

CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS: PROPOSITIONS 6, 7 and 8

Teachers' understanding of the nature of SMK is not the only influence on the way they plan and teach the subject. Much of what goes on in the classroom is also influenced by the teachers' understanding of how the SMK is best learnt. This chapter develops this aspect of teachers' understanding in a final set of propositions. These propositions are embedded in the following story line:

In teaching the SMK in the ELICOS syllabus to the students, teachers also draw on their understanding of how this SMK is best learnt. This teaching must take three entities into consideration, that is, the teaching environment, the student, and the teaching/learning process. In considering the teaching environment, three types of environment must be taken into account. These are the physical, affective and social environments. In relation to students, three types of needs are catered for, namely, knowledge, affective and behavioural needs. Finally, in terms of the teaching/learning process, two sets of strategies are employed in the teaching of the SMK. The first is strategies that are based on understanding of the nature of the SMK and the second is based on understanding of learning in general.

This story line is now unfolded in the form of three major propositions.

Proposition 6

In considering the teaching environment, ELICOS teachers view it important to take account of three types of environments. These are the physical, affective and social environments.

From the ELICOS teachers' perspective, there are at least three dimensions to a conducive learning environment in the classroom. These are the physical environment, the affective environment and the social environment. Each of these is now considered below.

The Physical Environment

The ELICOS teachers' are of the view that physical space has an effect on the social dynamics of the class. This is evidenced in Laura's observation of her class after they moved from their usual small classroom to a big classroom for one lesson. Laura noted that her students found it difficult to settle down to work after the move and she offered the following explanation as the reason:

I think in that little classroom, it was small and cramped but they usually sat in the same seat with the same friends. So they were comfortable with those people and comfortable with me and how my voice would sound, the lighting and everything and to move them elsewhere, if the desks had been in the same order or if we put them in the same configuration, they would have probably settled a bit more quickly but they were disconcerted and they had to find another space to own. They had to adopt ... psychologically – choose a desk, who are they going to sit with, how far is it from the door, the window, the teacher. Do you know what I mean? (Laura; intv.2.2, p11)

Any change in the physical environment, even though it is for the better, still has an adverse effect on learning, albeit temporarily.

With respect to the physical environment, the arrangement of desks in the classroom contributes to the learning environment. Where possible, the ELICOS teachers arrange their students' desks in groups of four and at right angle to the teacher's desk. As Laura explained:

I think I'll put the desks facing each other in groups of four ... It was important that they face each other and talk to each other face-to-face, not just sideways. ... When the desks are in groups, they can see each other and this is part of my idea of how students learn based on the fact that they are there to help each other. (Laura; intv2.2, p12)

Such a seating arrangement facilitates group and pair work, and the students can also face the teacher easily if required.

The arrangement of desks and the size of the classroom have an effect on class cohesiveness as Joanne discovered when her class was allocated a slightly smaller than normal room with fixed desk arrangement. Joanne remarked:

I talked to M___ about this and we've perhaps - It wasn't jelling quite so much because of all the classrooms they were in. They were really squashed. They couldn't be put into groups, or they were all lined up facing the front, or they were in a big U-shape. So I think the seating arrangement had some failure for students to be even in a small subgroup within the class and forming friendships. (Joanne; intv.1.2, p3)

Most teachers tend to rearrange the desks so that students face each other most of the time rather than the teacher. However, this is not possible in some classrooms if the desks are arranged in a particular order for specific reasons. This is because other university classes also use the same rooms and the arrangement may be at the particular request of one of the mainstream classes.

Another way in which the physical environment affects teaching is when the classroom is carrying the maximum class size. When this happens, the mobility of the teacher is affected. Some teachers note the difficulty of physically getting to the back of the classroom when the room is filled to its maximum capacity. This is illustrated by Rosa's observation of the difference in her teaching style when the number of students in her class was reduced. Rosa said:

Often at Curtin, just the physical thing of being able to get to people. I was in a room with seven where I had fifteen (in the first module), so I mean I could put the tables into groups and I left a space at each table. I like to go and sit with students, so I felt I had much more contact with them. It's just great to have a smaller class because I remember when there was like fifteen or sixteen. It was physically difficult to actually get there to look over someone's shoulder. (Rosa; intv2.1, p7)

It is clear, then, that some types of interaction between students and the teacher have to be curtailed simply because of the physical difficulty of getting to the back of the class.

Another kind of physical environment that affects learning is the seating of students. Joanne, for example, finds that there is more interaction between mixed-sex pairs than same-sex pairs:

But I find that if I put boy with girl, they'll ask questions; they'll be animated. If I put mixed sex with people who are more sleepy, they'll (perk up). (Joanne; intv1.2, p7)

This, however, is not always the case. Some teachers have found that mixed-sex pairings usually sees the male dominating the pair work. One such is Anna. Anna's observation is that:

Interestingly enough, what happens every time, when you've got a male and a female, the guy just dominates completely. The poor girl is left sitting there and I go, "Don't let him spend all the money, you know. You tell him what you want to do." (Anna; intv0.3, p2)

Although there are differences in opinion on whether mixed-sex pairings are better for language learning than same sex pairings, the effect of sex of students on interaction is significant enough for the ELICOS teachers to take note.

Thus, physical environment plays an important role in creating a conducive learning environment. The ideal physical environment is one where there is sufficient space for the teachers to move around the class to check on their students, and have desks that are arranged in groups of four. In addition, the seating of the different sexes also makes a difference as it is perceived to determine the type and quality of interaction that takes place between students.

The Affective Environment

The second dimension to a conducive environment for learning is the affective environment. One condition which all the teachers automatically try to address in different ways is the reduction of threat in the classroom environment. As Theresa puts it, her aim, which reflects the aim of the other teachers as well, is to create an environment in which the students can "*feel safe and comfortable enough to ask what sometimes they think are really stupid questions*" (Theresa; intv1.4, p8). There are a number of ways this is accomplished by the ELICOS teachers. The first is to boost the students' confidence by not putting in the syllabus skills that are deemed too difficult. An example of what this means is articulated by Rosa who feels that it is too much to expect students in Acl to learn to identify implied main ideas when they already have a lot of other new things to learn. She expressed the following opinion:

I found, for example, Academic 1 had to get through a lot of things. It was almost above their level, like they had to identify stated main ideas in paragraphs. That was fine although the material was most difficult for them but they found implied main ideas very hard. Now, I would take out implied main ideas and put it in Academic 2. (Rosa; intv1.1, p5)

Underlying Rosa's concern regarding the Ac1 syllabus is her belief that some language skills are more difficult than others and that students should be exposed to the different skills gradually. Their self-confidence will be affected if they are taught a skill which is beyond their current ability. In turn, this will have an impact on their learning.

Another confidence booster is to select materials, which are relatively simple when teaching a skill so that the students do not have to struggle with understanding the text and learning a new skill simultaneously. Again this is articulated by Rosa who maintains:

that if you are teaching students a new skill, they certainly need to start with materials that they can handle and then build up and I think that's the problem. We sometimes use materials that are difficult. They're trying to do something really difficult which is to pick up someone's implied main idea, often a topic that they're not familiar with as well or the topics may be culturally biased, maybe American. That can be a problem. (Rosa, intv1.1, p5-6)

Material difficulty is judged not only by linguistic difficulty but also by the degree of strangeness of the topic to the student. Rosa maintains that if care is taken to select suitable texts which are not difficult, students can devote their whole attention to learning the new skill that is being taught.

Associated with materials selection are the tasks that the students are expected to do. One criterion for judging task difficulty is to see if the teachers themselves can agree on the answers. Rosa, for example, is critical of the questions given by the textbook for teaching reading skills in the Ac2 class. She contends that many of the questions are so ambiguous that even the teachers cannot agree on the answers. That being the case, she argues that it is inappropriate to give students such exercises. Rosa asserts:

You get a passage like that where I looked at it and I could not work out the main idea. _____ looked at it. She could not work out the main idea.

Why are we asking the students to do that? It's got to be something that an educated native speaker can do before they ask the students to do it. (Rosa; intv1.2, p8)

She believes that “*it's demoralising for students to struggle through all that*”. As such, teachers have to be very careful about selecting tasks that are within the ability of the students to do.

An additional strategy to boost student confidence is to be lenient in marking for the first assessment. For example, Laura says that she does not like to fail her students for the first assessment because of its negative impact on the students. She says:

I don't like to fail anyone on the very first one and I think they need a bit of confidence boosting. (Laura; intv 2.2, p3)

Many teachers share this view. For this reason, they take care to correct only the most obvious mistakes made by their students. This is especially so for written work. According to Joanne, too much correction will cause her students to lose confidence:

I try not to correct them too much or I just repeat in the correct form as I want to boost their confidence. (Joanne; intv1.3, p12)

Therefore, teachers do not correct everything that is wrong with the students' work. If they do, the students' writing may be overwritten by the teacher and that is likely to have a negative effect on the students.

One other way of creating confidence is to give students an opportunity to practise a particular skill. Laura understands that students do not like standing in front of the classroom to speak. A way to make them feel more comfortable about public speaking is to give them as much practice as possible in speaking in front of the class. Thus, by the time of their assessment, they will, hopefully, have overcome some of the fears. Laura explains this as follows:

My experience of twenty years as a teacher now tells me they hate doing that (speaking in front of a class), whatever their nationality, and if they'd done it two or three times, they know where the whiteboard marker is, how

to erase the previous person's work, their whole presentation will be better. ... It's giving them more confidence. (Laura; intv 1.1; p6)

On the same matter, Leanne has this to say:

(I want to) make them aware of what they're going to have to do and build confidence. ... I think it gets them focused on what they had to do. It's also like a dry run, an opportunity for them to actually (find out), "This is actually what we've got to do". (Leanne; inv. 0.1, p3)

The underlying assumption is that students are less nervous when they are asked to do something familiar. By giving them practice in speaking in front of the class, the teachers think that their students will become used to public speaking and consequently, will become less nervous when they give their actual presentation.

The second way to create a conducive affective environment is to use 'face-saving' measures to deal with student errors and mistakes. ELICOS teachers are sensitive to their students' feelings when giving feedback. Consequently, they use a number of face-saving strategies in regard to this. One strategy is to give the students an opportunity to check their answers privately with a partner or a small group before they call out their answers to the whole class. According to Emma:

I always do that because I remember as a language student learning Italian, I was usually petrified to give an incorrect answer, or not to just share answer with a partner so that ... So now, I just let them share answers. (Emma; intv.0.1, p8)

This reduces their chances of getting wrong, and if they are wrong, they are not alone.

Yet another strategy is to address the class as a whole without singling the student out for special attention. This can be seen in Anna's description of the way she deals with mistakes:

Oh, if they're saying something to the class, I'll rephrase it grammatically correctly with an eye on that student, hopefully to see that they would actually hear me say it correctly and sometimes, I get them to repeat, say, "Is this what you mean?" and then not to put them on the spot to say, "Your grammar is wrong". Sort of integrate it into what's going on in the classroom hopefully. (Anna; intv 0.1, p5)

By addressing the whole class and not the student, Anna treats the problem as one that is common to all students and not specific to the student. In this way, the student does not feel that he/she has been singled out for attention.

A further face-saving strategy that is used by some teachers is to make students realise their own mistakes through a series of guiding questions. This is done through guiding questions. For example, in describing how she got her students to do a group writing on a film review, Theresa recounted an incident when a student gave her an incorrect answer. Theresa recalled:

One student actually gave an incorrect answer, and I tried to guide him back to the order of the information saying, "Would that come at this point or would that come later?" (Theresa; intv 0.2, p3)

Without even pointing out to the student that he was wrong, Theresa made him aware that he was not doing the given task correctly.

Finally, if the work is to be edited by fellow students, a habit which many teachers encourage, there is the occasional reminder that criticisms are to be made in a positive way as shown in Theresa's instructions to her students when she asked them to edit the work of the other groups in the class:

And also minding group feelings. They've put a lot of effort into this and I want them to feel good about writing and I do remind the class to be very sensitive when giving feedback because writing is personal and it's somebody's personal work or possession. (Theresa; intv 0.3, p8)

Thus, by boosting confidence and by making sure that the students' dignity is maintained through face-saving strategies, the teachers attempt to create a safe affective environment for their students to learn in.

The Social Dimension

The third dimension of conducive environment is the social dimension. One way to create a conducive social environment is to try to bond the students in the class so that

they see themselves as one group rather than several small groups. Bonding is a process that the teachers initiate on the first day of meeting the new class because:

At this stage, it's so important that you build up some group cohesion, that people talk to each other. (Laura; intv2.6, p6)

Most teachers spend some time at the start of each module to ease the students into the new module and also to provide students with the opportunity to know each other better especially as there are usually newcomers at the start of each new module. Teachers usually start with an activity called 'ice-breaker' which encourages the students to move around the class and find out information about their new classmates. In the Academic English classes, the teacher may integrate diagnostic testing with the activity as in the case of Laura who asked her students to introduce themselves to the class in a three to five minute talk. Laura said:

As a warmer for that and also to build a group cohesion and group feeling because I think that's also very important, we'll do a short presentation. (Laura; intv 2.1, p6)

Teachers realise the importance of a bonded class in promoting learning and efforts to create one begins before actual teaching of SMK commences.

To get the new students to bond with the old students, some teachers have put the new students in groups with the old students so that they can make friends with the old students and also use them as resource persons. Theresa is particularly aware of the need to bond the new with old students and she does this by asking the old students to look after the new students in various ways:

I'd said that this week we're much into the adjustment stage – getting to know them and I ...ah ... really want to ... make them feel that they're bonded to the rest of the class. ... I, first of all, got all the previous students to introduce themselves and share. I said to them, just take care of these new students. You know – show them where the facilities are and where everything's done. ... Just make the new students feel comfortable. (Theresa; intv0.1, p1-2)

On her part, she says that she:

Constantly uses the new students' names to remind the rest of the class and previous students and you can even do lots of group work together.
(Theresa; intv0.1, p1-2)

This is just so that they have “*intimate time together*” and “*that the new students can feel part of the class*”.

In addition to pairing the old and the new students, another strategy used by the teachers to bond the students is to ensure that no one nationality is allowed to dominate in the class. In classes where there is a predominance of students of one nationality, there is a tendency for those students to speak their own language in class. This often leads to resentment among the other students and this is often revealed in their evaluation of the module with comments like “Too many Japanese” or “Classmates speak too much Korean”. To avoid situations where the minority students feel left out, the teachers feel that they have to take an active role in managing the language used in the classroom as illustrated in the following comments:

I said that, of course, if there are some learning difficulties or vocab items, well, then explain it. That's fine but don't do it on a regular basis.
(Theresa; intv0.1, p3)

I guess I've felt and other teachers felt we need to take more authority in the situations to aid the other students who weren't Korean because they felt quite disempowered in a way. ... Just being sensitive and let the other nationalities know that I know that they may be feeling a little left out and it's not okay for two Korean students to chat in front of the Thai students in Korean... (Theresa; intv0.1, p3)

I said to Leo sort of nicely. I said, “Oh, English” because they started to speak in Taiwanese. I think if it happened again, I might have to tell them.
(Emma; intv 2.1, p1).

I have to say to them, sort of like, I say, “Agot” – Japanese for “English – English”. The Taiwanese, I just glare at them. (Emma, intv2.2, p12)

The use of the students' L1 is permitted but only for limited functions. At all other times, the ELICOS teachers actively encourage the use of English. This is not only because teachers believe that it will help the students learn English faster but also because they feel that a common language will help the class become more bonded.

In addition to directly telling students not to use their L1 too often, some teachers like Theresa arrange the students' seating in such a way that all the nationalities in the class are as well spread out as possible. Theresa ensures that:

They're sitting at tables of four and at some tables, with only three, and I make sure that the nationalities are mixed up. (Theresa; intv0.1; p2)

ELICOS teachers generally leave their students to decide where to sit in the classroom. However, when they perceive that intervention is necessary, they readily take charge. One instance when they feel they need to take charge is when they believe that class cohesion is affected by ethnic polarization.

Proposition 7

In relation to students, ELICOS teachers perceive that three types of needs have to be addressed in their teaching, namely, knowledge, affective and behavioural needs.

The students' needs form a vital part of the ELICOS teachers' consideration when it comes to understanding how the SMK is best taught. In particular, teachers take account of three sets of needs, namely, knowledge, affective and behavioural needs. In terms of knowledge, the aim is to find ways of bridging the gap between what students know and what they need to know in order to achieve first, their immediate goal of completing the module successfully, and second, their long term goal for studying English. In regard to affective needs, the general view is that the students' feelings and emotions have a strong impact on their learning. Consequently, looking after the emotional well-being of the students is regarded as an important part of teaching. Finally, on the subject of behavior, there is also a view that for students to be successful in their learning, they have to acquire a certain set of behaviours. These are learning to be autonomous learners, being active participants in the classroom, being able to take risks, and heeding the advice of their teachers.

Knowledge Needs

The ELICOS teachers focus on three types of knowledge needs of their students when planning and teaching. These are language, cultural and general knowledge needs. What these knowledge needs are have already been described in some detail in the preceding chapter on teachers' understanding of the SMK for language teaching. Therefore, they will only be mentioned briefly here. Knowledge of language refers to the non-verbal and verbal codes comprising vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and the macro-skills. Cultural knowledge refers to knowledge of beliefs, values and norms generally held by Australians and those specific to the academic world. Finally, general knowledge concerns knowledge of issues that are deemed important to know by the educated Australian community.

The three types of knowledge do not enjoy equal importance with the teachers. Most time and effort is spent on addressing the students' gaps in language knowledge. For example, if the students do not know a language structure, the teachers will re-teach it or look for activities that will help them understand it. In relation to cultural knowledge, unless it is on plagiarism, they are unlikely to spend much class time dealing with it. Where it comes to general knowledge, the amount of effort spent on helping students to bridge the gap is up to the individual teacher. Most teachers go about selecting material, which they think are useful or interesting for their students to know. There is an assumption that what is interesting and useful is knowledge about current issues which the average Australian undergraduate knows but of which the ELICOS students have little awareness.

Sources of knowledge

The teachers' assessment of their students knowledge needs is based on their understanding about two types of students, namely, the typical ELICOS student and the actual students that they had to teach. Their understanding of the typical ELICOS student is derived from the collective experience of teachers in the ELICOS program as well as the individual teachers' experience of teaching ELICOS students both at the university and elsewhere. Teachers often talk about their students and make observations about their learning. Discussions of this nature take place both in formal staff meetings and informally when the teachers meet for the morning coffee breaks or

at lunchtime, or when parallel and co-teachers meet to discuss student progress. The observations they make about the students in their classroom are often confirmed or disproved by some of the other teachers and over a period of time, observations that are frequently confirmed become ‘facts’. Many of such facts can be put into the following categories:

- Knowledge needs related to specific nationalities such as “*I think the Chinese students are the main ones that have pronunciation problems – you know, a lot of basic pronunciation problems. Indonesians were really quite good*” (Leanne; intv2.1, p8), and “*Japanese students tend to have problems with /l/ and /r/. Thai students have problems with consonant clusters and word endings. Korean students have problems with /p/,/f/ and /v/ sounds and the final /ch/.* (Carol; journal, entry 1).
- Knowledge related to the particular level such as “*They need a lot of vocabulary at pre-intermediate level*” (Emma, intv.0.1, p1).
- Learning needs related to cultural differences in behaviour – e.g. Asian students are timid and will not ask for things or challenge their teachers; Asians students are not very good at critical thinking; they have too much respect for the written word; they are used to rote learning; or “*I know some of the Chinese students just love to tick and cross. They want to know how many they got right or wrong – not explain it.*” (Joanne; intv1.3, p9).

From such sources, the teachers build a concrete picture of the typical ELICOS student that they often use when planning prior to the commencement of a module.

The assessment of knowledge gaps specific to the actual students in the class is obtained in two ways. One way is to ask the students’ previous class teachers about them if they are students moving up one level. This is illustrated by Emma recounting what she did prior to the start of her DE2 class. She said, “*I asked a few teachers about those students and they were the lovely ones*” (Emma; intv1.1, p5). However, this source of information about specific students is becoming rare because of the introduction of a ninth module into the academic year. With few breaks between modules, only one staff meeting at the end of each module and classrooms spread across the campus, the opportunities for teachers to meet and discuss about their students is much reduced.

A further source of information about student needs is obtained from interactions with the students and being involved in their learning on a daily basis. This is probably the

biggest source of accurate information the teachers have. Teachers monitor their students' learning every time they are in class and keep a mental note of the things, which require special attention. Teachers begin assessing their students' needs from the first day of the module. Through their observations of their students doing certain getting-to-know-you type of activities, the teachers are able to gauge the level of English proficiency of the students and get a more specific understanding of their knowledge needs. Based on student reaction and interaction among themselves and with the teacher, the teachers arrive at conclusions like these: "*Quite a high level for G/P, I think. Their grammar is not very strong. They're a high intermediate, I would say*" (Joanne; intv1.1, p1), or "*Quite a range of ability. There seems to be one girl who seems to be very good but she said nothing ever and I checked with her last teacher and she never said anything in her class and then I've got two or three people who were fairly low level and a couple in the middle; so it's not one of the most outstanding academic classes I've had*" (Rosa; intv2.1, p5). To a large extent, the teachers rely on their first impression of their students to determine those knowledge needs.

The diagnostic test also supply the teachers with some more information on language points that require further attention as can be seen in Leanne's account of what she needed to do to improve her students' pronunciation. In summing up the kinds of pronunciation problems, which her new students had, Leanne said:

Well, with pronunciation – that diagnostic test, hopefully, I can be more focused on some of their other spoken problems – targeting problems like vowel sound and clusters – consonant clusters and things like that. (Leanne; intv1.1; p9)

Similarly, after the diagnostic test on writing, Joanne concluded:

They're not very good on some aspects of grammar but the general format of the letter is there. ... A couple of the students are obviously not aware of paragraphing and I think that merits discussion. We'll do something special on paragraph and topic sentence. (Joanne; intv1.1, p5)

In this way, teachers are able to identify language points that need further attention for every class.

On a daily basis, student needs are further ascertained by teachers walking around the class to monitor their students' ability to perform set tasks. If they see or hear their students making mistakes, they know the specific language points to target in their teaching. An example of what teacher usually do when they go round the class is provided below:

I don't teach too many grammar points but I'll try and pick up grammar that I hear perhaps two or three students (use) incorrectly. (Anna; intv0.1, p5)

Therefore, through monitoring their students' language output, teachers also become aware of their language needs.

Another way of ascertaining knowledge needs is to analyse the types of errors their students make in their assigned work that they have to do by themselves. These may be a piece of homework set, a task to be completed in class or a test and it can be written or spoken. The type of information, which the teachers can derive from such work is demonstrated in Rosa's observations of the problems made by her students after correcting a class assignment:

Sometimes they weren't writing a complete sentence – the topic sentence – so they might write “Secondly, lack of education because da da da da ...” instead of making it clear that “The second cause is the lack of education”. Some of them didn't even have a verb. They would say, for example, “Thirdly, kidnapping” and they weren't realising that it had to be a complete sentence which indicate that it was a cause or effect. I picked up some general things that were happening like using ‘as’ meaning ‘because’. For example, somebody's written a sentence, “As more and more people use the internet” full-stop. As a way of saying, “Look, you've got to have the two parts of the sentence, the statement and the reason together”, so things like that. (Rosa; intv2.2, p3)

As Joanne comments, by looking at their performance in the assessments, the teachers are able to know which students were “*riding on the backs of others in the group in giving ...answers*” (Joanne, intv 0.1, p12). Tests are particularly good for revealing what students know and do not know of the SMK in the module.

Both types of knowledge needs, namely, knowledge needs of the typical ELICOS students and knowledge needs of the actual ELICOS students, are used to guide the teachers in their lesson planning and classroom teaching. Generally, the teachers use their information of the typical ELICOS student when planning before the commencement of each module. As they get to know the own students more, they refine their lesson plans to address the specific knowledge needs of their students. Therefore, while the teachers plan their lessons based on their understanding of the knowledge needs of the generic ELICOS student at the beginning of each module, the situation changes rapidly once they meet their own students. The generic student soon becomes individuals with identities whose learning strengths and weaknesses are familiar to the teachers. In Laura's words:

I know my students as individuals so I can say, "Yeah, that topic will suit you," or "No, that topic is too difficult, try – suggest you look at such and such." (Laura, intv2.1, p12)

From the ELICOS teachers' perspectives, deciding on what to teach students is gained through knowing what their students' language needs are.

Strategies to address knowledge needs

The strategies that the teachers put in place range from those that are broad and general which are incorporated into the teaching plan for the module at the start to those that are specifically targeting a particular aspect of language, which are part of the daily lesson. How general and broad or narrow and specific those strategies are, coincide with the time in which they are devised and implemented. There are three key times when the teachers develop strategies to address the language knowledge gaps. These are before the start of the module, on first encounter with the students, and during and after a lesson they have had with the class.

Strategies developed prior to the start of a module

Those strategies that are carried out before the start of the module are based on the knowledge needs teachers have of the typical ELICOS student and not any individual in particular. The strategies are usually broad and long range, involving actions intended for the whole module. One strategy is to identify difficult concepts, which the students have to learn and then unpack them into learning units that are more readily accessible.

The notion of difficulty is dependent upon the teachers' experience of how the previous students have found the learning of those concepts. For example, Rosa knew from experience that students had difficulty in grasping the concept of cause and effect. Therefore, when it came to planning for the teaching of the 'cause and effect' essay, she took into consideration their difficulty in differentiating between a 'cause' and an 'effect'. To make the concepts clear, she decided to first focus entirely on causes, then effects, and finally, the two together. Therefore, when she was planning the module, she made provision in terms of materials and time for teaching the 'cause and effect' essay in that way.

Another strategy is based on their knowledge of the length of time it requires to acquire a skill. Equipping students with the skills to follow the western conventions of acknowledging the work of other people and avoiding plagiarism is a lengthy and complex process. First the students have to know what constitutes plagiarism. Next, they have to be taught the ways of acknowledging the work of authors they use in their writing, and finally, they have to acquire the habit through practice. Thus, teaching the students how to avoid plagiarism necessitates an overall strategy. Following the advice that she had read in a paper of plagiarism, a new strategy, which Anna decided to try, was to get her students to do more writing in class. Anna decided that it was worth attempting, as her previous endeavours at helping students were not very effective.

An additional habit which takes time to develop and which the teachers encourage the students to acquire is reading for pleasure as many teachers are firm believers that extensive reading helps with their general language proficiency. They feel that their students write better after they started reading for pleasure. Joanne is particularly enthusiastic about her students doing it as she notices an improvement in their English. In describing the standard of writing of her students in DE4, she has this to say:

I'm really thrilled with their writing. Really am. But I think the big difference this term to the class last term is not where they started from but it's the reading that I made them ... that I encouraged and facilitated their reading those readers and they're all avid readers. They're all reading one a week. ... I just think they ... read something, subconsciously it goes in, whether it's intentional or not. It's just something that's acquired through gradual exposure. (Joanne; intv 0.2)

To encourage her students to develop a love for reading, her strategy is to take a pile of simplified readers to class and lends them to the students. After reading each book, the students are expected to write a simple review.

The third strategy is based on the teachers' understanding that some knowledge is cumulative and needs to be acquired over time. One such is general knowledge. The ways in which this is achieved is to select teaching materials, which inform students about issues that the teachers think are important for them to know. The materials which are frequently used by the teachers are interviews on Radio 6NR, the radio station at Curtin University, Behind the News segments, articles from magazines such as New International and the Bulletin, and articles from the internet.

One other kind of knowledge that can only be acquired over time is vocabulary. Rosa's strategy to address this language knowledge gap is to pay some attention to vocabulary in every lesson, either by consciously teaching new words or by revising them in a systematic manner. Rosa's plan is to revise new words while she and the students who come on time to class are waiting for the latecomers to arrive. She also hopes that the students will revise those new vocabularies at home.

Finally, the teachers feel that the students can acquire some cultural knowledge by reading about the culture of the host country. Therefore, to address the cultural knowledge gap, they collect articles and devise activities that allow the students to practice their English while at the same time learn about cultural values in Australia. Such information is usually given to the students very early on in the module. For example, Rosa selected a reading passage based on the role of students in western countries for a reading class in the first week of the module. The aim was to give her students some knowledge of how students were expected to behave in a western context. This was partly to address the perceived need that Asian students were passive learners who were used to being told what to do all the time. Through this, Rosa hoped that the students would be able to see that they would need to play a more active part in their own learning (Rosa; intv1.2, p1). Emma planned an activity and material that were on eating etiquette and this was also given to her DE2 class in Week1 of the module (Emma, intv0.1, p7); finally, Joanne chose something on cultural *faux pax* (Joanne, intv1.2, p2).

Strategies developed after first encounter with the class

The strategies devised and implemented once the teachers have met the students in the first week are of two kinds. The first kind is developed from the teachers' assessment of students' knowledge needs based on meeting the students for the first time. From the getting-to-know-you activities, the teachers are able to ascertain some types of knowledge gaps that require attention. The strategies devised have already been discussed in various parts of the thesis. To restate them briefly, the strategies employed by the teachers include the following:

- Using the old students as resource persons who can explain concepts to the new students;
- Incorporating elements of language the students have to know in the new lessons;
- Teaching these elements to the class as a whole so that the lessons were a form of revision for old students and new lessons for the new students;
- Expecting the new students to acquire the knowledge through a process of osmosis.

Based on the first impressions of the language proficiency of the students, the teachers also review the teaching materials for the module. Many teachers go through their files and choose only materials that they feel are appropriate for their new class. One aspect of appropriateness is the level of difficulty of the material. Activities judged to be too difficult for the current class are put aside. When Emma was teaching a DE2 class in the afternoon, she discarded some activities because she thought that some of the activities were too difficult for the class to handle after her first lesson with the class. In her words:

This is one of the tasks that was a bit too difficult. I didn't try it. I thought this is a good task but I had a look at the instructions and I intuitively guessed that there could be problems. (Emma; intv0.1, p5)

By the same token, activities that are viewed to be too simple for the class are made more complex if the teachers assess their new class to be more proficient in their level than expected. This again is illustrated by Emma's recount of what she did after meeting another class for the first time. She found the students to be lively and alert and as a result, decided that they need activities that would require them to be more interactive. Therefore, she modified her activities for the class. In recalling what she did, Emma said:

I changed what I did today. ... I did more student centred things with the introductions.” (Emma, intv1.1, p5)

On first meeting, then, teachers fine-tune their subsequent instructional materials and activities to better fit the level and personality of their current students.

The second kind of strategies is derived from information of specific language needs based on diagnostic tests given. The strategies developed depend on the nature of the problem and the individual teacher's preference for certain actions. With Leanne, after analysing the students' speech in the diagnostic test, she keeps a mental note of the areas of pronunciation that need addressing. She then looks for short exercises to be used as warmers at the start of each lesson to help address those problems. Laura's strategy is to give individual students feedback about their problems based on certain general criteria she has and then ask them to work on overcoming those problems by themselves. This strategy is possible because of the nature of the problem, namely, pronunciation, speed of delivery, tone of voice and body language. These are skills that only the students can help themselves through practice and conscious monitoring of their own speech. For Joanne who finds that her students do not understand the concept of paragraphs, her strategy is to plan a lesson on paragraphing, writing topic sentences and the use of connectives.

Strategies developed based on day to day encounter with students

Strategies, which are developed from the assessment of knowledge needs resulting from daily contact with the students, deal with specific problems related to the classroom activities. Two forms of actions can be identified. The first is immediate action to correct the errors and bridge the gaps in knowledge not anticipated by the teacher and accounted for in the planning. These actions range from giving the students the correct answer without dwelling too much on the problem to giving students a lot of time to ask questions about the problem and explaining what the students need to know. Immediate action to address a perceived problem is usually taken under the following conditions. First, if the problem is easily rectified, then most teachers do it immediately. For example, if a student uses a wrong word or a wrong tense, the teachers normally give the student the correct word or the right tense. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

And at times, I can ... hear someone use the wrong word and I'd say, "No, it was went out, not come out", you know. I just shout across the room as I'm plugging the tape recorder in. (Joanne; intv.0.2, p5)

However, if the teachers want the students to focus on a specific skill for a particular lesson, they generally do not correct the errors immediately as in the case of a lesson in Rosa's writing class:

Yes, the whole purpose is to get information up on the board so that everybody has the information; so I didn't want to stop and pick them up on areas of grammar and spelling. I didn't want to highlight that because we just didn't have time in the lesson. ... So my main thing was getting the information on the board but I felt that I couldn't leave it there as it was too glaring. So I kind of correct that as we go along; that's what I normally do whereas if we were having a grammar session, then I would explain it but you can't do everything at once and I wanted them to be focusing on writing and just making sure that everybody has the information. (Rosa, intv1.3, p4)

Rosa merely put the correct form on the board without drawing too much attention to it. If it is a persistent problem, she would find some class time to address it.

Second, if an error is noticed in a number of students and can be corrected quite easily, the teachers normally alert the class to the error. For example, when Laura heard a few students committing the same error in their presentation, she decided that she would let her students know that they were not using the language correctly. Laura described her actions thus:

Sometimes I might put something on the board and we correct it together or I say, "A lot of you are ..." and I did it with the students. "I hear this from a lot of you – I'm going to presentation you bla bla bla...". So I would talk about it. (Laura; intv 2.1, p3)

Normally, the explanation is brief and is only a slight diversion from the main task of the lesson.

The third is when the problem has to be addressed before the students can proceed further with the task. In some of the more complex language tasks which teachers give the students, successful completion depends on the ability of the students to get each

part of the task right. This may be illustrated by Leanne's account of how she dealt with the problems her students in Ac 1 had when designing their questionnaire for their survey presentation. She could not allow her students to proceed with the next stage of their survey presentation until their survey questions could elicit the type of information set by the assessment task. This was because the finished product would not have addressed the set task. Therefore, she had to get her students to redraft their survey questions to her satisfaction. She did this through conferencing with the individuals.

One reason given for instant rectification of problems was offered by Joanne who believes that providing immediate feed-back is a more effective way for students to learn about their errors than handing them back a piece of work that was marked. Joanne observes:

I find that the students like that instant contact with the teacher a bit more. ... I think they get more out of it; otherwise, I correct it and they put it in a file and just don't look at it. (Joanne; intv1.1, p6)

Many other teachers share the same view. In every observation made by the researcher, the teachers went round the class to check on their students' work and spoke to the groups individually about their work.

The second form of actions taken by the teachers is planned activities to address the specific problems. This involves looking at the errors of a class in a systematic manner. Planned activities are usually taken under the following conditions. One is when students' language needs are revealed in their written work. Depending on the nature of the problem, the following strategies are employed. If the problem is related to language structures, most teachers take samples of their students' work and turn those into an exercise for the students to do in another lesson. A time is specially set for that particular activity. How this is carried out is illustrated in the following comments:

I took sixteen or seventeen sentences and photocopied them all and we did grammar points from there. So I put them into groups. They had to correct those sentences and again, we highlighted what are the areas of grammar that people are having problems with. ...We spent about an hour and half doing that. (Rosa; intv1.3)

With their writing, if I notice a few mistakes, I might take grammar from their own writing and put these on overhead and have a formal lesson and use their own mistakes for them to find. (Anna; intv 0.1, p5)

The majority of teachers find it more meaningful to use their students' writing to teach grammar.

However, some teachers prefer to take exercises out of grammar books as in the case of Joanne who says that she likes using commercial materials because she believes that it is a more time-efficient way of teaching. Time efficiency is not only in the reduced time for preparation but also in the teaching as her strategy is to give the students sheets of grammar exercises and then go through a few of the questions with them in class just to make sure that they are capable of doing the exercises. After that, she gives instructions for them to do the rest as homework, and they mark the exercises themselves. The answers are also provided. She explains thus:

I just try to put the responsibility back on them and I suppose that comes from when I learnt German and I learnt it from speaking and no grammar at all, and then after I was so thirsty for doing grammar exercises on my own and checking. So it's my experience as a language learner. (Joanne; intv1.3, p9)

Joanne feels that taking exercises from grammar books is good as she is very familiar with a range of grammar books and she knows where to extract the best exercises for the different grammar problems the students display.

Sometimes, after devoting a block of time to addressing a problem, the teacher may decide to spend a little time on these problems over a period. This is because they see this as a good way of reinforcing what they have taught. On this Rosa remarked:

And after that, I just wanted to keep revising it and picking up bits and pieces rather than doing it all over again. I think that the students actually prefer that we did that. (Rosa, intv1.3, p5)

Rosa, in particular, likes doing this as she is very conscious of the limited amount of time she has to get through the body of SMK she has to teach in each module.

It is also important to point out that not all planned actions involve the whole class in an activity. In some instances, the planned action can be individual conferencing. Teachers usually allocate some class time to go through with each student their assignment or presentation as illustrated in the following comment by Rosa:

Friday I can't get much done because I do individual conferencing when I give them back their assignments. ... I try to talk to them individually.
(Rosa; intv2.2, p7)

Individual conferencing is time consuming but teachers try to do it where possible because they feel that students' language problems are better addressed with personal attention.

Finally, most teachers plan a feedback session after a mid-module test to address problems they have noted when marking their students' test papers. By going through the test paper the teachers are able to show the students how they are assessed and where they have made mistakes. It is also an opportunity for those who have some wrong answers to find out why those answers are wrong. The teachers find these feedback sessions useful because the students are interested in knowing how and why they lose marks since most students measure their own progress by the test marks they get.

Affective Needs

The emotional wellbeing of the students is another aspect of the student to which the teachers look after when teaching. If they think that a student is disturbed emotionally and the condition warrants intervention, they either take action themselves or they refer the student to the most appropriate person for assistance. The teachers monitor students' emotional wellbeing mainly in three ways. The first is observation of the students' behaviour in the classroom. Usually, teachers became more watchful if they notice that a student is not behaving in a way that is consistent with their understanding of the student's normal behaviour. If a student is unusually quiet, consistently sleepy, or comes late to class for two or three days consecutively, then they usually take steps to determine the cause for the change in behaviour. Normally, this means speaking to the

student directly to find out if there is a problem. If it is a matter that the students cannot solve themselves but can be resolved by the teachers, the teachers generally help. However, if the problem requires the attention of someone trained and hired for the purpose, it is always referred to the right person.

Sometimes students do not like to speak directly with the teachers. Thus, another way that teachers learn about what is happening in the students' life is through their diaries. The ELICOS students keep diaries as an additional way of practising their writing. Most of them use their diaries as a means of conducting an on-going dialogue with the teachers about what is happening in their life outside the classroom. Many students use their diaries to express their worries regarding the perceived lack of progress in class, their worries about not being able to get the required score to get into another course of study, problems with the opposite sex, and homesickness. The usefulness of diary writing is illustrated in the following comment by Joanne:

I can learn more about the students personally. That's why I could not work out why one student was glum and then I read that he had terrible accommodation problems. He was feeling very unsettled. He doesn't know what to do. Another one seems to be out of sorts lately. I discovered that she was worried about what she's going to do when she goes back to China. So I can understand where the students are coming from. (Joanne; intv0.1, p14)

From the diaries, the teachers obtain an insight into matters that bother the students. Such understanding is valuable as it helps the teachers to handle the class and teaching better.

The third way in which students' needs are monitored is through their evaluation sheets of the module. The students complete the evaluation form at the end of each module. The form seeks to find out students' satisfaction regarding various aspects of the course. From the responses the teachers are able to identify the areas in the module in which students particularly like and those that they are unhappy about and which require action. It was from feedback in the evaluation forms that Theresa discovered that some of her students were unhappy about the fact that students of the predominant nationality in her class for a particular module were communicating in their own language. She recalled:

The previous group – they verbalised they want more mixed nationalities and they obviously feel – they sense – that if they – they're more comfortable if I take authority and do a bit of a swap around. (Theresa, intv0.1, p3)

She then took care in the following module to seat students of different nationalities together so that it was more difficult for students to communicate in their L1.

Strategies for dealing with affective needs

The strategies which the teachers use to deal with the affective needs of their students are best discussed in terms of the roles they play. The first role is that of an assessor. The teachers first make an assessment of the nature of the perceived need and then decide on how best to handle the problem. In this respect, one role the teachers play is that of a referral person. The teachers always refer the students to the appropriate people within DoLIE if the problems are bureaucratic, financial and legal. As stated in the first proposition, DoLIE has a well established support system for international students. There is a fulltime student advisor and a housing officer whose services are available for all students studying at DoLIE, and a recreations officer, an ELICOS administrator, and the DoS who are specially designated for the ELICOS Program. Most matters that entail practical solutions such as helping students to deal with car insurance claims, finding new accommodation, applying to another institution after ELICOS and transferring to another level in the ELICOS are handled by the staff members in charge of these matters. The role of the ELICOS teacher is to direct the students to see the relevant people in these matters.

In addition to acting as an assessor and referral person, the teachers also take on several other roles especially when it is a problem that they feel is more appropriately handled by themselves. The role they assume depends on the perceived needs. A lot of times the students express anxiety over their language learning ability and the lack of progress. It is also frequent that the students talk about their loneliness and their homesickness. On most occasions, the students do not wish or require practical assistance. They need to talk through their problem with a sympathetic listener and most students find their teachers sympathetic. When students talk to teachers or write about their problems in their diaries, the teachers normally deal with the situation in a sensitive manner. This may be in the form of a short reply that acknowledges the

students' feelings. In this respect, the teachers take on the role of the confidante who listens to the students' troubles and show sympathy for their emotional upsets.

If the things, which the students write, are judged to require more personal attention, the teachers might seek out the student and talk to him/her privately. Sometimes if the teachers feel that they can do something for the students, they usually put in extra effort to help the individual student. This may mean getting their students involved in voluntary work, lending students some equipment or books so that they can pursue their hobby or learn a new sport, or inviting them home for a meal if they think that it will benefit the student. In this respect, the teachers take on the role of the fixer-upper.

The teachers also adopt the role of the advisor. Occasionally, the students ask for advice from their teachers as demonstrated by Joanne's account of how one of her students used his diary to ask her for tips to handle a difficult situation:

It's become a written dialogue between us. So obviously they feel a lot more comfortable. I think the boys, particularly the boys, feel very comfortable. They're always asking me, "Is it okay to do this?" – punch up the _____ when they pinch their mobile phone. I said, try to work out the odds. Are you going to beat them ... and just work out – think, they may have a knife, so just expect the unexpected. (Joanne, intv0.2, p7)

Not all the teachers, however, are as down-to-earth as Joanne in giving advice.

The teachers are also the expert in the field who can provide professional advice on how individual students can improve their English. Many ELICOS students experience disappointment at their own ability to make progress with their English at the rate they want. Most have the expectation of achieving near-native proficiency after only a short period in Australia. In such a situation, the teachers usually take on the role of the expert who is able to give advice to the students on how to go about their study to get better results and, also to assure them that it is very unusual for a new student to acquire near-native proficiency in a short period of time.

All these roles call for the teacher to develop a rapport with their students. To do this, they have to be perceived as being approachable. As expected, how approachability is demonstrated is unique to the individual teacher. Some teachers such as Theresa are

interested in all aspects of their students' lives and they invest a significant amount of time talking to the new students at the start of each module so that the students feel comfortable about approaching them. Theresa does this during coffee breaks or after class when she takes time to find out about their personal backgrounds. Another type of teachers such as Joanne is friendly and informal with the students and occasionally they go on social outings with their students. There are also teachers who view their students as adults from whom they can learn things. One such teacher is Emma who is as curious and interested in things the students can tell her about their country and culture as they are about what she can tell them about herself and the language. Students tend to regard teachers such as Emma like an elder sister. Finally, there are those who adopt a more traditional teacher role by maintaining a greater social distance from their students but are still able to remain approachable. These teachers do not socialise with their students but through their way of handling students who have problems, the students know that they can rely on them for help and advice.

Behavioural Needs

The majority of students who come to the ELICOS program have grown up in many cultures that are different from the Anglo-Australian culture. The values, beliefs and norms that provide them with the template for conducting their everyday life and help them to make sense of the environment are sometimes different from those in Australia. Often this leads to the inability of the students to operate efficiently in the new cultural environment.

In terms of learning, there are certain beliefs held by the ELICOS professionals that are unfamiliar to students coming from several Asian educational backgrounds. The ELICOS teachers believe that for successful language learning to take place, the students have to adopt certain behaviours, which are commonly believed to enhance learning. In this study, four such beliefs have been identified. These are:

- To be a successful learner, an adult student must be autonomous;
- An adult student must also be actively engaged in the learning activities;
- An adult student must be receptive to the advice and teaching of the teacher;
- An adult student must be disciplined to attend to their responsibilities as students.

Each of these beliefs will be discussed in brief.

The autonomous learner

In every unit outline, one of the aims written is to help the students become autonomous learners. What this means is not overtly stated but from the reports of what the teachers do in planning and teaching, it appears that autonomous learners are students who take charge of their own learning. It means knowing:

How much students should do on their own; how much the teacher should provide (Rosa; intv1.2, p1).

In other words, it concerns knowing how to go about addressing some of their own learning needs, and negotiating with the class teachers what they feel will be useful to learn.

Strategies to promote autonomous learning

The first strategy to promote autonomous learning is to make students aware of what is involved in language learning and encouraging them to make use of all those learning opportunities that they are given when they learn English in Australia. One way which teachers use to make students independent is to inform them of all the places where they can get study materials. They are normally given the location of ESL textbooks and videos in the library, the websites where they can access ESL learning materials and suggestions of activities they can carry out outside class to improve their language proficiency. These activities may include learning English through making friends with native English speakers, reading storybooks and newspaper, and watching English films and television. Most teachers try to make students aware that language learning can take place in many ways and the students are encouraged to explore them and find the ways that best suit to their personality.

To help students become more self directed and to meet NEAS stipulation for 25 hours of tuition per week, the students are given a sheet where they record the number of hours they spend weekly on different learning activities which include the following: searching for materials on the internet, writing their learner journal, consulting teachers, doing homework, taking part in Speakers' Corner activities, and participating in the

activities organised by the ELICOS recreation officer. The aim of this is to make sure that the students are spending an average of 4.5 hours per week on language activities on their own.

Another strategy to encourage autonomy is to give students more power as learners. This is realised in a few ways. The first is to allow students an input into what is taught in class. An example of this is demonstrated by Joanne seeks the agreement of her students on the themes that she intends to cover for the module. If her students do not like any of the themes, she asks them for suggestions and then tries to accommodate them. On this matter Joanne remarks:

We worked out five sort of themes (p2) ... They are not set in concrete. I mean that's the plan at the beginning and I suggest to the students that we might do these themes – whether they're the themes that they'd prefer to do. So it's negotiable. (Joanne; intv 1.1, p4)

Consequently, Joanne only prepares her materials and lessons one week at a time so that she can accommodate her students' request for something different without feeling that she has wasted a lot of time in organising materials and activities on lessons that she will not be delivering.

The second is to involve students in making decisions on certain aspects of language learning. For example, Rosa, as reported above, wanted to give a checklist to her students to use when editing their own writing. Rather than giving them a checklist created by herself, she invited the students to help her to create one. The following is her recount of what how she did this:

And then the following Friday, we went through it together as a group and we drew up a list of things that they had to concentrate on – you know, things they had to revise, things they had to check. ... We did a checklist together. (Rosa; intv1.3, p1)

By inviting collaboration from students, Rosa is demonstrating her confidence in their ability to help her to produce a set of criteria, which they will use to check their own work.

The third is to wean the students off teacher dependency. A number of ways is used to do this. One is to allow the students the freedom to choose their own topics for their essays and oral presentations especially in the Academic English and G/P classes. The general practice is for students to select a topic from a list that they are given and then narrow down the topic to something they wish to write or speak about. Another way is to get the students to correct each other's work, which is quite commonly practised. Yet, another is to give students homework that they can do and correct by themselves. Teachers do not have to mark everything the students do. There is an assumption that the students are capable of handling these tasks with little intervention from the class teachers.

The final way to help students to become self-directed learners is to give them the opportunity to evaluate the teaching program that is carried out in class. Many teachers perform informal evaluations at different times during the module to find out their students' view of whether they are benefiting from the class activities. Some teachers ask the class directly what they feel while some teachers ask for anonymous feedback. Yet others speak to different individuals in the class. The views of the students are usually taken into account in subsequent lessons. In addition to these informal evaluations, there is the formal evaluation at the end of each module where a fairly detailed questionnaire is given to each student to fill in. Again, the teachers take note of what the students say and they accommodate their wishes if they are pedagogically sound as demonstrated by Anna who decided to give her students a lot of group work because they had said that they liked to work in groups. She said:

They enjoy working in groups. They've said so in their evaluations. So I'm giving them lots of that. (Anna; intv0.1, p4)

Thus, by allowing the students to evaluate the teaching program, the students are given an opportunity to influence the way the teaching program is designed and conducted.

The active learner

As stated, there is a common assumption among the teachers that the typical ELICOS students who come from an Asian culture are passive learners who are more used to the chalk and board method of learning. They are used to an orderly and quiet classroom in

which the individual students sit in their own places to do their work in silence after the teacher has completed his/her instructions. This form of learning is incompatible with the ELICOS teachers' understanding of successful language learning. The ELICOS teachers believe that for learning to take place, the students have to play an active role and apart from taking charge of their own overall learning, they also have to be more active and interactive in class.

Strategies to encourage active learning

The first strategy is to introduce the students to an interactive learning environment as soon as possible. In most ELICOS classrooms, the first day of each module is usually full of interactive activities as the teachers try to get the students to break through their barrier of reserve and to bond with each other. Most of the getting-to-know-you activities are fun and interactive. They require the students to move around the classroom to complete their activity.

Subsequent to that first day experience, interactive activities are used in the teaching of all the macro-skills. At the start of most lessons, teachers like to engage their students in a warmer, an activity that aims at preparing the students for the day's lesson. These include running dictation, the recitation of rhythmic poems and quizzes. Once the lesson proper begins, most of the activities the students are asked to do are also interactive. In reading, for example, the students may be given an activity called jigsaw reading where all the information of the text can only be got by students asking other people about the texts which they have read. There are also the usual discussions in groups to check answers or to produce answers.

In writing, a great deal of the preparatory work requires interaction too. For example, all the teachers reported giving their students group writing tasks as seen in these comments:

So, I put them in groups and they had to correct those sentences. (Rosa; intv1.3, p4)

I said that I feel initially, that by doing a group piece, that you're learning from each other – all the different levels of knowledge – you having to discuss, to speak and explain why – rather than me saying, "Okay, go

home and write a pie". I said it's a rich learning environment. (Theresa, intv0.1, p10)

They had to actually put it into paragraphs, structure it and then look at the arguments, then, discuss it. (Anna; intv.0.1, p3)

For group work, students cannot be passive because they each have to contribute towards the completion of the task.

Finally, active learning also means encouraging students to ask questions about the subject matter being taught. This is done occasionally by most teachers but there are some who encourage their students to ask questions most times. One such is Theresa. As she explains, she likes her students to approach the learning of grammatical structures in an analytical manner because she feels that it gives them greater control of their language output. In her words:

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

To encourage her students to participate actively in the lesson, Theresa tries to create an environment in which the students "*feel safe and comfortable enough to ask what sometimes they think are really stupid questions but I value every question that comes from them*" (Theresa; intv0.4, p8). She is also prepared to stay after lesson to answer some more questions just so as to help the students clear up language points that are '*needling them*'. Because of her willingness to answer her students' questions, even the timid students are encouraged to ask question.

The receptive learner

The teachers also believe that successful language learning is dependent upon the receptiveness of students to advice and suggestions from the teachers. When reflecting on their students' performance, the teachers attribute the progress made by the students to how much each of the students has heeded to their advice. The following are two excerpts taken from interviews with Rosa and Anna:

And the ones that had problems had improved. I've noted an improvement in their essays. ... I think they've taken notice. Those particular two I'm

thinking of have been specifically asking me questions all the time – “How do I say this, how do I put that and I think they’ve taken notice of what I’ve said and they’ve applied it and I’ve said I wish that the other students had done that. They’re quite keen. (Anna; intv0.3, p4)

They’re one of the best sets of essays that I’ve ever seen. I think the best thing that I liked is when I conferenced with them and pointed out errors and weaknesses. I can see that several of them had obviously had had a look at them over the weekend and incorporated kind of correct thing into their test essay – like, one girl was still having problems with topic sentences, writing things like, “Firstly, economy”, you know, instead of writing full sentences, and I talked to her about it on Friday, and she’s done much better. (Rosa, intv2.4, p1)

In addition to these individual students, the teachers measure their own success in teaching the particular module by whether the students have done as they are told. Thus, Laura considered the module she had completed to be successful because the students all knew what she wanted them to do and produced that exactly.

What teaching’s about is deciding what we want student to learn and then say that to them. ...They had to summarise a news article in their own words, paraphrasing, not plagiarising. They had to learn the two technical terms and they had to learn the skill, and then they had to say who the journalist was, where the material was from, must have an introduction, must have the main body talking about it and then they had to give an opinion at the end, and they managed all of those things. I was really pleased. (Laura; intv2.1, p1)

In general, if students do as they are told, they are considered good language students.

Strategies to enhance receptive learning

No specific strategies are noted apart from constant reminders for students to apply the skills, which they have been taught when they are doing their work and the high marks that they get when they follow the instructions given. In contrast, students who do not follow the advice given by their teachers usually do not do well.

The disciplined learner

Finally, for learning to take place, students have to exercise a certain amount of discipline. This might include doing extra study by oneself, completing assignments on time or checking over one’s work before submission. For the ELICOS teachers, the minimum they expect from their students is that they attend class regularly. The

inability to do a certain task is sometimes attributed to the fact that the students do not attend class regularly as is shown in Anna's observation of a student in her class who resorted to plagiarising the whole essay:

He's got a good reason (for plagiarising). His writing was very, very poor. He just wasn't in class often enough to get the skills. He was hardly ever there. (Anna; intv0.3, p3)

Next, they also prefer their students to be punctual. After that, they hope that their students would do their homework and hand in work on time. Finally, they also hope that their students would check their work after they have completed it.

Strategies to encourage discipline

A mix of positive and negative strategies is used by the teachers to encourage discipline. The class roll is marked daily and the DoS is usually notified of students who have missed class for a few days. Usually the students are reminded that their visa regulations oblige them attend class for at least 80% of the time and both the class teachers and the DoS use that reminder quite often to reinforce the need to come regularly to class. In regard to encouraging punctuality, a mix of reward and punishment is practised. Most teachers have a rule that if students come fifteen minutes after the start of class, they will be marked as 'late' or in some cases, 'absent'. Some teachers also start their classes on time so that the latecomers will miss out on the early part of the lesson. In terms of reward, some teachers reward the punctual students with little treats such as giving them extra exercises to do. For instance, Rosa does revision of vocabulary with the punctual students while waiting for the other students to turn up.

When it comes to work that the teachers have asked the students to do at home, the teachers usually make sure that all submitted work is marked. While a few may remind the students who have not done their work to do so, most teachers adopt a passive attitude towards the submission of homework or even class work if that work does not contribute to their assessment mark. If the work is to be assessed, most of the teachers keep a watch over their students' progress as in the case of Anna who said:

One of the purposes (of going through their work in class) was to get them on track, to manage their time so that they don't come to me at the

beginning of next week and say, "I haven't got a topic". I needed to know where they were up and say, "Look, you have to get this done by this time. Keep to a schedule." (Anna; intv0.1, p2)

Anna adopts this strategy because she wants to make sure that her students are able to hand in their assignment on time. By regular monitoring of their progress, she helps the students to become more disciplined in the way they use their time.

Sometimes, none of the strategies work and the teachers cease to try to effect a change in behavior. Joanne, for instance, had a student who was always more interested in completing her tasks quickly than making sure that she had done it correctly. Joanne tried unsuccessfully in various ways to get the student to check her work. After a while, Joanne decided to stop trying. Instead, she decided to give more exercises to this student to do while the others were carefully editing their first task. According to Joanne:

I still have one Chinese student who sometimes won't write anything and just say, "I'm finished". I've got used to her and I think I'll just give her some extra work 'cos I can't seem to change what her attitude or thinking why are we doing this or have I got anything out of it. Hers was to get finished first. So I can't change her or anything, so I think I'll just have a few exercises up my sleeve. (Joanne; intv1.3, p6)

Rosa reported a similar situation in her class where she had one student who would not self-edit despite the fact that she had spent a significant amount of time in helping the class to create a checklist. In the final writing test, Rosa recalled:

One guy gave in an assignment which is really the worst one – absolutely full of errors, and I write a list of things that he should check each time and we have an hour and a half for writing. He finished after 55 minutes of writing and I said, "Have you checked it?" and he said, "No," and I said, "Don't you want to check it?". He said, "No". And it is full of errors. I give up on that one. (Rosa, intv 2.4; p1)

When this happens, teachers do not see the point of pushing further. They accept that their students are adults who have the right to ignore their advice.

Proposition 8

From the ELICOS teachers' perspective, two sets of strategies need to be employed in the learning/teaching process. The first set of strategies is based on an understanding the nature of the SMK and the second is based on an understanding of learning in general.

For the SMK to be learnt, the teachers, not surprisingly, believe that they have to pay a lot of attention to learning/teaching process. What the teachers do to manage this process is based on their understanding of how learning, and in particular, language learning, takes place. Accordingly, the strategies, which they have developed to handle this process, are reflective of their theories of how language learning occurs. The data collected reveal two sets of understanding, one that is specific to language learning, and the other is related to learning in general.

Learning Strategies Specific to Language

Concerning language learning, the teachers believe that the learning experience ought to imitate the real language behaviour as closely as possible. Since their aim of teaching English is to enable their students to function in the language, it is necessary to provide them with the opportunity for genuine communication in class. Genuine communication is meaningful in that whatever is communicated is for a purpose and not merely for practising a particular structure. To make language learning meaningful, the ELICOS teachers pay particular heed to three aspects of teaching, namely, the learning activities, the materials and their role in the classroom. They have strategies in each of these areas of teaching as will be seen below.

Learning activities

To make the activities meaningful, the teachers select topics that conform to their idea of 'relevance' for their students. The notion of relevance is concerned with their perceptions of how well they think their students can relate to the teaching materials. In the ELICOS program, this usually means activities that ask for information that is known to the students but not to the teachers or other students (e.g. information about their customs, families and so on), and activities that require their views and thoughts on various issues. For instance, Emma usually starts her class with an activity that asks the students to reveal something about themselves. An example of this was to ask her students to each write a sentence on what they would not do even if they were paid

\$50,000 to do it as one of the first exercises when she taught the first conditional. As Emma reported it:

They had to write sentences in groups and my sentence was, "Even if ... see, I have to use "I will". Even if someone offers me \$50,000, I will never go bungee jumping" and they were surprised at that because a few of them have done bungee jumping. A few people went, "Why not? \$50,000!" I said, not me. So then they had to write their own. (Emma; intv1.2-3)

Most other teachers do similar kinds of activities where they try to get their students to use the language by talking about something about themselves.

Relevance is also maintained by selecting themes, which the teachers think will be of interest and use to the students. In the DE classes in the morning, these are usually dictated by the unit outline but in the G/P class and the DE1 and DE 2 afternoon classes, the teachers have the freedom to choose what to teach based on their assessment of their students' needs and interest. Thus, Emma picks topics like shopping and telephoning for her DE2 afternoon class as they need the language to perform these tasks in real life. Joanne selects topics like work and travel for her G/P class because most of her students have jobs in their own country and are interested in travelling to places of interest in Australia.

To be meaningful, the activities also have to be interactive as communication entails interaction. Therefore, where possible, the activities are made interactive. As has already been indicated in various parts of this thesis, such activities include pair or group work.

The interactive activities, which the teachers devise, can be put into four groups. These are information-piecing activities, information exchange, group essays and presentations, and games. Information-piecing activities are those where a task can only be completed through students sharing information with each other. For example, the task can be on making an appointment to see a movie. In order for the students to find a mutually convenient time for the appointment, they each need to consult their diaries to locate a time that suits both parties. Another type of information piecing activity is text organisation where a piece of text is cut up into individual sentences and the students

have to arrange the sentences in its proper sequence. Other information-piecing activities may include different parties getting together to share what they have in their texts in order to get the complete picture. Jig-saw readings and listening are examples of such tasks.

Many types of information exchange activities are available. One type that is commonly used and requires little preparation on the part of the teacher is volunteering information about the self. For example, Joanne likes to ask her students to tell each other about their weekend at the start of the week as a way of warming up the class for the day's lesson. Another type of information exchange is discussion on a certain topic or issue. Depending on the level of the class, the topic of discussion may be something complex like abortion or genetically modified foods, or something less cognitively and linguistically demanding like the planning of an itinerary for friend who is coming to visit Perth. The final type of information exchange activities is error analysis. As reported earlier, the teachers prefer to teach common errors in language structures by taking examples from students' work. In these exercises, the students work together either in pairs or groups to identify the errors and suggest possible corrections.

The third type of interactive activities is group or paired essays or presentations. Many teachers like giving their students group essays to write before allowing them to write their own individual pieces. Usually, the students are given a group essay to write after they have been taught a particular text organisation. Another type of interactive activity is paired presentation. Students work in pairs to deliver a presentation that is assessed. The normal procedure is to assign the task to each pair of students at the start of the module and by Week 4, they are expected to deliver the presentation to the class.

The final type of interactive activities is language games. Included in this category are role-plays and activities, which contain an element of competition. In role-plays, the students are given cue cards where they have to act out certain roles. Usually, the teachers give the students a cue card, each with prompts on what to do or say in various situations and the students produce their own dialogue based on the cues in the card. In terms of activities with an element of competition, several types of language games that facilitate the learning of specific language points are available. For example, there are vocabulary games such as bingo, crossword puzzles, and hangman, grammar games like

‘twenty questions’ and grammar auction, reading/writing games like running dictation, listening/speaking games like Chinese Whispers.

Teaching materials

The second aspect of teaching to which the ELICOS teachers pay particular attention, is material selection. One strategy specific to language learning is to give students authentic materials where possible since those are the materials, which they need to deal with in real life. As such, where possible, the teachers prefer to look for materials from the newspapers, magazines, and the internet to supplement or substitute what they are supposed to teach from the textbook. The ELICOS program has class sets of the *West Australian* and *In the News*, a set of weekly exercises based on newspaper reports produced by the University of Tasmania. Authentic materials used in the lower levels can also be teacher-made as shown in another activity of Emma’s, which was used as a warmer for teaching the reported speech. She said:

I think I wrote ten sentences about myself and the students had to guess if they were true or false. So, just things like – one of them, I said I had three tattoos. True or False. And they were quite interested in that one. I divided them into A and B – the groups. (Emma, intv2.4, p1)

In higher level classes, 6NR interview tapes, BTN program, newspaper articles and texts from books taken mainstream subjects are used for teaching rather than the commercially produced video tapes meant for TESOL. This is shown in the following comments:

I see a useful newspaper article, I cut it out. I hear something on the radio, I might tape it and I make a note of it. So sometimes I make a record of the tv – parts of a science show, parts of a health report. (Laura; intv2.1, p13)

I was scanning newspapers about articles – that sort of thing, or the internet, or looking at the themes that we do, or think we’ll do, and check the internet for up-to-date information or readings. (Joanne; intv1.1, p3)

The type of authentic materials used depends on the level of the classes. Lexically less dense materials on familiar topics are used in lower-level classes whereas lexically denser and more sophisticated materials are used in the upper levels.

Implicit in the focus on interaction in language learning is the assumption that learning a language requires practice. This is evident in the following statement by Laura, Anna and Rosa below:

I'm firmly convinced that in order to learn something, you have to do it and you learn it by doing it. It's not only knowing how something is. It's actually doing it – doing the task. (Laura; intv2.1, p2)

The fact that they're actually having to do this in English and they're having to use vocabulary that they've not used before, hopefully that is adding to their stock of list of concepts and vocabulary in English... (Anna; intv0.1, p5)

It's a shame they couldn't do anymore practice because that's what made them grasp it – their actually having to do it rather than ... they can identify those features if I give them an essay but when they have to produce the structure and thesis statement and topic sentences, that really reinforces it. (Rosa; intv1.3, p2/3)

Thus, language lessons at the ELICOS are characterised by a greater proportion of student-centred activities than teacher talk.

If the students are learning writing, then they are expected to produce writing. As Rosa said, with writing, the students “*should actually do it, rather than just being told*” (Rosa; intv2.2, p3). In this regard, the teachers normally give students writing in groups first before they ask the students to produce their individual pieces. For example, Theresa's students produced a group film review before they were told to write one of their own. In speaking, the teachers give students ‘dry runs’ so that when the time comes for them to deliver their individual presentations, they would have had one or two attempts at speaking in front of the class as demonstrated in Leanne's comment:

It's also like a dry run – an opportunity for them to actually (find out) “This is actually what we've got to do”. ... What's expected of them because I think just to give out a presentation assignment is very well but for them to understand what is required that they would not understand it completely before they actually do it ... (Leanne; intv0.1, p3)

For listening, the students are also given practice in the skills on which they are assessed. Therefore, in the Academic English classes, students are given a lot of practice on lecture note-taking, a skill for which they would be tested and which they

require when they commence mainstream study. For reading, they are taught various reading skills and given many paragraphs to practise those skills.

Teacher role

The fact that language can only be learnt through doing means that the teacher's role has to go beyond that of the traditional pedagogue whose function is to disseminate knowledge to the students in the classroom. All the teachers in the program describe their role as being facilitators:

I see her as a facilitator and mentor rather than as dispersor of knowledge. (Laura; intv2.1, p2)

For the teachers, facilitation is to provide the students with learning opportunities. This means setting up situations, which allow students to practise the language in class. In Joanne's words, a facilitator's job is:

To provide language learning situations whereby the students are feeling that they're gaining the language; they are achieving whatever they set themselves out to achieve be it a postgrad course, be it to travel round Australia. (Joanne; intv0.4, p10)

In providing the language learning situations, tasks have to be set and the facilitator's responsibility is to:

To provide tasks that are challenging for them – not impossible, but that are not too easy – where I can see some growth and they can see a bit of growth. (Laura; intv2.1, p3)

Besides providing the students the opportunities to practise the language, the facilitator also has the role of actively helping the students to reflect on the language activities they are doing in class.

I felt my role is to guide them cognitively into thinking more deeply about what they're learning so that they could, hopefully, feel more equipped and empowered in their language learning ... (Theresa; intv0.3, p6)

Laura sums up the role of the facilitator thus:

I see my role as facilitator and helper and provider of stimulation but they will have to do the learning and if they can do it cooperatively and hopefully, they'll learn more and quicker. (Laura; intv2.2, p7)

Therefore, a language facilitator is one who spends a lot of time in planning and preparing before the start of class. They create language situations in which their students are able to practise the language taught.

Arising from the role of the facilitator are other roles for the teacher. One of these is to be a manager of the learning process. This role requires the teacher to perform several tasks. The first is to make decisions on the type of learning activities to give students and to determine how those activities are to be carried out. For example, the teacher may decide that an activity be carried out by the students in small groups or in pairs or perhaps, as a class as shown in the following account by Rosa of how she organised her students to correct common grammar mistakes of the class:

I put them in groups of three and I got them to look through all the sentences and ... then I gave each group just two or three to concentrate on and I got them to write their version of them on the whiteboard and again we all looked at it. (Rosa; intv 1.3, p6)

Decisions of this nature are usually made before class and may entail some preparation. This may be in the form of telling the students what to bring in the next lesson for the activity or providing them with the materials for the activity.

Another function, which the teachers perform as managers of classroom learning, is to monitor the students as they perform their activities:

They got into groups of four. They had the same story. Helped each other retell the story and then split up and went to other groups. I walked around. Some people were very fluent in paraphrasing, and the others were pathetic (Joanne; intv1.4, p4)

I moved on and made time to go to every single group, just listen and answer any question they had or help them think of problems. (Theresa; intv0.2, p4)

Where they notice that the groups are having problems with getting on with the given task, the teachers usually intervene as demonstrated in the account given by Theresa below:

I noticed there's one group that was struggling because one of the students has been sick and he tends to sit with his head down. Another guy, an older man, more demanding – he's a brand new student – so, I just sat down with the group at the table and just ask some questions to get them focused, to try and help them choose a film that they'd all seen (Theresa; intv0.2, p4)

Once she made sure that the stumbling block to their group activity was removed, she “just left them to it and moved on to other groups.”

A large part of monitoring, however, is concerned with helping students with expressing their meaning accurately. Evidence of this is reflected in the following comment:

I had to go around and still many tasks – some of them were getting 'is made' and 'invented' mixed up. I had to still go round and check. I was surprised. I thought easy (Emma, 2.1, p5)

Monitoring of students at their work has to be constant, as teachers cannot take for granted that their students will have no difficulty doing activities, which they think are easy and straightforward.

Another form of monitoring of student activities is keep track of what the students are doing for their major assignments. This is shown in Leanne's recall of how she kept track of her students' progress for the major assignment she set her class:

I went one by one, just conference individually. It was very time consuming and I try it. Also, because I set a task for the others ... (the questionnaire design), ... I went through one by one, and really try to get it out of them. (Leanne; intv1.1, p3)

The work is painstaking but Leanne, like most of the other teachers, does it because she feels that paying attention to how individuals carry out their assignments is a very important aspect of language teaching in the ELICOS program.

Another function of class management is to take into account the students' personalities when determining the type class activities. Sometimes, the students do not get on with the other members of the group, or prefer to work by themselves. Theresa, for example, gave her students a choice of either working as a group or individually in a writing activity because she felt that some students preferred it that way. She said:

I didn't want them to feel pressured about having to work inefficiently with people in their group. ... If they're in the mood for thinking in a solitary way because there was one guy in particular who has not been well in the class and he hasn't been able to interact with his group and I just sort of thought I just put that up as a possibility for him or any of the other students who were those kinds of learners or in that sort of mood. (Theresa; intv0.2, p3)

By giving the students an option, the teachers are taking precautionary steps to prevent unpleasant situations from arising in the classroom.

Sometimes, students do not want to cooperate. Rather than insisting that they do what the teachers wish them to do, the teachers leave them alone. This is seen in the case of Joanne who decided to allow one or two of her students to do as they pleased in one lesson because they did not want to do the grammar exercise which the rest of the class were keen to do:

We've got a couple who decided that they won't do grammar - Adam and Emerson and Thomas, whereas others are as keen as mustard to do it and others who would rather talk about it than do any writing. So I sense they that they're a bit of a restless camp. ... I didn't really want to confront them so much. ...Adam said that it was boring, "I'm not doing it". All I said was, "Well, could you possibly do three or something and prove it but he looked so affronted. At the end, you know, ... (Joanne; intv1.4, p2)

Joanne did not insist because insistence would only lead to a confrontation. Most managers prefer to avoid such situations.

As managers, the teachers know how much they can push their students to achieve results and know when it is counter-productive to continue exerting pressure on the students to learn when the students do not wish to learn. This is again demonstrated in

Joanne's explanation of how difficult it was to get a particular student to learn more vocabulary in English.

Thomas was such a drain on energy – a lovely guy but because of his disposition – he says “I don't have words in Polish, so I don't need any other words from 'good' if it is 'good'. I don't need 'fabulous', 'fantastic' or other adjectives. I just need good”. ... He refuses to do it in his first language, so we have no hope in asking him to do it in the second. (Joanne; intv2.1, p3)

The ELICOS teachers manage by persuasion. If that does not work, they prefer to let the matter rest.

Another role related to the role of facilitator is that of the resource person. The teacher is the resource person whom the students use to help them with their tasks. While walking around the class to check on the students doing their work, the teacher are often called upon by the students to explain meanings of words, check sentence constructions, clarify grammar points and provide the right expression as seen in the following quotes:

Sometimes they asked, “Why can't I use the simple past?” or, “Present perfect and not the simple past?” and I remind them of the particular time – that sort of grammar rule. ... (Joanne; intv0.4, p4)

A few of them wanted me to come and explain a few of the terms because they (the passages) were really written in sort of ...ah... some economic terms or historical terms and some of them were quite challenging... (Theresa; intv0.1, p6)

In addition to providing solutions to linguistic difficulties, which the students have, the teachers are also resource persons in terms of content knowledge.

I go around and just listen to their language and also what they're saying and giving suggestions of what happens in other cultures. They say they don't know what that is or what happens with that and if that's acceptable. ... I've got a German student who's no idea of Ramadan and the Muslim students not eating during the day. She was asking questions about that; so there was no Muslim student in the class; so I answered that. (Joanne; intv1.3, p7)

Therefore, teachers must be more knowledgeable than students not only in language but also in content.

Finally, as is evident from the discussion on students, the role of the teacher as a needs analyst is very important in the learning/teaching process and what is selected in the classroom for teaching is geared towards meeting the individual needs of the students. As this has been described fully in the preceding part of this chapter, it is sufficient to mention that the focus on student needs is the result of the significance which is placed on attending to individual needs for effective language learning.

To sum up, the role of the teacher is more than a matter of delivering a set of materials recommended in the unit outline. The teachers are facilitators, managers, resource persons and needs analysts. For the teachers, language teaching is concerned with finding or creating opportunities for students to practise various aspects of language in meaningful ways. This means finding activities and materials that are relevant to the students' needs and interest, and that it should approximate real communication as far as possible.

General Learning Strategies

In addition to the strategies that are specific to language learning, there are also those, which are related to the nature of learning in general. Four such strategies are noted. The first is to produce lessons that are cohesive and coherent. The second is to communicate, either directly or indirectly, to the students their performance expectations for each given task. The third is to keep a close watch over the mental and emotional level of the students so that a realistic and satisfying outcome for each lesson can be obtained. The last strategy is to make learning an enjoyable experience for the students. Each of these strategies will be explained in greater detail below.

Cohesive and coherent lessons

The ELICOS teachers are concerned that the learning they plan for their students is cohesive and coherent. Cohesion and coherence are observed in their approach to their planning of the activities and materials for the whole module as well as for their daily lessons. To ensure that their learning plan is cohesive and coherent, they often work with the notion of themes. The reason for this is well articulated by Joanne who states:

If a student is ...looking themselves at it and they don't understand how it's all being put together, I think that's one angle that they can look at and say, "Oh, it's holding together because of that". (Joanne; intv0.2, p8)

Themes provide students with a framework to organise the various information and skills which they are taught. It allows them to make sense of what may appear to be bits and pieces of language which teachers highlight in class.

Three types of theme guide teachers in their planning of the module. The first is topic theme which most of the teachers use to unify the language activities they teach each week. Joanne likes teaching according to topic themes because she claims that it makes the learning more meaningful:

I like teaching theme because I think the students and myself can totally immerse in the whole theme and in their reading, listening, speaking and writing; through different skills and that's comprehensive learning environment.

Joanne adds:

I think that's important because I actually observed a teacher who's teaching another language and I was really thrown off because they did a whole lot of pair activities ... but they weren't related. It was like the other extreme of having no theme or no common thread almost following through them and it wasn't grammatically linked. It wasn't thematically linked. I got disturbed by it. ... I was reeling the whole lesson because I could not work out the reason why the teacher is doing it. (Joanne; intv0.1p2-3)

Her experience made her realise that learning is difficult if students cannot see the relationship between the different learning activities they are given.

The second type of theme is the task-based theme where all the activities culminate in the production of a big task. This type of theme is used most commonly in the production of the writing and speaking assignments particularly in the Academic English classes. Assignments for both these macro-skills require the teachers to break down the task into several sub-tasks, which are arranged in a sequential order. For example, if the task is to produce a survey presentation at the end of the module, then the sub-tasks may consist of the design of the survey followed by the data collection and

analysis, and the writing of the report. In addition, other sub tasks are the preparation of audio-visual aids and the rehearsal of the presentation. In the case of topic themes, the teachers usually have one for each week and all the activities are linked by the same theme. In terms of task theme, a task can be developed for the whole module with the focus on one sub task each week. The topic theme then becomes less important as the teachers pay attention to the various aspects of language and genre to help students achieve their target.

The third type of theme is a skills-based theme where the materials and activities are varied but coherence is maintained by the building up of skills in a macro area. This is most used in reading and listening. In listening, for example, the students are taught abbreviations and numbering as part of helping them to take notes. The other sub-skills that they have to learn include listening for the stressed syllables of words and the stressed words. As for reading, the skills that are taught to the students may comprise deducing the meaning of words in context, skimming, scanning and identifying main ideas that have been described in the last chapter.

In terms of daily lesson planning, coherence is also maintained either through a topic, a task, or a skill. If employing a topic theme, the teachers look for a number of activities linked by topic on different aspects of language. For example, to teach functions and vocabulary which the students could use in their life outside the classroom, Emma used the theme of shopping. In her words:

First of all, to get them speaking in pairs, I did a questionnaire – quite an easy one about generally on shopping – that type of thing – where do they go shopping – just to get them talking, interacting and then from that, any vocab that comes up, I write on the board. ... So then we did a bit of vocab which came from them and we did a vocab sheet on shopping lists expressions like ‘a packet of cigarettes’, ‘a bunch of flowers’. ...I didn’t just give them the sheet. I think I drew one flower and a bunch of flowers and I think I try to put it in context like here in the markets And then I gave them the sheet and they worked in pair. ... Then I think we had a reading from Headway Australasia on shopping in Hong Kong, I think it was. ... And then we did a speaking task from the same text – Headway Australasia and A and B. A had a shopping list and students B – they had a list of shops in Melbourne and Students A, they wanted to not spend too much money. They want to spend the least amount of money as possible but these students were trying to persuade them to spend big. (Emma; intv0.2, p1-4)

All the activities and materials that she gave them were concerned with shopping. The students learnt vocabulary related to shopping, practised speaking with each other about shopping and they also read about shopping.

If using a task-based theme, the teachers usually select aspects of language, which they think their students will need for successful completion of a specific task. A task-based theme can be observed in Theresa's account of how she taught her students to write a book review. Theresa recounted how she conducted the lesson thus:

I took in this sample of a book review that had come out of Headway workbook. And it was a book review about Frankenstein and as I said to them, ... "Has anybody read a book or a film called 'Frankenstein'?" ... One Korean boy at the back said "Yes". ... I started drawing the information according to the structure that I wanted them to write in – all the main headings like the title of the book, type of book it was, the different characters, events in the story, their opinion. ... And then as a whole class, we brainstormed all the different types of movies and books they had seen – comedies, romance, action, science fiction – all that sort of thing. ... Well, my whole purpose in the lesson was to get them to do a group writing piece and to produce something close either at the end of the lesson, or to have it fairly well knotted out to be able to be given in by next week some time. ... Then I got them to do this cloze exercise where they had to work out where the missing information went and why – why it followed. I want to look at cohesive devices within the model, and why one particular sentence fitted in after another, and another, and so on which leads in to indirectly looking at the structure of the book review – film review. ... After we've done that cloze, we went into a bit more analysis of, "Okay, let's dissect it. What's the title, who's the author, what type of book is it, where does it say that, characters." (Theresa; intv 0.2, p1-3)

To summarise, Theresa did "a sort of an analysis of the structure, little bit of grammar, the order of information". Once she had gone through that with the students, she felt that they were ready to write a review of their own.

If a skills-based theme is used, the whole lesson may be used just for the students to practise a particular skill. The skills-based theme is well illustrated in the reading classes in the Academic English classes. For example, in one of the lessons in Ac2, the students are taught to deduce the meaning of a word from context. In this lesson, the students are given several short texts of two or three sentences in length each. Each of these texts contained one or two difficult words that the students have to guess the

meaning from the context. The texts are varied and come from a number of different subject disciplines. The link between them is that the texts are there for the students to practise the techniques for deducing the meaning of difficult words in context. The techniques involve looking at the use of commas, synonyms, antonyms, and examples. In teaching students how to skim read, the students are given two different passages on different topics. One is on high-speed decision making while the other is on smoking and what is contained in cigarettes (*Reading Skills Handbook*). Thus, the link for all these texts with diverse content is the fact that the students know that the lesson is to teach them certain skills.

It is necessary to note some teachers do not seem to have lessons that appear coherent or cohesive. In one lesson, the teacher may have a little exercise on vocabulary, an exercise on writing introductory paragraphs, and then a reading exercise that focuses on implied meaning of the given texts. Nevertheless, the students are able to make sense of their teacher's jumping from one activity to another. This is because of the way the teachers have structured their learning program. As mentioned in the first proposition, each teacher for the morning classes is given two macro-skills to teach and it is left to the individual teachers to decide how they would make use of their time to teach the skills. Some teachers are inclined towards allocating a full morning to each skill while others indicate a preference to teach both skills in each lesson. For instance, a Speaking/Listening teacher may use the first half of the morning to concentrate on speaking and the second half for listening. In cases like this, it is not usual for the activities of the day to be directly linked with each other. Instead, cohesiveness and coherence are maintained with activities, which the students have done in previous lessons for each skill. For example, Leanne reported spending the second half of one of her lessons on revising note-taking skills, an activity that had no connection with the morning activity, which was questionnaire construction:

We did revision because we haven't finished the note-taking from the previous (lesson). (Leanne; intv1/2, p4)

As can be seen, that activity was linked to an activity in the previous lesson.

Communicating teacher expectations

Another important aspect of teaching is to ensure that students know what the teachers expect from them in their work. As Laura puts it:

I think that what teaching's about is deciding what we want students to learn and then say that to them. It doesn't really matter what you choose but you've got to convey it clearly. (Laura; intv2.1, p1)

The teachers make their expectations clear in various ways and at various times in the course of a given task. Before the students begin their task, care is taken to ensure that the students are able to follow the instructions correctly. To this end, Emma usually checks the written instructions for activities she plans for the class so that the students can do the work without too much intervention from her. She explains:

One of the lessons, I think it was the second lesson, we had a game and I thought my instructions were very clear but a few of them got very confused. So, sometimes I think, "Oh, hang on, make the instructions easy for them to follow especially at the beginning of the DE2 module and they're quite new to these sort of thing". (Emma; intv 0.1, p5)

However, the most usual way to ensure that instructions are followed is to walk round the class to explain what they want the students to do if the students are not clear about the instructions given to the class as a group. Thus Theresa reports:

So I got them in groups doing it. ... I said, "You'd need to select an article and answer the same set of questions for each individual article. ... They found it, particularly the new students, they found the concept quite strange ... till I went round to them to individually explain... (Theresa, intv0.1, p5)

Some teachers make sure that their students follow instructions by delivering the instruction orally and in the written mode as seen in Laura's report of how she instructed her students to carry out a certain task.

I can give out a sheet but I find it's easier if I talk about it, write it on the board and by the time they've written it, they understand it and make sense. If I were to give out a sheet, it's just one ear in and one ear out the other. (Laura; intv2.2, p9)

If the task which the teachers want their students to do is complex and the instructions are complicated, some teachers do not give the instructions for the whole task at once. They break up the task and give students enough instructions to complete each portion of the task as reported by Emma below:

Sometimes I find that if I give instructions all at once, they're always going sort of ahead of themselves. Some of them. And I find that they're just interested in the end result rather than the process. So I break that (instructions) down. (Emma; intv2.3, p2)

A lot of teacher expectations are communicated through instructions. Therefore, teachers take pains to ensure that those instructions are understood and followed.

The teachers also communicate their expectations as the students are doing their work. As the teachers check the students' work when they walk around the class, they point out to students where they have not done something correctly and get the students to make correction. Anna and Laura walked around the class to check that their students were doing their tasks correctly. Anna checked the students' essay outlines and consulted with each individually so that "*they had at least a clearer idea of what I wanted*" (Anna; intv 0.2, p1). Similarly, Laura made sure that the newspaper articles chosen by her students for their presentation met with her approval.

In addition to checking students' work in an informal way, some teachers also make their expectations known in a more formal manner especially for the final product as illustrated in the following comment by Theresa:

I want them to know what standard I expect in their assignment and what criteria – a bit more on the criteria because of the assignment - the assignment sheet here which shows them how I'm going to mark all the different areas. ... I think it's really important to know what the task requires and it's not open to a lot of misinterpretation for the students themselves ... They need to know what I expect, how am I going to mark it. And there's no hidden agenda. (Theresa; intv0.3, p8/9)

They give their students a sheet with the written criteria, which they will use to assess their students' work. Thus, the students all know how they will be assessed before the

event. Some teachers give this sheet to the student early in the module so that they know what to pay attention to when they go about doing the task.

In addition, models are frequently used as a means of demonstrating to the students what to do and what not to do. For example, before Emma asked her students to write a biography individually, the students were exposed to two models of a biography. The first was from the textbook, which the students had to analyse in terms of discourse structure. Then Emma herself wrote one on the board which was the model that she wanted the students to follow:

Also I wrote a model biography on the board. It was a lot shorter. That's what I expected from them. (Emma; intv1.1, p8)

Models are useful because the students know what the teachers expect them to do without the teacher having to spend a lot of time communicating her/his requirements to the students.

While teachers believe that it is necessary to communicate their expectations, this is only possible when the teachers themselves have an overall understanding of what they are supposed to teach for the particular unit and the standard the students are expected to achieve for each level. The teachers display a degree of insecurity and uncertainty when they teach a new unit, regardless of their experience in teaching. Thus, Rosa was not willing to discard materials which she thought were not suitable when she was teaching Ac2 reading for the first time. In a number of the interviews, she voiced doubts and dissatisfaction over the reading materials but she felt that she still had to use them once to see how the materials worked and to get an overview of the unit as was structured and shaped by previous teachers. This was especially true in the first module. In the second module, Rosa felt that she had an idea of the level and therefore, had a better control over what she wanted from her students. Similar sentiments were expressed by Joanne who said that she was more discriminating about her materials and selection of activities when she taught reading to the G/P class for the second time. After teaching the module once, she gained an understanding of what materials were suitable and what were not. On the whole, the teachers are better able to communicate their expectations of their students after they have taught the unit at least once. They

understand better the level of performance that is expected of the students for that particular unit and therefore are more able to prepare their students to achieve that level from the start of the module.

Keeping the learning atmosphere in balance

The teachers also work from an assumption that learning takes place when the mental and emotional energy of the students are in balance. The teachers take for granted that students cannot concentrate intensely on what they are doing for a long stretch of time. To keep the mental energy in balance, the teachers display a tendency to alternate between what they consider to be mentally taxing with less taxing activities. Activities that require concentration such as analysing language structures and doing tests are considered mentally taxing. Less mentally taxing activities include discussions, reading familiar topics, and games. Thus, after a morning of analysing the passive voice, Theresa gave her class some discussion work where they did not have to think as hard:

Well, I just felt that we've spent an hour thrashing out the passives. There's a limit to how much they can take. I want them to kind of lift – get them more refreshed and get them to focus on the content. ... We've concentrated so intensely in that first hour, it was like it's time to just let go, you know. Just have a read and think. Let's balance the atmosphere in class and the type of task. And I feel they want to let off steam.
(Theresa; intv0.1, p9)

By the same token, Rosa wanted to give her students an activity that was not too taxing after their test.

Monday, they'll be doing their reading assessment, ... I'm not sure what I'll be doing for the last hour but nothing too heavy because they've just done a test. (Rosa; intv2.2, p7)

Thus, when the teachers plan for certain activities that require concentration, they also make sure that they alternate them with other activities that require less concentration. Sometimes, it is not possible to anticipate how the students will react to the selected material or activity. An activity that a teacher thinks will last twenty or thirty minutes may take a full morning session of one-and-a-half hours because the teacher has gauged the level of the students wrongly. This usually leads to students spending a long time in checking up on words from the dictionary and trying to make sense of the text. The

teachers regard students' attempts at dealing with the difficulty of the material as mentally taxing and as such, they often give something less taxing as a follow up activity even if the activity is not planned. In this regard, most teachers carry to class with them some back-up activities, which they will use if they have to deviate from their lesson plan for the day. This was reported by Anna, who after observing her students struggling with a paraphrasing activity, gave them something "lightweight":

By the time they got to that stage, it was 10.30 and I think they were pretty well fed-up with trying to do it because it took them so long. I had intended it for them to continue after the break but I decided they needed a break, and so after the break, I told them that I thought they needed a rest from that and they heaved a sigh of relief. ... I usually take in other activities just in case and I had them evaluating a passage – to evaluate ideas and so I did that which is more lightweight. (Anna; intv0.2, p4)

As Anna reasoned:

I think there's only so much you can do when they've reached a certain point. (Anna, intv0.2, p5)

Teachers feel that when students are mentally taxed to the limit, persisting with the activity is counterproductive. Thus, when they feel that students have reached the point where they cannot concentrate anymore, they often do something else that requires less mental work.

In addition to trying to balance mentally taxing with less taxing activities, many teachers also do not press on with the work planned for the day if they sensed that the class is not in the mood for that work. Joanne says that if she walks into the class and if she senses that the class is in a difficult mood, she usually drops her planned lesson and does something else:

When I walk into a class, I might have a lot planned but I won't do that. I might do something off the top of my head because I can feel that the energy is not receptive or something. (Joanne; intv0.1, p15)

To cater for such situations, most teachers have a few possible activities for the day and they will decide on the specific activity only after they have assessed the mood of the

students. This is especially after the students have been given what the teachers perceive to be an intense activity as is seen in the following comment by Theresa:

Between 11.00 and 12.00, I want to go back and have a look ... I'm just going to see what the mood's there and after going through quite intensive analytical work, ...I just go with the flow. If it's too heavy, I'll just bring in something lighter. (Theresa; intv0.3, p10)

Occasionally, instead of giving students an activity, a teacher may sense that the mood of the class is the result of other issues that need resolution. In such instances, one strategy is to stop whatever the class is doing in order to attend to the problem. Anna stopped what she wanted her class to do when she sensed that they were not applying themselves to the task. She recalled:

They were very quiet at that stage and it came out towards the end of the lesson on Wednesday that they – some of them were a bit unsure about where they were going at the end of the course. So there were all those concerns going in the heads on Wednesday, which in the end, I spent a bit of time on. (Anna; intv0.2, p3)

Once she had addressed their concerns, she felt that the class was then ready to concentrate on their work.

Ensuring that the mental and emotional energy of the students is in balance is important because it affects the receptiveness of the students to the activities in the class. By extension, an imbalance would render their learning less effective. It is, therefore, counterproductive to plan activities that require full concentration for more than an hour each time. By juxtaposing mentally taxing activities with those that are less taxing, the teachers feel that the students are able to gain more from their time in the classroom. Similarly, many feel that if the students are not in the mood for certain intensive activities, it is better to do something else that require less concentration on their part.

Learning as a pleasant experience

Underlying a great deal of actions of the teachers is the idea that learning ought to be a pleasant experience. Therefore, apart from making sure that the students' needs are met and that the environment is conducive to learning, the teachers try to make their lessons

fun and interesting wherever possible. To this end, many of the teachers reported looking for language games to make their lessons more interesting.

The use of language games is most evident in the lower level classes such as DE 2 and especially in the afternoon classes. For example, in DE2, Emma gave her students many activities that were fun to do in the afternoon class. When asked why she did it this way, she said that she found that it worked:

For the DE2 classes, I try to find activities that are very interactive (with) an element of fun. ... It is so much fun when we have a competition element. It's all out there. It just comes out. It comes out more when it is interactive. ... They're talking more spontaneously. (Emma; intv0.1, p4)

Students enjoy competing in groups and when they are having fun, they forget that they are actually in a learning situation. The communication is more authentic and spontaneous as they concentrate on winning points for their individual groups.

The element of fun is not limited to the lower level proficiency classes, however. Using games as a teaching tool is also evident in DE4 with Joanne who feels that her grammar lessons can be made more interesting if she makes use of games to introduce various grammar points. She believes that it is a much better way of learning something as dry as grammar. Joanne explains:

We take grammar that's out of the book and I usually introduce that through grammar games, activities – light activities, so that they don't see grammar as some awful thing which they perhaps have memories of learning grammar ... I make it a fun activity that they're almost subconsciously using the structures without actually thinking about it. (Joanne; intv0.1, p1)

Her reason for using games is the same as Emma's. The students concentrate so hard on the game that they forget that they are using the language which Joanne wants them to practise.

Where possible, the teachers in the other classes incorporate some language games in their teaching. Games are used by Leanne and Laura as warmers for the day's lesson as mentioned in various parts of this thesis. Anna gives her students language games when

she feels that the class has lost its momentum for study after submitting their assignment for the module. Anna regards the use of games as a lighter way of staying focus on language learning as seen in her recount of what she did with her class:

This morning we just did a quiz and a vocab game. They were bright, focused – loved it. Same thing. I think they really had enough of the straight academic work. Essays are done. Their presentations are done. They are switched off. (Anna; intv0.3, p7)

Anna is concerned that her students who have paid a lot of money to learn English are not wasting their class time on anything that is unrelated to language learning. Therefore, even when it came to winding down activities, she wanted them to be language focused.

Apart from games, there are other activities that are considered to be fun. These include questionnaires (for example, personality quiz) and problem solving activities (for example, solving a mystery murder). Once again, these are used by teachers in the various levels of the ELICOS program.

In addition to the above activities that are fun, there are other activities that make language learning pleasurable. One such is reading. Attempts are made by some teachers to make reading fun. Joanne tries to inculcate the habit of reading for pleasure by lending her students simple readers. Rosa feels that there is a need to introduce readings that are more enjoyable.

I think you've got to balance the kind of readings where they are definitely learning to do something with overall readings which are more enjoyable, which encourage them to read a bit more. (Rosa; intv2.1, p9)

The teachers feel that the benefits students derive from reading for pleasure is worth the extra effort they make to encourage their students to read storybooks.

Another non-interactive activity that is enjoyable is listening to songs and filling in the gaps in the lyrics. If a song fits in with the theme of the lesson, the teachers sometimes use pop songs with which the students are familiar. Sometimes, if appropriate, the teachers may play segments of a movie to fit in with their lesson. Thus, attempts are

made to vary the types of learning stimuli that are presented to the student to make them stay interested.

Another way to make learning pleasant is to select materials that are deemed interesting. The notion of ‘interesting materials’ includes materials that are visually pleasing, current and being relevant to Australia. For instance, many teachers like the new Headway series because of its presentation. According to Joanne:

(The layout) keeps my interest (because of) colour. ... It's fun language. It's language made interesting and it's made a unit predictable. (Joanne; intv0.2, p8)

Materials that are current and topical are also considered interesting. For example, Leanne expresses a liking for BTN as a teaching resource because:

I think that the BTN can lead to a lot of interesting discussion for the students because it is current and interesting. (Leanne; intv0.1, p4)

By the same token, Rosa wants something newer than an article on the Exxon Valdez because she does not think that students are interested in something that is so dated:

I think students are put off when they're reading things that are 1983, which to me, seems like yesterday but to them – some weren't even born in 1983. (Rosa; intv2.3, p7)

Interesting materials must appeal to the eye, and they must be current.

Attempts are also made to have materials that are Australian in content. There is an assumption that since the students have chosen to study in Australia and not another English-speaking country, they are interested in learning about the country. Hence Rosa is critical of the use of an American text for reading for her academic class. Other teachers, while not articulating such a concern, just go about looking for materials with Australian content. They sometimes choose themes that are local in nature. For example, in Joanne's G/P class, the theme of Australian Aborigines is taught because the students want to know more about a group of people of whom they have had only negative understanding.

Conclusion

This chapter developed the third proposition that was that teachers drew on their understanding of how SMK of TESOL was best learnt when teaching the subject. In this regard, three entities were important to them when teaching. These were the teaching environment, the student, and the teaching/learning process. In considering the teaching environment, three types of environment were taken into account. These were the physical, affective and social environments. In relation to students, three types of needs were catered for, namely, knowledge, affective and behavioural needs. Finally, in terms of the teaching/learning process, two sets of strategies were utilised in the teaching of the SMK. The first was strategies that were based on understanding of the nature of the SMK and the second was based on understanding of learning in general.