

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS: PROPOSITIONS 3, 4, and 5

In this chapter, a further set of findings is presented. These findings are in the form of a cluster of propositions. These are derived from the following story line (Strauss and Corbin, 1990):

In carrying out their teaching of the SMK stipulated in the ELICOS syllabus, the teachers draw from their own understanding of the nature of the SMK, namely, language, that they are teaching. For the ELICOS teachers, language is a complex system consisting of non-verbal and verbal codes. It is tool, which is used predominantly for communication. Communication is concerned with the expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning. For meaning to be fully realised, language must not be taken out of its socio-cultural environment. Thus, understanding of the sociocultural norms of the speech community is necessary for successful communication to occur.

Each proposition in this ‘story line’ will now be considered in turn.

Proposition 3

For ELICOS teachers, language is a complex system consisting of non-verbal and verbal codes.

As Emmitt and Pollock (1991) assert, most people think of language as comprising the verbal code involving speaking, listening, reading and writing. However, like Emmitt and Pollock (1991), ELICOS teachers take a broader view of language. According to these teachers, language comprises both non-verbal and verbal forms of communication. This notion of language is most apparent among the teachers of Speaking/Listening who have to teach presentations.

Language as a System of Non-verbal Codes

ELICOS teachers are equally concerned with the messages that their students convey with their gestures, facial expressions and body movements and their verbal messages. Raising their students' awareness to the role of non-verbal codes in conveying messages is essential to both Leanne and Laura who teach Speaking/Listening in an Academic English class. In teaching their students skills for oral presentation, they include non-verbal codes as an aspect of language that requires attention as revealed in the following comment:

That's something else I'd like to do, and that's looking at body language (Leanne; intv.0.1; p6)...(and how to) use body language in a correct way (Leanne; intv1.3,p1)

We talked a bit about using positive body language. (Laura; intv1.1, p5)

For the teachers, 'body language' includes eye gaze, gestures, body movements and facial expressions. All these movements carry messages that can be intentional or unintentional.

As the ELICOS teachers see it, the messages carried by 'body language' can either give a positive or negative impression of the speaker. An example of positive body language is given by Laura:

If you're giving a presentation, it's very important that you look at your audience, smile and stand still, and if you're writing something on the whiteboard, then you turn around and face the audience before you start talking – things like that. ... I just need to make them aware of it that that's an important part of an oral presentation. (Laura; intv1.1, p5-6)

She also gives an example of negative body language when she recalls advising one of the students thus:

I'm able to tell him to stand still, don't sniff, ..., don't touch your face when you're speaking because all of those things distract the speakers and that's rude in Australia. (Laura; intv2.2, p5)

Overall, the examples given of negative body language refer to such nervous mannerisms.

As well as body language, there are other non-verbal behaviours associated with roles and settings. These behaviours are more subtle and can lead to misattribution of personality traits by other people. Some were again listed by Laura:

There's non-verbal behaviour; so, knowing that you need to sit still while somebody is giving a presentation; so knowing what's appropriate behaviour in a lecture. ... but the body language that they use and if they're in a tutorial-type setting, they need to be active and ask questions and be involved. (Laura; intv2.3, p1)

Laura felt that her students were unaware that many of their behaviours were interpreted in a negative light in Australia. Therefore, it was necessary to raise their awareness to behaviours that were not considered appropriate in Australia.

Language as a System of Verbal Codes

Where the verbal codes are concerned, the ELICOS teachers share the majority of the practitioners' view on what is important to teach. These are the lexicon, phonology, morphology, syntax and pragmatics of the language. Together they form the subject matter of what the ELICOS teachers teach in regard to the verbal codes. However, the ELICOS teachers do not describe their teaching content in these terms. They use terms more commonly used among TESOL teachers and which appear in TESOL methodology books such as Harmer's (1991) *The Practice of English Language Teaching* and Ur's (1996) *A Course in Language Teaching* and TESOL coursebooks for students. The ELICOS teachers refer to the different aspects of language they teach as vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar and the macro-skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Each of these general categories ELICOS teachers use when talking about their work will now be considered in turn.

Vocabulary

Each item of vocabulary is a linguistic token that represents a unit of meaning. As Wilkins (1972) asserts, without grammar, little communication can occur. However, without vocabulary, no verbal communication can take place. The ELICOS teachers share this view. They look upon vocabulary as one of the essentials of language. In talking about vocabulary, the imagery of building a foundation with vocabulary is used most frequently. This is apparent in Emma's description of what she normally does with her DE2 class:

I often start off with the vocabulary. So I build up with the vocabulary. Then usually, by the end of the lesson, I see results using the language – the function. (Emma; intv0.1p5)

Other teachers express the same notion in a different way. Rosa, for instance, sees the possession of a reasonable sized vocabulary in the target language as a prerequisite for the learning of other language skills. Teachers cannot go very far with the teaching of other aspects of language if the students do not have an adequate vocabulary in the language. As Rosa sees it, the lack of vocabulary is the main barrier to the learning of other skills. She noticed this in her students and has this to say of their problem:

Their main problem seems to be that they don't have enough vocabulary. They get into a text and although they have been taught skills, they can't apply them to a text because they don't understand it enough. (Rosa; intv1.1,p7)

It is clear, then, that the first element of language which the ELICOS teachers feel students need is vocabulary.

What the ELICOS teachers include in the category of vocabulary is broad. It ranges from single words to phrases to idiomatic speech, which includes colloquialism. The selection of the vocabulary items is not based on any specific system. The items that are selected for attention in class are usually items found in texts that the students have to understand in order to carry out set language tasks such as note-taking or summary writing. The ELICOS teachers either identify the items at the start of class or they ask their students to tell them what words or expressions they do not understand. Many of the items, which require explanation are culture specific. For example, Emma had to

explain idioms like “a string of pearls”, “a ball of string” and “a bunch of flowers” while Laura had to explain colloquial speech used by the speaker of a listening tape before she could get her students to take notes.

In the teaching of vocabulary, Ur (1996) maintains that there are four aspects that need to be taught. These are the form that consists of the pronunciation and spelling of the items, grammar, collocation and meanings – denotative, connotative and appropriateness. All four aspects of vocabulary are taught by the ELICOS teachers. However, they are not given equal prominence in class. The pronunciation, spelling, collocation and grammar aspects of vocabulary are not given as much emphasis as the meaning aspect.

The pronunciation of vocabulary items is done on an *ad hoc* basis. For example, when Theresa’s students were giving her the answers for a reading comprehension exercise they did in class, she found that some students had difficulty pronouncing certain words. In response, she repeated the words with their proper pronunciation and then asked the students to repeat the words. In terms of grammar, occasionally the teachers point out the various forms of certain words. This is particularly the case when teaching BTN as there is an exercise in each BTN program devoted to vocabulary expansion through bringing attention to various forms of one word. For example, the students may be asked to provide the noun, adjective and adverb for a word given in its verb form. Related to this is the use of prefixes and suffix to create a word with different meaning from a stem word. The teachers also draw students’ attention to the role of prefixes and suffixes in vocabulary as shown in Joanne’s rationalisation for giving her students a specific exercise on prefixes and suffixes:

...looking at stem of the words ... and see(ing) the prefixes and suffixes, how they alter the meaning. “Unemployment is a problem today”. They look at ‘employ’ and they’ve got to be able to try and think, “I need a noun” and think of the meaning of it. So many won’t use the ‘un’ prefix – prefixes and suffixes. (Joanne; intv1.2, p 13)

As in the case of pronunciation and spelling, this aspect of vocabulary building is not systematic. It depends on the individual teachers and what they feel their students require at the time.

Collocation, the way certain words are usually found together, is used by certain teachers to show the habit of various vocabulary items. Emma calls her DE2 students' attention to the collocation of words as a means of helping them understand that certain words must go together and that communication in English is not a simple matter of relying on their small bi-lingual dictionary for translation of words from their own language into English. As Emma explains:

I like vocabulary; so, I tend to focus a lot on collocation especially at this level. ... I told them it's worthless some of them looking at words as single units. I tell them, "No, no. At this level you should be looking at groups of words". ... I do a lot of patterns and collocation work. (Emma; intv1.2-3, p.1)

Thus, to learn a new word, one must also be aware of the language environment in which the word is usually found.

As stated above, the meaning aspect of vocabulary receives the most attention from the teachers. In teaching the meaning aspect of the vocabulary items, all the teachers emphasise the understanding of meaning in context. This characteristic of vocabulary is imparted to students in all levels of the ELICOS program. Thus, Emma told her students in DE2 that they had to learn to interpret the meaning of words in context. She remarked:

I've mentioned it a few times on the board – meaning in context, meaning and form. I try to get them to understand that meaning depends on the situation or the context. (Emma; intv0.1, p6)

In the Ac2 class, Rosa also reinforced the point that vocabulary building is not a straightforward matter of learning the meanings of each word given in the dictionary. In order to get the correct meaning of the word, knowing the context in which the word is found is crucial. According to Rosa:

You can't just look up a word in a dictionary and get the meaning of the word – that it's different in different contexts and that's something that a lot of them (students) don't realise until they get to the higher levels – that words in context are different. (Rosa; intv1.2, p2)

She concluded by saying that they can have “*several shades of meaning*” (Rosa; intv1.2, p2).

Usually, the teachers in most levels are concerned with the denotative meaning of the vocabulary items. However, at the more advanced levels such as the Academic English classes, the teachers also make their students aware of the connotative meaning of the vocabulary items. The students have to understand the nuances of the language and this is made possible by understanding the connotations of the words.

Grammar

Like vocabulary, grammar is another element of language, which the ELICOS teachers also regard as a foundation block of language, and so has to be learnt by the students in the early stages of their L2 learning. As such, there is an assumption that the teachers in the DE classes are responsible for the teaching of grammar. This then allows the teachers in the G/P and Academic English classes more time to teach the more complex skills of language use. This is evident in the view expressed by Laura that her responsibility in the AC1 class was to assist her students to develop their thinking, and to enculturate them to the Australian university setting. On this, Linda said:

I think that when you get to Ac1, I would assume that they're reasonably fluent in English. ... I don't see it as my job to go back to basic grammatical structures ... because that's what Developing English is all about. (Laura; intv2.1, p2)

The same sentiments were echoed by Rosa:

I think it's completely different doing that level (the DE levels) – so much slower, so much repetition. You're more teaching them parts of a language which they can build up whereas once you get to the higher level, they've got a good working knowledge of the language and you go more into the skills from there but you're not, for example, ... we don't teach a lot of grammar in Ac2 and 3 and 4 because you assume that the students already have had all that sorts of input... (Rosa; intv1.1, p8)

It is clear from these statements that the ELICOS teachers consider knowledge of grammar as a prerequisite to the learning of other language skills. In that respect, it is looked upon as another building block of language.

There are two aspects to grammar, namely, form and meaning (Paul, 1993). It is through the form that meaning is manifested. In language teaching, emphasis could be placed on either form or meaning. Up until the 1960s, the focus of grammar teaching was on form and the systematic presentation of grammar forms starting from those that were formally simple to those that were formally complex (Grauberg, 1997). The aim was to ensure that the accuracy of form was learnt. However, since the 1970s when the notional-functional syllabus was first introduced, the emphasis shifted to meaning carried by the grammar forms. The teaching of grammar forms gave way to the teaching of notions such as how to express time and space, and functions such as how to ask for directions or make future plans. Grammar rules relating to various grammatical categories were not taught explicitly.

Today, there is a tendency to pay attention to both form and function. Grammar rules are made explicit but always within context. This appears to be the position taken by the ELICOS teachers. They are interested in the meaning performed by various grammatical structures. The focus, then, is on structures as a way of expressing meaning. A good illustration of this is the approach taken by both Emma and Theresa in introducing grammar points to their respective DE2 classes. In the case of Emma, her main objective in teaching grammar is to show her students how different grammatical structures convey different meaning. For this reason, she always approaches the teaching of grammar points by selecting activities in which the form would be used. The activities she picks have to involve her students in genuinely communication, that is, they are actually saying or writing something which other people in the class would find meaningful. For example, to show that a distinction is made in English between open and hypothetical conditions in the conditional clauses (Leech and Svartvik, 1975) Emma asked her students to give her some names of famous people, dead or alive. Then she gave two examples showing when to use what the textbook called first conditional (open conditional) and the second conditional (hypothetical conditional). Next, she wrote the conditional clause for each of the famous persons nominated beginning with “If I meet/met...” and she instructed the students to complete the sentences. Emma recalled what she did in class thus:

Week 7, we looked at conditionals. ... Second conditional, I think. And to get into that, I actually elicited from each student the name of a famous

person. He or she could be dead or alive and then I wrote an example – yeah, things like Audrey Hepburn and Michael Jackson came up and I said to them that if a person is alive, I wrote an example on the board – If I meet Michael Jackson, I will such and such. If I met Audrey Hepburn – that's right, she's now dead – If I met Audrey Hepburn, I would So I wrote those unfinished sentence on the board. So they each wrote sentences and they had each chosen a person that was written on the board but then they had the choice of choosing any name on the board to write their sentence. (Emma; intv2.2, p2)

From the perspective of the received wisdom of academics, this explanation is incorrect but regardless of the correctness of the explanation, the point to note here is that for Emma, it was important for her students to get the message that grammar carried meaning. By creating activities where the students had to reveal something about themselves, their thoughts, feelings or opinions, she was teaching them grammar in what she saw was a meaningful way in that what the students were communicating to the rest of the class was real and worthwhile communicating. They were not doing an exercise, which merely illustrated a grammatical point.

Theresa's main emphasis is on the function performed by a particular grammar point. Theresa likes to involve her students in analysing the grammatical form of the structures. She states:

I like to present it in a very analytical manner and challenge them. "Why is it this and why is it that?" Get them thinking; get them really engaged and understanding the language and the function of it. (Theresa; intv0.4, p8)

For instance, in teaching the passive, she asked her students to think if they had such a structure in their L1 and if there was, how it was used. Below are some excerpts of the interview in which she described the lesson on the passive voice.

We had a wonderful discussion with the students comparing their first languages – what was it; what was the passive used in their language – I mean, what form, in written or spoken, and compared to our way of using it (Theresa; intv0.1, p 4)

One Japanese guy – he was great. He said, "Can I use the passive in speaking?" I said you can but it's useful in writing and more reporting-type situations and he said, "'Cos in Japan, we use the passive more. We tend to focus on ourselves rather than the other person when we're

speaking”. And yes, he wanted to kind of check when it was appropriate to use the passive as it is and in what form. (Theresa; intv0.1, p4)

And yes, we sort of talked about that and yeah, looked at er ... if it was in the active, what would that mean to the focus of the sentence and structure... (Theresa; intv0.1, p5)

Even though Theresa seems to spend a great deal of time on the form of the language, her main interest in teaching the structures is to deal with the function of the structure – what it is used for.

Theresa’s reason for focusing on the meaning aspect of grammar is that she feels that it helps to empower her students as language users. She declares:

I feel that it’s important they know why they’re using a piece of language and what the correct pattern is so that they feel they’ve got some authority in using it and because they understand it. They know that “I’ve to use this here, and not that, and I know why”. You know, they can make intelligent choices. (Theresa; intv0.1, p8)

Thus, focusing on the form is a way of getting her students to understand that meaning is carried in the structures of the language and to give them some control over the way they express meaning in English.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation, a micro-skill, is generally seen by the ELICOS teachers as an aspect of language that is important enough to be treated as a separate entity from the macro-skill of speaking. Under the umbrella of pronunciation, the ELICOS teachers include the phonology of English, stress, rhythm and intonation. In general, teachers of Speaking/Listening are more aware of pronunciation as an area of language requiring special focus than Reading/Writing teachers. They usually incorporate activities in their lessons, which sensitise students to their own speech. This usually takes the form of a ‘warmer’ at the start of the lesson where the teachers use language games such as running dictation, songs, or little verses to draw attention to the articulation of individual words, stress, rhythm and intonation patterns of English.

Although pronunciation is considered by the teachers as a very important aspect of language, it is an area which does not receive systematic attention unlike grammar or the different genres such as letter writing, essay writing or oral presentation. The amount of emphasis given to it, and the type of pronunciation practice selected are dependent on the individual teachers' judgement of what is necessary to make their students' speech more intelligible. Laura and Leanne both teach Speaking/Listening, but Leanne pays more attention to her students' pronunciation than Laura. One of Leanne's first tasks on meeting her students is to give them a diagnostic test on speech so that she can "*look at ... the range of pronunciation problems they have*" (Leanne; intv1.1, p5) and based on the results of the test, she determines the aspects of pronunciation on which she needs to focus for the duration of the module.

Laura, on the other hand, considers pronunciation to be a practical skill that does not need as much attention as the cognitive skills associated with the content of speech. She is more interested in developing the thinking of her students and therefore, devotes more time to doing that. This is evident in the following statement:

I mean the delivery wasn't perfect. Some people were hard to understand; some people spoke too quickly but they're like ... what's the word ... practical skills that we can work on. (Leanne; intv2.1, p1)

Because of this, she does not pay as much attention to pronunciation as Leanne.

The Reading/Writing teachers also correct students' pronunciation when it affects intelligibility and ultimately, comprehensibility. For example, Emma reports that she does "*bit of vocabulary and I do a bit of pronunciation*" (Emma; intv0.1, p10) in her afternoon class. She does not specifically teach pronunciation but she usually reads aloud dialogues or texts to the class before she gets them to practise on their own. Then she goes round the class to monitor the students' efforts and at the end of their practice, she usually goes through some of their common problems, which may include aspects of pronunciation. In explaining how she carries out an activity on telephoning, Emma said:

So, we do a model – an example – usually myself and another student. We model it and we go through pronunciation, and often numbers, we go

down at the end (referring to intonation). ... (I model it) so that they can listen to my intonation and rhythm. Yep. ... I usually go round and listen but I don't interrupt unless they ask me. Y'know, they'd see me and they'd go, "What does this mean?" and I'd help them ... And then, after I've given them enough time, I'll go through some of the common errors. ... I find with this one, some of it is intonation and how they pronounce numbers – "double 7" and they won't go down at the end. And just pronunciation like they don't say 'directory'. (Emma; intv0.2, p4-5)

The teaching of pronunciation for Emma is incidental. Only if her students' speech is very different from what she believes to be the 'right' way of speaking will Emma point it out to them.

The macro-skills

Vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation are not the only aspects of language to which the teachers pay attention. In addition to these, the teachers put a great deal of emphasis on discourse, the "larger units of language such as paragraph, conversations and interviews" (Richards, Platt and Weber, 1986). In fact, all the ELICOS teachers consider language at discourse level to be the proper subject matter of language. Vocabulary and grammar are taught primarily because they constitute essential parts of discourse formation.

Although the ELICOS teachers give most attention to language at discourse level, the word 'discourse' is rarely used in their everyday speech when discussing what they teach. They prefer to talk about 'genres' that are the specific classes of discourse, and specific discourse elements like 'transitional signals'. They see the various genres like narratives, essays, letters, memos, telephone calls and other speech events as the main SMK, which they have to teach. In Writing, this is illustrated in Joanne's description of the various aspects of discourse she needs to highlight when teaching students how to write an essay:

Tomorrow, ... I'm going to be doing introducing advantages and disadvantages essay ... and so I'm going to do a worksheet on that. ... We're going to discuss advantages and disadvantages. ... (The) focus is 1), to be able to brainstorm about ideas and use adjectives that we've done – using that language; reintroducing connecting words – cohesive devices; revise also paragraph structures, be it describing advantages or you know, the method – describing disadvantages; working out the whole

format of the essay – the introduction, paragraph for advantages, disadvantages and conclusion. (Joanne; intv0.2, p8)

Thus, what Joanne has planned to teach her students is the essay genre, top-level structure, which looks at the relationship between the ideas (Emmitt and Pollock, 1991), and text cohesion.

In Reading, an examination of the unit outlines, the reading materials, and the teachers' description of what they do in their Reading class also demonstrate that Reading is focused on understanding texts at discourse level. At all levels of the ELICOS program, teachers want their students to be able to locate different types of information such as main points and specific information in various kinds of written texts (for example, brochures, newspaper articles, and academic texts). In addition, in the more advanced levels of the ELICOS program, the teachers also want their students to understand inference and to evaluate the content of the texts. The ability to do all these requires an understanding of how information is usually organised in different text types, and the use of set conventions to relay the information in different genres. They also require an understanding of how words and punctuation are used to organise the information within the texts. A large part of teaching reading comprehension is centred on understanding the discourse structure of various text-types.

In Speaking, the focus is again on genres and how to produce these genres. There are several genres that the students in the different levels are taught. In the DE2 classes, for example, one of the genres taught is simple dialogues with openings, turn-taking and closings. In the more advanced level classes, the students are expected to give oral presentations, which require an introduction, body and a conclusion. In all these, much attention is devoted to teaching the structure of the different genres.

Similarly, in Listening, information retrieval from various types of spoken texts is the main concern of the teachers. These texts can be monologues such as lectures or news items, or dialogues such as radio interviews or just conversations. They can be spoken in a variety of accents and the language range from formal language to very informal language containing colloquialisms. Once again, the focus is on the whole text and how to make use of various types of discourse cues to help to determine the gist, look

for key information and specific information. This is demonstrated by Leanne's description of one of her Listening lessons. Leanne reported as follows:

The listening – the main focus is note-taking – looking for main ideas, key words, specific information. The first listening we did on Tuesday was a lecture on how to apply for an exam and ... I think it made them focus on the main idea. Looking at it, it's quite orderly (with the lecturer saying) "The first thing you have to do ..., the second thing you have to do ...". So with note-taking, I'm trying to get them to ... think about how spoken lectures are structured, and therefore they should follow with their note-taking. (Leanne; intv0.1, p4)

Thus, Leanne's selection of text is based mainly on the clarity of the discourse markers, which signal the types of information that are to come.

To help with information retrieval from a spoken text, the teachers also attended to vocalics, a feature of discourse that concerns meaning realisation through sounds. To teach students to decode an oral message, they have to understand the possibilities and limitations of the oral speech, which is used to carry language. Forming an important part of Leanne's teaching of pronunciation is the use of vocalics to carry meaning. This is illustrated the following quotes where she lists some of the features about speech which carried meaning:

Conventions for English- for example, stressing important words, pausing after important points (Leanne; intv1.1-2; p7)

How sounds are connected to their listening skills; so for example, the weak stress words of the English language and how the reason why they sometimes don't understand is because the word's not said or not said completely or is not stressed. (Leanne; intv1.1-2; p7)

Once more, what can be seen from Leanne's comments is that her concern in teaching listening is understanding the nature of language at discourse level.

In conclusion, the notion of language to the ELICOS teachers comprises both non-verbal and verbal codes. The subject matter of language then must include both these sets of codes. In terms of body language, the subject matter extends beyond the normal focus on eye gaze and facial expressions to include general behaviour that is culturally

appropriate. In regard to verbal codes, the ELICOS teachers teach many things related to language and these are generally categorised under the headings of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and the macro-skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. All these are aspects of language that are important for communication to be possible.

Proposition 4a

For ELICOS teachers, language is a tool which is used predominantly for communication.

Corder (1972) observes that the way in which people talk about language usually gives an insight into how language is regarded by those people. For the ELICOS teachers in the present study, language is regarded as a tool, an instrument that a person uses to perform a task. Thus, the verb ‘use’ and other words conveying the same notion are most commonly associated with language in the interview data. The following extracts from teachers’ comments illustrate this:

We’re now going to use the language that we learnt in this last activity in this and see how it looks in the written form. (Joanne; intv 0.1)

What we did was that we looked at some of the structure words used and I just gave them two basic things making sentences using these. Incredible! Very large number of mistakes. Very few people could handle that language at all. (Rosa; intv . 1.2).

They’re just using the language by the end of the lesson with discussion ‘cause I often start off with the vocab. ...Then usually by the end of the lesson, I see results (with students) using the language – the function. (Emma; intv0.1 p.5)

As Theresa (intv. 0.2) puts it, to use language, one has to “*crack the formula*” and “*pull apart ... all the bits and understand it*”. Cracking the formula can involve knowing the genre that the students are supposed to learn, knowing its structure and knowing how to put information together in a coherent and cohesive manner with the aid of all the elements of language stated above – vocabulary, grammar, and discourse rules.

The ELICOS teachers are primarily concerned with language as a tool for communication. As Joanne puts it:

Language ... is used for a purpose. I think 99% it's used to communicate some need or knowledge to people, and hopefully, through good communication language skills, you're able to do that. (Joanne; intv0.3)

As she sees it, classroom teaching, especially for a general English course, is to help students to “*communicate outside the classroom*” which means “*the ability to talk to people*” (Joanne; intv 1.1).

Theresa, in explaining why she wants her DE2 students to learn the rules of grammar well, provides an elaboration of how classroom learning would aid communication outside:

When they go out of the classroom, they're going to try using it in their homestay situation. They want to feel like they know what they're talking about – that they know the structures, they know the meaning, that they feel powerful when they're out there communicating with other speakers – native speakers or students of higher level. (Theresa; intv 0.3 p3)

Similarly, Anna feels that “*The purpose of writing is to communicate. They've got to communicate their ideas*” (Anna; intv 0.4 p.5). Her role in teaching Writing thus is to teach students to write in such a way that they can communicate their ideas to the reader.

Associated with this is the notion of audience and reader. The teachers are conscious of how messages are received by the other person. For this reason, Leanne is concerned that her students are aware of their audience when they are making their presentations:

The student had to be aware of the audience when they give their presentation. (Leanne; intv1.1-2)

Therefore, when choosing a topic and making a decision on what aspect of the topic to focus, the teachers have to think about what is interesting to them as well as their audience.

Taking up this matter, Leanne stated:

The students really have to think about how to regard them (topics) – what actually is their topic, ... what is interesting to them as well as their audience. (Leanne; 1.1-2, p1)

In this regard, Rosa taught her students in their writing to have an introduction that would get their reader's attention:

You have to check ...you can get the reader's attention with a question or an anecdote or something like that. (Rosa; intv1.3, p6)

She emphasised the importance of keeping the reader's interest in mind communicating through the medium of writing. An interesting introduction helps to attract the reader to the article.

Having gained the audience or reader's attention, it is also necessary to engage the other person. Laura stated that when teaching Speaking, she emphasised the use of positive body language, by which she meant maintaining eye contact with the audience, smiling and not speaking with their back towards the audience. As she explained:

If you're giving a presentation, it's very important that you look at your audience, smile and stand still, and if you write something on the whiteboard, then you turn around and face the audience before you start talking – things like that. (Laura; intv 1.1)

Leanne shared a similar view, adding that it is important for students to realise that they have to make eye contact with their audience when they speak.

It is important that they look at the person rather than read. (Leanne; intv1.1-2; p8)

Finally, getting the other person's attention also requires the addressor to make sure that the message is comprehensible.

One aspect of comprehensibility is related to shared background knowledge and how much the reader knows about the subject. If the reader has a large shared background, then it is not necessary to be detailed in providing the background information. Theresa

cautioned her DE2 against assuming that their readers were familiar with what they were writing about in their film reviews. Thus she told her students:

You need to remember ... yeah, realise that your reader knows nothing about the movie. Don't assume that the information written down will make sense to a person. (Theresa; intv. 0.2, p.4)

In summary, ELICOS teachers view the teaching of language primarily for the purposes of communication. In connection with this is their notion of audience and how to initiate and sustain interaction to achieve one's communicative goals. This idea underpins a great deal of the decisions and actions of the teacher. Their perspective is that in order to achieve a desired outcome, the students need to know how to write and speak using various genres.

Proposition 4b

Communication is concerned with the expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning.

I place more importance on the meaning (Emma; intv1.3p3)

Emma's sentiments are shared by the other ELICOS teachers who all consider meaning realisation as the focus of their work. In viewing language as a tool for communication, the teachers are interested in meaning – how it is expressed, interpreted and negotiated. Each of these aspects of meaning will now be developed in greater detail.

Meaning Expression

Meaning expression is within the domains of Speaking and Writing. To the teachers, there are two parts to meaning expression. The first is the content of the message and the second is the means to convey the message content. These are treated as two separate entities with the substance or content, comprising ideas and thoughts, being viewed as preceding the form, which is the language used to convey it. This way of conceptualising the meaning expression process is evident in the way the teachers handle the teaching of both Speaking and Writing, where they encourage their students

to talk about a topic or think about a particular issue first without worrying about the accuracy of their speech.

When talking about the usefulness of discussions, Joanne said that its purpose is to generate thoughts so that the students have something to write about later on (Joanne; intv0.2, p.2). Similarly, in preparing her DE2 class to write a film review, Theresa advised her students as follows:

Just throw down your ideas in note form ...Instead of getting bogged down in writing your notes – this grammatical accuracy – just get your ideas down first. (Theresa; intv. 0.2).

Thoughts, then, must come before getting the language right.

Emma also had the same idea when she gave her students a problem-solving exercise in which they had to write a report of a road accident. In order to write as ‘truthful’ an account as possible, the students had to go through a few eye-witness accounts of the accident, each of which contained some information that was not collaborated by other accounts. Emma instructed her students to work out where the accounts differed and where the accounts were in agreement with each other. She recalled:

I wasn't really focusing on accuracy at that stage. I just wanted them to discuss. ... each person got an eyewitness account of the accident and some details were the same and some were different. ...they had to find which parts of the report were true. There were seven or eight facts that were correct. (Emma, intv1.1, p9)

Once again, the concern is on getting the ‘facts’ worked out before attention is directed to the way the language is used to express these facts.

Finally, one of Anna’s first tasks in guiding her students in their writing assignment was to check each student’s ideas. This was done before students got down to writing:

While they were working, I went round and discussed with each of them their ideas about where they were going. I talked to them about perhaps the necessity of changing the topic and work out how to get that information, and making decisions on when to do that ... and just

clarifying where their ideas were and helping them to fine-tune that.
(Anna; intv0.2)

From these comments, it is clear that teachers tend to view ideas and language separately in their teaching. Attention must first be on the development of ideas. Only after that is satisfactory do teachers attend to the way the ideas are conveyed in the language. In teaching meaning expression, three criteria are heeded by the teachers. These are clarity, relevance and appropriateness.

Clarity

The ELICOS teachers did not say specifically what they meant by clarity of expression. However, it is not difficult to determine what this means to them by examining their statements on what they said was unclear about their students' work and their accounts of what they did in class to help students make their meaning clear. From the data collected, two aspects to clarity have been identified. The first is content and the second is the language used to express the content.

Clarity of content

For the teacher, there are various facets that contribute to the clarity of meaning expression. One concerns with the ability to understand the substance or content of the message well enough to reproduce it. This can be a short reading text, a movie or a storybook, or indeed any topic. In one exercise, Joanne observed that some students in her G/P class did not have much flow in paraphrasing the text she gave them to read. For the exercise she had given the students different texts, each describing a cultural *faux pas* committed by various individuals. The students' task was to read the text, determine what went wrong and then tell their partner about the situation. Joanne found that some of them had difficulty doing the exercise. Joanne remarked:

I couldn't understand what the whole thing was about, perhaps, because they haven't understood well enough themselves. (Joanne; intv1.3p12)

Thus, Joanne attributed the students' difficulty in paraphrasing the texts to the fact that they had not understood the passages that they were given to read.

Another facet of clarity of content for the teachers has to do with whether the ideas are clear enough for the students to articulate them in the right words. In many cases teachers cannot understand what the students are saying because the students themselves are not clear about what they want to express. This is illustrated in the account by Emma who asked her class to write about the advantages and disadvantages of train travel. As Emma recalled:

One of them – they found it difficult in saying, “In train travel, you can ...” – they say ‘relax’ – “you can enjoy the trip. You can see the scenery as you travel” - some of them found difficulty in writing it, “whereas in a plane, you don’t see the scenery, but in a train, you can do that”. They found that difficult to write. (Emma: intv1.2-3, p4)

As can be seen in Emma’s recollection of the incident, one group of students wanted to state an advantage of train travel, which necessitated a comparison with air travel. They appeared to be struggling with a vague notion that train travel had an advantage over air travel in that train passengers could relax because they could look at the scenery outside. Air passengers, on the other hand, could not relax because they could see nothing from their windows. Emma had to ask them questions to determine what they were trying to convey and together they agreed that what the group wanted to communicate was that it was more enjoyable travelling by train because one could see the scenery outside. Both words, ‘enjoyable’ and ‘relaxing’, were in the group’s vocabulary but they were not clear enough about their own idea to use the right word and in the process, created some confusion in the way they expressed their meaning.

The third facet of clarity for the teacher is related to whether there is a conflation of ideas. Sometimes students treat two ideas as if they are one and the same thing. For example, Anna had a student who was supposed to be writing about online newspapers but he treated online newspaper companies and online newspapers as if they were the same entity. That created confusion. In recounting the incident, Anna said:

He had difficulty in narrowing down his topic, what he wanted to say. He was talking about online newspapers and he started off with a title that was about online newspaper companies. (Anna; intv 0.3,p3)

To avoid confusion, Anna had to ask him to decide which of the two ideas he wanted to write about and then to make sure that the points he gave were consistent with just one of the ideas.

Clarity of content can also be compromised when relationships between the ideas are not properly analysed. This is illustrated by a piece of writing by a student in Rosa's class. Rosa asked her class to write a 'cause-and-effect' essay. One of the students chose to write about domestic violence and she tried to link one cause to one kind of violence when in fact, all the causes could end in violence of all kinds. Rosa recalled:

One girl was trying to write a chain essay for her assignment about domestic violence. I was trying to explain to her that there are lots of causes for domestic violence. She'd identified aggressive personality, alcoholism etc but in fact, the effect was the same – domestic violence. And she was trying to link things together one by one which didn't work – the domestic violence caused by alcoholism leads to injury; domestic violence caused by personality is linked to divorce.

She concluded by saying that it “*needed more clarification than that*” (Rosa; intv2.2,p6).

Lastly, clarity of content deals with how well the students are able to address their given tasks. Leanne found that her students had difficulty focusing their minds on the task at hand. Leanne's students were supposed to produce a survey presentation and part of the task was to design a survey comparing two groups of people – Australians and Asians – on a topic of the students' own choice. She gave the students some examples of good and bad questions to ask and then gave them instructions to write questions that would help them obtain the information they required for their presentation. Leanne found, to her despair, that many of the questions her students produced lacked focus. Some asked double barrel questions while others asked questions that were aimed at finding information about one group rather than information that allowed comparison between the two groups of people. She recalled:

The content was all over the place as well. You know, we had the order of questions which were throwing up – we had double barrel questions ... (and) just asking questions which were aimed at Australian students or

questions aimed at Asian students when in a comparative survey they had to aim at both. (Leanne; intv1.3, p3)

Leanne attributed this to the fact that the students did not think through the task, which they were supposed to do and devise appropriate questions that would allow them to get the right kind of information.

To help students express meaning clearly, there are strategies which teachers teach their students. In Writing and Speaking, the first is to focus on narrowing down the topic of their writing or presenting. Underlying this is the assumption that little meaningful information can be imparted if the topics are too broad. In this respect, Anna teaches her students to narrow down their topic before they proceed with their essay. In fact, one of her earliest tasks in teaching Writing is to check students' attempts at narrowing their topic. Explaining what she had planned for one such lesson, Anna remarked:

We're going to look at how they narrow a topic down. All they've done is broad – very broad topics like globalisation, and so we're going to say how you're going to take that, if you're interested in that – how you're going to make an essay topic out of that. (Anna; intv0.1, p7)

Anna's strategy, then, was to teach her students the way to narrow their own topics by using examples, which the students gave her in the previous lesson when she taught them to brainstorm topics for their assignment.

Once the students have narrowed down their topic, the next strategy is to see if the students' thesis statements are clear. According to Anna, one of her first tasks in guiding her students in their essay writing is to check their thesis statements to see that their ideas are clear. In recounting what she did with her class, Anna said:

Suggestions were mainly on content arrangement and what they were really trying to say. What was their thesis? Some of the theses were a bit unclear, and where they were going to get concrete support for their points. (Anna; intv 0.2; p1)

So Anna raises her students' awareness on the importance of having messages that are clear and in writing, this is achieved by having thesis statements that are clear.

Anna also teaches her students to look for inconsistencies in arguments and to check for the internal logic of the arguments with the aim of ensuring that all the ideas in the essay are in agreement with each other. One way of doing this is check that the thesis statement is well supported by the various paragraphs in the essay. She asks them to check to see if “*the points are consistent with the thesis statement*” (Anna; intv0.1, p2) when they edit their own essays.

Finally, clarity of content within the academic context also means proper acknowledgement of ideas taken from other. The western tradition has well developed conventions that have to be followed and for content to be truly clear, it is important that students show which ideas are theirs and which are taken from other people. To do this, they need to know how to use these conventions appropriately. Consequently, much time is spent on teaching students the conventions of proper referencing. As Anna says, she spends quite a lot of time on teaching the students to reference and to check that their referencing is consistent (Anna; intv0.3 p1).

Clarity of language

Clarity of meaning expression also governed by the way the content of the message is packaged for the listener/reader. The ability to manipulate the language to convey the message as intended relies largely on the communicator’s control of the language. There are controls at different levels of language, which the ELICOS teachers identify as being important for meaning to be clearly expressed. At the most minute level, it is individual words and phrases. Next is control at sentence level and finally, at the level of discourse. Additionally, there are certain controls that are specific to writing and some that are specific to speaking as well as those that are common to both macro-skills. Clarity of meaning expression depends on the ability to control language at all these levels.

In relation to control at word level, many ELICOS teachers find that what students want to convey is sometimes inaccurate because they cannot find the right word or expression. For example, a group of students in Theresa’s class were trying to write a review for the film *Romeo and Juliet* but she discovered that their active vocabulary was not extensive enough for them to use the most appropriate words to express what they wanted communicate. According to Theresa:

They needed a little bit of help with vocabulary because they were using words that were close to but they weren't sort of ... They were so grateful that I came up with words. ... I said, "Do you mean this?" and they say, "Ah yes, thank you" and they all dived into their dictionaries ... (Theresa, intv0.2p4)

So, Theresa gave them help to arrive at the right words to convey the meaning they wanted to express.

An account of what happened in Emma's DE2 class also serves to demonstrate this point quite well. Emma went round her class to check on the stories that the different groups had written. In one group the students wrote "*Unfortunately, at last, they got divorced*". Emma pointed out that it was not appropriate to have '*unfortunately*' and '*at last*' together. She suggested that the students used '*in the end*' instead because that was the usual way for concluding stories. As Emma put it:

The last sentence was, "Unfortunately, at last, they got divorced." And I circled "at last". I said, "At last – at last and unfortunately – is that okay?" And they were all like, "Mmm, at last, yes, at last ...yes, because last thing" and I think I said, "In the end" sounds better and I think one of the students asked, "Oh, at last – in the end" and I said, "Well, because this is the end of the story, so that's why we say in the end – the end of the story. You don't say at last of the story but in the end" and they went, "Oh, okay". (Emma; intv2.3p3)

At DE2 level, students generally have very limited vocabulary and little awareness of the role of the linguistic environment to determine the choice of expressions and teachers find that they have to supply them with the appropriate words. However, as demonstrated in Emma's recall of how she handled such situations, teachers do not generally devote much time to explaining why one word or phrase is used in place of another unless the explanation can be made quickly.

Sometimes the clarity of meaning expression is marred by the use of the wrong preposition. In the same lesson, Emma had to work out whether some of her students wanted to express the meaning 'argued for' or 'argued about' in their story. One group of students wanted to say that the couple had an argument about whether or not to have a child. Instead of using 'about' they used 'for'. To establish what they really meant,

Emma had to ask them to explain to her what they meant when they wrote ‘argued for’. She said:

They said ‘for’ – ‘they argued for something’. I circled ‘for’. I think I asked them about the meaning.... So when they explained that, then I realised that it was ‘argued about’... (Emma2.3 p.4)

Once again, as new language learners, the students did not know about the importance of small words like prepositions and how these words carry meaning.

In terms of control over the sentence, clarity can also be hampered by what the teachers believe is poor grammar. This is illustrated in the following comments made by Emma, Laura and Rosa about their students’ writing and speaking:

A few times I couldn’t understand the meaning and I said to them that the grammar is so bad that it affects the meaning that I couldn’t understand it. So I had to ask them what they meant. (Emma; intv1.2-3 p3)

When they were paraphrasing those paragraphs, they didn’t do it very well. They found it really hard. They could understand the gist of it but their grammar was up the creek. (Laura; intv1.3, p8)

I think the only trouble is (the reason) they sometimes get confused is because it’s a grammatical thing. They’ve got the grammar – the misunderstanding of the use of the structures and that’s how it’s muddling the cause and effect t.... (Rosa; intv2.2p4)

As can be seen from these comments, in most instances, when the students’ writing is incomprehensible, the teachers attribute it to the grammar. This usually means problems with word order, tenses, subject-verb agreement, notions of plurality, missing articles or wrong use of articles, and other obvious grammatical features.

Where control at discourse level is concerned, clarity of meaning expression has to do with how the content is organised within the text. For meaning to be clear in writing, information needs to be organised according to the accepted conventions. For example, if the text is to describe a process, then a chronological order for organising information is advised. When teaching their students to write a ‘compare and contrast’ essay, Ben and Rosa select only two methods of information organisation to teach, namely, the

‘block’ method and the ‘point by point’ method of laying out information. As Rosa explained:

On Friday, students were building up to finishing the lesson with a plan of the two ways you can write a comparison and contrast essay. I mean, there are more than two but they only get taught two, which is the ‘block’ method and the ‘point by point’ method. (Rosa; intv1.2p9)

The reason for teaching students to organise their information in a certain accepted manner is to make meaning expression clearer in spite of poor control of the language. According to Rosa:

And I find that it really helps students – often students, by the end of, say, Ac2, if they’ve done Ac1, really structure essays well, I think it really makes it less painful for mainstream lecturers to read bad English. (Rosa; 1.2p10)

Given the limited time which the teachers have to teach their students, teaching them some ways of organising information is seen as strategic in helping them to cope with study in their university courses.

The control of language at the levels of word, sentence and discourse described so far is applicable to both writing and speaking. However, there are language features pertaining to writing alone that are necessary to make meaning expression clear. These are the conventions relating to punctuation and spelling of words. The ELICOS teachers also see the importance of correcting their students when they do not apply the rules of punctuation in their writing. In addition, they explain the boundaries of a paragraph, the appropriate places to break up ideas into different paragraphs and how a paragraph ought to be developed. They also point out the need for correct spelling of words as misspellings can create confusion.

In speaking, clarity is concerned with the delivery of speech. While punctuation, paragraphs, and spelling form part of the visual mode for expressing meaning, pronunciation, stress, intonation, speed of delivery and audibility comprise the auditory mode of meaning expression. The excerpt taken from an interview with Leanne

illustrates some of the challenges which confront the students in making their meaning clear in speech:

Well, my difficulty is in understanding our students. So, for example, I mean, simple words – they understand the meaning of the word. They know how to write the words but they don't know how to say it correctly so that I can understand what they're saying. Sentence stress ... I suppose when they start doing their presentations, ... it becomes more difficult to understand because the flow is not there. They are not stressing the important words in a sentence – the key words. (Leanne; intv0.1)

Leanne's role, then, is to help her students to improve their speech to the extent that they can express meaning more intelligibly.

Relevance

The ELICOS teachers' second criterion of meaning expression is relevance. Relevance is a pragmatic concept that is concerned with how a particular piece of text relates to a particular situation. It is also concerned with the expectations of the reader/listener (Serber and Wilson, 2004). The concept of relevance as it is generally used by the teachers is straightforward. It refers to whether the meaning expressed makes sense within the context in which it is expressed. Within the ELICOS class context, it refers to whether the students' work addresses the tasks they are given. If a piece of work is very well written but it does not address the task, then it will have failed in getting one aspect of meaning across. This point is well illustrated in Rosa's recall of how one of her students asked her what Ben's essay which he wrote for students to critique, would score in an IELTS test. Her answer was that it would get the top score if the essay directly answered the essay question. She told them this:

(I)f it was appropriate to what he was asked to do, he would have got top marks (Rosa; intv2.1p3)

It was made clear to the students that their efforts had to address the task at hand. No matter how good a piece of work is, if it is not relevant to the task, it is not considered to be meaningful.

Leanne provided some further insights into what the concept of relevance involves for ELICOS teachers. In terms of designing a questionnaire to seek certain information, it means asking the right questions so as to elicit the right information. She explained:

I mean, if their aim is to look at the relationship between parents and children, I mean, what questions will they have to ask in order to get the answer. (Leanne; intv1.1-2p1)

The teachers also perceive that students have great difficulty keeping their work relevant. On this, Leanne recalled a student who was supposed to find out the differences in food habits between Australian students and Asian students. Leanne said:

So, you've got like one guy that's writing on food and some of his questions are, "What kind of taste food do you like – Thai, bla, bla, bla", "Are you a vegetarian?" and so on. You know, it's all over the place. (Leanne; intv1.3, p4)

Instead of producing questions that could bring out the similarities or differences, he asked questions that could only illuminate the food habits of the particular individual.

As a way of helping their students to keep relevant, the ELICOS teachers spend much time on monitoring students as they apply themselves to tasks given to them, including walking around the class to check that the students do their work correctly. In Academic English classes where the major assessment task is fairly complex in that it requires students to do a number of subtasks before they can actually complete the assignment, the teachers help their students keep to the point by checking their subtasks regularly. Laura's description of what she did to keep her students on track with their oral presentations was typical of what the majority of the ELICOS teachers do in the Academic English levels. She started early by getting her students to tell her what their topic for the presentation was and each week she checked on their progress. In particular, she wanted to make sure that the students were addressing the topic as one of the criteria for the oral presentation was relevance of content:

Also I want to talk about how they're going – discuss the research of their topics. I've written down how they're getting on with it, what ideas they have 'cos I need to know if they're going off track or way off beam and I

will want to see their outline and their plan before their talk. (Laura; intv2.2p10)

Overall, then, relevance is regarded as a straightforward criterion. It is a case of whether or not the meaning expressed makes sense in the communicative situation. At the same time, it is something with which the students experience great difficulty. For this reason, the teachers spend much of their time checking their students' work to help them keep to their task.

Appropriateness

While clarity and relevance are concerned with the message content and how accurately it reflects the intentions of the sender, appropriateness, a sociolinguistic concept, for the ELICOS teachers, is concerned with the packaging of the message in terms of how it fits with the context in which it is presented. Their perspective concurs with that of Hymes (1972), that judgements of appropriateness require tacit knowledge of the rules of language use within the speech community. It is an understanding of who can say what to whom, when and how. Such an understanding requires an understanding of the cultural norms of the speech community. Within the ELICOS context, making explicit some of the tacit knowledge, which the speakers of the community have, is essential for language teaching.

Appropriateness, according to the ELICOS teachers, has a number of facets. First, there is appropriateness related to how the meaning is expressed. In this regard, many teachers mention the register. Joanne explained that one of the indicators of whether a student is competent in the language is whether the person can respond appropriately. This includes the ability to use the correct register in various situations. On this, Joanne said:

*When you speak, the person can understand and respond appropriately.
To use – to be aware of appropriate language for a variety of situations –
different registers of language ... (Joanne; intv0.3, p12)*

One aspect of register is the formality of language and the notion of appropriateness is concerned with knowing when it is appropriate to use formal language and when to use informal language.

Regarding the latter, students' attention is drawn towards the difference between spoken and written language. For example, Emma brought the attention of her DE2 students to the fact that there are certain expressions that are appropriate in speech but not appropriate for writing. Her students used phrases such as “*by the way*” when they were reading out their written texts and Emma told them that such phrases were acceptable only in speech but were inappropriate if it was in a piece of written text. (Emma; intv1.1, p2)

In terms of Academic English, some ELICOS teachers like their students to observe extreme formality in their writing. Anna, for example, made the note that many model essays from books used the personal pronoun “I”. She cautioned her students against using “I” in their writing. As a way of raising their awareness to such use, which she considers inappropriate, she asked her students to critique model essays containing the use of personal pronouns among other things. In her own words:

I'm asking them to critically evaluate the structure of the models I give them based on what I've taught them. So, to look for inconsistencies in the arguments, or use of personal pronouns which I always tell them that I don't want. So many of the model essays have got “I think” and I'm telling them that I don't want to see “I think”. (Anna; intv0.1, p2)

Although Anna acknowledges that the first person pronoun is beginning to appear in academic essays, she does not like it and consequently, insists that her students not use it in their essay.

Appropriateness, especially in the academic setting, takes in the way other people's works are used by the students. Failure to acknowledge properly the borrowed ideas and words of other writers in one's essay is viewed as a serious offence. On this, the perception among the ELICOS teachers is that many of the students from Asian cultures plagiarise:

In Asian cultures, memorising things, copying with the word is praised and rewarded but in our system, it's punished and they need to know that, particularly if they're going on to higher study or straight into mainstream. (Laura; intv1.3, p.1)

The explanation given for students plagiarising may be an over simplification and over generalisation in that there are many different cultures and many reasons why students copy without acknowledgement. However, the point to note here is that the teachers are keen for their students to understand how plagiarism is viewed and much time is devoted to teaching students strategies to avoid it.

Meaning Interpretation

The perspective of the ELICOS teachers is that there are three different levels of meaning interpretation. The first level is the literal comprehension of the text, which is understanding information that is stated explicitly. The second level of interpretation is inferential comprehension, which deals with ideas not directly stated but implied. The third is evaluative comprehension, which concerns analysis and judgements made about what is said or written. All these levels of interpretation form part of what teachers see as the SMK of language, which their students need to learn. However, not all levels of interpretation are taught at all levels. More of this will be discussed below.

Literal comprehension

The ELICOS teachers regard literal comprehension as the most fundamental level of meaning interpretation. Before students can infer from and evaluate a text, they must first be able to understand the text (spoken or written) they are given. Literal comprehension requires understanding of the text at word, sentence and discourse levels. To teach literal comprehension, the teachers focus on different features of language at these various levels.

At word level in Reading, the teachers are concerned that students understand the denotative meaning of words. There are two qualities of denotative meaning, which they feel are important to note. The first is that the specific meaning of words can only be derived by looking at the word in context and not from consulting a dictionary alone. Without contextual clues, misinterpretation can easily occur. One form of misinterpretation can arise from the fact that certain words with the same spelling can represent two entirely different meanings. Emma's account of an incident in her class illustrates this:

I just wrote 'plant products' on the board and one student thought 'factory' because they thought I meant, I guess, a plant and I said, "No, no, no". And another student called out, I think, "Tobacco". Maybe she had seen the passage and guessed. (Emma; intv 2.1, p8)

For this reason, the teachers emphasise the need to interpret a word in context.

An additional quality of denotative meaning, which the ELICOS teachers address in teaching literal comprehension to L2 students is the difficulty associated with direct translations. An anecdote recounted by Theresa shows that teachers have often to contend with this in class. Theresa had a student who argued with her that 'what' and 'who' had the same meaning in his language because only one word for used to refer to person and thing in his language. Theresa recalled the incident thus:

One of the questions – "Who was able to help Chow in his smoking habit?" And a Chinese student wanted to argue at length. He had put 'cloves' and I said, "No, the answer is this mountain medicine man in Nepal". And he was argueing that "Who" and "What" really mean the same in his first language and that why, then, couldn't I accept it in English? And so I said there's a very clear distinction between 'who' as a person and 'what' as a thing and that's why. He accepted that for a short time and then he – I could see him still thinking. And then he came up with some more interesting examples that he had prepared himself. ... I was saying that we clearly distinguish people from objects but he was saying, "Yes, but in my culture, a sky can be a person and mountains and trees". They have like .. personified in a way. (Theresa; intv0.4, p3)

A similar example is provided by Joanne who had a Brazilian student who insisted that 'panorama' and 'view' could be used interchangeably. She had to explain to him that:

You wouldn't look out of the window and said, 'What a lovely panorama; you might, but generally you don't. You'd say, "What a lovely view".

However, he was not convinced for he kept saying, "In my language, there's no difference" (Joanne, intv1.4, p6). Frequently, no direct translations or equivalence in meanings exist between the words of different languages. This is another aspect of denotative meaning that teachers have to convey to students.

At the sentence level, the ELICOS teachers perceive literal comprehension to require an understanding of all words in a sentence for accurate interpretation. An example is

again provided by Theresa. She gave a trial reading test to her DE2 class. The selected reading passage was about a man who worked as a ghostbuster. The students had to answer True/False questions and one of the questions was “Mr Robinson was a social worker”. Many students answered ‘True’ which was, in fact, wrong because the text stated that Mr Robinson was ‘*a kind of social worker for ghosts*’. Theresa recalled:

Question 1 said, “Mr Robinson was a social worker. True or False”. A lot of them went, “Oh yeah, true,” because the in the text, it actually said, “I’m a kind of social worker for ghosts”. So, I was just saying to them, “Okay, let’s have a closer look at that now. Social worker is a social worker. Okay, let’s compare that statement with this one and are they exactly the same? If you’re a social worker, how is that different from ‘a kind of social worker’?” (Theresa; intv0.3, p4)

Only after Theresa had drawn their attention to the difference between “I’m a kind of...” and “I’m a ...” did it become apparent to the students that there was a meaning difference between the two statements.

In terms of discourse, the identification of the main idea and supporting sentences in each paragraph appear to constitute a very important aspect of literal comprehension especially in the Academic English classes. The teachers place the greatest amount of emphasis on meaning interpretation at discourse level. The bulk of the materials for teaching this comes from an American text called *Reading Skills Handbook* (Weiner and Bazerman, 1992) where specific chapters have been devoted to showing students how to obtain information in various ways from written texts. In the DE classes, the identification of main ideas may not be taught explicitly but teachers focus on global understanding of the text. This is usually done through asking students to tell them the main ideas of the reading text before they attend to the questions that accompany the texts.

Lastly, for reading, all teachers also raise student awareness to the fact that meaning interpretation even at the literal comprehension level is based on the top down and bottom-up approach. To help the students apply their background knowledge to their reading, the teachers often ask students to predict the content of a text by making use of available clues such as the title, headings and subheadings, pictures and graphs. In Joanne’s words:

Strategies ... like when you look at a text, looking at the title, any clues, pictures – sit back and have a think about what they know of this topic.
(Joanne; intv0.2, p6)

By doing thus, the teachers demonstrate to their students that meaning interpretation requires background knowledge on the part of the reader, a fact of which many students are unaware.

With reference to listening, the ELICOS teachers believe that meaning interpretation at the literal level requires knowledge of phonology, rhythm, stress and intonation. At word level, the first requirement for the interpretation of speech is recognition of the oral form of words in an utterance. The teachers have their own preferred approach to teaching this. Some teachers, especially those responsible for Reading/Writing merely model the correct pronunciation for the students. More specific teaching is carried out by the Speaking/Listening teachers especially in the Academic classes. In these classes, the students are shown where the stress is put in different words, and they are given exercises on sound perception so that they can become aware of how minimal differences in some sounds can signal a different word (for example, ‘sit’ and ‘seat’) and how some words are pronounced differently by different speakers (for example, ‘dance’ is pronounced as /dans/ or /daens/ by different people in Australia).

At sentence level, recognition of an utterance in speech is important for literal meaning interpretation. Within complete utterances, students are taught to recognise the main points much in the same way as they are taught to identify the main points of sentences. They do this by teaching students to listen for words that are more stressed than others. In note-taking exercises, one of the strategies employed to help the students to recognise the main points of a text is to ask them to listen for words that are stressed in the utterance. Leanne explains what this entails thus:

When they’re listening, to listen to key words rather than the ones that are stressed less, the pauses after these words, signposting involved ...
(Leanne; intv0.1, p1)

In connection with the unstressed parts of an utterance in literal comprehension, students’ attention is directed to the fact that the comprehension of utterances is

dependent on the knowledge that not all the words in English are articulated. According to Leanne:

The reason why they sometimes don't understand is because the word's not said or not said completely or is not stressed. (Leanne; intv1.1-2)

In short, the listener has to “*be aware of what's there and what's not*”. (Leanne, intv.1.1-2, p8)

From the overall perspective of discourse, the same features that are important in reading such as identifying main ideas and supporting ideas are also important in listening in the Academic English classes. The reason for this is given by Laura who states:

Because it's an academic course, it focuses on comprehension of written material – university level materials – listening to lectures, how you take lecture notes ... (Laura; intv1.1, p1)

Therefore, Laura is “*more interested in students getting the main idea from a lecture*”. For identifying main ideas and supporting points in speech, a greater emphasis is placed on discourse markers such as “*signposts and transitional signals*” (Leanne; intv1.1) as mentioned by Leanne earlier. These are features of language that the Speaking/Listening teachers teach to their students.

In the DE levels, greater attention is given to understanding the literal meaning of a text in a holistic way. Emphasis is on getting the gist and specific information from various genres of text. How this is to be taught to the students is not articulated. What seems to be important is to expose students to both dialogues and monologues of as many kinds as possible so that the students develop a sense of where information is located in different genres.

The ELICOS teachers are also of the view that it is necessary to understand the variety of accents among speakers of English. Consequently, most of them use listening tapes with the speakers from different countries in the inner circle where possible. As the

students have come to Australia to study, effort is also made to include tapes with the ‘Australian dialect’ as demonstrated in the comment below:

Out there in the real world, some people will other people come here and say that they’ve only ever heard English speakers speak and they don’t know any Australians. So, in the real world, they need a variety of accents. (Joanne; intv.0.2, p7)

If students are exposed only to one particular accent, they will find it more difficult to attune to other accents when exposed to them. Thus, Joanne concludes that it is necessary to expose the students to “*a little bit of everything*”.

Finally, just as in reading, meaning interpretation in speech requires the listener to bring to the text all relevant prior knowledge he/she has of the topic for efficient processing of what he/she hears. Thus, the Speaking/Listening teachers also prepare their students for the listening texts by teaching them how to predict. One of the elements is the title of the lecture because titles usually give many clues to what the lecture contains. As Leanne puts it:

If they understand the meaning of the title of the lecture, that should give them a clue as to what is going to come next, like predicting what’s going to come. Also if they have some of the key words and phrases there and if they get that title at the beginning of the lecture, they could guess and they’d be able to look up in a dictionary so that they can understand it. (Leanne; intv0.1, p4)

Therefore, many teachers find it useful to prepare their students for a listening text by getting them to predict from the title of the talk.

Inferential comprehension

The second level of meaning interpretation is inferential comprehension. This entails looking at the meaning that is not overtly stated. Included in inferential comprehension are inferring the meaning conveyed by idioms, finding the implied main ideas in paragraphs, making sense of texts that leave gaps which the reader /listener are required to fill (e.g. jokes), and attitude of the writer/speaker.

This level of meaning interpretation is only taught in the Academic English classes as it is considered to be more demanding. There are at least two levels of inferential comprehension identified in the data. The first is at the level of word where the literal meaning of certain expressions such as idioms is not reflective of its real meaning. Laura gave the example of the expression, 'open the floodgates' which appeared in a talk on gambling. Expressions such as this rely on the reader/listener's ability to interpret the imagery created by the idiom in contexts far removed from what the words mean literally. When learning a second language, idioms are one type of vocabulary that receives attention from the majority of the teachers interviewed.

The second is inferential comprehension at the level of discourse and there are many types of inferences to which students are sensitised. First, there is the identification of implied main idea of paragraphs or stretches of speech. In many of the texts, the main ideas are not explicitly stated but implied. The students have to infer from the text what the main idea of each paragraph or speech segment is. To help them with this, the teachers teach them techniques such as determining what the details in the paragraph imply.

Second, there is insight into the writer/speaker's attitude, which is derived partly through understanding the connotative meaning of words. Most words have denotative and connotative meanings. Literal comprehension requires knowledge of the denotative meaning of words while inferential comprehension calls for knowledge of the connotative meaning. Where it is present and where it is significant to the text, the teachers normally point out to the students so that they learn to read the writer's or speaker's view on a certain issue by inferring from their choice of words. According to Rosa:

It's obviously something you can't generally teach but just by pointing it out when it occurs. (Rosa; intv1.2, p2)

The reason she gives for this is because:

English has such a wide vocabulary and there's again, such a lot of shades of meaning and connotations that we put on words. (Rosa; intv1.2, p3)

Connotative meaning of words has to be taught in context and in an incidental way since a book that lists connotative meanings of words has yet to be written.

The teachers also teach their students to make inferences about the writer/speaker's attitude towards an issue by looking at the use of extended imagery in texts. For example, Joanne gave her class a reading passage about a person who was overweight. It was intended to be amusing with the writer evoking imagery of bulk and weight. Joanne recalled:

I thought it would be quite good to start with, to give them the idea that in English we often use, well, it could be idiomatic language, but just very colourful language. You know, this is talking about a person who's pretty overweight. She's got massive thighs about to roll from the flabby frame and the imagery. I drew a picture on the board and then – you know, in English we often like to create some sort of imagery that's amusing to make fun of ... sometimes sober situations. (Joanne; intv2.1, p4)

The use of imagery is yet another device of language which teachers tell their student to look for when they are asked to find out the attitude of the writer on an issue.

The last form of inferential comprehension is one where the reader has to deduce from strategically selected information in the text what meaning the writer is trying to impart. This form of inferential comprehension depends on shared understanding of the schema of the topic for interpretation. If the schema is unfamiliar to the reader/listener, the meaning will be difficult to deduce. An example of this form of inferential meaning is given by Anne whose students had great difficulty understanding a passage because the crucial actions in the story were implied rather than made explicit. Anna recounted the event thus:

I did not realise that it was going to be such a problem. There was a line that said ... It's about tourists in Bath. It's about a family, a particular family whose house was on the tourist route and every six minutes, a bus would go past – an open topped bus. And they got so sick of it that they hosed – the next time a bus went past (it) received a full blast from the hose pipe which drenched all the tourists. (Anna; intv0.2p3)

The students could not understand what happened because they could not make the connection between the inhabitants of the house, the hose and the drenched tourists. This is not surprising considering that the students come from different cultural backgrounds and they may find such actions funny.

In addition to the above forms of inferential comprehension, which are applicable to both written and spoken texts, the Speaking/Listening teachers feel that there are other features of speech that convey feelings which are not articulated. According to Leanne, students also need to learn to ‘read between the lines’ when listening to tapes because:

What’s important is not said often and it’s ... a much more difficult thing to a speech because you can’t sort of ... it’s in there, so I think it’s ..to be able to read feelings, emotions – it’s all life skills and those kind of things. (Leanne; intv0.1p6)

What this entails is an understanding of vocalics – the pauses, the tentativeness of speech, intonation patterns, pitch, loudness and all other aspects that came with vocal delivery. These, however, are features that the native speaker knows but which need to be pointed out to the students who are learning English as a second language. Leanne continued:

I think it’s really useful at this level as well because it’s something that’s quite clear to us but they’re still not aware of it. (Leanne; intv0.1, p6)

In the Academic English classes, therefore, an important part of teaching listening is to make students aware of this aspect of speech.

In reading, one other form of inference taught is visual clues such as pictures. Often, pictures accompany texts and much can be gleaned from looking at them. Because of the power of pictures, Rosa uses them when teaching inference. She asks her students to say as much as they can about pictures she takes to the class. This is illustrated in her recollection of what she did with her class one day:

Today, we did a lot of reading and making inference and I wanted a way of them ... to fully understand how inference works. ...So I brought in a load of pictures that I’ve kept from magazines and gave them out

*and work in pairs and say as much as they could about their pictures ...
I just want to make it clear that it's this idea of bringing in knowledge to
the text but on the other hand, not going too far. (Rosa, intv. 2.2, p5)*

Her aim was to demonstrate that with inference, a reader brought a lot of knowledge to the text; however, it was not to the extent where wild claims could be made

Evaluative comprehension

The third level of meaning interpretation is evaluative comprehension, which is the reader/listener's ability to pass judgement on the written or spoken texts. Where the ELICOS teachers are concerned, there are three kinds of evaluative comprehension. The first is determining whether something stated or said is a fact or an opinion. The second is the ability to weigh two sides of an argument and then provide an opinion. The third is to evaluate the writer/speaker's text for consistency of argument. The second and third types of evaluative comprehension are termed as 'critical reading' by the teachers.

With reference to the first type of evaluative comprehension, namely, making a distinction between fact and opinion, systematic teaching of the skill is carried out by the teachers in the Academic English classes. Once again, materials and ideas on how to approach the topic are taken from the text *Reading Skills Handbook*. When teaching this, the teachers direct students' attention to the choice of words used by the author when an opinion is not prefaced by obvious phrases such as "I think" or "It is my considered opinion that".

The second form of evaluative comprehension, which most teachers feel is necessary to teach their students, is giving an opinion. Most of the ELICOS teachers feel that their students who are predominantly from Asia are not good at expressing their opinions on all matters including what they read or hear. A possible explanation offered by Laura is that these students come from environments where opinion giving is not encouraged and nurtured. As most of them in the ELICOS program have intentions of furthering their study in Australia, the teachers feel that they have to learn to give opinion on the written or spoken texts. For Laura and many of the teachers, this aspect of learning is very important. Laura explains what this entails in the following manner:

Being able to express their opinion, so not just outline two sides of the discussion or an issue but be able to make up their own mind about it. We talked about it this morning. You can't sit on the fence. You've got to tell me what you think. It doesn't matter – what's important is that you make a decision because I find Asian students find it incredibly difficult to do it because it's not a valued thing in their culture. It's culturally inappropriate for them historically. (Laura; intv2.3, p5)

Thus, Laura insists that her students “*have an opinion and they have to defend it and argue it and discuss it*” (Laura; intv2.3, p5). In doing so, she hopes that they will develop their ability to question what they read and not to take all printed words as the truth.

Because of this perception that the ELICOS students need practice in giving opinion on issues, the teachers decided, in 2003, that all the students in the Academic English classes be given practice in what they term as ‘critical reading’. From their perspective, this involves giving opinion on selected articles from the newspaper. In Rosa’s words:

We also did critical reading this time. ... The students were meant to take a newspaper article and read it in a critical way. So they were meant to give a summary of the article and say whether they agreed or disagreed. (Rosa; intv1.3, p8)

Through such practice, the teachers hope that the students will become more comfortable with expressing their opinion by the time they leave the ELICOS program.

There is some disagreement among the teachers as to what giving an opinion means. Laura says that she is interested in raising the social awareness of her students and she does this by giving them articles that deal with social justice issues such as poverty. She declares:

I want to make them aware that even within Australia, there are different levels of society, and this is my personal push. We need to look after people who are not so well off. ... Some of the newspaper articles that I use maybe deal with homeless people, teenage pregnancies or teenage suicides. So we're looking at social justice issues because I think they need an awareness of those to function better in an Australian university. ... I guess it helps to make them better people – a bit more rounded, a bit more depth, a bit more morally aware. ... They're going to be professional people or business people

making decisions. I think they should have a social conscience and an environmental conscience. (Laura; intv2.3, p2).

She wants her students to be aware of these issues because she believes it will help them function better in an Australian university and it will make them morally aware of their responsibilities as members of society.

On the other hand, Rosa does not favour teaching critical reading this way because she sees in it the danger of the teacher imposing his/her values on the students. She states:

I just still have this dilemma if that's what we're really here to do at this level and I've often heard teachers say, "I'm really pleased because I gave them an article about whatever and this and that student say, oh yeah, I really see that in my country the roles of women and family are not really fair" and I think that in some ways it is valid but I don't feel I'm here to point out things about other people's cultures because that implies I think mine is best, and so I do have a little problem with that. (Rosa; intv1.3, p9)

Furthermore, Rosa believes that asking students to give an opinion on an issue is not a straightforward matter as many teachers think. It is difficult to find articles that lend themselves to critical reading. She points out that:

It's sometimes hard to find readings that lend themselves to critical reading to actually criticise the writer's opinion. You have got to find something that allows you to do that and I have found a couple of times that it's been a cultural thing as well, like there was a one teacher was using quite a long letter from The Australian and it was someone absolutely condemning. Someone had burned the Australian flag in protest and going on about the penalties these various flag burners should have. But that's how some of our students coming from some other cultures where they also believe it's quite wrong to burn your country's flag. I mean, the whole idea of critical reading is that they realise that this was a very extreme view from the point of the writer. I can see that some of the Indonesians would be horrified at the thought of publicly burning their own flag. (Rosa, intv 2,4, p10)

Rosa's point, then, is that teachers have to be careful when engaging their students in such an exercise. They must be prepared to accept that their students may hold a view that is opposed to theirs.

The third form of evaluative comprehension is critical evaluation of the text, which is made up of the evaluation of the structure of the text, and the evaluation of consistency of the arguments it contains. An example of what this means was given Anna who said:

It's the critical thinking in the reading – more inference, evaluation of text, not just the information, but how it's written and looking at texts for main points and discussing whether they agree or disagree themselves with the propositions made in the text ... (Anna; intv0.4, p8)

Anna teaches her students to examine the structure of written texts and examine the content for the logic and consistency of arguments. She teaches them these skills to help them with their writing but at the same time, she hopes that they will apply the knowledge in the reading texts that they encounter. Anna observes that there is a tendency among students to assume that anything in print is perfect. By getting them to evaluate texts critically, she hopes to dispel that particular myth. Teaching critical text evaluation, therefore, serves several purposes.

From this, it can be gathered that the different forms of evaluative comprehension are placed in an order of perceived complexity and sophistication. The least complex of the three is distinguishing fact from opinion. A slightly more complex form of evaluative comprehension is outlining the arguments in a text and then offering an opinion which is backed by personal arguments for the particular stand taken. Finally, the ability to evaluate both the structure and the content of a piece of text is ranked the most difficult. For this reason, the first two forms of evaluative comprehension are taught to all students in the Academic English classes while the last form is left to students with very high levels of English proficiency.

Meaning Negotiation

The impression given of the participants' perspectives on communication thus far, in terms of meaning expression and interpretation, is one where meaning is a tidy, neat and finished product. To a large extent, the tasks, which the students have to do such as writing an essay or giving an oral presentation can be viewed in this way. They are

finished products with meaning already fine-tuned, and packaged in the manner that follows the conventions of the different genres. The process that each of these finished products has to go through to arrive at its final form, however, has not been given much attention. Nevertheless, this process is an important one, where meaning is clarified and refined through negotiation.

Meaning negotiation is about the participants involved in the communication being clear about each other's meaning when interacting. If the meaning is ambiguous, then the participants engage in the process of negotiating the meaning until it becomes clear to all parties. In regard to the tasks that the ELICOS students have to do, a great deal of the meaning is fine-tuned through negotiation with the class teachers and classmates.

Meaning negotiation forms an important part of the ELICOS teachers' approach to language teaching. It is evident in the way in which all the teachers provide their students with as many opportunities as possible to learn to negotiate meaning in English. This is done through an emphasis on interactive activities, where meaningful exchange of information is required for the activities to be successfully completed. Such activities are used in the teaching of all aspects of language, namely, grammar, reading and writing, listening and speaking.

Interaction that brings about meaning negotiation includes that between the teacher and the whole class, the teacher with small groups, and the students in pairs. In the course of one lesson, all these types of interaction take place as teachers engage students in different types of meaning negotiation. In the teaching of skills, grammar and vocabulary, meaning negotiation takes place in the following classroom interactions:

1. Checking comprehension of meaning;
2. Reaching consensus in meaning;
3. Collaborating to refine and modify meaning.

Checking comprehension of meaning

When teachers introduce a new topic, particularly grammar, they like to start by asking their students what they know about the grammar point, which they are planning to teach for that lesson. This is illustrated in Theresa's account of how she taught the present perfect simple tense:

When I came in on Wednesday, ... I asked them, "Did you feel comfortable with the present perfect simple?" They said they still wanted to talk about it. They were quite There's a lot of uses for it and meaning and they were quite confused there. ... They were trying to contrast the different use and meaning and wanted to review that again, just to boost their confidence. So I said, "You tell me what you know" and I just start drawing out of them ... We ended thrashing it out the whole morning because they kept throwing up other examples, y'know. "What the difference between this and this?" ... I like to present it in a very analytical manner and challenge them, "Why is it this and why is it that?" Get them thinking, get them really engaged and understanding the language and function of it. (Theresa; intv0.4, p8)

In addition, the teachers encourage their students to check each other's understanding of the language tasks before they discuss their answers as a class. For example, students are asked to check their answers for reading comprehension exercises, grammar exercises, and listening with each other or in small groups before the teacher discusses the answers with the class as a whole. While the aim of doing this is to reduce the likelihood of being wrong in front of the whole class, the underlying principle for doing it is that when two people or a small group of people compare their answers, differences in their answers, if they occur, are likely to be discussed and sorted out. Each person will have to look more closely at the task they have completed and their own answers. Through this, they can jointly decide on what the 'correct' answer is.

Reaching consensus in meaning

The teachers like giving students activities, which require them to reach some form of consensus before arriving at the final outcome. Two types of consensus require negotiation. The first type is based on genuine communicative need to reach a decision that is satisfactory to all concerned before the task can be accomplished. The second type of consensus is based on the language activities, which are specially designed to produce discussion and obtain a decision before the activity can be considered as complete.

With regard to the first type of communicative activities, it is common for teachers to set their students paired or small-group tasks for speaking or writing. In these activities, the students are required to make a decision on what to write or say and how

to present the information or ideas. For example, in writing a group essay, Theresa allowed her DE2 students to work in groups to select a film of their choice for their film review. Meaning negotiation was carried out in three phases. Firstly, the students had to agree on a film to review. Then they had to work out the main story line and the details to include. Finally, they had to decide on the structures and vocabulary they would use to write it. They had to make decisions on words choices and agree on grammatical structures to use. In preparing for a paired presentation, Leanne's students went through a similar process. They had to decide on the topic for presentation and then work together to produce the text and visuals. The final outcome of the presentation was based on consensus on the part of the two students involved in the meaning making.

Concerning the second type of consensus in meaning, the teachers tend to give students language tasks designed to elicit joint decisions in order for the tasks to be completed in a satisfactory manner. In reading, the teachers occasionally give their students the task of unscrambling texts and engaging in discussions based on the topic read. To unscramble a text, the students have to agree on how to arrange jumbled-up sentences within a text in a logical order. Sometimes the students are asked to discuss issues raised in a particular text and then to arrive at a conclusion to which all the group members agree. Other language activities which call for consensus include group answer to dilemmas posed by the text, discussion on what equipment to take on expeditions, who to invite for a dinner, and other such activities.

Collaborating to refine or modify meaning

The ELICOS teachers' perspective is that meaning negotiation is also to help students refine and modify some of their earlier ideas if those ideas do not make sense to the other parties involved in the interaction. The teachers often take a leading role in this. One way of refining or modifying meaning that has already been discussed at length is making meaning expression clear. Another way of refining meaning takes place when teachers point out to students that some of their statements are too sweeping and cannot withstand scrutiny. For example, Leanne said that she would challenge her students to defend statements like "All Westerners support abortion". Finally, meaning is also negotiated in discussions among students. Anna found discussions useful because the

students were given the opportunity to reflect more deeply about their topic and also to consider points of view given by other teachers.

Proposition 5

For the ELICOS teachers, in order for meaning to be fully realised, language must be taken within its socio-cultural context. Thus, understanding of the sociocultural norms of the speech community is necessary for successful communication to occur.

According to Kramersch (1998), Malinowski, an anthropologist who studied the fishing and agricultural practices of the natives of Trobriand Islands, found that in order to understand the meaning of the practices of the islanders, he had to understand the language. However, in order to understand what was going on, he needed to know more than just what the words meant. He found that for meaning to emerge, it was necessary to have information about the following: the reason(s) why the participants in the speech event said what they said; the manner in which they said it; the other participants to whom they said it; and the specific context in which all these took place (Kramersch, 1998, p.26). Furthermore, their words, beliefs and mindsets had to be linked to the wider context of the culture of the society. This included their social organisation, economy, kinship patterns, concept of time and space and seasonal rhythms. Therefore, for meaning in language to be fully expressed and understood, the context of the situation has to be taken into account. The context serves as a reference for time and space, and provides a schema for interpreting messages. “It gives meaning to the text and it stands in dynamic relationship to the participants in the interaction” (Stern, 1992, p158).

These insights regarding the importance of context in meaning realisation through language reflect the perspectives of the ELICOS teachers. ELICOS teachers are concerned that their students should produce accurate as well as appropriate language. To do this, the students would need to be familiar with the culture of the society and the teachers address some of these in their classes. In Laura’s words:

It’s ... about culture and adopting mainstream culture here and learning how to fit in to the academic culture. (Laura; intv2.3, p2)

I'm aware that they've all come from different cultures; they've all got different cultural backgrounds. Most of them are Asian and their way of thinking and their way of living, their emphasis on group harmony, of not losing face which by our standard is extreme politeness, is all different and it's slightly alien. For them to come here, ... they have to learn. ... How do people react? Are Australians as rough and ready as they were conceived and they have to fit in both socially and academically. ... I'm trying to give them some cultural background, general knowledge, information about social justice issues because the people they will be working with, not competing, that's not the right word, the students – they all have this. (Laura; intv2.3, p3-4)

Thus, part of the SMK of language is knowledge of the culture of the place in which the language is used. By providing students with such knowledge, there is an assumption that they will be able to interact more appropriately in Australia.

What the teachers do in class in relation to the teaching of culture can be roughly put in three categories. These are behaviour, values and general information about Australia. Where behaviour is concerned, the teachers draw attention to behavior in general and behaviour in the Australian academic setting in particular. Behaviour in general includes the appropriateness of students speaking their own language in front of other people who do not understand them, being direct in asking for more food or drink, actions that could cause cultural misunderstanding and certain eating etiquette which has been described in the preceding section. Below are some comments made by the teachers regarding these matters:

Speaking their own language

It's not okay for two Korean students to chat in front of the Thai students in Korean because it has happened and quite often, even now in the first week, I'm picking up things. I'd say, "Hey, excuse me, don't forget that there are some of us who don't understand and it's really quite impolite to speak in front of them in your first language". (Theresa; intv0.1, p3)

Being direct

Sometimes we do discuss things like that – like the notion of behaviour in Australian culture that might just "can't do" like Japanese behaviour. "Would you like a drink? No," and then you ask, maybe the

third time and they'll say "Yes". I say to them Australians will just walk away and you get nothing. I sort of explain where Australians come from. They won't understand that. You have to change that pattern of behaviour. (Joanna; intv.0.4; p13-14)

Actions that cause miscommunication

And then we did cultural things. What we've done is, I've got a book with all cultural situations – why it went wrong. With the cultural thing is that there are a whole lot of situations where cultural faux pas have happened and the students have to identify what went wrong and they're given a choice at the bottom – 1,2,3,4. And they decide. So again the idea was that again, ... they were to ... concentrate on the general meaning of what was being said, look at the bottom one, try and identify why miscommunication occurred. (Joanne; intv1.3, p10-11)

These are just some of the aspects of culture to which the teachers present to their students. No specific checklist of cultural information is available but teachers normally teach their students such things if they perceive a need for it.

In terms of knowing how to behave appropriately in the academic setting, understanding the role of a student in Australia is considered necessary by some of the teachers. One such person is Rosa who gave her students a passage on education attitudes in the West. One of the reasons for the passage was:

to get them into the idea of thinking about what a student should do, what's a good student. ... Some of the things were about how much students should do on their own, how much the teacher should provide and a lot of them were quite surprised at how much they're asked to do in Australia – the fact that things are not so much given to them as they're given the methods by which they can get information, that they have to work things out, they have to research, they take a lot more responsibility for their own learning really. (Rosa; intv1.2, p3)

By making students aware of these expectations, Rosa feels that they can then be better prepared for their role as students in Australia.

An added aspect of role expectation as a student is their behaviour in the university classroom. According to Laura:

If they want to do further study, you've got to be more assertive – learn to be more assertive than they would have been in their home countries. In their home countries they are encouraged to be quiet and memorise materials and it's semi-socially acceptable to talk through lectures, whisper or whatever as long as you're there, but in Australia, you can't do that and you're expected to be much more involved in a lesson and ask questions of the teacher and things like that and these students cannot do that. (Laura; intv2.2, p6)

In short, Laura felt it necessary to teach her students about the “ *cultural values and mores and behaviours in academic institutions*” (Laura; intv2.2p7).

In addition to general behavior in the academic setting, there are those specific to different formal activities in the university such as giving a presentation. Among the behaviours that the teachers teach their students is positive body language which has been described in earlier sections.

Another point highlighted by some of the teachers in the Academic English classes is the importance that must be paid to certain specific information. For example, Laura had a student who picked an article from *The Australian* for his presentation but he said that it came from the *West Australian*. According to Laura:

One of the boys who's a mature-aged student, who, when I said, “Which newspaper is this from?”, at the top it said ‘The Australian’ but he said, “The West Australian” but I said it's not the West Australian and he looked at it again and he said, “Aren't they the same thing?” and I said, “No, they are two different papers – the regional one and the national one” . (Laura; intv1.3, p7)

To the student, such small differences were negligible as what was significant knowledge for him was that the source was a newspaper; but to Laura, these were significant small difference that needed to be made clear in Australia.

Lastly, the teachers usually try to provide students with as much information as possible about Australia in various ways so that they can acquire a better understanding of the socio-cultural life of the country and so that they can express and interpret meaning more effectively. There are three ways in which the socio-cultural aspects of communication are handled by the teachers. First, it is through pointing out directly to students what habits and practices regarded in a positive light and what negative.

Second, this is carried out through the materials that the teachers use in the class. Third, this can be achieved through activities that particularly highlight certain cultural practices. This is illustrated by the exercise on dining etiquette which Emma gave her DE2 class and the exercise given by Joanne to her G/P class on identifying the cultural faux pas.

From the ELICOS teachers' perspectives, the notion of appropriateness must also address the issue of the appropriate variety of language to use. Many of the teachers are conscious that they are teaching standard Australian English as opposed to American English or British English with which the majority of the ELICOS students are familiar. In this regard, some attention is paid to Australian pronunciation and some explanation given to idiomatic expressions that are typically Australian. Associated with language variety is the question of appropriate register and appropriate genres.

According to Halliday (1970, p145), the full meaning of an utterance can only be realised within the context of the situation. To Halliday, the context of situation determines the behaviour of the participants in a speech event based on the individuals' understanding of their role vis-à-vis the other participants in that particular setting and it provides a frame of reference for the all speech that occurs within that event. The role expectations of participants in different speech events are influenced by the social and cultural norms of the community. These vary from culture to culture and understanding the meaning of the each participant's utterances will require the others to have a reasonable knowledge of the social and cultural norms of the particular community. The ELICOS teachers are well aware of this element of language. Where they are concerned, to know the language, their students have to be exposed to Australian culture as much as possible. Within the time that their students are with them, the teachers focus on giving them insights into appropriate behaviour both in the academic setting and in the wider community, and telling them about the values of the Australian society, and providing them with some general information about the Australian society.

Conclusion

This chapter developed the story line of the ELICOS teachers' understanding of what constituted the subject matter knowledge of English. From the data gathered, it was concluded that the SMK of English is the complex system of non-verbal and verbal codes that make up language. The aspects of language included in verbal codes are vocabulary, grammar, the four macro-skills and pronunciation. Non-verbal codes included body language made up of kinesics, oculisics and facial expressions. In addition, non-verbal behaviour such as being more active in speaking is also included in this aspect of language.

Although language serves several functions, the teachers are most concerned with language as a tool for communication. In this regard, the main function of language is for meaning expression, interpretation and negotiation. Meaning expression requires knowledge of the non-verbal and verbal codes of language and certain criteria are used to guide meaning expression. These are clarity, relevance and appropriateness. In terms of clarity, there are two important aspects. The first is the clarity of content while the second is the clarity of language. In regard to meaning interpretation, there are three levels of interpretation. These are literal comprehension which is considered fundamental to the interpretation of text, inferential comprehension which requires the reader/listener to draw certain conclusions from the text that are not made explicit, and evaluative comprehension which requires the reader/listener to make judgements about the writer/speaker's ideas and style of delivery. In regard to meaning negotiation, it is not taught explicitly as the nature of meaning negotiation in communication is best conducted through actual doing. For this reason, activities for teaching all aspects of language are made as interactive and as authentic as possible.

Finally, the teachers also believe in the importance of context in meaning realisation. To this end, they feel that it is important to teach the students about the values and behaviours of mainstream Australian society and the notion of appropriateness that is associated with these. Furthermore, to give them more understanding of the society, they try, where possible to give the students general information about Australia and the issues of importance to Australians.