CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

What teachers understand to be the subject-matter knowledge (SMK) of the subject discipline that they are teaching is an integral part of the teaching/learning process. It is an assumption within this thesis that it can help shape and orientate teachers' planning, selection of teaching materials, classroom teaching and the assessment of student learning. Although SMK is an essential aspect of teaching, it was not the focus of sustained research until the mid-1980s. Since then, there has been a growing number of studies on SMK of teachers in subject disciplines such as mathematics, English literature, history, biology and social science. However, relatively little is known about the SMK of Teaching-of-English-to-speakers-of-other-languages (TESOL) teachers. In particular, very little is known about TESOL teachers' perspectives on SMK. The study reported in this thesis is an attempt at addressing the deficit. It investigated the perspectives of TESOL teachers on SMK in language teaching in the English language intensive courses for overseas students (ELICOS) setting.

The study was conducted in a tertiary institution in Perth, Western Australia, which has a very established ELICOS teaching unit within one of its departments. The participants were experienced ELICOS teachers with at least three years of teaching experience in the ELICOS industry. Each participant was asked a wide variety of data gathering questions based on two sets of guiding questions, namely questions that focused on teachers' perspectives on planning and those that focused on their teaching. These questions were aimed at uncovering the perspectives of teachers regarding language teaching. The questions were developed from Blackledge and Hunt's (1985) unravelling of the concept of 'perspectives'.

As the study was located within the interpretivist paradigm, the primary modes of data collection were those that elicited qualitative data. Thus, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, non-participant observations and field notes formed the main methods

of data gathering. They provided the bulk of the data for the study and were analysed using the grounded theory method whereby raw data is reduced to concepts, which are then grouped into categories.

This introductory chapter now presents an overview of the remainder of the thesis. It begins with an overview of the historical and contextual background to the study, followed by a brief overview of the informing literature. Next it outlines the research approach and methodology that determined the data collection and analysis. The chapter ends with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

The Background: An Overview

The spread of TESOL has been rapid, especially in the 20th century. This has been due mainly to the phenomenal rise of English as the main language of international communication in several fields regarded as prestigious. According to Alatis and Straehle (1997), English is the official or semi-official language in over 60 countries. Furthermore, it has a place of prominence in another 20 countries. It is the main language of newspapers, books, airports, air-traffic control, international business, academic conferences, science, technology, medicine, diplomacy, sports, pop music and advertising. More than two-thirds of the world's scientists publish their academic research in English, while three-quarters of the world's mail is written in English. In addition, more than four-fifths of all information in the world's electronic retrieval system is stored in English (Crystal, 1987). It is, therefore, not surprising that TESOL is much in demand throughout the world.

TESOL occurs in many different educational settings. The teaching and learning arrangements for TESOL vary according to such key factors as the status of the language (for example, whether the language is an official language or has a *de facto* official status) (Judd, 1987; Kaplan, 1987); the public will, that is, the community's current attitude towards, and value of, the language; and the administration and organisation of TESOL in

the individual places (Strevens, 1987). In countries which Kachru (1992)[1] terms 'the inner circle' where English is the dominant language and is used for all areas of communication except, perhaps, in intimate circles, all non-native English speakers (NNES) need to learn the language in order to participate effectively in their communities. The type of English courses required are numerous - courses that help students in their social interaction, courses that prepare them for work or study, courses that are meant for small businesses, courses for health professionals, and so on.   English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is offered to migrants and international students in schools and universities, and in community classes to migrants. The latter include the English classes conducted by the Adult Migrant Education Service in Australia. Additionally, TESOL takes place in intensive language centres or schools which specifically cater for the international student market. In Australia, there are several language schools that offer such language tuition under the banner of ELICOS (Marginson, 1997).

The ELICOS industry is a fast expanding industry, and has been growing at the rate of 28% per annum since 1992/93. In 2001, the ELICOS industry contributed $710 million to the Australian economy (English Australia (EA) media release, 9th October, 2002). It considers itself to be a professional service industry that has to maintain certain standards in order to compete with the same service provided by language colleges in other English-speaking countries such as England, Canada, the USA, and New Zealand. To that end the ELICOS industry has established the National ELICOS Accreditation Scheme (NEAS), which is the national accreditation body for all ELICOS colleges. All colleges wishing to offer intensive English courses to international students need to obtain NEAS accreditation before they are allowed to operate. For accreditation to take place, the college has to provide evidence that it has met the requirements stipulated by NEAS on various aspects of operation of a language college. NEAS also monitors all existing colleges to ensure that

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[1] Kachru (1992) proposed the 'circles' model of English users. He saw the uses and users of the language in different countries as fitting into one of three concentric circles. Very briefly, the inner circle comprises countries where English is a native language; the outer circle comprises countries where English has been or is still being used as a second language; and the expanding circle consists of countries where English is used as a foreign language.

they too continue to comply with NEAS' standards for management, student service, curriculum, assessment, materials, equipment and specialist staff.

In addition to NEAS, which oversees the quality of service provided by all the ELICOS colleges, there is another organisation that plays an active role in the ELICOS industry. EA, the main representative association for ELICOS colleges, provides support to its members so that they can continue to improve the quality of their services while at the same time stay financially viable. The EA helps with the publicity of the ELICOS colleges locally and overseas, actively lobbies state and federal government departments on issues of importance to its members, assists its members with compliance with government regulations and legislation, and encourages the development of quality service in all areas of operation. The EA promotes the image of their colleges as quality English language training (ELT) providers. In its web page on why students ought to choose to study in an EA college, it states that the EA colleges "meet strict quality assurance membership criteria … follow a range of policies and codes which lead to a high level of service provision … have well-qualified and experienced English teachers … have modern and up-to-date facilities …" (http://www.englishaustralia.com.au/why_ea.html). In short, EA member colleges are promoted as professional institutions that offer quality ELT.

To ensure that quality service is provided, the EA has produced guidelines, policies and by-laws by which their members have to abide. Currently, there are four sets of documents relating to quality assurance that the members are expected to follow. The first is a code of conduct, which aims to "assist members to provide high quality educational programs for their students; establish high professional and ethical standards for members; and assist, strengthen and promote the interests and welfare of members." (http://www.englishaustralia.com.au/code_of_conduct.html). The second is the EA refund and transfer policies, which state the conditions for refund and transfer of fees. The third is by-laws for disciplinary procedures that allow the EA to take disciplinary action against members who have broken the by-laws and who have gone against the policies of EA. The last is best-practice documents produced to help the members achieve a high standard of operation.

Although EA is interested in promoting quality service, ELICOS colleges are, first and foremost, businesses. All ELICOS colleges have to be self-funding, if not profit making. Financial viability is an important consideration in all the major practices of the ELICOS colleges. One of the practices of the ELICOS colleges is to maintain only a small number of permanent staff who hold key roles in the organisation and who also do some teaching. The majority of the teachers in the ELICOS centres are employed on short-term contracts, or on a casual basis. The contracts are usually for the duration of the course, which may be four weeks in many ELICOS colleges. Their continued employment is dependent upon student numbers. In situations where colleges have to let go of some of the teaching staff due to shortfalls in student enrolments, it is a common practice to retain teachers who are judged to be 'good' teachers by the students. Usually, these are teachers who are popular with the students for various reasons. They may be competent at explaining concepts, or they may be the ones who engage the students in a lot of social activities.

Due to the fact that the exact student numbers are usually not known until the last minute, it is not uncommon for ELICOS teachers to be given notice of employment at very short notice. In certain instances, teachers are employed a day before the commencement of class. This, together with the lack of guarantee of employment at the end of their current course, has implications for their lesson preparation. Short notice of employment means that they have little time to prepare adequately for the course that they are assigned to teach. The lack of certainty that they will get work generally discourages teachers from making improvements to the courses they have just taught.

In addition, financial considerations by the colleges often result in classes with mixed levels of English language proficiency. It is normal practice to test and place students in a class according to their level of proficiency. However, there may be instances when the students cannot be placed in the right level class because there are not enough students of that level to make up a class that is financially viable. When this happens, these students are put in a class with students who are tested to be at the next level to form one class. Thus, in one class, there may be a mix of elementary and intermediate level students, or a mix of upper-

intermediate and advanced level students. A mixed level class has an impact on what and how teachers teach.

As businesses, the ELICOS colleges have to be sensitive to market demands. In recent years, the demand is for shorter courses and more flexible starting dates. When the ELICOS colleges first started in the 1970s, the teaching periods were approximately of nine months duration. Gradually, they grew to be about ten weeks. However, in the mid-1990s, there were more and more agents asking for very short courses on behalf of their clients who only wanted to study English for one or two weeks. Furthermore, they were not willing to wait for the set dates for the commencement of term. To accommodate such demands, many ELICOS colleges began weekly intakes and exits and they accepted students who wanted to study for as short as a week. New students are tested for their English language proficiency (ELP) and placed in an appropriate class at the beginning of the week and if they wish to 'study' English for only one week, they exit on the last school day of the week along with some other students who may have completed two weeks, four weeks, seven weeks or even twenty weeks.

Such a scenario calls for well-qualified teachers. To that end the ELICOS industry has established the National ELICOS Accreditation Scheme (NEAS), which among other things, ensures that ELICOS centres employ only people with a certain level of formal TESOL-teacher qualification. There is a range of TESOL qualifications acceptable to NEAS. The minimum qualification for people who wish to teach in an ELICOS centre is a certificate in TESOL, such as the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), a qualification awarded by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES). In addition, there are many teachers employed within the ELICOS industry who have more than the minimum qualification and who have Diplomas, Graduate Diplomas, Master's degrees and doctorates in an area related to TESOL.

The nature, depth and length of TESOL training as well as the entry requirements for each type of training course, vary. As with training in other disciplinary areas, the higher the level of qualification, the more stringent the entry requirements and the longer the training.

For example, the minimum entry requirement for a CELTA course is evidence of qualification for entry into a tertiary institution in one's home country[2]. No teaching experience is required. The duration of the CELTA course is one month if undertaken on a full-time basis. On the other hand, the entry requirements of the Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA) course include two years of TESOL experience and a certificate in TESOL, and the length of training for the DELTA course is three months in its full-time mode. The one-year long Graduate Diploma course in TESOL offered by several Australian universities does not require the applicant to have teaching experience. A first degree is a pre-requisite although it is up to the individual university to decide on the relevance of the applicants' first degree to TESOL. Finally, the Master's course in TESOL or the Master of Education in Applied Linguistics usually require applicants to have at least five years of teaching experience, a first degree and teaching qualifications. The full-time course is one year in most Australian universities.

In addition to the above TESOL qualifications, there are also the doctorates – the Doctor of Philosophy and the Doctor of Education. Although entry requirements for these degrees vary according to individual universities, it is the usual practice for doctoral candidates to have completed either an Honours degree or a Master's degree. The minimum number of years for the completion of these degrees is three years, if undertaken on a full-time basis.

In regard to the content of the various TESOL courses available, each institution offering the courses has control over what to teach. There is no agreed corpus of knowledge, which all training institutions have to offer their students in order for them to qualify as TESOL teachers. Even UCLES, which contracts out its training to various centres around the world and which keeps a firm control over the quality of its teacher training, allows the training institutions the latitude to decide on the specific topics on which they wish to focus. Similarly, different universities often design TESOL courses based, amongst other matters, on the perceptions of what the needs of trainees are and their understanding of the skills and

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[2] In the case of people wishing to seek employment in Australia, CELTA holders must also have a first degree in any discipline.

knowledge essential for TESOL. Consequently, the SMK of TESOL teachers who graduate from different institutions and universities may differ significantly.

In summary, SMK preparation in TESOL training varies according to the type of course and to the qualification that the students receive on successful completion. Furthermore, it is dependent upon the institution from which the students receive their training. The nature of the subject matter of TESOL to which the students are exposed differs according to the perceptions of needs of TESOL by the individual training providers and the availability of expertise of each provider.

Largely, the ELICOS industry accepts all the above qualifications as adequate preparation for work. More importantly, the qualifications of the teachers appear to have little or no bearing on decision-making by program managers regarding the level of teaching responsibility given to teachers. For example, the degree of supervision of a certificate-trained teacher is likely to be similar to that of a diploma-trained teacher. In addition, there is an equal chance of a Master's qualified teacher being assigned to teach an elementary language class as there is for a teacher with a CELTA qualification.

This practice of allocating teaching responsibilities without apparent due consideration being given to the TESOL training received by the teachers raises a number of questions in regard to assumptions made of TESOL, and in particular, of SMK within the ELICOS setting, all of which would merit further deliberation. This is because such practice appears to be at variance with the commonly held assumption that the longer the period of training and learning, the greater the acquisition of knowledge and expertise which, in turn, would translate to greater effectiveness in teaching. Some of the questions this practice raises include:

- Is the subject matter offered in courses beyond the certificate in TESOL superfluous to TESOL in the ELICOS setting?
- Is SMK an important consideration for effective TESOL within the ELICOS industry?

- Is the nature of TESOL so different from all other subject disciplines that SMK of TESOL teachers is of little consequence to the successful learning of languages?

Alongside such questions, there is also the question of what TESOL teachers' perspectives on SMK are. In other words, there is a need for 'emic'-type studies as well as 'etic'-type. The study proposed here is of the 'emic'-type. It is an interpretive study aimed at developing theory about TESOL teachers' perspectives on SMK necessary for planning and teaching.

The significance of this study lies in its aim to develop theory on TESOL teachers' perspectives on SMK given that no such theory exists. SMK is well researched in other subjects, including biology, mathematics, English literature and physical education, to name a few. However, a search of literature for the purpose of the study reported here revealed no studies on TESOL teachers' perspectives on SMK.

Most of the research carried out in the field of TESOL has centred on pedagogical issues. Current TESOL practice is more concerned with observable teacher behaviour in the classroom, the ratio of teacher talking-time to student talking-time, the pacing of classroom tasks and other technical aspects of teaching. If TESOL is to be better understood, SMK has to be systematically explored and in some considerable depth.

The Literature: An Overview

As a field of inquiry in education, SMK has a relatively short history. It came onto centre stage in 1985 in America at the American Educational Research Association Meeting when Shulman (1986) urged the research community in education to turn its attention to the SMK of teachers. Since then, a number of studies have investigated SMK and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). These include the work of Grossman (1989) on English literature, Hashweh (1987) on biology, Ball (1991) on mathematics, Marks (1990) and

Carlsen (1991) on science, Gudmunsdottir (1991) on English, and Wineburg (1997) on history.

This, however, is not to overlook the fact that earlier studies touched on SMK. SMK was investigated as one of a number of variables in studies which Dunkin and Biddle (1974) called 'process-product' research. This particular type of research aimed to study systematically those teacher traits and classroom behaviours which researchers believed made an impact on students' academic achievement. In these studies, four main types of variables, namely, presage, context, process and product were correlated to determine the relationship between the teachers' observed classroom behaviour and the learning outcomes of the students. Included in the category called 'presage' were teachers' formative influences such as social class, age and sex, the teachers' training experiences that take into consideration their university education, teacher training and teaching experience, and the teachers' personal characteristics such as teaching skills, intelligence, motivation and personality.

In his review of the process-product studies, Byrne (1983) was of the opinion that they had conceptualised the relationship between teachers' SMK and students' achievement in too narrow a manner. According to him, SMK had to be measured in more than just the number of units in the subject which the teacher had studied, and his/her test scores and grades. Shulman and Quinlan (1996), in reviewing the research undertaken prior to the 1980s, also made the observation that process-product research had "ignored the role of subject matter as a central feature of teaching and learning". In consequence, Shulman (1986b, p.409) called for a focus on SMK in research in teaching. In response to this call, a series of studies was conducted in different disciplines on how teachers' knowledge of subject-matter played a crucial role in the way the subject was approached by the teacher and how this approach influenced the manner in which it was taught in class.

In the 'new' research into the impact of teachers' SMK, the conceptualisation of SMK has been more comprehensive. In the associated studies, the notion of SMK has not been limited merely to length of time spent on learning the subject or the grades obtained in the

subject, although both of these factors could serve as observable indicators of a teacher's subject-matter knowledge. The new way of defining SMK was derived from Schwab's earlier model of structure of a discipline (1964, 1978). Schwab saw SMK as being made up of two types of structures[3], namely, substantive and syntactic structures. According to Schwab, substantive structures are those "conceptual devices, which are used for defining, bounding, and analysing the subject matter" (Schwab, 1978, p.246). Syntactic structures, on the other hand, are the "way(s) of discovery and proof (and the ways of) determining the route or pathway by which the discipline moves from raw data through a longer or shorter process of interpretation to its conclusion" (Schwab, 1964,p.14).

Grossman, Wilson and Shulman (1989) elaborated on this definition and produced a model of SMK that comprised four dimensions. These are content knowledge (facts, concepts, and procedures), substantive knowledge, syntactic knowledge and beliefs about the subject. In Grossman, Wilson and Shulman's conceptualisation of SMK, content knowledge is what is generally understood as subject matter by the layperson. This can roughly be interpreted as the contents of textbooks and it comprises factual information, organising principles and central concepts. According to them, content knowledge is shaped by both substantive and syntactic knowledge. Substantive knowledge means the knowledge of "paradigms or frameworks within a discipline that guide the focus of inquiry, dictating in many ways, the questions researchers ask and the directions they pursue" (p.29). Syntactic knowledge refers to the "canons of evidence that are used by members of the disciplinary community to guide inquiry in the field. They are the means by which new knowledge is introduced and accepted into the community" (Grossman, Wilson, and Shulman, 1989, p.29). Finally, beliefs, while not part of the structure of a discipline, are seen to be so closely intertwined with the three dimensions of SMK that Grossman, Wilson and Shulman (1989) consider it as the fourth dimension. Beliefs[4] are seen to be different from knowledge in that they are more difficult to investigate and they are subjective, drawing more on the affective aspect of human nature.

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[3] Schwab used the term 'structure' synonymously with 'structure of knowledge' and for the purpose of this study, the meaning of 'structure' is kept.
[4] Grossman, Wilson and Shulman (1989) acknowledge that beliefs are accepted as part of knowledge in philosophy. However, for the purpose of their model, they are treating knowledge and beliefs as two entities even though the distinction between the two are not clear.

Borko and Putnam (1996) carried out a thorough review of studies on knowledge and beliefs about subject-matter as part of their review of research on the learning of teachers. A positive correlation was found to exist between the teachers' depth and breadth of SMK and the way they carried out their teaching in class. The studies conducted on this phenomenon dealt with differences between novice and experienced teachers, and the differences exhibited by experienced teachers when teaching a subject of which they had depth of knowledge with that of a subject that they had only superficial knowledge.

In general, the studies of the 1980s found that students' learning opportunities were affected by their teachers' understanding of SMK (Ball and McDiarmid, 1990). There was a qualitative difference in teaching performance between teachers with greater SMK and those who had superficial understanding of the subject. Teachers with greater SMK organised and planned their teaching differently from those with less knowledge. They tended to stress the conceptual, problem-solving and inquiry aspects of their subject, while teachers with superficial knowledge of the subject were found to adhere closely to the textbook emphasising facts, rules, and procedures. These teachers missed opportunities to focus on key ideas, or draw links between ideas.

The studies conducted focussed on the differences between the way novice and experienced teachers teach. They also investigated the effects of SMK on the teaching of knowledgeable and less knowledgeable teachers. There have also been studies carried out on how novice teachers gained SMK in the course of their teaching. From these studies, much has been learnt about the effects of SMK of teachers on teaching. Teachers who have deeper knowledge of a subject are able to provide better understanding of concepts to their students than less knowledgeable teachers. Furthermore, teachers with breadth of SMK are able to draw connections between the different topics, thus rendering their teaching more effective (Grossman, Wilson and Shulman, 1989).

Within the TESOL community, the issue of SMK is beginning to gain some attention. Issues related to the lack of SMK are reported by scholars such as Richards, Ho and Giblin

(1996), Numrich (1996) and Borg (1998). There are also calls by practitioners (Basanta, 1996; DeFelice,1998) who feel a need for both native and non-native English TESL teachers to have greater knowledge of English. However, a search has failed to uncover any substantial body of literature on any aspect of TESOL teachers' SMK. Only one study surveyed, namely, that of Richards, Li and Tang (1998), has investigated the effect of SMK of TESOL teachers on a lesson.

The study by Richards, Li and Tang is only a small study that examined how different groups of teachers exploit literary texts in an English-as-a-second-language (ESL) class. Again, like the other studies carried out in mainstream subjects, the study was based on lessons in a mainstream school setting where the period of study for students was one school year and where financial viability was not a major consideration in the operation of the school.

More studies on the SMK of TESOL need to be carried out and in a variety of settings. These studies can be undertaken using a variety of theoretical approaches, including approaches derived from cognitive psychology, historical research and behavioural science. The interpretive paradigm can also be illuminating. This is the paradigm upon which the study reported in this thesis is based.

Interpretive studies are highly valuable as they focus on individuals as creative and active players in the negotiation of meaning. They are based on the assumption that the individuals' perspectives are important determiners of their actions. The study conducted as the basis of this thesis was an interpretive study focusing on TESOL teachers' perspectives on the SMK necessary for language teaching in a self-funding unit.

The Research Approach and Methodology

Theoretical background

The study reported here was conceptualised within the 'interpretive' paradigm. At the heart of the interpretive paradigm is the importance placed on the perspectives of people as individuals. Interpretivists assert that in order to understand social reality, one has to study how individuals interpret the world around them. This is because interpretivists see the social world as being subjective and social reality as being constructed and negotiated by individuals acting according to the perspectives they confer on the phenomena in their environment (Reid, 1986). There are, therefore, many social realities, each constructed by the individuals involved.

Underpinning these assertions are certain assumptions held by interpretivists. According to Blackledge and Hunt (1985), there are five such assumptions. The first is that the study of social reality should be grounded in a study of the everyday activities of people. The reason for this is that "ultimately, every aspect of society can be traced back to the way people act in everyday life" (Blackledge and Hunt, 1985, p.234). The second assumption held by interpretivists is that although people are not totally free of social forces, they have a large degree of freedom and autonomy over their own daily actions. Thus, everyday life is the result of people acting together and producing their own roles and patterns of action. The third assumption is that everyday activities involve interaction. In other words, people not only have perspectives on their own actions, but also interpret the actions of people with whom they come into contact. The fourth assumption is that the perspectives held by individuals are likely to change or be modified by those around them. In time, through the process of negotiation, people come to have common understandings and interpretations. Finally, in order to understand the perspectives held by individuals, one has to try to get inside the heads of the actors and see how they define, interpret, and explain various situations.

An important concept that has to be explained is that of 'perspective'. It includes such notions as aims and intentions (so one can ask what an individual aims to do in a particular

situation). Another property of 'perspectives' is that people can state the 'strategies' they use to achieve their aims. It also includes the idea of significance (so one can ask what the individual sees as significant in the situation). Finally, the notion of reasons is included (allowing one to ask what reasons the individuals give for the aims, strategies and significance they have with regard to the particular situation).

The guiding questions
The central aim of the study, it will be recalled, was to develop theory about TESOL teachers' perspectives on SMK for language teaching. A set of guiding questions was developed from Blackledge and Hunt's (1985) unravelling of the concept of 'perspectives' as outlined above. These took in the notion of perspectives consisting of aims, strategies, and significance, and the notion that 'participants' or 'actors' can give reasons with regard to their position on each of these areas.

The following set of questions guided the study from the beginning:

1 Questions on TESOL teachers' perspectives on planning

1.1 What actions do TESOL teachers take when planning a) a course outline, b) a weekly teaching plan, and c) a daily lesson?

1.2 What aims lie behind these actions? What reasons do they give for these aims?

1.3 What are the strategies TESOL teachers have to achieve these aims? What reasons do they give for these strategies?

1.4 What is the significance of these aims and strategies for the individual TESOL teacher? What reasons do they give for attributing such significance to their aims and strategies?

2 Questions on TESOL teachers' perspectives on teaching

2.1 Within the classroom situation, what aims do TESOL teachers have when teaching individual lessons?

2.2 What are their strategies for achieving their aims? What reasons do they give for having those strategies?

2.3 What is the significance of these aims and strategies for the teachers? What reasons do they give for attributing such significance to their aims and strategies?

From the outset, however, it was recognised that these questions could be extended, revised and developed, depending upon the responses of the participants.

Research context

The study was undertaken in an ELICOS program in a tertiary institution in Perth, Western Australia. The ELICOS program is one of three pre-tertiary programs sited within a department that offers undergraduate and postgraduate study. Many of the students who enrol in this particular ELICOS program have academic goals in mind. They want to get into a mainstream course when they have met the language requirements of a university. As the ELICOS program is the only one of the three pre-tertiary programs, which offers ELT from upper elementary to advanced level English, many of the students come into the program with the intention of acquiring the ELP required for entry into either of the other two pre-tertiary programs. These two programs offer them direct entry into a pre-determined mainstream course upon successful completion.

Apart from a handful of permanent staff, the ELICOS program is staffed by sessional lecturers. The teachers can work a maximum of nineteen hours, but many choose to work part-time and may opt to work only two days a week. The days of work are fixed by the way the timetable is structured. The timetable is structured such that one teacher takes the class for Speaking/Listening while the other does Writing/Reading.

The ELICOS program currently consists of nine five-week modules. At the time of data collection there were four terms, with each term being made up of two five-week modules and a four-week summer school. The classes are broadly divided according to ELP. General English is taught to all students who are tested to be at intermediate level and below in their English language proficiency. Students who are of upper-intermediate level and above have a choice of either doing Academic English or General/Professional English. In the mornings, students attend their core classes while in the afternoons they attend their elective classes if they are of intermediate level and above. Students who are lower-intermediate and below do not have electives. Assessment forms an important part of the

teaching as promotions to a higher-level class are based on the academic results of the students.

The participants

The participants in the research were all ELICOS teachers who were employed in the ELICOS program. All of them were experienced teachers with a minimum of three years ELICOS teaching. Their qualifications ranged from those with a CELTA to those with a master's qualifications in TESOL. All had taught in an ELICOS program for at least a year and were, therefore, familiar with the program and the educational setting. Most of these participants were local-trained while one was trained in England. Most had experience teaching overseas.

Initially, seven people took part in the study. However, two dropped out half way through the data collection while another two did not continue after the first round of data collection. In the second round of data collection, another teacher volunteered. These teachers also participated in the third round of data collection. The data were supplemented by those from another six teachers who were interviewed intermittently.

Data collection

The period of data collection was the duration involved in teaching over three ELICOS modules. Each module lasted five weeks. Data were collected from three sources – documents, in-depth interviews and observations. These sources, which are commonly used in interpretive studies, are a means of getting close both physically and psychologically to the participants (Merriam, 1988). They will now described in brief.

Documents

Data were gathered from two types of documents – those directly related to work, and journals kept by the participants. The work-related documents examined included annual reports, course outlines, teaching materials, corrections of students' work, and students' assessment tasks. In addition, participants were requested to keep a journal. Journal keeping, according to Nunan (1992), involves participants recording in writing their

thoughts and reflections regarding their work. The entries are a form of self-disclosure and they help make explicit beliefs and assumptions the participants hold. As journal entries are in the participants' own words, they are particularly useful in capturing the participants' perspectives. These, however, were not very useful in this study because the participants merely used their journals to record what they did without any reflection on their work.

Interviews

In-depth interviews, as described in Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1990), formed the main source of data-gathering. All the interviews were taped and transcribed so that the words of the participants were faithfully recorded. In this study, all the participants were interviewed at least once a week for the duration of the data gathering cycle which was the period devoted to teaching one ELICOS module. The researcher met with the participants either at the beginning of the week or the end of the week to discuss the aims, strategies and significance of the work they had planned for the coming week, and also to discuss their reflections on the teaching of the week before.

An initial *aide memoire* was developed to help keep the interviews focussed. An *aide memoire* is an interview guide, which is made up of a list of issues, topics, problems or ideas which the researcher wishes to cover in the interview with the participants. It is not a standardised instrument and is revised as and when required (Minichiello *et al*., 1990). The questions in the *aide memoire* were organised using Blackledge and Hunt's conceptualisation of perspective. That is, the questions investigated the participants' views on the aims, strategies and the significance of their aims and strategies in planning and teaching. The questions in the aide memoire were refined, modified or rejected in response to the data, which emerged as the study progressed.

Observations

This study also made use of observations of the participants in action in the classroom. Observations are important as they allow the researcher to gain access to a form of data that can be used to verify and corroborate the information gained through interviews. This allows the researcher the opportunity to check if the observer thinks there is a mismatch

between what the participants say they do and what they actually do. Another importance of observations is that they give the researcher an opportunity to elicit explanations for actions and behaviour noted while participants are conducting their teaching.

The researcher took notes while observing the teacher in the classroom. Every attempt was made to describe as closely as possible what was being said and the actions that took place in the classroom. Each teacher was observed once in each module, except for the first module because of a clash in timetable.

Analysis of data

The analysis of data was carried out using the grounded theory method as explained by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Using this method, raw data are reduced to concepts, which are then grouped into categories. In grounded theory analysis, the data are coded and analysed using three coding methods, namely, open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Open coding represents the first level of coding when raw data are sorted and placed into conceptual categories. This is achieved by breaking down the raw data (which may be an observation, a sentence, or a paragraph) into discrete ideas or events and labeling them. Then these concepts are grouped together into categories and each category is given a name. The aim is to analyse the data with a view to theory building.

Categories derived from open coding are first order concepts (Punch, 1997). The second order concepts, which are more abstract than the first, are determined through a process called axial coding. In axial coding, the open categories are examined and relationships between the categories are found. Propositions are then developed. At this stage, the open categories are put together again, but in a way that is different from the raw data. The open categories are examined for logical links and are grouped into broader, more abstract categories. Some of the ways in which these categories may be linked include searching for cause and effect relationships, comparisons and contrasts, parts of a process and other logical links. The categories may also be linked in that they may be representations of the same thing from different viewpoints.

The final stage of coding is selective coding. At this stage, a category selected as the core category and the other categories are integrated into this category. For this study, selective coding was not employed as the use of open and axial coding was sufficient for the development of propositions relating to the central question. Instead, analytic induction was used to formulate the propositions. Analytic induction, according to Katz (2001), is a research approach that requires the researcher to define the phenomenon investigated as propositions in such a way that these propositions can accommodate all the explanatory factors presented. The propositions are constantly refined or reformulated if new data contradict the propositions.

To assist with the data analysis, there was constant comparison of categories for differences and similarities through memoing and diagramming. Data collected at the end of each interview with participants and from documents, journal entries and observations were coded immediately. Memo writing commenced as soon as the initial coding had taken place. Memos, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998), are very specialised kinds of written records that are the result of the researcher's analysis of the data collected. They are also records of directions and actions to take.

Diagrams were also used for representing the relationships between categories. As used in this context, diagrams are "visual devices that depict the relationships among concepts" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.217) and are as important as memos for keeping records of data analysis. By using diagramming, it is possible to identify areas that need further data collection.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the study reported in this thesis. Eight chapters follow. Chapter 2 describes the research context. It begins with a brief historical perspective of TESOL, followed by an overview of TESOL today. The last part of the chapter is devoted to an overview of TESOL in Australia. Chapter 3 presents a review of

the literature on SMK within the context of effective teaching. The first part of the chapter is a review of literature on SMK in various subject disciplines. The second part of the chapter reviews studies on SMK in TESOL. Chapter 4 outlines the research methodology and design of the study. Chapter 5 presents the first of eight propositions of the thesis. Briefly, this proposition states that ELICOS teachers see their role as solely to teach students the SMK stipulated in the syllabus. The following chapter, Chapter 6, develops the second proposition, which is that the ELICOS teachers have developed strategies to deal with the constraints posed by the nature of an ELICOS operation. Chapter 7 presents the 'story line' for teachers' perspectives on the nature of the SMK of TESOL in language teaching in the ELICOS program. The story line is broken into three propositions, each of which deals with one aspect of teachers' perspective of the SMK of language teaching. Chapter 8 presents the second 'story line' concerning teachers' perspective on how the SMK ought to be taught. Finally, Chapter 9 is the conclusion.