addition to data regarding their cognitions. Observations give direct access to events and interactions in the classroom (Simpson and Tuson, 2003). As Elbaz (1981) states

The nature, defining characteristics, and criteria of [practical] knowledge should be apparent from their use. The most plausible way of conceptualising practical knowledge, then, should be via direct examination (Elbaz, 1981: 46)

Similarly, Borg (2006) reminds us that teachers' verbal accounts of what happens in the classroom are not always congruous with what can be observed for a number of reasons. This has important implications for practical knowledge research, the principal one being that researchers should concern themselves with what teachers actually do rather than simply investigate those teachers' stated theoretical beliefs in isolation. Observation data 'offers an investigator the opportunity to gather 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations. In this way, the researcher can look directly at what is taking place *in situ* rather than relying on second-hand accounts' (Cohen et al., 2007: 396). The classroom observations also play another significant role in that they provide a means by which the observer can use events from an observed class for 'stimulated recall' (Gass and Mackey, 2000). This allows interviewer and interviewee to explore the cognitions behind classroom behaviour which they have both experienced (albeit in different ways) as I discussed in the preceding section.

An observation schedule was used to chronologically note teacher actions and classroom events. The schedule included initial orienting categories (Zeichner et al., 1987) for the observation data generation (a copy of the schedule is included in Appendix 4). As with the interview data generation described above, these initial *a priori* categories were adopted with specific observation foci emerging for the different cases as distinct themes arose from analysis of the data sets. Such semi-structured observation '[has] an agenda of issues but will gather data to illuminate

these issues in a far less predetermined or systematic manner [than a highly structured observations]' (Cohen et al., 2007: 397)

It should be noted that the observation foci did not always continue through the rest of the study and at times they were specific to certain classes rather than the teacher's practices as a whole. The bases on which the foci were developed included the following:

- a) To investigate areas of experimentation, change, or specific challenge that teachers explicitly commented on during the interviews;
- b) To explore key aspects of teaching practices mentioned by the practitioners during interview to establish the degree to which cognitions and practices concurred;
- c) To further explore key areas which had been considered particularly noteworthy during earlier observations; and
- d) To consciously identify teachers' practices for classes with different levels of ability and courses with diverse cohorts and stated aims.

The classroom observations began in October 2011 and took place at regular intervals throughout the academic year with a total of 6 observations for each participant. The observations each lasted between 1 and 3 hours, depending on the institutional timetables, teacher preferences and the availability of the researcher. The observations also ran in tandem with the interviews, ideally taking place several days prior to the interviews in order to allow time for the observation data to be analysed in advance of the interviews.

When undertaking the classroom observations I encouraged the teachers to engage in their normal classroom teaching and not to make any allowances for my presence. Whilst I was aware of the possibility of reactivity (Cozby, 2008), I felt that my growing rapport with the participants and the non-judgmental tone of our discussions both served to minimise this influence (see Holliday, 2002 on the importance of the researcher's relationship with the observed to minimise reactivity). Prior to the lesson, teachers would either supply me with a lesson plan or, where this was not available, explain the focus of the lesson. I also collected copies of hand outs from the class or noted the materials used. I positioned myself discretely in the classroom to be as unobtrusive as possible and avoided engaging directly in the lesson so that I could make notes as a non-participant observer (Cohen et al., 2007).

The only exception to this was when technical problems meant that a teacher could not open a digital audio recording and, in the spirit of professional collaboration, I agreed to read the transcript aloud to the students (in DO3).

#### **4.6.4 Classroom audio recordings**

Owing to the intrusive nature of video-recording equipment for both participants and their students (Cohen et al., 2007), I had decided not to adopt this form of data generation. As the research progressed, however, I found that it would be useful to have an accurate record of the language produced by the teachers. Although I had been noting direct quotations in the observations when deemed relevant, I began to feel that this real time assessment of the significance of discourse may be inadequate and that deeper analysis of the audio recordings at a later point might produce other significant findings. Therefore, on the advice of my supervisors, I introduced the use of digital audio recordings for the final two rounds of observations. I did not fully transcribe these recordings but instead listened to them numerous times in order to identify those sections for which transcriptions would be useful.

#### **4.6.5 Multiple data generation points**

As mentioned earlier, data was generated at a number of different points throughout the academic year. This is consistent with the longitudinal dimension of the study discussed in 4.4.3 but also enabled data to be generated for teachers' cognitions of different aspects of the academic year. Over this period, teachers would experience phenomena such as changes in group composition, Ofsted inspections, internal observations and student examinations. These varied events also provided 'ways in' to explore the teachers' cognitions about these contextualised realities.

Following an initial meeting in which the participants provided biographical information and details of their teaching responsibilities, I conducted six classroom observations and six interviews with each of the four participants over the course of an academic year. This data generation design took the form of two rounds of observations and follow-up interviews with the participants in each academic term. This allowed for a reasonably similar period of actual teaching to have taken place between each of the data collection points. As such, data generation timetabling was intended to support the longitudinal dimension of the research, allowing any changes in teachers' practical knowledge to be identified at regular intervals. The data generation timetable is shown in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Data collection schedule

	Term 1		Term 2	Term 3
All teachers	Initial Meeting	Observations 1 and 2 Interviews 1 and 2	Observations 3 and 4 Interviews 3 and 4	Observations * 5 and 6 Interviews 5 and 6

\* These observed classes were audio-recorded

#### 4.6.6 Practical constraints on data generation

Although the original intention of conducting two classroom observations and two interviews with each teacher per term was carried out, the decision about which classes to observe and when, where and when to conduct interviews became far more complex than had initially been anticipated. Reasons for this included the following:

- a) Teachers did not want to be observed during Ofsted inspection periods or during periods when they might be observed by their own line managers (or other persons in their institutions). The Ofsted inspections, in particular, meant that teachers had a great deal of extra pressure at these times.
- b) A certain number of sessions were devoted to initial assessments and diagnostic sessions for new intakes of students and later to examining, which effectively reduced the number of taught classes that could be observed. These practical constraints are explicitly addressed later in the study. In addition, there were inter-term and intra-term breaks.
- c) Teachers' timetables determined the number of sessions that were directly relevant to my research. I did not observe any reading and writing classes, for example, even though there is certainly oral language produced in them, because I wanted to observe classes where there was a primary focus on the development of speaking skills.
- d) Teachers also demonstrated preferences for the classes they wanted to be observed. Some of these preferences included concerns about my observing 'challenging' classes; however, preferences also included classes that teachers wanted to discuss, at times because of particular issues they were trying to

understand better and at times because they felt that the classes would give me a better understanding of certain dimensions of their work.

e) My own availability as researcher was also a factor in the timings of classroom observations and inevitably influenced the classes that were observed. The distances involved in travelling to the different institutions and my own professional commitments added to the challenges of time constraints with evening classes presenting the least problems for repeated observation of the same groups.

f) Although it would have been ideal to have interviewed the teachers immediately before the observed classes and again immediately afterwards, this was not practicable. Teachers were invariably busy with student queries, photocopying and administrative tasks and I felt that asking teachers to provide this additional time for the purposes of my study would have been an imposition.

## **4.7 Data analysis**

### **4.7.1 Transcription**

I used Express Scribe software to transcribe the audio recordings of the interviews in full. I adopted a non-verbatim approach to the transcriptions (they did not include all speech phenomena such as false starts and hesitations) since such information would not have increased my ability to answer the research questions. I did, however, add any annotations to the transcriptions which I felt would be important for a reading of the data (such as the participant's ironic or jocular tone of voice). Pauses were indicated by three continuous dots (...) (no brackets), deleted sections by [...] and the transcription was punctuated, where possible, following standard conventions for written English. As mentioned earlier, I also transcribed identified sections of the classroom audio recordings (introduced in the third college term) to supplement the data generated through my field notes.

### **4.7.2 Data coding**

During the field work period, I reviewed the generated data several times and first analysed it according to the initial categories I began working with. At the same time, I tried to keep an open mind and allow fresh patterns and themes to emerge, a process which Simpson and Tuson (2003) refer to as allowing the data to 'speak'. I used NVivo9 software in order to carry out this coding process and, with the initial categories as the primary nodes, I coded the data for each case, creating sub-nodes

where there appeared to be useful sub-themes emerging within the data. An example of the NVivo coding for one of the cases (that of Alan) is included in Appendix 5. I then repeated the process for the classroom observation data by, for example, adding classroom episodes and information about the lesson aims and the materials adopted. When the coding was complete, I printed the separate coded sections to review my original coding decisions, to re-assign data to other categories where appropriate and to test whether there were correlations between the cases which might be obscured by the coding process. I then evaluated the significance of the emerging themes and the degree of support provided by the data in order to identify the findings to be presented.

As I was interested in the teachers' practical knowledge growth, in addition to observing the teachers' practices over the year, I also discussed the teachers' practical knowledge development of teaching speaking explicitly with them over the duration of the research. By way of illustration of the development of sub-categories generally, examples for this area of practical knowledge development included the role of continuing professional development (CPD), teachers' motivation to develop and the effect of the teaching context (such as the degree of collegiality). Categories and sub-categories did not always relate to all the cases although I did ensure that I periodically tested for cross-case correspondence of themes that were emerging in individual cases to establish whether they applied across any of the other case studies.

#### **4.8 Trustworthiness**

The case study has long been stereotyped as a weak sibling among social science methods owing to its perceived lack of objectivity and rigour (Hartas, 2010a). As a result, Yin (1994) argues that researchers must exercise great care in designing and doing case studies to overcome these traditional criticisms of the method. 'Trustworthiness' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) is a useful means of approaching these quality control considerations and can be defined as 'a set of standards that demonstrates that a research study has been conducted competently and ethically' (Rallis and Rossman, 2009: 264). A trustworthy piece of research is one which is 'worth paying attention to, worth taking account of' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 290) in that it meets these competency and ethical criteria.

I have referred throughout the data generation sections in 4.6 to the steps that were taken to enhance the quality of the interview and classroom observation data that were generated. These are briefly summarised below (4.8.1). I then identify how I addressed quality concerns in the data analysis (4.8.2), discuss the data presentation quality (4.8.3), describe the pilot study which took place (4.8.4) and explain how I dealt with ethical issues that arose (4.8.5).

#### **4.8.1 The data quality**

In order to increase the quality of the observation data, I attempted to reduce the degree of reactivity (Cozby, 2008); that is, the extent to which the data is affected by the presence of the researcher. A key measure adopted was the development of a positive relationship with the participants (Borg, 1997; Holliday, 2002) throughout the research process in which I emphasized the non-evaluative nature of the classroom observation.

In addition, I adopted a flexible approach of semi-structured observation (Cohen et al., 2007) with initial orienting categories (Zeichner et al., 1987) based on previous studies which also allowed for a refinement of sub-categories. Field notes were made systematically and I referred to Spradley's (1980) checklist for the dimensions of observation to orientate this observation. Observation data generation also formed part of a pilot study conducted (see 4.8.4) in which I was able to reflect on and develop my skills in identifying salient classroom events and recording these efficiently in the field notes. As Cowie (2009) notes, observation skills can be consciously developed through an ongoing process of reflection.

As a result of close examination of my field notes over the academic year, I was also able to identify practices which were consistent with teachers' earlier practices and those which represented departures. Reflection on the teachers' classroom talk (and teacher interaction with students) over the research period also led to my audio-recording the observed classes in term three (as described above) in order to decrease my reliance on real-time note-making.

A number of measures were also adopted to enhance the quality of the interview data. This including taking steps to establish appropriate rapport to ensure that the participants felt relaxed and that there was rapport from the outset in order to facilitate frankness on their part (Shenton, 2004). I also consciously avoided timetabling interviews at times that might be inconvenient to the participants as I felt

that time pressures on the interviewees could compromise the quality of the interview data generated.

A pilot interview I had conducted prior to the main field work (see 4.8.4) also made me aware of the need to monitor my interviewing technique to not include leading questions, to avoid lengthy turns and to ensure that I was sufficiently probing and clarifying the participants' responses (Bogdan and Bilken, 1992). In order to achieve this, I routinely examined the interview transcriptions to identify and reflect on my questioning technique. Following Kvale's (1996) quality considerations for interview data, I also sought 'to verify [my] interpretations of the subject's answers in the course of the interview' (Kvale, 1996: 145).

#### **4.8.2 The data analysis quality**

As I have mentioned, the data generated was subjected to 'ongoing interpretation' (Cowie, 2009: 173). As part of this process, I summarised key points and my comments in a journal immediately post-observation and post-interview and then identified (through a longer period of reflection and theorising) which of these were to be discussed in the following interview. Silverman (2001) argues that another means of enhancing the quality of the data analysis is to establish the congruence of research findings with those of previous studies. I also invited a 'critical friend' (Rallis and Rossman, 2009) to read my work critically and challenge the conclusions that I have arrived at in addition to my own searching for alternative explanations for the findings (as suggested by Stake, 1995).

Shenton (2004) states that for research to achieve confirmability, researchers must 'take steps to demonstrate that findings emerge from the data and not their own dispositions' (Shenton, 2004: 263). Making the methodological and theoretical assumptions underlying the concepts and methods used in this research explicit is not only essential to achieving a fuller exploration of the data, but also provides the research with higher levels of trustworthiness because 'assumptions guide the decision-making process as in any other cognitive activity' (Calderhead, 1987: 188). This transparency is designed to allow the research community to evaluate the legitimacy of the findings by providing a sufficient degree of information about the research process (Brown and Sime, 1981). Prolonged engagement with the cases, as in this study, also increases the dependability of the research by providing the

opportunity for the researcher to become more familiar with them and adds credibility to the interpretations (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

#### **4.8.3 The data presentation quality**

As Duff (2008) argues, good quality research involves primary data being meaningfully condensed, presented and interpreted to enable readers to get to know the cases well. Similarly, Cousin (2005) makes the case that research needs to be presented in a manner which will allow the reader to make informed judgements as to the value of the study. Thick data (Geertz, 1973) is therefore introduced in the presentation of the cases as rich description is needed to increase the readers' ability to understand the cases (Rallis and Rossman, 2009).

The researcher needs to present sufficient descriptive data to allow comparison by the reader to evaluate possible transferability to his or her own setting (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Whilst such an evaluation of the usefulness of the research remains the responsibility of the reader (Krefting, 1991), the researcher has a related responsibility in presenting the work:

To allow transferability, [researchers] provide sufficient detail of the context of the fieldwork for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting (Shenton, 2004: 263)

To meet this need and fully aware of the need to avoid implying generalisability of the findings to other populations or settings in the presentation (see, for example, Morrow, 2005), I not only emphasize the unique nature of each case in its naturalistic setting (see Krefting, 1991) but also present the work with humility to show the 'elusive, tentative and context bound' nature of the findings rather than presenting them as 'abstract universals' (Rallis and Rossman, 2009: 268).

#### **4.8.4 Pilot study**

I referred in the data quality section (4.8.1) to a pilot study which I conducted. This pilot stage enabled me to trial the chosen research instruments and to refine them as necessary (Drever, 2003). It also provided an opportunity for me to become more familiar with these instruments and to develop my skills in applying them (Cohen et al., 2007). In addition, it was important for me to consider whether the data produced would answer the research questions and to trial the data analysis process.

The piloting session was carried out on 24/3/11 in a further education college in West Yorkshire. The teacher, an acquaintance who volunteered to assist, was an experienced ESOL teacher (approximately 10 years' experience) and had previously been a primary school teacher. Although my main study focuses on early career teachers, I felt that the research process could be trialled equally well with a more experienced teacher. However, the participant profile excluded her (and the pilot data) from the main study. I collected classroom observation data from a two-hour beginner literacy speaking and listening class. I then conducted a 90-minute semi-structured interview investigating the teacher's reasoning of the practices that I had observed.

#### **4.8.5 Ethical issues**

The manner in which research is undertaken is not value-free (Cohen et al., 2007) and there are steps which need to be taken to ensure that it is responsible, professional and ethical. Kimmel (1998) notes that 'ethical' connotes conformity to a code or set of principles. Here, it is the academic community which can be seen to hold a set of values (which Rallis and Rossman, 2009, refer to as 'established protocols) about which there is broad agreement. For this research, procedures consistent with the University of Leeds' guidelines for ethical research have been put in place.

The ethical principles that are central to this study include that of informed consent, defined as 'a procedure for ensuring that research participants understand what is being done to them, the limits to their participation and awareness of any potential risks they incur' (Social Research Association, 2003: 28). In order to ensure that participants were fully aware of what their participation entailed and that they understood that they were under no obligation to continue their participation should they have no longer wished to do so a participant information sheet (Appendix 1) and a consent form (Appendix 2) explaining these points were provided. In addition, the participants' confidentiality was safeguarded during the study. As suggested by Ruane (2005), the participants have been anonymised in the thesis through the introduction of aliases and removal of information that would enable them to be traceable.

I sought institutional permission to conduct classroom observations both for the classes which took place on main college sites and those taking place in community

centres operated by the colleges. The importance of respecting the autonomy of the institution is identified by Hammersley and Traianou (2012) and ensuring proper negotiation of access to avoid complications for future researchers also reflects a responsibility towards the research community (Cohen et al., 2007). Such avoidance of undue intrusion also involved minimising potential harm to the relationship between the participant and the institutional gatekeeper (see Social Research Association, 2003).

The storage of data needed to be approached responsibly and systematically. The audio recordings were stored under anonymised file names on a secure drive where they would not be accessible to others. Notes, classroom observation schedules and transcriptions were kept in hard copy in individual files and particular care was taken to safeguard these. All references to the participants' institutions, students and colleagues mentioned during the interviews and other information which could have compromised the participants was removed at the time of transcription or completion of notes. The signed consent forms, which do need to have the participants' names on them, were scanned and stored electronically on the secure server mentioned above.

There was also a more general ethical concern to minimise the 'anxiety, stress, guilt and damage to self-esteem' which participants might have felt during data collection (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001: 340). Attempts were made to deal sensitively with participants throughout the research, to respect their integrity and to avoid situations (such as evaluative judgments of their teaching) which might cause distress. In addition, I felt it important to limit the degree of intrusion that my research presented. Thus, I very happily accommodated last-minute changes of interview time and avoided making demands on participants during busy periods such as when inspection regimes were taking place. Participants also noted that their involvement in the research and the opportunity for them to discuss their work with a neutral and sympathetic listener had assisted them in arriving at a greater understanding of their practice.

#### **4.9 Presentation of the data**

As outlined above, case studies need to be presented in a way which will allow the reader to make judgments about their credibility, dependability and transferability. To facilitate this, the following principles were adopted:

- a) The cases were designed to locate the reader in the classroom so that discussions of teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking were rooted in the performative dimension of that practical knowledge. This was achieved through initial presentation use of classroom observation data with subsequent discussion incorporating the interview data.
- b) The cases are presented with quite extensive use of the primary data. I have consciously avoided over-interpretation of the data in the cases and instead intended that the data would be presented with sufficient context and in sufficient detail for the reader to fully understand how my understandings had been arrived at.
- c) Case summaries were provided at the end of each case which highlighted the most significant findings for each of the cases.
- d) I included a cross-case analysis chapter (Chapter 9) in order for the reader to better understand significant commonalities and differences across the cases. To make this information more accessible, I incorporated a substantial number of tables in the data presentation.
- e) In order to refer to the different data sets efficiently throughout this study, I have adapted Borg's (2006) coding system as shown in Table 4.3 below:

Table 4.3: Codes for data presentation

Teacher	Type of data	Number
Alan = A	Observation = O	1-6
Dee = D	Interview = I	1-6
Susan = S	Classroom Recording = R*	5-6
Rachel = R	Notes of initial meeting = N	

\* Note that the recordings and post-observation discussions are numbered according to the observed class.

Thus, AI3, for example, refers to the third interview conducted with Alan, whilst RD5 refers to the post-observation discussion which took place after the fifth interview. The following chapter (Chapter 5) now presents the data for the first of the cases, that of Rachel.

## Chapter Five: Rachel

### 5.1 Introduction

This is the first of four chapters in which I present the findings for the individual case studies. The teacher, Rachel, is a non-native English user with a postgraduate diploma in education (PGDE) in ESOL. When the research began, she had approximately two years' full-time ESOL teaching experience and had also been a primary school teacher for a number of years. As with the other teachers, at the time I conducted the research, she was teaching in the FE sector in the north of England. I observed Rachel teaching a number of different classes, including a European Integration Fund (EIF) course for students who had recently migrated to the area and a family language class designed to develop the language skills of mothers of young children in order for those mothers to be able to better support their children. A summary of Rachel's observed teaching and the respective exams for those classes is provided below in Table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1: Information about observed groups

Group	Level(s)	Exam	Observation(s)
European Integration Fund (EIF)	Pre-entry/E1	Trinity ESOL	RO1, RO2, RO4
	E1	Trinity ESOL	RO6
Family Language Class	Multi-level (E1 to L1)	n/a	RO3
Regular ESOL class	E3	Trinity ESOL	RO5

Overall, the requirements of the funders had a strong impact on Rachel's syllabus design either owing to the given cultural integration aims of the European Integration Fund (EIF) courses or the family language class funders' stipulations for the development of mothers' skills in supporting their school-age children. The washback effect of the exams for the EIF programme and Rachel's regular E3 class was also very evident. In addition, Rachel used her familiarity with the students' languages and cultures to create an environment which she felt would be familiar and culturally appropriate for the lower level group (pre-entry/E1). She adopted more direct approaches for these students whereas she adopted more learner-centred and indirect teaching approaches for higher level students in the E3 class.

The findings for this case are organised in sections which present the observation data (what the teacher does) together with the interview data (what the teacher says about her practices) for different aspects of her teaching of speaking skills. In order to provide the reader with an understanding of Rachel's actual classroom teaching practices as early as possible, I begin with an analysis of her practical knowledge of pedagogy and then proceed to introduce the findings for her practical knowledge of lesson design and the syllabus. The final section provides a comprehensive summary of these findings.

## **5.2 Practical knowledge of pedagogy for teaching speaking**

### **5.2.1 Direct approaches to teaching speaking**

There was substantial evidence of controlled language practice in the pre-entry/E1 classes that I observed Rachel teaching. An illustration of this can be seen in episode 1 below from the first observed class (RO1). The stated speaking focus was for students to be able to describe their routines for certain days of the week.

#### Episode 1 (from RO1)

Teacher drills the days of the week individually and chorally

Then:

R: [Student's name], what do you do on Monday?

S1: On Monday, I come to college.

R: Good. And what do you do on Friday?

S1: I go to the mosque...

Teacher looks expectantly at the student.

S1: On Friday. On Friday, I go to the mosque.

R: That's right. Okay. [other student's name], what do *you* do on Fridays?

S2: I go to the mosque too.

R: Anything else? What do you do after the mosque?

S: I make the food.

As can be seen, Rachel drilled the days of the week with the students and then initiated exchanges with individual students. Although the students are invited to share information about themselves, there is a clear emphasis placed by Rachel on

the inclusion of the days of the week and the use of the present simple tense in the interaction. Rachel explained her use of these direct practices as follows:

Well, pre-entry and entry 1 is more drilling information into them. There's lots of vocabulary, very short dialogues, structures... tenses for that level... lots of repetition and lots of visual aids. They need to get used to saying these things so that it becomes almost automatic for them and it sticks in their minds... it has to be recycled or they just forget. (RI1)

For Rachel, then, the relatively low language proficiency of pre-entry and entry 1 students makes it necessary to include such activities which focus on the oral repetition of lexis, structures and the often phatic language of short service encounters in dialogues introduced during the course. It can be seen that she regards repetition as being important for language proceduralisation and retention. She also added the following explanation:

You also have to think that the students only have classes twice a week and there are interruptions with holidays so they need a lot of classroom practice and repetition. The fact that some of them won't even be able to write in their language also means they won't be aware of what the words sound like once they've gone home. (RI1)

There are two contextual factors here which Rachel identifies as increasing the need for language repetition in the classroom. The first of these is the low frequency of the classes and the second is that students' lack of literacy in L1 may mean that students are unable to use transliteration to have a record of word pronunciation for home study.

Having established that Rachel's practices with the lower level students evidence a significant degree of direct approaches, in the following section I discuss her use of indirect approaches to teaching speaking.

### **5.2.2 Indirect approaches to teaching speaking**

In RO5, I observed Rachel teaching an E3 class which began with the teacher's description of St Patrick's Day and then led into a discussion of festivals in Pakistan, the country of origin of all of the students in the group. Episode 2, below, shows how Rachel managed this discussion:

#### Episode 2 (from RO5)

R: Now I'd like you to think about celebrations in Pakistan. Can anyone think of an example... which is a national holiday?

S1: The fourteenth of August, we have Independence Day.

R: Yes, I expected that answer from you because we celebrate that in India too but on 15th August.

S1: And on 25th December

R: Is that Christmas?

S2: No, it's the birthday of Muhammad Ali Jinnah

S1: He's the father of Pakistan

R: And how do you celebrate?

S1: We have special food

S3: And special prayers

Rachel explained this different approach to teaching speaking for higher level students as follows:

By E2, it's more than [building vocabulary] and I try to push the students more. They already have the language and it's a case of confidence-building, which they struggle with. By the time they are in E3, they are quite able to discuss and debate so it's very different. At this level, the speaking activities are much more student-oriented. I just give them the idea and sit back and get them to talk about it. (RI5)

Rachel, then, states that she varies the speaking tasks according to the students' language proficiency. Although the classes I observed were still teacher-fronted as in episode two rather than the teacher 'sitting back', there was clearly less control over the form of the language she wanted students to produce. Explaining this lower emphasis on direct approaches for higher level students, Rachel went on to say that

These [E3] students just pick up the language. They wouldn't like to have a lot of repetition and it would be unnecessary... and boring for me, as well [laughs]. What they need is to talk about different topics and develop their ability to express themselves. (RI5)

Rachel, then, believes that once students have achieved a certain level of language proficiency, they are able to 'pick up' language without the need for controlled speaking practice in the classroom. Furthermore, she both views students at higher levels as being resistant to language repetition and recognises that she also finds this practice unstimulating. Instead, she views the students as benefitting from indirect language activities in which they are motivated to communicate. The implication would seem to be that she believes her students' spoken language skills will develop

through this communication. I asked her what was important for these discussion activities to be successful and she explained her choice of discussion topics:

When we have a good topic, the students will get very involved ... topics can include British politics, history, solar panels, anything, really. Sometimes these discussions, like ... we looked at Arabian Nights last week and had a very rich discussion...it's about knowing what might interest them and what might not. When I find a good topic, like house husbands, which my E3 group got very passionate about, I can't stop them talking and I will use that again but what produced a really good discussion with one group might not work well with another and then they won't get the practice they need. (RI5)

Rachel, therefore, aims to introduce discussion topics which will appeal to the students and result in a high degree of participation. She adopts a diverse range of such discussion subjects and has experience of topics which have been successful with previous groups. She is aware, however, that group responses vary. In 5.4.2, I discuss how she introduces elements of a learner-centred syllabus to identify suitable topics.

### **5.2.3 The teaching of pronunciation**

The pronunciation activities that I observed during the observations were limited to very occasional on-the-spot choral drilling in response to student errors. The following episode exemplifies such an activity:

#### Episode 3 (RO4)

Who can tell me what pancakes are made of? It's written in the text...

S1: Better

T: It's batter, batter. Batter is something else.

S1: Batter

T: Together (gestures to the group)

Ss: Batter

T: Good. And this is better (indicates the written form on the board and gestures for repetition)

Ss: Better

Teacher then drills the two words alternately

When I asked Rachel about her teaching of pronunciation, she told me

I tried doing more [teaching of pronunciation] but they don't like it. I tried drilling words into them – they either giggle or give up. But, at the same time, you still need to make sure that what they say will be understood by people... I do drilling as and when the words come up that are really not clear and then we drill together [...] I should probably do a lot more than I do but I've somehow found that it's never gone down very well, the drilling bit. (RI4)

It can be seen that Rachel identifies mispronunciation that she believes would result in a communication breakdown and focuses on this lexis to develop students' intelligibility. She also states that she limits pronunciation development to this language as, in her experience, students do not respond positively to systematic pronunciation practice either through embarrassment or frustration. She goes on to say

Bangladeshi people ... their way of talking is very different. I can hear it in their way of speaking English. It does help to know what is difficult for each person. In Bangla, you don't have the /s/ sound. You don't have the /v/ sound. So, they will say 'berry' instead of 'very' and I will try to focus on some of the mistakes they make with those sounds as I know the practice will help all of them. (RI4)

Her knowledge of the students' dominant languages, then, provides her with insights into the pronunciation errors they typically make and, as in the example of episode 3, she at times focuses on instances of these errors to introduce pronunciation practice relevant to the whole group. Her overall lack of focus on pronunciation, however, may to an extent be attributable to the following:

Well, mine is a very pronounced Indian dialect. My daughter keeps saying, 'How on earth do you manage to teach English with that accent of yours?' I probably teach pronunciation less because mine isn't a great model but then I guess because I teach mainly to the Asian community, it goes down well. (RI4)

Thus, Rachel views her Indian variety of English as providing a deficient model for students. Her knowledge of languages other than English was also evident in her use of students' L1 in the classroom as is discussed in the following section.

#### **5.2.4 Use of students' L1 in the classroom**

When I first began observing Rachel's classes, I was struck by the amount of non-English oral communication which took place. Whilst at times I could associate the

use of languages other than English with supporting students when they did not seem to understand, at other times there were long exchanges in other languages for which I could not identify a pedagogical purpose. I asked Rachel about her language use and she confirmed the use of other languages as a means of checking student understanding:

Yes, sometimes I think maybe I'm using too much of the first language and maybe I shouldn't but then I also worry whether they've understood, even after using so much of it, sometimes they're lost, so I'm just thinking maybe I should make sure they understand what I'm doing. (RI1)

This view that the use of other languages played a pedagogical role had been reinforced for Rachel by comments made by her line manager:

If I didn't speak [other languages] at all, if it was only English, it would be so difficult for me to... that's what [name], my boss, was saying. She has given me another E1 class because she said she struggled, she wasn't sure if they understood and she had to catch hold of one person who was stronger in the class and get her to translate. She thought, 'We'll try it this way this time', that I do Entry 1 and she takes over the higher entry, so that by that time they've got some language. (RI2)

Rachel then explained that she used these additional languages as a response to the students' lack of confidence in speaking, which she viewed as being a particularly important consideration given that the students were recent arrivals in the country and many had limited formal education:

You have to bear in mind that some of the students have only been here for a couple of weeks. Hopefully they'll open up. I mean, the others were really quiet when they started six weeks ago but now they've come on a lot. There's also the fact that many of them haven't studied in their own countries so they are faced with a new country, a new language and they need to get to become familiar with me and with each other too. (RD1)

I asked Rachel whether the problem was actually one of confidence or the students' lack of communicative competence, which impeded their classroom contributions. She replied

There's a couple of them who are quite able but they're not confident enough to talk so they just tend to keep quiet. And actually if you look at their written work you'll find that they can do a bit more. I definitely think it's a question of low self-confidence. (RD1)

Rachel, then, allowed a degree of interaction in other languages as a means of creating a familiar and supportive environment for the students. She identifies

students' ability in written work as evidence that it is the students' confidence and not communicative competence which is the issue. However, the issue of using languages other than English later became a central concern for Rachel as another line manager had indicated, following a classroom observation, that he did not agree with such practices. I observed a noticeable decline in the use of students' L1 over the course of the observation period and the use of strategies to encourage more English language use as in Episode 4 below:

Episode 4 (RO5)

After a student had made a contribution in a language other than English

R: Tell me in English. Would you talk in Urdu if [other teacher] were here giving the class?

S1: No.

R: So you need to tell me these things in English as next time you might have another teacher who won't understand you.

I returned to the question of the use of students' dominant languages during our final interview and Rachel provided the following commentary:

I'm pleased that there is less Urdu and Bengal in the classroom. I've been stricter with them and it's had a good result as they *were* getting too dependent on me. I don't believe in doing it on day one, though, because I have a very needy group here [...] When I talked to them in the language, they sort of opened up a bit quicker and now they are more happy to talk so I don't need to do it so much anymore. (RI6)

We can see, then, that Rachel accepted the need to reduce the use of students' dominant languages in the classroom. However, for this to fit with her experience of teaching the students, she introduced a staged reduction of this language use (and progressively greater use of English), which she then incorporated into her practical knowledge.

### **5.2.5 The cultural content of speaking activities**

Having explored in the previous section how Rachel used her knowledge of students' languages in her teaching, this section focuses on the role that her knowledge of the students' cultures plays in her teaching. The extract below from RO1 demonstrates, for example, how Rachel elicited examples related to Eid (which had just passed) when she focused on present simple use to describe daily routines:

Episode 5 (RO1)

R: Yes, on Fridays you go to the mosque. And tell me, what do you do at Eid? Is it different from normal days?

S1: We cook the food.

R: Yes, that's right. But before that, what do you do? What's the first thing you do?

S: We get up.

R: That's right. So you get up, you...

S2: We get up and cook the food.

R: And then...

S1: We go to the mosque...

R: And do you give anything to your family and friends?

S3: Presents... we give presents.

When we discussed this activity in the follow-up interview, Rachel explained

The students described what they did for Eid. So, we get up in the morning, we cook all this food and we go to the mosque, we invite our friends and family. We visit them and we get gifts, we give presents, that kind of thing. Simple sentences pretty much in the present tense. They respond very well to the topic of Eid because they like to talk about things that are in their normal lives and they can produce lots of ideas. (RD1)

For Rachel, then, making the language practice meaningful for the students in this manner engages them and also results in the production of more ideas by the students. I also noted that Rachel often referred to the students' outside lives during classroom exchanges. Her rationale for this was similarly based on her belief that this would engage students:

I naturally store information about the students so that I can involve them in the class. Take [name of student], for example. She's got two children, so she's very involved with the children, so it's always a good topic to get her on. 'What do you do?' 'I take my children to school'. I can then guide the examples to their own situation and that will keep them interested. (RD1)

In addition, there were repeated references to the students' countries of origin. In RO2, after teaching the names for different kinds of housing, Rachel asked the students (in this case all of Pakistani origin) questions about their homes in Pakistan.

This is shown in Episode 6 below:

Episode 6 (RO2)

R: What kind of home do you have in Pakistan?

S1: It's big.

R: And does it have two levels or one.

S2: Two.

R: Ah, yes, that's a bungalow. They are typical in [area]. Did you know the word 'bungalow' comes from Hindi and Urdu? Does it have the roof like this [indicates]?

Students respond positively and a number of students begin to vie to make contributions

S2: Yes, and there are four bedrooms and a large garden.

On this and on many other occasions, then, Rachel used her knowledge of the students' cultural background to introduce speaking content that would be familiar to the students. Rachel felt that it was important to include these familiar cultural reference points for students to be able to produce ideas and contribute in class. This concern with student participation was also evident in the modes of interaction she employed, which is discussed in the following section.

### **5.2.6 The modes of interaction in speaking activities**

Rachel's teaching was very teacher-fronted: there was limited use of pair work (none in RO3, RO4 and RO5) and no evidence of small group work in the classes that I observed. The pair work in two of the observed classes (RO2 and RO6) took the form of situational dialogues that Rachel elicited from the group and which the students then acted out. The example in Figure 5.1 below was written by Rachel on a flipchart in RO6.

Figure 5.1: Dialogue on flipchart in RO6

A: Hi. Good morning!
B: Hi
A: How are you?
B: Fine. I'm good.
A: Nice day, isn't it?
B: Yes.
A: Why don't you come in for a cup of tea?
B: I'm sorry but I'm going to college/the shops.

When I asked Rachel about her use of these pair work activities she told me

It gives them a lot of practice as they can read out their part to each other and then swap roles. They need this amount of practice, especially at E1 where they repeat it half a dozen times. If it's Entry 2, a little less maybe.

Pair work, it can be seen, though not used frequently in the classes, is viewed as providing an effective means of the direct practice discussed in 5.2.1. When I asked Rachel about the pairings of students she had introduced, she explained

If there're two strong people in the class, I get them to talk. If there's one, then I do it with that person. I usually start off with the strongest and then the next group and then the group that I think really requires a lot of prompting and pushing we do at the end. (RI6)

Here Rachel provides her belief that modelling of activities by pairs of stronger students is effective in terms of modelling for weaker students. At other times, however, she adopts an alternative approach to supporting weaker students:

I often pair a strong and a weak student together [...] that works for me most times. The strong one always takes the lead and always gets to do things. Where at least I feel that the weaker one gets to see what the other one is doing rather than doing it on her own and battling it and being clueless. (RI6)

I commented at the beginning of this section that Rachel's classes were mostly teacher-fronted and, following a formal college observation by her line manager, Rachel was told that her classes should be less teacher-centred. Rachel was unhappy about this evaluation of her teaching, however, and explained her reasons as follows:

I'm happy to have learner-centred classes when they're ready for it. To expect an entry one class and a pre-entry class with no formal schooling even in L1 to know what to do, I think it's a bit much to expect. One of [the line manager's] problems is he's only taught in a college. He's not had exposure to community centres, so he tries to... the general feeling of the tutors is he tries to bring those ideas in and it doesn't work for us. (RI6)

Rachel, it can be seen, is opposed to the suggestion that she introduce less teacher-centred classes because some of the students have limited formal education and the fact that the students in the class in question are pre-entry/entry 1 level and, she feels, are therefore less able to take initiative. Rachel is also aware that students with experience of schooling in India and Pakistan will have certain expectations as a result of the teacher-centred educational system in those countries:

[the students] always come into the class expecting a lecture from the teacher and notes and written work and copying. That's what they got used to and so you have to lead everything just like I lead these [speaking] activities you have seen. (RD1)

She also referred to the teacher-centredness of her own education as influencing her practices:

I think even now in India schools are very teacher centred. The system is very different to here, but I'm told that 20/30 years ago it was pretty similar here... but in England it's moved on whereas in India the pace is slightly slower. I went to an English medium school run by missionary nuns who trained in England or Ireland [...] Maybe this is why I think a teacher's job is to explain and to correct and... that's what I would expect a teacher to do. (RI6)

Overall, then, whilst Rachel spoke in support of the principle of a more learner-centred approach, her own educational experiences and the perceived expectations of the students (particularly at lower levels) meant that she felt it was often inappropriate for her classes. Thus, although there was some use of pair work, this was limited to controlled activities. Rachel's deeply held beliefs about the needs of her students meant that she did not incorporate the institutional guidance into her teaching practices.

### **5.2.7 Corrective feedback on spoken language**

For the classes I observed, Rachel provided very substantial amounts of oral corrective feedback on students' spoken language. This feedback was invariably on-the-spot with the first turn in Episode 7 below providing a reasonably rare example of a prompt for student self-correction and the following turns being more typical. In the extract, a student is giving a short prepared talk about her ESOL classes:

#### Episode 7 (RO4)

S1: My teacher helps us to learn the English class

R: To learn?

S1: the English ...

R: English. Just English. My teacher helps us to learn English.

S1: My teacher helps us to learn English. I like my friendly very much.

R: You can say 'the other students are friendly' or 'I like my friends very much'.

S1: I like my friends very much.

Rachel explained why she adopted this form of corrective feedback:

This is the teacher's job... to correct. I think students need to know when they are making the mistake so that they can correct it there and then and hopefully it will stick... that at least some of it will stick while the idea is still fresh in their minds and they know where the mistake came up. (RI6)

It can be seen that Rachel states a strong conviction that correcting students is intrinsic to the role of a teacher: a characteristic which can also be related to her belief in teacher-fronted teaching as discussed in the previous section. She also believes that correction is more memorable to the student (and, by implication, more effective) when on-the-spot as there is a context for the correction.

Although I observed a high degree of correction, Rachel also stated a belief that rather than correcting all the students' mistakes, it is better to focus on specific aspects of their language production and that over-correction should be avoided owing both to the low confidence levels of the students and the fact that the language required may be too advanced for them:

If I was doing a topic like 'What did you do on your last holiday?' so we're talking about something that happened before, I try to make sure at least that they stick to the past tense. If you do too much correction, they start to get scared ... they won't come up with language as they'll just be afraid to speak. Plus, sometimes I just think they're not ready for that language and so I don't push them too much. (RI2)

I also saw Rachel provide cultural explanations of the differences between the students' languages and English in her corrective feedback. In RO1, for example, this could be seen when she was working with one of the students to build a dialogue between a person and his or her neighbour that could then be used as a model for pair work practice:

#### Episode 8 (RO1)

R: And so what you say to your neighbour if you see her in the morning?

S1: Hi. How's it going your job?

R: It's 'How's your job?'

S2: How are you? I'm fine.

R: ‘How are you, I’m fine’ is not correct. In Bangla people say that but in English we don’t as it is a different culture. Here, we only say, ‘I’m fine’ when someone else says ‘How are you?’

In RI3, Rachel told me that one of the reasons she encouraged students to do pair work is so that she can monitor and make notes of student errors. There was little evidence of feedback being provided post-activity, however, though it may have been the case that repeated errors were dealt with in follow-up lessons.

### **5.2.8 Developing students’ confidence in speaking**

Rachel offered a significant amount of positive reinforcement to the students in her classes. The following two episodes (9 and 10) were fairly typical of her classroom practices:

#### Episode 9 (RO2)

S1: I went to the shops and I did my shopping

R: Very good. Many students don’t know how to use ‘and’ to join sentences at this level. Well done.

#### Episode 10 (RO5)

Following a discussion on Pakistani festivals

R: You all had lots of very nice ideas in that activity. I’m learning a lot from you. [laughs]

The first of these extracts shows Rachel providing individual praise and the second is an example of how she often provided praise to the group as a whole for their contributions. She explained her use of this positive reinforcement as follows:

You have to create the right environment for them otherwise they just clam up. It’s very difficult to draw them out as they have such low confidence. They can chatter away to me in Urdu and other languages and they will talk ten to the dozen but ask them to speak English and it’s like getting blood from a stone at times [...] they won’t speak English if they think people will laugh at them. (RD1)

Rachel, then, places importance on creating a secure environment for students to speak without fear of criticism. The identification of pre-entry/E1 students as possessing ‘low confidence’ is a point which Rachel returned to repeatedly throughout our interviews. The fact that the students were all recent arrivals in the UK and many had a very limited formal education also informed Rachel’s focus on affective considerations:

All of our students have been in the UK for less than a year and many of them have been here for far less. [Name of student] only arrived last week and suddenly finds herself in a classroom so I need to do whatever I can to help them settle in. Some of them have not had any schooling in their home countries so the whole experience is just new to them. (RI1)

However, she goes on to say

I've taught in a primary school before and it's always about positive reinforcement. But with (the ESOL students), when I'm positive they sometimes just sit back and just bask in the glory so I have to push them as well to be more involved and take more initiative. (RD1)

The classroom observations supported this counter position as there were occasions on which Rachel was openly critical of students' lack of participation. She therefore sought to provide an appropriate degree of support (established as 'good practice' in primary schools) and her belief in adult students' need to be taken out of their comfort zone to increase their level of participation.

### **5.2.9 Teaching speaking to mixed ability groups**

A highly significant factor which Rachel noted as affecting her teaching of speaking was the range of speaking ability in the groups that she was teaching. Here, for example, she explains why one of her groups was classed as 'pre-entry/E1':

It's all about the continuous enrolment because we have a certain number of classes and we keep taking new students and try to find places for them. The classes are just set up like that. Sometimes we can divide them into new classes but here, for example, I've got students who are clearly pre-entry and have almost no language... together with E1 students. It's really a lot of work teaching them together. (RI1)

Institutional priorities, then, at times resulted in classes where students of different levels were taught in the same classes. I observed an example of Rachel's response to this challenging situation in RO6 when she was setting up the pair work speaking activity using the situational dialogue I described earlier in Figure 5.1. The way that Rachel set up this activity can be seen in Episode 11 below:

#### Episode 11 (RO6)

R: Good. So now we are going to practise this dialogue. When you have practised it, you can swap over with your partner. [name of student], do you have to read exactly what is written here?

S1: No.

R: That's right. You can use whatever expressions you know and you would like to practise. Some of you might have different ideas about what to say in this situation. What could you say instead of this?

Rachel points to 'Why don't you come in for a cup of tea?' on the board

S2: Why don't you come round for a chat? (an alternative which had been mentioned earlier)

R: Yes, and what other reply could we give?

Rachel points to 'I'm sorry, I'm going to college/the shops' on the board

S3: I can't, I'm busy

R: Yes, or you could add 'maybe later'. Now, I want you all to say the dialogue with your partner using whatever language you would like.

Rachel explained setting up the activity in this way as follows:

Planning a class without differentiation won't work as weaker students won't understand or stronger ones will get bored. With this kind of activity, the weaker students will pretty much stick to what is there on the board and the stronger ones can substitute some higher level expressions like you saw with [stronger student]. (RI6)

Rachel, then, sees it as important to use speaking activities which are suitably challenging for a range of student ability within the same group. In the example above, the students are working together on the same task but at other times, Rachel felt unable to marry the needs of both levels and students were separated and given different tasks. In RO1, for example, E1 students practised a dialogue in pairs whilst Rachel drilled some phatic language with the pre-entry students. She told me

Sometimes I just need to keep the pre-entries together near me so that I can do some extra work with them and help them to catch up and it's not something that I can ask the E1 students to do with them. (RI1)

The challenges of teaching a range of ability were exacerbated in the family language class, which I observed in RO3. This single class consisted of students registered solely on the basis of their being migrants with children of a certain age. Here, Rachel adopts a different approach, focusing on developing the students' vocabulary as a means of developing their spoken communication:

This is one course where it depends entirely on the group of learners I get [...] In this group, I have three or four whose English is fairly decent, I have three or four who really struggle and I have a couple somewhere in-between so it is quite tricky finding something which is common. So, I

intend to focus a lot on vocabulary because that is one thing that I feel they will all benefit from in their speaking. (RI3)

In summary, then, Rachel's practices were influenced by the mixed-level composition of her classes. The following section focuses on her knowledge of lesson design for teaching speaking.

### **5.2.10 Integrating speaking with other skills development**

A consistent feature of Rachel's teaching was that whilst both the pre-entry/E1 and the E3 groups which I observed were nominally 'listening and speaking' classes, Rachel often integrated the four language skills in her lesson planning. The fifth observed class (RO5), for example, had the following stages:

Figure 5.2: Class stages from R05

- Teacher pre-teaches vocabulary with support of online graphics
- Students read text on St Patrick's Day (on-the-spot pronunciation correction and checking for understanding)
- Teacher provides worksheet with questions about Irish culture for students to answer using online resources
- Teacher leads discussion about Pakistani festivals
- Students write about a festival of their choice as a homework task

When I asked Rachel about her use of integrated skills, she explained

Students need to get ideas to discuss, to respond to and the texts provide that and also the vocabulary that they can use when we talk about that topic and even when it comes to discussing a topic like maybe spring, I say, 'I just want you to write something about spring so then what do you see in spring?' and then all these ideas come up... 'We see flowers, we see grass, we see trees, fresh leaves and we see little animals, baby animals, chicken eggs...' and, you know, things come up and they have generated the ideas they need for us to start talking about spring and I can feed in extra vocabulary. (RI5)

Thus, she argues that the inclusion of other language skills in the lessons often supports the development of students' speaking skills by providing ideas and language through texts and by allowing students to brainstorm ideas for speaking through writing. The following section discusses in greater depth Rachel's practical knowledge of teaching resources.

### 5.2.11 Resources for teaching speaking

In the classes I observed, Rachel drew on a wide range of materials. These included materials from a number of course books (she did not systematically follow any single course book), Skills for Life material and published supplementary teaching activities. There were also a substantial number of resources developed by Rachel herself; she explained that she regarded the published materials as being more suitable for higher level classes:

I tend to make my own materials for the E1 group. It's much easier to use ready-made materials with the E3 class because they can deal with most things you give to them at that level as they're already quite independent. At E1 the students are so basic and there's hardly anything at all for pre-entry so I have to fill that gap, really. (RI2)

Rachel, then, compensates for what she perceives as a lack of materials for her pre-entry/E1 group by developing her own materials. She also viewed the materials which were available as often being culturally inappropriate for her students. In the extract below she explains the limitations of certain course books:

One example would be at E1 'What do you do in your free time?' Now, if you had students from Europe or from China, you could use things like 'I went on a date' or 'I went to the pub' but with these students I could never do that because they have no idea what it means to go on a date or go to the pub because it's just not in their culture. It's so far removed and they are so isolated that explaining this would not help. (RI2)

In a related example, Rachel described a lesson using course book material with references to Hollywood actors which she felt did not relate to the students' cultural knowledge:

And nobody knew who [the actors] were. So, I thought about the Pakistani singer, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan. As soon as I mentioned his name, they sort of brightened up and they came up with, 'Oh, yes, he sang this, he sang that.' They gave me half a dozen names of the songs and then we said, you know, 'What do you think of him and what kind of lifestyle would he lead?' 'What is his profile going to be like?' and then they could make a link. Often, I think that with the standard materials, it's difficult for them to know what to say and so they are silent. (RI5)

Rachel also introduced a certain amount of realia in her classes. She explained that she regarded her experience of preparing her own materials on her PGDE teaching practice in a library with no available resources as being invaluable for her ESOL teaching:

I ended up doing only about 80 hours in a college and the other 95 I did in a functioning library. I only had a small portable table and a few chairs and the class grew. For many of them it was the highlight of the week. I learnt because I had no resources – I had to make my own, to adapt it to suit the students and make do with a board – I remember drawing a map of a small town on there. There, I felt I developed. I would use lots of realia, for example, to make up for the lack of resources. I still do these things now. When I do the pharmacy, I always take a tray of things – ‘That’s a bandage, that’s a thermometer’. (RI2)

Rachel explained to me that she also finds pictorial support especially useful for her lower level students, who had a very limited vocabulary. After I observed her using flashcards in RO4, for example, she explained that

Pictures definitely help where there’s no language, where the students join and there is just no way to explain things because they don’t have the language yet to understand even basic descriptions. With E1, I move away from the visuals more and it has more to do with words. (RI4)

Rachel was also aware that for the EIF programme, the funders expected original materials to be used and she felt it important to comply with this:

EIF (the European Integration Fund) do ask that we use our own resources, though, rather than pinching from here and there and so I do try to develop my own materials. I’ve done that for all the main festivals to meet the cultural integration requirements and they are now there for other teachers to use in the future. (RI4)

An additional contextual factor which Rachel referred to was the availability of technological hardware in the community classrooms in which she was delivering her classes:

Technology is pretty much non-existent in some of the places. I’m lucky if I get a flipchart or a whiteboard. The question of an interactive board doesn’t come up in the community, but I’m sure if we were teaching in colleges then you do get to use them and then obviously you’re planning your – teaching your resources, everything changes. I sometimes take my laptop into work and then at least I can show the students flashcards from ESOL.com and Google Art. (RI6)

Rachel, then, was eclectic in her use of published materials and created and adapted materials to fit the needs of her students where she felt they could not be otherwise met, particularly for the lower level students. She was also required to include a certain amount of original material relating to the cultural integration aims of the EIF funded project and this cultural information strand is one of the foci of the following sections, which explore her practical knowledge of the speaking syllabus.

### **5.3 Practical knowledge of the speaking syllabus**

#### **5.3.1 Speaking syllabus content**

Some reference has already been made in this case study to the functional, situational, grammatical and cultural strands of the speaking syllabus employed by Rachel. As can be seen in the interview extract below, Rachel had the responsibility to develop her own syllabi for the courses but operated within the programme aims defined by the funders as in the case of the European Integration Fund (EIF) programmes:

The programme is about integrating the students into the local community, helping them to communicate with people there and also understanding the local culture. When you apply for funding from the EIF, they do like to see things that you've done. That's why we do... like integrating with the community, we talk about celebrations and festivals and weddings and christenings and things like that. Luckily with EIF, I have the freedom to choose my topics. As long as I integrate them into society and they know about the culture and the language and the festivals and the social scenarios, it's fine. (RI1)

Rachel introduced these festivals and cultural events to coincide with their position in the calendar and so of the classes I observed, RO4 (pre-entry/E1 class), for example, focused on Pancake Day and RO5 (E3 class) focussed on St Patrick's Day. Rachel also mentioned other examples:

We did Halloween, we did poppy day, we did Guy Fawkes Day so I introduce them as they come – my term started in September and then all these events came one after another. And then there was Eid in-between, there was Diwali in-between, there was Christmas, so it was a term with a lot of festivals and celebrations. They seem to know a lot about it, they relate to it because it's something they can connect to. (RI4)

Rachel was also conscious of the need for the course to have the relevant cultural content to meet UK immigration requirements:

And, of course, there has to be a certain amount of Life in the UK content for the students to use the qualifications to apply for indefinite leave to remain and for British citizenship. For a lot of them this is very important and I have to make sure that part is covered. (RI1)

In addition to this cultural content, the schemes of work contained a number of interwoven elements: topics (such as 'the family'), situations and functions (such as 'joining a swimming class'), and language items (such as the use of the present simple tense and the lexical field of housing). Rachel explained why she felt the

inclusion of situational and functional language in the syllabus was particularly important in addressing the students' needs:

Accessing services, such as borrowing books in the library, making appointments, explaining illnesses and talking to people in social situations is the most important thing to develop because these are the things that they are going to need if they are new to the country. (RI4)

Rachel also included grammar and vocabulary in her speaking syllabus, regarding them as being needed as a basis for speaking. In the following extract from RI4, she expands on this idea in relation to the pre-entry/E1 class:

All these situations are taught and the language comes through there so I can bring in the curriculum points and tenses whilst we're doing them. They need these tenses to develop their speaking. Also... the students just have no vocabulary and ... unless you have some words, you can't talk so I build up vocabulary on day-to-day things like you can see. I don't have to do this in the same way for the E3 group as they can already talk about a range of things, they have the main tenses and I just feed them the words that they need in the discussions. (RI4)

Rachel, then, interweaves a number of strands into her speaking syllabus with more systematic inclusion of syntax and lexis for lower level students. This contrasts the strong focus on vocabulary for the family class that I described in the previous section, and further demonstrates how the mixed-level composition of that class undermines Rachel's normal practices. In the following section, I now describe how Rachel includes the students in deciding the details of the syllabus content for the various classes.

### **5.3.2 Integration of skills in the syllabus**

Although Rachel believes there is a justified emphasis on listening and speaking because 'that's what they need most' and because of the washback effect of the exams (discussed in 5.4.4), she also believed that the students would need literacy skills for their own purposes in the future:

We are teaching them speaking and listening now because that's what they need most – they have to communicate with people and make themselves understood. But in the future they will go on to do other things ... the E3 students, they can use their qualifications to apply for childcare courses and other ones so they will need to be able to read and write for their course work. You can't really cut out the literacy work just because it's called listening and speaking (RI6)

Rachel's inclusion of reading and writing development in the S/L classes is also explained in terms of the institutional course arrangements as the following interview extract reveals:

Figure 5.3: Interview extract from RI6

R: Both of these EIF groups - E1 and E3 – will probably become reading and writing classes later

I: Can you just explain that for me?

R: Well, once the students have done their exams, we hope to have the funding to carry on with the classes but they will then be preparing for reading and writing

I: At the same level?

R: Yes. [line manager] thinks we'll be able to do it again this year so I have to include the literacy work now otherwise there would be too much for them to catch up on.

The inclusion of reading and writing skills in the speaking and listening skills classes, then, is explained both in terms of their value for preparing students for speaking activities and also the value of these literacy skills for participation in wider society and as preparation for later college study.

### 5.3.3 Learner-centredness in the speaking syllabus

I explained earlier in the chapter that there were no set institutional syllabuses for Rachel's courses. With the freedom to decide syllabus content, Rachel explained why she felt it important to consult the students and include their stated needs in the speaking syllabus design:

They are more motivated if they are studying what they want to learn. They react better seeing that the course is developed around their ideas or at least contains some of them...It also builds a different relationship between us because they can see that I listen to their views. (RI4)

Rachel, then, has experience of students responding positively both to a negotiated speaking syllabus and to the teacher who has introduced it. She also told me the process by which she includes the students' suggestions:

I first ask the students what they'd like to study. Always at the start of each term I ask them what they've done, what they've liked and what they haven't. What would they like to do in the next... and I try to work my topics around it and then I usually plan from there [...] I do it every term. It's easier that way. I have a piece of paper on which I've got all the ideas jotted and I try to cover as much as I can during the term. (RI5)

She did, however, identify potential limitations in the degree of learner-centredness she could achieve, particularly for the lower level groups:

These [pre-entry/E1] students, many of whom have no formal study background, just aren't able to express in detail what they want to study. I don't think they have a clue what they want to learn. They tend to look to me to make those decisions - that's also a cultural thing as well because I'm the teacher and in our culture it's the teacher who decides. I do keep asking and getting suggestions from them when I can, though but it's nearly always the same topics of health, education and the family that are mentioned. (RI6)

Rachel, then, regarded the students' expectations of a teacher-centred classroom and students' inability to identify their own language needs as obstacles to a learner-centred syllabus. In RI3, she had referred to the fact that she increased the degree of student involvement according to the students' level and this approach was also manifest in the following extract from a later interview:

When I am teaching the slightly higher level class I'm quite happy to make it learner-centred because I think they should take their learning into their own hands. Certainly when we get to E3... let's say I don't spoon feed them. At that level they know what they want and say specific things like wanting to be able to take my child to the doctors or being able to buy something in the shops and there's more variety in the schemes of work. (RI6)

I also asked Rachel about the college requirement that individual learning plans (ILPs) be used and the impact it had on making teaching and learning relevant to student needs. She explained

For the ILPs, I try to understand what they are looking for, what they want to learn and what they already know. It's something that I would do anyway [...] The ILPs are good to focus your mind on the students' individual requirements but then at lower levels they pretty much all need the same thing. But then it comes to a question of 'Do I concentrate on writing all the ILPs and doing all the paperwork and putting it in order or do I sit and plan interesting lessons?' (RI4)

It can be seen that although Rachel values the process of identifying individual student needs, she regards the ILPs as an unwelcome administrative burden. She also identifies lower level students as having very similar needs, which is consistent with earlier comments in this section regarding her belief that there are limitations to student involvement in the design of the speaking syllabus.

### 5.3.4 The washback effect of speaking exams

Rachel's E1 and E3 students were all entered for their respective Trinity ESOL listening and speaking exams. In this section, I examine the impact of these exams on Rachel's teaching practices for speaking. One example of washback can be seen in Figure 5.4 below, which shows a dialogue for joining a swimming class which Rachel had elicited from the students and written on the flipchart.

Figure 5.4: Dialogue for joining a swimming class in RO4

A: Hello, How can I help you?
B: I'd like some information about the swimming classes please.
A: What would you like to know?
B: What time are the classes?
A: What level?
B: For beginners
A: They are on Thursday mornings at 10am
B: How much does it cost?
A: It's £2
B: Do I have to book in advance?
A: No, you don't.
B: Thank you very much.

Rachel explained the use of this dialogue as follows:

The second [exam task] is a role-play where they have to become a member of ... I think they join a course. That's why I did ... last time I did joining a computer course and today I did joining a class in a leisure centre. And hopefully, they'll do a couple more on their own and then when they come to the exam they'll have an idea of what it's about as they need to ask for different kinds of information. Obviously, I want to give them some practice but not for the exact exam question otherwise it's not valid, is it? (RI4)

Rachel is aware of expectations on the part of the funders that students be entered for and show a good pass rate in the listening and speaking exams:

If the students pass, it looks good in our records, in our data for funding. So, if they can put the funding to good use and show some result or some progress because it's all marked against that, isn't it? It's learner achievement at the end of the day. So, if I'm able to show a pass then it just makes the case for funding stronger the following year. I hope mine do okay but there's only so much I can do. (RI5)

Aside from the explicit exam practice already mentioned, there is also certain language which Rachel includes in the speaking syllabus as it is required for students to be successful in the exams:

The exams expect a certain amount of knowledge which can only be covered by doing general stuff, especially for E3 so I will refer to the curriculum and find a way to bring in the relevant points. So, I have to do this and give them all the practice in the different sections of the exam regardless of the fact that I know what they really need and they have told me things they want to do. (RI5)

She also believed that the impact of the exams was greater still owing to the short duration of the courses:

Unlike the main courses in the college, where they have nine months, these are quite short courses. It basically means that I can only do about three months and then I have to do the exam prepping (RI6)

Overall, then, Rachel viewed the impact of the exams as undermining her preferred syllabus since the exams required students to be taught AECC content that Rachel might not have prioritised and also necessitated substantial exam practice. The fact that funding for the programmes was linked to student success in the exams further was an additional factor contributing to this washback effect.

#### **5.4 Case summary**

The syllabi adopted by Rachel differed according to the group but tended to integrate topics, situational language and functional language with language structures and lexis usually introduced in these contexts (the family planning class was an exception and centred instead around a topic with a strong emphasis on vocabulary). Rachel thought that the syllabus should primarily prepare students for social and public service encounters. She also thought it important to include learner-chosen content in the syllabus but, as for other aspects of her teaching, differentiated between the E3 class, who she viewed as being better able to understand and communicate their teaching needs and the lower proficiency students, who she regarded as being limited in this capacity. The institutionally-required ILPs did not add to this process of meeting individual student needs which Rachel was already committed to. Rachel was eclectic in her choice of materials and developed many of her own to meet the specified cultural syllabus, to deal with the mixed-level classes and to ensure the cultural appropriateness of materials for female Muslim students.

Rachel incorporated both direct and indirect approaches in her teaching with the strong emphasis on repetition of language for low proficiency students being replaced by discussion activities for her higher level (E3) class. For Rachel, students

developed an ability to ‘pick up’ language as their proficiency increased whereas lower levels required more mechanical practice to learn language structures and sounds, especially as many had very limited literacy and were unable to produce a written record of the language. The higher levels she viewed as learning through communicative situations and focused on identifying topics which she felt would engage the students and motivate them to participate. For both levels she regarded cultural appropriacy as important for students to relate positively to content and be able to generate ideas but she regarded the more proficient students as having a greater ability to deal with the unfamiliar. Her approach to oral corrective feedback also reflected a firm view that a teacher’s role involves providing direct on-the-spot correction during language activities. Her teaching of pronunciation was also diagnostic with some choral drilling of classroom pronunciation errors.

The pre-entry/E1 and the E3 classes that Rachel taught were uniquely for recent arrivals in the UK and this factor was significant in the introduction of practices which would develop the students’ confidence such as reasonably substantial use of students’ L1 with the lower level students. The lack of formal education of many of the students and the low language proficiency of the pre-entry/E1 group (together with Rachel’s own teacher-centred education) contributed to a teacher-fronted teaching style which she also believed was consistent with the student expectations. The funding bodies for these courses stated certain requirements (cultural syllabus content, the use of in-house materials, listening and speaking exam entry) which Rachel was obliged to follow, with the exams exerting a degree of washback on Rachel’s teaching which she viewed as a distraction from her own teaching aims. Institutional arrangements also meant that Rachel had to employ differentiated teaching activities for the multi-level classes and to prepare students for future reading and writing study concurrently with the listening and speaking objectives.

Rachel had already established many of her teaching routines and her comment ‘I’m set in my ways’ revealed that she regarded these teaching practices were reasonably fixed. A resistance to the suggested introduction of greater learner-centredness emerged when it conflicted strongly with her existing knowledge informed by an understanding of the low proficiency student profiles in the community settings. A separate suggestion (again by a line manager) that the use of other languages other than English be reduced in the classroom led to a period of classroom

experimentation and reflection by Rachel. At the end of the academic year, she reported that she accepted the principle but that this should take the form of a staged reduction in this language. The two examples together would seem to indicate that Rachel needed to test the principles in the real conditions of her own classrooms in order to be persuaded of their viability. In the latter example, she also drew on the practical knowledge of her community-based colleagues in order to validate her practices.

## Chapter Six: Diane

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings for the second of the four case studies. The teacher, Diane, is a native English user and had a DT(E)LLS diploma in ESOL teaching and a Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA). When the research began, she had approximately two years' ESOL teaching experience though she had also previously taught EFL to young students in Taiwan for a year. As with the other teachers in the study, she was teaching in the FE sector in the north of England. The classes which I observed and the respective exams for these groups are provided in the table below:

Table 6.1: Information about observed classes

Group	Level(s)	Exam	Observation(s)
Functional Skills classes (16-18s) *	E2/E3	Functional Skills	SO1, SO3, SO5
Regular ESOL classes	E1/E2	City and Guilds	SO2, SO4, SO6

\*The ESOL Functional Skills classes, as explained in more detail in Chapter 3, form part of an integrated programme of ESOL, IT and mathematics for 16-18-year-olds.

Overall, Diane adopted a reasonably communicative approach to the teaching of speaking. This teaching differed in several significant aspects for the two groups of students that I observed owing to the differences in their levels of proficiency, however. The ages of the students also had implications for teaching and, as Diane had no previous experience of teaching 16-18-year-old students, this introduced a number of challenges which she responded to throughout the academic year.

As with the preceding case, the detailed findings for this case are now presented in three main sections: pedagogy, lesson design and the curriculum. However, the subsections are driven by the data and reflect the key issues which emerged for this particular teacher. The case then concludes with a concise summary of the main findings.

## 6.2 Practical knowledge of pedagogy for teaching speaking

### 6.2.1 Direct approaches to teaching speaking

For the E1/E2 group in particular, there was substantial evidence of reasonably direct teaching approaches in Diane's approaches. An example can be seen in Diane's class focusing on 'describing people' in Figure 6.1 below:

Figure 6.1: Activity stages in DO2

- Teacher pre-teaches vocabulary of clothing/personal accessories and adjectives to describe physical appearance.
- Teacher describes a picture of a person as a model for the students. Teacher focuses on the use of 'to have' and 'to be'.
- In pairs, students make similar sentences based on their picture cues.
- In plenary, students produce similar sentences for pictures which are shown on the Smart board. Teacher focuses on accuracy.
- In pairs, students produce descriptions of Simpsons characters as part of a deduction activity.

As can be seen, Diane models the use of structures to describe people and creates opportunities for the students to repeatedly reproduce these structures. For Diane, this controlled practice is particularly necessary for use with lower level groups:

I think at lower levels you need to use more repetition to draw attention to form. They need lots of practice so that they can remember it and so that it becomes automatic for them. I still want to keep it interesting so I change the activities and they have to make some choices about what they're describing, like in the lesson you just saw (DO2) but I probably should do more to make sure that they've got a good grasp of the structures. It's just that it's so boring for them to be repeating all the time. (DI2)

Diane, then, values the use of direct approaches for students to remember and to proceduralise language but is concerned that such activities can be uninteresting for students. As a result, she avoids the use of drilling in favour of activities which require a degree of language choice on the part of the students. She also introduced numerous activities which added elements of entertainment to the controlled production of spoken language. The noughts and crosses activity described below in Episode 12, for example, practises vocabulary related to plumbing and also practices the present continuous tense:

#### Episode 12 (from DO6)

Teacher shows a grid containing pictures of plumbing and electrical problems on the Smart board. Members of the two teams have to describe

the pictures to their own group (e.g. ‘the pipe is leaking’) when it is their turn. The activity is played as noughts and crosses with the teacher insisting on accurate production of the present continuous tense.

S1: Boiler is not working.

T: Boiler?

S2: The boiler is not working.

S1: The boiler is not working.

T: Good. Correct. That’s a cross for you.

Diane’s use of this activity to overcome the lack of student engagement with some indirect activities can be seen in the following interview extract:

It’s useful to get [the students] producing language over and over again and for us to be able to check it without driving them crazy. Here, they are falling over themselves to do it and they will all work together to get it right, which is even better. (DI6)

Diane also identifies the mixed-ability nature of the classes as a possible limiting factor in the use of direct activities:

You know that often the classes have lots of different levels in them. This makes it difficult to do this kind of [indirect] practice a lot. You’ll find that one person might be doing it and be like ‘I’m so bored!’ and someone else might say ‘What did she say?’ It’s just too difficult to pitch it right for both groups. (DO2)

In general, then, Diane regards direct approaches as being particularly relevant for lower level students to memorise language and become fluent in the oral production of that language. She does, however, see constraints in the use of such activities with mixed-level classes and believes that tasks should be engaging to avoid potential student boredom she associates with excessive repetition. In the following section, I describe her knowledge of indirect approaches.

### **6.2.2 Indirect approaches to teaching speaking**

Whereas Diane regularly adopted direct approaches with the E1/E2 group, she tended to use more indirect approaches with the E2/E3 group. For a substantial number of activities with the latter group, for example, she introduced a series of questions for students to ask each other in pairs or groups. In DO5, for example, she asked student pairs to discuss their experiences of interviews using the questions reproduced in Figure 6.2 below:

Figure 6.2: Questions presented on smart board in DO5

Have you ever had an interview?
What was it for?
How did you feel?
Who interviewed you?
What did you wear?
How long did it last?
Did it go well?

Diane explained her use of this activity as follows:

In that session, I wanted the students to be able to talk about their own experience. They have to get used to talking about a range of topics and doing that freely with whatever language they have. I mean, whatever I do with them here is just a preparation for the world outside where they will have to respond to real events. I don't think you can just get them repeating language and then hope that they will magically put it all together to cope with a real situation. (DI5)

Diane, then, considers more indirect approaches as being necessary for students to develop an ability to deal with the authentic communicative situations which they face outside the classroom. She goes on to say:

They often need some help to get started so I give them a few questions but I always ask them to add their own questions and I hope it will develop into a more natural discussion. Obviously, at the same time I'm trying to keep a bit of a focus on the question structure and for these students we practise the past tense. (DI5)

It can be seen that for Diane, the students require a degree of structure in the speaking activities but she believes there is value in students extending the activity using their own ideas in order to introduce more indirect language practice. The activity choice also reveals that whilst Diane has a focus at that level on the specific language structures she is developing with the students, the main emphasis is on the communication by the students of their unique experiences. This focus on learner-oriented content is the subject of the next section.

### **6.2.3 The use of student-oriented content in speaking activities**

There were a number of activities in which Diane sought to relate language activity content to the students' own lives. In addition to the example provided in Figure 6.2 above, in which students exchange their interview experiences, there were speaking activities in DO4 in which students ask each other about their homes and

neighbourhoods. In the following interview extract, Diane explained her beliefs about this process of creating opportunities for meaningful language use in which students share details of their own lives:

Figure 6.3: Interview extract from DI4

D: I guess I do try to link it to their life. Not because of any learning theory but just because it's a nice thing to do and it works as they can relate to something in their head. All ESOL is about using what you know already and being able to apply it to that. Like, I know a few of them are working and if we do something about work, I will ask them what they do.

I: What's the difference if they personalise it for themselves?

D: Interest, relevance, meaning... all the things which help them to respond in some way.

For Diane, then, when students are engaged in speaking activities linked to their own lives, there is greater student learning and stronger student engagement. She states that she is not acting on abstract theoretical arguments here but on her own practical knowledge, borne of her teaching experiences. Her understanding of the limited life experience of the Functional Skills students and her subsequent framing of activities can also be seen in Episode 13 below which shows her setting up of the interview activity from Figure 6.3:

Episode 13 (from DO5)

D: You may not have had a job interview but what about when you applied to this college? *That* was an interview. When you arrived in the country did you have an interview for a visa or anything?

In our interview discussion regarding the relating of content to students' outside lives, however, Diane explained the constraints she felt herself to be under as a result of a lack of familiarity with the local area and the students' out-of-class lifestyles:

Well, I don't know [the town] very well at all, and it's such a shame that I don't because loads of times we're doing propositions or directions, or just anything, and they're like 'Oh yeah, this shop in [the town]' and I'm like 'I'm really sorry but I don't know.' I wish I did know more about [the town] and about what they do outside the college generally. (DI5)

Diane, then, states a belief that the content of oral language activities should be relevant to students' outside lives and she provides opportunities for students to produce language use related to their lives. However, she is also aware of limitations in her own knowledge about the students' living environments and lifestyles that she can base her practices on.

#### 6.2.4 Promoting longer speaking turns

A consistent feature of Diane's observed teaching was that she employed teaching practices which encouraged longer turns on the part of the students. Episode 14 below involving the teacher and an E1 student illustrates one means by which she achieved this:

##### Episode 14 (DO2)

T: Can you describe this picture?

S: Hat.

T: Oh, can you tell me about the hat?

S: Wearing.

T: Can you make a full sentence?

S: He wearing a hat.

T: Can you add another word? He... [uses fingers to encourage self-correction]

S: He's wearing a hat.

T: Good.

It can be seen that Diane scaffolds the production of a complete sentence from a minimal initial student contribution. She explained this episode as follows:

Well, part of my job is to teach them how to speak fluently as well as accurately so they have to speak in full sentences and communicate more than the minimum. Here, I wanted to help her to produce that sentence and also to let her and the others know that we are looking at sentence level and trying to say as much as we can. It is only by speaking that they can learn to speak. (DI2)

For Diane, then, students need to be able to develop the capacity to speak in longer turns. Although she demonstrated aspects of good practice such as the use of questions to facilitate student involvement, she initially experienced difficulties engaging the Functional Skills students in long turns. In the following extract, she reflects on this challenge:

Maybe it's a problem with the tasks I set because they do them as quickly as possible and then say, 'Okay done!' After today's talk, I introduced questions that there aren't any right or wrong answers to, like 'What do you think about drugs – are they a good thing or a bad thing?' and 'If all drugs were legal, what would happen to the world?' and they just gave

one sentence answers and so I need to find more ways to encourage them to speak more. (DI3)

Diane later developed strategies for greater student engagement such as the use of a note-taking audience to encourage speakers to provide fuller responses. Figure 6.4 below shows how one such series of activities was staged:

Figure 6.4: Staging of an activity in DO3

- Students are assigned to groups
- One student in each group recounts her experiences whilst the others take notes
- The speaker checks the accuracy of the notes taken by the other students
- The other speakers take turns to explain their experiences
- The teacher nominates certain students to feed back from their notes of other students' contributions

She explained:

I wanted them to have purposeful listening and one way to do that was to have them take notes. Otherwise they might not listen to each other properly and they wouldn't be motivated to speak... or at least not say anything substantial but this way they tend to say more so that the others have enough to note down. (DI3)

We also discussed the possibility of student presentations to provide students with the opportunity to develop longer turns. Despite Diane's acceptance of the rationale for their use, however, she was concerned about the affective factors involved in students giving presentations:

I've never done presentations with that class. Even if it would be really good for their speaking, I think they'd get really scared by it, which is maybe a reason to do it to help them practise but... no, it would freak them out! [laughs]. I'll have to find other ways which don't put them on the spot so much. (DI4)

Diane, then, was engaged in a process of developing activities which she hoped would result in longer turns by the students and scaffolding the students' spoken language production of students in the classroom. I have already made reference to the use of pair work and group work for this language production and in the following section I focus on these different modes of interaction in more depth.

### **6.2.5 Modes of interaction in speaking activities**

There was substantial use of pair work and group work evident in all of Diane's observed classes. In our first interview I commented on her use of different pairings and groupings in the class I had observed (DO1) and she explained:

Obviously, I can't do much individual speaking practice with each of the students so they have to learn to work together and it helps them to develop their speaking when they are working together... it encourages them to speak and to help each other. Especially in the first few weeks of the course, the students didn't necessarily work together very well and that's something that I have been trying to get them used to. (DI1)

For Diane, then, use of pair work and group work serves to facilitate a greater degree of speaking practice than teacher-fronted activities. She believed it is necessary to build appropriate collaborative relationships amongst the students in order for them to engage in constructive pair work and group work. I also noted that in DO4, Diane had nominated one student in each group to 'make sure that everyone is talking'. When I asked her about this, she stated:

The groups vary for each activity. Well, so, sometimes I want the E1s together and sometimes I want the E2 with an E1. In the class you saw, I mixed the groups up but made sure that I had one strong student in each group. The questions were quite difficult and if it had been just a group of E1s they wouldn't have known what to answer and how to answer but by mixing the group, hopefully the E2s would have explained. As I go round and monitor, I try to encourage them to say 'Why?' 'Why?' 'Tell me more about that' like I would do. (DI4)

Thus, Diane at times arranged the pairings and groupings in such a way that stronger students support weaker ones in successfully completing spoken language activities. She also asks the stronger students to engage in encouraging more substantial contributions from the other students. This focus on increased participation is discussed in greater depth in the following section.

### **6.2.6 Increasing student participation in speaking activities**

Diane's classes often involved a high degree of pace from a series of relatively short activities. These activities, almost exclusively conducted in pairs or groups, also tended to involve a degree of competition (and sometimes physical movement). Figure 6.5 below exemplifies these characteristics:

Figure 6.5: Activity stages from DO5

- One student from each pair runs from her seat to the board to read interviewing tips written there.
- The student then races back to her partner and dictates the information, focusing on accuracy.
- This takes place until there is a winning pair.
- The two members of each pair swap roles and the competition is repeated.

The figure below (6.6), which has a number of common features but involves students working individually, also includes example of time-bound activities, which were common in Diane's classes:

Figure 6.6: Activity descriptions from DO5

- Teacher gives students 1 minute to prepare 8 possible interview questions.
- Teacher provides students with different key words as cues to make questions. A time limit of 3 minutes is imposed.
- Students have two minutes to complete a chain activity in which they all mingle, ask their questions (from previous step) and exchange their questions with the person they have just asked. There are 12 questions that students need to have asked.

Creating pace in the classes in this way was identified by Diane as a strategy she had developed to motivate the E2/E3 students in particular:

Another thing that I have learnt is to keep the activities in the class interesting and not quick but not to drag on for ages because they lose interest quite quickly. It's something I do especially with 16-18 year olds just to keep them on the ball. Team games are something I do a lot with that class. I don't know if you heard me talking about points but we have a spread sheet with the points for each student and whoever is winning at the end of term gets a present from me – it's bribery! I always use games in class. I love games, which is why I do so many of them. Especially with that age group - the 16 to 18s - because it really engages them. Even with adults I use games because it's a way to motivate them. (DI3)

Thus, she rationalised the activity design for the 16-18s with her belief that these younger students have short attention spans. Her experience also strongly supports the use of competitive activities to involve such students but it could be seen (in the use of the Simpsons activity described in Figure 6.2, for example) that she believed that games have a universal appeal. She went on to describe how her own experience as a student had influenced her incorporation of such activities into her teaching:

Myself, I like loads of different things and, as a student, I get really frustrated with a teacher if they don't do a variety of stuff. I expect things to be made fun and for teachers to be creative so with me it just comes out naturally, I think. (DI4)

Diane's own enjoyment of games, then, and her belief that they motivate students to participate more actively, are consistent with her view, stated in 6.2.1 that direct approaches, in particular, should be employed in ways that will engender interest. Whilst these activity characteristics were more in evidence with the 16-18s group, Diane did not limit their use to this group of students.

### **6.2.7 Corrective feedback on spoken language**

Accurate language production by the students was an important objective for Diane. Describing the E2/E3 students' spoken language outside the classroom, for example, she says:

I think many of them, because they mostly speak to their friends, don't realise that their accuracy is not that good and I've seen them talk to someone who is English - for example a security guard or at reception - and they don't understand them. So they get frustrated because this person doesn't understand them and I think that's really frustrating for them. Even though they don't always see it, they really need to focus on speaking accurately. (DI1)

Whilst Rachel, the teacher in the previous case study, employed a large degree of direct corrective feedback, Diane's teaching contained only isolated instances of on-the-spot correction. Instead, Diane facilitated either student self-correction or student peer correction. An example of the former is shown in Episode 15 below:

#### Episode 15 (DO4)

S: Your kitchen is big or small?

T: How do you say that question?

S: Is your kitchen big or small?

T: Good. So, to make the question, you take 'your home is' and...

[signals with hands to indicate the change in word order]

S: Is your house big or small?

Diane explained to me that she did not use direct correction as she did not believe it to be useful for improving students' speaking accuracy. For her, the act of self-correction, however, is effective as it involves student reflection on the nature of the error:

I hate correcting because I don't think they learn or listen so I prefer it when they can self-correct or recognise... maybe I or someone needs to show them that there's a problem but then they need to think about what's

wrong with it because then hopefully the act of recalling will mean that next time they won't do it. When the students leave class there won't be a teacher standing over their shoulder going 'Do this, do this.' They need to learn how to self-correct themselves. That leads into a deeper understanding by them: why they got it right and why they got it wrong. (DI1)

Diane mostly introduced feedback after a speaking activity (rather than during it). The following episode (16) provides an example of noted student errors then being introduced post-activity for peer correction:

Episode 16 (DO3)

T: Now, I want you to correct some of the things that people said during that activity. I forgot my problems...

S1: Forgot... I forgot my problems.

T: I can't go to sleep.

S2: I couldn't go to sleep.

D: These problems is happening.

S3: The problems happened.

When I asked Diane about this practice of focusing on correction after the main speaking activity, she explained that she adopted this practice to not interfere with the students' fluency practice.

Yes, I do it quite often. I think I learnt it on ... someone told me about that on the CELTA course right at the beginning but it gives them the chance to speak fluently when they're doing it, and then at the end again they reflect back on what they've said and how they've said it, and then you get them to correct it or peer correct it. (DI2)

Although the students had made a range of language errors in the activity in DO3, it can be seen in the Episode 16 above that Diane uniquely selects examples of tense misuse. When I raised this with her, she explained:

I find it hard to hear all the mistakes they make but anyway, it's more useful to focus on the main areas if possible and find examples of the same error. Past tense is something we have focused on recently and so they should be able to self-correct. That was my priority there rather than trying to cover everything. (DI3)

For Diane, then, dealing with correction after the main activity avoids interruptions to the fluency-oriented activities and her correction stage tends to focus on specific

language errors which the students should be able to self-correct or peer correct. Diane's belief in the link between these forms of correction and students' confidence is one area which is discussed in the following section, which focuses on the affective domain.

### **6.2.8 Developing students' confidence in speaking**

Diane explained that she viewed the use of peer feedback as a means of facilitating student feedback of errors whilst not drawing attention to the student who had made them:

I prefer this way, especially with that class because they were giving information to me fine but I couldn't just ignore the fact that they'd made those mistakes. I didn't want to pick out any individual's mistakes and make them really self-conscious – they are teenagers, after all - but that one student made lots of mistakes with the simple past and it was there and they all know it's a mistake and can do the corrections themselves.  
(DI5)

This reflected a broader concern on Diane's part that it is important to create a secure and supportive environment for learning to take place:

The classroom should be a place where the students can feel confident with what they're trying. I don't want anyone to laugh at anyone else or go 'Oh, you're rubbish at English' because no one is going to learn then, safe where they can ask me any questions they want and just be at ease [...] we always do a class rules thing at the beginning of the lesson where I get them to make the rules but I also sneak it in somehow that they should also respect each other. (DI6)

There were also a number of occasions on which Diane offered praise and encouragement to the students. The following episode (17), in which a student has presented on the topic of 'my language learning' to the whole group provides a typical example:

#### Episode 17 (DO3)

T: How did you feel doing that activity?

S1: It was hard.

T: Yes, but you did it well didn't you. That is the kind of thing you have to do for your exam, to keep talking like that.

S2: Miss, I find it difficult.

T: I know it's strange talking to a group like that but you're actually very good at it and had some nice ideas. It's easier when you practise. If you forget, should you panic?

S: No.

T: Yes, you have to keep going

Our discussion of this episode further demonstrated Diane's belief that there are affective factors involved in the teaching and learning of speaking skills. Significantly, she refers here to the long turns required for the exams but the follow-up interview revealed a concern with preparing the students for authentic situations outside the classroom:

I don't always want to link it to the exams but they are going to have to do something like that (give extended talks) for the exams and when they are older, etc. so I'm trying to train them for that to get them over their fear of speaking in front of people. They are very self-conscious at this age but they will have to face lots of situations. (DI3)

Diane's recognition of the performance nature of speaking, particularly for longer turns to a group audience, is clear here. She sets ground rules and uses strategies such as peer correction to protect students' self-esteem and provides the support of praise and encouragement.

### **6.2.9 Teaching speaking to mixed-level groups**

As has been mentioned, the two classes involved in the classroom observations both contained mixed-level students; that is, students who have been formally assessed as having different levels of language proficiency. The challenges of accommodating this range of ability and preparing students in the same class to take exams at different levels were repeatedly referred to by Diane during the research. The following interview extract provides one such example:

All my classes this year are mixed. The class you saw before was E2 and E3, and basically pretty much every class in the college unfortunately from a teaching and learning point of view is mixed, but that's just how it is [...] it's really quite a difficult challenge. I guess it's up to me in that class to make the activities accessible for both levels. (DI2)

She goes on to explain her response to this teaching constraint:

You have to try and differentiate as much as possible, which isn't always easy. I mean some lessons we can just deliver as normal because it applies to all the students, but then sometimes I split the class completely into E1 and E2 and they do completely different activities, maybe linked on the

same topic or something... we've a lot to get through to get them ready... quite often I do differentiation like the E1s do it in the present tense and the E2s do it in the past tense or something like that. (DI2)

Diane, then, at times teaches the class together and in a separate discussion immediately after DO4 told me that one of her aims in so doing was to create a sense of class unity. The pressure to cover syllabus elements (see 6.4.3), however, meant that sometimes the class needed to be separated to work on separate tasks. An example of the third option that she mentions, that of differentiated tasks, is provided in Episode 19 below:

Episode 19 (DO4)

T: Right, now this group, you're going to ask each other and talk about your neighbourhoods now – whether you have meetings, when those take place, who makes decisions...

Teacher moves to another group

T: (to the group) You are going to discuss your neighbourhoods back home. So you are going to talk about where people met, what they did together. What tense are you going to use?

S: The past.

T: That's right.

This differentiated task, then, involves the students at different levels using the tense assigned to their level by the teacher, which in turn corresponds with the AECC curriculum. I asked Diane what determined her use of these differentiated tasks and she told me:

It depends what materials I've found, really. Sometimes, there are materials that can be used by both levels and sometimes not. It depends what I lay my hands on. Sometimes, I can see how I can hit the AECC aims for the different levels by altering the task for the different groups and sometimes I get worried that there are areas that we need to develop that can't be brought together and I have them working separately for some of the lesson but I will always bring them together at some point. (DI4)

Diane, then, adopts a pragmatic approach to the phenomenon of mixed-level groups. She tries to balance the need to meet the needs for their respective levels with the desire to find commonality between the levels and does so using the teaching materials at her disposition. In the following section, I focus on her management of these speaking activities.

### 6.2.10 Management of speaking activities

Many of the classroom management skills that I describe in this section are general teaching skills not limited to the teaching of speaking. They are included here, however as Diane initially found the management of the Functional Skills to be very challenging. In the following extract from the second semester, she reflects on her early experiences teaching the 16-18-year-olds:

Yes, well, it gets a bit hectic and they were shouting at me and I was like 'I don't know who's first!' But that's part of it... it was all a real shock to me at the beginning learning how to deal with that age group and I've had to work on it a lot I was like 'Why aren't they listening?' 'Why don't they want to learn?' And actually, it's because they are 16-18 year olds and I have to teach them differently. (DI5)

Following these initial difficulties, I observed that a consistent feature of Diane's later classroom management was that she modelled activities and then asked students to repeat the instructions she had given. In DOI, for example, she first modelled a 'find someone who' activity with one of the students and then checked student understanding of the task in the following way:

#### Episode 20 (DOI)

T: So what do you have to do?

S1: We have to ask these questions to find the right person.

D: Who do you need to ask?

S1: Different people.

S2: And we write the name of the person who says yes.

S: Yes, and we write their name.

T: That's right. Okay, you have 3 minutes to complete as many as you can starting... now!

This emphasis on ensuring that the students fully understood the tasks, Diane explained, was the result of earlier experiences in which the tasks had not run smoothly:

With this group I do the checking thing very consciously now because of the number of times in the first couple of weeks of having them when I said, 'Right, let's be getting on with it!' and maybe two would get on with it and then five would go ... two people over here would go, 'Miss, I don't understand' and then I'd go over and then three people over here would go, 'Miss, I don't understand' and so, just to make it easier and clearer, I try to

check it all together [...] The demonstration thing I just started doing naturally as I was trying to find ways of improving. (DI1)

Particularly in the case of the 16-18-year-olds, Diane's classroom management also anticipated possible activity problems. In the example below, she had just provided the instructions for a running dictation activity. She then emphasized certain points as shown in Episode 21 below:

Episode 21 (DO3)

T: This is another chance to win points. Can you take the paper with you?

Ss: No.

T: Can you stand there and shout?

Ss: No.

She rationalises this behaviour with reference to her belief that the students will otherwise not follow the established rules:

Well, I've never done the activity with this group before but I can just visualise what they would do and also what I would do [laughs]. I love games, which is why I do so many of them, I think, but I love thinking about doing games and I would be wondering 'How can I cheat here?' I've encouraged this series of competitions and now I have to control their enthusiasm for winning a little bit [laughs]. (DI5)

Diane also routinely employed directed questions in the class. She explained that this was designed to keep the students on task:

Yes, that's so they are always prepared to speak to the whole class. If they know that they can be called at any moment to feed back, then they are more likely to actually work. At the beginning, there were some who just didn't get on with the activities but now they know that I'm watching them and they will definitely get called if they are slacking. (DI1)

This practice of nominating students was one of the rare aspects of Diane's teaching which she was able to attribute directly to her level 5 (CELTA) training. Referring to the feedback she had received during the classroom observations for that course, she said:

There wasn't any one great weakness that came up in different classes because there were different things in different classes that came up. Mainly, it encouraged my nominating – I try to do that much more now rather than letting the stronger students shout out and checking instructions. (DI3)

Thus, Diane had to develop her practical knowledge of working with this age group of students and this involved reinforcing her classroom management practices, drawing in one instance on advice provided during her formal teacher education. Overall, the data reveals differences both in her responses to the language proficiency of the students and to the challenges she experienced with the Functional Skills groups. The following section focuses on the stages in Diane's speaking classes.

### **6.2.11 Activity stages in speaking classes**

As with the other case studies, Diane did not adopt any single fixed model for the teaching of speaking. However, certain patterns were distinguishable in the lessons; for example, many of Diane's classes began with a short brainstorming activity. In DO5, Diane began the class with the following activity:

Figure 6.7: Staging of an activity in DO5

- Teacher separates students into two teams: males and females
- Teacher asks the students to lists words connected with work/jobs for each letter of the alphabet
- Teacher sets a timer for the activity on the Smart board
- Teacher incorporates two late arrivals into the teams whilst the activity is in progress

This initial activity was then followed by other activities in which students discussed interviews and interviewed each other. Diane explained that she believed it is important to activate the students' background knowledge of the class topic at the beginning of the class:

Yeah, definitely with that class ... and with other classes, I like to have something which activates schemata, or whatever it's called... just to wake them up and get them focused on the lesson, which follows the topic for the week. And I often just do brainstorming. (DI5)

My field notes for the episode above also identify Diane's smooth incorporation of late arrivals into an initial activity. Diane explained that her planning was, in part, a response to the phenomenon of late arrivals, which she viewed as characteristic of the context in which she worked:

Well, they come in in dribs and drabs and it's something I've noticed recently that the lesson doesn't start for the first ten minutes because I'm waiting for everyone or I start the lesson and people are still coming in so I wanted to think of an activity that I could start and then if people came in, it wouldn't interrupt it - they could just join. (DI3)

Aside from this consistent use of initial activities for these purposes, there was also a general trend for speaking activities to be staged from direct to more indirect activities as Diane explained in relation to DO4:

We'd spent most of the lesson on questions ...not just questions... and the students had to write them down, they checked each other's questions and then I checked them all for grammatical accuracy and then I wanted them to practise saying them again and again - like drilling or whatever. After this, when they can produce it, I like to get them to practise in more realistic situations where they are asking for real information for each other and having to adapt the language. (DI4)

Thus, Diane adopts a general principle of developing students' ability to produce language structures and then creates speaking contexts in which that language can be used more communicatively. However, at times, she also introduces more indirect approaches which then lead to a focus on form and possibly diagnostic controlled practice:

At first we just focussed on the fluency of asking questions and then we looked at accuracy and when you saw it we were doing a bit of both. They were making a lot of mistakes so we went back and had some practice of correct versions. I find that you have to keep going back to accuracy and then keep recycling the language. (DI4)

Having examined aspects of Diane's lesson stages, in the next section the case study now focuses on the integration of speaking development with that of other language skills.

### **6.2.12 Integrating speaking with other skills development**

There was some integration of skills in the classes I observed but the extent of this was very limited. In a rare instance of an explicit listening activity by Diane (DO4), following students' descriptions of their own houses, an audio recording on the topic of buildings and architecture was used with follow-up discussion questions. Diane explained its inclusion:

I just included that recording because I Googled it and there were some good materials on the same theme of buildings and architecture. Sometimes, the materials just seem interesting like that and I decide to bring them in but I have to say that I rarely use just listening activities in the class except for some variety. (DI4)

Thus, there was no systematic use of discrete listening activities in the development of speaking skills in Diane's classes such as student identification of discourse

features of audio recordings. There was more explicit use of the integration of writing with speaking, however, as the interview extract from DI4 in Figure 6.8 before shows:

Figure 6.8: Interview extract from DI4

I: I left at the break when they were doing some discussion questions and I just wondered what happened afterwards...
T: Well, I split them into E1 and E2 and gave them some reading and writing practice. As soon as you were gone! [laughs] I did it with those questions and then E1s had to do it in the present and E2s had to do it in the past.
I: Why did you add the written stage?
T: The writing focuses their minds on the structure again and I can give them written corrections if necessary. So, it gives them a reference for the structure for future speaking... if they decide to look at it again! [laughs]

Diane, then, also incorporates writing as a means of consolidating language structures which are being developed orally. Writing also provides students with a record of the language focused on should they be inclined to refer to it. The reference to reading and writing practice here reflects the broader fact that the Functional Skills students were also preparing for reading and writing exams. One effect of the classroom observations, however, may have been that the skills development was more segregated than in her normal practices as the teacher was aware that I was investigating the teaching of speaking.

### 6.3 Materials for teaching speaking

Diane used an eclectic range of materials in her teaching of speaking skills. For the sessions I observed, several of the materials were from Skills for Life and a limited number from published course books but the majority appeared to be in-house materials. When I asked Diane how she selected the speaking materials for teaching speaking, she told me:

We have a shared hard drive in my department and when ... whenever anyone uses, or finds, or makes a resource they save it into the folder that's most relevant, so there's like a health folder, and a shopping folder, and I think that was an adjectives folder and it was just there. Great [laughs]. I don't spend too much time making my own stuff, I'll be frank.  
(DI2)

It can be seen that Diane enjoys the convenience of the availability of the hard drive materials. She also explains that this institutional provision and organisation of online materials appeals to her preferred computer-based style of working:

I think it's brilliant because I'm quite computer-based. I find it quite easy to use the computers and if I'm sat writing my scheme and I'm thinking that I'm going to be teaching about shopping, then I can look in the shopping file and find something useful and then print it with quite minimal effort and I do use books and obviously other resources but it's much easier if it's all there. I don't know if that's good or not. (DI1)

An important factor in Diane's choice of materials was their appropriateness to her own classes or their potential to be adapted:

The Skills for Life materials weren't very good for what I wanted (the class on housing, DO4). They were either way too easy or not applicable to both levels. So, that's why I chose it – it was there, and it was easy and had loads of resources made with it already so I could select and adapt them for my group so what more could you ask for? [laughs] (DI6)

As can be seen, Diane did not regard the Skills for Life materials as being suitable for her mixed-level class. Her rationale for using course book materials in DO5 reinforced this point:

Well, I knew I wanted to do something related to work and I don't like the Skills for Life work section particularly, especially when it's split level like E2 and E3 in the same class – it's hard to pick and choose from them because they are so 'This is E2' and 'This is E3'. Whereas the [course book] one was somewhere in the middle. (DI5)

Overall, then, Diane is a 'bricoleur' who identifies materials from a variety of sources that will best meet her teaching needs. Diane seemed assured in this approach to materials but during our final interview at the end of the academic year, immediately after she had attended a workshop for 16-18 students, she told me

[The workshop] was great. Well, no, it wasn't... I didn't learn anything new at all and that meant it was a long day but that was really good. I mean, you're always wondering if there are all these great things that everyone is doing and all these amazing materials and things but I knew all the materials web sites and the kind of activities they contained and how to adapt them to my class so there was nothing people mentioned that I wouldn't normally do so I'm really happy. (DO6)

The significance of this experience is that Diane felt that her Functional Skills practices, including the materials she chose, had been validated by this opportunity to learn about what professionals in the field were presenting as representing best practice.

## **6.4 Practical knowledge of the speaking syllabus**

### **6.4.1 Different groups**

Diane's syllabus design differed significantly for the two groups which I observed. I have already mentioned that the E2/E3 students were following a Functional Skills syllabus consisting of ESOL, IT and mathematics. Diane explained how her institution had adopted a pragmatic topic-based approach to integrating these three strands:

A member of staff has put together a guide. So, this week we do health, this week we do shopping, for example, so that brings everything in. So, if we want to do a speaking activity, we try to link it to that topic but that topic is also being covered in maths at the same time, in IT at the same time. Does that make sense? So when we do the speaking, we have to look at what should be done across the three areas [...] It gives you a starting point. I think it is good that it's linked from the students' point of view because what they are learning is more inter-connected and more relevant as they can see. (DI1)

For Diane, then, the broad thematic syllabus provides surface coherence to the overall Functional Skills syllabus. However, the fact that she had not been provided with any detailed curriculum for the ESOL component (including speaking skills) proved problematic for her:

I didn't have any confidence in what I was doing because at the end of the day we're delivering an exam course and I didn't know what the exams were going to be, and I didn't know how they'd be assessed, and I didn't know the curriculum I needed to cover, and I didn't know ... [...] so I really wanted someone to sit down with me and be like 'This is the exam, this is what you need to cover, go!' But no one did. (DI6)

For Diane, then, it is important to have learning aims for the students and she notes that her relative inexperience increases her desire to work towards stated objectives. She explained that, in the absence of other institutional guidance, she had adopted the AECC:

[The AECC] is the only real reference we have as to what the students should know so I refer to it because I don't know what else to refer to. And it's good to have something to refer to. I wish it was more structured. I wish it was more this is what they need to do exactly. It's all so vague. I still use the ESOL curriculum because it's quite clear, I can fit it around the topics and I'm reasonably familiar with it. I haven't found a functional skills curriculum here - there. There isn't one. (DI6)

The AECC, then, which Diane was already familiar with, was accessible and was flexible enough to meet Diane's needs within the overall thematic syllabus. Diane also used it as reference for the E1/E2 group. The extract below focuses on Diane's flexible use of the AECC with reference to her topic of neighbourhood in DO4:

I think I just chose neighbourhood arbitrarily when I found some materials ... it sounds really bad ... but it's in the Core Curriculum – talk about culture, talk about neighbourhood. It's a good thing for the E1s to be able to do to talk about themselves and the E2s to learn new vocab and, again, talk about themselves but it's just a standard topic, I would say. I find the Core Curriculum is a good guide to what you should cover but I don't work through it from beginning to end. (DI4)

I noted that there were no pronunciation activities in the observed classes. Diane explained her beliefs about the students' existing comprehensibility and the lack of need for this practice as follows:

Lots of the students, as they are surrounded by English people, don't have terrible pronunciation. People do understand them. I think pronunciation is important, yes, but I just correct an individual student as it comes up. (DI3)

Overall, the speaking syllabi for both groups included topics, grammatical structures and a reasonably strong emphasis on situational language. This focus on situational language can be seen as a result of Diane's belief that the syllabus should reflect students' real-life lives:

I think with ESOL it's so much more relevant to them, to the students [than EFL]. It's much more meaningful because they need speaking to live here and they're seeking that. Lots of the lessons are very functional like going to the Post Office, going to the doctor, whatever, because that's what they need and that's what they want, so that's quite nice. It's nice in a way to teach something clearly with relevance rather than some abstract information that they don't really want to know [...] I think that's why I found it really hard to teach in Taiwan because they came to class, they spoke English, then they left and had absolutely no need for it whatsoever. (DI6)

The identification of what the students want to learn, referred to here, is the focus of the following section.

#### **6.4.2 Learner-centredness in the speaking syllabus**

Consistent with Diane's interest in the relevance of content to the students' real-life needs, she explained that for the standard ESOL classes (she was more constrained in the case of Functional Skills as has been discussed) she often used classroom

activities to identify student preferences so that these could be incorporated into the syllabus.

I often provide... Okay, right, so you know the Skills for Life materials that have chapters on health, shopping or whatever, I'll give them those and then we have... I have some activities where they discuss where they use English and why they want to improve English, and then they put those topics in order of what they think is important for them, and then together with the class they decide what topic they want to do and then ... so they choose the topic area. (DI2)

Thus, Diane integrated student-chosen topic areas into the syllabus. She combined this approach, however, with her own inclusion of elements of the Core Curriculum, which she believes should also be covered:

And we might not do every lesson on the topics they choose because, yes, there are things I need them to do, but I mean it's a good umbrella to get everything in on there – I can find a way to include the grammar... the tenses and questions and vocabulary. Lots of them want practical help, especially at this low level at entry one, but they often choose education if they've got children, or shopping, or just general ones that we cover anyway because that's what's in the Skills for Life and that's what they need to learn. (DI2)

Overall, then, Diane's learner-centredness is balanced with her own professional judgement of what should be covered at each level. The topics, as she explains above, allow her to introduce grammar and vocabulary within this context. She also tried to accommodate individual requests. Referring to the noughts and crosses activity practising present continuous tense with plumbing and electrical problems (Episode 12), she explained:

That was what they told me they wanted to learn. Last week we did lessons on problems in the home and phoning the plumber and saying, 'My sink is leaking, please can you come and help me?' And that was something they said, 'Oh yes, we need to know this!' So I did a lesson on it. I did two lessons on it. This is why, although some teachers cut and paste their schemes of work each year, mine is always different. [laughs] (DI6)

I was also interested in the role of the ILPS for identifying individual learning needs. Diane was critical of the limited information that she believed they provided but believes that they can have certain value if used appropriately:

It's difficult to get any detailed information from the students themselves. Also, the college says you should review them every term, set them and review them every term, but if I do that I don't find them useful at all

because it's so abstract, and you have this student that's got like 100 things, and you have to pick out three that they need to practice for a term but reviewing it every term is not enough if you're going to do it ... I think it's better to use them every lesson, almost, or every ... frequently. And when they can do it, I just sign it off then and they can see how it helps them to progress. That's how I do it. (DI6)

Thus, through experience of employing the ILPs, Diane has adopted practices which differ from the institutional conventions but which she regards as being more effective for student learning.

#### **6.4.3 The washback effect of speaking exams**

In DO6, I observed a speaking activity in which students discussed language which was used in a number of situations such as the hospital, the bank or the hairdressers. Diane explained to me in DI6 that whilst she found this exercise valid for the learners, the language needed to be covered as these were possible contexts for the second part of the E1/E2 students' speaking examination. Later in the same lesson, the students in turn delivered well-prepared short talks in which they left phone messages to book a dental appointment. For Diane, it is necessary to include such practice to prepare the students for the exams they take:

In the first part, they have to listen to a tape and then leave a message for someone. And they have to spell their name ... say their name and address and ask for some information. It's a really short task and it's really easy for them to do but it's really hard to pass that one because there are ten marks and if you forget to do one thing, you're done so we keep practising it. It's just prepping. (DI6)

There was also explicit teaching of the format of the speaking exams for the E1/E2 group as shown in Episode 21 below:

#### Episode 21 (DO6)

T: In the third section you must keep talking. It's a long conversation. Entry 1 students, what do you have to do?

S: Talk about things that we do...

T: And what tense do you have to use?

S1: The present simple.

T: And how about for Entry 2 students, do you use the present simple?

S2: Past simple.

T: Yes. Are you worried about the exam?

S3: Yes, I might forget everything.

T: You will be fine. We will be doing practice this week, next week and the following week.

My final E1/E2 classroom observation (DO6), coming as it did shortly before the exam, identified a significant amount of exam practice and preparation such as in this episode. I did not observe an equally strong focus on exams in the E2/E3 classes, however. Diane explained that she viewed the degree of washback involved for the two groups as differing greatly:

I guess I teach the E1/E2 group the skills they need to know like the grammar, and functions, and the questions and all things like that, but I also know that the City and Guilds exam is very structured and they need to do this, this and this, and so I do a lot of work with them, whereas with the Functional Skills one I know it was much vaguer and much easier for them so I've just ... I haven't taught them similarly and haven't had to focus so much on the exams. (DI6)

As Diane designed and administered the Functional Skills exam herself, following certain Functional Skills guidelines, training students for an external exam format was not an issue. Diane also felt that the students' language proficiency was such that they could be expected to perform well in the exams without specific preparation and she therefore placed less emphasis on these exams. Despite the need to prepare the E1/E2 for the exams, however, Diane adopted a pragmatic position towards the influence of the exams:

Well, I'm definitely steering the students towards them because you have to in a way. There's steering them just to get them through the exam and steering them because they need that skill anyway like asking each other questions and discussing and taking longer turns to speak. It is steering them because that's what they have to do in the exam but it's also an essential skill to learn so I don't feel too guilty about steering them. (DI4)

Overall, then, the different funding basis of the courses had a large effect on the syllabi which Diane developed. The Functional Skills ESOL syllabus was tied to other curriculum strands and the respective exams had different degrees of washback. For both courses, however, Diane referred to the AECC with which she was familiar and incorporated a degree of student content.

## 6.5 Case summary

Diane adopted different speaking syllabi for her two groups but there were certain common elements. The over-arching structure consisted of topics, whether agreed with other teachers as in the case of the Functional Skills programme or negotiated with the students. Diane also integrated situational language and chose language practice which would involve the use of certain structures and tenses but there was little explicit teaching of this grammar. Diane utilized an eclectic range of materials to meet the needs of her students with the multi-level nature of her classes being a key factor in her decision-making.

Diane's teaching included both direct and indirect approaches with the former more in evidence with lower proficiency students. She had strong interest in the use of 'games' to provide a means of repetition (as opposed to the drilling sometimes employed by Susan), especially with the young adults in the Functional Skills group. She also believed that the 16-18 year-old students had short attention spans and would be motivated by competition and pace. Following the speaking activities, Diane routinely provided self and peer-correction, often selecting a specific class of error. There was no teaching of pronunciation as students were already considered to be intelligible.

The student profiles influenced Diane's teaching in a number of ways; she adopted the use of a series of fast-paced activities to motivate the Functional Skills students, for example. She referred to the relevance of speaking skills for the migrant students in general terms, focusing regularly on situational language, but without evidence of a more detailed knowledge of their real-life challenges. The mixed-level nature of the classes also affected her choice of materials and pedagogy with some use of differentiated tasks. Another strong institutional influence on her practices was the fact that the 16-18 year old students were studying ESOL as part of a wider Functional Skills programme with a thematic syllabus linking their language study with other subjects. The exams that students were entered for also resulted in different degrees of washback on Diane's practices. Diane conducted the ILPs required by the college but, believing them to be ineffective, had adopted a personal way of using them.

Diane initially faced many classroom management challenges with the 16-18 year olds as she had no previous experience of teaching ESOL to this age-group. This led to more methodical use of modelling and the checking of instructions and the adoption of fast-paced activities to maintain student interest. She was also faced with the absence of a curriculum for ESOL in Functional Skills and, concerned at her lack of experience, adopted the AECC as a reference for what should be taught. Although Diane already had quite routinized practices with the regular ESOL class, she sought a means of benchmarking her practices against those of other teachers and felt validated when a CPD event confirmed for her that they were in line with those of other practitioners.

## Chapter Seven: Alan

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings for the third of the four case studies. The teacher, Alan, is a native English speaker and has a Cert Ed in ESOL teaching. In common with the other teachers in the study, he was teaching in the FE sector in the north of England. When the research began, he had approximately two years' ESOL teaching experience. In addition, he had taught EFL on a summer course in the UK shortly after gaining his CELTA qualification. I observed Alan teaching speaking skills to classes at different levels of proficiency (unlike the other cases, there were no instances of mixed-level groups). Summaries of the observed teaching and the exams which students were entered for are included in Table 7.1 below:

Table 7.1: Information about observed classes

Group	Level(s)	Exam	Observation(s)
Regular ESOL	E1	Cambridge	AO5, AO6
Regular ESOL	E2	City and Guilds	AO4
Regular ESOL	E3	City and Guilds	AO2, AO3
ILP*	E1	No exam	AO1

\* Note that the individual learning plan (ILP) groups are those (often pre-entry) which are not assessed

This third case differs significantly from the others in several aspects. Firstly, Alan did not attach a great deal of weight to the institutional skills label (speaking and listening, reading and writing) of a class. Instead, he adopted a predominantly integrated skills approach with a dominant grammatical syllabus. Indeed, Alan's teaching was very much characterised by this focus on student mastery of language structures. In addition, Alan's teaching was strongly course book-led and there was evidence to suggest that this was related to an unwillingness to invest a greater amount of time in choosing materials and in lesson planning. The findings for the case are presented within the same overall structure as the preceding chapters whilst allowing for the unique characteristics of the individual case to come to the fore.

## 7.2 Practical knowledge of pedagogy for teaching speaking

### 7.2.1 Direct approaches to teaching speaking

A dominant feature of Alan's teaching of speaking skills was the presence of direct approaches. Indeed, all of the classes that I observed contained a significant number of such activities. Episode 22 below provides an example of such an activity:

#### Episode 22 (from AO6)

T: [student's name] What do you like?

S1: I like milk.

T: Good. Everybody. I like milk.

Ss: I like milk.

T: [student's name] What do you like?

S2: I like eggs.

T: Right. Now everybody tell your partner the things you like from the list (in the course book) using 'I like'.

In two of the observed classes, there was also evidence of choral drilling activities in which substitutions were used. In the first session that I observed (AO1), for example, Alan introduced the following activity:

#### Episode 23 (from AO1)

T: They didn't leave at 5 o'clock. They left at 4 o'clock.

The teacher cups both ears with his hands.

Ss: They didn't leave at 5 o'clock, they left at 4 o'clock.

T: He didn't leave at 5 o'clock. He left at 4 o'clock.

Ss: He didn't leave at 5 o'clock. He left at 4 o'clock.

T: We...

Ss: We didn't leave at 5 o'clock. We left at 4 o'clock.

Alan's belief in drilling, including the use of substitutions, as an effective way of teaching speaking skills can be attributed to the emphasis he places on student manipulation of language:

[...] you can get so much more out of one of those activities where if you have a controlled area of language to practise, like a phrase which is transferable, so something like... I don't know... it could be just

something like ‘Where did you go yesterday?’ or ‘Where did you go last week?’ So, you basically change each time the ending. This is what they need to be able to do - to manipulate the language for different situations. (AI6)

He also demonstrated a strong belief in the importance for students of mastering language (I discuss the accuracy of grammatical structures in more detail in 7.2.4). Discussing the final observed class in AI6, for example, he explained to me that ‘the students will be very familiar with [the verb] *to like* but they need to practise it until they automatically say it correctly.’ This statement reveals both the emphasis on accuracy and the value for Alan of repetition. He also believed that it was necessary for students to master stages before progressing to other structures because of the inter-connectedness of the language points:

I think sometimes that if you’re going to be thorough, you’re going to do things that will bore some of the group. Like today, if I’d told the group that we were going to be doing daily routine, they would have said, ‘Well, we’ve done that! I get up at 8 o’ clock and all that.’ They *have* done it before but this leads into question formation like ‘What time do you get up?’ and they need that auxiliary verb in there, which is something I know the ladies in that group are very weak in so we need to get all the steps right. (AI4)

The activities which Alan employed to practise a given structure did show some (limited) variety, however. In AO1, for example, he incorporated the following activity at the end of a class in which had focussed on the past simple tense:

#### Episode 24 (from AO1)

Teacher writes ‘Where were they last night?’ on the board.

Teacher nominates a student for each word of the sentence.

S1: Where

S2: were

S3: they

S4: last

S5: night

Teacher nominates different students to produce the sentence (repeated).

This activity was significant because it was a rare example of explicit experimentation and reflection by Alan:

That was taught to me by [tutor's name] on the level 5 course but in the session he taught it, I wasn't entirely sure what the purpose actually was. Just by experimenting, I found that, regardless of what the purpose actually is, if you're going to do something that is based around grammar and word order as a follow-up activity... which *I* try to do... that activity seems to really improve the success rate of the students in producing that structure. (AI1)

Overall, then, Alan placed a high value on accurate language production and believed that controlled speaking practice contributed strongly to achieving this. The following section discusses the role of less controlled activities in Alan's teaching.

### **7.2.2 Indirect approaches to teaching speaking**

The absence of indirect approaches was a significant feature of Alan's practices. In the six classes that I observed, there was little that would constitute an indirect speaking task. Despite this, however, Alan did state a belief that there is a role for indirect approaches. His description of a debate and accompanying explanation of the importance of a motivating topic he had introduced in an unobserved class is included below to illustrate these stated beliefs:

I found some material in the Skills for Life material which created a very interesting and polarised male-female debate about whether a bloke should chase his dream job in London and whether it would mean moving his family or do what his wife wanted and take a stable job. They were bringing out some great language like 'Go for your dream' and the girls were using a lot of emotional language about responsibilities and stuff and I let it go on for a while and develop. (AI5)

Overall, Alan tended to work towards language outcomes requiring, in his view, more direct approaches, however. Whilst he saw some value in the creative dimensions of freer practice, he was concerned that the language produced may not match that required for his spoken grammar objectives:

I thought it was worth maybe not meeting all the targets for that lesson because it was such a rich debate and sometimes that happens and you can divert it into a creative outlet somewhere further down the line and I think it makes a far more valid production stage but it might mean that the production stage is more limited or it might mean that the language in the production stage is less controlled and by controlled, I mean less anticipated rather than restricted. So, you might get the language you wanted in there or it might not get practised at all. (AI5)

Alan, then, recognises the value of indirect teaching approaches within a PPP model for the more meaningful language production that they can facilitate (discussed in

more detail in 7.2.5). However, in practice this knowledge is often subordinated to a desire to adopt a more direct approach in order for specific language items to be focused on.

### 7.2.3 The teaching of pronunciation

In contrast to the other cases, Alan's teaching contained a considerable amount of pronunciation drilling. This practice was exclusively remedial and focused on pronunciation errors which arose during the course of a lesson. Alan argued that the choral drilling which constituted most of the practice allowed students to overcome their inhibitions:

[...] drilling with one person is difficult. You have to do it, but... when I say *difficult* it's... there's a momentum that happens with choral drilling and I do get a sense that that deepens the pattern. It allows them to be louder in an environment where they're not feeling aware of their voice as much. It's like when you're singing in church, it doesn't matter if you're out of key. And then that's why you... well, I presume that's why people do choral drilling and then individual. (AI6)

Alan's belief that students need to be at ease to develop their pronunciation can also be seen in the following interview extract. In the interview, I had asked Alan about an incident in which he had indicated a problem with a student's pronunciation by holding his ear-lobe and, when the student did not self-correct, Alan asked another student to peer-correct the first student:

When her friend corrects her with pronunciation and grammar, it's all part of the normal chat but when she's repeatedly corrected by other students I think she feels picked on. She said she didn't like it and I think that's fair enough – if she feels hounded then it's counter-productive to have peer correction anyway as she won't take it on board. Most of them seem to be happy with peer-correction. (AD3)

The need to avoid excessive correction at any one time and to instead return to pronunciation correction on future occasions was also commented on by Alan. He mentioned it in the context of a student who was experiencing particular pronunciation difficulties:

What I want to avoid is negatively charged language, especially with [student's name], who is the Thai girl, because her pronunciation is way off and I want to avoid... it's difficult because I can't let some issues go uncorrected but I don't want to drill and drill and drill. Sometimes I might just have to leave something uncorrected just for the esteem of the

student, really but I will wait for it to come back up in context and pick it out and see if we can work with it a bit more. (AI1)

In contrast to other cases, there was little reference during the interviews with Alan to the need to develop students' confidence in speaking aside from this stated belief that students should not be over-corrected. In AO1 and AO3, Alan initially focused on pronunciation by eliciting the word stress of vocabulary that had been mispronounced during the class. Episode 25 below exemplifies this:

Episode 25 (from AO1)

Teacher writes 'stereo' on the board from his notes.

T: How do we say this word? Is it 'stereo'?

S: Stereo

Teacher marks the separate syllables and the main stress for the word.

T: And what's this word?

Teacher writes 'burglar' and uses the same procedure.

On two occasions, Alan also introduced minimal pairs on the board in response to pronunciation errors on the part of the students. He explained that he regarded this minimal pair practice as an effective way for students to develop their pronunciation of individual phonemes:

Okay, so specifically for pronunciation I try and draw attention to syllables in the words and I isolate them so it could be isolated as a consonant cluster or combination of vowels or maybe a look at, I don't know, a CVC word, so that would be something like 'bat'. I can compare two words like 'bat' and 'bet' or 'hat' and 'hot' and things like that... a minimal change so that we can focus on isolating and practising the sounds. (AI2)

This focus on discrete elements of students' language production was also very evident in the centrality of grammar in Alan's teaching, which is the subject of the following section.

#### **7.2.4 Developing students' grammar for speaking**

Alan paid a great deal of attention to formal aspects of language in his classes and, unlike teachers in the other cases, he consistently taught and used metalanguage as the episodes below (26 and 27) demonstrate:

Episode 26 (from AO4)

T: What kind of word is ‘want’? Is it a verb or a noun?

S1: A verb.

T: Yes, it’s a verb. Right, I want you to underline all the verbs

Students do the task.

T: So, when we are talking about what he or she does, we need to include...

S2: (the letter) ‘s’

Episode 27 (from AO5)

S1: Have bath.

T: You’re missing an article.

S1: Huh?

Teacher writes ‘Have \_\_\_\_\_ bath’ on the board.

S2: A... have a bath.

T: Yes. The words *a*, *an* and *the* are called articles.

Alan explained this focus on metalanguage as follows:

[...] going back to this empowering students with metalanguage, I saw it was useful because I reasoned that I had taught entry two students who wouldn’t be able to tell you what a verb or a noun was. And I have taught entry one students who, typically in these groups the first time the subject is broached, the metalanguage, maybe one student will have heard of a verb and maybe they’ll confuse it with something [...] I want to be at the point where we can talk about these parts of speech in the lessons. (AI2)

Alan quite consistently elicited examples of the language to be practised and then focused on its formal elements using the metalanguage he had introduced. An example of this can be seen in the following episode:

Episode 28 (from AO1)

T: [name of student], what did you do at the weekend?

S1: I go to see my brother

T: Oh, you went to see your brother. And [other student’s name], what did you do?

S2: Shopping.

T: Oh, what did you buy?

S2: I buy (looks quizzically at teacher)... bought...

T: Good.

S2: I bought something for my mobile phone.

Teacher writes go → went and buy → bought on the board. He draws attention to the fact that they are irregular past tense forms and gives students a matching activity from a course book with infinitives and past tense forms.

Alan explained his belief in this inductive approach (which I return to in 7.2.9):

When I've planned a lesson I might have, say, a grammar area to tackle and in the past I might not have not taught it using inductive methods... it might have been more deductive but I think it's better for the students to see the examples first and then I can draw out the explanations.. I think that it would work in a PPP session. (AI1)

In addition to Alan discussing his practices with reference to concepts such as inductive and deductive approaches (I did not introduce the terms), declarative knowledge was also central to Alan's understanding of his own development:

I think I've got to being an E2 teacher or a robust E2 teacher about now, and this is as I'm now teaching and learning E3 grammar. And what I mean by that is that in an E2 class I could probably in most situations respond very dynamically to students with questions like 'What's this?' 'Why is it?' 'What type of word is this?' 'Why does it behave in this way?' sort of thing, or at the very least I could lead them to a very honest 'I don't know because it's maybe an idiosyncrasy of the way the language formed in the first place.' (AI2)

The emphasis that Alan places here on 'responding dynamically' is also revealing and over the course of the interviews could be seen to encompass remedial activities such as word stress elicitation and use of minimal pairs for pronunciation development in addition to the explanations of grammar and lexical meaning that he provided.

### **7.2.5 The personalisation and cultural content of speaking activities**

In my field notes for the final observation (AO6), I wrote 'These don't really feel like ESOL classes'. Subsequent reflection on this comment made me aware that Alan's use of mainstream EFL course books in the classroom and the lack of language practice in which students talked about real world affairs, including their own lives, resulted in English classes which might equally have taken place in an

EFL classroom. After six observations, for example, I felt that I had learnt very little about the students' opinions, their lifestyles or their interests. The activity below exemplifies this lack of personalisation:

Figure 7.1: Stages of an activity from AO6

- Students have a list of food items on a photocopied hand-out.
- The teacher asks them to check that they understand the vocabulary.
- Students are asked to tick the food items which they like
- With a partner, students form sentences expressing which items they do/do not like

When explaining the importance of meaningful language use, Alan referred to this activity as follows:

And we were doing something with third person singular. And the food is fairly generic, but also it's something that they can... everybody can relate to food, if you can't relate to food then you've got bigger problems than English language. (AI6)

Although there is superficial personalisation here, however, it could not be argued that students are really able to express true preferences since the choice is limited to selecting from given options. Alan seemed aware of this shortcoming (he says 'the food is fairly generic') but had not introduced any changes to the course book task. To investigate this further, I asked Alan to what extent he attempted to bring the students' outside lives into the classroom; he explained that he also thought he could do more to achieve this:

Well, this is another area for my development. I don't think that I know my students well enough and I don't think I do enough of that. When I make reference to students' culture, quite often it's generic and based on my own stereotypes. That's why these things get shattered a bit - like today when two students said that they loved watching English television for cooking programmes. One Asian lady told me that she likes watching these programmes but every time she tries to cook something she burns it because she can't cook. That's another stereotypical image shattered. [laughs] (AI1)

The potential for raising interest levels by appealing to students' interests was apparent to Alan. For example, when we discussed a hand-out he had introduced with images of Al Pacino, Kate Winslet and Daniel Radcliffe in order to create a context for language activities based around a text on the life of an actor, he said

Yes, there was one moment there where I could feel that all their attention was on the pictures and there was silence... a notable change in their

interest level. What it suggests to me is that I want to be spending the same amount of time that I spend teaching getting the group profile, finding out what their interests are, picking up their ideas in class and giving them something that is meaningful for them. (AI5)

Interestingly, however, although the students had become very animated during a discussion of the Pakistani actress, Vienna Malik, during the previous observed class (Alan used the same course book materials with a different group), Alan continued to use Western cultural icons. He did, though, express a belief that students need to have an emotional connection to their language use:

Yeah, well, I think there are some things which just stand out like there being an emotional connection between the language you use and the success you have in learning it. If you feel particularly strongly about something, then you'll remember it and the key word is 'feel'. If you *feel* strongly about something, you it will mean more to you. Yeah, I think I read that somewhere or heard it on a course. (AI5)

This stated belief that students respond positively to meaningful content can also be seen in his description of an (unobserved) class using Skills for Life materials in which he had incorporated materials relating to the local context:

I just found that when you use the Skills for Life materials and there's no local content, it's a bit meaningless for the students. When I put the grid on the board, however, and said, 'The bus leaves [the local bus station] at such and such a time and gets to [place] at such a time,' they were all engaged with it. It's simpler but they can imagine being on that bus. If we're talking about a bus from Glenrothes to Dundee, it's meaningless – it's just numbers and names. Especially if you have to go through those names to get the pronunciation, which is another ball-ache. (AD3)

I returned to the issue of Alan's use of Skills for Life materials in the final interview as I wanted to understand more about his decision to only use these materials in one of the observed lessons. He told me:

The materials are good but I have to make a lot of my own resources for them. And I have to be a bit clear about that. I have to read them really carefully when I do read the plan in the back. I don't just think I can wing it with a Skills for Life pack resource. It means a bit more work in the evening but less... I wouldn't just chance it with a Skills for Life pack in the morning; I'd want to know what I was doing the next day. I want to get resources together that I need because sometimes you have to add things to the book, sometimes you need to find a map from somewhere or you need to find a little video or something. (AI6)

There is a tension here, then, between the fact that the localisation of materials is viewed as being positive for student involvement and the time investment, which Alan expresses reservations about making. This tension between Alan's ideal-oriented cognitions and his unwillingness (or inability) to invest the necessary time to put them into practice recurs throughout the case. Having discussed the role of personalisation in Alan's teaching, I now turn to discuss Alan's practical knowledge of language correction.

### **7.2.6 Corrective feedback on spoken language**

In 7.2.3, I discussed Alan's remedial approach to teaching pronunciation in which he responded to students' errors and introduced related practice tasks. Here, I briefly discuss Alan's practical knowledge of correction for language structures. I have already referred to the high value which Alan places on accuracy and in the interview extract below, referring to AO6 in which students practised forms of 'to like', he refers to the need to address 'fossilised errors' in the students' language use:

Well, with the E2 group they knew this form anyway. All of the students knew the form. But they were making mistakes in production regularly. To the E1 group it was a revelation for some of them. And because they had a level of fossilised fluency they'd be saying, 'Oh, yes, he like milk.'  
(AI6)

Alan also states that students need to be made aware of their own errors in order for them to correct their language use:

I think you can get by, especially just after a CELTA. I think you can probably... maybe if you pick out mistakes in some kind of a cycle, maybe in part of a PPP cycle or test teach test thing, you can pick out mistakes, and those are areas where the more knowledge you have as a teacher the more ability you have of encouraging your students to find things by examination. I mean the point I mean is you can easily pick out errors from the students and you can find ways of having the students correct them, and students have to use their... I suppose they have a network somewhere in the mind, I guess, of things they've learned either consciously or it's passed into deep learning, maybe, or it's still in surface, but they draw on their own resources to see maybe there is a mistake here.  
(AI2)

Alan's practices were consistent with the views that he expresses here that students need to be encouraged to reflect on language accuracy. In many of the observed classes, he made notes of errors during the limited pair work activities or responded

to individual students' classroom contributions in a way which focussed their attention (and that of the group) on an aspect of language. In addition to examples such as that in Episode 27 (in which he indicates a missing article), there were also examples of him writing incorrect sentences produced by students on the board for peer/self-correction and eliciting or providing corresponding explanations. Episode 29, which depicts the introduction to AO5, provides the example of Alan's focus on the distinction between the use of the present simple and present continuous tenses:

Episode 29 (AO5)

T: What do you do every day? I'll tell you what I do - I get up, I come to work...

S1: I go to the library.

S2: I'm talking to my family.

Teacher writes 'I'm talking to my family' on the board.

T: What tense is this? Present or past?

S3: Present.

T: Yes, and if I say 'I'm talking to my family', when does that happen?

S2: Now.

T: And if I say 'I'm walking' or 'I walk'? [writes both on the board, elicits differences and continues explanation]

Having established that Alan routinely introduces remedial activities both for grammatical errors (as shown above) and pronunciation errors (discussed in 7.2.3), I now move on to discuss his use of teaching resources.

### 7.2.7 Resources for teaching speaking

Of the six classes of Alan's that I observed, five of them (the exception was AO3) were course book-led and Alan tended to follow the course book activities very closely. I began by asking him about the choice of course book for his E3 class and whether it was prescribed by the institution:

No, it wasn't chosen for me. It's possibly a bit of a lazy decision, actually, but I made the decision myself. All I can say at the moment is that I like Headway... I like using Headway with elementary students and below... basically elementary and beginner but I don't like everything about it. I don't like the fact that the font has serifs on it and I don't like the fact that all the activities are all on the same page. (AI1)

We returned to choice of course book in the following interview as I had observed that Alan had adopted a different course book series (*Face to Face*) for the second group.

Headway is more pitched for teenagers in Europe so I've had to spend time re-working things to make them contextually relevant for the students whereas with *Face to Face* less work is required there. If I had a class of Asian ladies, I'd have to rework some of the stuff but for the evening group of students who have experience of work, they want to get language that will help them be a bit more functional in society... be professional and I think *Face to Face*, from what I've seen, is fairly ideal. (AI2)

Alan, then, stated that he chose a course book which he believed was appropriate both to the age group and to the needs of a class which was largely composed of those in employment. He did recognise cultural assumptions in the course book that he felt were inappropriate for his classes, however:

There's also the problem of the contexts for some of these materials – it's very European. For example, the social conventions of being a guest in someone's house. They're all different and you think it's going to be straightforward but the students don't have the same experience and expectations. So, half of the group didn't clock the idea that the people in the dialogue give presents and go out on their birthday even if it's obvious to me and you. (AI2)

Despite these insights into the deficiencies of the materials, though, there was little evidence that he actually adapted materials to make them more suitable. This could perhaps be explained by an unwillingness to dedicate the necessary time to tailor the lessons to his classes. Alan was very candid about the fact that course books significantly reduced the time required for planning classes and that this was an important consideration for him:

I'm a little bit limited by time and preparation for planning which is one of the reasons why [the Headway course book]'s really good, because I understand how to use the format really without actually doing much in terms of planning whereas when I work with my own resources I actually have to consider what's happening in each order, why am I doing this. And, well, I could tell you why I'm doing something in the book... sometimes, for lack of time, I just open a book, 'Okay we're doing this' and I think about the context bits, the aims and objectives bit and then I just get there the next morning and copy what I need to copy and just get on with it and into it. So, that's why I use that book. (AI6)

Given his reliance on course books, I was interested by Alan's comments that he felt he had learnt to better understand the design of course book materials and was better able to exploit the material:

Last year and the year before, I spent a lot of time making my own materials and this helped me to understand the purpose of the materials. Now, it seems that ... my push towards my own materials was really because I didn't understand how to use the course books effectively and the sessions I was doing seemed dead and I couldn't work out what the problem was so I just switched away. But then, there's so much in the course books that needs accounting for so at some point you pick up a course book again and use it and, for me, it worked very well... something has happened and it's been an illuminating moment ... like a gestalt moment and I've suddenly realised, 'Yes, that makes sense! That's why that happens in that way!' I can extend much better now so I'm not edgy if I only have two pages of a course book. (AI5)

If we consider Alan's focus on lesson introductions (explained in detail in the next section) and his use of correction, language explanations and diagnostic practice activities, there does appear to be some substance to this position. Having discussed Alan's use of resources, I now turn to his practical knowledge of the syllabus.

### **7.3 Practical knowledge of the speaking syllabus**

#### **7.3.1 Speaking syllabus content**

I explained in the introduction to this case that Alan does not approach the teaching of speaking in isolation. In the extract below, he describes how, even though the classes are formally labelled as 'listening and speaking' classes by his institution, his own objectives for the classes include the four language skills:

Because the students aren't doing other skills classes, I'm not going to focus on speaking and listening particularly. I'm going to develop all the skills and grammar together like a general English teacher. We did a reading and writing course together in E1. Those students passed the exam - most of them did - but when I was teaching them reading and writing I was developing everything together. (AI4)

As this was central to understanding Alan's practical knowledge of teaching speaking skills, I wanted to probe Alan's decision to approach speaking in this way.

The interview extract for this discussion appears in Figure 7.2 below:

Figure 7.2: Interview extract from AI4

I: I'd just automatically assumed that the students would be doing listening and speaking in one group and reading and writing in another.

T: They would be to pass the exam but not for the sessions. I wouldn't teach reading and writing with no speaking and listening and vice-versa. It's just called that because they've passed their exam and then they've moved to another group and they are on a different code. So, they are on a code which says that they will be doing a certain exam at the end.

I: And do the students expect more of a focus on speaking and listening in those classes?

T: Well, maybe at the beginning, but speaking is about being able to use tenses and structures accurately. These students are all quite fluent so I'm giving them a better understanding through grammar teaching and that involves reading and writing as well. If they can write language correctly, this will be a good basis for their speaking so it's all connected.

Alan, then, expressed his belief that the development of language skills is interconnected. I had observed the use of controlled written practice (in AO1 and AO4, for example) and practice in other language skills. Alan's description of an intended follow-up class to AO3 is illustrative of his planning process:

As it's the last taught session, I can't really leave anything hanging but I think I've got enough here – there's the dialogue to read, we've got the listening activity giving information based on this... we've got the basic framework for a role-play (based on directions in a bus station) and I've also drawn out my own plan of a bus station. We can do some writing for control later. Now, my bus station can't be like an authentic bus station like [local bus station] because I've put too many things in it that I need but I've got [local bus station] service numbers - I've got the 680, the 621... (AD3)

As also indicated in interview extract 3 above, accurate production of grammatical structures was viewed by Alan as central to the development of speaking. In particular, he believed that the grammatical requirements of the exam should be included in the syllabus:

Yeah, [the Core Curriculum] helps me make sure that I haven't left anything off which is really glaringly important but this core curriculum, as far as I can tell, doesn't really tally up with... what I've got on this USB drive (he shows me the drive) is a list of the grammar elements that should be covered at each level. This is what I think Cambridge is assessing in their exams and so this also informs my scheme of work as well. (AI1)

This emphasis on the grammatical elements of the syllabus is clearly evident in the main foci of each of the observed classes, which are presented in the table (7.2) below:

Table: 7.2: Structural foci of observed classes

Observation one	simple past
Observation two	use of can + verb base
Observation three	prepositions of place
Observation four	present simple
Observation five	present simple (repetition of observation 4)
Observation six	to like (+ s for 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular)

I was also interested in the degree to which student needs were incorporated into the syllabus and how they were established. Although there was little evidence of learner-centred input in the classes that I observed (since they largely followed the course books), Alan did state that he believed that ILPs can be useful:

Yes, there is something about ILPs, they do teach you to look deeply into the language and the skills of the student. I think that when I first started teaching I had a very fuzzy perception of what language was being produced. The whole idea of doing an initial assessment for a student, when I was in my first few weeks was just – ‘Well, what am I doing?’ But then you realise that if you’re not doing that then you are teaching blindly, you’re blindly saying they need to do this without any real reference to where they’re at. (AI6)

What is clear, however, is that there was no systematic syllabus planning around student needs; whereas the first two cases revealed on-going negotiation of the course content between the teachers and the students (even if the teachers expressed certain reservations about the practicalities of this process), Alan did not engage in such a process.

### 7.3.2 The washback effect of speaking exams

Owing to Alan’s timetable and my own availability, I was unable to observe classes in which there was explicit exam preparation. Alan, however, consistently referred to the exams in our discussions about his teaching. He felt there was a strong washback effect of the exams on the course as he felt it necessary to prepare the students for those exams:

I don’t think the exams are too far off now... they do influence what I’m thinking about. We’ve got a number of exam topics that we can choose from and when it gets closer to the exam, I think I’m going to pick one topic and we’ll spend a lot of time going through it and coming up with a lot of stuff . The exams will be in May-June. (AI4)

The washback effect is also reflected in Alan’s response to my question regarding the extent to which he was teaching to the exam:

Well, we've got an E1 grammar guide and I've got these for all the levels and the exams – so what I do want to make sure of is that I hit all of these elements and so that also informs my scheme of work. This is what I'm really working from. (AI1)

This is a clear identification by Alan, then, of the grammatical syllabus as being central to the exam preparation. I have already established Alan's belief in the importance of grammar for the development of students' speaking and there was no tension here between this perceived test syllabus and Alan's approach to syllabus design. In addition to the skills and grammar, however, he also believed it necessary to teach the format and task types in preparation for the exam:

Yes, well the second task has questions in it. The second task is where you actually ask for the application form for a free delivery service. And you've got to find out some information about that service. You've got to find out how far they deliver. So, the teacher has this information, you've got to make the questions and the students need to be aware of this for the exam. So, I started off the session by brainstorming shopping, going through question forms, basically starting out very, very loose, and getting them to just relate shopping to their own experiences and have a bit of fun with the context. Then going more into the kind of question forms that I wanted them to produce in the exam, drilling and practising. It's about getting them to jump through the hoops, really. (AI6)

I referred earlier to the fact that Alan viewed the core curriculum as providing a limited degree of guidance for his syllabus design. He told me that when he entered the period of more intensive exam preparation, however, he used this curriculum to a much greater degree:

Basically, I'm going to actually go through the mark scheme, and the mark scheme actually has the curricular references on. So, it's going to take away the need to actually think about what I'm doing. I'll just take the curriculum reference looking at skills for... it will be the core curriculum. And it actually gives you some sample activities that you can do to test that area. So, really although the work's been taken away from me, I actually just have to create the things that I'm doing. (AI6)

Alan, then, like the teachers in the two previous cases, was heavily engaged in exam preparation with his students during certain periods. When I asked him how he felt about this impact of the exams, he replied:

I think the problem is that we're being told to complete the qualification in five months, or whatever, from September to January and then from February to June because then you need to spend a lot of time preparing for the exam and actually, when I look at it, we did a fair amount of

balanced skills work, lexis and grammar, pronunciation up until about October and then I started really thinking about the exam and then I neglected some of the teaching I should have been doing to have given them a balanced course. And if that's going to happen twice in a nine-month period, those students could be doing 3 months of exam practice in nine months, which isn't very good for them. On the other hand, the prospect and fear of them failing outright is going to drive that. It's only when we've relaxed a bit after the exams that I'm beginning to develop my teaching skills again. (AI3)

Overall, then, Alan believed that the washback effect was excessive and that it interrupted his teaching. The resulting tension between his preferred syllabus and the need to prepare students for the demands of institutionalised exams was clearly frustrating for him. Having concluded with this explanation of the role of exams on his practices, I now present a summary of the case.

#### **7.4 Case summary**

Alan relied reasonably heavily on course books to provide much of the syllabus and the materials for his courses. Although this choice appeared to be motivated to an extent by the convenience of reducing planning time, Alan also stated a belief that the course books' dominant structural syllabi were appropriate. He placed a very strong emphasis on developing the students' mastery of these grammatical structures both as result of his individual concern with accuracy in language production and as a result of the washback effect of the exams which, he believed, tested a grammatical syllabus. In contrast to the other cases, Alan's syllabi were not negotiated with the students and they also integrated writing and reading skills, which Alan believed required development alongside students' speaking and listening skills.

Alan's teaching revealed quite a strong focus on direct approaches to the teaching of speaking skills. Adopting a reasonably teacher-fronted approach, Alan introduced a significant amount of drilling (including substitutions) with some use of less-controlled activities. Although he stated that indirect activities should be employed, none were evidenced in the classroom observations. Alan believed that there should be a high degree of language correction and regularly responded to student errors with practice activities. Although he articulated the value of meaningful language use, however, this was not fully reflected in his teaching resources or practices.

Alan expressed a desire to develop his teaching of speaking skills but over the period of the research there was little evidence of growth in this practical knowledge. His explicit experimentation with new ideas was limited to a single activity and there was restricted consideration of broader issues or approaches despite the fact that he was teaching E3 classes for the first time. Alan's knowledge of students' cultural and personal backgrounds was rather limited, as he himself conceded, and there was not a significant difference established between the teaching of ESOL and Alan's earlier teaching in an EFL context. He believed that the wider institutional context, however, restrained his teaching owing to the pressure to include exam practice and the need to cover certain syllabus content in a relatively short period of time.

## Chapter Eight: Susan

### 8.1 Introduction

This final case study presents the findings for Susan. As with Diane and Alan, she is a native English user. Susan has a DT(E)LLS qualification and when the data collection period began, she had approximately two years' ESOL teaching experience following a similar period of time teaching EFL in China. Her ESOL teaching took place in an FE college in the north of England. A summary of Susan's observed teaching and the respective exams for those groups is provided below:

Table 8.1: Information about observed classes

Group	Level(s)	Exam	Observation(s)
Regular ESOL classes	E2	City and Guilds	SO1, SO3, SO4, SO6
Functional Skills (16-18s)	E1	City and Guilds	SO2
Job Seekers' Allowance class	E1	n/a	SO5

Overall, this case differs from the preceding one in several important aspects. For example, although Susan did regard grammatical control as contributing to students' speaking ability, there was a stronger emphasis on developing students' communicative ability than in the previous case, particularly at lower levels. Susan was also more student-centred in her teaching practices and drew on an eclectic range of materials rather than adopting a course book. There was, however, a significant amount of washback from the speaking exams, which became increasingly evident as the exam period approached.

In line with the preceding cases, I now present the detailed findings for this case in three main sections: pedagogy, teaching resources and the curriculum. I then conclude the case with a summary of the main findings.

### 8.2 Practical knowledge of pedagogy

#### 8.2.1 Direct approaches to teaching speaking

There were several examples in Susan's teaching of activities which focused primarily on form. Episode 1 below, for example, demonstrates how Susan, having introduced the question 'What did you do for lunch?' in context, introduced a chain

drill to build the structure and then followed this with a further activity in which students in turn asked their neighbours the same question:

Episode 22 (from SO5)

T: do for lunch (gestures to the students to repeat what she has said)

Ss: do for lunch

T: you do for lunch

Ss: you do for lunch

T: did you do for lunch

Ss: did you do for lunch

T: What did you do for lunch?

Ss: What did you do for lunch?

T: Okay, now we're going to go around the class and I want you to ask your neighbour, 'What did you do for lunch?' So, [student], you ask [other student] first.

I asked Susan about this use of direct approaches and she explained:

I do try to find interesting ways of putting in a lot of repetition as they need it and actually the last group quite liked it when I did some back chain repetition... I would use it for common utterances, not for random utterances but 'What did you do for lunch?' is quite a common one and they need that question structure so I think that it's okay for me to drill that [...] and they tend to find it quite fun and the stronger ones are sometimes the ones who will initially repeat their mistakes and then notice they're making them. (SI5)

Susan, then, values repetition in the teaching of speaking skills and introduces it in particular for high frequency expressions. It could be seen that she preferred to choose language with a social function (in the given example, the focus was on making small-talk after the lunch break), which she explained elsewhere as being a means of preparing students for future authentic discourse situations. In the same interview (SI5), she goes on to explain that she believes that less proficient students can gain confidence from the clear language models provided by drilling and that they benefit from the opportunity to repeat the given language:

I do use this repetition a lot with beginners because they need to be able to recognise and respond to these common expressions. They need a model they can follow. There's no point racing ahead and just expecting that the students will produce these structures because we've looked at them once

so at this point I give them lots of practice with these basic structures. Later on, they are able to take more on board without the same degree of repetition. (SI5)

It can be seen that Susan believes in the value of a greater degree of repetition with lower level students than with more proficient ones. Her practices are guided by her understanding of the need to allow students to proceduralise language, particularly at lower levels of proficiency. For higher level students, she regards repetition as being less necessary, stating that these students ‘already have a base and are better able to incorporate new language to the point that drilling would just be demotivating’ (SI5). She also refers to the relevance of drilling for different learning styles and to the fact that she believes such activities are suitable for students with very low literacy:

I do use that a lot with beginners. I like it because... I like the rhythm of it, I like the fact that it sort of has a pattern in the listening, and so people who are quite audial listeners, if there is such a thing, tend to respond to that. And especially if I have got students who can't write or who can't read, which is true of a number of my students, unlike when I was in EFL, it is another technique... one they probably draw on quite a lot is listening and remembering what they heard. (SI4)

Susan, then, views direct approaches such as choral and chain drilling as providing the necessary oral language practice for students, especially at lower levels, to develop their ability to produce high frequency language structures accurately and fluently. The following two sections explore her use of more indirect approaches.

### **8.2.2 Indirect approaches to teaching speaking**

On several occasions, Susan introduced tasks where there was little attempt to define the language that students would produce orally. Instead, the students were provided with prompts based on a topic or situation and they were then expected to decide individually how to develop the communication. To exemplify the tasks incorporated, Figure 8.1 below lists the prompts that were provided to three separate groups in SO3:

Figure 8.1: Activity prompts from SO3

- a) ‘Think of something you are really good at and tell the group about this’
- b) ‘Is it easier to be unemployed when you are younger or older?’
- c) ‘What’s the best way to get a job?’

I asked Susan to explain why she included this discussion activity. She explained:

We've been working for some time on the language of jobs and now I want to get them to talk and to use that language. Hopefully, they can relate to these topics and generate some ideas around them and that will provide a context for the language use to recycle the language [...] When they explain their own ideas, it makes the language more memorable and easier for them to pull out when they need it... otherwise, it's just like facts that they know but they don't have a relationship with it. (SI3)

Susan, then, views these indirect speaking activities as an opportunity for students to become accustomed to using the thematic language in meaningful communication. She values the recycling of language introduced and the interview extract further suggests a belief in these approaches as a means of achieving a deeper level of processing which aids student retrieval of language during authentic speech acts. Susan also explained her view that students could only develop their communicative ability through the use of indirect language activities:

I want them to get used to expressing themselves because that's the only way that they will learn to do it... I know it's a struggle for some of them but this is the best place for them to get used to putting their ideas across and drawing on whatever language they have. It doesn't help them in the end if I give them all the language they need here and then they're all lost when they are not in the college. (SI5)

In this section, I have shown Susan's use of indirect activities as a means of enabling students to retain and retrieve language for use in authentic communicative speech situations. In the following section, I show how elements of these indirect approaches were often combined with those of the direct approaches described in 8.2.1.

### **8.2.3 Combining elements of direct and indirect approaches to speaking**

Characteristic of Sarah's teaching, particularly with higher level classes, was the pattern of an initial focus on form (with question structures particularly in evidence) followed by interactive activities in which students were provided with opportunities to employ the given structure in more communicative contexts. In SO4, for example, students invented interview questions for a job familiar to them and then conducted an interview with their partners using these same questions. Figure 8.2 below similarly shows activities which combine a structural focus (the use of 'should') with a function (students ask for and provide advice):

Figure 8.2: Sequence of activities from SO6

1. Teacher presents and then introduces controlled practice in the use of 'should'
2. Teacher provides each group with a list of problems (such as 'I need to fly to Poland this summer', 'I can't afford my rent' and 'I've got backache') and topic headings (health, work, housing and travel) that problems should be grouped under.
3. Teacher asks students in groups to invent solutions to the problems using 'should'.
4. Teacher asks students to choose one of the problems and to pair themselves with someone from another table and to seek advice.

Although this might be regarded as a variation on the PPP (presentation, production and practice) model which is common to English language teacher training courses, Susan did not refer to it in these terms. Instead, she described the inclusion of these activities as follows:

I want them to be aware of the language that they can use to give advice as it's something really useful for them and if they don't already know 'should', they tend to pick it up quite quickly here and then they can start using it with their own ideas for the problems. I tried to use examples like not knowing what to buy as a birthday present for a friend, not having money to buy something or visa problems... something that they can relate to and introduce their own ideas for. (SI6)

It can be seen that Susan is concerned here with creating opportunities for the structure ('should' + base form of verb) to be practised in activities which are meaningful for the students. I asked her why she focused on structures in these speaking tasks and she explained

I have to make sure that they are actually improving, that they are adding new structures to what they can do when they are speaking. Like at the moment, I'm doing a lot of questions with them otherwise they might either avoid trying to use them or they will get them wrong and people might just not understand them. I think I also need to know that there is something at the end that they probably couldn't do before. Even if they already knew the structure, they will be more fluent and more accurate with it afterwards. (SI6)

Thus, Susan views these activities as developing these students' control of the language structures and also their fluency in using these structures. Introducing a greater range of structures which the student can employ in speech situations is seen as improving their communicative ability and Susan makes a direct connection here between accuracy in spoken production and comprehensibility. In an earlier interview, she also provided an additional rationale for the inclusion of the focus on grammatical structures in largely communicative tasks:

Setting it up like this so that they create questions (for job interviews) and then ask each other means that they have a framework... I mean, they have a structure that they can work through and it helps them know what to do next and keeps them talking, which is basically what it's all about. [laughs] (SO4)

At a practical level, then, Susan often included stages of focused language work that would then provide direction for the students rather than the unstructured discussion tasks I exemplified in Figure 8.1. She refers to students not always having the initiative to develop discussion and this is an area I focus on in greater detail in 8.2.6. Susan also explained that she felt it important to be flexible to respond to opportunities for authentic speaking practice which presented themselves within the planned lesson. She attributed this both to her disposition and her own experiences of studying:

My favourite teachers were the ones that would go off at a tangent and you could explore an idea in a different way and not just stick to the lesson, so I don't mind it too much if that happens [...] when I learnt German, I really liked learning about the roots and some of the grammatical rules about it and then we'd often find ourselves talking about something that came up in the class and we could use the language we'd learnt. So, I like the structure and the freedom together. (SI6)

Having established here the importance for Susan of combining both direct and indirect approaches to the teaching of speaking, in the following section I focus on her practical knowledge of teaching pronunciation.

#### **8.2.4 The teaching of pronunciation**

Susan did not focus extensively on pronunciation in the classes that I observed. However, there were two occasions on which short activities for the pronunciation of regular past tense verb forms were introduced. One of these is described in Figure 8.3 below:

Figure 8.3: Sequence of activities in SO3

1. Individual students provide the infinitive for the past tense verb forms presented by the teacher.
2. Teacher corrects the students' pronunciation when they read out the answers.
3. Teacher writes the infinitive and past tense forms on the board.
4. Teacher elicits the pronunciation of 'liked', 'worked' and 'helped' from individual students.
5. Teacher leads choral drilling of the past tense verb forms.

Susan explained to me that this pronunciation practice had not been planned but was instead a response to the student errors that she encountered during the class. She told me that she did not introduce pronunciation activities systematically:

I do do some drilling. I worked in EFL before and I used to do quite a lot of pronunciation activities and I do fewer in ESOL because it feels as if, with the ESOL, although pronunciation is important, fluency is often more useful for them overall because of the context that they're speaking English in. I mean they'll be understood even if their pronunciation is not ideal. So, I'm not sure if I do enough. I mean, I try to do some but I don't have a specific slot for it. (SI1)

Susan prioritised fluency as goal for ESOL students, then, seemingly as a result of the fact that students are already in an environment in which there is much authentic interaction in English. Her belief in the primacy of the comprehensibility of the students' speech also resulted in a low emphasis generally on pronunciation development. However, her position differed according to the students' language proficiency:

If I was teaching Entry 3 or Level 1, I might teach more pronunciation... in EFL I used to teach quite a lot with phonetics and... yes, I think I'd probably have more of a focus on pronunciation in the beginner class, actually, just so they could make the main sounds and I... oddly enough, I would do quite a lot in the higher level when they are looking more at accuracy for exams and general development... I wonder if sometimes Entry 2 kind of misses out. (SI1)

Susan, it can be seen, views providing beginner students with an initial grounding in aspects of pronunciation as being important. She treats the higher level students as requiring a focus on pronunciation owing to exam requirements for greater accuracy and, it would seem, a general expectation on the part of the teacher that higher level students be more accurate in their language production. Susan acknowledges that this dichotomy results in a lack of pronunciation practice at E2 and that there are unresolved issues regarding her teaching of pronunciation.

In SO6, Susan introduced an online tool for students to access pronunciation models and modelled the use of the software with individual words ('food' and 'mountain') which students had pronounced incorrectly in an earlier activity. She explained to me afterwards that 'it means that they can check words themselves if they are not sure and they can be less reliant on me' (SI6). This suggests a belief that students should be proactive in accessing pronunciation models for their own pronunciation

practice but I did not observe other examples of student training in Susan's practices.

### **8.2.5 Motivating students to produce spoken language**

The need to engage the students in classroom speaking activities featured strongly in the interviews with Susan, particularly with reference to the Functional Skills group. In the following extract, she expresses her frustration when students are not engaged:

I feel sometimes I am doing all the work and they are not doing the work, so how to step back from that. I do feel like I put a lot into the lessons and sometimes they just sit there and you think 'Come on, this is you producing it, this is not me producing it!' So, it's a real relief when the activities work and everyone is involved. It's all about getting their interest, really. It's something that I keep working on. (SI4)

One of her responses to this challenge had been to create a degree of pace when teaching speaking to these 16-18 year olds. In an activity in SO1, for example, she introduced an online countdown timer on the Smart board for an activity in which students worked to develop a list of questions. She explained that she viewed this pace and the introduction of a variety of activities as being particularly necessary for that age group:

I think I do change my teaching style a bit for the 16-18s. I'm more dynamic, I move around the class more, I'm more aware of pace, like when I used the online timer. With 16-18s, any resource that you give to them, they want to do it like that [clicks fingers] and then they are looking for something new to interest them. (SI2)

Susan then explained how she had adopted recommendations from a more senior colleague on how best to teach this age group:

So yes, but [name] is the course tutor. She gave me some really valuable advice last year that I think all of us do now. It's fifteen-minute sessions. Don't think half an hour for anything. Fifteen-minute blocks. You might have something that does run over a bit longer, but yes, try to keep it snappy. (SI2)

This rule of practice that activities should be time-bound and not last more than 15 minutes appeared to have resonated with Susan and had proven to be a useful way for her to provide the desired pace for the classes. I also noted during the observations that in addition to the online timer, Susan incorporated other online

resources in order to engage the students; an example can be seen in the description of a team competition in Figure 8.4 below:

Figure 8.4: Activity stages for SO1

1. Teacher presents a Blockbuster game on the smart board.
2. The teams in turn choose a question letter
3. Teacher reads a question related to home remedies (the topic of the previous class) beginning with the chosen letter
4. Teams discuss the question and the group leader announces their chosen answer

Following this observed use of an online competitive activity, I invited Susan to explain her use of online resources:

Yes, I made that [Blockbuster activity] myself for revision of the vocabulary from the previous class and a chance for the teams to develop their speaking discussing the answers. We did home remedies. I do create quite a lot of my own resources from websites where you could create things [...] I don't know if you saw it once before, where you can type in the students' names and it will do a fruit machine thing, roll around and then click on one student's name, and you can use that for getting them to speak, and that's quite nice for sixteen to eighteens to see their name there. After it shows their name it goes, 'Yeah!', so it's just quite nice. So I use a lot of things like that, little things that keep the atmosphere up.  
(SI2)

She explained that she felt that her creative personality contributed to this desire to identify ways of motivating the students:

You know, I really want to be a 'good' leading up to 'outstanding' teacher. I want to... I am creative and I want to do it in a way which suits the students and gets them inspired to learn English and excited by it and it being meaningful to their lives. (SI3)

Susan, then, found the Functional Skills group to be diffident and, driven to an extent by her self-identity as a creative teacher, had experimented with means of motivating them to produce a greater degree of spoken language in the classroom through greater student participation in the activities. The following section now explores the practices she introduced to encourage the students to engage in longer speaking turns.

### 8.2.6 Promoting longer speaking turns

Susan's desire to encourage her students to take longer turns was a point that she returned to throughout our interviews. Episode 23 below, from the first observed class, provided an early indication of her concern with this issue:

#### Episode 23 (from SO1)

Two students present an interview which they had prepared as homework

T: That's good but you need to say more... don't use such short answers to the questions. You know, this is good fluency practice for the exam.

S1: But I don't know what to say, Miss. I haven't got much experience of it.

T: It's not necessary to tell the truth. You just need to produce language.

I asked Susan to expand on the subject of the length of student turns that she had referred to during the observed class. She described her beliefs as follows:

A big part of what I'm trying to do is getting them to say enough. They have to use this language we introduce so that they will learn it. Otherwise... well, I'm teaching them how to express themselves but they sometimes don't share many of their ideas [...] if they are going to pass the exam, they need to say a lot more and they know that. (SI1)

Susan's concern, then, seemed to rest with the need for students to produce the necessary amount of spoken language for language learning to take place, for them to develop the ability to convey their ideas and for them to be successful in their exams. She explained how she encouraged students to extend their turns by setting them specific individual speaking tasks:

I will sometimes give them activities like... I'll tell them, 'Your target is to speak for two minutes and you have spoken for thirty seconds, you need to say more. How can you say more? What can you say that is more?' So I am trying to get them to think more widely around the subject and what they could possibly say about this. (SI1)

The perceived need to develop the students' ability to generate ideas, particularly for the 16-18 year olds, was also apparent in a later lesson I observed in which Susan introduced mind-mapping as a tool for idea generation. The stages for the lesson in which this was introduced are shown in Figure 8.5 below:

Figure 8.5: Lesson stages from SO3

1. Teacher provides students with a text and students are required to identify and then write the appropriate information under the three headings of ‘past’, ‘present’ and ‘future’.
2. Teacher asks students to complete a mind map with a minimum of three ideas about themselves under each of the same headings.
3. Students are asked to share their ideas with two other students.
4. The teacher invites two volunteers to present their ideas to the whole group.

Susan explained her use of the mind maps as a means for students to develop their ideas in preparation for longer speaking turns:

Starting off from someone saying ‘Tell me about yourself’, you can’t think of anything. So, it was finding categories of information for students to talk about themselves but also using past, present and future tense to talk about themselves [...]mind-mapping also means that they are checking about whether they have said something about this and something about that. I told them that they can use it in different situations. I hope they do. (SI3)

In addition to making students aware of the need to extend turns and providing encouragement, then, Susan also provides the students with practice in mind-mapping as a strategy for them to employ independently. A further technique that she introduced to encourage longer turns was to set up tasks in a manner that provided speakers with an attentive audience within their group as shown in Episode 24 below:

Episode 24 (from SO6)

The teacher nominates a student at each table to explain his/her future plans to the rest of the group. She then nominates a second person to follow the first.

T: When someone is speaking, what do you do?

S: Listen

T: Yes, we need to listen. And you will complete the paper I’m giving you. For those with writing targets, you can write this in full for your folders. For other people, you can just write a few words. I will be asking you to report back on what you have heard.

At the end of the activity, the teacher asks students to feed back the ideas of other students.

Susan's comments about this activity, echoing those of Diane in the second case study, reveal a strong belief in the importance of a focused audience to encourage the speaking of longer turns:

It means that they have to listen to each other as they have to write certain information down. The speaker knows that and so they are aware of the need to provide sufficient information for the rest of the group. It tends to work so that they are all focused on it rather than just asking the students to explain their ideas with no task attached. (SI6)

Having shown the importance of extending students' turns for Susan and the practices she employed to promote longer turns, in the following section I analyse Susan's focus on the development of students' communication strategies.

### **8.2.7 Developing students' communication strategies**

There were a number of instances in which Susan focused on strategies which students could introduce in order for them to be able to repair breakdowns in communication:

#### Episode 25 (from SO6)

T: What do we do if we want to check something?

S1: Could you repeat that?

T: That's right.

S2: Can we say 'pardon'?

T: Yes, it's very polite. So, for example, I would say 'Sorry?' to my mother but with my step-father, I would say 'Pardon?' as I don't know him as well.

Later in the same class, Susan also mentioned that it is useful to focus on the specific part of the sentence that the student doesn't understand during oral interaction. Episode 26 below presents the example that Susan provided for the students:

#### Episode 26 (from SO6)

T: So you can say 'Did you say 'bin' or 'being'?' That way, the other person knows which part you didn't understand. This is a useful expression for you to use. In a shop you might say, 'Did you say sixty pounds or sixteen?'

For Susan, providing the students with the means to continue a conversation was clearly regarded as having great importance. In our interview discussion of these

episodes, she both explained the rationale behind the use of these communication strategies and provided additional examples:

They need to be able to keep the conversation going and not just giving up if they don't understand and that will definitely happen in some situations, especially when people speak in dialect [laughs]. I'm trying to move them away from 'Can you repeat that?' because people get bored of repeating the whole thing and they don't understand what word it is that that student didn't understand but 'Can you rephrase it?' is quite a good one and 'Can you say that a different way?' (SI6)

Susan's clear reference to the language challenges that students face outside the classroom provides the rationale for her focus on communication strategies for students to interact successfully in language encounters. In the following section, I analyse her use of different modes of interaction to encourage speech production within the classroom.

### **8.2.8 The use of different modes of interaction**

Susan consistently adopted the use of group work and, to a slightly lesser degree, pair work in her classes. Her comments here, taken from the first interview, represent her views on the value of peer support which collaborative work can produce:

I wanted them to work together to support each other and because they can help each other's confidence by doing it well together [...] I want them to realise that they've got individual strengths that they can pass on to others and that someone else might have a strength that they can help them with. (SI1)

Susan also commented on the degree of language production which pair work and group work facilitate:

If we have a class discussion with everyone involved, there's not much opportunity for everyone to say a great deal and it may even be mostly me and just the strongest students talking so pair work, acting out a dialogue, for example, means they will have more chance to speak and then whatever we are working on, like that question formation, they can discuss it. They actually often disagree about things, so that produces even more language [laughs]. (SI3)

It is worth highlighting her reference here both to the possibilities for speech in targeted speaking activities and the incidental authentic communication based around other language-related tasks such as whether given question forms are correct or not. Susan sees these possibilities as contributing to the development of

speaking skills. For her, group work and whole class discussions also allow individuals to bring in different perspectives and experiences which can develop a discussion:

It's perfect like that when we are talking about a subject and everybody brings in different ideas and the discussion just takes off and everyone is enjoying it and interested in what the others are saying. I love it when they are dying to tell you things instead of you trying to give them things to say just to practise and that's what I'm looking to do. (SI4)

Although students often organised themselves into pairs and groups, there were two occasions on which Susan actively arranged the groupings. The first is shown below in the extract from my field notes below:

Figure 8.6: Teacher's use of group work in SO5

At the beginning of the class, the teacher changed the layout of the tables from a large horse shoe pattern to pairs of tables for groups of 4/5 to work together. The teacher then gave each student a letter from A to D and students sat at the table assigned to their letter. Susan told me in the break that this was 'to add variety and to separate students from the students they are always with.'

The variety Susan wanted to introduce here may have been as a means of providing an impetus for people to speak more and for them to become familiar with speaking to a range of different people. The second example (in SO6) involved her pairing the students with partners from other countries in order to avoid the use of students' L1:

I think that having those pictures in front of them and them talking with someone who didn't necessarily speak their language meant that they were spurred on to use the language they have to say whatever they were able to. That's why I've divided them up. They don't use their first language too often but this way it avoids it completely. (SI5)

Susan, then, viewed the considered use of pair work and group work as supporting the development of speaking skills. This section has identified practical uses of these modes to increase both the quantity and quality of oral language production. The affective dimension of peer support is also relevant to the following section, which analyses in greater depth the issue of student confidence.

### **8.2.9 Developing student confidence**

In SO1, Susan set up a presentation by a pair of students at the front of the class (described in Episode 24) and, on a separate occasion, in SO3, she invited two students to report back to the whole group about their past, present and future activities following small-group work on the same task. In the following interview

extract she explains the value she places on students presenting on topics in this manner as a means of developing their confidence:

I would like them, at the end of this health topic, to have all prepared a short presentation or a group discussion about a health topic that they can deliver using the past tense because we've been practising the past tense as well, using the past tense and comparatives. Then I can tick that off but also I will feel that they have evidenced to themselves... I don't like the word 'evidence' but that they can show that they can... it's meaningful and that they've built up some confidence about talking about this topic. (SI1)

She also explains the value for students of observing the performance of other students so that the tasks will seem achievable to the observers:

I wanted them to observe each other doing this and, if people who they were observing were not very confident, it might give them confidence that they could do it and, if those people could say a lot, it might make them think, oh, I can say that much too or I might be able to in the future. (SI1)

In effect, then, Susan seeks here to normalise speaking in front of others and thus make it seem more manageable to the students. A key feature of Susan's discussion of confidence, however, was that students develop their confidence in speaking through successful experiences of language use in achievable tasks:

I was mainly focusing on vocabulary and question forms in the lesson that you watched because I want to build their confidence in asking and answering questions and... it's quite important to me at an early stage to get them confident at speaking with each other by giving them activities that they can do successfully with language that I have taught them. (SI1)

Although not as systematically as Rachel in the first case study, Susan at times praised the whole group for their contributions as in Episode 27 below:

#### Episode 27 (from SO6)

T: I heard some lovely speaking. I'm very impressed. Well done. And I only heard English. That's great.

The repeated praise evident in this extract, according to Susan, is particularly appropriate for the Functional Skills students who, in her experience, respond positively to such recognition of their work:

For the 16-18s, in particular, they seem to be very responsive to praise. Especially the quiet ones... and you can see from their smiles that it means something to them to hear you're happy with them. With the older

students, I use it less, I suppose, but I try to remember to encourage them like that. (SI4)

This focus on the affective domain can also be seen in Susan's concern that a supportive and non-judgmental environment be created more generally:

I try to create an environment where they don't feel embarrassed to make mistakes because it is more about fluency than it is about saying it accurately. If they criticise each other... laugh when other students make mistakes, I won't allow that as people who are not confident can be really affected by that and not want to be there. (SI4)

Susan, then, seeks to create the conditions in the classroom in which students' oral language production will not be adversely affected by a lack of confidence. The next section focuses on the roles of correction and accuracy in this language production.

### **8.2.10 Correction and accuracy**

There were very few examples of direct on-the-spot correction in the classes that I observed for Susan. More in evidence during the speaking activities were examples of teacher-guided self-correction as in Episode 28 below:

#### Episode 28 (from SO3)

S1: What do you eat?

T: What....?

S1 (silent)

T: How do we make a question in the *past*? What word do we need?'

S2: Did

T: Yes, so... (teacher looks at S1 and raises hand to prevent S2 providing answer)

S1: What did you eat?

T: Exactly

Susan demonstrated a strong preference for students' self-correction, then, but this correction largely took place after the main activity. The activity stages in Figure 8.7 below are indicative of this use of corrective feedback:

Figure 8.7: Activity stages in SO6

1. Teacher monitors during a group activity in which the students state their future plans. She makes notes while she does this.
2. Teacher draws the group activity to a close and writes the following incorrect sentences produced by the students on the board ('After gym, I go with my boyfriend', 'I'm going to shopping at the weekend')
3. Teacher elicits correct versions of the sentences in (2) from the students

Susan explained why she preferred to deal with correction after a speaking activity:

Well, I'm not sure about how to use on-the-spot correction so that it's useful and doesn't make them feel on the spot so I tend to avoid it and do it later. I don't know that I correct a lot. I'm conscious, though, that there are a couple of very strong students who I don't correct much because I think I go very much for fluency and I want the students to feel comfortable about practising their English and I think I need to do a bit more about accuracy perhaps. (SI3)

Susan, then, views in-activity correction as interrupting the development of language fluency and potentially causing students to feel self-conscious (see comments in the previous section about student confidence). However, her own uncertainty over where to position herself on an accuracy-fluency cline is apparent both here and more explicitly in the comments she went on to make later in the same interview:

Last week, when we were doing running dictations and they had to ask each other questions and they kept missing out the question words and I really thought, 'We need to focus on the accuracy here because they are making questions and you can understand what they are asking but they need to get it right.' If they're just trying to explain their ideas, how important is this accuracy? I don't know [...] City and Guilds isn't very specific about accuracy of producing the grammar points but I did mention to the others that I think you should use [accurate grammar] because you get extra points. So I am trying to get them to think about not saying 'I go tomorrow, I go yesterday.' (SI3)

It can be seen, then, that there is a washback effect on the degree of accuracy aimed at but that Susan is also aware of the different foci of the examination boards. In addition, Susan drew a distinction between the accuracy needs of lower level students and those students with higher levels of language proficiency. Referring to her E1 students, she stated:

This class has just started up and I want them to build their confidence so I'm not doing so much on the accuracy now; it's more about the production of language. It would be good if they could go away saying, 'I don't like' instead of 'I not like' but I don't know if that will happen. I think at beginner level maybe I can't strive too much for accuracy, it's

about being understood. I will try but it's better that they are able to express more than they're absolutely accurate if they come in being able to express very little. (SI5)

Thus, for lower level students, she places a stronger emphasis on the students' communicative competence and believes that students will not be able to attain a high level of accuracy. In contrast, however, she places a greater value on accuracy for students at higher levels:

I do still get worried about letting the speaking run away with itself and actually the accuracy of stuff isn't there, so I am quite concerned about exams for the higher levels and making sure that they're actually getting better rather than just talking at the same level. (SI5)

In summary, whilst Susan experienced uncertainty over what constituted an appropriate degree of emphasis on accuracy, she stated that she placed greater importance on accuracy for higher level students. This distinction could be attributed both to the exam requirements at higher levels and also her desire to ensure continued skill-getting (as opposed to simply skill-using) once students had achieved a significant level of language proficiency.

### **8.2.11 Integrated skills**

Whereas the earlier sections focused on pedagogical features of Susan's practical knowledge of teaching speaking, the next two sections focus on her knowledge of lesson design. I have already shown how Susan's planning included the introduction and subsequent oral practice of language structures (see 8.2.3). A further consistent feature of this lesson design was that she consistently integrated the four language skills. In SO2, for example, she integrated a discussion on students' favourite sports as a lead-in to a listening activity and the following observed class, SO3, introduced speaking as a pre-reading predictive activity. Susan recognised that she adopted an integrated skills approach and attributed this in part to the topic-based nature of the syllabus:

I like integrated activities and I think I see each lesson as a standalone and I don't know how much I link between the lessons. So it is about getting the most out of a lesson. I have just got a lot to learn about... when you said do I focus some lessons just on speaking, I don't really. I think maybe I used to and now I try and integrate some other things. I guess it's because we're often developing topics rather than looking at separate skills. (SI4)

This reference to the centrality of topics in the syllabus design and its impact on lesson planning is revealing. Susan explained to me that there was not a fixed model that she followed and that instead she would build a lesson around the materials which seemed interesting and exploitable for syllabus elements. I still wanted to identify certain principles behind this planning, however, and one aspect that surfaced was that of recapping at the beginning of the lesson, such as the topic of home remedies in SO1, which Susan refers to below:

So, for example, on that previous Tuesday, we'd listened to some different people talking about home remedies and then in the warmer in the next lesson they had talked about home remedies for revision and activating schemata, I suppose, trying to make the subject relevant, and then introducing elements that someone might have experience of and that will then generate more discussion so a lot of discussion points. (SI1)

It can be seen that Susan regards schema activation as necessary to draw on students' knowledge as a means to prepare them for discussion activities. Although in the example given here, the staging uncharacteristically continues over two classes, the inclusion here of listening activities (and in other lessons reading) to activate schema and develop content for discussions was a regular feature of her classes.

As with the teachers in the three earlier cases, however, Susan recognised that a number of students required the development of reading and writing skills within the speaking and listening classes as they would later be taking exams in reading and writing. She explains that this knowledge, together with a belief that students need to develop the four skills for real-life situations, encouraged her to integrate all the language skills in her planning:

The way that it's been arranged is that this class will only do a speaking and listening exam. However, two or possibly three of them would be capable of doing a reading and a writing exam but they can't do it just yet even though it would help them to go to another level. They will do it later and several of the others may also do that, so I am including activities now and will, for example, offer some students to write up notes from a listening or discussion. I don't think you can separate these skills and only focus on listening and speaking all term as they need to read everything around them every day. They can't just wait when they are living here. (SI1)

Having described the integrated skills approach of Susan's lesson design and the underlying cognitions, in the following section I present the data on her use of teaching resources.

### 8.3 Speaking resources

Unlike Alan, Susan had not adopted any course books for her classes and instead was eclectic in her choice of language teaching materials. She explained that this allowed her the flexibility to find materials for the syllabus topic or situational context that were suitable for the interests and level of the group. Referring to online speaking materials that she had used in her teaching, she said:

So there's a lot of material that's related to jobs, for example there's ... in fact there's a lot of materials for speaking that's about jobs that link to health and safety and these other topics, tends to be high, it tends to be Entry 2 but we can sort of mix it a bit [...] I tend to look around a lot to find something that fits the topic and is interesting and can fit all my students so this site works well for me. (SI5)

I asked Susan if she found the Skills for Life materials useful for her classes and she explained to me that she tries to find materials which represent more authentic interactions:

I have been using the... what are the other ones, the blue ones... family health modules ... and there was a nice activity in there where they had people ringing up for an appointment and they were saying 'I can't do this, I can do that', and that was so much more useful because they weren't just saying 'Can I have an appointment? My name is, at this time...' They were saying 'Oh no, that is no good. I'll have that time.' and so you heard them actually negotiating an alternative, whereas in ESOL it's '2.00pm, yes that's fine.' In real life that often doesn't happen so I think it gives falsely easy scenarios that aren't real. (SI4)

The perceived authenticity of the language and situation presented, then, was important for Susan as she wanted to prepare her students to deal with real situations outside the classroom. Authenticity of materials was also an issue in her comments below on certain published materials on the topic of employment:

I am aware of materials we can use but how authentic they are, I don't know ... students react much better when they are real advertisements ... and it's always the same jobs of doctor, nurse. I spent quite a long time on one of the jobs websites looking for jobs in [city] and [city] and printed off quite a few and one was trainee teachers and one was working in a care home because I know that two students are interested in that. Then there was a job that wanted Polish speakers I think. So I went for quite a

range because I was really conscious that I didn't want to go for the standard packing jobs. (SI4)

Susan sought to choose authentic materials as her experience suggested that students are more motivated by these. She also chose materials which would reflect the students' outside lives whilst avoiding social stereotyping. More generally, the profiles of the student groups and the institutional labelling (Job Seeker's Allowance classes, Functional Skills classes) meant that the materials which Susan developed differed accordingly. In the case of the 16-18 year old students, for example, Susan found that many of the available materials were not suitable:

But for all the sixteen to eighteens this year [...] there's so much more that goes into sixteen to eighteens than adults ... they're just at a different stage in their lives with different interests and reference points in their lives. I'm learning a lot making and experimenting with materials. I don't always get it right! [laughs] (SI1)

In summary, Susan sourced speaking materials related to the relevant topic, which were at a suitable level for the students, which were (mostly) authentic, and which she regarded as being exploitable for teaching purposes. In the next section, I explore the syllabi within which the materials were located and how Susan arrived at these syllabi.

## **8.4 Practical knowledge of the speaking syllabus**

### **8.4.1 Syllabus content**

Susan viewed speaking as a priority in the ESOL students' language learning; one of the key reasons she provided was that she viewed the development of speaking skills as being particularly important for the students' outside lives:

We are told to focus on speaking and listening, especially for beginners' classes. I do do quite a lot of speaking and listening activities because they want to be fluent, that is the main reason why they come to the class, because they want to be able to use it. There are a couple who want to pass the exams... and well, I'm sure they all want to pass the exam but I suppose I see speaking and listening as really fundamental because it is going to help them outside the classroom. (SI4)

Whilst there are considerations of institutional expectations here and the washback effect of exams (which I discuss in 8.4.3), Susan felt that she had a high degree of freedom to develop the syllabus and placed the perceived needs of the students at the

centre of the syllabus. She therefore felt that the non means-end nature of the AECC worked well for her:

I think in some ways it really suits me, the idea of the ESOL curriculum framework, that there isn't a set pattern, there isn't a year and you say this happens this year, by this date you will have to have done this and they've got to have ticked off this. I quite like being able to set my own thing and mould it to the students in your group... yeah, perhaps we shouldn't really be allowed to do it as much as we can [...] I feel that some of my ideas are rather haphazard but... (SI6)

Interestingly, whilst she is in favour of the freedom to develop the curriculum, it can be seen that she also expresses certain reservations about this teacher autonomy, possibly as a result of her lack of experience and the complete responsibility it places on her for designing the speaking syllabus. For certain courses that she was involved with during the observation period, Susan had produced elements of the schemes of work in collaboration with other teachers who then each took responsibility for developing separate sets of materials. In the interview extract below, Susan explains how this happened in the case of the Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA) course she was teaching to students referred by the Job Centre:

[Teacher 1] had taught a JSA class before and we said, 'Let's do food week 2 and 3, let's do health week 4 and 5' and then we put in what we wanted to cover in health, so [teacher 1] said, 'On Monday I'll do parts of the body.' I said, 'Okay I'll look at health problems to do with that'. (SI3)

Susan, then, adopted a pragmatic response to sharing macro-planning responsibility, viewing it as an efficient way of working and increasing the coherence of the syllabus. The topic-based elements of the syllabus described here, together with situations (such as encounters in the Job Centre for the JSA students) were the main organisational principles for the syllabi in Susan's teaching. These featured in the syllabi as 'Students will be able to talk about (alternative medicine)' and 'students will be familiar with normal discourse in (a GP clinic)' respectively. The development of semantic fields of vocabulary was aligned to these topics and seen by Susan to contribute to the students' communicative competence in these areas by 'building up enough vocabulary so that they can hold a conversation on the chosen topic.' (SI1)

I have already referred to Susan's focus on the development of students' oral grammar. As in the case of Alan, Susan used a reference guide for the grammatical elements to be included at each level:

We have something called... we have Rules and Tools with the grammar for each level so I can tick off which ones I've done and, in the core curriculum, there're different things that they have to cover. I don't know that any teacher actually gets to cover all of them in the time. Maybe they do. Sometimes I might decide that I'm going to cover this but actually I find that most people have already done that so I'll change them to something different but there are things, like prepositions of place for beginners that they have to be able to do to progress. (SI1)

Overall, then, Susan combines thematic, situational and grammatical strands within a speaking syllabus. This kind of syllabus, she believes, allows her to respond to the students' needs whilst including structures she regards as necessary at certain stages in students' development. I have shown how Susan adopted pragmatic arrangements with other teachers to decide aspects of the syllabus but the following section analyses how Susan also involves students in the syllabus design.

#### **8.4.2 Learner-centredness**

Susan repeatedly referred to the importance of including students' choices in the curriculum and linked this to student motivation in addition to the principle of meeting the students' outside language needs:

I like to involve the students in choosing the topics. And yes, if I can give them as much ownership of it as possible, I think that will definitely motivate them [...] Doing it like this, I think they get a strong sense that what we study in the future is especially for them and after all, the course really should be about what they need in their daily lives so it's better to ask them directly. (SI1)

In SO5, I observed one of the activities which Susan employed in order to ascertain the students' syllabus preferences. As this was a JSA class, she had already decided that the Job Centre and 'jobs' would be included as foci of situational language activity 'because it's JSA that have sent the students and they are obvious contexts they need' (SI5) but she did encourage student involvement in choosing other syllabus elements as Episode 29 below shows:

### Episode 29 (from SO5)

The teacher elicits a list of places where the students speak English and then writes student responses on the board (bus, college, shop, street, Job Centre, doctor's)

T: Here there are too many places for us to look at in the next 10 weeks. Which are the most important for you? We will be doing the Job Centre and jobs but you can choose the others.

Whilst the choices here were for situational language, in a separate class, I also observed a process of language topic negotiation:

Figure 8.8: Activity stages for SO1

1. Teacher distributes a series of pictures for students to describe in groups.
2. Teacher distributes a number of topic headings and asks students to group the pictures under the headings.
3. Teacher asks groups to decide which topic they would most like to study.
4. Teacher brings groups together to arrive at a consensus about the topic. The students choose the topic of health.

Susan also conducted individual learning plans (ILPs) with the students, ostensibly in order to meet their individual needs, but she cited strong reservations about their effectiveness:

It's a lot of work and I'm not really sure that it helps our teaching at all. I mean, I do think about what students need anyway. You know, we're going on about whether the students have done their targets and what I'm really thinking is 'Have I given them enough speaking practice?' 'Have they really covered this? And still, expecting beginner students to be able to decide their targets... targets for lower levels are mainly chosen by the teacher. Okay, you might give the student a choice, but if they don't really understand, how are they really going to make a choice?' (SI3)

Susan, then, viewed the use of ILPs as an administrative requirement and as not contributing meaningfully to her teaching practices. The following section explores Susan's practical knowledge of the exams, a further mandatory element of many of her courses but one which, in principle, she accepted the need for.

#### **8.4.3 The role of exams**

The ESOL examinations had a clear impact on Susan's teaching and in this section I discuss the skills and language that she taught to prepare the students for the exams, the familiarisation of the students with the format of the exams she engaged in, and

the specific exam practice she provided. Firstly, however, it is worth establishing Susan's position on the use of assessments for the teaching of speaking:

I feel that there's not enough expected of the students in the class if there's not a formal assessment. I do feel a little bit like that. I didn't realise I felt like that, but I do. I would do things differently, I'm sure, without exams but to another extent I think, well, exams are a reality and they are a way of saying 'I have moved on'. And if I am focusing on exams, I do make it quite exam- focused actually and I will be saying, 'You need to do this in exam, you need to do that.' (SI4)

It can be seen that Susan values the expectations and recognition of student progress that exams can provide. She therefore adopts a pragmatic approach to providing students with the necessary preparation for these exams. In Episode 23, I noted the reference that Susan made to the exams during the first observed class when she emphasized the importance for students of extending their turns. The interview extract below shows her response when I asked her whether she routinely kept a focus on the exams from the beginning of the academic year:

I think I've started thinking like that because, last year there was a big focus in the college on retention and achievement and it was quite stressful last year trying to get students through the exams and exams being retaken and retaken so actually I have started mentioning the exams because I want them to realise that it is a college requirement that they take an exam, that they prepare for it and understand why I want them to do certain things. (SI1)

Susan's practices, then, were influenced to an extent by institutional pressure for certain pass rates to be attained. This included her choice of materials as she explained to me after SO4 that she was 'starting to use more Skills for Life materials to cover the necessary grammar for the speaking and listening exams' (SI4). She also indicated that she paid closer attention to the Rules and Tools grammar guidelines for exams as I reported in 8.6.2. One language area which Susan had identified as being necessary for students in the second stage of the speaking exams was that of question structures, which I identified as the focus of many of her speaking activities:

[The students] have to choose a topic and ask questions about it to the examiner and then they have to be able to say something about it if the examiner asks them questions [...] I'm very aware of the pressure on students to pass exams so some of this is about them being able to ask questions for the exams but also they really need these structures for the future anyway. (SI3)

It can be seen, then, that Susan developed language skills which she viewed as being specifically required for the assessments but that she regarded them as also being necessary to the students' broader speaking development. As a result, there was little tension created as a result of this feature of the washback effect. Other instances of exam preparation, evidenced early in the course, involved tasks in which students became more familiar with the format of the exam. In the following extract, Susan explains why she showed the students a video recording of an exam simulation:

We watched on the Trinity exams where three students are discussing a topic and they've commented on that and what they thought they did well and what they thought they didn't do well. It helps the students to have a sense of what they are aiming at. (SI1)

As the exams approached, an increasing amount of class time was dedicated directly to exam practice and to priming the students to perform well at the exams. This preparation continued until shortly before the exam, when Susan introduced speaking activities which were directly related to the exam tasks. Explaining her lesson planning for the class following my final lesson observation with her, she told me:

I'm going to get them in groups preparing questions on the topic of the practice paper. And then I will probably get them in pairs and I'll go round and monitor that and then I'll get them in groups again, preparing the discussion, and then I'll put them with other people and go round and monitor that and then do some feedback at the end. I can't think of any other way to do it really. (SI6)

I have shown in this section that the exams feature strongly in Susan's determining a number of Susan's practices when she teaches speaking. Overall, she accepts the exams and adapts her teaching practices to prepare the students for these exams. She does, however, note that were it not for the exams, she would teach differently, which indicates a pragmatic accommodation of the exams.

### **8.5 Case summary**

Susan adopted a speaking syllabus consisting primarily of topics, which would allow the development of thematically-based language, and situational language, which would prepare students for real-life encounters outside the classroom. These topics and situations were often decided with the involvement of the students as Susan viewed such ownership as motivating for the students. Susan routinely incorporated grammatical development and activities developing the other language skills in her

speaking skills lessons. She avoided the adoption of a course book in order to allow herself the flexibility to respond to the complex needs of individual groups. She also placed a high value on authentic materials and materials reflecting authentic language use, which led her to access an eclectic range of speaking materials and develop her own resources.

Susan adopted both direct and indirect approaches and her practices were often characterised by the use of direct approaches for students to obtain the control of given structures followed by less direct activities allowing the structures to be used in more communicative contexts. She regarded the proceduralisation of language structures this facilitated as contributing to the students' communicative competence, which she regarded as being particularly important for the lower level students. She also focused strongly on the means of motivating students to engage in speaking activities and experimented with language tasks to extend student turns. Recognising that her pronunciation practice was not systematic, she explained that her objectives of student comprehensibility at lower levels and accuracy for much higher levels meant that pronunciation development of the students in between was often overlooked.

The student profiles impacted on Susan's practical knowledge in several ways and, for example, she cited the fact that the students had immediate communicative needs outside the classroom as being the reason for her making student needs central, for the importance of authentic language models and also for the introduction of communication strategies to repair communication breakdown. The institutional influence on her practices was also significant. The topical organisation of syllabi was accepted as the standard way of approaching syllabus design in the college and there was a strong washback effect of the speaking exams evident in the focus on language structures required for the exam and student familiarisation with and practice of exam tasks. The ILPs, required by the college, were adopted by Susan as an institutional requirement and were not, in her view, a valid means of establishing student aims.

Susan had established teaching routines and reasonably consistent practices. She expressed uncertainty, however, over the role of accuracy in her teaching, both in terms of language structures and for pronunciation. She was also anxious about whether there was a sufficient degree of pronunciation practice included in her

teaching. Susan was teaching a Functional Skills group for the first time and it was noticeable that much of her explicit experimentation (with activities to extend student turns, for example) took place with this group. There were also certain parallels with the previous case studies in that Susan demonstrated a strong desire to match her own practices against those of other teachers; this suggested a personal need for benchmarking to confirm the validity of her established practices.

## Chapter Nine: Cross-case Analysis

### 9.1 Introduction

The previous four chapters (5-8) presented the findings for the individual case studies, identifying in turn the early career teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking over the course of an academic year. As I explained in my discussion of collective case study research in the methodology chapter, focusing on a relatively small number of in-depth cases allows the unique and complex nature of each case to be explored in depth (Yin, 1994). Indeed, the highly personal nature of a teacher's practical knowledge (Calderhead, 1996; Golombok, 1998) necessitates a methodological approach which allows the complexity of an individual case to be identified. Whilst retaining the integrity of individual cases is desirable, however, common elements may also be identifiable, facilitating cross-case assertions (Stake, 2006). Similarly, contrasts between cases can also provide useful insights (Levin, 2003). In this chapter, then, I provide a cross-case analysis of the findings, saving the more theoretical discussion for the following chapter (Chapter 10) in order to explore emerging themes in greater depth. The cross-case analysis is organised in such a way as to match the main research questions introduced in Chapter 3. These questions are reproduced below for reference:

- 1) What practical knowledge did these early-career ESOL teachers have of teaching speaking?
- 2) Is there a shared practical knowledge held by the teachers?
- 3) How, if at all, did the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking develop over the academic year?
- 4) What factors seemed to influence any development in the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking?

This cross-case analysis chapter first addresses the questions relating to identifying the ESOL teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking and establishing whether there is a shared practical knowledge (research questions 1 and 2). The chapter then analyses any practical knowledge growth across the cases and the factors which seem to influence this change (research questions 3 and 4 respectively).

In order to discuss the teachers' practical knowledge across cases, I will adopt a typology for the different areas of practical knowledge which are held by the teachers and upon which they draw in the course of their teaching. As explained in the literature review (Chapter 2), practical knowledge research has routinely categorised the different dimensions of teachers' knowledge as a means of discussing it in a systematic manner (see, for example, Black and Halliwell, 2000; Elbaz, 1983). The categories adopted in these previous studies differ in certain respects but, as Meijer *et al.* (1999) argue, despite a lack of standardisation in the field, there are core elements common to most of the studies. For the purposes of this research, and in response to the data generated, I adopt the categories of teachers' knowledge of syllabus (including knowledge of exams), their knowledge of learning resources, their knowledge of pedagogy, their knowledge of students, and their knowledge of context.

I present the teachers' practical knowledge principally in terms of the 'practical principles' and 'rules of practice' (introduced in Chapter 2) which are held by the teacher. It is useful to remind the reader at this point of the definitions of these terms (both from Elbaz, 1981) and why they are adopted in this chapter. Rules of practice, then, are 'brief and clearly formulated statements of what to do or how to do it in a particular situation frequently encountered in practice' (Elbaz, 1981: 61). Practical principles are more inclusive (and less explicit) statements 'in which the teacher's purposes, implied in the statement of a rule, are more evident' (*ibid*). An example of the level of abstraction which distinguishes these two tiers can be seen in the practical principle that a supportive environment should be created for students to develop their speaking skills. This principle can then be realized through a number of lower order rules of practice such as the rule that students should be praised when they perform well. Whilst further tiers with more specific sub-beliefs could potentially be added to the cross-case analysis, the inclusion of excessive detail here would hinder the identification of the more salient findings for the teachers' practical knowledge. I also illustrate the rules of practice with descriptions of teachers' classroom practices where this is useful and include analysis of the cognitions which underpin the rules of practice where these are particularly significant in the cross-case findings. A teacher's use of praise, for example, might be predicated on a specific belief that their students have low confidence as a result

of limited educational backgrounds and that praise is therefore particularly important to develop the motivation of this student group.

In the following section, I begin with a discussion of the first of the chosen domains of the practical knowledge, that of the teachers' knowledge of the syllabus.

## **9.2 Teachers' knowledge of the ESOL speaking syllabus**

### **9.2.1 Knowledge of the ESOL speaking syllabus content**

It can be seen from the individual case studies that the participant teachers, who were from three different colleges, were engaged in teaching speaking to students in a diverse range of programmes which differed in aspects such as the course aims, the ages of the students, and the students' language proficiency. A summary of the taught programmes for each of the case studies is provided in Table 9.1 below:

Table 9.1: Summary of courses taught by each participant

Rachel	Susan	Alan	Diane
EIF pre-entry/E1*	E2/E3	E1	Functional Skills
EIF E3*	Functional Skills	E2	Functional Skills
Family group	Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA) course	E3	E1/E2

\*EIF = funded by the European Integration Fund

Although a range of programmes were taught by the teachers, intra-case and inter-case patterns in the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking do, however, emerge from the data. Across the cases there was a shared practical principle that a multi-strand syllabus consisting of a combination of topics, situations, grammar and vocabulary should be adopted. Given the design of the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum (AECC) and the fact that teachers produced syllabi to be viewed by line managers which were expected to include AECC references, this approach to syllabus design is perhaps unsurprising and, as I argue in Chapter 10, could represent a hegemonisation of syllabus design within the sector.

Despite this commonality in the syllabus elements, however, the research findings indicated different emphases amongst the cases with two of the teachers in particular demonstrating a consistently dominant syllabus strand across the ranges of courses which they taught. In the case of Rachel, for example, there was a substantial element of situational language in the syllabi and a focus on the language of typical service and social encounters that the teacher believed would prepare the students

for communicative situations outside the classroom. Alan, on the other hand, placed a strong emphasis on the grammatical syllabus strand of the speaking syllabi and systematically introduced and provided practice activities for the grammatical items he had identified for each level. Whilst Susan and Diane both referred to published grammatical and situational specifications for the proficiency levels they were teaching, they included a more even balance of topics, situational language, grammar and vocabulary in their syllabi.

Having established teachers' common practical knowledge about the ESOL speaking skills syllabus and identified two cases in which an individual strand of the syllabus knowledge is dominant, I now summarise this information in the table below:

Table 9.2: Teachers' practical principles of the syllabus

Rachel	Alan	Susan	Diane
Situational language should feature most strongly.	Grammatical structures should feature most strongly.	Syllabus elements should be balanced	Syllabus elements should be balanced
Common across the cases: The syllabus should contain topics, situational language, vocabulary and grammar.			

In all of the cases, the syllabi were developed throughout the course. The teachers explained this approach to the syllabus as allowing them to respond to students' needs as these became evident at different points in the programme. Although the teachers were the principal agents in determining these needs, in most of the cases there was evidence of a negotiation of the syllabus with the students. This is the focus of the following section.

### 9.2.2 Learner-centredness in the ESOL speaking syllabus

The teachers' introduction of learner-centredness in the syllabus is shown in Table 9.3 below. It can be seen that three of the teachers adopted the practical principle that students' preferences should be included in the syllabus content. Classroom activities designed to identify their students' preferences regarding the content of the speaking syllabus were employed in these cases. The fact that these activities were, in the words of Susan, 'available in the materials' and that the three teachers

routinely undertook the exercise suggests that the culture of including student priorities was reasonably dominant in their institutions and represented established practice. The notable exception to the inclusion of student-chosen content was Alan, who adopted a course book with specified language objectives for students at that level of proficiency.

The paraphrases in Table 9.3 (below) of the beliefs that each teacher cited for the inclusion (or otherwise) of learner-chosen content also reveal the range of cognitions which support the teachers' positions.

Table 9.3: Teachers' knowledge of learner-centred syllabi

	Rachel	Diane	Alan	Susan
Learner-chosen content	Learner-chosen topics and situations	Learner-chosen topics and situations	No learner-chosen content	Learner-chosen topics and situations
Teachers' dominant beliefs	A valid syllabus should, as a matter of principle, reflect language needs as defined by the student.	It is important to know that the content is actually valuable for the students as this makes teaching worthwhile.	There is given language which students need to master at each level.	Student involvement in determining the syllabus increases student confidence and ownership.

The beliefs that teachers cited as underpinning their practical principle of a negotiated syllabus showed different emphases and it is useful to include these to illustrate the diverse knowledge that teachers draw on in forming practical principles. Rachel, for example, stressed the legitimacy student input lent to the syllabus whereas Susan emphasized the potential motivational gains of providing students with ownership of the syllabus. As with practical knowledge presented for other domains, then, whilst the practical principles (and rules of practice where provided in other sections), are useful for the purpose of analysis, they do reduce the granularity of the data.

The Individual Learning Plans (in which teachers work with students to create individual learning goals that should be met over a term) were not recognised by teachers as playing a useful role despite their being introduced into the ESOL sector in order to establish procedures to meet individual learning needs in the classroom (Julka, 2005). Instead, the shared practical principle (across all cases) was that the ILPs should be carried out purely for institutional needs. The teachers regarded the ILPs as both burdensome and impractical, citing, amongst other beliefs the view that low proficiency students in particular were unable to articulate their needs in detail. Diane had been most successful in integrating the ILPs into her practical knowledge of teaching speaking; she adopted the practice of developing objectives intensively over a shorter period and revising them more regularly than on the stipulated termly basis. Her classroom experience created a belief that this adaptation, a response to the perceived ineffectiveness of the ILP system, resulted in a more effective means of meeting individual needs.

### **9.2.3 Teachers' knowledge of an integrated skills syllabus**

A practical principle shared across the cases was that the teaching of speaking should be integrated with the development of all the other language skills (reading, writing and listening) despite the fact that the courses were institutionally labelled as 'speaking and listening' ones. A number of beliefs were provided by the teachers to explain this practical principle. Firstly, teachers were aware that, owing to the institutional progression routes, students would later be attending reading and writing courses and teachers believed that the students' literacy skills should therefore be developed in preparation for this later study. For Rachel, in line with her learner-orientation, there was also a strong focus on the students' outside lives and a belief that the students needed to be functionally literate to deal with linguistic challenges in authentic communicative situations. Alan's language-dominant orientation, in contrast, prioritised the development of a structural language base and he did not make a strong distinction between classes that were nominally for literacy or oral/aural skills.

All the teachers concurred on the integration of language skills on pedagogical grounds, believing that listening and reading activities, for example, introduced language and ideas as a basis for the speaking activities, especially as the syllabi were largely topic-based. Writing was also viewed by most of the teachers as a

means of consolidating structures needed for speaking. Table 9.4 below provides a summary of the cognitions underpinning the integration of skills in order to illustrate both the pedagogical and contextual knowledge that teachers drew on.

Table 9.4: Beliefs supporting the integration of other language skills

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It is necessary for students to develop their reading and writing skills in preparation for their future language study.</li><li>• Students need to develop their reading and writing skills to deal with outside literacy demands.</li><li>• Other language skills should be integrated into speaking classes for pedagogical reasons.</li></ul> |
|---|

Having discussed the teachers' practical knowledge of the content, degree of student negotiation and integrated nature of the speaking syllabus, in the next section, I examine the teachers' practical knowledge of the ESOL exams.

#### **9.2.4 Teachers' practical knowledge of ESOL exams**

For each of the participant teachers, some (if not all) of their students were entered for exams. Overall, teachers shared the practical principle that the syllabus should be aligned to the assessments. However, a number of variables could be identified for the degree of washback and the form that this washback took. These factors are presented in Table 9.5 below:

Table 9.5: Variables in the degree of washback

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The degree of challenge the exams presented for the students</li><li>• The complexity of the exam format</li><li>• The length of the taught programme</li><li>• The importance of the exams (for the institution, the students and the teacher)</li><li>• The assessment criteria</li></ul> |
|---|

As can be seen, the first of these relates to the degree of difficulty that the teachers believed the exams represented for the students. In the case of Diane, for example, the Functional Skills speaking exam, which was designed, delivered and assessed internally according to guidelines set by an external assessment board, was regarded as being well within the existing abilities of the students and therefore impacted less on the syllabus. In contrast, Alan had E2 students for whom he believed the exam would be very challenging and he accordingly dedicated a substantial amount of the syllabus to the development of language and skills he viewed as being required by the exam.

Teachers' beliefs regarding the marking schemes and the complexity of the exam format were also significant factors affecting washback. Diane, for example, cited the need to prepare students to ask for a very specific list of information during the exams in order for them to gain sufficient marks to pass. Whereas Susan identified less need for script memorisation for her students, the assessment tasks did lead to a strong focus on question formation in the syllabus. Indeed, in addition to the need to familiarise students with the exam format, all teachers cited specific language (grammatical and lexical) which they included at each level, informed by official reference materials, to prepare students for their exams.

The teachers' beliefs in the importance of the exams overall was also significant. Teachers commented on how they felt the level of exam success reflected on them professionally, the importance of exam passing for the students (with reference to students' immigration status, their career progression and ability to attend future language courses) and the institutional pressure (exercised by line managers and the wider management owing to the implications for future funding bids) which existed.

I have referred to the significance of the teachers' 'orientations' (introduced and explained in Chapter 5) when considering their practical knowledge of teaching speaking and this phenomenon was also evident in the teachers' knowledge of exams. The two clearest examples of this could be seen in the cases of Rachel and Alan. Rachel was most resistant to the impact of exams on her practices. In contrast, for Alan, close attention to the grammar specifications and AECC references for the speaking exam sat comfortably with his overall dominant focus on grammar.

### **9.3 Teachers' knowledge of ESOL students**

#### **9.3.1 Students' affective domains**

The cross-case analysis strongly suggests that there is a shared practical principle that a positive learning environment should be provided for students. This practical principle differed in the degree of application, however. Thus, whilst Rachel consistently referred to her students' levels of confidence and factors which she believed affected this confidence, Alan limited his focus to avoiding potentially embarrassing situations for students. There were also differences in the rules of practice teachers adopted for this practical principle. Rachel's prioritising of student needs in teaching practices, for example, involved substantial use of praise, the use of students' L1 to build relationships in the classroom and a focus on cultural

appropriacy. She also made repeated reference to the limited educational backgrounds of most of the students, the significance of their being recent arrivals and their (exclusively Muslim) cultural backgrounds. Such considerations were less relevant for Diane and Rachel and appeared to have little impact on Alan's classroom practices. The table below lists the diverse rules of practices which were adopted by one or more of the teachers.

Table 9.6: Summary of rules of practice to create a supportive environment:

- Short individual student presentations should be introduced to normalise the task for the audience and lower associated anxiety.
- Praise and encouragement should be given.
- Peer criticism should be discouraged through appropriate classroom rules.
- A positive atmosphere should be created through appropriate teacher-student interaction.
- Choral drilling should be used to allow students to develop confidence in speaking
- Anonymised correction should be adopted as required to avoid individual students becoming self-conscious.
- Students' dominant languages should be used to put them at ease.

The next section focuses on teachers' knowledge of mixed-level classes.

### **9.3.2 Mixed-level classes**

Another significant feature of the cases was that most of the teachers had classes which were officially labelled as 'mixed-level'. The teachers' practical principle for this institutional arrangement was that opportunities should be sought, where possible, to meet students' learning needs within a single taught group. The different rules of practice, adopted according to circumstances, took three main forms. The first of these was for students of both levels of proficiency to be taught in lock-step. This either involved teachers in identifying speaking skills activities which would be useful to all students or tended to focus on the needs of the weaker ones. However, as Rachel commented, combining both levels at times resulted in situations where weaker students failed to understand and/or stronger students were under-challenged. In the second option, the teachers separated the two levels and taught each group independently of the other. Although teachers identified this approach at times in order to cover the respective syllabi, teachers stated a strong preference to work with a single group. The third option was for students to work together with differentiated tasks according to their respective levels. Diane, in DO5, for example, set a speaking task on the topic of neighbourhoods in the present simple tense for E1

students and a related task using the simple past tense for E2 students. This last option was regarded by most teachers as being the most effective but teachers felt limited by the materials available to introduce such differentiated tasks and this seemed to explain why differentiation was not adopted more consistently. The table below presents the three rules of practice for the teaching of mixed-level classes which I have described above. They are listed in descending order of preference for the teachers.

Table 9.7: Summary of teachers' rules of practice for mixed-level groups

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students at both levels should do similar but differentiated tasks</li><li>• Students at both levels should do identical tasks</li><li>• Students at different levels should do separate tasks</li></ul> |
|--|

This issue of mixed-level classes is discussed further in the following section, which analyses practical knowledge of teaching resources across the cases.

#### **9.4 Teachers' knowledge of teaching resources**

Most of the teachers adopted the practical principle that they should adopt teaching resources from a range of sources. This eclecticism was attributed to the fact that they often needed to locate materials which would meet a number of criteria (listed in Table 9.8 below). The teachers drew on in-house materials, Skills for Life ESOL materials, published materials (for both ESOL and EFL) and online materials in addition to creating their own materials (especially in the case of Rachel) and adapting existing ones. The notable exception to this was Alan, who adopted a published EFL course book and largely followed this material.

A further key factor in teachers' choice of materials was that of funders' expectations. I have already discussed the washback effect of the exams that students are obliged to take for most government-funded courses and an exam focus was reflected in certain materials. In addition, the European Integration Fund required courses to use in-house materials consistent with the broad objectives of social integration (as a consequence, Rachel developed materials based on UK and Irish cultural events and festivals). Teachers also sought materials which combined different syllabus strands, such as in the combination of past tense practice with the topic of health in SO2. The mixed-level nature of classes taught by most teachers (see previous section) also introduced a need at times for material either suitable for

the two levels of language proficiency or that would lend itself well to differentiated tasks.

Teachers' working styles also proved to be significant. Alan stated a clear preference for the convenience of using the pre-prepared materials available in the course books just as Diane, who drew heavily on the readily-available materials on the common shared drive at her institution, self-categorised herself as being 'computer-based'. These preferences and the availability of technological hardware also impacted on teachers' practices: whereas Susan and Diane incorporated multi-media materials (Google images, online Blockbusters games, countdown timers, audio and video clips for listening), the lack of technological hardware in Rachel's community setting contributed in part to a dependence on the flipchart. Rachel also expressed a preference for working with physical materials (books and realia), which she attributed in part to her early teaching experiences with limited resources.

Although not shared amongst the teachers, there were two further significant practical principles held by teachers regarding the choice of materials. One teacher (Susan), critical of the Skills for Life materials for not replicating authentic interaction, believed that materials should contain more authentic representations of situational language use. For another teacher (Rachel), the cultural appropriateness of the values and lifestyles represented in the materials should be considered, particularly (for her) in the case of predominantly Muslim classes. These and the additional factors relating to teachers' choice of materials mentioned above are summarised in Table 9.8 below:

Table 9.8: Factors involved in teachers' choice of teaching resources

- The materials should meet the language objectives.
- The materials should be appropriate for mixed-level classes (where necessary).
- The materials should be readily available.
- The locating or creating of materials should suit the teachers' working styles.
- Information technology should be used where available to add interest to classes.
- The materials should contain authentic language and tasks.
- The materials should be culturally appropriate.
- The materials should meet the funders' expectations

In this section, I identified the eclectic nature of most of the teachers' use of materials. I also highlighted the substantial number of factors which are involved in

such decision-making. The following section focuses on the teachers' practical knowledge of pedagogy employed in the delivery of the syllabus with the teaching materials outlined.

## **9.5 Teachers' knowledge of pedagogy for teaching speaking**

### **9.5.1 Introduction to teachers' knowledge of pedagogy for teaching speaking**

A useful means of approaching the ESOL teachers' practical knowledge of pedagogy for teaching speaking is through the identification of the teachers' use of direct and indirect speaking activities. This distinction focuses on the degree to which language activities focus on form and meaning as discussed in Chapter 3. Table 9.9 (below) presents the predominant use of speaking activities according to this categorisation in the observed classes for each teacher. I also include Alan's reported use of indirect activities.

Table 9.9: Teachers' use of direct and indirect activities

	Rachel	Diane	Alan	Susan
Use of direct methods	Pre-entry/E1	Pre-entry/E1	E1/E3	E1
Use of indirect methods	E3	E2/E3	(Reported) E3	E2/E3

Overall, there emerged a shared practical principle that the speaking development of lower proficiency students benefitted strongly from direct approaches. This consensus over the need for tasks involving language repetition to aid retention and to automate language use, however, was accompanied by a range of rules of practice. Alan, for example, believed that tasks should include a strong degree of language manipulation and his practice included substitution activities. Other teachers, however, thought that there should be less drilling and a stronger focus on activities which are more intrinsically motivating; Diane, for example, regularly incorporated language 'games'. For Rachel, greater emphasis was placed on personalised use of these structures such as descriptions of Eid celebrations to practise present tense forms.

The use of repetition in language activities was believed by the four teachers to provide a necessary language model for students, a factor which teachers believed to be particularly important for low level students. Repetition was also regarded by those teachers with low proficiency students as being especially relevant for students lacking literacy in English and who may in some cases not be literate in their dominant language(s) and therefore unable to transliterate. The institutional phenomenon of mixed-level classes, however, weighed against the use of drilling in certain classes given the students' different language needs at each level.

A second practical principle shared by most teachers was that higher level students should be taught using more indirect approaches. Teachers believed that these students were demotivated by drilling when they already had a command of sounds, vocabulary and structures and that they were able to integrate additional language into their language production without the need for direct approaches. Susan, for example, used tasks involving discussion questions in order for students to recycle language introduced and use the language meaningfully; her belief that this would create the conditions for deeper learning, retrieval and communicative competence was similarly evident to a large extent in the other cases.

A further practical principle that could be identified across the cases was that within a speaking lesson, activities should generally develop from the use of more direct to more indirect activities. For example, Diane (in DO4) introduced direct activities focusing on question formation and the use of the past simple tense and then introduced contextualised practice for these language foci with a role play in which students interviewed each other about their interview experiences. Such practice was viewed by all teachers as enabling students to proceduralise given structures and facilitate skill-getting with an opportunity for accompanying meaningful language use. Two teachers expressed explicit concerns that purely indirect approaches might not extend students' skills.

### **9.5.2 Motivating students to produce spoken language**

The findings identified a shared practical principle that activities should motivate students to produce spoken language. The rules of practice adopted by teachers differed in emphasis, however, and could also be seen to reflect differences in teachers' understandings of the motivational needs of different students and the

teachers' own individual personality traits. These rules of practice are presented in the table below:

Table 9.10: Teachers' rules of practice relating to student motivation

	Rachel	Diane	Alan	Susan
There should be pace in the classes.		✓		✓
Activities should include physical movement.		✓		✓
Activities should incorporate technological resources.		✓		✓
Activities should address students' cultural backgrounds.	✓	✓		✓
Activities should personalise language use.	✓	✓		✓
Activities should be based on content which is of interest to the students.	✓	✓	✓	✓

The rules of practice adopted by the two teachers working with the teenage Functional Skills groups included the use of pace (often through the use of time-bound activities), activities incorporating movement and a strong degree of group competition. They also featured the use of technological aids (smart boards) to increase student interest. The data therefore suggests a reasonably strong perceived need on the part of these two teachers to adapt their practices to this specific age group.

Whereas there was an overall shared practical principle that the content of speaking activities should be personally meaningful for the students to encourage greater production of speech, the application of this principle differed significantly and there was a cline for the degree of emphasis that teachers placed on it. For one teacher (Rachel), there was a rule of practice that the students' cultural reference points (religious, social and geographical) should be included. Two other teachers (Diane and Susan), whilst believing that content should be meaningful (Diane introduced tasks which involved students in, for example, talking about homes and neighbourhoods so that they could 'relate language to something in their head'), did not regularly refer to students' cultural reference points. The remaining teacher, Alan, pointedly placed less emphasis still on content immediately relevant to

students' outside lives, focusing instead on opportunities to introduce specific language structures.

### **9.5.3 Promoting longer speaking turns**

Two of the teachers (Diane and Susan) had both developed the practical principle that they should introduce pedagogy which would promote longer speaking turns for students on the Functional Skills courses. This was driven by a concern that language production (and hence learning) for these groups was limited. Both teachers shared rules of practice that activities should be introduced in which a group of students had an explicit listening task (note-taking or chart completion, for instance) based on the oral contribution of another member of the group; this resulted from a belief that listeners would be more motivated by a concrete task and that those speaking would in turn be better motivated to speak for longer if they had an attentive audience. The aim of developing speakers' turns was most evident in the practices of Susan and included a task in which students spoke individually for two minutes in order to become accustomed to these longer turns. In addition, Susan introduced mind-mapping strategies in her belief that students experienced difficulties in generating ideas. She also introduced elements of extrinsic motivation by reminding students of the need to take longer turns for their exams. This information is summarised in Table 9.11 below.

Table 9.11: Teachers' rules of practice for promoting longer speaking turns

	Rachel	Diane	Alan	Susan
Mind-mapping activities should be used.				✓
Time-bound individual speaking tasks should be used.				✓
Group listening tasks should be used to provide a communicative purpose.		✓		✓
Students should be made aware of exam requirements.				✓

Having discussed the rules of practice adopted by teachers to extend students' speaking turns, in the following section I focus on the modes of interaction adopted by the teachers for speaking activities.

### **9.5.4 The modes of interaction in speaking activities**

For all four teachers there was a practical principle that the students' language learning should include group work and/or pair work. However, the degree to which

this practical principle was held differed. This variation is evident in the teachers' practices as shown in Table 9.12 below:

Table 9.12: Teachers' use of modes of interaction in speaking activities

	Rachel	Diane	Alan	Susan
Use of whole class work	✓	Limited	✓	Limited
Use of group work	-	✓	-	✓
Use of pair work	Limited	✓	Limited	✓

It can be seen that there was substantial use of pair work and group work by two of the teachers (Susan and Diane) in their classes. Alan's focus on language structure explanations and open-class practice with individual students meant that his teaching was reasonably teacher-fronted but there was also some use of pair work since Alan viewed this as facilitating more extensive direct language practice. Rachel believed in teacher-fronted activities as being culturally appropriate for the students and pair work was evident only in a very limited degree of situational dialogue practice.

The teachers' rules of practice drew on a number of beliefs about the value of pair work and group work. These included the beliefs that students could support each other to successfully complete tasks and could have more opportunities for speaking turns than they might in a teacher-centred class. Beliefs relating to speaking content (that individuals each brought ideas and experiences to the activities which could increase their level of success) were also cited during the research. Finally, teachers placed importance not only on the set activities but on the oral communication occurring naturally between the students whilst they were working collaboratively. These beliefs are listed in Table 9.13 below:

Table 9.13: Teachers' beliefs for the use of pair work and group work

- They allow students to support each other with speaking tasks.
- They maximise oral interaction during tasks, providing the opportunity for students to develop their communicative competence.
- They facilitate the introduction of different experiences/perspectives which can engage students and develop discussion.
- They create authentic oral communication opportunities.

The teachers had also adopted a number of different rules of practice regarding the use of pair work and group work. As with rules of practice identified in earlier sections, some were adopted flexibly with the result that, for example, Rachel paired students on the basis of equal language proficiency in one class and paired stronger

students with weaker students in another. This flexibility reflected the presence of a number of variables for teachers (in this case, whether teachers felt that stronger students were becoming frustrated by working with weaker students, and whether a specific task would be challenging for weaker students and could be scaffolded by stronger students, for example). The rules of practice which were identified as operationalising the practical principle are listed below in Table 9.14.

Table 9.14: Rules of practice for the use of pair work and group work

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Variety should be introduced in pairings/groupings to stimulate discussion.</li><li>• Students of different nationalities should be paired where possible to maximise English language use.</li><li>• Stronger students should be paired together to model activities for other students.</li><li>• Strong students should be paired with weaker ones to support them.</li><li>• Nationality pairings should avoid potentially conflictive combinations.</li></ul> |
|--|

I have suggested in this section that teachers' pair work and group work practices varied as a result of a number of factors relating to the classroom. For the following section, which examines the teachers' use of corrective feedback in the teaching of speaking, teachers' practices were more consistent.

### 9.5.5 Language correction

A practical principle shared by all the teachers was that regular feedback should be provided to students on the accuracy of their language production. However, there were evident differences in the teachers' understanding of appropriate language goals for the students and these in turn had implications for the rules of practice adopted. Rachel, for example, cited a belief that 'students need to be understood', which suggests an emphasis on 'intelligibility' (Jenkins, 2002) (Note that teachers used this term and 'comprehensibility' interchangeably.) Susan expressed a similar belief for students at lower levels of proficiency but stated that for these students at higher levels there was a stronger need for accuracy both to meet exam requirements and for 'skill-getting' once students had developed a certain communicative competence. By this, she was referring to a concern that students might not develop beyond their existing language competence if there were insufficient demands placed on them. Diane, on the other hand, had witnessed instances of communication breakdown between students and college staff which she attributed to students' lack of accuracy and stated that this contributed to her belief that accuracy should be developed at all levels. This prioritising of accuracy was shared

by Alan, who strongly believed in the need for student mastery of language structures for speaking. Thus, teachers placed different emphases on accuracy in their teaching of speaking.

For most of the teachers, there was a shared rule of practice that either self-correction or peer correction activities should be used for the correction of grammar and lexis. Teachers often adopted self-correction as they believed that it involves a process of recall, which aids language acquisition. There was also a common belief amongst these teachers that the correction should take place *after* the main speaking activity where those tasks were aiming to develop students' language fluency. In addition, peer correction activities were regularly introduced by the teachers with the rule of practice that students should receive peer correction, principally focusing on repeated errors (such as incorrect use of irregular past tense verbs in DO5). Teachers argued that they were therefore able to focus students' attention on patterns in the correct language forms. The notable exception to the rule of practice of providing feedback post-activity was Rachel, whose use of correction for grammar and lexis was characterised by on-the-spot direct correction, which she believed to be 'more memorable' for the students. Her belief that 'it is the teacher's job to correct' she attributes to the entrenched teacher/student roles of her own educational experiences, reinforced by the community values in which she was raised.

Although there was no systematic teaching of pronunciation by any of the teachers in their syllabi, most of the teachers provided pronunciation feedback. All such corrective feedback was direct. Consistent with the language goals attributed above to the individual teachers, Rachel and Diane shared a rule of practice that pronunciation correction should be provided where the language produced was believed to be incomprehensible; thus, whilst Rachel corrected what she regarded as errors which would interfere with a listener's understanding, Diane, who believed that her students' pronunciation was already comprehensible, engaged in almost no pronunciation correction. In contrast to this central focus on comprehensibility, Alan and Susan's joint rules of practice were that students should be provided with correction activities when language was not believed to be accurate. Teachers providing corrective feedback for pronunciation all did so directly and incorporated elements of individual and choral on-the-spot drilling. Alan, however, was unique in his use of follow-up activities using minimal pairs to isolate sounds and provide

drilling activities distinguishing between pairs. The rules of practice relating to corrective feedback for the teachers are included below. Table 9.15 shows this for grammar and vocabulary errors whilst Table 9.16 relates to the pronunciation errors:

Table 9.15: Rules of practice for corrective feedback (grammar and lexis)

	Rachel	Diane	Alan	Susan
Use of post-activity self-correction		✓	✓	✓
Use of post-activity peer correction		✓	✓	✓
Grouping of errors for peer-correction		✓	✓	
Use of on-the-spot direct feedback	✓			
Use of reinforcement activities			✓	

Table 9.16: Teachers' rules of practice for corrective feedback (pronunciation)

Use of on-the-spot direct feedback	✓			
Use of post-activity correction	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use of drilling choral and individual	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use of reinforcement activities			✓	

Having provided a cross-case analysis of teachers' practical knowledge of correction, I now discuss the role of the ESOL context in determining the teachers' practical knowledge of speaking.

### 9.5.6 Teachers' knowledge of the ESOL context

The contexts of the four cases, whilst all within the ESOL sector, differ substantially. In this section, therefore, I seek to identify characteristics of the ESOL context which, whilst not necessarily common to all cases, appeared to influence teachers' practices. A number of these features have been referred to in previous sections but are compiled here to facilitate analysis. I have also categorised the teachers' knowledge of context according to whether the knowledge relates to internal factors (related to the students and the immediate classroom) and external factors (those which can be regarded as beyond the immediate classroom, such as institutional factors). A summary of this knowledge is provided in Table 9.17 below, followed by discussion of the table contents.

Table 9.17: Contextual factors influencing teachers' practical knowledge

Internal factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student age groups (all adults with some limited to 16-18-year-olds)</li> <li>• Student levels of formal education (very limited in some cases)</li> <li>• Proficiency levels of the students (many low level students)</li> <li>• Mixed-level classes (e.g. pre-entry/E1 or E1/E2 students combined)</li> <li>• Recent arrival in the UK of some students</li> <li>• Students' level of confidence</li> <li>• Immediate language needs of students</li> <li>• Cultural and religious backgrounds of students</li> <li>• Availability of audio visual aids</li> </ul>
External factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)</li> <li>• The needs of funders (such as the European Integration Fund)</li> <li>• Institutional listening and speaking exams</li> <li>• Supervision by line managers</li> <li>• Institutional syllabus expectations</li> </ul>

As can be seen, the ages of the students were relevant and I have already indicated that two of the teachers had developed a specific practical knowledge for the teaching of teenage Functional Skills students. Although the ESOL sector includes many students with successful study backgrounds, the fact that a number of the students lacked such a background (and in some instances were not literate in any language) and were predominantly elementary to intermediate level students influenced some teachers' pedagogy as described in 9.5.1, with teachers adopting more direct teaching methods as a result. The institutional arrangements also meant that certain classes contained a combination of two different levels of language proficiency in the same classes, with the implications for materials and pedagogy which I have also already discussed in this chapter.

The cultural and religious backgrounds of the students were also internal factors which influenced teachers' practices to different degrees according to the teachers' orientations and their understanding of the students' home culture as I argued in 9.5.2. For the practitioner teaching on the European Integration Fund funded courses, the fact that the students were all recent arrivals required additional attention to their affective needs. The fact that these students, as migrants to a English-dominant country, are viewed by most teachers as having immediate language needs can also be seen in practical knowledge such as the inclusion in the syllabus of situational language (to include service and social encounters) and syllabus topics such as health, education and work, which are mostly placed in a British context.

External contextual factors also featured in the teachers' practical knowledge. These factors included the funders' requirements which usually played a dominant role within the teachers' practical knowledge where they existed. Thus, as I explained in the syllabus section, Rachel included British culture elements in the EIF courses and Susan included content related to the workplace in the JSA course. Most of the other courses also had institutionally required exams and I discussed the washback effect of these exams in 9.2.4. Institutional requirements included the completion of ILPs, which was also dominant in the teachers' practical knowledge even where teachers believed that they did not contribute to improved student learning. I have also discussed in 9.2.1 the hegemonic syllabus characteristics based on teachers' understanding of institutional expectations that AECC references be included for syllabi.

### **9.5.7 Summary of teachers' shared practical knowledge**

I have already made the case that a useful means of exploring teachers' practical knowledge lies in the identification of the teachers' practical principles and the (lower order) rules of practice. Having systematically established what these practical principles and accompanying rules of practice are in the previous sections of this chapter, I collate the practical principles shared by most of the teachers in Table 9.18 below; this will facilitate later discussion of my second research question, the degree to which there is a shared practical knowledge of the teaching of speaking. At this point I exclude the rules of practice in order to explore the more general patterns within the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking.

Table 9.18: Summary of teachers' shared principles of practices

- A multi-strand syllabus consisting of a combination of topics, situations, grammar and vocabulary should be adopted.
- Syllabus content should be negotiated with the students (except Alan).
- The teaching of speaking should be integrated with the development of other language skills.
- The syllabus should be aligned to the exams.
- A positive learning environment should be provided for learning to take place.
- Teachers should locate appropriate teaching materials from a diverse range of sources.
- Lower proficiency students should be given more direct language activities.
- Higher proficiency students should be given more indirect language activities.
- Activities in lesson should develop from more direct to more indirect.
- Activities should motivate students to produce spoken language.
- Pedagogy should promote longer speaking turns for Functional Skills students.
- Pedagogy should include the use of group work and pair work (shared by 3 teachers)

- Regular feedback should be provided to students on the accuracy of their language production.

It can be seen that there is an overall consensus in a considerable number of aspects of ESOL teachers' practical knowledge of speaking and that the shared practical principles include practical knowledge of syllabus, teaching resources and pedagogy.

### **9.6 Teacher orientation**

Whereas in the previous section I focused on the commonality of the teachers' practical knowledge, in this section I present a summary of the syllabus, materials and pedagogy domains of the practical knowledge for each teacher. This reflects not only the differences which exist amongst the practical knowledge of the teachers but also the patterns which exist *within* the individual cases. This information is contained in Table 9.19 below:

Table 9.19: Data supporting teacher orientation

Teacher	Rachel	Alan	Diane	Susan
Syllabus	Main focus on situational language	Main focus on language structures	Focus on all strands	Focus on all strands
Teaching resources	Cultural appropriateness important	Loading of language structures important	Eclectic materials use to combine different strands	Eclectic materials use to combine different strands
Pedagogy	More direct activities  On-the-spot, direct correction  Use of students' languages	More direct activities  Indirect peer correction	Less direct activities  Indirect self/peer correction	Less direct activities  Indirect self/peer correction
Orientation	Learner-dominant	Language-dominant	Domain-equal	Domain-equal

It can be seen that reasonably clear patterns emerge for the practical knowledge domains of Rachel and Alan. I refer to these patterns as teachers' practical knowledge 'orientations'. In the case of Rachel, characteristics such as the focus on

the students' outside lives through a prioritisation of situational language, and an emphasis on the students' affective domain through the use of students' dominant languages suggest a 'learner-dominant orientation'. For Alan, the emphasis on language structures can be labelled a 'language-dominant orientation'. This concept of 'orientation' and its implications for practical knowledge are discussed further in Chapter 10.

### **9.7 The development of the teachers' practical knowledge**

In the literature review, I identified three criteria from Wyatt (2009) which can be applied to identify whether practical knowledge development can be said to have taken place. I did so as this is the only work focusing on practical knowledge development (even though there has been research into related areas such as a study into personal practical knowledge growth by Gray and Morton, 2010). The first criterion is whether the teacher's reported beliefs about teaching and learning are more consistent. The second criterion is whether there is increased consistency between the teachers' reported beliefs and classroom practices. The third criterion is whether this practical knowledge draws more upon public theory than was previously the case. I now apply these criteria to the cases I have researched.

For all four cases, the teachers' beliefs appeared to already be internally coherent at the outset of the study and there was no evidence in the data of teachers holding conflicting beliefs. There was also little evidence of initial inconsistency between teachers' stated beliefs and practices; instead, teachers' descriptions of their practices aligned closely with the observation data. In addition, teachers very rarely referred to public theory to explain their practices and none of the teachers consciously sought to introduce changes to their practices as a response to theory in the field. However, limited changes in teachers' practical knowledge can be identified in three of the cases. Although not driven by theory, these changes do reflect attempts by the teachers to improve their practices and can be considered to have a principled basis. I summarise these developments of the teachers' practical knowledge in each of the case studies in Table 9.20 below.

Table 9.20: Teachers' practical knowledge growth

Rachel	Introduced a staged reduction in the use of students' dominant languages.
Diane	Introduced classroom management strategies for use with the Functional

	Skills 16-18-year-old students.
Alan	Little recorded change - reported increased subject content knowledge and introduction of an isolated teaching activity.
Susan	None recorded

It can be seen that Rachel's reduced use of students' dominant languages and Diane's introduction of certain classroom management strategies were the two primary examples of development from the cases. The following section focuses on the factors which appeared to influence the amount of practical knowledge which took place.

### **9.8 Factors influencing the development of teachers' practical knowledge**

As I have shown above, the research identified relatively limited practical knowledge growth by the teachers over the course of the academic year. It is useful to remind the reader that none of the teachers in these cases were involved in any formal INSET programmes, a feature of this research which distinguishes it from many other teacher development studies which have tended to examine the impact of in-service teacher education courses (see, for example, Wyatt, 2009). Factors which appeared to influence the development of the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking (either positively or negatively) are listed below with accompanying explanations. It is important to note that the inclusion of factors here does not suggest that they were evident in all the cases (I indicate the most useful examples) nor that they are mutually exclusive since there were often a combination of factors in single instances of practical knowledge development or a lack of such development.

#### **1) Institutional control**

The degree of professional autonomy offered by the institution appeared to be significant for teachers' practical knowledge growth. The level of direct control exercised by the institutions in the case studies was relatively low and provided teachers with the freedom to experiment and thereby develop their individual practices. However, despite the fact that there were periodic formal lesson observations in all institutions, even when observers disagreed with a teacher's practices (as in the case of Rachel), there was little direct enforcement of the practices advocated by the institution. This lack of control therefore might also

therefore be seen as representing a lack of quality control mechanisms in the colleges.

2) The exigency of the situation

The degree to which the situation in which the teachers found themselves required practical knowledge development was a significant factor affecting such growth. Diane's initial classroom management difficulties with her Functional Skills classes, for example, led to a high degree of experimentation on her part as she sought to develop her practical knowledge to meet the challenges of a large group of teenage students. The stimulus for practical knowledge building was therefore a response to specific challenges encountered.

3) Teachers' personal motivation to develop

Teachers' individual motivation to develop as teachers also emerged as a factor affecting practical knowledge growth. In addition to the situation-specific desire to develop (see 2 above), the personal motivation to improve generally as a teacher could also be identified. Rachel's self-identification as someone 'set in [her] ways', for example, suggested a general resistance to change whereas Diane referred to a personal need to learn and to improve her practices which was a spur to the experimentation and reflection which I suggest (in 6 below) are key to practical knowledge growth.

4) Models of expert practice

The lack of information regarding the practices of teachers perceived as being 'expert' was identified as a factor which potentially hindered the development of practical knowledge growth. The teachers in the cases evidently valued such information and expressed a desire for more opportunities to observe other teachers, to learn about their practices and to become aware of innovations that might be introduced into their practices. Alan, for example, reported having observed an experienced teacher and having experimented with reinforcement techniques as a result. In addition, both Susan and Diane were anxious to benchmark their own practices against those of others in the profession through peer observation and workshops.

5) The compatibility of innovation with existing PK

The need for potential changes to teaching practices to be compatible with teachers' existing practical knowledge emerged as a factor affecting practical

knowledge growth. This requirement for a ‘fit’ (Tsui, 2003b) with the practical knowledge teachers already held could be seen in the example of Rachel, who was resistant to the suggestion that a greater degree of learner-centredness be introduced as it conflicted with her belief that students held a cultural preference for a teacher-fronted classroom. Her introduction of a staged reduction in the use of students’ L1 rather than eliminating all such use enabled a fit with her belief that students’ low confidence and recent arrival in the country made such communication necessary initially.

6) Experimentation and reflection on the part of the teacher

Essential factors in the practical knowledge growth which took place appeared to be the willingness and ability of the teachers to engage in a process of experimentation and reflection. Where teachers identified and implemented possible changes and reflected on the success of the changes (and the fit with existing practical knowledge), this enabled change to be personally meaningful. Alan, for example, in a rare example of innovation, introduced a chain sentence-making activity in the classroom that he had been introduced to at a training workshop; only through reflection on this experience was he able to fully understand the language skills it developed and how it could be employed effectively in his own classrooms.

7) Institutional guidance

A further significant factor for practical knowledge development could be seen in the degree of guidance provided institutionally for teachers teaching courses for the first time. In the absence of specific information regarding such courses, practical knowledge development can be limited to existing practices. Diane, for example, was not provided with a syllabus for the Functional Skills course and transferred her existing practical knowledge to the new context rather than integrating new practices for this age group.

These factors are listed in Table 9.21 for easy reference:

Table 9.21: Factors affecting teachers’ practical knowledge development

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Institutional control</li><li>• The exigency of the situation</li><li>• Teachers’ personal motivation to develop</li></ul> |
|--|

- Models of expert practice provided by colleagues
- The compatibility of innovation with existing PK
- Experimentation and reflection on the part of the teacher
- Institutional guidance

This chapter, then, has analysed the data across the cases to identify cross-case assertions which can be made in addition to highlighting significant differences amongst the cases. It began by analysing aspects of the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking and proceeded to focus on the development of this practical knowledge over the research period with a proposed redefinition of 'growth'. The following chapter (Chapter 10) discusses the issues emerging from these cross-case findings in relation to the relevant literature.

## Chapter Ten: Discussion

### 10.1 Introduction to the discussion

This chapter aims to discuss the significance of the main cross-case research findings presented in the previous chapter and to relate them to the existing literature in the field. The aims of the research, it is worth recalling, were to explore the practical knowledge of teaching speaking of early career ESOL teachers. A year-long longitudinal approach to the data collection was adopted to also investigate potential practical knowledge growth during this time. In total, 24 interviews (each lasting approximately 60 minutes) and an equal number of classroom observations (each lasting up to three hours) were conducted during the data generation process. This data was then presented case-by-case in Chapters 5-8, leading to the cross-case analysis in Chapter 9.

In this research, I have adopted the concept of practical knowledge, defined as ‘the knowledge that is directly related to action ... that is readily accessible and applicable to coping with real-life situations, and is largely derived from teachers’ own classroom experience’ (Calderhead, 1988: 54) though formal theory plays a role in informing this knowledge. As explained in Chapter 3, I consider this concept to be useful to explore both the practices of ESOL teachers and the reasons for these practices. I have structured this discussion chapter broadly in relation to the original research questions, focusing on the more salient findings and their implications. The chapter therefore begins with a discussion of the practical knowledge held by the teachers (10.2). I then discuss the role of formal theory in the teachers’ practical knowledge (10.3) and the effect of the ESOL context on this practical knowledge (10.4). Following this, I explore the second research question of the degree to which this practical knowledge is shared and the implications of the degree of commonality (10.5). Subsequently, I answer research questions three and four, which relate to the teachers’ practical knowledge development and factors which appear to influence such development (10.6). As most of the data relates to the nature of the teachers’ practical knowledge rather than its growth, these research questions are addressed in a less detailed manner. Finally, (in 10.7), I summarise the main contributions of the study, which are: the insights provided into teachers’ practical knowledge of teaching speaking skills in the ESOL sector; a deeper understanding of the influence

of the ESOL context on teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking; insights into the role of theory in this practical knowledge; and a deeper understanding of the conditions required for the development of ESOL teachers' practical knowledge.

## **10.2 The practical knowledge content**

The first research question aimed to identify the practical knowledge of teaching speaking which was held by the teachers. The relevant findings of the cross-case analysis in Chapter 9 are discussed here with the teachers' knowledge of the syllabus, teaching resources and pedagogy each treated in turn.

### **10.2.1 Teachers' knowledge of syllabi**

In this section, I first make the case that the teachers' syllabi mostly reflect broad current trends in current thinking in the design of speaking syllabi in English language teaching. The multi-strand syllabi adopted by the teachers (consisting of language topics, functional/situational language, grammar and vocabulary) align with a contemporary concern with the combined inclusion of these syllabus elements for the development of students' speaking skills. Such syllabi also largely reflect the structure of the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum for speaking, which was itself designed in accordance with a prevailing view of the importance of these integrated strands (Williams and Williams, 2007). The dominant influence of this AECC syllabus is discussed from the perspective of contextual factors affecting teachers' practical knowledge in 10.4.

Although the practices of the teachers might have been in line with current thinking in ELT, however, the question of the ESOL-specificity of the teachers' course aims arises. There was, for example, a notable absence of reference made by the teachers both to contexts in which the students will use English and the educational and employment aspirations of those students, factors which Williams and Williams (2007), in their review of ESOL provision identify as ones which language providers were expected to bear in mind with the introduction of the AECC in 2001. As adult migrants to English dominant countries (Cooke and Simpson, 2008), ESOL students experience immediate language needs (Ward, 2008) and 'instrumentality' (the immediate usefulness of content) has traditionally been a feature of ESOL courses (Sutter, 2012).

To an extent, teachers addressed students' life situations through the inclusion of functional/situational language and topics (such as health, work and education)

which would develop the lexical base of the students and their socio-cultural discourse knowledge. By three of the teachers' own admission, however, there were limits to their knowledge of students' outside lives which reduced the degree to which teachers were able to include such information in either planning or interactive decision-making. Cooper's (2002) research in the US highlighted the importance of teachers' acquaintance with the milieu of the Latino community as a prerequisite for appropriate interaction and an understanding of student needs. Such understanding is similarly relevant in the UK context but has been identified as lacking amongst ESOL teachers (Callaghan, 2011) such that the diverse dreams and aspirations of ESOL students (Cooke, 2006) may not be represented in the classroom.

The most notable absence in the syllabi, however, was the systematic teaching of pronunciation. Although the findings identified teacher feedback on students' production of individual phonemes (and occasional correction of word stress), none of the teachers engaged in systematic inclusion in the syllabus of phonological language features. This was despite the importance placed on the supra-segmental features of stress, rhythm and intonation in the literature (see, for example, Hewings, 1993; Derwing et al., 1998). The non-inclusion of phonology also represented the single major deviation from the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum (AECC). Teachers tended to stress the fact that their students were already mostly intelligible (Jenkins, 2000) to explain the lack of emphasis on phonological development but it may have been that teachers' resistance to the inclusion of pronunciation was due to the fact that they regarded it as too complex an area to be taught at these levels of language proficiency. Multi-case study research by Baker (2014) investigating teachers' knowledge of second language pronunciation techniques, for example, found that teachers often regarded pronunciation practice as uninteresting both to the teachers and the students, in which case training in an integrated approach to the teaching of phonology involving a range of teaching methods might be required. Other research, such as that by Macdonald (2002), has identified a lack of institutional resources and limited understanding of assessment of students pronunciation as factors which can contribute to a reluctance to teach pronunciation and which may also apply to the teachers in my own research.

The negotiation of the ESOL speaking syllabi identified in the practices of three of the teachers can be seen to be consistent with the current focus in ELT on learner centredness (Nunan, 2013). Although these teachers routinely undertook consultation exercises with the students, however, the extent to which the syllabi were ultimately learner-chosen was limited (in large part by the washback effect of the exams as discussed in detail in 10.3). This restricted degree of student involvement contrasts with certain initiatives within ESOL to increase the degree of student participation based on the premise that ‘...a pre-written scheme of work [...] does not offer a means of exploring topics which arise during the course or issues which are directly affecting students’ (Cooke et al., forthcoming, 2015: 2). ‘Emergent’ syllabi’ (Cooke et al., forthcoming, 2015) seem to offer an alternative to the adoption of the AECC-oriented syllabi of the teachers in my study. In such programmes, there is a deeper level of negotiation between teachers and students to make the syllabi more responsive to the students’ concerns. The value of such process syllabi has been proposed in the ELT literature for some time (Breen, 1984; Nunan, 1988; Breen and Littlejohn, 2000) and, more recently, also in the ESOL literature (Shepherd, 2012; Baynham, 2006; Appleby and Barton, 2008).

### **10.2.2 Teaching resources**

The findings highlighted the eclectic practices of three of the teachers in identifying resources for the teaching of speaking skills. Such eclecticism has been identified in EFL (Tomlinson, 2003) and in ESOL (Baynham et al., 2007) but the contextual factors affecting this eclecticism in ESOL (which I discuss in 10.3) have to date been under-reported. The lack of use of the Skills for Life materials produced for the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) for use in ESOL classrooms nationally is noteworthy in that these professionally produced materials, linked to the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum, were intended to contribute to the professionalization of the sector (Williams and Williams, 2007). The fact that none of the teachers regularly adopted these materials on anything other than an infrequent basis strongly suggests, however, that the materials did not meet a number of conditions important to the teachers (see also Cooke and Simpson, 2008).

The factor which seemed most significant in determining the teachers’ choice of materials was the perceived need to locate or create materials which would combine given syllabus topics, syllabus structures, vocabulary and situational/functional

language, and which could be exploited by the teacher for mixed-ability classes where necessary. The influence of the curriculum on materials, therefore, is clearly identifiable and involves a response by the teacher to the institutional phenomenon of speaking classes often containing students of two official levels of proficiency. Ollerhead (2010), writing about the Australian ESOL context, has also identified the challenges of preparing ESOL materials for students in multi-level classes.

A further significant finding relating to resources that emerged from the research was teachers' use of materials produced for the EFL sector. Alan, in particular, based his teaching to a large extent on sequential use of an EFL course book. Stutter (2012) notes that commercially-produced EFL course books are now reasonably commonplace in ESOL settings despite the report by Williams and Williams (2007) that EFL materials are viewed by teachers as being written for 'relatively affluent European teenage learners with an interest in celebrity rather than migrant families interested in making their way in the UK' (*Ibid*: 28). The three teachers that did use EFL materials had all previously taught in the EFL sector and their familiarity with these materials together with the availability of such materials in their ESOL contexts appeared to be principal factors influencing this adoption. This issue of the ESOL-specificity of teachers' practices and accompanying cognitions is further developed in the following section, which discusses the teachers' knowledge of pedagogy.

An additional factor raised, though only by Susan, was the lack of authenticity of the materials: she sought to find materials which problematised encounters and which involved a greater degree of negotiation. This stance is consistent with the findings of Roberts and Cooke (2009) that authentic materials and authentic tasks can result in increased student motivation and that '[migrant] needs are not adequately met by invented or oversimplified functional materials which flatten out interactional complexity' (2009: 620). Indeed, research indicates that scripted dialogues often do not reflect the language which people might actually use (Goh and Burns, 2012) and there can be a need for materials to contain more 'authentic' language (McCarthy and Carter, 1995) in order to develop students' sociolinguistic competence (see Burns, 1998). The fact, then, that only one of the teachers raised the issue of a need for authenticity in teaching materials might be seen as an indication of potential future practical knowledge development for the teachers.

### 10.2.3 Teachers' knowledge of pedagogy

The pedagogy adopted by the teachers for the teaching of speaking skills could also be viewed as broadly consistent with contemporary methodological literature in English language teaching. Overall, the teachers' approaches fit into the classification of communicative language teaching (CLT), the principles of which are well-established in ELT (Nunan, 1989; Richards, 2005). The value of modelling and repetition of language at sentence level for low proficiency students is also a finding which concurs with the general ELT literature (Goh and Burns, 2012) together with research by Baynham *et al.* (2007) in the ESOL context. Most of the teachers then adopted less controlled language activities (Burns, 1998), which research has indicated to be essential for the proceduralisation of language and development of communicative competence (Nation and Newton, 2009).

A further practical principle that emerged across the cases was that within a speaking lesson, activities should generally develop from the use of more direct to more indirect activities. This combination of controlled and less-controlled/transfer activities has been advocated by a number of researchers (see, for example, Bygate, 1987; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Johnson, 2003) in that combining the two approaches also provides a means of overcoming the limitations of purely direct approaches (a lack of real-time communicative ability) and of purely indirect approaches (a neglect of language elements and discourse structures). This use of 'weak' CLT (Skehan, 1996) also provides the 'pushed output' (Swain, 1985; Swain and Lapkin, 1995; Goh and Burns, 2012) required for communicative use of structures which have been introduced.

The predictable development within lessons from direct to indirect approaches, however, was to the complete exclusion of task-based learning (TBL) in which the grammatical focus takes place following the main communicative activity (Willis, 1996; Ellis, 2003). This approach, in which communication is designed to be more authentic (Littlewood, 2004), is reasonably well-established in the field of ELT. Indeed, only a decade ago, Littlewood described it as the 'new orthodoxy' (2004: 319) though we might argue that the influence of TBL is limited to some (mainly private EFL) 'Western' contexts. The absence, then, both of TBL in teachers' practices and also of reference to this approach by the teachers in the interview data is significant and contrasts sharply with research by Andon and Eckert (2009)

where understanding of TBL was evident both in the practices and in teacher discussions of the practices of four UK ELT teachers. In attempting to account for this phenomenon, it may have been the case, as in research by Zheng and Borg (2013) into the cognitions and practices of secondary language teachers in China, that there was limited understanding of TBL and a subsequent lack of confidence in incorporating it into their practices. As I argue in greater depth in 10.3, another possible explanation for why teachers may not have adopted such an approach is that they were often prioritising the teaching of specific structural items required for the speaking exams. This is consistent with the results of research by Urmston and Pennington (2008), where the exams represented a constraint on teachers' teaching approaches and led to the teachers being less innovative.

The teachers' shared practical principle that a positive learning environment should be provided for students aligns closely with a focus in ELT literature on the affective domain. Humanistic psychology with its emphasis on the individual's inner feelings, including the desire to learn, has had a significant impact on the field of applied linguistics (Stevick, 1990). Within this field, the importance of language anxiety as an affective variable on language learning has been recognised (Horwitz and Horwitz, 1986) and it has been established that students suffering from this anxiety are less willing to take risks and experiment (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991; Tsui 1996). Therefore, the teachers' rules of practice to create a 'safe place' (Nelson, 2010) in which students would be able to produce oral language without fear of criticism are consistent with current research. In addition to interpersonal sources of anxiety, teachers also addressed students' personal sources of anxiety (Young, 1991) to assist students in overcoming fear of failure through encouragement and scaffolding during speaking activities. This concern of ESOL teachers with creating a supportive learning environment was identified in Mallows' (2006) review of ESOL research and the need for both the affective and social needs (the latter being met in part by the consistent use of pair work and group work activities by most of the teachers) to be met for ESOL students has been emphasized by Baynham et al. (2007). The group interaction strongly focused on by the teachers is also consistent with a view of learning as being mediated through social and cultural activity (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Block, 2003).

A practical principle shared by all the teachers was that regular feedback should be provided to students on the accuracy of their language production. This is consistent with the value that is placed in the literature on language accuracy in the development of speaking alongside complexity and fluency (see, for example, Norris and Ortega, 2009). In the majority of the cases, teachers also shared a rule of practice that self-correction and peer correction activities should be employed rather than direct correction. Encouraging students to consider their own language errors (or those of others in the group) provides a context for attention to form, which contributes to students' linguistic competence (Swain, 1985). The manner in which correction took place also aligned with the literature which emphasizes the need for errors to be corrected in a way that is sensitive to the students' feelings (Tudor, 1996).

An established principle within ELT is that in order for students to develop their speaking skills, they need to move beyond short interactional turns and engage in longer speaking turns (Nolasco and Arthur, 1987). The desire of two of the teachers to promote longer speaking turns for students also aligns with comprehensible output theory (Swain, 1985), which posits that oral output helps students to learn language and that they can be pushed to use language further when repeating, rephrasing or correcting speech to make it comprehensible to others. The fact that the other two teachers neither referred to the need to create a context for longer turns nor demonstrated this understanding in their practices indicates possible training needs.

In this section, then, I have argued that the teachers' practical knowledge mostly reflects dominant ideas in ELT pedagogy. TBL and the teaching of pronunciation are conspicuously absent in the teachers' practical knowledge, however, and the importance of extending students' turns was not evident in the practical knowledge of two of the teachers. A possible rationale for the degree of commonality in the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking overall is provided in a section on socialisation (10.4.2). Before that, however, in the following section I address the absence of theory in the accounts of the practices which were provided by the teachers.

### **10.3 The role of theory in teachers' practical knowledge**

A consistent feature across the cases was that there was scant reference made to research and literature in the field when teachers explained their practices. There was, for example, no reference made to communicative language teaching (CLT) even if, as I have shown in the previous sector, this general approach was evident in teachers' practices. As a researcher, I was careful to avoid reference to formal theory as I wanted to establish the teachers' own reference points. In keeping with this, for example, I did not mention items such as the present-practice-produce (PPP) model although I did repeatedly enquire as to whether teachers were aware of the influence of either ITT or INSET on their practices, which provided an opportunity for teachers to draw on theoretical approaches if these formed part of their practical knowledge.

This identification of the non-theoretical nature of practical knowledge is consistent with findings in Sato and Kleinsasser's (1999)'s research, which indicated that teachers did not use the theoretical models and literature as reference points for the introduction of more communicative teaching and instead drew on personal ideas and experiences. The fact that practical knowledge emerges from teachers' own experience and relates to practical situations in the teacher's role (Elbaz, 1981) does not exclude the role of theory, however. As Beijard and Verloop (1996) remind us, practical knowledge is not the opposite of theoretical or scientifically gained knowledge but instead encompasses theoretical knowledge adapted to the relevant teaching situations.

As Graham *et al.* (2014) point out, research has identified ELT studies both where teachers do and do not make reference to theory. In their research into EFL teachers' cognitions and reported practices regarding the teaching of grammar, Borg and Burns similarly identified the 'atheoretical nature' (2008: 479) of the teachers' explanations of their practices, noting that this absence of theory in teachers' accounts 'raises questions about the reliability of their judgements about its effectiveness' (*Ibid*). Given the wealth of literature which exists for the teaching of speaking, this lack of reference to methodological principles and the practical and experiential nature of their sources of evidence for their practices is similarly revealing. In my own research, there seemed to be an underlying belief amongst the teachers that what they did sat within the ESOL tradition and was unproblematic. As

such, I have suggested that they had undergone a process of institutional socialisation (see 10.4.2) in which teachers either adopted practices without consideration of their theoretical underpinning or that teachers' existing cognitions were confirmed by their environment. I argue that without a context in which teachers are exposed to theory, routinised practices may no longer be subject to theoretical examination and the problematising of teachers' practices required for development may not take place.

The lack of explicit theory identified in the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking may be a result of formal theory introduced in ITT and INSET being distilled into practices which have since become automated with little or no ongoing reflection on the theory behind them. These findings do, however, raise questions regarding the degree of theoretical awareness behind the teachers' practices. The lack of models guiding teachers' practices, for example, would appear to reflect an absence of teacher engagement in theoretical debates around student learning (such as issues relating to the teaching of pronunciation, authenticity in materials design and the inclusion of TBL in teacher' pedagogical practices). The lack of effective CPD provision and the relative isolation in which teachers worked would appear to have contributed to an institutional culture in which formal theory is less likely to be discussed.

#### **10.4 The impact of the ESOL context**

The cross-case findings of Chapter 9 indicate that the ESOL context plays a significant role in teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking. In explaining this influence, I first discuss the institutional level contextual factors which were identified as being most noteworthy (10.4.1). I then discuss institutional socialisation as a means of further understanding aspects of teachers' practical knowledge (10.4.2). Following this, I introduce the concept of teacher agency to describe the process by which teachers give direction to their individual practices (10.4.3). In the final section, I discuss the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking in terms of the teachers' responsiveness to ESOL students (10.4.4).

##### **10.4.1 Significant ESOL institutional factors**

For this first section, I focus on the three most significant findings relating to the institutional contexts in which teachers' teaching took place: the influence of funders, the influence of the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum (AECC) and the

influence of the speaking exams. These all relate to restricting discourses (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2011) through which the teachers indicated that they viewed their teaching as subject to outside constraints.

The findings showed that the teachers' knowledge of the funders' requirements played a significant role in determining the syllabi. Funding for the EIF courses taught by Rachel, for example, was awarded on the basis of a detailed college proposal designed to meet funders' requirements and there would therefore have been resulting institutional expectations that this syllabus would be adhered to (Hayes, 2008). The teachers' response to these specifications was one of pragmatic acceptance of the task of developing a syllabus within the guidelines provided and there was little evidence of teaching dilemmas (Freeman and Johnson, 1998) on the part of the teachers. The process of adherence to funders' requirements is not a given, however, and in 10.4.3 I argue that teacher agency allows teachers to introduce their own teaching and learning priorities. What is clear is that trends such as the increasingly employment-related focus of ESOL (Roberts et al., 2007) evident in classes such as the Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA), together with Functional Skills classes (integrating ESOL with mathematics and IT) and EIF classes (with a strong community integration focus) all play a role in teachers' practical knowledge. As I argue later, there are also corresponding training implications for teachers who are expected to teach these classes.

The introduction of a statutory ESOL core curriculum (DfES, 2001) appears to have brought a degree of standardisation in the syllabi. As I discuss in greater depth in the 'socialisation' section (10.4.2), the institutional requirements that AECC references be included in teachers' lesson plans and the institutional format of schemes of work requiring these strand elements seem to have resulted in similarities in teachers' knowledge of syllabi. This degree of standardisation within the profession could be interpreted as signifying that to an extent the original aims of the Skills for Life policy (Rosenberg, 2007), which was introduced as a response to the earlier lack of coordination across the sector (Ward, 2007), have been met. Teachers' conformity to (most of) the AECC strands needs, however, to also be seen in the context of the ESOL speaking exams, which most of the teachers' students were required to sit.

The ESOL speaking exams were shown to have been highly significant in the teachers' practical knowledge: the washback effect is evident both in the extent of

the course dedicated to exam practice and the inclusion of content (particularly from the grammar strand) to meet the exam requirements. The washback effect therefore reinforced the centrality of the AECC for teachers. It should also be noted that the existence of these exams was not strongly contested by the teachers, who regarded them pragmatically as part of the ESOL landscape. Teachers, however, regarded test formats as often based on a narrow definition of language ability which constrained the teaching/learning context, creating ‘negative washback’ (Hughes, 1989; Taylor, 2005). Teachers also regarded the need, for the purposes of preparing students for the exams, to include certain AECC syllabus elements as limiting the degree to which the syllabi could be learner-chosen. This suggests a certain tension between the learner-centredness in the teachers’ syllabi and the strong exam-orientation of the ESOL sector.

The test-taking training that was very evident in the teachers’ practices aligns with literature suggesting both that such practices have become an integral part of ESOL teaching (Simpson, 2006) and that exams play an ever more central role in ESOL generally (Hamilton and Hillier, 2009). The prevalence of these exams has also been symptomatic of a policy direction which has emphasized performance targets across the sector (Cooke and Simpson, 2008; NATECLA 2009). Clearly, the degree of standardisation in syllabus content might also be regarded as ‘positive washback’ (Cheng et al., 2004) if, as has been suggested, the exams have provided a means for teachers to include suitable syllabus content to map appropriate skills development aims for their students at different levels of language proficiency. Teacher concerns about the time dedicated to test-taking and the pressure on students and teachers as a result of the exam system remain, however.

#### **10.4.2 Institutional socialisation**

In 10.3 I established the ‘atheoretical’ (Borg and Burns, 2008) nature of the teachers’ practical knowledge even though (as described in 10.1) the teachers’ practices still generally conformed to current notions of good practice. The research identified that teachers considered certain practices to be ‘the norm’ in ESOL teaching, such as the use of Skills for Life activities to identify a degree of learner-chosen content for inclusion in the syllabus. One means of understanding how teachers might have adopted these practices without a strong awareness of the underlying principles is through the process of teacher socialisation, that is the

process by which teachers ‘pick up’ the values and practices of their professional environment (Zinn, 1995). As Reio (2011: 107) notes, this socialisation process ‘involves proactively learning about the norms, values, and procedures of the school or work group one is entering’.

The institutional culture that teachers are socialised into can be considered ‘the unspoken meanings that people in places over time create and share about who to ‘be’ (think and act)’ (Wedell and Malderez, 2013: 29). This creation and sustaining of institutional socio-cultural norms is also well-documented in the general education literature (Denscombe, 1982; Lightfoot, 1983; Sizer, 1983). It would seem to be the case that the institutional context ‘generates knowledge that socializes members to the existing organizational norms through such vehicles as policies and procedures that guide member conduct and organizational direction’ (Scribner, 1999: 242). Thus, although there was an absence of ‘authority discourse’ (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2011) in which teachers report that they are instructed on expected pedagogy by institutional authorities, certain assumptions about the syllabus design and pedagogical approaches were evident.

In other words, the elements of control in the institutions routinise certain teacher behaviours which are (largely) learnt as situated learning (Wenger, 1998) by teachers through interaction and the experience of being a member of the community. For the teachers in this research, however, I would suggest that this ‘community’ might also include the wider EFL community since three of the teachers had previous EFL teaching experience and reference was made at times to teaching materials and activities that were in use in these earlier contexts. The transfer of this practical knowledge may also have contributed to the blurring of the EFL/ESOL distinction that I discussed in 10.2. The limits of the standardising effect of the socialisation process, however, can be seen in the teacher agency which I describe in the following section.

#### **10.4.3 Teacher agency**

Although teachers often demonstrated pragmatic acceptance of the contextual constraints that I have described, there was also considerable evidence of teacher agency, where agency is regarded as the ability of individuals to exercise choice and discretion in their teaching practices (Toohey, 2007). These findings, then, sit in contrast to the findings of studies such as Ollerhead’s case study research into ESL

literacy where ‘policy conditions acted to constrain [the teacher’s] ability to act agentively as a teacher’ (Ollerhead, 2010: 616). Farrell (2008a) provides an additional example of unwelcome curriculum influence on novice teachers’ practices in a secondary school context in Hong Kong. The institutional imposition of a set syllabus and course textbook resulted in teachers feeling constrained in their ability to engage in interactive and innovative teaching. In my own research, teachers’ agency was evident in areas such as teachers’ individual interpretations of the AECC (and in some cases their inclusion of reading and writing activities in the speaking classes), the diverse range of learning resources which were adopted for the classes, and the exercising of teachers’ own pedagogical choices. In the case of Susan, for example, this involved an explicit resistance to a restricted (as she viewed it) work-oriented JSA syllabus. The presence of teachers’ individual orientations in their practical knowledge (which I discussed in 9.3.4) is a further strong indication of the existence of teacher agency.

The conditions allowing this agency appeared to be three-fold. The first is that the agency of the teachers could in part be attributed to the absence of control mechanisms in the teachers’ institutions. This identification of relatively high levels of teacher autonomy is consistent with earlier findings by Cara *et al.* (2008) for Skills for Life teachers, including ESOL teachers. The second, related factor seems to be the reasonably weak formal instructional guidance (Cohen and Spillane, 1992). Thus, whilst formal classroom observations of teachers were conducted by line managers, there was not a defined model of what the teaching should look like and therefore there was no evidence of a strong system of control to ensure that non-prescribed teaching practices were discontinued.

In addition to the availability of space for teachers to act on their initiative, however, the teachers require the necessary self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) to provide direction to their practical knowledge. The findings revealed that even though the teachers were at a relatively early career stage with approximately two years’ language teaching experience (including EFL teaching experience in three of the cases), they demonstrated a confidence in their own decision-making and a willingness to act independently. Overall, the findings underscore the significance of the teacher perception of an environment on practices (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2011) whilst also

suggesting that whilst the culture of the context influences each member's behaviour, it does not determine it (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009).

## **10.5 The degree of uniformity in the teachers' practical knowledge**

The second main research question aimed to identify the degree to which the practical knowledge of speaking held by the teachers was similar. In this section, I first discuss possible homogenising influences on the teachers' practical knowledge (10.5.1). I then focus on the individual nature of teachers' practical knowledge that the research identified, with reference to the teachers' practical knowledge orientations (10.5.2). Finally, I address the implications of the degree of identified commonality for the development of a practical knowledge base for the teaching of speaking in ESOL (10.5.3).

### **10.5.1 Commonality in teachers' practical knowledge**

The cross-case analysis identified a substantial degree of shared practical knowledge (summarised in Table 9.4). This commonality was despite the existence of a number of contextual variables across the cases and included teachers' practical principles for the teaching of speaking relating to the syllabus, teaching resources and pedagogy. In 10.3 I suggested that institutional socialisation may have been significant in creating this degree of homogeneity. I also briefly speculated that earlier socialisation into the broader English language teaching profession may have taken place in the cases of three of the teachers through their earlier teaching experience in EFL contexts, a process that I will henceforth refer to as 'sectorial socialisation'. Teachers' occasional reference to early formative experiences (such as Diane's use of language games in teaching young EFL students, for example) suggests the previous establishment of patterns of behaviour which are still evident in their practices. Teachers' teacher training experiences may also have contributed to the sectorial socialisation: three of the teachers for example, studied for CELTA qualifications largely based on a CLT approach to English language teaching (Borg, 2008). Although teachers' understanding of teaching may not be directly attributable to their training, however, such training might have created or reaffirmed expectations about what constitutes ESOL teaching at a critical period in the teachers' professional development.

However, the degree of shared practical knowledge and its general alignment with current ELT methodological literature (as I have argued in 10.2) indicates that for

these four teachers in the ESOL sector, a certain level of standardisation of provision at a reasonable level of quality has been established. This phenomenon is noteworthy in two respects. Firstly, the teachers are at a relatively early stage in their professional careers (all had approximately two years' EL teaching experience at the start of the data collection) and had already routinised practices along broadly similar principles despite the absence of extensive teaching experience.

Secondly, as I have already argued, commonality in teachers' practical knowledge is significant in the context of the Skills for Life aims of creating standardisation of quality and professionalising the sector. The AECC, for example, even though Skills for Life no longer formally exists, continues to have a powerful influence on teachers' practical knowledge of the teaching of speaking skills. The increasingly exam-oriented culture of the ESOL sector in England (Simpson, forthcoming, 2015) can also be seen to reinforce the centrality of the AECC in the teachers' practical knowledge as shown in 10.4.1.

### **10.5.2 Differences in teachers' practical knowledge**

Whereas in the previous section I focused on similarities in the teachers' practical knowledge, the findings also identified significant differences in the teachers' practical knowledge. The existence of differences in the teachers' practical knowledge concurs with the literature which illustrates the individual nature of this knowledge and the influence of teachers' personal experiences, values and beliefs (Bullough, 1991; Pajares, 1992; Johnson, 1994; Bailey et al., 1994). Research by Flores (2006), for example, indicated how the professional development of four teachers who had studied on the same ITT programme followed diverse trajectories owing in part to existing beliefs that the teachers brought to the teacher education course.

In my research, there were significant internal patterns within the teachers' individual practical knowledge. I refer to the dynamic creating these patterns as the teachers' practical knowledge 'orientations'; that is, the tendency for one (or possibly more) of the knowledge domains to play a dominant role. The identification of orientations within the teachers' practical knowledge aligns with research by Meijer et al. (1999) into Dutch language teachers' practical knowledge of teaching reading comprehension. Here, the researchers also found significant differences in the teachers' practical knowledge and translated the findings into a typology of four

different teacher categories. Clearly, the limited sample in my own research precludes the establishment of a comprehensive typology for the teaching of speaking but the findings do suggest that there are also patterns to be found within teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking skills.

The clearest examples of characteristics running through the practical knowledge of individual teachers were evident in the learner-dominant orientation of Rachel (with a more learner-centred syllabus, culturally-responsive teaching resources and a strong focus on the affective domain) and the language-dominant orientation of Alan (with a strong structural syllabus, an EFL course book adopted for heavy loading of structures and less focus on the affective domain). Further research, with a larger sample, would certainly be required to develop a comprehensive typology for the teaching of speaking skills in the ESOL context but the presence of unifying factors within individual teachers' individual practical knowledge is strongly suggested by the current cases. As with the research by Meijer et al. (*ibid*) , it is not being suggested that there is always a strict relationship between the dominant dimensions of the teachers' practical knowledge and the patterns that have emerged here or indeed that teachers will fit neatly into a single orientation category once a full typology has been established. However, the concept of teacher orientation appears to be useful to understand the inter-connectedness between different aspects of the teachers' practical knowledge and (as I argue in 10.11) for an understanding of practical knowledge development.

In contrast to Johnson's (1994) research to establish the origins of language teachers' maxims, my own research did not attempt to systematically identify the source of the teachers' practical knowledge. Moreover, practical knowledge is often tacit (Elbaz, 1983) and during the interview data generation teachers were themselves often unable to trace how they had arrived at their practical principles and rules of practice. Thus, teachers' practices are guided by their own 'largely invisible' approach (Wedell and Malderez, 2013: 82). However, the data did reveal a number of factors which appeared to have been significant for individual teachers. I have already discussed the impact of predominantly shared experiences, such as sectorial socialisation and institutional socialisation, and here I focus on factors which seemed to contribute to the diversity of practical knowledge.

The background factors affecting teachers' practical knowledge were most evident in the interview discourse of Rachel. This teacher recognised the influence of her own educational and cultural background in her preference for a more teacher-fronted classroom and direct on-the-spot correction. The 'indelible' values of a teacher's own educational experiences on their practices is well documented in the broad educational literature (Lortie, 1975; Kennedy, 1991) and other background factors have been shown to have an enduring influence on practices (Borg, 2006). What is perhaps most noteworthy in this case, however, is that Rachel also states a need to respond to the cultural backgrounds of the students by creating a classroom environment which is familiar to them. The skills set she possesses allowed the use of additional languages to be employed in the classroom and for speaking activities to contain consistent reference to aspects of students' cultural milieu. Rachel also cites her own background as a primary school special needs teacher as contributing to a concern with the individualisation of teaching. Such significance of teachers' professional life histories and routes into the profession for teachers' practices and cognitions have been identified in the English language teacher education literature generally (Freeman, 2002) and more specifically in the context of ESOL teachers' cognitions (Callaghan, 2006).

An additional example of complex personal factors affecting a teacher's practical knowledge can be seen in the case of Alan, whose practical knowledge sits in strong contrast to that of Rachel's. Largely defined by a focus on form (Ellis, 2001), Alan's practices appear to be more strongly shaped by washback (Hughes, 2011) than those of other teachers. He also stated a personal interest in the intricacies of the language system and identified his own mastery of the language system as being meaningful for his professional identity, which appeared to add to his focus on grammar and grammar explanations in the classroom. Other significant factors, however, included the convenience of adopting a course book where lessons have been professionally produced and piloted and where structural strands are a useful starting point (Tomlinson, 2008). Alan's lack of cultural understanding of the students may have contributed to an 'ironing out of differences' between them but his strong belief in accuracy was based on a belief that students in ESOL contexts will necessarily develop a degree of communicative competence and that much of his contribution is therefore remedial.

A further finding of note regarding differences in teachers' practical knowledge was that even where the practical principles were shared by teachers, these principles were often translated into diverse rules of practice. In Table 9.2, for example, the practical principle of creating a positive learning environment can be seen to have been operationalised in different ways by teachers (Alan simply avoided potentially embarrassing situations for students whereas Rachel used students' dominant languages and cultural reference points to put students at ease). The superordinate principles of practice therefore result in a smoothing out of differences which exist. This finding aligns with research by Breen et al. (2001) in an Australian ESL teaching context in which it was similarly identified that a shared practice might be based on diverse principles and that a shared principle could be associated with a diverse range of practices.

The findings also support research suggesting that it is natural that there is a degree of eclecticism in practices as teachers 'build up practical skills that [involve] dealing with the interaction of the complex array of factors within classroom work' (Breen et al., 2001: 471): that is, teachers' unique teaching experiences will also result in different approaches to teaching. Ruohotie-Lyhty (2011) similarly identifies problems with viewing teachers as a homogeneous group owing to the teachers' exercising of agency (discussed in 10.3.5) through which individual differences become most apparent. Where differences are atheoretical and teachers may have not engaged with ideas in the field to arrive at principled positions or have unmet development needs, this has implications for the provision of teacher education at an institutional and sectorial level as I discuss in 11.2.

### **10.5.3 The implications for a professional knowledge base**

As I explained in 3.4, a number of writers (see, for example, Hoyle and John, 1995) have argued that shared practical knowledge amongst teachers might serve for the codification of a body of specialist knowledge for the professional community. Such an argument rests on the basis that professionals will develop shared understandings of how to be most effective and that such information has more value than a purely theoretical body of knowledge. Even though the findings show a substantial degree of shared practical knowledge across the cases, however, as argued in 10.5.2, there remain considerable variations in contextual factors, in the teachers' practical knowledge orientations, and in the detail of teachers' practical knowledge even

where there are broad commonalities. These factors weigh against a single statement of what teachers' practical knowledge might be. In addition, the issue of a body of professional knowledge raises the question of how the quality of the diverse practical knowledge held by teachers might be evaluated. Thus, the concept of a 'knowledge base' is undermined by the teachers' individual orientations but also, this chapter argues, by a culture where there is a relative lack of teacher engagement with theory in the field and where teachers experience a degree of professional isolation.

## **10.6 Practical knowledge development**

In the following two sections, I explore the growth of the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking skills. Firstly, I answer the third research question, which sought to identify the degree to which this practical knowledge developed over the academic year (10.6.1). I then address the fourth research question by examining the factors which appeared to affect practical knowledge growth (10.6.2).

### **10.6.1 The degree of practical knowledge development**

As noted earlier, the growth of teachers' practical knowledge does not feature as strongly in the data as the nature of the teachers' practical knowledge and is therefore treated in less detail here and in 10.6.2. It is also worth reminding the reader here that for the purposes of this research, I have adopted Wyatt's (2008) definition of practical knowledge growth, which includes the following criteria: greater consistency in teachers' practical knowledge, greater alignment between stated practices and actual practices, and qualitative changes, including the introduction of formal theory into teachers' practical knowledge. The data were collected at multiple points over the course of an academic year to identify any practical knowledge change.

Overall, the findings indicated a very limited degree of growth in the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking over the academic year that the research took place. Here, I will briefly discuss this lack of development according to the definition I have provided above. Firstly, the teachers' practical knowledge was generally stable throughout this period and teachers' practices were routinised even at this early stage in their ESOL careers after approximately two years' teaching. This is in contrast to research conducted with novice language teachers by Golombok (1998) and Black and Halliwell (2000) where 'competing personal,

professional and practical demands made it particularly difficult to determine the most appropriate action' (Black and Halliwell, 2000: 4). Indeed, Beijard and Verloop (1996) suggest that it can take several years of experience for a teacher's practical knowledge to become stabilised but the results of my own research indicated that the early teacher development period in which inconsistent teaching becomes more consistent (Richards and Pennington, 1998) had already passed. This may well be in part due to the transfer of practical knowledge developed in other (largely EFL) contexts. There was also little evidence to indicate a contrast between teachers' stated beliefs and their practices. Whilst research in other contexts has shown that strong differences between teachers' beliefs and practices can result from contextual factors which restrain teachers' practices, the teachers' exercising of agency (as discussed in 10.4.3) appeared to mitigate such a phenomenon in the ESOL contexts in which the teachers were located.

A further noteworthy finding was that practical knowledge development which did take place related solely to changes of an atheoretical nature and in areas which are not unique to the teaching of speaking skills (Diane's development of providing instructions and task modelling and Rachel's reduced use of languages other than English). Whilst these were both clear examples of positive change in teachers' practical knowledge, the lack of consistent experimentation and reflection on the application of theory by the teachers generally is particularly significant. Wyatt's (2008) research into practical knowledge growth during an in-sessional BA TESOL programme, for example, identified strong integration of public theory into the teachers' practical knowledge as did Morton and Gray's (2010) study of pre-service teachers' practical knowledge of lesson planning. The fact that these published studies were conducted in the context of teacher education programmes means that the prominent role of theory is unsurprising but the contrast between them serves to highlight the potential development teachers might have experienced through institutional professional development programmes and individual development activity.

The lack of practical knowledge development identified needs to be viewed in the context of the teachers being at a relatively early stage in their ESOL career development. Although, as I have argued, teachers had consolidated certain practices which broadly conformed to the dominant ideas in English language

teaching, there remained much scope both for the development of practices and the cognitions underpinning those practices. This research has, for example, identified areas such as the challenges of teaching multi-level classes, the authenticity of teaching materials and the role of phonology in the syllabus where practical knowledge development could take place. In addition, there is potential for development of teachers' practical knowledge in terms of their responsiveness to the ESOL students through a consideration of students' cultural backgrounds, their migration trajectories, their current life situations and their individual language needs.

The ESOL sector is also a rapidly changing environment (Simpson, 2015, forthcoming), which requires an updating of teachers' skills in order for them to meet the challenges that national policy change and its institutional enactment present. The increased number of Functional Skills courses for 16-18-year-olds, for example, has implications for teachers who may be unfamiliar both with teaching this age group and with the integration of ESOL with mathematics and IT at a syllabus level. The fact that two of the teachers also explicitly expressed a desire to develop their teaching skills and were frustrated at a lack of direction as to how they might go about this process also raises the issue of teachers' sense of professional satisfaction, which has implications for teacher retention within the sector. Clearly, the sectorial aim of providing high quality education is contingent upon the ongoing development of teachers' skills throughout their teaching careers.

### **10.6.2 Factors affecting practical knowledge growth**

My fourth research question involved identifying the factors which seemed to influence any development in the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking. In the cross-case analysis (9.8), I identified a number of such factors from the findings and explained how they appeared to contribute to teachers' practical growth development. Many of these factors were evident only in a limited number of the cases, however, and their importance for language teacher development has already been discussed in depth in the literature. The need for teacher freedom from institutional constraints, for example, has been well-documented (see Wedell and Malderez, 2013) as has the exigency of the situation, particularly for early career teachers struggling with classroom management issues as in the case of Diane (see, for example, Fuller and Brown, 1975; Veenman, 1984). The role of teachers'

personal motivation and the drive for individual self-actualisation have also been covered in some detail in the literature (see, for example, Lange, 1990).

As discussed in the previous section, there was only very limited practical knowledge growth identified overall amongst the teachers. Given this, it is the factors which seemed to *restrict* development which emerge as being particularly significant in this research. In particular, the necessary conditions for the integration of theory into the teachers' practical knowledge were indicated as not being present. This phenomenon, as stated, is despite two of the teachers demonstrating a strong motivation to develop their teaching. Here, then, I focus on the principal factor which appeared to be responsible for the absence of practical knowledge growth: the lack of appropriate continuing professional development (CPD) available to the teachers.

The value of CPD in teacher development is well-established both in the general education literature (Goodall and Britain, 2005) and in that for English language education (see, for example, Mann, 2005; Hayes 2014; Wiseman 2014). My own findings highlight several issues which align with this literature and which suggest that practical knowledge growth could be met by certain forms of CPD. Lifelong Learning in the UK (LLUK) clearly valued the provision of CPD and the fostering of shared learning in and between institutions formed an integral part of the drive for the professionalization of the ESOL profession. However, despite the fact that all the teachers fulfilled the statutory Lifelong Learning in the UK (LLUK) requirement for ESOL teachers to undertake 30 hours of demonstrable CPD per year (IfL, 2010), as described in Chapter 3, in none of the cases had the teachers engaged meaningfully with institutionally organised CPD.

Two main limitations of the institutionally-provided workshops, for example, were identified by the teachers. The first was that the workshops were regarded as lacking context, as in the case which Rachel reported of a senior academic being seen to be out of touch with the community classrooms. The importance of the familiarity of 'experts' with the local teaching context has similarly been identified in the findings of Sharkey (2004). The second limitation was where the workshops were viewed as serving institutional bureaucratic needs (such as Diane's reporting of institutionally-determined CPD instructing teachers how to fulfil administrative tasks appropriately). In this, the findings were consistent with earlier work by Dalziel and

Sofres (2005), who concluded in their research into the impact of CPD in the ESOL sector that there was strong teacher interest in CPD opportunities but only where these were relevant to classroom practices. The fact that CPD events were not based on consultation with teachers to identify teachers' own priorities and interests would appear, therefore, to be a contributing factor to their lack of impact (see also Lessing and De Witt, 2007; Scribner, 1999 on this subject).

The findings also showed that models of practice (Clarke et al., 2014) provided by more experienced practitioners were also largely absent in the institutional contexts and that teachers were anxious to observe more experienced practitioners and to develop a better understanding of what constituted 'expertise' in their field. Dialogic engagement with cooperating teachers has also been shown to offer the potential for increased reflection by more novice teachers. Other developmental activity which might contribute to a more effective environment for practical knowledge growth includes learning in networks, peer coaching and collaborative action research (Driel et al., 2001; Sunderland, 2008).

Writers such as Stones (1994) have established the importance of constant interaction between theory and teachers' practices. In order for the connection between new practices and teachers' existing practical knowledge to become stable, the findings suggested that there exists a necessary period of teacher experimentation and reflection. The finding of the need for a 'fit' of new ideas with teachers' existing practical knowledge (particularly apparent in Rachel's staged reduction in the use of students' dominant languages) is consistent with Tsui's (2003b) research. The importance of teacher reflection is well-documented in the general education literature (Schön, 1983) and in language teaching (Farrell, 2007; Scribner, 1999). Overall, however, the institutional contexts lacked a culture in which teachers were routinely engaged in the theoretical consideration of their practices and formal experimentation. Of course, it could be argued that teachers could access professional networks on their own initiative but this overlooks both the part-time nature of the teachers' employment (in all four cases) and the responsibility of their institutions and the sector more broadly to be creating the necessary developmental culture.

### **10.7 Limitations of the research**

Although care was taken to enhance the quality of the research throughout the study period, it is important that the main findings of the study be considered in the context of the limitations of the research. Here, I identify a number of relevant points which should be borne in mind for an informed evaluation of the findings:

- a) The sample for this multiple case-study research was limited to four early career ESOL teachers. Whilst it is impossible to draw generalisations from such a limited number of cases, the thick description (Geertz, 1973) made possible by the generation of a substantial volume of data for these cases does allow for a better understanding of the complex and individual nature of the teachers' practical knowledge. The findings for the case studies may also be relatable to other contexts (Yin, 1994) by revealing case characteristics which are also applicable to other ESOL contexts both within and outside the UK.
- b) Each of the four case studies involved six classroom observations of each teacher at different points throughout the year in order to introduce a longitudinal dimension to the study. One of the reasons why practical knowledge growth did not feature strongly in the data, however, may be because of the limited number of occasions on which data was generated. Belief-practice consistency in particular may not have been fully captured through the limited data generated.
- c) Practical restraints on data collection existed, especially in terms of the researcher's availability. This meant that the choice of classes for observation was determined, at times, by what was feasible rather than what was always most desirable. The result was that data was generated for a observations of a number of different class contexts for each teacher, which problematises the process of drawing comparisons to establish changes in the teachers' practical knowledge. It may be the case that teachers' attempts to develop more appropriate pedagogies for their class-specific contexts were not identified either through the limited number of classes observed or the fact that comparisons were made with data across class contexts and possible class-specificity of teachers' attempts to develop their practices might therefore have been excluded.

- d) Although I explained clearly to teachers that I wanted to observe their normal classroom practices rather than viewing ‘demonstration’ lessons, it may be the case that there was a ‘Hawthorne Effect’ (Cohen et al., 2007) in which teachers may have modified their behaviour as a result of the process of being researched. Indeed, one of the teachers noted after the study that it had been motivating to be involved in the study and this in itself may have influenced the data generated to some degree. Observing teachers on several occasions, however, is likely to have reduced the impact on the teachers and the consistency which was identified in their practices suggests that they were largely teaching as they normally do.

Having here provided the limitations of the research to inform the reading of the research findings, in the next section I summarise the main contributions that this research has made to our understanding of the teaching of speaking skills in an ESOL context.

### **10.8 Contributions of the study**

This research has investigated both the *content* of ESOL teachers’ practical knowledge of teaching speaking skills and *change* in this practical knowledge over the course of an academic year. In this discussion chapter, I have focused on a number of the key findings for both of these areas. I now summarise the contribution made by these findings:

- a) The research provides a clear description of the practical knowledge of teaching speaking which is held by the ESOL teachers; this includes teachers’ knowledge of the syllabus, of teaching materials and of teaching methodology. The research therefore enhances our understanding of the cognitions and practices in the teaching of this curricular domain within ESOL. Whereas there has been research on teacher cognition for the teaching of grammar and, to a lesser extent, for the teaching of reading skills, my research has provided insights into teachers’ practical knowledge for the largely unexplored field of the teaching of speaking skills.
- b) My findings show that the teachers’ practical knowledge largely reflects current pedagogical thinking about the teaching of speaking skills. As a sector which, prior to 2001, was regarded as offering uncoordinated and inconsistent English language provision (Ward, 2007), this finding indicates that the teachers were

all aware of and, to an extent, adopted contemporary practices in the teaching of speaking. This included the use of Smartboard technology for two of the teachers. The research also reveals, however, that there are aspects of the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking which can be considered to be under-developed; I have highlighted the absence of phonology in the syllabi and a lack of evidence of approaches such as TBL as two examples of this restricted practical knowledge. These findings therefore have strong implications for ESOL teacher professional development, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 11.

- c) The identification of the 'atheoretical' nature of the teachers' practical knowledge corresponds with findings by Burns and Borg (2008) in a different context. None of the teachers justified their teaching with reference to theoretical knowledge. My research also suggests that a process of institutional teacher socialisation may take place whereby teachers adopt certain practices without drawing on the public theory which underpins such practices.
- d) The study demonstrates the role that the ESOL context plays within the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking and thereby adds to existing knowledge of the influence of contextual factors on teachers' practices and underpinning beliefs. Whilst the findings corroborate previous literature detailing the constraints under which ESOL teachers operate (as a result of funders, the AECC and the system of speaking exams, for example), my research contributes an understanding of how teachers may actually exercise a considerable degree of agency within these settings.
- e) Although there were commonalities in the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking, the research also identified significant differences. As the practical knowledge literature grows, so does our understanding of the range of unique personal factors which influence a teacher's practical knowledge. The study contributes to this knowledge through identification of factors which appeared to be significant for individual teachers but also through the identification of orientations in this knowledge where certain domains of knowledge were dominant.
- f) The research has highlighted the lack of development of the ESOL teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking. The study therefore indicates the

need for institutional and sectorial teacher development programme design to more effectively engage teachers in order to promote practical knowledge development.

This chapter, then, has identified and discussed the central themes which have arisen from the research. The following chapter (Chapter 11) is the concluding chapter for this study. It aims to briefly recap the aims, the methodology and the contribution of the findings of the study. It also explores the implications of these findings for ESOL teacher development.

## Chapter Eleven: Conclusion

### 11.1 Introduction

The research that I have conducted was designed to address gaps in the literature regarding the identification of ESOL teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking and the factors which appear to affect the growth of these teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking. In this conclusion chapter, I will first provide a brief summary of the findings, highlighting the original contribution that the study makes to our understanding of the areas identified above (11.2). I will then discuss the implications of the study for teacher professional development programmes (11.3). This is followed by a consideration of the limitations of the study (11.4) and, finally, I will introduce recommendations for further research which have emerged from the study (11.5).

### 11.2 Summary of findings

The value of understanding teachers' practical knowledge has been well documented in the literature (see, for example, Doyle, 1990; Beijaard and Verloop, 1996; Meijer et al., 2001) but there remain too few accounts of the content of this practical knowledge (Black and Halliwell, 2000). This study addresses the dearth of such practical knowledge studies and thereby makes a significant addition to an important but neglected field. The main findings of the research are summarised below:

- g) The research provides detailed descriptions of the practical knowledge of teaching speaking for the four ESOL teachers. This practical knowledge includes the teachers' knowledge of syllabus, teaching materials and pedagogy.
- h) There was a substantial degree of shared practical knowledge amongst the teachers. This practical knowledge could be seen to be largely consistent with understandings of the teaching of speaking in current methodological literature.
- i) There were noteworthy omissions in the teachers' practices such as the lack of phonology in the syllabus and the lack of task-based learning. There was also limited reflection of an understanding of students' social and cultural realities in most of the teachers' practices.

- j) The teachers' practical knowledge was identified as being atheoretical in that the teachers did not refer to public theory in the explanations of their practices. These findings suggest that teachers may experience a process of socialisation (both institutional and sectorial) through which practices are adopted without a theoretical basis.
- k) The findings indicate that the ESOL context plays a significant role within teachers' practical knowledge through the influence of funders, prescribed syllabi and a relatively strong washback effect as a result of the examination system. However, the teachers could all be seen to exercise certain agency within these contexts and the institutional pressure was therefore not uncontested.
- l) The research revealed differences in the teachers' practical knowledge and identified a number of factors which appeared to be significant in the individual cases. Patterns evident in the practical knowledge of two of the cases also suggested the existence of teacher orientations in which a particular practical knowledge domain is dominant.
- m) There was a notable absence of growth in the teachers' practical knowledge of speaking over the period of the research. The findings indicated a number of factors as being responsible for this.

The findings relating to the final summary point (g) are discussed in the following section, which seeks to establish the implications of the research for addressing the identified lack of practical knowledge growth.

### **11.3 The implications for ESOL teacher professional development**

In this study I have established that there exists a certain body of practical knowledge of teaching speaking skills in ESOL contexts which was shared by the four participants. I am not suggesting, however, that identified common practical principles and rules of practice of expert practitioners should be adopted for a 'transmission' type teacher education design (Driel et al., 2001). The significant differences amongst the teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking skills instead support the movement away from a technical research approach to teacher education and towards recognition of the individual nature of the teaching endeavour that has characterised teacher education in recent years (Borg, 2006).

In order, then, for teachers to develop their practical knowledge of speaking, a constructivist approach (Freeman and Johnson, 1998) to the design of teacher development is suggested. Such a methodology involves the inclusion of activities in which teachers' existing teaching-related cognitions are made explicit in order for teachers undertaking teacher development programmes to meaningfully engage with the programme and for the programme to be most effective. Tsang (2004), in her research on teachers' personal practical knowledge, for example, concludes that teachers' knowledge should be made explicit for the de-automatization of teachers' existing instructional decision-making and the subsequent automatization of better developed decision-making. Studies such as those by Kennedy (1991), and Dangel and Guyton (2004) have similarly identified the value of a constructivist approach in recognition of the individual nature of the teaching endeavour that my own research has identified.

The findings of the research identified specific areas in the teaching of speaking skills where there was reasonably clear potential for the development of teachers' practical knowledge in the teaching of speaking skills. These included the teaching of pronunciation, teaching to mixed-level classes, the use of task-based learning (TBL) and (for two teachers), the syllabus and classroom management challenges of teaching 16-18-year-old students in Functional Skills classes. The practical knowledge research findings can therefore be used to ensure that teacher professional development is relevant (see also Driel et al., 2001) both for pre-service and in-service training. As Chou (2008) argues, 'by uncovering the kind of knowledge that teachers hold and express through the understanding they have of their own work, teacher educators can gain insight useful for providing appropriate support for teachers' professional development' (Chou, 2008: 530).

However, a key finding of the research was that the continuing professional development (CPD) which was offered to teachers was not regarded by the teachers themselves as addressing issues which were meaningful to them but which instead served institutional bureaucratic needs. This teacher perception of a lack of relevance of support suggests that a degree of negotiation of content with teacher involvement may be beneficial (see, for example, Wallace, 1991). Through such a process, it could be expected not only that the teacher professional development would address aspects of teaching identified by teachers as being most relevant but

that teachers would be more engaged as a result of the consultation process itself (Johnson, 2009).

The atheoretical nature of the teachers' practical knowledge which was identified in this research strongly suggests that teacher professional development should concern itself with public theory. Rather than approaches that simply exemplify current 'taken for granteds' in the profession, it is therefore proposed that teacher development programmes facilitate teacher interaction with research into ESOL and language learning more broadly, which has much to offer teachers. I have already mentioned (above) the need for a constructivist approach to be adopted for deep teacher engagement with teacher professional development experiences; the case of Rachel also illustrates the need for a 'fit' to be established between public theory and teachers' existing practical knowledge. This suggests that INSET approaches which encourage experimentation and reflection are therefore more liable to result in public theory being successfully integrated into teachers' practical knowledge. Forms of action research (whether group or individual) in which theory is used to inform interventions which are then evaluated by the practitioner(s) would be one means of allowing teachers to experiment with ideas in the literature and to respond to the dynamic nature of their own professional contexts.

I have shown that teachers reported a desire to be aware of models of practice in the teaching of speaking to ESOL students. This desire stemmed from the fact that there was little institutional provision to allow this to take place consistently. There seems to be potential, therefore, for coordinated mentoring (especially as these are early career teachers). Such programmes would facilitate dialogue in which the early career teacher would be able to obtain insights into the practical knowledge of a more experienced teacher. Peer coaching, 'a process of cooperation between two or more colleagues in which they exchange ideas, attempt to implement these ideas [and] reflect on their own teaching practice' (Driel et al., 2001: 51) would be one means of achieving this.

Structured peer observation programmes would also appear to be useful interventions as teachers (early career or not) would be able to observe other teachers as a basis for reflection on their own practices and, with an appropriate forum, be able to explore similarities and differences in the practical knowledge that they draw on to inform their practices.

The research also indicated a lack of engagement with professional issues both within the individual institutions and through regional and national organisations (such as NATECLA). The research therefore suggests a need for the fostering of a culture in which teachers are encouraged to engage with professional development in order to problematize and challenge their existing practices. This process may be with reference to public theory (conspicuously absent in teachers' explanations of their work) as I have suggested without precluding the practical suggestions and which teachers may find most immediately appealing. The fact that teachers cited their part-time status as a factor limiting their involvement in these networks suggests the need for institutions to ensure that workload models and financial arrangements for all staff are conducive to the taking up of sector-wide as well as institutional teacher development opportunities.

#### **11.4 Suggestions for future research**

This research was the first to investigate teachers' practical knowledge of teaching speaking. It has also produced the first practical knowledge for teachers within the ESOL sector regardless of the curricular domain. In this section, I examine the findings from the perspective of the indications they provide for future research foci. I make four main recommendations for future research:

1. The study suggests that the concept of teacher orientations is useful in order to understand the patterns that exist within teachers' practical knowledge. The limited number of cases in this research, however, means that it is not possible to go beyond identification of the occurrence of these patterns and early indications of a small number of possible forms they might take. In order to establish a more comprehensive and rigorous typology, therefore, a larger scale study is required and I would suggest that a study along the lines of Meijer *et al.* (2001)'s research into teachers' practical knowledge of the teaching of comprehension skills could therefore be undertaken to develop the potential for such a typology which has emerged from the research into the teaching of speaking skills.
2. This study indicates the value of practical knowledge research generally. The significance of such an approach to facilitate an understanding of the teachers' practices and the cognitions which underlie those practices therefore also has strong implications for other fields. As a result, the research could usefully be replicated both for curricular domains where practical knowledge research has

not been conducted to date (such as the teaching of writing or listening skills). In addition, knowledge of the teaching context was shown to be a significant component of the teachers' practical knowledge and it would therefore be useful for practical knowledge research to be conducted in other contexts (such as English for Academic Purposes or English as an Additional Language).

3. A key finding of the research is that the teachers' experience of teaching in other (principally EFL) contexts tended to have a strong influence on their practices. It would therefore be interesting to have longitudinal research investigating teachers who do not already have teaching experience prior to their entrance into the ESOL sector to both explore their development of core teaching skills (such as classroom management) in this context and to establish whether the teachers' practical knowledge would reflect the ESOL context more strongly without this prior teaching experience in other contexts.
4. As a result of the findings, I have made assertions regarding the conditions that need to be created both within formal teacher education programmes and in other areas of professional development in order to promote teachers' practical knowledge growth. Further research could usefully investigate the efficacy of the recommendations I have made such as the impact of mentoring systems, peer observation and teacher-negotiated teacher development sessions.

### **11.5 A final word**

ESOL as a sector has undergone a number of significant developments over the last fifteen years. Skills for Life introduced initiatives such as the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum, standardised levels and a testing regime which appear to still be very much in evidence. Within this context, teachers appear to be both socialised into established approaches to the teaching of speaking and to exercise varying degrees of agency. The teachers bring many individual characteristics to the teaching situation, including their cultural backgrounds, their own educational experiences and their teaching experiences (in ESOL and other subject areas), which creates a unique practical knowledge with, I have suggested, specific orientations. Whilst teachers are expected to constantly improve the quality of their teaching and to develop to meet the teaching challenges of a changing ESOL landscape (including changes in government funding and the composition of ESOL classrooms),

however, this research strongly suggests that appropriate institutional arrangements need to be put in place to facilitate practical knowledge growth.

The continued dominance of the Core Curriculum and the exams system in this post-Skills for Life period which I have identified in this research has impacted on my perception of ESOL. Having gained my own professional experience in the ESOL sector before the introduction of Skills for Life, I am struck by the degree of overall harmonisation in the practices of the teachers and in their rationalisation of these practices. In addition, the blurring of distinctions between ESOL and EFL in the practical knowledge of a number of the teachers was also surprising to me as I had expected to identify more ‘ESOL-specificity’ in the cases.

Undertaking this doctoral study has provided me with the opportunity to develop significantly as a researcher. As a result of conducting the research, I not only feel that I have gained specific research design, data generation and data analysis skills but that the journey has involved a rewarding integration into the academic research community.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

- AECC Adult English core curriculum
- CELTA Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults
- CLT Communicative language teaching
- CPD Continuing professional development
- DTE(E)LLS Diploma in teaching English (ESOL) in the lifelong learning sector
- EFL English as a foreign language
- ESOL English for speakers of other languages
- FEFC Further Education Funding Council
- ILP Individual learning plan
- INSET In-service (teacher) training
- LEA Local education authority
- NATECLA National Association of Teachers of English and other Community Languages

TEFL The teaching of English as a foreign language

## Appendices

### **Appendix 1: Research participant information sheet**

You are being invited to take part in a PhD research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

As in other subject areas, newly-qualified ESOL teachers still have much to learn ‘on the job’ about effective teaching. At the moment, very little is known about the process through which ESOL teachers develop their skills, even though this information would greatly aid the development of initial ESOL training courses and continuing professional development programmes for new teachers. This research focuses principally on how teachers learn to teach speaking skills (arguably, the most ‘in-demand’ skill for ESOL students).

You have been chosen as a potential participant in this research as you have been identified as being at an early stage in your development as an ESOL teacher and will be teaching within the geographical area that I am researching. I am planning to involve six ESOL teachers in total (all the cases will be treated completely independently of each other and may not be in the same institution) and to analyse both the similarities and differences in people’s experiences to better understand how their teaching develops.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You can still withdraw at any time without giving a reason. The research will involve a one-hour interview every month for approximately eight months and one observed lesson of your own choosing each month to provide a focus for our discussion. The observations are in no way to make any formal assessment of your teaching (no information will be shared with anyone in your institution) but are rather an opportunity for us to be able to later discuss your teaching. The interviews will seek to explore your lesson-planning, the decisions you make during the class and your reflections afterwards. They will be largely open questions in order to enable you to express your thoughts in your own terms.

There is no payment offered for participation in the research. However, involvement in the study is an opportunity for participants to reflect on their teaching experiences through dialogue with the researcher. It is hoped that this will be a useful forum for the teacher to gain a better understanding of his/her teaching and how that teaching develops over a period of time. For beginning teachers, especially, it represents a chance to ‘talk through’ the challenges that can be presented.

The audio recordings of the interviews conducted will only be used for transcription, and this data will be anonymised. No one else will be allowed access to the original recordings. All the information that we collect about you during the course of the

research will also be kept strictly confidential. You will not be identified or identifiable in any reports or publications.

The research is expected to be completed by approximately March 2015 and will appear as a doctoral thesis and possibly as subsequent publications.

If you require any further information about this research and your involvement in it, you can contact the researcher:

Simon Webster  
Language Centre  
University of Leeds  
Woodhouse Lane  
Leeds LS2 9JT

Tel:                  Mob:

*Thank you for your interest in this research*

**Appendix 2: Participant consent form**

*Initial the box if you agree with the statement to the left*

- 1 I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 19/10/2011 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.
- 2 I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. The researcher's contact details are: 0113 3433355 (office) or s.j.webster@leeds.ac.uk
- 3 I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for the researcher and his supervisors to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.
- 4 I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research.
- 5 I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the researcher should my contact details change.

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Name of participant

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Date

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Signature

---

Name of researcher taking consent

---

Date

---

Signature

*To be signed and dated in presence of the participant*

### Appendix 3: Initial interview schedule

<b>Categories of practical knowledge</b>	<b>Exploratory questions</b>	<b>Areas which could potentially be focussed on</b>
Knowledge of curriculum	<i>'Tell me about the syllabus for this term'</i> <i>'What do you think the students most need to learn?'</i> <i>'How do you decide the syllabus?'</i>	Goal-setting Role of AECC curriculum Student negotiation of course content Formal assessment Subject matter
Knowledge of lesson planning	<i>'Talk me through the lesson plan for the lesson I've just seen'</i> <i>'The hand-outs look interesting – can you tell me about them?'</i>	Principles of planning Cultural sensitivity Degree to which CLT is evident Differentiated objectives
Knowledge of teaching materials	<i>'Tell me about the hand-outs that you prepared'</i> <i>'Why did you choose this dialogue to practise?'</i>	Selection, creation and adaptation of materials Degree to which communicative in design
Knowledge of pedagogy	<i>'What kind of classroom atmosphere are you trying to create?'</i> <i>'How do you think teachers can best help students to speak English?'</i>	Classroom management Degree of contingency in responses Learning atmosphere and roles Appropriate activities Correction strategies Degree to which CLT is evident
Knowledge of context	<i>'What's unique about this class?'</i> <i>'How does that affect your teaching?'</i> <i>'Do you have an opportunity to discuss your work with anyone?'</i>	Classroom context Classroom dynamics Student needs and expectations Institutional support and demands Collegial relations Policy context
Knowledge of students	<i>'What can you tell me about the backgrounds of the students you have in the class?'</i> <i>'What would you say are the students' main reasons for studying English?'</i>	Cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds Motivations for learning English Learning styles and preferences Student experiences Current life situations/language needed Different learning styles and preferences
Knowledge of themselves	<i>'How do you see yourself as a teacher?'</i> <i>'What do you think a good teacher should be like?'</i>	Teacher values Self-image Professional identity Teaching 'mission'

#### Appendix 4: Initial observation schedule

Date:	Teacher code:	Skill and level:
Time:	Sequence number:	Location:
Context for the class:		
Observations:	Points to discuss in the interview:	
<p><i>Examples:</i></p> <p><i>Pre-active</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Curriculum choice</li> <li>▪ Lesson planning</li> <li>▪ Materials</li> <li>▪ Activities</li> </ul> <p><i>Interactive</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use of NVC</li> <li>▪ Use of realia</li> <li>▪ Checking for understanding</li> <li>▪ Instructions</li> <li>▪ Modes of interaction</li> <li>▪ Seating arrangements</li> <li>▪ Reacting contingently</li> <li>▪ Attending to affective needs</li> <li>▪ Use of questions</li> <li>▪ Form and frequency of feedback</li> <li>▪ Use of examples</li> </ul>		

### Appendix 5: NVivo coding tree for Alan

Name	Sources	References
To extend turns by generating questions	1	1
Using translation to bring the outside in	1	1
Biographical	2	2
Classroom Management	3	6
Creating a safe environment	2	2
Development	0	0
Knowledge of Context	0	0
Institutional targets	1	1
Observations	1	1
Knowledge of Curriculum	0	0
Collaborative project between teachers	1	1
Communication strategies	1	1
Confidence as an aim	1	2
Cultural Content	1	1
Grammatical Syllabus	1	2
Health and Safety influence	1	1
ILPs	3	3
Integration of skills	3	3
Interaction as an aim	1	1
JSA Students	1	1
Learner centredness	2	2
Limitations	1	1
Problematic nature of choosing priorities	1	1
Role of 16-18 course tutor deciding curriculum	2	3
Rules and Tools - elements to cover	0	0
Teacher identification of needs	1	1
Topics	1	1
Unique syllabus for each group	1	1
Vocabulary	1	1
Knowledge of Exams	1	2
Knowledge of Learners	0	0
Knowledge of Materials	0	0
Knowledge of Pedagogy	0	0
Knowledge of Self	0	0
Motivation	1	1