



João Canoquena

# English Learning Maximisation System

*A Learning-Centred Approach*

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By

João Canoquena

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This book is dedicated to my three bundles of joy – Filipe Nunes-Canoquena, Emma Joseph Nunes-Canoquena and Rochelle Tomé Canoquena.

It is equally dedicated to my mother, Maria da Conceição Francisco Canoquena, for her unwavering and unconditional support. She has always been a reliable source of encouragement and inspiration.



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## ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

ACTA	Australian Council of TESOL Associations
AMES	Adult Multicultural Education Services
ASQA	Australian Skills Quality Authority
CAE	Certificate in Advanced English
CELTA	Certificate in English Language Teaching
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CRICOS	Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students
DoS	Director of Studies
EA	English Australia
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
ELMS	English Learning Maximisation System
ELT	English Language Teaching
ERIC	Education Resources Information Centre
ESL	English as a Second Language
FCE	First Certificate in English
GE	General English
HR	Human Resources
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IT	Information Technology
KET	Key English Test
NEAS	National ELICOS Accreditation Scheme
●UP	●xford University Press
PET	Preliminary English Test
PPP	Present – Practise – Produce
R●I	Return on Investment



RT●	Registered Training ●rganisation
TAFE	Technical and Further Education (College)
TES●L	Teaching English to Speakers of ●ther Languages

# INTRODUCTION

The English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) industry in Australia is largely privately owned. Its owners operate small to medium-sized colleges/English Language Teaching (ELT) centres in major cities such as Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide. These proprietors invest millions into this increasingly regulated industry, which suffers enormously from the Federal Government's tightening of the Australian visa system. The challenge faced by the Federal Government in the management of the visa system arises predominately from a lack of consultation mechanisms with the teaching industry, its main bodies, education agents and clients (the students and/or their parents). However, its consequences are drastic. For instance, one report by a prominent Australian into the visa system has recommended that Australia export its educational courses and stop importing overseas students. In other words, the report has recommended the removal of the economic benefit of international education from the Australian economy, which is in the billions. This perplexing recommendation comes at a time when Australia is spending millions advertising itself as a preferred destination for tourism. Puzzling too is the fact that international students' relatives and friends are the biggest cohort of tourists to Australia. It is not surprising, therefore, to hear cries for help from ELICOS' Academic Managers. "Government officials know nothing about ELICOS." Or the more mundane concern over the rise in the cost of compliance. "That's another burden imposed on us [ELICOS] by the government."

As a direct result of these suggestions for reform in the educational sector which only serve to heighten tensions and the tightening of the visa system, private education providers are confused, wary, and, in most instances, defensive. These sceptical proprietors are merging job titles (e.g. Marketing Manager/Campus Manager) and diluting existing job roles (e.g. the duties of a manager are spread across a range of other job descriptions). The last thing they need to hear is that a teacher has been perceived by students as not "teaching them anything". Worst of all would be the prospect of students asking to withdraw and moving to another provider after their first six months at the college, because they are "not learning anything".

In this book, the phenomenon of “not learning anything” is explored. In addition, its causes are outlined. These are said to be, inter alia: the textbook, teachers’ lesson delivery style, students’ own challenges, teachers’ profile, the dearth of information about ELICOS and the absence of an alternative method. Additionally, this book offers a new ELT paradigm. This new system is herein denoted as ELMS (English Learning Maximisation System). ELMS is a principle of English language learning maximisation, which should offer teachers a wide range of benefits. It should help TESOL practitioners to structure their lessons. Moreover, this new paradigm should make lesson planning an effortless task. Most importantly, through the adoption of the ELMS sequence ELT teachers should be able to engage their students in meaningful learning.

Divided into five parts and nineteen chapters, this book examines a problem (or phenomenon), outlines case studies to understand the factors contributing to the phenomenon and describes a research project designed to resolve the problem.

# **PART I**

## **THE PHENOMENON: WHAT HAS HAPPENED?**

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE STUDENT COMPLAINT

### Introduction

This chapter narrates a sequence of events related to a student complaint, which was raised at an ELICOS college.

This complaint referred to the perception, on the part of some ELICOS students, of “not learning anything” in a series of English lessons.

A cycle of the management of this complaint is briefly outlined in this chapter.

### A Student Complaint Life Cycle

#### *Notification*

●n a Thursday morning, just after the morning break, a staff member notified me, the Director of Studies, of some student complaints about a young, male teacher via e-mail. ●ther staff members had been copied into the e-mail to help unveil additional, similar cases. It was common practice to treat students’ complaints in a manner that initially generated feedback from other staff members. This often had either one of two outcomes. ●ther staff members offered additional comments to corroborate the students’ complaints. ●r there might be staff members who have heard positive comments about the teacher, in which case, the complaints might be treated as isolated cases.

The complaints at hand related to the male teacher’s teaching style. These related mostly to pace and language knowledge.

A second e-mail was subsequently sent by the same staff member to me, a day after the initial one. This time, additional information was provided in relation to the nature of the students’ complaints. Their main concern was the perception of “not learning anything” in three out of the five days of

timetabled tuition. The teacher in question taught this class of intermediate, heterogeneous, Conversational English students, Monday to Wednesday.

### *Investigation*

I sampled four students out of this class. I selected the more capable ones from their test results. I sat with them separately and made no mention of the complaints received, indicating that it was my routine to talk to students from time to time about their learning experiences. I asked direct questions in some cases. In other cases, I outlined the gains in their learning first. So, for example, I started with “I’ve noticed that your second reading test shows some improvement in your reading skills”. The more capable ones saw this as a cue to talk about their reading skills. The less proficient student required a more direct question. “Has your English improved?” I noted down the answers, summarising some and quoting others verbatim. The chief concerns raised by the students I spoke to and the ones who had approached the aforementioned staff member fell into six categories, namely: the pace of delivery (too fast), a lack of visual aids, the relevance of learning experience to their needs and interests, a lack of hands-on and challenging activities, knowledge acquisition through daily theme changes/ number of conversation activities and a lack of written production. These items have been conceptualised from the actual complaints voiced by the students to allow me to draw generalisations from this experience in Table 1.1. These generalisations are not intended to indicate that all teachers consider student complaints in the same way. Different teachers will approach student complaints in a range of different ways. Nonetheless, the inclusion of this example in this first chapter serves two purposes. ● On the one hand, it allows the reader to visualise the process involved in handling a complaint. ● On the other hand, it contextualises the phenomenon of “not learning anything”.

### *Right of Response*

I, the Director of Studies, forwarded a summary of the issues raised by the students to the respective teacher. Because it was a Thursday, the teacher was not at the college to discuss the concerns raised face-to-face. In my e-mail, I focused on the key issues in order to provide a manageable framework to work with. I outlined the six aspects of the learning experience, about which the students were concerned. In the e-mail, I made every effort not to identify the complainants as per the college’s

complaint handling policy. In his reply e-mail, the teacher expressed concern at the complaints. He then indicated that he would have liked to have been approached by the students, in the first instance. In the teacher's interpretation of the complaints, there were some truths and some inconsistencies in the students' assertions.

**Table 1. 1 Structure of a teacher's response to students' complaints**

<b>COMPLAINT CATEGORIES</b>	<b>TEACHER'S RESPONSE TO COMPLAINTS</b>
<b>Pace</b>	agreement & pledge to address it
<b>Visual aid</b>	agreement, admission & indication of recent rectification
<b>Relevance of learning experience</b>	disagreement/different perception & anecdotal evidence of addressing it in recent past
<b>Hands-on &amp; challenge</b>	disagreement/different perception & speculation of a reason for the complaints as the students had not been in the class long
<b>Daily conversational topics</b>	justification for the decision not to have had daily topics
<b>Written production in class</b>	partial agreement with indication of it being an isolated case & refutation

### *Reconciling Accounts*

The teacher's response was then compared to the students' complaints. I concluded that a) the students were able to examine or interpret their learning experience, b) these students had a fairly good understanding of what they wanted and needed, c) the teacher was willing to address some of the issues raised and d) although the teacher would have preferred the issues to have been referred directly to him, he admitted that he was aware of some areas for improvement such as speaking too fast in class. Most importantly, the two sets of comments (i.e. the students' and the teacher's) revealed a clear mismatch in perceptions about the learning process. For instance, in relation to the lack of relevance of the students' learning

experience and the lack of hands-on activities, there were discrepancies between the complaints and the teacher's response.

### *Investigating Further*

Due to these inconsistencies, I asked the Head Teacher to conduct a focused observation of the teacher. The report of the observation confirmed the existence of areas for improvement such as pace. However, it indicated that most of the improvement areas were minor and could easily be addressed. The report also indicated that the teacher had been debriefed in relation to the nature and extent of the improvement required.

### *Exploring Solutions*

Subsequently, I saw the teacher and discussed his professional development needs. I asked the teacher to describe some of the class activities to me to see if I could help in any way. "I know how to teach," he retorted. "I hired you. I know you can teach, but there might just be a mismatch between your teaching style and their learning style," I offered, backing off a bit. "Well, you know, I get them to do tasks and reflect on their learning." As these words were uttered, a realisation dawned upon me. The teacher was using task-based teaching with an accuracy-minded class. In other words, his class was best suited to a method which bridged the gap between accuracy and fluency, with greater emphasis on the former rather than the latter. In other words, the pendulum had swung too far towards fluency, at the expense of accuracy.

### *Resolution*

I suggested that the teacher observe a very experienced teacher who had an accuracy-oriented delivery style. The teacher organised the observation with the experienced colleague I had suggested and forwarded a post-observation summary to me within a week of our debriefing session. In it, the teacher summarised the lesson and outlined the professional development drawn from the observation.

I then proceeded to sit down with the complainants to explain to them how their complaints had been investigated. I elicited their reaction to the processes adopted to address their complaints. They all indicated that there had been some progress in the lesson delivery style of their teacher from Monday to Wednesday. I then asked them if they were happy to declare



the case closed, to which the three initial complainants sitting in my office agreed unanimously.

## Conclusion

This initial chapter outlines the life cycle of a student complaint. This cycle, in the case presented in this chapter, encompasses seven steps, from notification of the complaint to its resolution. In addition, this chapter provides a depiction of the duties fulfilled by various members of staff within an ELICOS college.

The conceptualisation shown in Table 1.1 affords the reader a bird's-eye view of the teacher's reaction to the complaints. This summary of the teacher's views enables readers, on the one hand, to access the mental orientation of a teacher under enormous pressure. On the other hand, it shows perceptual differences between teachers and students. Whilst the students in this case study believed that there was not sufficient writing in class, the teacher was of the opinion that there was "enough writing in class".

## Curriculum Implications

### *For Academic Managers*

The starting point of a student complaint cycle holds considerable significance for Academic Managers. Firstly, early *notification* is important to the work of Directors of Studies (or Academic Managers) because it allows counter measures to be put in place in good time to thwart any derailment of a teacher's career. By receiving early signs of areas for improvement, Academic Managers are placed in a good position to offer support to teachers in need. Secondly, the comprehensiveness of the *notification* may assist the Academic Manager to manage the complaint effectively. The more initial information there is, the more focused the subsequent investigation is likely to become. The receipt of sufficient information to establish lines of inquiry may not always be forthcoming from all staff members. It is, therefore, imperative that staff members be trained to gather sufficient detailed information from complainants to aid further investigation. Often the people in these initial ports of call share the language of the students and they are well-positioned to unearth their concerns and challenges. These staff members

(the first ports of call) are, invariably, Marketing Officers and Student Service Officers.

In addition, profiling teachers may assist Academic Managers in the management of teachers' performance. In this sense, Academic Managers should have information about: a) teachers' orientation (fluency or accuracy), b) professional development records, c) graduating students' feedback, d) philosophies of teaching, e) awareness of students' study goals, learning preferences, proficiency needs etc. and f) lesson delivery styles.

### *For Classroom Teachers*

It is important that both agendas – the teacher's and the students' – be aligned in order for a great deal of agreement between the two to exist. This alignment is often overtly obtained. For instance, the teacher may conduct surveys with the class to identify their needs, study goals, past learning experiences and philosophies of learning. This information can then be factored into lesson planning and delivery. Covertly, teachers can observe students' behaviour in a variety of exercises and classroom settings (i.e. individual, pair or group). Observing students' reactions and engagement can prove significantly instructive. These two methods of learning about students' learning preferences do not need to be employed in a mutually exclusive way. These can be adopted and combined at the teacher's discretion.

# CHAPTER TWO

## HANDLING A STUDENT COMPLAINT

### **Introduction**

This second chapter represents a sequel to the first chapter. In it, the stages of the escalation of the complaint outlined in Chapter 1 are presented.

The end result of the escalation is also discussed in this chapter.

### **Not learning anything**

#### *Notification*

Some four months after the initial complaints about the young, male teacher's teaching style, two distraught students raised fresh, new concerns about the same teacher. I was sitting in my office when the college proprietor popped her head in and politely asked me to follow her. I wondered why she had chosen not to elaborate on her request. Nonetheless, I thought the request had been fairly reasonable and so I followed hot on her heels. In her office, there were two students. One of the students appeared distraught. She sounded somewhat agitated. The other, sitting on the couch, appeared settled. It took me about half a minute to figure out what was actually happening – these were not happy students. I suspected this the moment I stepped into the office. What eluded me was the reason why they had felt so distressed that they had not chosen to see me, in the first instance. I resolved to listen as I had not been instructed to do anything else. As I sat in silence, the revelations became more surprising by the second.

#### *Seriousness and Sense of Urgency*

Apparently, four students had stopped attending lessons in the class of the complainants. These two students in the college owner's office were threatening to stop attending as well. I waited patiently for a moment of clarity as to what motivated their threats. Nonetheless, I feared stifling the

flow of information from the students. I looked at the proprietor and was given some background to the threats.

### *The Complaint Proper*

These two female students had said to the college owner that they were “not learning anything” with their Monday to Wednesday teacher. I pressed for additional information, making every effort to sound supportive. I wished to learn more about the term “not learning anything”. I had assumed that if they had a teacher in class, who had been trained to teach English, that the students would do nothing but learn the language or at very least some level-appropriate language. Surprisingly, I could not have been more wrong. These Intermediate Conversational English students explained that from Monday to Wednesday, they came out of the lessons without any recollection of the contents. They could hardly say what the lessons had been about. They were, however, able to say what activities they had done in class. One student described a two-hour activity, which entailed describing a bedroom. I asked, if there had been any specific exercises for the description of the bedroom, to which the two females shook their heads. “No grammar? No vocabulary or new words?” I insisted. The heads shook more vigorously this time. I thanked them for giving us some feedback about their learning experience and pledged to investigate their complaints further.

### *Investigation*

I spent the next hour interviewing students about the particular class and their learning (or lack thereof) experience. The students’ comments I gathered fell into two clear categories. The first category indicated that “there was nothing to learn” and “I didn’t write anything”. The second category of students represented those who had been able to explain what they understood by the phrase “learn something”. This latter group said that they thought it meant, “you can remember” and “you know, oh, today I learnt *so do I*.”

### *Historical Reference*

The revelations about “not learning anything” this time emerged as a result of direct questions about the learning experience in the classroom. Once again, individually, I spoke to five students from the relevant class. “So, you’re saying that with G [teacher’s name] you learn a lot, aren’t you?

What does G do in class?" I questioned, to which the students responded, "yes, with G, we do one activity, we learn one grammar, you know, struc ... structure and then we do something more like it, and then some writing, reading but still the same grammar." As I captured this description of a sequence of activities, I became intrigued. "But all the teachers do this, don't they?" The response to this question was similar from all the students. "No, Costa. With X, the teacher talks and talks. Then we open the book. We fill in the gaps. I guess, I don't know. Then sometimes, I'm right. Sometimes, I'm wrong. But I don't know why."

### *Right of Response*

Afterwards, I spoke to the teacher in question about the complaints. I put it to the teacher that there might be a mismatch between the students' learning preferences and the teaching methodologies adopted in his classes. "They're just not used to my style. It's a great style. It helps them to talk," argued the teacher.

I reflected for a moment and accepted a couple of possibilities. Firstly, the students might be comparing teachers. Their comments might not be reflective of what was actually happening in class. These comments may have reflected what they had expected to happen in class. Secondly, I suspected that it could well have been a perceptual issue. Students were perceiving differences in the amount of language learnt at different stages in their educational experience.

Nonetheless, I continued to investigate this case. This time, I wished to educate myself about this phenomenon of being in a class with a trained teacher but "not learning anything". It somehow intrigued me.

### *Students' Contribution to Learning*

Before I get too far into my inductive extrapolations about "not learning anything," it is important to take stock of this phenomenon with a degree of care. This caution stems from a meeting I attended with other Academic Managers. When I mentioned the phenomenon of "not learning anything" to other colleagues, one relayed a similar experience at their own college. "Funny you should say that. We had one last week, who said just that." I asked if the Academic Manager had drilled further into the phenomenon. The Academic Manager grinned and added, "we're looking into it, but frankly I think that there might be an issue of perception. Their test results may be showing otherwise." Other Academic Managers joined us, and we

bounced ideas off each other. “I think they actually mean, not being engaged or not having hands-on experiences,” suggested an Academic Manager. “But we’ve got one student who refuses to engage. She’s in IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and has actually refused to engage in speaking activities in class. She thinks that speaking activities are a waste of time. She says that she can learn to speak on her own.” This last comment about a Chinese IELTS Preparation student, who was under enormous pressure to obtain 7.0, resulted in a few raised eyebrows. *Learning to speak on their own?* We all looked as though we had asked the same question in our heads.

Whilst I could not fathom it, I understood what the student’s reluctance to engage actually meant – students contribute to the learning process enormously. As if reading my mind, one of the Academic Managers suggested, “it’s all about learning as a process, isn’t it? They really need to be helped to learn to learn.” They certainly do. This realisation could be expanded on to include an examination of the role of the student in the learning process or the concept of student-centredness. However, this book focuses primarily on teachers as the main “locus of control” for change in the creation of learning environments in ELICOS classrooms.

### *Outcome of the Threats*

Whilst my learning curve led me to insightful discoveries, the fate of the teacher against whom the “not learning anything” complaints were made was not as enjoyable. Once the widespread nature of the discontent had been confirmed and the evidence (as demonstrated by the excessive drop-out rate in his class) indicated a commercial threat, the young, male teacher realised the inevitability of the need to part company with the college. On the one hand, his departure represented a wasted opportunity for growth on his part. On the other hand, it threw months of professional development, feedback and support down the drain.

However, the loss of this young, male ESL teacher has galvanised me in more ways than one. It has given me the strength to step out of my doctoral thesis and investigate this phenomenon of “not learning anything”. In addition, it has made me even more committed to unveiling a better way to plan lessons and a more confident way to teach English to speakers of other languages.



## Conclusion

This chapter outlines an escalation of students' complaints. This escalation involved the owner of the college and the decision by other students to stop attending classes. In addition, this chapter describes the process of complaint handling I adopted in managing the concerns of the students, including an unfortunate end result.

Despite the small group of students involved (four withdrawn and two threatening to withdraw), this case holds significance in the issue of customer satisfaction. This significance relates to the potentially detrimental impact of a few unhappy students on many happy ones. In this sense, analogies can be drawn between unhappy students and rotten apples. When apples and any other fruit (e.g. bananas) rot, these give off a gas called ethylene. Whilst this gas, ethylene, is often associated with the ripening process, it causes enzymes such as amylases and proteases to break down the tissue in fruit, thus causing rotting. Once the rotting process begins, other enzymes in other fruits can be equally affected by the gaseous substances given off by the rotten fruit. The word of mouth of unhappy students can act in the same way as ethylene, affecting the satisfaction levels of other students. In this sense, the number of complainants does not need to be large. They only need to be influential individuals in the eyes of their peers for havoc to be wreaked in a college population. Therefore, the complaints of any students, especially those brave enough to see the college proprietor must be considered with extreme seriousness.

## Curriculum Implications

### *Academic Managers*

This chapter is of exceptional importance to Academic Managers. Its relevance to the job of Academic Managers relates to the management of expectations. If students' expectations are managed satisfactorily every time these are made explicit, they will gain confidence in the Academic Manager's ability to effect change in their favour. In this case, I admit not having acted in the initial instance with the determination required of me. I gave the teacher, in the first instance, the benefit of the doubt without placing sufficient monitoring mechanisms in place to give the students the confidence of a satisfactory resolution. At the very least, the teacher could have been better matched to a different class.

Having admitted failure in the management of the initial complaints, I advise caution. It is imperative that Academic Managers are also able to manage the perceptions of the teachers. I once acted on behalf of students who had complained against a teacher's choice of daily homework. The teacher turned to me and asked if the students had just been handed down a moral victory. I then turned to the teacher and explained my belief in a "jointly interpreted order". By this term I meant the ability of the teachers to sell their ideas and secure students' agreement regarding the activities in class.

### *Teachers*

Teachers who are notified of complaints may not always take these well. In some cases, they may struggle with the idea of being betrayed. In other cases, there might be a sense of a lack of appreciation. In any instance, it is important to view students' complaints as a reflection of the disconnect between teachers and students. This disengagement is often triggered by aspects of our teaching, our personality and the students' own expectations. Knowing what teaching techniques and personality traits best bring students back "into the fold" is as critical as learning about students' expectations. In this case, English teachers of fee-paying students at private colleges do not have the luxury afforded to university lecturers. The English teachers need to have a thorough knowledge of their students and of themselves as teachers. This in-depth knowledge of students is developed through strong bonds between students and teachers. It is equally enhanced through referent power, the ability to influence people through trust-building interactions. The university lecturer, on the other hand, can, and often does, use legitimate power in their dealings with their many undergraduate and graduate students. Legitimate power refers to the authority bestowed upon teachers through rules and regulations. Whilst these rules and regulations are welcome in ESL, in general, and ELICOS, in particular, these are best used as a broad framework through which to resolve conflict rather than as mediators of relationships.





**PART II**

**MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL**  
**WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

# CHAPTER THREE

## THE PERCEPTION OF LEARNING

### Introduction

This chapter investigates the concept of “not learning anything” by unearthing students’ perceptions of actual learning. In this chapter, a question is posed: what does it mean to learn? The answer to this question is provided, in this chapter, by ELICOS students.

The chapter ends with a synthesis of the process of learning from a student’s perspective.

### **A Rationale for not Learning about Learning Deductively**

My university years in Australia were extremely instructive. These engendered in me a thirst for knowledge and a faith in the principles drawn from the minds of some revered men in the TESOL industry. Some of these bright minds have continued to influence my teaching philosophy. One such inspiration has been Stephen Krashen. Krashen’s belief in meaningful communication in the classroom as a means by which learning occurs has stayed with me ever since Dr Gillian Perrett eloquently explained it in one of her many, meticulously prepared Language Teaching Methodology lectures at the Faculty of Education of the University of Sydney in 1995. Therefore, when I decided to write this book, I did not think of the inductive method first. I considered the deductive one in the first instance. I thought that drawing my insights from theory would help me write a good book. ERIC, TESOL Quarterly, the Oxford Teachers’ Club and a few other databases became my places of scavenging. Some may find the word *scavenging* rather confronting. It may appear to conjure up the wrong image of the TESOL literature, but it should not because it is the closest to what it felt like navigating through higher-order deductions about “our” lives in the real world. Volume after volume of TESOL-related material reinforced the ideas defined decades earlier. Very little fresh material, with immediate real-world relevance, seemed to be within easy grasp. It was as if every writer in TESOL had

given up innovating. For instance, in my search for new, fresh ideas about the process of learning English, I could find only one reasonable reference – Professor David Nunan. The reasonableness of a reference, in this case, depended upon two criteria – its relevance to the fee-paying ELICOS context and its simplicity of explanation about students’ perceptions of “not learning anything”. I was looking for material, which could be easily accessed by an ELICOS practitioner interested in the perception of “not learning anything”. Most importantly, I wished to find material related to complaints of “not learning anything,” which had emerged from research with ELICOS students. Regrettably, very little literature appeared to match these criteria.

### Learning from a Student’s Perspective

I spent the best part of a week casually engaging students in informal conversations to learn more about the phenomenon of “not learning anything”. In my rounds, I sat down with a female Iranian student. She offered the most insightful window into the process of “learning something”. “It’s too much vocabulary. It comes in, and then out,” she explained, her index fingers pointing to her temples. “It’s not memorising. You get a sense of the word. It’s like a formula. You see the symbols, remember them and then you must feel them or see them,” elaborated the student. “But to pass to this stage, you need practice. First memorising, then when you’re practising, you feel it.” In her mind, learning had an affective dimension. The act of learning was a feeling, much like the satisfaction of having nailed a maths formula. Put differently, this student was suggesting a fairly straightforward sequence of *recall->internalisation*, which was aided by memory exercises and manipulation or transformation. In this case, the language structure represented the formula. Replacing, switching and adding elements to this formula would provide a “feeling” or a “sense” of the word or the target language. A far more important realisation emerged too. Learning could not occur from exercise setting and answer validation. In other words, exercises needed to be developed into tasks and administered in more than just two steps.

Another student I spoke to was a male student from Colombia. The student went on to describe what happened to them in X’s [their teacher’s] classes: X talks -> he gets bored -> loses concentration -> does not understand -> does not learn -> does not remember anything.

A further male Turkish student summed up the idea of learning fairly succinctly by saying, "... when the teacher gives me three different ways of understanding, I learn better ..."

Most importantly, a female Italian student offered a fairly comprehensive insight into learning from a student's perspective. "When the teacher is explaining good and asks about the argument, do exercise, I'm relaxed in the class, when I'm relaxed, my brain is free," she paused before continuing, "she works for me, I don't make a lot of energy to understand the teacher." Having reflected further, she offered, "the teacher works for me ... for example, when explain a new grammar, she explain very good, she look me and if I don't understand, understood?" Her rising tone signalled the use of a concept checking question by the teacher. "She understands when I have a problem, she did the example, the phrase, she permit I make the phrase and there is a dialogue."

### *Proficiency Levels*

I was once approached by a young, male, prospective student and a relative of his. The lady accompanying the student was Australian and the student Italian. The Australian lady wished to know what the school could do for her nephew. She indicated that the prospective student was able to hold a very basic conversation in English, albeit with some reliance on Italian and body language. I took her question to mean, what her nephew would gain in return for the weekly tuition fee. After explaining that her nephew made a significant contribution to his own learning on top of the school's efforts, I asked to assess the young adult's proficiency level through a placement test, an assessment tool used to place students in one of a number of proficiency levels. It is not an admission test as it does not play a role in the admission of the student. An English student is often admitted to a college, irrespective of their proficiency level unless it is either much higher or lower than the proficiency levels offered by the college. I described the various potential outcomes of my assessment in terms of proficiency levels – i.e. Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate or Advanced – to which she was agreeable. Having secured the 21-year-old's consent, I administered a placement test, which assessed all the macro skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking plus grammar. The test results indicated that the student was at a Pre-Intermediate Conversational English level. I then provided descriptors for every level after Pre-Intermediate, explaining to the lady that each level represented a promotion (progression). For each promotion (e.g. Pre-Intermediate to Intermediate), the student would

require ten weeks of tuition. I offered an exception though. In cases of exceptional improvement in language acquisition, this progression was likely to occur in five rather than ten weeks. In addition, I outlined the benchmarks for progression. One such yardstick was the achievement of an average 70% score over at least four class progress tests. The other three points of reference included: a) attendance at or above 80%, b) potential to benefit and c) active class participation.

For illustrative purposes regarding this progression, some verbatim quotations of students' natural speech have been grouped under Oral Proficiency Levels in Table 3.1. The differences across the levels centre around a) breadth and accuracy of grammar (with the Pre-Intermediate student visibly more limited to *present* and *past simple*), b) breadth, control (word formation) and accuracy of word use (with the Upper Intermediate student visibly more at ease with this criterion) and c) coherence (with the Upper Intermediate student requiring little or no additional information to get her point across).

**Table 3. 1 Oral Proficiency Levels**

Pre - Intermediate, young male student	Intermediate, young female student	Upper Intermediate, young female student
"... we are paying I think too much, we need more things ..."	"... in the morning everybody is standing on the train ..."	"... we have more opportunity to communicate with other people ..."
"... X [their class teacher] talks too much ..."	"... there are nothing special things ..."	"It's one of the biggest cities in Vietnam ..."
"...in Y [another teacher], you have to be active ..."	"... there was only one bad thing ..."	"... some people look after the animals ..."
"... Y asks you, if you are wrong, says you're wrong ..."	"... every train is coming on time ..."	"... there are so many cities in Vietnam ..."
"... I did not grow up my English in X's class ..."	"... I couldn't believe it. I didn't shout..."	"...because my hometown is modern ... a lot of shops ..."
"... I remember things Y told me 2 months	"... when I go home in the night, I saw some cockroaches ..."	"...the most thing I don't like is it's a lot of people ..."
	"... I was in Gold Coast in winter season ..."	"People work in farms."

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ago ...”	“... when I was in	They grow vegetables
“... with X, I don’t	Tokyo, I was making	...”
remember anything	coffee ...”	“You don’t need to go
...”	“... I love teaching	to the market but you
	something about	see the market on the
	coffee to students ...”	road ...”
		“... they can buy
		everything in the
		market ...”

---

●nce I had outlined the potential gains in language proficiency for her nephew, the Australian lady was happy to part with her money.

### *Learning as a Perception*

At any rate, learning in the sense suggested in this section represents gains in any one (or all) of the three oral proficiency aspects listed above in relation to Table 3.1, namely: a) breadth and accuracy of grammar, b) breadth, control (word formation) and accuracy of word use and c) coherence. Apart from these speaking indicators, other descriptors are used to establish or report on learning. These can be broadly divided into knowledge (i.e. grammar and vocabulary) and skill (speaking, listening, reading and writing) areas or macro skills. Each one of these areas or language aspects has its own descriptors as indicated by the examples of the three students above (cf. a-c descriptors/criteria or refer to the published IELTS band descriptors). Therefore, when the young male student indicated that he had not “grow[n] up his English in X’s class,” he might be perceptually looking at the whole gamut of skill and knowledge areas. Most certainly, this lack of perceptual improvement in language proficiency may be just that – perceptual. Nonetheless, in a commercial enterprise, the perception of clients counts enormously. For instance, I once interviewed a male Russian student who had taken the IELTS exam twice. ●n both occasions, his speaking skills were assessed at 5.0. “Impossible, Costa! They [the IELTS examiners] are ... you know, ... crazy! My English has improved, I know it, I feel it,” the Russian student explained to me, still impressed with the tuition he had received at our college, despite his unchanged IELTS speaking score. And he was actually right, as Table 3.2 illustrates.



**Table 3. 2 IELTS Academic Exam Results for a Student (2011-2012)**

SKILLS ASSESSED	2011	2012	Gain, Neither or Loss
	Moscow	Melbourne	
Reading	5.5	6.5	18.8% G
Listening	4.5	5.5	22.2% G
Writing	5.0	6.5	30.0% G
Speaking	5.0	5.0	0 N
●overall	5.0	6.0	20% G

From Table 3.2, it becomes clear that gains in language proficiency may occur in any aspects of language knowledge and/or skills at any rate. However, scores alone do not paint the full picture. Students' perceptions are just as important as test scores when it comes to gains in language proficiency. In line with this latter principle of the validity of students' perceptions, I sat down with this Russian student and engaged him in a reflection on his IELTS exam results. At the start of the conversation, I decided to profile his use of English in Australia. This male student indicated to me that, although he had not worked in the ten months that he had stayed in Australia, he had adopted very good study habits. He completed his weekly self-study material. In addition, he watched Australian television programmes on a daily basis (i.e. channel 9 and ABC news). Furthermore, he was an avid reader of the college graded readers and listened to the radio on a daily basis. However, he had made no friends with any Australians other than his Australian homestay family.

Extracts of our conversation are presented below.

To begin with, he reflected on his IELTS results, which indicated that he had not "learnt anything" in terms of speaking by examining his interaction with native speakers:

"I can't say I spoke with her [landlady in homestay] a lot ..."

"... it was very rarely in speaking with native speakers ..."

"This morning, I asked her, was my English improved?"

Subsequently, he reflected on the importance of the IELTS exam results:

"... obviously, I need the results for application at university ..."

And then, he questioned the validity of the scores:



“I had the same score one year ago ...”

“I hadn’t improved my English for one year?”

“... they are crazy ...”

“... partly, it’s like a roulette ...”

“It can’t be. I really speak better than I did one year ago.”

“I can’t believe it. Stupid!”

However, he also admitted that there might have been some other contributing factors:

“I didn’t have enough time to fill all the gaps ...”

“... just maybe time pressure ...”

“... maybe it was too early in the morning ...”

“... but I understood all topics ...”

Most importantly, he seemed to have lost faith in the reliability of the IELTS exam:

“If I do it now, I’ll get another score regarding listening and speaking.”

### *Students’ Contribution to Learning*

In a journal article published by TESOL Quarterly early in 2012, Professor Nunan attempts to answer a question posed 28 years earlier. In 1984, Allwright posed the question, “why don’t learners learn what teachers teach?”

In answering this question, Nunan places the blame squarely on the mismatch between two pedagogical agendas – the teacher’s and the learner’s (Nunan, 2012). In other words, if these agendas are aligned, learning will flow from teaching. Whilst such arguments oversimplify learning, they provide some useful insights into the complex issue of “not learning anything”. One such insight is the acknowledgement that students make a contribution to the learning process. In line with this acknowledgement, I once met with eleven ELICOS teachers as part of the end of term staff meeting. The goal of the meeting was to review the term, which was coming to an end, and plan for the upcoming term. After a

range of deliberations on changes to the tests, I stressed the need to move on to one agenda item I was eager to get to – students' complaints about "not learning anything". Speculative questions floated around the room. Amongst these, one question sought to elicit further information about the complainants. "Are these poor attenders or good ones?" After much listening, clarifying and nodding, I, as the Chair of the meeting, thought that the time was ripe to impart some advice. I suggested that teachers should ask the students at the end of the lesson, if they had enjoyed the lesson. I further recommended that teachers should ask students if they had learnt anything. With one noticeable exception, most teachers nodded and seemed to genuinely heed the advice. Right at the back of the room, one of the teachers raised their hand and posed a question, "what the heck do they know, if they've learnt anything?" I responded by explaining that Airbus had conducted 200 focus groups to learn about the flying needs of its future customers before manufacturing the A380 aircraft. The point I was making was that if non-engineers, non-specialists were able to contribute to the construction of a sophisticated machine, our students should be able to express their views about their learning experience. The teacher pressed, "wouldn't they think that the teacher should know when they've learnt something?" I did not take the time to fully consider what the teacher was driving at. I simply answered, "at least this way there will be no surprises. There will be no students claiming that they're not learning anything." What I failed to appreciate was the fact that the teacher might have been referring to concept checking questions. Surely, if you concept check what you have taught, you should be able to know whether or not your students have "learnt something". This, I have come to learn, is not always true though.

### *Belief System in the Perception of Learning*

In my investigations of complaints about "not learning anything," I spoke to students who were able to use meta-language to explain the process of learning to me. "You ... get correction, Costa. G [their teacher] corrects me in class and then I say oh, I see," reflected one of the students. "I see the structure, and then I know, oh, I know ... it is this way or that way," explained another student. Both accounts are useful in advancing our knowledge of the value of concept checking. In this sense, if students are given an opportunity to make mistakes and be corrected, learning may occur. In addition, if patterns are highlighted, learning is just as likely to take place.

The conversations with the teachers have been equally insightful. In one instance, a teacher proudly reflected upon a class, “they [the students] got drilled.” This audio-lingual claim underpins an instructive belief system. In this value system, the act of forming a habit through drills generates learning. When combined with concept checking questions, this habit formation belief system may give teachers a sense of achievement, which, in this case, means students’ acquisition of a new aspect of the language.

In both cases (pattern recognition and habit formation followed by concept checking), learning occurs through aided practice. In this sense, the teacher aids the process of using language, recognising patterns in it and forming the habit to use the patterns meaningfully.

## Conclusion

This chapter provides a rationale for adopting an inductive perspective in the development of this book. In addition, it recognises the students’ contribution to clarifying the understanding of learning.

Nonetheless, in the absence of pre- and post- instruction experimental tests, all teachers have to judge the extent to which learning has occurred throughout a given lesson based on their intuition or belief system. This perceptual assessment comes with experience and professional development, which most novice teachers do not have. It is, therefore, important to look for alternative ways to monitor learning. This new option should focus on maximising learning. In other words, if every activity in class is intended to maximise learning, the likelihood of it occurring should be enhanced.

In addition, Table 3.2 presents a case for future research. In this case, a student who spent 40 weeks in Australia made progress at a rate which was different from the progression expected in the ubiquitous IELTS framework. In this system, it is believed that students need ten weeks of instruction for every half a band of progress. In other words, the results in Table 3.2 should have shown increases in the order of two IELTS band scores or 36% (7.5-5.5/5.5). That is to say, for every ten weeks this student should have made a 9% improvement in language proficiency.

## Curriculum Implications

Concept checking is intended to identify gaps in knowledge, following exposure to new language, form analysis and practice activities. This

consolidation technique, which often indicates the internalisation of rules and patterns (i.e. learning in many teachers' minds), can be correctly or incorrectly employed in the classroom.

### ***Good Concept Checking Techniques***

Bearing in mind the key purpose of concept checks, expert teachers often employ exercises or tasks which stretch students' knowledge of the target language slightly. These exercises or tasks may ask students to use a language input in a creative, challenging way such as performing a language function with the target language. One example of this may be a task in which students are asked to describe the formation of rain droplets to practise the use of the *simple passive*. In this case, the teacher might observe an instance of the correct use of the target language and plausibly assume that learning has occurred.

### ***Bad Concept Checking Techniques***

Concept checking does not always involve creative activities. Quite often, concept checking questions are of a confirmatory nature. For instance, the teacher may ask a class if an action has finished or if it is ongoing to concept check internalisation of the *present continuous*. Another example of this clarification technique is the use of Y/N-questions. In this case, a teacher may use the following question to clarify the use of the *present simple*, "do I do it once only?" In this case, a negative answer to this question may indicate that the class (or a section of it) has internalised the use of this tense. This may be partially true because whole class questions may elicit answers from the strongest students only. Attention to the strength and conviction in the answer is just as useful as the Y/N-question itself. In this respect, it might be far more useful to have an actual task for the students to complete.

In a nutshell, concept checking is not about asking permission to move on. It is about identifying the next step – either to move on or to review further. If some students struggle with the creative activity, they need to be given additional help. If, on the other hand, some students sail through the creative activity, they should be asked and helped to move on to another language input or a different facet of the current language input. For instance, if students were looking at words, a range of facets or dimensions could be covered, namely: synonyms, antonyms, spelling, sound, word choice, word formation, register, stress, word partners and word class (e.g.

verb, noun, adjective etc.). By the same token, a grammatical structure has a range of dimensions – affirmative, negative, question form, register, (cultural, social and political) appropriateness, contextual meaning, functional meaning, intonation, syntactic structure etc.

### *Use of Drills in Class*

Whilst drills have become associated with rote-learning and, therefore, rejected in this era of communicative activities, it might be worth considering the usefulness of their foundations. In other words, habit formation may still have a place in present day language classrooms. By all accounts (both teachers' and students'), this is not an unwelcome addition to ESL lessons. For instance, the teacher who proudly asserts that "they got drilled" can be said to be aiding students' retention of an aspect of the target language. This retention is aligned with students' own expectations, especially at low levels. For instance, the assertion by a student of the need for teacher-controlled correction makes the case for the role of habit formation in the language classroom. Nonetheless, habit formation will need to be differentiated across levels. Whilst for beginner and elementary students, this may mean drills in the initial stages of language presentation, for more advanced students, habit formation may need to involve proficiency-appropriate activities such as unaided pattern recognition and the construction of their own substitution tables or sentence pattern schemes. For instance, if the teacher had said, "having made certain the door was locked, I then retired to my quarters." The advanced students might be asked to create a sentence pattern scheme, which, in this case, might include the following: *having + v-pp + adj + subj.-phrase + to be (past) + adj, subj. + v-ed + prepositional phrase.*

### *Academic Progress*

Some ELICOS colleges establish rules for academic progress in line with the prescriptions of the National Code 2007. These requirements define satisfactory academic progress as a student's successful completion of at least 50% of the units in a term or study period. In this sense, students can be reported to the visa issuing entity for failing to pass half of the units in two consecutive terms. This policy on academic progress has its limitations. One such shortfall refers to the relationship between teaching and learning. It is quite hard to establish the impact of teaching on learning through this 50% rule. For instance, if a student comes into a programme with strong reading skills, they may pass all tests without having their



reading proficiency gain accurately assessed. This failure to capture actual proficiency gains is fairly apparent in programmes where a skill is tested only once. It is also commonplace in courses, where the differences between entry and term scores are not compared.

An alternative approach to the 50% rule might be the 9%-11% improvement rate. In this case, colleges would monitor students' academic progress based on their ability to demonstrate actual progress. In other words, if a college had a pre-term test and a post-term test, the difference between the two test series should equal or exceed 9-11%. Each test series would include all macro skills plus the knowledge areas of grammar and vocabulary. The tests would need to have a high level of reliability and validity. These would be best sourced from existing examinations such as KET (Elementary-Pre-Intermediate), PET (Intermediate), FCE (Upper Intermediate) and CAE (Advanced). The test scores between the two series (i.e. pre- and post-term) would be compared using the following formula: post-term test (or pre-term test if that is greater) minus pre-term test (or post-term test if that is the lesser value), divided by the pre-term test score (this does not change, irrespective of the values) and multiplied by 100. The result should be equal to or above 9%. Some colleges may set their academic progress scores higher than 9%. This book recommends a benchmark of 11%, although values of up to 23% are likely. There ought to be some caution in adopting this approach though. It is important that students still pass at least a certain number of units or learning outcomes to be deemed competent or at least not in need of remedial work. This caution is valid in those cases where students may make academic progress in the sense described above. However, this improvement occurs in score ranges deemed below a pass. For instance, if a student's score for reading improves from 35% to 43% over a five-week period, the student may be deemed to have made academic progress in the order of 22.8%. However, they may still not be competent in this skill. In this case, this student would be best advised to move down to a lower level class, from which they might be able to gradually gain confidence and language proficiency.

In those cases where pre- and post-term tests can pose an enormous logistical challenge, the arrangement of the tests may offer some flexibility. In this case, there should be two test series of each skill and/or knowledge area spread across the term. For instance, in five-week courses, the first week would have a test series, which would include all four macro skills and the two main knowledge areas of grammar and vocabulary. The last week of the term would have the second series of these tests.



**PART III**

**POTENTIAL CAUSES  
OF “NOT LEARNING ANYTHING”  
WHAT MIGHT EXPLAIN IT?**



# CHAPTER FOUR

## CAUSES OF THE STUDENT COMPLAINT

### Introduction

This chapter explores a set of system-wide potential contributors to the emergence of student complaints related to poor learning. It discusses the link between these factors and the perception of “not learning anything”.

### Potential Causes of the Phenomenon

The issue of “not learning anything” is rather complex. Therefore, its examination cannot be simplistic. To this end, this chapter will attempt to provide a system-wide perspective on the phenomenon of students who perceive zero English language proficiency gain from an English lesson. In line with the acknowledgement of the complexity of this perception of “not learning anything” from an English lesson, the subsequent chapters will document twelve case studies to shed further light on the twelve system-wide potential contributing factors to some students’ perception of “not learning anything”.

Whilst the number twelve is arbitrary, the actual potential triggers of students’ complaints of “not learning anything” are not. These are some of the main weaknesses in our ELICOS system. Others may exist. However, the extent to which these other contributing factors impact on students’ perception of “learning something” is not known to me.

It is equally important to understand that these twelve “culprits” may not be illustrative of the whole teaching industry in ELICOS in particular, or ESL in general. Colleges may have managed these issues at different rates, with some experiencing them less often than others. Better still, there might be colleges where none of these factors are at play. Nevertheless, it is instructive to examine a manageable facet of the issue of students perceiving that they are “not learning anything”.

For illustrative purposes, Figure 4.1 depicts the twelve potential causes of the phenomenon of students perceiving little or no linguistic gain from an ESL lesson.

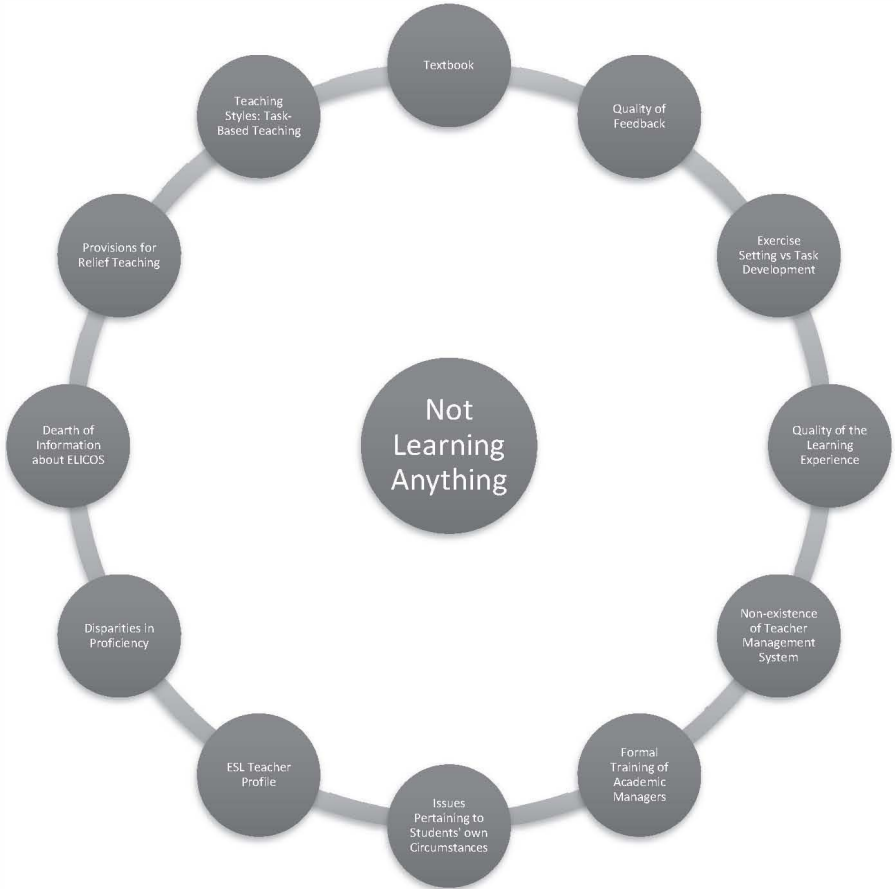


Figure 4. 1 Potential Contributing Factors to “not learning anything”

### *Textbooks*

Textbooks tend not to provide sufficient practice for language development to occur. For instance, a textbook may only have a single vocabulary exercise for a set of words. This exercise may be presented in the form of a gap-fill, a table with words and a ranking chart or some other cognitive action for students to perform. These actions do not lead to gains in knowledge. Put differently, textbook exercises tend not to allow students to fully appreciate the target language and develop the skills or knowledge for its adoption. Little wonder, then, that a great number of teachers have lost faith in textbooks. We, Directors of Studies or Academic Managers, see and hear of this loss of faith on a daily basis. We observe teachers photocopying from a range of textbooks to teach a single grammatical structure. We hear teachers complaining about the shortfalls of a certain series. We sense the frustration in teachers about the limitations of textbooks.

Admittedly, very few teachers make full use of the multi-modal nature of textbooks. In other words, all textbooks, these days, are published with accompanying web sites and CD-ROMs. Unless teachers incorporate these additional online resources into their lessons, the usefulness of these new textbooks may be jeopardised.

### *Quality of Feedback*

The feedback given to students in an ESL/ELICOS classroom following a test may be just as important as the comments made on students' answer sheets. Throughout a lesson, it is important that students receive feedback on their receptive and productive skills. Experienced teachers do this by integrating the various skills and knowledge areas of vocabulary and grammar. For instance, a grammar lesson may end with students producing a brief e-mail. In this case, the teacher will provide some feedback to the students at the end of the writing exercise.

●n the one hand, this feedback can reinforce students' understanding of the use of the target language. ●n the other hand, it can boost their confidence in the use of the target language.

Nonetheless, this feedback must be focused. It ought to mark level-appropriate errors. It must not correct every single mistake the students make. Herein lies the problem. Focused marking is often carried out by experienced teachers. Unfortunately, these teachers have either moved out

of the industry or up to managerial positions. Novice teachers (who seem to be represented in large numbers in ESL/ELICOS) are tempted to mark everything, including the mistakes, which are frequently made by everyone except native speakers – i.e. prepositions and articles.

A student who receives a third piece of writing with the same types of mistakes highlighted may correctly assume that they have “not learnt anything,” even though they might be using the target language correctly in the lesson.

### *Exercise Setting versus Task Development*

Teachers differ significantly in the way they approach exercises, especially textbook exercises. Some teachers use them as a means to an end. Others use exercises as an end in themselves. In the former case, the exercises in the textbook are used to create a dialogue, an e-mail, a quiz etc. In the latter case, students may be asked to complete an exercise, check their answers and move on to another exercise, the completion of which will not differ from the previous one. This latter approach is, unfortunately, far too frequently adopted in our ESL/ELICOS classrooms. Its use does not give students the confidence or the ability to produce the target language meaningfully.

The use of exercises as a means to an end has the potential to offer students a learning experience, which is conducive to the acquisition of both confidence and the ability to contextualise the target language in a communicative manner. This is so because when an input item, a word or a set of words is subsequently utilised, students’ appreciation of its nuances is enhanced. This enhancement can lead to self-discovery. In other words, through the appreciation of a word sound, meaning, appropriate and inappropriate use, inflections, stress and spelling, students are able to internalise it.

In this sense, there are two roles that teachers can take on when delivering a lesson in a classroom – exercise setters and task developers. The first uses exercises as an end. Task developers utilise exercises as a means to an end. Unfortunately, a large number of newly trained ESL teachers fall into the first category of classroom lesson delivery style. This is not to say that newly trained ESL teachers are only exercise setters. It simply means that most of them adopt this classroom lesson delivery role. In many other respects, these teachers may take on a range of different roles, for example as a resource, counsellor etc.

It is worth noting that the roles suggested herein are restricted to classroom lesson delivery styles.

### *Quality of the Learning Experience*

In my experience as Director of Studies for ELICOS colleges, some observations I have conducted of English lessons have left me baffled and utterly perplexed. I have, on occasions, come out of classrooms wondering what educational philosophy underpinned a certain lesson. By educational philosophy, I mean behaviourist, cognitive or constructionist. The first believes in habit formation. A teacher who believes in habit formation may adopt drills for the most part of the lesson. A cognitively oriented teacher may challenge the students with exercises in which language is manipulated. This approach may use pattern recognition as its main delivery style. Constructionism relies on hands-on problem-solving, followed by reflection.

When I come out of an observation unable to discern the teacher's belief system, I wonder what direction the lesson is taking. This absence of an educational philosophy in our classrooms may well lead to the perception of "not learning anything" on the part of the students because it impacts adversely on their experience. Lessons which are devoid of an educational philosophy (or a combination of philosophies) are poorly sequenced and generate little or no meaning for students. This is so because we, human beings, are pattern-dependent. We draw learning from pattern recognition. IQ tests, for example, are designed around this inner resource we all share. If lessons do not draw upon this inner resource by being organised in a meaningful way, there is every likelihood that these lessons may be deemed to be not teaching anything.

### *Non-existence of a Teacher Management System*

There is a range of information about teachers, as will become apparent below, which emerges in the course of their tenure with a college. This information must be captured in a system for future examination and decision-making. For instance, armed with an electronic system which stores such teacher-related information as strengths, classes previously taught, students' feedback from different classes etc, Academic Managers may be better positioned to make decisions, at the start of a term, as to which class allocation to assign a certain teacher. This very same system could help Academic Managers demonstrate to the college Directors that

some teachers contribute substantial value to the college's equity (i.e. reputation), based on cumulative evidence.

Nevertheless, this type of teacher management system is non-existent in most ESL/ELICOS institutions. Its non-existence can impact adversely on the identification of teachers who may need to attend "refresher courses". Its proactive adoption may, in a significant way, prevent "exercise setters" from generating complaints of "not learning anything". By capturing information about observations which have been conducted and the teaching styles observed, this teacher management system could prove to be very useful in those cases where "corporate memory" is lost with the resignation of a Director of Studies (DoS). In other words, when a DoS leaves, they take with them the knowledge of who has what teaching style, who has received what complaint etc. This knowledge is not often made available to the incoming DoS.

The notes we might be able to record on a teacher management system may assist us in monitoring teachers' performance. I once interviewed a teacher whose experience had been mostly in secondary schools. As the teacher described to me how she would teach a particular activity in the textbook, I immediately thought of it as content-based delivery. I instinctively thought of helping her change her content-based teaching into language-oriented delivery. I needed a system, which recorded my thoughts and my notes drawn from the TESOL literature on converting lecturers into ESL teachers. There was just no such system within easy grasp. I had to rely on my spreadsheet, which by then was so long I could not simply scroll through it.

Unfortunately, without a teacher management system, Academic Managers are unable to identify and keep a record of teachers who are and those who are not able to create manageable goals for each lesson. This management system would allow managers to record the conversations they hold with teachers, in which their ability to break down learning outcomes becomes clear. This information came out in a conversation I had with a young, male teacher. He had taken up an advanced class which a couple of other teachers had taught before. The first teacher thought that all the advanced students sounded like native speakers. The second teacher could not find challenging activities for this cohort of students, despite insisting that she had taught advanced classes in the past. The young, male teacher in my office explained that he had identified a gap in the students' knowledge related to vocabulary and idioms. He had sensed that they need to be stretched. As I listened to the teacher, I thought of Vygotsky. The teacher



had been able to identify his students' zone of proximal development, which the other two had failed to figure out. I looked around for a system to capture my thoughts and those of the teacher. I wished to record the evidence that this teacher deserved to be paid more than the other two. However, apart from my Excel spreadsheet, there was very little in the way of an electronic recording system, which would allow me to retrieve and analyse this information at the click of a mouse.

### *Formal Training of Academic Managers*

Training in Management or Administration tends to result in the acquisition of a belief system. Management and Administration trainees learn to believe in a self-organising system. In addition, these trainees learn to establish this system. Without this belief system and the accompanying skills to set it up, Academic Managers cannot manage proactively.

Unfortunately, a large number of Academic Managers or Directors of Studies in ELICOS are trained in neither Management nor Administration. This is not their own fault. It is a system-wide issue. Essentially, there is no requirement in the ELICOS industry for Academic Managers to hold a qualification or a degree in Management or Administration.

This lack of belief in a system and the tools to implement it can potentially impact negatively on the learning experience of English students. For instance, the absence of managerial or administrative expertise tends to lead to the lack of a focus on measurement. In other words, there is often, in this environment where the Academic Manager is not trained in Management or Administration, little or no measurement of students' satisfaction rates, teachers' performance rates or resource utilisation rates. In addition, benchmarks for academic progress may not be closely monitored. Moreover, there is often very little dispersion of power. The idea of achieving through others is often not present in these settings. As such, teachers' frustration with the fact that they have to teach in an inflexible way mounts in this environment of centralised power. In this context, systems are created which complicate the curriculum. However, these very systems do little to generate evaluative information about the curriculum. This useful information about the benchmarks in the curriculum has the potential to help Academic Managers discern the amount of learning generated in each lesson. This is so because, in an environment of benchmarks, there is always an emphasis on clear learning outcomes. When there is clarity about learning outcomes, it is relatively easy to develop indicators of the achievement of these learning outcomes

at lesson level. By breaking up the learning outcomes into manageable chunks, Academic Managers might be able to assist teachers to discern when an aspect of a learning outcome has been achieved. This achievement may not necessarily be recognised as learning by the students. However, if negotiated with them, it will. If a teacher tells their class that all they wish them to achieve is the ability to change the endings of verbs to refer to the past, then once the students in this class feel that they can accomplish this task, they will perceive that they have actually learnt something.

### *Students' Own Circumstances*

Of all the factors presented thus far, students' own circumstances may be one of the main contributing factors to the notion of "not learning anything". Tired, over-worked and concerned students cannot expect to learn much. Tiredness has its origins in a wide range of bad student habits. The main one I have come across is staying online until the early hours of the morning. In some cases, this is fairly understandable. I once had a Saudi student who had just turned nineteen and had been placed in a student lodge. He was the oldest of five children and had become used to being the centre of attention in his family. Suddenly, he found himself in a lodge on his own, with the various mundane tasks he was not used to, such as finding a place to wash his clothes and worrying about where he will eat next. Not surprisingly, this Saudi student spent long hours on Skype chatting with his loved ones and arrived at school sleep-deprived. The fact that Australia was seven hours ahead of Saudi Arabia did not help him either.

Over-worked students fare no better than tired ones when it comes to learning English. These students may not be exceeding the legal 40-hour a fortnight limit. They are simply working odd hours. I remember talking to an Indian student once who finished a cleaning job at 8:00 a.m., having started at 11:00 p.m. the previous night. With only an hour separating the end of his shift from the start of this class, this student struggled to keep his eyes open in class.

The third group of students whose circumstances may adversely affect their perceptions of learning can be said to be those with personal concerns. These students may be worried about the fate of relatives in war-torn parts of the world or may have their own relatives in Australia who are hospitalised or in need of care. This particular situation of students with sick relatives is commonplace in cases where students come as



dependents of scholarship holders. In most cases, their wives may have been given a scholarship to Australia. When the wives conceive and require medical attention, these students may require leave of absence. Frequent bouts of leave of absence may cause students to lose track of the direction of their learning, thus creating the impression that they might not be learning anything.

### *Teacher Profile*

ESL teachers, like all other teachers, differ on a range of variables. Nonetheless, not all these variables impinge upon their ability to teach. For instance, a teacher's height is unlikely to affect their adoption of an exercise setting or task development style. The choice of variables to discuss in this publication was guided by the extent to which these were viewed as likely to intrude upon a teacher's classroom lesson delivery style.

Following the departure of the teacher who was accused of "not teaching anything," I looked closely at the whole teaching staff. I then allocated a score for each teacher on a scale. This 0 – 10 scale had the following verbal labels at either end: *highly unlikely to teach anything* 0– 10 *highly likely to teach a lot*. I then compared the teachers who I thought were *highly likely to teach something* with those on the other side of the argument, based on the two aforementioned lesson delivery styles. The disparities fell into a wide range of categories. I then refined these categories down to seven, which are further explored in Case Study 8.

### *Disparities in Proficiency*

The issue of disparate levels of student ability is a troubling one in ELICOS. Its origins are complex and varied. In most instances, disparate levels originate from a lack of sufficient student numbers to have separate homogenous classes. With the rise of the Australian dollar, the tightening of the visa system and the recent global financial crisis, fewer students are travelling to Australia today than they did up until 2009. As a result, colleges are filling classes with students with approximate rather than similar proficiency. In very few cases, disparity may arise out of placement tests with very low validity.

Whilst the origins of disparate levels of student ability are complex, the ability to deal with them in the classroom is rarely in evidence. In other words, a large group of teachers in ESL, in general, and ELICOS, in

particular, cannot teach mixed-level classes. This became apparent through interviews with prospective teachers. In these interviews, I always asked how the teachers would deal with disparate levels in students' proficiency. Invariably the answer was to pair up weak students with strong ones. Pressed further, these teachers revealed the intent to still teach to the centre in mixed-level classes.

This inability to understand the requirements of a mixed-level class and differentiate teaching impacts adversely on students' perception of learning. A weak student, for instance, in these teachers' classes, who is most likely to be ignored, has the right to claim that they are not learning anything. By the same token, a strong student, who is most likely to receive much of the attention and feel empowered, may equally complain that they have learnt very little because they will not receive the extension activities which they need to bridge the gap between their current and potential proficiency.

The ELICOS industry has itself to blame for not heeding the advice available in the literature about mixed-level classes. If the various publications in circulation about mixed-level classes, multi-level tasks and disparate classes were to be part and parcel of teacher professional development, a lot more differentiated instruction would become prevalent in ELICOS.

In schools in Australia, the prevalence of differentiated instruction is already a reality. All primary and secondary mainstream schools in Australia adopt principles of differentiated instructions. In this sense, teaching disparate levels is not just about grouping strong with weak students. It is about differentiating everything you do in a classroom – worksheets, instructions, pace etc.

### *A Dearth of Information about ELICOS*

Many may argue against the link between knowledge of ELICOS and students' complaints about "not learning anything". I can understand these arguments. To start off, ELICOS is the industry, not the classroom. What does the industry have to do with what happens in a classroom?

Everything!

Knowledge of ELICOS includes details of the type of students in ELICOS. These students are unique in many respects. Our overseas

students are often young, computer savvy, with little ability to lead an independent lifestyle and deprived of a social network. These students, however, tend to come from close-knit families. In their home countries, some of these students never do anything around the house. Maids are employed for this work. In a large number of cases, these students have an orientation towards sciences rather than humanities. This last trait is essential because it differs significantly from the orientation of most ESL teachers. In my experience, most of the ESL teachers I have interviewed hold a Bachelor of Arts degree. Very few ESL teachers hold degrees in science.

Far more importantly, the ELICOS industry has a legal framework. This legal framework imposes obligations on colleges, which delegate these down to the academic programmes. Amongst these obligations is the need to define academic progress, monitor it and report students for failure to achieve it. Depending on how this benchmark is defined, loosely or tightly, academic programmes may not necessarily be able to proactively anticipate gains or losses in language proficiency. For instance, the definition that academic progress represents the successful achievement of half of the learning outcomes for a term may be deemed, in the current discussion, as loose. It may only pick up students who have failed to pass 50% of the learning outcomes. In this case, a student who fails to pass five out of ten tests may be deemed not to have made academic progress. The actual extent of achievement in each test appears to be secondary to the number of learning outcomes passed. In other words, this system does not pick up students who are failing to learn, despite being able to pass the class tests. Failure to learn, in this case, represents the non-existence of actual cumulative gains in proficiency.

Unfortunately, these weaknesses in the legal framework and the profile of ELICOS students are not widely published. There is very little information out there about the industry to assist new teachers wishing to enter it. Unless teachers entering ELICOS are made aware of the weaknesses in its legal requirements for academic progress and the pertinent traits of the fee-paying, international students, they will be unlikely to help students gain the perception of “learning something”. Worst still, unless teachers entering the TESOL profession are made aware of the legal obligations of a visa holder in Australia, their potential to help these students to stay compliant with their visa conditions will be minimum. Furthermore, this reduced ability to assist their students will render new ELICOS teachers useless in the eyes of college proprietors who wish to keep their students compliant so that they are not reported. In most instances, the expectation

on the part of college owners is that the class teachers will, at the very minimum, alert the DoS when a student has been absent for a few days.

### *Provisions for Relief Teaching*

I once had to incorporate into the Teachers' Guidelines a requirement that relief teaching must result in substantive learning. I had realised that some relief teachers were under the impression that their job in a relief situation was to "baby-sit" students. I had come to this realisation through a lesson record sheet. I was mapping lesson record sheets with the respective programmes when I realised that a relief teacher had noted down *revision* on a day when a new lesson was programmed to be taught. I recalled forwarding the details of the lesson to the relief teacher at least 24 hours prior to the actual lesson. I sampled some students from this class, who had just had four hours of *revision*. The students confirmed that the lesson had been about revision. I spoke to these three students separately and each rolled their eyes and asked not to have the teacher again. Just as I finished talking with the last of the three students, their main class teacher entered my office. He asked me to call anyone other than that particular relief teacher. I sat down with the teacher and reviewed our communication with the relief teacher. We both concluded that we had forwarded everything the relief teacher needed to teach a new lesson about the *simple passive*. We both hazarded a guess that it may have been the case that the relief teacher looked at the grammatical structure and, fearing that she might not be able to teach it, decided to go back rather than move forward. We both laughed it off. The teacher left my office and used the lesson plan we had forwarded to the relief teacher to teach the lesson about the *simple passive*. I, on the other hand, decided to change the Teachers' Guidelines and incorporate a requirement for substantive learning. By substantive learning I meant the creation of a learning environment in the class, which was conducive to the acquisition of new knowledge. In other words, I meant to indicate that each lesson had to count towards students acquiring cumulative abilities to use English. On the one hand, this definition relegated language reinforcement to a small part of the lesson. On the other hand, it refuted the idea of revision occupying centre stage in a lesson, even in pre-test/exam cases.

### *Teaching Styles*

Teachers have a wide range of teaching styles. Some tend to be spontaneous whereas others like to have a structure. However, teachers

tend to share a common style – teacher talk. Many teachers use teacher talk from a front position, where it is the least effective. This tendency has been challenged in a wide range of publications. ●f these, Mario Rinvoluceri's stands out. This distinction is not due to the fact that he has sold over 100,000 copies of his most favourite book, "Grammar Games". Rinvoluceri's lesser known book, "Humanising Your Coursebook," is the reason I broke my own fundamental pledge in this book – i.e. to have little or no reliance on deduction. I have decided not to honour this commitment, in this isolated case, for a simple reason. My experience in relation to teachers' teaching styles cannot be explained in more eloquent terms than Rinvoluceri's publication. In it, Rinvoluceri questions a range of activities conducted by ESL teachers. For instance, why does the teacher have to write on the whiteboard? Why can't students do this? Nevertheless, suffice it to say that teachers ought to question their teaching style and the extent to which this helps students to learn English. An example of a style which clearly does not lead to learning as narrated in Chapter 2, is illustrated in Case Study 12.

●f the various teaching styles I have come across, three warrant further discussion. The first style is a lecture-type lesson delivery. In this case, the teacher stays almost *glued* to the whiteboard and locks into an endless cycle of elicitation. The second style sees a teacher *glued* to their desks. In this style, instructions are barked out from behind the desk and answers are confirmed through nomination. Students are nominated to give the answers to the exercises. These answers are then confirmed by the teacher. The third style sees the teacher *glued* to the top of one of the desks. In this case, the teacher invariably holds the textbook and moves occasionally to the board to illustrate a point. These three styles have one main feature in common – i.e. a lack of engagement. These are devoid of students' engagement with the material and commitment to the lesson. In many cases, the students feel as though the teacher is being very cold and distant. In this frame of mind, students cannot perceive any learning at all. Learning depends on a sense of belonging. Students need to feel part of a social climate, a social atmosphere, which validates their answers, offers a rationale for engagement and guides them on a journey of self-discovery.

For this (i.e. a lack of engagement) reason, I have counselled young teachers about teaching styles with a single sentence: *your place in a classroom is close to your students.*



## Conclusion

This chapter discusses twelve potential contributing factors to the student perception of “not learning anything”. Each one of these aspects is expanded upon in the twelve case studies presented in the upcoming chapters. In all but three instances (disparate levels, teacher management systems and students’ own circumstances) the teacher is the executioner of the less-than-ideal action or the main beneficiary of the existence of improvements in the contributing factor (i.e. the dearth of information about ELICOS). Therefore, any effort to enhance students’ perceptions of “learning something” or to reduce their perception of “not learning anything” will rest with aspects of the teachers’ performance.

## Curriculum Implications

### *For Academic Managers*

It is important that Academic Managers gain an in-depth appreciation of the extent to which teachers’ teaching styles, weaknesses and philosophies impact on their students’ perception of learning English. This information can be gathered through student surveys. These surveys must be administered frequently enough to allow proactive measures to be deployed. In addition, in order for this information to be synthesised, Academic Managers ought to demand that teacher management systems (similar to the ubiquitous student management systems) be made available to aid decision-making.

Furthermore, there ought to be an industry-wide requirement that teachers in ELICOS update their professional development every six months by submitting evidence of attendance at seminars, workshops and lectures. Moreover, teachers ought to be encouraged to join such free membership-based associations as the Oxford Teachers’ Club.

Currently, this requirement of updated professional development exists at college level. It ought to move down to the teachers’ level. The onus must be placed on the teacher to engage with the TESOL industry.

### *For Teachers*

Teaching is a reflective endeavour. It differs considerably from vocational activities. In a vocation, one employs a skill, and in most cases, the problem is resolved. In teaching, we employ a range of skills tentatively

and watch how it affects the students' ability to employ the tools we are imparting to them. The results of this reflective exercise should inform our next move. This approach refutes elicitation for the sake of elicitation. It embraces elicitation, which is used as a means to an end. It also rejects lectures in ESL classrooms. Instead, it accepts efforts to create a learning atmosphere in a classroom.

I often tend to evoke an analogy of a party to illustrate the concept of creating a learning atmosphere. I say to new teachers that if you were to invite friends to your house to have a good time, you would think of things which could contribute to having a good time – alcohol, finger food, music and chatty people. Likewise, if you were going to create a learning environment in your classroom, you would not bring a textbook to class. You would bring a wide range of teacher aids to generate a learning environment. You would try to give students a fairly good chance of internalising language by presenting it in a variety of ways, providing a great deal of creative practice and production opportunities. You would literally “chew on” rather than “pay lip service” to a language input item. You would feel the responsibility to make sure they had a good time in your company. You would not want them to listen to you all the time. You would not want to tell them to perform successive actions – fill in the gaps, complete the table, write down some notes etc.

**PART IV**

**CASE STUDIES**



# CHAPTER FIVE

## THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOK

### Introduction

As the first of the twelve case studies, this chapter documents the opinions of some teachers in relation to the limitations of textbooks. These limitations impact adversely on teachers' ability to generate learning.

### Case study 1: Textbooks

Textbooks have been the main source of information for lesson development for a fairly long period of time. However, their use has not always been widespread across the world. I recall my days with the British Council, at the Teacher Training Institute in Angola. We had no textbook. Instead, the Council put together a black and white publication which was then used to teach English to Years 7 and 8 in the capital city, Luanda.

Whilst textbooks continue to dominate TESOL practice at classroom level, their ubiquity is not necessarily the result of the benefits arising out of their use. This section will discuss the usefulness and drawbacks of textbooks in an attempt to explain their role in the emergence of students' complaints of "not learning anything".

### *Usefulness of Textbooks*

In one teacher's view, there is very little wrong with textbooks. "Ten professionals in a room coming up with level-appropriate material, who are we to say or come up with something better?" He substantiated his challenge by alluding to some specific practical features of textbooks. "With the grammar points, you cover everything," he explained before offering further praise for textbooks, "where else are you going to get listening and reading as good as the textbooks?"

From a teacher's perspective, a textbook may provide a range of helpful features. Firstly, it has ready-made exercises. These exercises are accompanied by instructions in the student's book and guidelines in the teacher's book. The answers to the exercises are given in the teacher's book, where additional activities may also be found. Secondly, textbooks contain pictures, which are often used by teachers to stimulate fluency activities such as discussions. Thirdly, the layout of a textbook may also be an attractive feature for teachers. Some textbooks are overcrowded with exercises, whereas others are neatly laid out with a great deal of white space. In this respect, *Streamline English – Departure*, for instance, has an interesting feature. It offers no instructions to students. It simply shows patterns. For instance, a sentence is given with a question underneath it. Then five to six sentences are presented below the sample answer. Students have to work out the pattern in the sample answer to realise that the task was to create questions from the five to six statements. This description of *Streamline English – Departure* is not an endorsement of its audio-lingual methodology. It simply represents an acknowledgement of the simplicity of its page layout. Fourthly, textbooks reduce the need to photocopy material, which has environmental and time-efficiency benefits. This reduced demand for photocopying can also help the college remain law-abiding. Copyright laws in Australia limit photocopying for educational purposes to ten per cent of a publication or a single chapter for colleges, which pay an annual membership fee to a copyright agency. The exception to this law is the odd case of when the publication is out of print. Fifthly, textbooks provide a good framework for lesson planning.

### ***Drawbacks of Textbooks***

Despite the benefits of ESL textbooks, they also have flaws, which may impinge upon a teacher's ability to "teach something". Some of these drawbacks are listed in Table 5.1.

**Table 5. 1 Drawbacks of textbooks**

Teacher	Verbatim Quotation	Theme	Implied Meaning
1*	“it can be bland. With Cutting Edge they try to be something for everyone, which means some of the interesting topic are not covered”	Appeal	Failure to appeal
2**	“there aren’t any of those things that really involve the students and allow them to communicate with each other”	Student Engagement	Failure to provide interactive activities
1*	“... sometimes the book does not serve the needs of the students”	Suitability	Failure to suit students’ needs

**Legend:** 1\* male teacher, with 11 years of teaching experience; 2\*\* female teacher, with 7 years of teaching experience

Both lack of engagement and suitability to the needs of the students are important factors in the adoption (or otherwise) of a textbook. Teachers often complain of these failures in a textbook and justify their adoption of supplementary or their own material based on the extent to which these shortfalls hinder their teaching duties.

Engagement in this sense represents the absence of relevant activities for the age, interest and study goals of the students in question. For instance, for a group of young Western European students who have travelled the world, topics about new cultures and rare events are bound to catch their imagination. Being fluency-oriented, this cohort of students may wish to engage in discussions, role-plays and oral presentations. Unless the textbook offers them these features (interesting topics and interactive activities), they will be unlikely to see any purpose in its adoption in class.

For a teacher, suitability may be just as important as engagement. For instance, if a teacher has identified the zone of proximal development of a class but the book does not provide sufficient challenge to bridge the gap between current and potential proficiency, it is unlikely to be the teacher’s favourite resource. This often results in an additional burden for the teacher, forcing them to either source or design their own material.

### *Sense of Loss of Control*

I once interviewed a highly experienced, female ESL teacher with rather impressive education-related qualifications. Some fifteen minutes into the interview, I set a practical task for the teacher. I asked her to explain to me how she would teach a listening task from Face2Face, Pre-Intermediate. After noting down the steps in her description of the lesson, the teacher lifted her head, jutting out her chin as if to say, *I'm ready*. I posed a question. I wished to know what she thought was the main objective of the listening task. There was silence. She pondered over the question and made a couple of false starts in her attempts to provide an answer. "I think in terms of vocabulary, there is bride, groom ... I'd be able to ... I'd make sure they all had a bit of an idea they knew what those people did at the wedding," she started, "if they say one more thing, well, they are not picking up what they need to learn." She made another attempt, "once we're through the text again, they may say oh, yes, I didn't know that one." And yet another one, "I'd see if there was anything that they did not understand." Still there was another tentative effort, "I'd know, if they were not picking up what they were meant to, in listening." This sense of being lost in a task, with little control over its purpose, epitomises the use of reading and listening exercises in textbooks for the purpose of practice. ● Often classroom reading and listening activities are carried out because they portray a contextualised use of the target language. In other words, the passages and recordings in textbooks perform the task of consolidating knowledge. Nonetheless, unless the instances of the target language are highlighted through reading and listening activities, students may not draw much learning from reading and listening practice activities.

### *Programmed to Set Exercises*

Unfortunately, to this date, textbooks and teachers' books have not stopped programming ELIC●S/ESL teachers to become "exercise setters". This sad reality and the examination of complaints from students who claim to not be "learning anything" have prompted the development of this book. Its intent is to help ELIC●S/ESL teachers to become "task developers". The distinction between the two chief concepts is simple. "Exercise setters" tell students what to do throughout the class – fill in the gaps; answer the questions in the textbook; turn to page 11 and read the passage in silence; get into groups of four; write a brief paragraph; listen and tick the correct answers. These are instances of order/command-oriented exercise setting. In these instances, the students are viewed as

“command followers” or “order takers”. There is an element of passivity on their part. “Task developers,” on the other hand, see an exercise as a means to an end and tend to scaffold in order to stimulate relevant knowledge. They model the required answers to guide students and expect a clear outcome, which is then subsequently applied in progressively challenging, proficiency-appropriate tasks.

### *A Blessing in Disguise*

I was quite thrilled when I received a telephone call from the DoS in 1995, not long after I had completed a Master of Education (TESOL). The young gentleman on the other end of the line sounded happy and began by thanking me for having attended the interview a day earlier. He then went on to announce his decision to hire me as an ELICOS teacher. I wondered momentarily, if it differed from ESL or EFL. Nonetheless, suspecting that my question might spoil the moment, I simply answered all the questions he posed in the affirmative, including that I would be happy to teach IELTS. Confused by the acronym and not wanting to step into a new job with little or no knowledge of the expectations deposited upon my young shoulders, I kindly asked my interlocutor to forward an e-mail to me with all the details of the class I had been assigned to. Upon receiving the e-mail later that afternoon, I spent the rest of the afternoon and a large portion of the evening researching into both ELICOS and IELTS. Of the former, there was very little information. There were college web pages with descriptions of courses and fee structures, but nothing else instructive for a new ELICOS teacher, albeit with nine years of teaching experience under my belt. The Fisher Library, at the University of Sydney (where I had spent two years studying TESOL), did not seem to hold any publications about ELICOS either. The lady at the information desk frowned at me when I said the acronym. She pulled out a piece of paper and made me write it down, as if blaming my poor pronunciation rather than her ignorance. Despite her various attempts to locate an item in the electronic and then paper catalogues, the descriptive publication about ELICOS I was searching for eluded us. Nonetheless, my search for information about IELTS was far more fruitful. I learnt the meaning of the letters (International English Language Testing System) in the acronym. In addition, I became aware of its significance for immigration and educational purposes. I was not surprised, therefore, when my search for IELTS textbooks at the Fisher Library returned a few items. I hurriedly jotted down the call numbers and headed for the shelves. Luckily, none of the books were on loan. I was able to spend a fair amount of time looking



at the different IELTS books, not quite certain as to which one would be on the shelves of the college where I was going to be employed. I read one book and then the next until there were none left. I then stopped and realised that I was reading tests. I looked for teachers' books, but there were none. I realised then that I had my work cut out. *How on earth was I going to create lessons out of the test-books?* It took a little longer than six months to realise the blessing disguised in the absence of textbooks for IELTS back in the mid-1990s. When the first few publications of IELTS textbooks emerged, I was utterly shocked at the almost explicit intent in them to programme English teachers to be “exercise setters” rather than “task developers”. I cast my eyes then to other course books and the shock only heightened. *Cutting Edge, Four Corners, Headway, Streamline English* and other textbooks set exercises for students to do. The teacher's books for these publications reinforced the idea of turning teachers into “exercise setters”. In each one of these publications, the teacher was expected to instruct the students to perform actions in class. Some of these actions included filling in gaps, ticking boxes and writing sentences.

## Conclusion

This chapter describes the usefulness of textbooks. In addition, it outlines some of the pitfalls in existing textbooks, especially the effects of their shortfalls on teacher lesson delivery style.

In essence, textbooks may contribute to the phenomenon of “not learning anything” in a number of ways. Firstly, they tend to programme teachers to become “exercise setters”. This delivery style is often observed in the administration of reading and listening exercises, where the teacher is hard pressed to think of a purpose for the activity. Secondly, textbooks may not engage students cognitively enough to help them bridge the gap between their existing and potential proficiency levels.

## Curriculum Implications

### *For Academic Managers*

It is important that Academic Managers are aware of the limitations of the main textbooks in use at their educational institutions. These shortfalls may refer to the tasks (global/vague or concrete/outcome-oriented), the impact on teacher lesson delivery (“exercise setters” or “task developers”) and the amount of control teachers have over the exercises in the

textbooks. Constant professional development sessions, which focus on identifying the shortcomings in textbooks, may significantly assist both teachers and Academic Managers alike in relation to the aforementioned shortfalls. Additionally, purchasing supplementary material on a regular basis may reduce the burden of worksheet design.

### *For Teachers*

As a male teacher with eleven years of ELICOS teaching experience once put it, it is important that teachers understand what textbooks do and fail to do. “There are sometimes ... in the book itself there are certain things that are better done in a different book, for instance Cutting Edge does better third conditional than Face2Face ... for instance, you need pictures for the third conditional ...” explained the male teacher. Another teacher, a young, female teacher offered her own take on the use of textbooks, “...sometimes I’d leave something out, if that was not a good fit for the students ...” The experienced male teacher seemed to agree with this proposition. “You don’t have to follow everything in it,” he suggested.

Most importantly, a balance needs to be struck between the use and non-use of the textbook. If used and followed blindly, the textbook may lead to boredom and perhaps very little learning. If dropped completely, teachers may not cover the level-appropriate language skill and knowledge areas prescribed for a certain class comprehensively. There might even be an unintentional tendency to show favouritism. Those tenses and topic areas most favoured by the teacher may be overdone at the expense of other areas. To minimise this risk of repetitive coverage, teachers are strongly advised to approach their Academic Managers and present a 5-week programme with ideas of their own. This submission is not a novelty of the current publication. At AMES Werribee, in Melbourne, teachers present a programme for the term, following a needs analysis, at the beginning of the school term.

I once wrote to the Oxford Teachers’ Club, complaining about the poor design of exercises in textbooks. The sterile reply I received through a nameless e-mail from [elt.enquiry@oup.com](mailto:elt.enquiry@oup.com) left me baffled and despondent at the same time. It offered no way forward and argued that many of my suggestions were already in evidence in other OUP publications. For legal reasons, I cannot include a copy of their message. However, my e-mail to the Oxford Teachers’ Club is listed in Appendix D.

# CHAPTER SIX

## STUDENT FEEDBACK

### Introduction

This second case study discusses the concept of global marking.

It outlines its pitfalls and offers alternatives.

### Case study 2: Quality of Feedback Given to the Students

I once hired an ESL teacher whose experience had been mostly in secondary school ESL settings. I trusted that it was the best type of experience because of the guidance and rigour in mainstream educational institutions. The first time I reviewed a piece marked by the particular teacher, that trust changed into intellectual and supervisory curiosity. I was quite taken aback by the absence of pedagogical focus in the marking. Low-order items such as prepositions and spelling errors had all been fixed, not highlighted or underlined, but actually “surgically repaired”. I had another look at the piece to see if a marking sheet had been attached to it. There was no marking sheet. I reviewed the essay once more to see if cohesion, paragraphing or logical development of ideas had been evaluated or marked. There was no evidence of these high-order items having been looked at. When I approached the teacher, I was told that the students had a preference for feedback about their use of low-order items. Debating students’ preference or comprehending the time constraints (or perhaps the teacher’s marking preference) did not seem to be a viable option. I then turned our attention to what the ESL industry and the teacher’s own experience in mainstream education instructed them to do when marking students’ written pieces. On this count, we both agreed that the written piece of the student I had stumbled across could have been better marked. The teacher kindly offered to re-mark the piece. I thanked the teacher and rejoiced in the knowledge that I had been able to make this way of marking commonplace.



Marking sheets are often pre-designed and contain criteria by which students are consistently evaluated. In most cases, schools have marking sheets attached to tests. For instance, if you were to administer a writing test, there would often be a task rubric, an answer sheet and an answer key and/or marking sheet. In some instances, there might be a marking guide as well. The marking sheets are grading papers, which feature scales and a range of criteria. A criterion could be spelt out as a statement or a noun phrase. Some examples of statements could be:

- a) the student presents a clear development of ideas
- b) the student develops ideas logically
- c) the student uses cohesive devices accurately

Phrases, on the other hand, may be written in a variety of ways with the most common variations being adjectives and nouns (e.g. a beautiful place) and/or nouns of nouns (e.g. a fleet of cars). Some illustrative examples may include:

- a) clear introduction
- b) logical development of ideas
- c) use of collocations

The scales may come in a wide variety of ways too. Some of the most common ones are numeric scales. For instance, the range of numbers from 0 to 5 tends to be prevalent on numeric scales. Other preferences may include decimal numbers as well. Labelled scales such as *poor – excellent* are less preferred for the fact that these do not add up to a single score. In some cases, a combination of numeric and verbal labels is adopted, with 1 representing poor and 5 excellent.

As a teacher, you might need to undertake a standardisation exercise. In the best run colleges, a teacher is assigned the task of standardising the marking of new recruits. Standardisation simply means applying the scales and statements in actual marking. The paper or papers given to you have previously been marked by an experienced teacher. You are expected to follow some guidelines (broad or specific, depending on the college curriculum orientation) and mark the piece or pieces. Your scores should be within a couple of points of the original marker's. The one aspect of the standardisation that you may not like is the fact that there is little assistance for you to develop a mental model which sees instances of language use in the same or compatible way as the original marker. In other words, there is often not a workshop before the standardisation

process to help you distinguish between one statement and the next or a score and the next score up or down. You will eventually realise that whilst 0 is clearly distinct from 5, 2 is not always different from 3.

The best guidelines for marking students' written pieces and speaking skills indicate a cut off number. For instance, there might be a number of instances of a certain grammatical structure which triggers a grade or score. In the case of academic essays, the use of the passive may serve to illustrate this point. If there is no passive in an academic piece, it may receive a zero score for this criterion. For each correct use of the passive, the piece receives a score. The challenge with this approach is the limit on the scale and the eventual possibility of the number of instances of the grammatical structure exceeding it. Scales cannot go on indefinitely, nor can instances be demonstrated indefinitely. An alternative scoring system describes the upper limit on the scale thoroughly. This description often includes a lower limit. For instance, there might be a requirement that the lower limit be at least five correct uses of the *simple passive*.

Whilst the description presented above itemises grammar, a holistic approach groups grammatical structures into higher-order categories. For instance, the passive may be part of a broader category called *formality*. Another category may be *tenses*. This approach can be elevated to a much higher level of holism. In this latter sense, *grammar* may become a single category. This "global" approach is herein denoted as "global marking".

"Global marking" may focus mostly on the intellectual strengths and weaknesses of the students under evaluation. This marking approach tends to generate comments about the ideas expressed by the students rather than the linguistic merits of the pieces written by them. On rare occasions, users of "global marking" may mark low-order items. This is because the "global marker" tends to access the intellectual underpinnings of the article. Any language items which interfere with this attempt to understand the writer's point of view will be "surgically repaired". This type of approach to marking students' written pieces is based on intuition. In this case, the teacher does not use a marking sheet or descriptors. There is no sense of expected behaviour. This marking often pays attention to virtually every instance of incorrect usage, which interferes with the message. To put that another way, this is a concern with coherence only. Whilst the teacher may believe that he or she is doing the students a great service by identifying the gaps in their knowledge, he or she is actually less likely to guide the students towards a better piece next time around. Low-order items such as prepositions, spelling and punctuation are marked. High-

order items such as cohesion, signposting, lexical chain and variety of sentence patterns tend to be ignored in this kind of marking.

Marking standards tend to vary significantly from school to school. Within these variations, a pattern can clearly be noted. The university-based ELT centres tend to consistently adopt marking sheets and emphasise the need to mark relevant items. In other words, you do not mark every single mistake. This type of approach to marking recognises that mistakes come in three different types, namely: error, mistake and lapse. Errors may be beyond the students' repertoire of rules. Mistakes are often the result of incorrect understanding of the rules, whereas lapses represent neither a novelty nor a misconception. Lapses, if pointed out to the students, arise out of inattention. Students often self-correct, in those instances where a lapse exists. However, small, private ELICOS colleges may be less likely to develop marking sheets with high-order criteria.

The advantages and disadvantages of specific marking or detailed marking of low-order items originating out of global marking or unguided marking are outlined in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1 Evaluation of Detailed Marking of Low-Order Items

	Students		Teachers		College	
	Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages
Detailed Marking of Low-Order Items	Detailed feedback	Overwhelmed	Appear to be doing their job in the eyes of some students	Labour - intensive marking	Depending on the nationality mix, good feedback from students who like specific marking	Potential complaints from teachers due to class sizes & workload
	Every mistake is identified	Focus too much on form	Diagnosis for remedial work	Recurring mistakes can be frustrating		
	Answers to questions of accuracy	Puzzled as to which mistakes to focus on	Sense of small achievement	Lengthy marking	Marketing potential: we mark all your mistakes ("We leave no stone unturned")	Might need to consider rewarding IELTS teachers for marking, creating a discriminatory policy
		Higher - order items such as cohesion, coherence, logical organisation of ideas, sentence patterns and paragraphing are sacrificed	Tests become clear microscopic lenses into learning	Lose sight of big picture items (higher-order) such as cohesion, coherence, sentence patterns, organisation of ideas and paragraphing		No real gain in student academic progress

Students may become too self-conscious and teacher – dependent for correction

Focus away from communication

*Error monitor* is turned on, stifling spontaneous interaction and communication

become surgeons rather than guides

Unable to benchmark across curricula e.g. European Framework

## Conclusions

This chapter reviews two marking styles – i.e. global and guided. It outlines the various approaches adopted by ESL centres in terms of the management of marking. In addition, this chapter offers detailed consideration in relation to the benefits and drawbacks of specific marking.

The adoption of global marking may potentially give rise to complaints of “not learning anything”. This may occur because global marking is not focused. There is no reinforcement of a model. Without a marking sheet, teachers are unable to model a behaviour. There is no clear set of benchmarks in global marking.

To stop global marking or specific marking of low-order items, colleges are advised to adopt marking sheets with clear criteria and scales.

## Curriculum Implications

I opted to incorporate into our guidelines at one of the colleges the idea of the need to use a marking sheet and provide sufficient written feedback to the students about both high and low –order items. Nonetheless, I learnt that the marking sheets posed some challenges to the teachers as some of the item descriptions were rather ambiguous. In addition, the numeric scales were too limiting. Having a 0 – 1- 1.5 – 2 – 2.5 scale presented some difficulties for the teachers. Some had begun to use 0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 instead. Other teachers requested that boundaries be set for the top figures with clear lower limits for 2.5 or 5. For instance, if students were expected to use noun-phrases, a number of noun-phrases were required to be in evidence for the marks to be awarded. Furthermore, some teachers asked for conversion tables to be designed. This is a list of raw and respective percentage values. A typical conversion table is presented below, in Table 6.2. Please note that it is only partially presented here. A full table has all 100 raw numbers plus percentage values from 0% to 100%.

**Table 6. 2 Conversion table**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
2.5	5	7.5	10	12.5	15	17.5	20	22.5	25	27.5	30

Key: shaded = raw marks; white = percentage values

Whilst the immediate reaction to “global marking” might be to blame the teachers for not adopting the marking sheets, closer inspection may indicate that these documents need reviewing. In other words, a system-wide review may be required to fully appreciate the complexities associated with the non-use of the marking sheets by a limited number of teachers. All parts of the system may be found to need one or more tweaks. For instance, the scales on some marking sheets may be found to be too long. In other cases, the marking sheets may not be easily accessible to technology-challenged teachers. In addition, there might be a need to have a guide with some of the marking sheets.

In brief, there is a range of complexities associated with the non-use of a marking sheet. Some of these issues relate to the level of professional competence of the teacher. Other issues relate to the marking sheet design itself. What is important to retain is the need to serve the student in the best possible way. The means to such an end may vary depending on the circumstances of both the marker and the educational institution. In those schools where peer review is encouraged, a commonality of marking approach may be reached through standardisation.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## TEACHING STYLES

### Introduction

This case study expands on the concepts of “exercise setter” and “task developer”. In addition, it examines some of the issues associated with these two types of lesson delivery style.

### Case study 3: “Exercise Setters” versus “Task Developers”

#### *Political [In]correctness*

The dichotomous description between “exercise setters” and “task developers” comes at a time in Australia when there is a collective consciousness away from pigeonholing people. This societal constituency has encouraged inclusiveness in all sorts of professional and non-professional facets of life. It is, therefore, important to provide an explanation or a rationale for the usefulness of a non-inclusive dichotomy in this book.

#### *Rationale for Distinguishing between “Exercise Setters” and “Task Developers”*

There are two main trends in Australia presently, which may have devastating consequences for the ELICOS industry. The first of these is the tightening of the visa system, which may push away international students and redirect them to other overseas markets such as Canada. Canada has, in recent years, made substantial concessions for student visa applicants, making it easy for international students to study English in Canada. This tightening of the student visa system includes a test of genuine intent to study temporarily in Australia. Such a test has been adopted arbitrarily by visa officers. In some instances, offshore applicants for a student visa in Australia are being asked to give a reason for leaving



their country rather than show the ability to sustain themselves whilst in Australia. This need for a cause to leave their country has redirected students to the Philippines. In the Philippines, there are English colleges which are attended by South Korean students. Some of these colleges offer boarding arrangements.

The second trend is the increase in the number of new teachers entering the industry with only a month of training. In fact, a presenter at one of Australia's former ELICOS industry regulator's (NEAS) ELT Management Conferences once claimed that ELICOS had the lowest entry requirement for a profession in Australia. In some cases, ESL teacher training in Australia is conducted mostly through a distance mode. This is true of the Certificate IV in TESOL. These two trends are interrelated. New, inexperienced teachers represent cheap labour for private college operators, whose profit margins are being squeezed out by the Federal Government's incompetent management of the visa system in Australia. However, the benefits for both the colleges and the students often stop there, at the savings on wages. Despite the fact that these teachers' trainers and NEAS recommend support and mentoring for these novice teachers, the reality, at the college level, is often stifling. Experienced Directors of Studies or Academic Managers are snowed under by paperwork and are constantly "putting out fire". Without a Senior Teacher or a Curriculum Coordinator, the job of the Director of Studies is often very difficult.

In order to identify and support ELICOS teachers who may not be "teaching anything", this publication has chosen to be politically incorrect in a very strict sense of the expression, without removing any merit from these keen teachers who are thirsty for knowledge.

### *Quality of Professional Development*

The lack of financial support limits professional development to in-house sessions. This is not always beneficial. Anyone with a knowledge of *network density* understands that in a dense network, where teachers have worked together for an extended period of time, there is often hardly any new, industry-generated knowledge. Old knowledge circulates round, whilst new knowledge is kept at bay.

### *Vulnerable Novice Teachers*

The result of this context of squeezed margins, novice teachers and stifling resources is vulnerable teachers. Vulnerability in this sense refers to the

potential for them to fall victim to students' complaints of "not learning much" or "nothing at all". This likelihood increases with the decrease in support, expert professional development and the ability to complete paid peer-observation hours.

### *Students' Explicit Needs*

This understanding of the negative correlation between the potential for generating complaints and the reduction in support has led me to examine the chief differences between teachers with good student feedback and teachers with poor student feedback. I conducted surveys with graduating students and spoke casually with other students. One student sat in my office for a fair amount of time and said to me, "Costa, I learnt the present perfect with teacher X last year and I still remember it." I pressed for further information. I wanted the student to tell me, if they had felt otherwise with any other teachers. "With teacher Y, Costa, I don't learn anything," he offered. I pressed further still. This time I wanted to know the difference between "learning something" and "not learning anything". "Teacher X gives us one task. Then we repeat it in a different way. We then do something about it. But teacher Y says, "do this, do that," is that teaching?" My excuse that different teachers had different styles of teaching did not wash well with this student who laughed it off and shook his head. At risk of being seen as ignorant of the strengths and weaknesses of the teachers I had employed, I offered my explanation of global and specific tasks, to which the student replied, "that's it, Costa. We want more and more activities, but with results."

### *"Exercise Setters"*

The words "exercise setters" are between inverted commas to stress the fact that the nomenclature pertains only to the context of this book. These inverted commas are also used throughout this book to denote a perception or a description based on a perception. The same approach is adopted above with the words "learning something," "[not] learning anything" and "[not] teaching anything". In each one of these instances, there is a specific meaning implied. "Learning something" may mean being able to recall language input. It may also mean being able to use it. Likewise, "[not] learning anything" denotes the absence of the ability to recall and/or use language input.

I once stepped into a class at very short notice, just after break, to observe a relief teacher in response to complaints from students who approached me at break time saying that they had “learnt nothing” in the previous two hours with the teacher. The teacher, having discussed the latest news about the London Olympics with the class, instructed them to open the student’s textbook on a certain page. The students obliged and waited for instructions. The teacher read out the instructions from the student’s textbook. The exercise required the students to identify one out of three options which was referred to in a passage. The teacher stayed behind the desk and waited for the students to shout out the correct answer. Whilst the students searched the text for the answer to the question, the teacher kept asking if anyone had completed the task. The strongest student raised her hand and shouted “b” to which the teacher said, “correct.” The teacher then instructed the class to move on to the next exercise, at which point, fifteen sets of horrified eyes looked in my direction. The students wanted to know why “b” was the answer. I sensed that they also wished to find out why they had been asked to do that exercise. *Was it a test?* Some may have wondered. This example epitomises the teacher’s classroom demeanour, which falls under the category of an “exercise setter”.

“Exercise setters,” in this context, tend to set exercises as instructed by the textbook. Textbooks, in turn, often instruct teachers to set exercises in a particular way. This bad habit formation is reinforced in *Face2Face*.

Tell your students to cover the vocabulary box in 1 and the table in 2a). Say the number of two or three items in the picture and ask students to say what they are.

Use the speech bubbles to remind students of the difference between It’s and They’re for singular and plural nouns.

Students work in pairs and take turns to test each other on the items in the picture.

Face2Face Elementary Teacher’s Textbook, p. 31.

This simple example is illustrative of the attempt to programme teachers into becoming “exercise setters”. In other words, the instructions in it tend to remove the use of the teacher’s best tool in a classroom – rationality or cognition. The teacher stops thinking logically and is forced to think sequentially. The concern stops being about what works. It becomes what comes next. For instance, why should the box be covered? Does it have to

be the same box as the one in the textbook, which the students have taken home and might have actually memorised? Most importantly, what is the purpose of the exercise? What aspect of the students' profile will it target? Is this a recall task? Is it a fluency task? What is the actual outcome of this task?

Another set of exercise instructions has been drawn from *New Cutting Edge Upper Intermediate Teacher's Resource Book*.

Focus students on the picture and ask them what advice they could give to someone who sleepwalks. Ask students to cross out the incorrect modals. Do the first sentence as a class to demonstrate that not every sentence has an incorrect modal in it.

*New Cutting Edge Upper Intermediate Teacher's Resource Book*, p. 67.

In this case, there is some attempt to present a rationale for the task. The words, "... to demonstrate that not every sentence has ..." provide a justification for the instructions. This can offer the teacher some flexibility in deciding whether or not to do the first and second exercise or go through an exercise with the class, if they feel that the class is unable to discern correct modals from incorrect ones. Nonetheless, the broader aspects of the exercise are missing. Why should the students' attention be focused on the picture? What does it actually mean to "focus students on the picture?" Does this mean, to ask them some questions about the picture? If so, what would be the purpose of the questions? Is it to facilitate the recall of information later on? Is it to activate prior knowledge? What would be an inappropriate way to focus their attention on the picture? Most importantly, what is the outcome of this exercise? Essentially, it is almost impossible for teachers to be anything other than robots in class with this kind of prescription. It is as if they were teaching someone else's lesson.

### ***"Task Developers"***

"Chewing on" was a label adopted by one of the teachers I have interviewed for this book to describe the behaviour of "task developers". In this sense, a "task developer" tends to view an exercise in stages. Often these stages fall broadly under the usual *before*, *during* and *after* temporal structure. Before an exercise, a "task developer" will activate prior knowledge or motivate students by giving them a tune-in task or a warm-up. These are not necessarily the same. A tune-in activity tends to lead a

class towards a thematic aspect of knowledge. For instance, if the text or passage in the textbook is about the Olympics, the teacher in the tune-in stage may ask the students to recall a fact about the Olympics or may actually offer a fact themselves that the students can relate to. A brief audio-visual clip of the Olympics or an Olympic event might be more useful and less straining for the students. A warm-up may simply aim to get the students ready physically for an activity or may be used as a pace-breaker. A pace-breaker shifts the class pace from slow to fast or from fast to slow. Pace-breakers are useful to prepare students for more “heads-down” activities. In other words, it might not be a good idea to have students go from a running dictation to a listening, without a pace-breaker in between. In this latter case, the warm-up used may not necessarily activate any prior knowledge, which will help the class with the upcoming exercise. During the exercise, the “task developer” will, having set it clearly and concisely, provide assistance to the students, especially the weak ones. This assistance may also be provided in the form of a whole class attempt to complete the first couple of exercise items. The “task developer” may correct the exercise as students finish it and get them to go around to help others. After the exercise, the “task developer” will have the students utilise the answers in at least four other exercises, each expanding the students’ knowledge of the target language further. In each case, new challenges are introduced. In fact, the “task developer” literally “chews on” the results of the main exercise.

It is worth noting that the three temporal aspects of an exercise are not new developments in the English teaching field. These have been suggested in other publications. The novelty in this book is the concept of utilising the results (outcomes) of the exercises to develop other exercises, thus providing adult students with a clear reason for completing the first exercise. In addition, the first results or answers become a means to an end rather than the end in themselves.

I have, in my years as a teacher and Director of Studies, known many “exercise setters” and a few “task developers”. I would like to acknowledge some of these “task developers” in this publication. I refer to them by name so that they are given the recognition they duly deserve. These are, in no particular order: Lindi Chiu, Balbina Arsenio, and Simon Schmidt. Simon Schmidt is probably the most consummate “task developer” I have ever come across in the ELICOS industry in Australia. Simon is constantly thinking of ways to develop tasks (or sequences of exercises with a clear outcome). Even in a simple exchange with students, Simon does not stop being a “task developer”. Simon was my assistant



Director of Studies at a Sydney ELICOS college, and as he and I bounced ideas off each other in the hallway once, a student approached Simon to ask him the meaning of a new word. He first smiled. Then he lifted his index finger and placed it over his mouth, pensive. After a brief moment, he flicked his finger up in the air, as if he had come to some realisation. He looked at the student and asked her to step into a classroom. He then wrote the word on the whiteboard. Simon gave a synonym to the student and paused. Subsequently, he gave the student a sentence with the word in it, keeping superfluous words out of this interaction with the student. He proceeded to give the student the opposite of the new word (or an antonym). He repeated the steps for this new word as per the steps for the first word. Then Simon wrote two gapped sentences on the board and asked the student to select the words for the gaps. The student completed the task correctly and thanked him. She came out of the room saying, “you’re the best English teacher I’ve ever had.” An “exercise setter” would have been tempted to give the student a synonym and ask her to look it up in a dictionary or write a sentence with the word in it for homework.

### *“Carriers of Bags of Tricks”*

It might be opportune, at this junction, to impart some advice for the “carriers of bags of tricks”. This group of teachers tends to have sets of exercises, mostly games, which have proven “exciting” and relatively easy to administer. When a teacher asks loudly in the staff room, if anyone has a good warm-up for a particular topic, “carriers of bags of tricks” may offer a suggestion. This is commendable because it is knowledge sharing. What is not commendable is if the recipient teacher does not ask additional questions to understand the strengths and limitations of the exercise. Some of these questions might be: when did you last use it? Did you use it with this class? What worked well? What didn’t work so well? Is it age appropriate? Is it appropriate for the proficiency level of my students? Is it easy to adapt?

The complexities of human relationships do not cease to exist at the threshold of your classroom. These complexities are vast and varied, depending on a range of student variables, namely: nationality, age, study goals, visa requirements, future plans, past learning experience, course length, gender and proficiency level, amongst others. Any one of these traits can hinder or aid a lesson, causing alternative tricks to be called for. The question is never, what am I going to do next? It is most often, how am I going to create a learning and engaging environment for my students?

The two main words in the latter question are: “learning” and “engaging”. These differ in meaning, in the context of a classroom. Whilst “learning” refers to gains in proficiency, “engaging” denotes increased motivation, sense of belonging and knowledge of others in the classroom.

### *Care in Labelling Teachers*

Note that the unit of analysis in these instances of students’ comments is a teacher’s specific classroom behaviour – exercise setting or lesson delivery. This specific behaviour differs from test administration, classroom management or utilisation of technology. It is important to stress that teachers are not “exercise setters” or “task developers” in all instances. They may adopt these sets of behaviours from time to time. For ease of reference, though, the nomenclature herein proposed will refer to “exercise setters” and “task developers”, bearing in mind that these labels refer to a specific type of teacher classroom conduct. Teachers cannot be so labelled outside the classroom or in relation to other matters. In other words, an “exercise setter” may still be a keen, friendly, sociable and highly culturally sensitive teacher. This teacher may be a highly compliant, punctual and sociable employee. Even in the classroom, an “exercise setter” does not stop being a “resource”, a “mind reader”, a “counsellor” to name but a few of the classroom roles of a teacher.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter makes a significant contribution to ESL by distinguishing between exercise setting and task developing lesson delivery styles. Furthermore, it acknowledges that teachers are not either one (i.e. exercise setters) or the other (i.e. task developers). Teachers may simply adopt one or the other lesson delivery style in different circumstances, depending on how they view the lesson, how familiar they are with the material, and how the students respond.

The task development lesson delivery style appears to be more adept at establishing links across textbook exercises. This method of teaching, in which an English class is introduced to and guided through a textbook, ought to be highly encouraged and supported in ESL classrooms.

## **Curriculum Implications**

### ***For Teachers***

ESL teachers must become familiar with the pitfalls of their lesson delivery styles. This knowledge should help teachers of English as a second language steer their lessons towards learning, engagement and confidence-building. Teachers must also understand the learning needs of the students and which are best served by these lesson delivery styles. By acquiring this appreciation, ESL teachers will bridge the gap between instruction and language learning needs.

### ***For Academic Managers***

Academic Managers play a critical role in the identification of lesson delivery styles. Through observations, students' feedback and conversations with teachers, Academic Managers are able to discern the manner in which a certain teacher delivers their English lessons. This information must be used in a collegial fashion to encourage open communication between teachers and Academic Managers, with the latter employing deferential power more often than legitimate power. Deferential power is based on respect and trust. When teachers respect and trust their Academic Managers, they view them as approachable. This approachability can be utilised as a tool to coach, mentor and monitor ESL teachers.



# CHAPTER EIGHT

## THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

### Introduction

This chapter examines teacher-generated materials. This examination is deliberately critical of the potential oversimplification of instruction in teacher-generated materials, despite the widely acknowledged benefits of customised instruction through these resources.

In addition, this chapter introduces the micro-economic concept of *opportunity cost* in English language learning.

### Case study 4: Quality of the learning experience

When I first became Director of Studies (DoS) in 2002, the previous DoS had resigned. The resignation had been so abrupt that there was no time for a proper handover other than "... good luck! Read the NEAS standards and you'll be fine." In actual fact, I was put into a position about which I knew very little. For a moment, I sat in the DoS' chair to soak it all up. There I was, uncertain as to whether I should head west to Fisher Library at the University of Sydney to read about being a DoS or ring up NEAS and declare my ignorance. I had been in the ELICOS industry for seven years. Yet I still knew very little about NEAS and its standards. As a teacher I had just minded my own business, so to speak. Nonetheless, I was not prepared, barely three months into my new job, to receive a notice of intention to inspect by NEAS at a short notice. By then I had spoken to other Directors and realised that there was some level of dread in the air about NEAS. I asked one of the teachers, Marian (her last name escapes me now) to contact another mutual friend who was the DoS at an ELICOS college. In her amusing way, Marian returned to me days later to say, "well, Simon said (this conjured up images of the game 'Simon says') that an old lady had been to his college, sniffed around a bit and then left." I asked Marian to return to Simon (a different Simon to our expert "task developer") and find out more about the lady. I wanted to know if his inspection had been conducted by the Head of NEAS. The response, brief

but helpful, was negative. Glenys Merrifield had not visited Simon's college, but was now due to inspect the place where I worked. Fearing that I might have to rely on my own inner strengths, I turned to the NEAS standards 2001 (or an earlier version), the National Code 1997 and the ESOS Act 2000. The inspection itself, to which Glenys brought with her Ana Bratkovic, started from the moment the two ladies set foot on "our soil". I thought that there might be a moment for formalities before the inspection proper started. However, I was wrong. When I materialised on the top floor where the ladies were waiting, I introduced myself and proceeded to introduce others around me too. The tone in Glenys' voice revealed her intent to mean business. My cue was unmistakable. I wasted no time in ushering the ladies down to the first floor where my office was. After proving, through evidence and clarification, that the college complied with all NEAS standards, I was relieved to hear Glenys announce her intent to depart, having offered words of encouragement before hurriedly making her way out of the office. Even before the college received the inspection report, there was a sense of collective achievement. I was rewarded with a pay rise and the teachers received a bonus payment. Most importantly, my teaching duties were assigned to a newly hired teacher, thus allowing me head space to do some managing.

Nonetheless, the inspection had diverted my attention away from the management of the college. That is to say, I had taken my eyes off my benchmarks, "the ball" – students' satisfaction, teachers' satisfaction and the efficient use of resources. As a result, students' complaints began to emerge. Some of these complainants were threatening to leave the college, if they were not moved out of the IELTS class. To make my life easier, in their view, they offered to stay in the same class, if the teacher was replaced. I sat down with a small representative group and elicited as much information from them as I possibly could in close to 90 minutes. My goal was twofold. ●n the one hand, I was looking for specifics of classroom learning experience. ●n the other hand, I needed to control the damage and rescue these students. "He's not prepared. He comes in and out of the classroom to get a textbook or a tape-recorder," one of the students said. "We just answer questions, one after the other," explained another student. I offered to see them again at a later date and the four of them agreed. As I looked at my notes, I kept wondering how I had missed some of the obvious clues – constantly stepping out of the classroom, for instance. The next line of inquiry was the teacher. I sat down with the teacher and explained our complaint management policy. It clearly mandated that the focus be placed on the issues raised rather than the complainants. It also imposed an obligation on the employee handling the

complaint to protect the identity of the complainants. Nevertheless, the conversation had a bad start. “But who complained? I need to know who complained,” demanded the teacher, in a somewhat infuriated manner. I adopted a strategy once mentioned to me by a good friend. This friend of mine was seeing a yoga instructor or some other specialist, who spoke very softly to calm people down. I adopted the same strategy with this teacher, without sounding condescending. Within a minute or two of my deliberately lowering my voice, the teacher fell quiet and showed a readiness to look closely at the issues. I had most definitely understood the indignation on the part of the teacher. I had once been asked by a teacher who had received complaints about their teaching style if the students knew anything about teaching. In actual fact, the teacher I had at the desk in my DoS’ office must have felt as though he had been stabbed in the back by the very people he woke up every morning to come out and help. The first of the issues on my agenda was lesson preparedness. We discussed how the lessons were prepared and the teacher recalled some instances where he had to step out of the classroom to get an extension activity because he had just thought of an exercise which could help some students. Fearful of a prolonged trial-like defence from the teacher, I changed the tactic. I turned the tables round. I identified a range of flaws in the information I had passed on to him about the students and perhaps a poor choice of textbook. With a couple of self-incriminating offerings from me, the teacher opened up and identified areas he could improve. ●One of these areas was motivation. To guide the teacher, I tried to think of a way to phrase it so that it became a research question. “How can we give the students,” I began, “tasks, which motivate them?” Having paused briefly to give the teacher time to absorb my challenge, I was attempting to rephrase it when the teacher offered, “how can I modify the textbook exercises into stimulating tasks?”

Subsequently, I suggested that he consult another teacher to work together in this new challenge of “translating” dry textbook exercises into stimulating classroom tasks. As I had expected, the other teacher, Simon Schmidt, asked to observe the lessons of the IELTS teacher to establish a starting point. Within a couple of days, the IELTS teacher approached me with a list of issues to fix, all pertaining to the creation of a “learning” atmosphere in class. I could not have been more thrilled at the journey of self-discovery the teacher had undertaken.

The results of this intervention did not take long to become apparent. When the first group of IELTS students graduated and we held a graduation ceremony on campus, three out of the four IELTS graduates

approached me, one of them sobbing. The crying student praised the IELTS teacher for helping them “learn”. This graduation occurred a day before the four students were due to sit their own IELTS exam. Within two weeks of sitting the exam, two of the students returned to the college to proudly show their teacher the report, with results which had exceeded their target scores. The other two who did not return to visit us were said to have obtained the same results. Nothing made me prouder than the sense of achievement in the teacher’s teary eyes.

I worked for a private college once where I was provided with a Curriculum Coordinator. The Curriculum Coordinator worked four (as opposed to five) days a week. On Mondays, the Curriculum Coordinator would often carry out duties related to their job description – test reviews, test design, resource purchase, CD cataloguing etc. The position had a clear but flexible job description, which also included relief teaching on Monday. When I realised late on a Monday morning that a teacher had failed to turn up, I did not think a relief teacher could make it to the college in fifteen minutes. I turned to the Curriculum Coordinator, who had laid out a plan for the day, which included some pressing tasks such as re-designing a test. After fuming about the oddity of someone forgetting that they had been scheduled to teach, the Curriculum Coordinator turned to me and said, “how can I teach? I’ve not prepared anything.” It took me a brief moment to interpret the statement of apparent fact. I had thought that there were sufficient resources to use in a lesson – a syllabus, outlining what to teach weekly; a textbook; a teacher’s textbook; soft copies of supplementary online resources (on the college’s intranet); and shelves bursting at the seams with supplementary material. As the Curriculum Coordinator jumped on the computer, searched for pictures and quickly created a worksheet on Microsoft Word, I realised what I was witnessing. Right before my eyes, I had a “task developer” at work.

Prior to the experience with the Curriculum Coordinator, I had been DoS at a different ELICOS college. On a certain occasion, I had stepped into the staffroom to retrieve a copy of a textbook when the door opened behind me. The IELTS teacher was coming in. She had had a draining day, to put it mildly. We sat down and revisited the day. She began by explaining to me that changing the exercises in the textbook into enjoyable classroom tasks was time-intensive and literally exhausting. I pressed for additional details. “You spend the whole day modifying, adding and re-ordering things. I feel like I’m doubling up somehow, but when I tried to use the textbook, it just fell flat,” she offered. I knew my role in that exchange and made no effort to change it. “That sounds exhausting,” I

returned, ensuring I sounded every bit as supportive and reflective. “Look at this activity, here on page 19. It’s f\*\*\* boring! Pardon my French. What are they [the students] going to do with it? Just listen and then what? Get their f\*\*\* answers checked and move on?” I hesitated momentarily before moving to solutions. “So, how do we make it exciting without turning this into an onerous exercise for you?” She took a deep breath and exhaled a thought. “Just get a project going and I’ll start designing my own stuff. You’ll have to pay me extra for this. You know that, don’t ya?” I smiled and added, “dream on! And how much would you like for your services, Mrs?” We both had a laugh. The use of colloquialism and my attempts at mocking her did indeed throw a wet blanket on the idea of getting paid for extra hours.

Nonetheless, I do have a word of caution to add about teachers creating their own material. It is a great idea, which brings benefits to both teachers and students. The teacher uses material they have tailored to the needs of the students. The students work with material, which has been finely (or sometimes roughly) calibrated for their proficiency level, interests and stage of learning in the course. In some instances, this material is equally culturally appropriate.

The aforementioned effort can be detrimental in the long run unless it is guided from the start. In other words, there is a need to ensure that there is no “opportunity loss” for the students. “Opportunity loss” refers to the potential for worksheets to oversimplify language, thus precluding students from being exposed to level-appropriate language input. In other words, I once realised that an IELTS teacher was using their own worksheets with open-ended questions for discussions. Most of the lessons were based on discussion or some sequence of fluency activities. When I conducted a comparison between the target language for this class as per the syllabus and the lesson record sheets for this class, it was clear that there was an “opportunity loss” for the students. These advanced IELTS students were not being exposed to “cleft sentences,” “reduced relative clauses” or any other advanced grammatical (accuracy) structures. Nor were they systematically and consistently being exposed to such essential reading strategies as “dealing with unknown vocabulary”.

## Conclusions

Despite the caution sounded in this chapter about English teachers developing their own resources, this practice of creating one’s own and customising existing resources should be encouraged. Teachers of English



should be provided with the tools, time and skills to generate resources, which engage their students. However, such encouragement, professional development and provision of resources must not go unguided.

In addition, structured and unstructured approaches to lesson preparation must be identified at the start of a teacher's tenure. In this respect, the approach is not to turn unstructured lesson planners into structured ones. The aim is to ensure unstructured lesson plans work well for both the students and the reputation of the college. An additional goal might be to ensure that structured lesson plans do not stifle creativity and flexibility.

## Curriculum Implications

### *Identifying "Exercise Setters"*

There are quite a few ways to identify "exercise setters". These detection methods can be direct or indirect. Direct methods tend to be limited to class observations. Indirect methods are much more broad-ranging. These include conversations with the respective teachers; examination of lesson records; curriculum schedules and lesson plans; observation of lesson preparation; students' evaluations; and peers' comments. Note that the latter set of detection methods are said to be indirect because exercise setting is a classroom teacher behaviour or skill. It can only be observed directly inside the classroom.

### **Observations**

This method of identifying classroom exercise setting behaviour offers a unique opportunity to collect experiential data. The students' learning experience becomes exposed through observations and can be independently documented. To make the best use of observations, it is important that these be conducted through a two-stage process. Initially, the observer, another teacher or the DoS, should seek to document the behaviours observed. This recording activity may capture the actions of the teacher in a succinct manner – T handed out pictures to s's; T elicited a description of some pictures etc. Subsequently, the observer should map the behaviour observed against a profile. This profile can simply be a list of statements with ratings or a scale. In my experience, I have found a short scale to be fairly useful. In this case, 0-1-2 are utilised. 0 means that the teacher does not need any help in relation to the benchmark under evaluation. 1 denotes the likelihood of requiring some assistance whereas 2 indicates a definite need for help.

## Lesson Records

Lesson records may not reveal a great deal about the teachers' classroom exercise setting or lesson delivery for a single reason. These records tend to represent only a summary of the lessons. Nonetheless, there might be some useful clues in them. For instance, there might be an oversimplification of the lesson. To overcome this oversimplification, Academic Managers may wish to turn the lesson records into lesson plans. This would involve asking the teachers to add sufficient details for relief teachers to run a lesson off the record. A sample entry must be provided. This may feature the following macro skill / knowledge area and four to five exercises.

An entry may read as follows:

Elementary – Conversational English

- Listening activities: 3,8,9,10
- Students to complete a variety of exs
- Alphabet: students to write alphabet in capitals & lower case

or

Elementary – Conversational English

- **Grammar:** Wh- and Yes/No Question forms using "BE" and aux "DO" → Qs about personal details. Pos- Neg- short answers with "be" & "do"
- **Listening/speaking:** Phone numbers: ss. Listen and write down phone numbers/ ss practice expression for requesting phone numbers
- 

Notice that the first entry denotes the likelihood of exercise setting. In this case, the class was asked to complete four listening exercises in one single lesson. Secondly, the student in the first entry "complete[d] a variety of ex[ercise]s". There appeared to have been very little task development. In contrast, the second entry, by a different teacher, provides more confidence in the teachers' ability to develop tasks.

## Lesson Preparedness

Whilst preparing lessons, teachers carry out a range of activities. These may include photocopying, scanning, cutting out, testing equipment, printing out, designing worksheets, gathering realia, skimming news

articles, to mention but a few. “Exercise setters” will often carry around the least amount of material and will, therefore, carry out the least amount of preparation.

A brief chat about the lesson and the anticipated challenges should reveal a great deal about the levels of lesson preparedness. A quick question about extension and concept checking activities may prove instructive as well.

### **Lesson Plans**

Lesson plans may be “rough drafts”. Often these will include a very broad outline of the lesson. By producing a template of a lesson plan, Academic Managers might be able to help teachers produce their own comprehensive drafts of a lesson plan. This template must be detailed with specifics of the lesson, exercises, steps for the exercises and supplementary material.

Asking existing teachers to submit a lesson plan once a month or every two months should provide an opportunity to detect exercise setting habits. In this case, this behaviour is expressed in the sequence of the exercises. For instance, the absence of scaffolding and model answers should indicate the presence of an exercise setting conduct.

### **Students’ Evaluations**

Graduating students can be asked to complete exit surveys. These surveys should have questions about their perceptions of the preparedness of the lessons and the clarity of the explanations given to the students.

A word of caution in relation to students’ surveys is important at this point. Often if students like the teacher, they are unlikely to rate them poorly in surveys. This bias may thwart the Academic Manager’s efforts to identify “exercise setters”. Therefore, it ought to be supplemented by other information sources.

### **Supporting “Exercise Setters”**

It is important to maintain that “exercise setters” are teachers who need help. Their training has not provided them with the whole set of skills and knowledge they need to generate learning in the classroom. In other words, it has not trained them to focus on the learning process. Therefore, the assistance given to “exercise setters” must aim to focus their attention on the learning process.



In fact, teachers do not require instructions in the teacher's book. They need rationales, clear activity outcomes and suggestions to re-use the outcomes of the activities. Additionally, teachers need ideas to transform an exercise into an activity or a task or project. One such suggestion or recommendation may be to always place textbook exercises in the middle of a *before – during – after* sequence.

### **Refocusing**

The task of getting a teacher to shift the focus away from tricks can prove to be challenging. Tricks or memorised steps are easy to employ. These often require no preparation. However, these have no purpose. Whilst tricks occupy students for a period of time, they are unlikely to have a clear outcome, which is highly relevant to all cohorts of students. It is, therefore, important to help “exercise setters” to focus on the actual learning process. This can be done through the tracking of academic progress. Offering and discussing academic progress figures with “exercise setters” helps to trigger innovation in them. Setting challenges such as a number of “movers” from their classes in a negotiated period of time is also certain to galvanise “exercise setters”.

This encouragement can be accompanied by frequent, informal discussions about progress in their classes.

### **Translating the Textbook**

Textbooks have not changed dramatically over the years in terms of exercise types. These, in the vast majority of cases, are not suitable for classroom use, despite being useful for individual practice. In the classroom, teachers need stimulating activities, which perform five main tasks, namely to: a) activate old knowledge, b) model language, c) provide assistance for exercise completion, d) list the answers visually, and e) concept check knowledge acquisition. Textbooks, by and large, do not offer any of these activities. Teachers do. Teachers achieve this by transforming textbook exercises into stimulating, engaging tasks, scaffolding and providing model answers.

### **Professional Development**

The aim of professional development for “exercise setters” must be to receive knowledge from an outside institution. This knowledge must be experiential. In other words, it will not be of much use to place “exercise setters” in a room to listen to a lecture from one of their peers. It is far

more useful for this group of teachers to be placed in a situation where knowledge transfer occurs in a collegial manner. Graduate Schools of Education offer a unique opportunity for knowledge transfer. In this sense, with the DoS as the placement coordinator and the “exercise setter” as the supervisor of a student-teacher, the transfer of knowledge from the student-teacher to the fully-fledged teacher can occur in collegial fashion. This placement involves a report, with which the teacher will need to be thoroughly familiar. This form focuses on the learning process, helping to refocus the teacher’s attention on how students actually learn English.

This process, if chosen, must be planned and implemented with a great deal of care. Attention must be paid to the potential for the student-teacher to pick up “bad habits”. Nonetheless, if closely monitored, this professional development process has the potential to assist “exercise setters” on their personal journey towards task development.

# CHAPTER NINE

## TEACHER MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

### Introduction

This chapter outlines the support system required for effective teacher management. In addition, Chapter 8 discusses the sorts of teacher traits not currently captured or retained for future examination due to a lack of a teacher management system.

### Case study 5: The Non-existence of Teacher Management Systems

Due to the complex nature of the job of a Director of Studies, there is a need for support systems to be made available. By support systems, I do not necessarily mean to say administrative staff members with the responsibility to handle inquiries, enrolments and commencements. I am here referring to legal teams, IT project managers for online delivered curriculum platforms (e.g. homework submission online, self-marking grammar tests etc), resource developers, exam item writers, staff management system developers etc. The very last example on the previous list is pertinent. Most, if not all, ELT centres have a student management system, which takes on a myriad of names. This IT facility helps to manage all matters related to students, from timetable allocation to attendance. The best of these student management systems allows you to send text messages to students and log counselling sessions. You can even upload medical certificates, copies of certificates issued and other documents on to the system. With such a system, information about students is literally at your fingertips. A simple click of the mouse opens up a window with a variety of information about existing (and prospective) students.

However, such electronic platforms are almost non-existent for teachers. The use of the word *almost* is deliberate and cautious because TAFE colleges and other good HR-supported centres do have access to staff management systems. Nonetheless, very few ELICOS Academic Managers

have access to a system that allows them to view teachers' personal details, upload details of the teachers' requests (lodged, pending and/or resolved), record mean/average scores for student feedback and upload copies of observation sheets. Fewer still would have access to much more sophisticated platforms, which allow you to see leave taken, classes taught in the past, warnings issued, professional conversations conducted, complaints (lodged, pending and/or resolved), performance appraisal results, counselling conducted, average years of experience teaching different streams, professional development sessions attended, teacher course review, support required, assessment of teachers' level of dependability etc.

It is not by chance that dependability sits at the end of the previous sentence. I wanted to clarify this further. Dependability is best understood by its most common synonyms, such as *reliability*, *loyalty*, *fidelity* and *soundness*. Whilst these are often used as synonyms of dependability, each term evokes a different dimension of dependability. Reliability, in this sense, means the ability to be trusted, which implies a reasonable presumption on the parties involved of the unlikelihood of unseen patterns of behaviour emerging all of a sudden, or unreasonable actions on the part of any of the parties. In other words, if you are hired by an Academic Manager who says that it is imperative that teachers be dependable, they might be alluding to the need for a trust-building relationship.

Loyalty does not differ significantly from trustworthiness. It simply adds features to it. Whilst being trustworthy is essential, it is constancy which is far more important. It is essential that teachers are able to be relied upon at all times.

● Of the aforementioned indicators of dependability, fidelity is the trickiest. It does share features with the two previous dimensions of dependability. However, fidelity adds an important facet, namely: **commitment**. Herein lies the **trick**. It is not a pledge to remain faithful to someone. It is not even a commitment to remain faithful to the college. It is a commitment to remain **truly** engaged in the delivery of quality education. Whilst this may sound clichéd, many new teachers may fail to grasp this concept of committing to quality education. Consider two examples of real teachers I have managed. For the sake of argument, the first is called Lumumba, the second Pinochet.

Lumumba is constantly looking ahead to see if there is a test scheduled for his students and plans test preparation activities accordingly. This teacher

gives students additional tasks to do and ensures that the tasks he sets are in line with the students' interests. For instance, Lumumba may ask a student who is interested in electronics to give the class an update on Wednesdays about the world of electronics. When students sit a test, Lumumba ensures that the students have been provided with sufficient information before the test (i.e. date, material covered, expected answer types) and after the test (counselling session to explain the test results and suggest remedial work). When Lumumba receives feedback from his students, he rejoices when this is positive, and addresses areas of concern when it is rather negative.

In Pinochet's case, the textbook is the Holy Grail. If it does not say to teach a certain language item, Pinochet does not teach it. When there is a test, Pinochet invigilates it and ensures the marking is strictly aligned with the course rules. Pinochet gives the students a copy of the marked test sheet. He asks the students to read his comments and see him for any queries. In Pinochet's comments, students can find their errors and correct alternatives. At the toll of the bell, Pinochet is out of the place, having diligently completed his lesson record sheet in the classroom whilst the students completed a lengthy writing task. When the completion rate comes in, Pinochet attributes the failures to the laziness of some students and the restrictions of the textbook.

Whilst the two teachers seem to be going about their normal duties in a manner that does not breach any laws or regulations, there is a marked difference between the two in terms of commitment to quality education, education which is stimulating and student-oriented. If the test was commitment to experiential learning, Pinochet would fail it. If the test was adherence to the curriculum, both teachers would pass. Lumumba's commitment would go unnoticed. Pinochet's arrogance would escape through the net. The students' boredom and burnout in Pinochet's class would be ignored. The low attendance in Pinochet's class would slip below the radar.

The real test should be the dimensions of dependability. ●f these, soundness has not been elaborated upon as yet. Dependable teachers are accurate in their discharge of their various duties. Their attention to detail is extraordinary. Think of a time when a workmate made the same mistake three times; or when someone failed to consult the guidelines, on four occasions. Moreover, consider the colleague who asked the same question over and over again. Not to mention the teacher who handed in the *Individual Learning Plan* incorrectly completed three times in a row in a

relatively short period of time. These are obviously examples of inaccuracies, which share a feature. In all cases, the error is made more than once. Honest mistakes committed once do not fall into this category because humans are fallible. If we were not error-prone, fewer plane crashes would have occurred. In brief, soundness in judgement and execution of curriculum-related duties add a dimension to dependability.

## Conclusion

Teachers contribute to curriculum development and continuous improvement in a wide range of ways. In some cases, this contribution arises out of teachers' acquired traits such as dependability. In other instances, such a critical teacher attitude as commitment to quality education makes a significant difference to course outcomes. This positive contribution ought to be captured and encouraged in a consistent manner. By so doing, ELICOS Academic Managers will be able to effectively tap into the full breadth and depth of expertise ELICOS teachers bring to the curriculum.

## Curriculum Implications

### *For Teachers*

It is common knowledge in ESL, in general, and ELICOS, in particular, that some teachers view their teaching "gig" as transient. This attitude is well justified. A large number of these teachers "in transit" may be between jobs. In some cases, these are young teachers whose first degree has not landed them a sustainable place in the workforce. In addition, ESL remunerations compare unfavourably with other professions.

These teachers need to be encouraged to become intrinsically motivated to teach English. Such inner drive to thoroughly prepare and enthusiastically deliver learning-focused lessons must be identified, discussed and rewarded.

ESL teachers will benefit immensely from a collegial approach in the management of their needs associated with the transition from "in transit" teachers to highly committed, dependable task developers.



### *For Academic Managers*

This chapter makes a strong suggestion that dependable teachers be engaged in ELICOS to deliver quality education. It also suggests that there is a relationship between course outcomes and teacher commitment to quality education.

In this sense, this teacher contribution must be identified and supported. In the first instance, the identification of teacher contribution to curriculum development and course outcomes may be conducted through interviews with prospective teachers. These interviews must have behaviour questions and hypotheticals, which establish the extent to which teachers appear to be dependable and committed to quality education. In addition, there might be scope to adopt a dependability scale.

Teacher contribution to course outcomes ought to be identified as well. This can be done through a wide range of reports. One such report may identify levels of improvement in test results by students in all classes over a period of time. An additional report may record the number of students who are able to succeed through post-English course pathways. For instance, this report may inform Academic Managers of the total number of students, who have gained entry into university.

Nonetheless, dependable teachers must not only be identified. They must also be supported. This support may include coaching, mentoring and rewarding. In my experience, the most effective way to coach and mentor ELICOS teachers is through ongoing discussion about class issues. This discussion is most effective when conducted one-to-one.



# CHAPTER TEN

## ACADEMIC MANAGERS

### Introduction

This chapter identifies and outlines three types of Academic Managers. In addition, it anticipates changes in the Academic Management of ELICOS colleges in Australia.

### **Case study 6: Formal Training of Academic Managers**

The crude reality about Directors of Studies or Academic Managers in ELICOS is that a vast majority are untrained in the most relevant fields of management (or administration) such as human resources management, organisational behaviour, organisational design, management science, financial management, strategic management or quality assurance management.

### *No Mandated Requirement for Formal Management Qualifications*

There is no official requirement (either from the new ELICOS National Standards 2012 or the old NEAS Standards 2008) in relation to the managerial qualifications of Academic Managers. Any experienced teacher (i.e. with at least five years of teaching experience) with a postgraduate degree can become an ELT centre manager. In most cases, senior teachers are catapulted to the job of managers because the incumbent has resigned at very short notice. Once these former senior teachers become Academic Managers at one college, they go on to become managers elsewhere. These heads of ELICOS programmes may succeed in their jobs. Often, they run fairly successful operations and are revered by their teachers. I recall hearing a great many stories from teachers who worked for untrained managers. The common thread amongst these anecdotes is the degree of flexibility and creativity in the teaching programme.

### *Type I Academic Managers*

The Type I Academic Manager leaves it to the teachers to manage the curriculum and relies on word of mouth. In this case, much of what is taught is decided by the class teacher. The role of the manager is seen as one of ensuring there are no hiccups. An additional feature of this managerial style is the level of close relationship between the teachers and the manager. Friday drinks are commonplace and so is leniency towards favourite teachers. These Academic Managers are Type I, in my view.

Type I managers tend to have degrees in Arts or Applied Linguistics and typically appear to be easy-going. One benefit of having a Type I DoS for teachers and students is the fact that they tend to be committed to educational goals. Commercial realities may not necessarily dissuade them from pursuing educationally sound projects with a high cost and little prospect of significant ROI (return on investment).

### *Type II Academic Managers*

An alternative management approach within the untrained cohort of Academic Managers sees the head of the programme literally “buried” in it. This state of affairs is epitomised by another adage: “jack of all trades but master of none”. I once joined a college as Academic Manager and could not believe how centralised the whole process was. The concentration of power was incredibly constraining. For instance, the exit proficiency level of the students was decided by the Academic Manager. “Movers” (students ready to move up) were defined by the Academic Manager. The Academic Manager designed class worksheets. There was a prescribed syllabus for each class. The teachers’ input was close to zilch. Delegation was non-existent. I call these Academic Managers Type II. Type II untrained, educational managers tend to be relatively highly-strung. This is the manager that would take a holiday with a heavy heart or may sit in a conference with the mobile telephone on silent right on their laps. The LCD would light up every so often.

In other words, neither manager (Type I or II) believes in a self-organising system. The adoption of written guidelines, course rules, policies, task manuals and frequent training to improve operations and standardise norms may appear foreign to these managers. Delegation and dispersion of power would not belong in their dictionaries. The risk for teachers under these two types of management is the potential damage students’ complaints

may have on their reputation. In the absence of independent performance appraisal, students' complaints can kill a great career.

### *Leadership versus Management*

I once attended a NEAS Academic Manager Conference in Sydney, hoping to further my knowledge of programme management. The first plenary session tackled the issue of leadership as opposed to management. The presenter had conducted a survey with a large sample of Academic Managers. He relayed the sort of bad news that I suspected was commonplace in the industry. Most Academic Managers, if not all, fell into the management category (as opposed to leadership). The Academic Managers were doing far too much management of operational issues, and not enough leadership. In actual fact, the Academic Managers in ELICOS were doing far less leading than a foreman on a construction site, who would get things done through his assigned workers.

Ever since that initial plenary on leadership, this topic has featured in subsequent conferences. However, the pitfall with all subsequent workshops is tragically illustrative of the state of the ELICOS industry's stagnation in management training. When the first presenter raised the issue of the lack of leadership, he was drawing from an Austrian-born business thinker turned prophet in management science – Peter Drucker. Professor Drucker, a nationalised American, worked closely with US giants such as General Motors. He was embedded in the industries he studied to fully understand their workings. By running a survey with Academic Managers, the first speaker was attempting to embed himself in the industry. However, his questionnaire had been ill-conceived and so had all the others which followed. They failed to unveil the reasons why ELICOS Academic Managers did a lot more managing than leading.

The missing ingredient in all the questionnaires was the so-called Delphi technique. It enables researchers to gain an initial qualitative appreciation of the critical issues at play in a given industry and aims to seek consensus around the relevance of these issues. Had the presenters made use of the Delphi technique, they would have unveiled Type I and II managers and advised the industry accordingly. In addition, they would have been able to unearth the restrictions imposed on Academic Managers, which prevent them from being innovative, creative and entrepreneurial.

● on the second of the two occasions when the leadership-management dichotomy was raised at a NEAS ELT Management Conference, we were

treated to visionary ideas of leaders creating transport systems (obviously an undefined type of Academic Manager as yet) rather than fixing broken cars (presumably, a Type II manager's job). Apart from the poor choice of analogy, the two workshops on management and leadership failed to revolutionise programme management in ELICOS. My subsequent appointment as Academic Manager at an ELT centre confirmed this observation. However, this is not the place to elaborate on it.

Like Drucker, who predicted the demise of the blue-collar worker, I anticipate that Type I Academic Managers will become fewer in numbers as the ELICOS industry is progressively handed over to the VET sector. I further foresee that Type II Academic Managers will soon learn to create self-organising systems. This metamorphosis will be considerably accelerated by the introduction of a legal requirement for formal management qualifications for the position of Academic Manager at ELICOS centres. This legal imperative would give rise to Type III Academic Managers.

### *Type III Academic Managers*

I was once sitting at an English Australia (EA) branch meeting of Academic Managers when I heard one Academic Manager stress that there was a need to raise broad issues. She was keen on industry-wide challenges rather than operational, college-specific challenging circumstances. I paid closer attention to the Academic Manager and learnt further about her philosophies of management. In answering one of the questions, she mentioned how Sue Blundell did a good job at networking with the "top guns" or "heavyweights" at Federal Government level. Nevertheless, the Academic Manager's calm demeanour informed me further about her views on management. She sat there at the horse-shoe shaped desk as if, for that instant, the world had stopped for us Academic Managers. As the EA state delegate, this Academic Manager was chairing the meeting outwardly unconcerned about the operational cycles at her ELT centre. Not once did she look or act concerned over an enrolment, a poor attender, a missing textbook, a test without an answer key or a sick teacher, who needed an emergency replacement. She was concerned about the leadership of her ELT centre. She had taken care of the management of the centre. Now she was worried about the leadership of the ELT centres in her state, which were members of EA. She was acting as a Type III Academic Manager. She had, most probably, institutionalised a self-organising system at her ELT centre, with clear guidelines, procedures and course rules. She must have trained her teachers to be highly dependable and made certain her momentary absence was highly unlikely to derail the

operational running of the ELT centre. There must have been very few secrets which only this Academic Manager could bring to bear on the apparently insurmountable problems at her ELT centre. She had laid it all out in easily accessible policies, procedures and norms. I bet she was travelling the great expanse of the Asian world, marketing her courses. I dared to speculate further. I imagined her working with the IT personnel to launch a new online application for her English catalogue of courses. Surely, she must have been informing the various facets of the commercial enterprise at her ELT centre as an ESL expert. Her power was not only legitimate. It was deferential and expert. She was, in my mind, the embodiment of the Type III Manager with leadership skills. She did not need to create a transport system to be acknowledged as a leader. She was already leading, in the restricted sense of a manager's job description, in ELICOS.

Somehow, I left the meeting positive that this Academic Manager would have had clear benchmarks for the performance of all the systems, teachers and students alike at her ELT centre. And as I gathered my stationery at the end of the meeting, I raised my head and took a good look around. I wondered how many of us could be said to be Type III Academic Managers. I just had no way of telling, not having previously paid much attention to anyone other than the Academic Manager I have been describing in this chapter.

## Conclusion

This chapter calls for Academic Managers to receive training in the management of educational institutions. It anticipates the demise of Type I Academic Manager and celebrates the existence of Type III Academic Managers.

The extent to which Type III Academic Managers will become a norm in ELICOS depends upon a range of circumstances. One such factor is the fact that often these managers demand (and rightly so) high incomes. Unfortunately, this demand cannot be met by a large number of privately owned ELICOS colleges in Australia. As a result, teachers are promoted to the position of Academic Managers, without any experience or training to do so.

Another factor influencing the extent to which Type III Academic Managers will increase in numbers is the regulatory context. Currently, there is no legislated requirement for Academic Managers to hold any



management-related qualifications. Whilst the teachers must hold vocational qualifications related to teaching, Academic Managers are only required to hold postgraduate qualifications in TESOL/ESL. The assumption is that these qualifications cover a range of management subjects. However, the reality contradicts this assumption. TESOL/ESL postgraduate courses, by and large, do not deal with such critical subjects as *Managing People*, *Establishing a Management System*, *Managing Budgets*, *Managing Quality*, *Managing a Value-Chain*, *Strategic Control*, *Enterprise Organisation*, *Organisational Behaviour*, *Organisational Design*, *Lean Management*, *Managing Up* or *Managing Down*.

## Curriculum Implications

### *For Private College Proprietors*

Quality education produces positive word of mouth. Happy students, who are able to achieve their post-course goals, tell other prospective students about their experience. This positive word of mouth yields revenue.

Contrary to what some proprietors may think, quality education is not only about having good teachers. It is about having both good teachers and trained Academic Managers. Trained Academic Managers create a positive learning experience for students. This experience spans a geographical space, which transcends the classroom.

In this sense, quality education is viewed as the whole college experience enjoyed by the students. Such an environment encompasses the information provided to students, the support afforded to them, classes, engagement, contribution to improvement and a sense of belonging.

Therefore, private college owners must insist on advertising Academic Management positions, recruiting highly trained Academic Managers and supporting them. This support must include macro and micromanagement targets. It ought to also include rewards. For instance, there could be a bonus scheme in place. This bonus scheme would reward the achievement of key indicators of quality education.

### *For Academic Managers*

In ELICOS, a large number of managers are exceptional teachers first and foremost. As a teacher, independence is paramount. Teachers like to work independently. This trait must be de-emphasised in a managerial position.

When catapulted to the position of Director of Studies/Academic Manager, a teacher must learn to establish a transparent model of education, design a fully substantiated curriculum, manage teachers' performance and increase course outcomes. In fact, independence must give way to collegiality.

In addition, these teachers-turned-managers must learn to generate reports, examine them and design action plans to improve outputs.

Furthermore, these young Academic Managers must invest in their own professional development. This professional development must not be limited to attending NEAS Management Conferences. It must also include the completion of either units of competency related to the management of organisations or a whole management qualification.

In those cases where the Academic Managers are Type III, they must understand the weaknesses of this management style. Some of these pitfalls may include the potential neglect of the development of micro-level curriculum support tools such as assessment instrument answer keys. In addition, Type III Academic Managers may fall into a false sense of complacency and give teachers too much independence. This independence may be positive as it removes restrictions. However, teacher independence must be guided by a code of professional conduct, which includes clear expectations of the level of lesson preparation, lesson delivery, test administration, course evaluation and cooperation with other departments.

### *For ASQA*

ASQA (Australian Skill Quality Authority) is the designated entity for the registration of ELT centres in Australia. ASQA monitors the conduct of ELT centres and responds to complaints about the quality of education at these centres by conducting a range of investigations. An application for registration as an ELT centre lodged with ASQA is examined against a set of national standards. These standards set out the requirements for operating as a registered ELT centre.

ASQA should review these national standards to ensure a national benchmark is set for the minimum vocational qualifications of Academic Managers in ELICOS. This benchmark ought to include the need to hold management-related qualifications such as a Diploma, Advanced Diploma or a degree in Business Administration, Management or a discipline closely related to Management or Organisational Design.

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## STUDENTS' OWN LIFESTYLES

### Introduction

This chapter turns the tables round. It looks closely at students' own circumstances to examine contributing factors to the perception of "not learning anything" in an English classroom.

This seventh case study illustrates four challenges ELICOS students face in Australia. These challenges are thought to impinge on the students' ability to "learn something".

### Case study 7: Issues Pertaining to Students' Own Circumstances

It is often tempting to blame the teachers, the Principal Administrators, the textbook, the Directors of Studies, the college or the weather in Melbourne for students' complaints about "not learning anything". However, I have learnt that this is a rather naïve approach. Students share a portion of the blame for "not learning anything".

### *Young Students*

I was once convinced of the commercial benefits of having two young students who were just under eighteen in our adult learners' classes. Two days into their enrolment and the micro management was beginning to prove the commercial argument wrong. I was informed, on two occasions, by their class teachers that these students' behaviour in class was very disruptive. In one episode, one of the students appeared to be admiring himself, looking at his own reflection in his mobile phone. In a different episode, the same student was asked if he had a notebook or a pen. After pretending to look for the requested stationery, the student shook his head. The female youngster was no different. In the words of the teacher, the girl seemed to be "addicted to her phone". She would insist on leaving the



mobile phone on and stepping out several times throughout a lesson to take a call. When asked once to set the mobile phone to vibrate or silent, she replied, "it's on silent." Minutes later, the telephone rang out loud.

### ***Mental Toll***

A student was referred to us by a tertiary institution, with which we had a pathway arrangement. Upon completion of his placement test, the student approached me to find out if he had been successful in securing a place in the class recommended by his university. I explained to him that he would have some difficulties getting into that particular class. He implored me and pledged to apply himself to his studies. However, he refused to enrol for longer than ten weeks. Because his results had fallen only just short of a couple of benchmarks, I decided to discuss his case with the class teacher to see what could be done to help him. The class teacher agreed to accept the student into this academic class. The teacher and I thought that it might be useful to sit down with the student and go over the potential risks arising out of his test scores and his short enrolment. We impressed upon him that stronger students than him would require almost twice the amount of time of his enrolment to bridge the gap between their current proficiency and the university benchmark. He pledged, again, to apply himself to his studies. I produced a self-study pack (or homework pack, with exercises and answers) and handed it over to the student with clear explanations and expectations of weekly work.

Within two weeks of this student's enrolment, I decided to see his teacher to touch base. To my surprise, the self-study pack had not been touched. Worst still, his attendance had been rather patchy. I thought I should let the teacher counsel the student. Three weeks into his enrolment, I approached the teacher again. This time, I was informed that the student had been leaving early every day of the week. I asked to speak to the student. He indicated to me that he had been assigned a role on a committee for a student protest, which was being organised. I asked to see the self-study pack. Only one set of exercises had been half-attempted. I asked for explanations, pointing out that the school was doing everything to help him achieve the 75% average required for an advanced certificate in English for Academic Purposes, which would help him secure a place on a master's programme. He then revealed another challenge. He had been unable to contact his relatives in a war-torn part of Africa.

### *Mental and Physical Exhaustion*

I was working my way through an academic progress report with volume after volume of test scores when a student stepped into my office. The student asked to see me for a brief moment. As always, I abandoned the report and gave the student my undivided attention. I did that with all students. They often only visited me when they desperately needed some help, despite my incessant encouragement for them to visit and talk about their experiences in Australia. Nonetheless, this student in my office did not seem to be enjoying his experience in Australia. There was no enjoyment in his face at all. He looked tired and gaunt. "You don't look well," I started, "is everything alright?" "No, Costa, I need three days." I encouraged the student to elaborate on the request for three days rather than five. He was forthcoming. Apparently, he held a job as a chef and began his shift at five o'clock in the evening. He did not get home from work until one o'clock in the morning. To have to get to school at 8:30 in the morning was starting to be a bit too much for him. "... really make you feel not focus on study ... I feel tired ... when you come to school, it really doesn't help you learn ...," he explained.

### *Untangling Themselves from Home Affairs*

I had another of those welcome interruptions on a busy Monday morning. I had just finished the orientation for new students and was entering the details of the placement of the new students when a young, female student came hesitantly into the office. I encouraged her to come forth. She had been trying to deal with a particular problem herself but had had little success. She then decided to see me and discuss her options. The problem related to her ongoing, internet-based job, which entailed producing inventory reports for a shop in her country. It also included placing orders over the internet. "I have to resolve their problems," she confided. She then pondered over the consequences of her efforts. "Sometimes when I go to school, I'm sleepy. I go to sleep at three o'clock. I catch the bus at seven o'clock in the morning." In addition, she explained how she coped with it all. "Sometimes I stop my alarm because when I go to bed in three o'clock in the morning and my alarm sings at six o'clock in the morning, I sleep just three hours." Nonetheless, she had not given up on school altogether. "At the moment, I want to go to school because I enjoy, but I'm very tired."

## Conclusion

This chapter unveils four scenarios in which some ELICOS students may find themselves. Whilst some cases breach regulations in Australia, others call for support. The chef who appears to be prioritising their job at the expense of their studies is in breach of their visa conditions. Student visa holders to Australia must focus on their studies. Part-time employment must not interfere with their studies.

In all of the other cases illustrated in this chapter, the mental toll on students arising out of their own commitments and parental responsibilities can be high. These students have very little knowledge about dealing with these circumstances. There is, therefore, a need for assistance to be provided to them.

## Curriculum Implications

### *For Principal Administrators*

The recruitment of an ELICOS student is a multi-faceted process. It must not only encompass the entry and exit points. Most importantly, it must include their experience between these two points. This experience is often marred by the issues listed in this chapter. However, it can encompass a whole range of other challenges. It is, therefore, the job of the Principal Administrator to assist the Academic Manager in the identification of these challenges and the provision of adequate support through Student Services.

In this respect, the Principal Administrator must ensure a well-trained team of Student Service Officers are available to counsel, accompany and report on students facing challenges both within Australia and abroad.

In this respect, when war breaks out in a part of the world, the Principal Administrator ought to identify any students who might be affected by this event. These students ought to be provided with support, which may include introducing them to consular assistance in Australia.

Furthermore, it is essential that Principal Administrators understand the concept of *student experience*. *Student experience* is a notion, which has a range of dimensions such as social, educational, personal and professional. Because the educational dimension occupies a large portion of *student experience*, it tends to be hierarchically higher than all other dimensions.

For this reason, it tends to define students' social integration, personal development and professional participation. This understanding must guide the conduct of Principal Administrators in assisting Academic Managers to provide the best possible *student experience* to the cohort of students the institution has worked so hard to recruit.

### ***For Education Agents***

Education agents are often the first port of call for prospective ELICOS students. These agents provide a wide range of course information to prospective students. However, in some cases, this information is limited to course details. It does not include support services, industry reputation, student experience indicators, management information or course outcome track records. In addition, the assistance rendered to students tends to decline immediately after the enrolment. The assumption in this withdrawal of support from education agents can be construed to represent a duality of trust in the ELT centre systems and a redirection of resources to pre-enrolment recruitments. However, sometimes, the former fails to materialise. The ELT centre may not gather sufficient information about *student experience* to act proactively.

Education agents must, therefore, conduct regular surveys with enrolled students about their *student experience*. The results of these surveys must be shared with the Principal Administrators at ELT centres. Furthermore, education agents must organise national events and establish a *student experience scale*. This scale should rank ELT centres on the extent to which their Student Services provide support to ELICOS students to realise their professional goals, grow personally and integrate in the wider Australian society.

### ***For teachers***

Teachers play an important role in the lives of ELICOS students. They are mentors and sources of information. In addition, teachers shape *student experience*. However, teachers tend to feel limited in the extent to which they can assist overseas students. It is not surprising, therefore, that some ELT centres are beginning to employ specialists in student support. These specialists ought to be increased in numbers. More personnel need to be trained in the understanding and support of *student experience*.

Specialist student support officers must work closely together with teachers to develop student engagement models. These models should help

students break their silence. These should encourage students to come forth with concerns and issues.

Culturally preconceived ideas must be understood and examined as a potential impediment to openness. These preconceptions may inhibit the provision of services. That is to say, unless students explicitly express their concerns, teachers may not be able to sound the alarm for support. By the same token, unless engagement models are put in place, students may never feel that they have an opportunity to talk about their *student experience*.

●ne facet of a *student experience engagement model* is the provision of opportunities for private one-to-one meetings between students and teachers. Another feature is the completion of class reports on a regular basis. These reports must include information about the private sessions. In addition, such reports should examine attendance trends per student. When used as a primary source of information for student support, the reports must be followed up.

# CHAPTER TWELVE

## THE ESL TEACHER PROFILE

### Introduction

This chapter explores the link between ESL teacher profiles and the student perception of “not learning anything”. In this case study, this conception is represented by scores on a 4-point student survey scale.

### Case study 8: ESL teacher profile

To synthesise the information about teachers and link teacher profiles to students’ complaints, I rated the teachers along a 0 - 10 continuum, based on the extent to which I thought they adopted an exercise setting or a task developing lesson delivery style. I then referred to their résumés to extract information for comparison purposes. I wished to compare highly rated teachers with poorly rated ones. In addition, I looked closely at the teachers’ first degree. I was seeking to resolve a puzzle raised in a conversation I had held with one of the teachers. When I first discussed the idea of writing a book about TESOL, one of the teachers (who held a Bachelor of Education degree) politely attempted to dissuade me from it. She argued that “we [were] so sick of method.” She went on to say that, “when we went to school, all we did was method.” This discussion with a holder of a Bachelor of Education degree made me pay close attention to the teachers’ first degree. I wondered if it explained the differences between teachers with scores close to 0 and those close to 10.

My initial attempt to synthesise the information about teachers in their résumés proved complicated and convoluted. For instance, I developed the table below. However, there were too many categories (15, in fact) and the boundaries between these categories were rather blurry in some cases.



**Table 12. 1 Categories of Information about ESL Teachers**

NATIONALITY	AGE	DEGREE	ESL	ESL in DEGREE	MASTER	TAA TAE	EXPRNC in YEARS	EMPLOYM TYPE	TYPES OF SS TAUGHT	EXPRNC IN CNTRS	EXPRNC CLASSES	NON-ESL EXPRNC	LANG SPOKEN	SKILL SETS
Australian	40	BA	CELTA	No	No	TAA	11	Casual	GE IELTS	Japan SKorea	GE Elementary	Sales Representative	English Japanese	Administrative Organizational

I then refined the information in the résumés to only seven main categories, namely: age, first degree, years of experience, countries of experience, courses previously taught, second language and vocation. These variables are shown in Table 12.2 below.

**Table 12. 2 ESL Teacher Profile**

AGE	QUALS	EXPERIENCE			OTHER LGS	OTHER SKILLS
		Years	Countries	Courses		
29-42	BA – 7 B.Ed -1 Grad.Dip.Edu – 1 Dip.Edu – 2 CELTA – 8 TAA – 3	6.8 avrg	Australia England Spain Japan Taiwan New Caledonia	GE IELTS CEVEFS Bus.Eng. FCE CAE EAP OET TOEIC TOEFL HSP ESL	Hungarian German Polish Spanish Italian French Greek	Administration Editorial Sales Fashion Singing VET Life Crisis Art



Subsequently, I identified eight teachers whose students' feedback I had gathered. I documented the students' feedback by giving graduate students a feedback form to complete. This form had ten positively worded statements about their lessons. For instance, one such statement read, *lessons are well prepared*.

These statements are listed below in Table 12.3. The details of the teacher have been removed to protect their identity. Accordingly, I defined a research question to guide my efforts in understanding the link between a teacher's profile and the phenomenon of "not learning anything". This question was: *which teacher trait best explains the existence of the student perception of learning or making progress?*

**Table 12.3 Students' Appraisals of Teachers' Performances**

Student	lessons are well prepared	classes have a variety of media	lessons are very clear	I receive very clear explanations	I understand what to do in all tests	I get very clear answers to my questions	I feel that I'm treated fairly	I have enjoyed being in this class	I have learnt a lot	My English has improved
1	3	1	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3
2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	2	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3
6	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3
7	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
8	2	4	3	3	4	2	4	3	2	2
9	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3
10	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
11	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3
12	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
13	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
14	3	2	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
15	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
16	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	3
17	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
18	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Avg	3.18	3.277	3.45	3.45	3.45	3.18	3.45	3.45	3.36	3.18

In this case, a rate of 4 indicated the highest amount of agreement with this statement. 1 indicated the strongest amount of disagreement. The values at the very bottom of Table 12.3 represent averages. The values for the teachers examined in this chapter can be found in Appendix B.

In the small sample of eight teachers, the following scores were obtained:

**Table 12. 4 Graduate Student Survey Average Scores**

Extent of Agreement	Score
3.18	1
3.25	2
3.66	3
3.77	4
3.90	5
4	6

To establish the relationship between students' satisfaction levels and teachers' profiles, I recorded the traits and experience details for eight teachers along with their students' appraisal of the extent of their agreement with the following statement: *my English has improved*. Furthermore, for each feature (or category) of the teachers' profiles (e.g. age, first degree etc.), I defined ranking scores to group the information in the teachers' résumés. These scores are described below in tables 12.5 to 12.12. In those cases where a teacher's experience merited the allocation of two scores on a single category (e.g. age), the higher of the two scores was awarded. This rule became relevant in terms of double degrees and teaching experiences in various streams.

I then entered the ranking scores into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), version 21 and ran frequency counts, cross-tabulation and correlation analyses.

The ranking scores are further explained in the sections below.

### *Age*

The ages were estimated from the year of their first degree. A starting age was assumed for all teachers. This was determined to be eighteen. In other words, it was assumed that all teachers had started their first degree at the age of eighteen. The number of years which separated the completion of

the degree and 2011 (when this chapter was first drafted) was added to make 21 (18 plus 3) to indicate the approximate age of the teachers (Table 12.5). For instance, someone who completed their first degree in 1995 was assumed to be 21 in that year. This teacher in 2011 was assumed to be aged 37. Whilst this estimate may not be highly accurate, it is sufficiently intuitive to assist in the understanding of the impact of teachers' profiles on students' perceptions of academic progress. Admittedly, not all degrees run for three years. Just as important, not all teachers start university immediately after completing High School, at the age of eighteen. However, the degree of accuracy of this assumption does not need to be very high as it is only used in this chapter as a tool for exploring the potential effect of teachers' traits upon students' perception of "learning something". In other words, any relationship herein established may only be viewed as indicative rather than predictive or prescriptive.

In addition, the age groups were organised in such an intuitive order that the youngest, most energetic and creative teachers were awarded the highest score.

**Table 12.5 Teachers' Age Groups**

Age range	Score
46-50	1
41-45	2
36-40	3
30-35	4
20-29	5

### *First Degree*

The relevance of the teachers' first degree to English teaching determined the score allocated to it (i.e. the first degree) (Table 12.6). The assumption underpinning this decision was the high likelihood of teaching degrees (as opposed to technical degrees such as Engineering) offering the most benefit to ESL teachers. These teaching degrees expose teachers to learning-focused educational concepts, which equip them with knowledge of differentiated instruction, task developing delivery styles and a philosophy of learning. This benefit was assumed not to exist in other degrees. For instance, it was not expected that a degree in Engineering would be as closely related to ESL teaching as a degree in Education.

**Table 12. 6 Teachers' First Degrees**

Bachelor's Degree	Score
Science	1
Technology	2
Arts	3
Arts (with TESOL Method)	4
Education	5

### *Experience in other Countries*

This feature had a single criterion – accreditation mechanisms. It was assumed that English teaching differed across countries based on the extent to which it is subject to an accreditation scheme (Table 12.7). This accreditation would require a minimum TESOL qualification along with a degree. However, such an accreditation scheme is not commonplace in many countries, including China, South Korea, Russia, Poland and Japan. It is, nonetheless, customary in a few countries such as Australia, New Zealand and England.

**Table 12. 7 Teachers' Experience in Countries**

Countries	Score
China	1
Taiwan	2
Europe	3
England/New Zealand	4
Australia	5

### *Courses Taught*

The criterion for the allocation of scores in the case of courses previously taught by ESL teachers was not dissimilar to the previous one for *country of experience*. In this case, the extent to which the course stream (i.e. General English, IELTS Preparation etc.) was perceived to be structured determined its classification. For instance, the Cambridge Examination courses, due to their high standards and quality organisational framework,

received the highest score. A second criterion for classifying English courses was the extent to which the course was outcome-oriented. In this sense, IELTS scored high, although its preparation is not as well-structured as its examination (Table 12.8). For this reason (i.e. lack of an organisational framework for IELTS Preparation), the Cambridge Examinations were awarded a higher score than IELTS. For instance, the IELTS Preparation textbooks, by and large, are not outcome-oriented. In these cases, unlike the Cambridge Examination series, there is no mapping of the textbook with an IELTS score band.

**Table 12. 8 Course Stream Taught by ESL Teachers**

Countries	Score
General English	1
CSWE	2
Business English	3
IELTS/EAP	4
KET/PET/FCE/CAE	5

Note: CSWE stands for Certificate

In Spoken and Written English

### *Languages Spoken by the Teacher*

This classification utilised the concept of “language distance” as a guide. “Language distance”, in this case, was deemed to represent the perceived morphological differences between languages. For instance, languages with closely related alphabets, word forms and cognates were deemed to be fairly similar. No exhaustive examination was conducted to establish these similarities. A visual examination of the scripts of different languages spoken by the ESL teachers under investigation in this chapter sufficed. A clear attempt was made to steer clear of “contrastive analyses”.

Therefore, the chapter does not make any attempt to claim a new taxonomy of language differences. It simply utilises an intuitive tool to make sense of the concept of “not learning anything” through the profile of the second language choice of English teachers. To this end, the languages perceived to be the farthest from English were given the highest score (Table 12.9). The rationale for this allocation is the likelihood of there being a much greater in-depth understanding and appreciation of the challenges in learning a language which is linguistically distant from

English than one which shares an alphabet and cognates with it. In the resulting grouping or families of languages, Dutch, English and German fell under Germanic Languages. Polish and Russian were grouped under Uralic languages. Spanish and French fell under Romance languages.

**Table 12. 9 Languages Spoken by the Teachers**

Language Groups	Score
English only	1
Germanic Languages	2
Romance Languages	3
Uralic Languages	4
Asian Languages	5

### *Other Vocations*

This might have been the most challenging criterion to operationalise. In other words, grouping teachers' other talents or aptitudes in a descending order proved rather challenging. No vocation appeared immediately related to English teaching (Table 12.10). For instance, how could *writing* be related to a teacher's ability to generate student satisfaction? Nevertheless, a criterion emerged, following detailed consideration, which seemed plausible – outcome orientation. In essence, those vocations which could be said to be highly driven by goals and outcomes were rated the highest for a single reason, that is, goal orientation was seen to aid the achievement of students' academic progress and study goals. In this sense, *sports* rated the highest. *Writing* was rated the lowest for it not being necessarily as result-oriented as *sports*.

**Table 12. 10 Teachers' Vocations**

Vocation	Score
Writer	1
Counsellor	2
Manager	3
Fashion Designer	4
Sports Aficionado	5



### *TESOL Qualifications*

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is a thriving industry, with a range of associations which come under a single institutional umbrella in Australia – i.e. ACTA or the Australian Council of TESOL Associations. Whilst this council sets out broad standards for *accomplished TESOL teachers*, the current publication looks specifically at the information presented in a résumé related to the qualifications of TESOL practitioners. In this case, the qualifications of relevance refer specifically to ESL formal instruction. It does not refer to the development of disposition (posture/demeanour), understanding (knowledge) and skills (aptitudes) as ACTA does. In this respect, the highest-scored qualification was CELTA A for the fact that recipients of the CELTA A award are deemed to be independent teachers. Essentially, the level of independence (a dimension of dependability) served as a guiding criterion for the ranking of the TESOL qualifications (Table 12.11).

**Table 12. 11 Teachers' TESOL Qualifications**

TESOL Qualifications	Score
EFL Certificate	1
Certificate IV in TESOL	2
CELTApass/G.Cert.TESOL	3
CELTA B/G.D.Ed.TESOL	4
CELTA A/B.Arts (TESOL)	5

### *Skill set*

In some instances, the skills were explicitly indicated in the résumés. In other cases, these had to be inferred. For instance, an English teacher whose experience had included work on construction sites was deemed to have highly developed practical skills.

Once identified, the skills were grouped into seven categories, namely: artistic (writers, singers, editors), professional (flight attendants, engineers, fashion designers), leadership (coordinators, team leaders, instructors), administrative (administrators, office personnel), technical (carpenters, mechanics), entrepreneurial (college owners, salesmen) and practical (construction workers, labourers). The values assigned to these categories ranged from 1 for artistic to 7 for practical. These scores were based on a scale. Underpinning this measure or scale was the continuum from a

global (less outcome-oriented) to a concrete (outcome-based) orientation of the skill areas identified in the teachers' résumés. For instance, a person with practical, manual skills honed in the construction industry, which is highly dependent on project outcomes, received the highest score of 7 (Table 12.12).

**Table 12. 12 Categories of Skill Sets**

Descriptions in Résumés	Categories of Skill Sets	Scores
Singers, writers, dancers	ARTISTIC	1
Engineers, teachers, lawyers	PROFESSIONAL	2
Coordinators, team leaders	LEADERSHIP	3
Office administrators	ADMINISTRATIVE	4
Carpenters, mechanics	TECHNICAL	5
Salesmen, college owners	ENTREPRENEURIAL	6
Landscapers, labourers, soldiers	MANUAL, PRACTICAL	7

### *Statistical Profile of ESL Teachers*

The ages of the teachers surveyed by this chapter fell into four ranges – a) 20-29, b) 30-35, c) 36-40 and d) 41-45 (Table 12.13). An equal number of teachers fell into each one of these ranges, indicating a wide spread of ages within the teaching profession. In other words, no particular age range seemed to be over or under-represented.

**Table 12. 13 Teachers' Age Distribution**

	N	Percent
41-45	2	25.0
36-40	2	25.0
30-35	2	25.0
20-29	2	25.0
Total	8	100.0

The teachers in this small sample of eight were evenly distributed across both ages and TESOL qualifications, with two in each range (Table 12.14). Whilst the holders of EFL certificates appeared to be mostly in their early to mid-thirties, the highest scorers in CELTA were in their early to mid-forties.

**Table 12. 14 Teachers' Age by Qualification**

	TESOLQUAL				Total
	EFL Certificate	CELTA Pass	CELTA B	CELTA A	
	AGE				
41-45	0	0	1	1	2
36-40	1	1	0	0	2
30-35	1	0	0	1	2
20-29	0	1	1	0	2
Total	2	2	2	2	8

The main statement adopted in this analysis came from the graduate student survey – i.e. *my English has improved*. When the scores for this statement for all eight teachers were tallied up (Table 12.15), it transpired that 3.66 was the most common one. In other words, our students seemed to be inclined to agree slightly rather than strongly with the statement. In fact, just under 40% (37.5%) of the scores fell within this 3.66 score band. A quarter of the evaluations fell into the 3.77 (out of 4) category. Only a tad over 10% (12.5%) strongly agreed with the statement related to their English improvement.

**Table 12. 15 Students' Extent of Agreement with English Improvement**

Extent of Agreement	N	Percent
3.25	1	12.5
3.66	3	37.5
3	1	12.5
3.77	2	25.0
4	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0

Notes: Extent of Agreement 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-agree and 4-strongly agree

Over half of the teachers (62.5%) held a Bachelor of Arts degree (Table 12.16). The other undergraduate qualifications seemed to be evenly represented. Importantly, over three quarters (87.5%) of the teachers held an undergraduate qualification other than a Bachelor of Education.

**Table 12. 16 Teachers' Degree Distribution**

Degree	N	Percent
Bachelor of Technology	1	12.5
Bachelor of Arts	5	62.5
Bachelor of Arts (TESOL)	1	12.5
Bachelor of Education	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0

In terms of years of experience, there appeared to be very few long-serving staff members (Table 12.17). In actual fact, more teachers appeared to have been teaching for a short period of time. Essentially, a quarter (25%) of the teachers had been teaching for two years whereas only 12.5% had been teaching for thirteen years. In fact, half of the teachers (50%) had been in the industry for six years or less.

**Table 12. 17 Teachers' Experience Distribution**

Experience (years)	N	Percent
2	2	25.0
5	1	12.5
6	1	12.5
7	1	12.5
9	1	12.5
11	1	12.5
13	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0

As for teaching experience, three quarters (75%) of the teachers had taught GE and IELTS (Table 12.18). Only a quarter had taught Cambridge Exam classes of FCE or CAE.

**Table 12. 18 Teachers' Teaching Experience Distribution by Course**

Course Taught	N	Percent
GE	2	25.0
IELTS	4	50.0
FCE or CAE	2	25.0
Total	8	100.0

In terms of other languages spoken by ESL teachers, Romance languages seemed to be the most favoured (Table 12.19). Half of the teachers spoke a Romance language whilst only a quarter spoke Uralic languages. In contrast, only English appeared to be an isolated case.

**Table 12. 19 Teachers' Distribution by Language Spoken**

Language Spoken	N	Percent
English only	1	12.5
Other Germanic	1	12.5
Uralic Languages	2	25.0
Romance Languages	4	50.0
Total	8	100.0

Whilst the analyses of the profile of the teachers provided insightful information about their age, teaching experience and preferred second language, they unveiled very little information relevant to the phenomenon of “not learning anything”. Quite obviously, a different examination was required to unearth pertinent details about the relationship between learning English and ESL teachers' profiles. Learning, in this case, was represented by the statement, *my English has improved*. This statement was rated by graduating students on a scale of 1 to 4, with strongly disagree (1) at one end and strongly agree (4) at the other end. When cross-tabulated with the teachers' profiles, the students' ratings proved revealing. In this sense, a research question guided the examination, namely: *out of all the teachers in the sample, who was most likely to receive a high score for English improvement?*

The strongest perceptions of improvement in English appeared to originate mostly from students in the classes of those teachers aged in their mid-thirties to mid-forties (Table 12.20). However, the highest student

endorsement (4), was for a teacher aged between 20 and 29. Nonetheless, the even distribution of ratings across the age groups did not seem to indicate a predominant age range.

**Table 12. 20 Students' Improvement as a function of Teachers' Ages**

	AGE				Total
	41-45	36-40	30-35	20-29	
3.25	0	1	0	0	1
3.66	1	0	2	0	3
ENGLISH IMPROV 3	0	0	0	1	1
3.77	1	1	0	0	2
4	0	0	0	1	1
Total	2	2	2	2	8

As for the undergraduate degree of the teachers, the spread of ratings appeared fairly clear in two respects. On the one hand, the holders of a Bachelor of Arts degree seemed to have received the greatest number of agreement ratings, with a total of five out of the eight ratings (Table 12.21). On the other hand, one of the three scores obtained by this group of teachers was the second highest on the English improvement scale. The exception to this rule was the single highest score of four given to a holder of a Bachelor of Education. In actual fact, it would appear that whilst the Bachelor of Arts teachers may have the greatest number of students' agreement responses, the Bachelor of Education teacher seemed to have the strongest amount of agreement. In other words, the strength in the agreement of those students in classes taught by the holder of a Bachelor of Education is higher than any other qualification. Essentially, this degree may be associated with the highest perception of improvement whereas the Bachelor of Arts may be related to the largest number of cases of perception of improvement.

**Table 12.21 Students' Improvement as a function of Teachers' First Degree**

		FIRSTDEGR				Total
		Bachelor of Technology	Bachelor of Arts	Bachelor of Arts (TESOL)	Bachelor of Education	
ENGINPROV	3.25	0	1	0	0	1
	3.66	1	2	0	0	3
	3	0	0	1	0	1
	3.77	0	2	0	0	2
	4	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>		1	5	1	1	<b>8</b>

Much like the age-related spread above, teaching experience did not seem to be indicative of students' perceptions of improvement in English language learning (Table 12.22). The exception in this respect referred to the low end of the experience continuum. In this case, teachers with less than six years of teaching experience received the highest rating for English improvement.

**Table 12. 21 Students' Improvement as a function of Teachers' Teaching Experience**

		EXPERIENCE (Years)							Total
		2	5	6	7	9	11	13	
ENGINPROV	3.25	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	3.66	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	3
	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	3.77	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>		2	1	1	1	1	1	1	<b>8</b>

Teachers' teaching experience in Australia seemed to be a positive factor in students' perception of improvement in English (Table 12.23). Six out of eight scores fell into this category, with three out of the six scores grouped within the 3.77-4.00 range.



**Table 12. 22 Students' Improvement as a function of Teachers' Country of Teaching Experience**

		<i>Experience</i>		Total
		Europe	Australia	
ENGINPROV	3.25	1	0	1
	3.66	1	2	3
	3	0	1	1
	3.77	0	2	2
	4	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>

In terms of the type of classes taught in the past, very little conclusive information emerged (Table 12.24). Nonetheless, a moderate indication could be detected within those who had taught IELTS. In this case, more scores fell into the IELTS category than any other category. Within these IELTS rates, one fell within the strongly agree category.

**Table 12. 23 Students' Improvement as a function of Courses Taught by Teachers**

		<i>Courses Taught</i>			Total
		GE	IELTS	FCE or CAE	
ENGINPROV	3.25	0	1	0	1
	3.66	0	2	1	3
	3	1	0	0	1
	3.77	1	0	1	2
	4	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>

More teachers with knowledge of Romance languages than any other language family appeared to have scored a positive rating (Table 12.25), with three of these ratings falling within the 3.77 – 4.00 range. Of the other languages, speakers of Uralic languages seemed to be the second highest rated teachers, with two ratings within the positive ratings (at or above 3).

**Table 12. 24 Students' Improvement as a function of Teachers' Second Language**

	Language Spoken				Total
	English only	Other Germanic	Uralic Languages	Romance Languages	
3.25	1	0	0	0	1
3.66	0	1	1	1	3
3	0	0	1	0	1
3.77	0	0	0	2	2
4	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>

Other scores are reported in Appendix C as the treatment of the teachers' traits in this chapter is not intended to be exhaustive. Suffice to say that the following traits proved rather worthy of further investigation: a) first degree, b) country of experience, c) second language and d) vocation. These factors appeared to positively correlate with students' perceptions of improvement in English. In this respect, the more closely a first degree (or any subsequent qualification) related to teaching, the higher the perception of English improvement there might be in the minds of the students. The same can be said for country of teaching experience. The more it (the country) mirrors the regulated nature of the Australian educational system, the higher the likelihood of positive perception in terms of academic progress from the perspective of a student of English. Likewise, the greater the language distance between the second language spoken by the teacher and English, the higher the chances of increased perception of language acquisition on the part of the students. Finally, the more outcome-oriented the teachers' main vocations, the higher the likelihood of their contributing to increased levels of perception of improvement in English language acquisition (Table C.10).

Nonetheless, experience, skill set and courses taught may either have no effect or be negatively correlated with the perception of language learning. These links will need to be further investigated with a much larger sample of teachers' data.

## Conclusion

This chapter has sought to provide a taxonomy of the main traits of English teachers. These traits can be gleaned from any résumé and/or a cover letter for a job application. Of the information obtained from the review of eight résumés, two pieces warrant further reflection. Firstly, years of teaching experience may not be a factor in learning maximisation. On the contrary, there might be a rather negative relationship between the length of teaching experience and students' perception of learning or gains in learning acquisition. This is a rather surprising finding, which should merit further examination.

Secondly, nearly 90% of ESL/ELICOS teachers do not appear to hold a first degree related to teaching. When compared to the suspected significant relationship between first degree and students' positive perception of learning English, this figure of almost 90% can be rather disturbing. This gap in the qualifications of ESL teachers may represent the absence of familiarisation with such essential, educational concepts as zone of proximal development, scaffolding, modelling, theories of language learning (e.g. the cognitive and behavioural perspectives), educational psychology or second language acquisition methodologies (e.g. Communicative Language Teaching, Functional-Notional Syllabus, Suggestopedia, The Silent Way, Total Response etc.). Nonetheless, this chapter presents very positive news too. The fact that ESL/ELICOS teachers appear to be taking up second languages, which can be rather morphologically distant from English, is a good sign. Second languages which do not resemble English in many respects have been found by the examinations in this chapter to correlate positively with enhanced perceptions of language learning by English students. This link between language distance and students' perception of learning may be fairly easily explained. The greater the difficulty in learning a second language, the more you are likely to appreciate the need to "chew on" when you teach English. In other words, teachers who have learnt a language which is dissimilar to English will tend to scaffold and model a lot more than those teachers who have learnt a language which has a great deal of features in common with English.

Whilst the analyses in this chapter were conducted with a very small sample of teachers' details, they proved rather insightful and should merit further investigation. In this sense, it would be useful for the ELICOS industry to identify strengths and weaknesses in teachers' profiles and estimate their impact on teachers' abilities to maximise English language

learning. This identification of aspects of the teachers' traits, knowledge, experience and vocations may guide recognition (i.e. praise, remuneration and promotion) and professional development efforts.

Most importantly, the small sample size of only eight teachers should preclude the findings in this chapter from being generalised to the entire ELICOS industry. Nonetheless, the exercise undertaken in this chapter should help future researchers to develop new discoveries and gain insights into the usefulness of teacher skills, vocations, languages spoken and other traits of language learning. In those cases where a trait is found to cause a teacher to be inclined to be an "exercise setter", the institution ought to plan professional development accordingly.

## Curriculum Implications

The results in this chapter are rather tentative. Therefore, caution must be exercised in adopting the conclusions from this chapter. Nevertheless, some recommendations can be drawn from the contents of this chapter.

### *For Academic Managers*

Academic Managers may wish to draw up taxonomies similar to the one presented in this article to examine the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching staff. This exercise of understanding the knowledge base within the existing teaching staff should result in praise and/or recognition and focused professional development programmes. For instance, the realisation that there are no teachers with pre-service degrees in Education should trigger a professional development programme, which focuses on TESOL methodology. Whilst graduates from Bachelor of Education degrees are "drilled" on methods, other graduates, unfortunately, are not. Therefore, it is important that this knowledge of learning principles and teaching methodologies be introduced to ELICOS staffrooms.

Secondly, young, energetic teachers with little experience but a sports orientation must be given a chance to enter the industry. These may prove to be your best chance to increase the number of students agreeing strongly to having made academic progress in English in your institution. Many young graduates with Certificate IV in TESOL are being denied entry into the ESL/ELICOS industry unjustly because of the myth that more experience means greater student satisfaction. This seems to be just that – a myth. Young teachers need to be supported and encouraged to enter the TESOL profession.

### *For Experienced Teachers*

There is a need for experienced teachers to reinvent themselves. Innovate and find new challenges. One such challenge might be the acquisition of a new language. If this option is chosen, be certain to select a language, which is not similar to English. This dissimilarity may range from the alphabet to the dependency on tones. An alternative option is to take up a competitive sport such as squash. Being somewhat competitive seems to help view learning more objectively rather than globally. By this dichotomy, I mean those teachers who use task-based learning without being able to identify a language input item may be deemed to have a global view of learning. Those who are able to have a precise target language aspect to teach every hour or every half an hour are said to have an objective perspective of learning English. It is worth noting that these definitions do not condemn the idea of holism in language teaching. Holism is recognised as a positive principle in language acquisition. However, it ought not to be used at the expense of clarity in language learning. Students must be clear as to what pattern of language input they are expected to master at a given point in a lesson.

### *For Novice Teachers*

This chapter seems to suggest that your energy, sports orientation and acquisition of a second language are far more important than other pieces of information you may add to your résumé. It is, therefore, important that you write your résumé and cover letter around the links between these positive traits and students' perceptions of learning. Your focus on results is an asset in language learning and must stand out in your application for an ESL/ELICOS job.

# CHAPTER THIRTEEN

## STUDENTS' PROFICIENCY LEVELS

### Introduction

This chapter examines disparities in ELICOS students' English language proficiency. To understand these differences, scatter charts are used in this chapter.

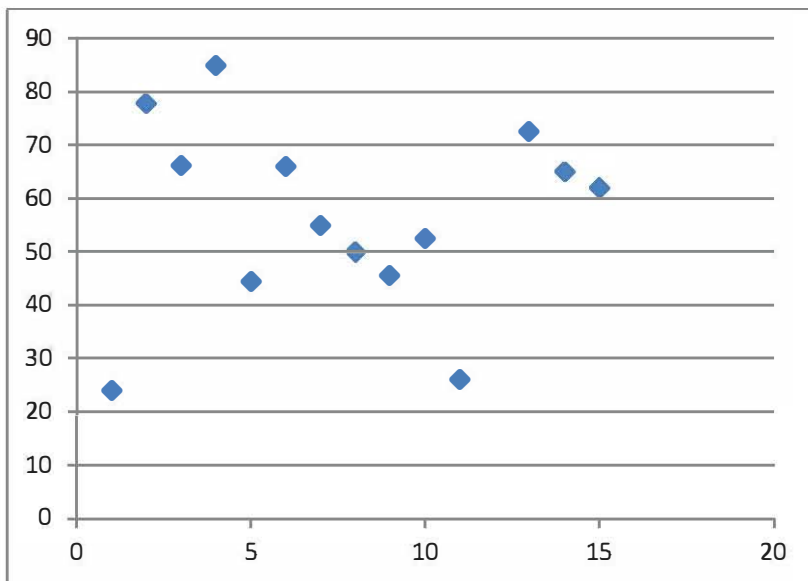
### Case study 9: Disparities in proficiency

Classes can be disparate in many respects – age, learning preference, cultural background, previous learning experience etc. However, the disparity under examination in this chapter refers to proficiency in English. In other words, the differences in the ability to use and understand English within a cohort of students are analysed in this chapter.

### *Using Scatter Charts*

This disparity in proficiency can be monitored with the aid of scatter charts. Scatter charts can be accessed through Microsoft Excel. Figure 13.1 shows a sample scatter chart, with grammar scores for fourteen students. In this case, the disparity is wide. The grammatical proficiency level in this class is scattered across seven bands or score ranges from 80-90 to 20-30.

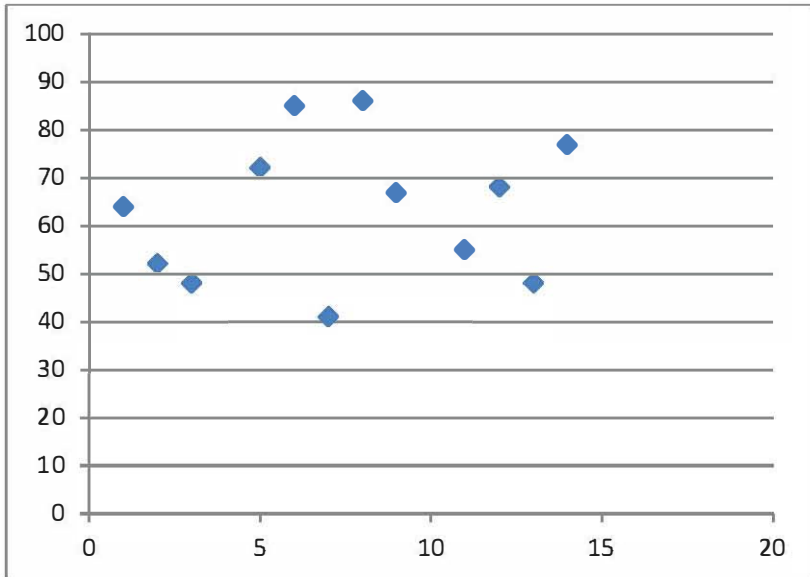
Figure 13. 1 Scatter Chart for Grammar Proficiency in a Disparate English Class



A less disparate class is shown in Figure 13.2 In this case, the scores seem to cluster around the middle bands of 50-60 and 60-70. Nonetheless, this is a rather heterogeneous class with the scores scattered across five bands.



Figure 13. 2 Scatter Chart for Grammar Proficiency in a Less Disparate English Class



### *Influence of a Teaching Degree*

Disparate levels or mixed-level classes pose a range of challenges to teachers, especially to those whose qualifications do not include a pre-service degree in Education. I reached this conclusion when conducting job interviews. In job interviews, I always ask behavioural questions. One of my favourite behavioural questions relates to mix-levelled classes. This question is posed to interviewees through a scenario. I describe a heterogeneous class much like the one in Figure 13.2 above. I then ask the interviewee to consider the lesson delivery implications of proficiency disparity in an English class. Like all other interview questions, I rate the answers from NI – Needs Improvement, P – On Par to E – Excellent. An excellent answer in this respect includes modifications to tasks (multi-levelled tasks e.g. Raymond Murphy grammar exercises), instructions (i.e. differentiated pace and complexity of delivery of instructions), differentiated instruction (i.e. different tasks for different ability levels), grouping (i.e. pairing up students to capitalise on their strengths), expectations (i.e. weak students may be expected to complete four out of twelve exercises only), extension activities (i.e. early finishers may be

given additional exercises to complete) etc. Instead, invariably, my interlocutors appear to limit their options to classroom management.

● On rare occasions, I am given a more comprehensive answer, which involves modifying the worksheets to suit a disparate class. ● On these occasions, I always refer to the prospective teachers' pre-service degree. Invariably, this degree is either a Diploma or a Bachelor of Education.

Nevertheless, the restrictive view of dealing with proficiency disparity, which is limited to pairing up weak with strong students, does not only affect novice teachers. It is extensive amongst more experienced teachers as well. I once was looking for evening class teachers. I had opened an evening class. Because of the slow uptake, the evening class students could not be screened too rigorously. As a result, within a few weeks of its opening, the evening class had become a mixed-level class. I discussed the pitch for the class with the class teacher.

In addition, one of my most experienced teachers asked to teach the evening class as the time would suit him. With eleven years of teaching experience, this teacher responded to my question about his style of teaching disparate levels by saying, "I'll teach to the centre. Little Joe in the back of the room will have to catch up, won't he?" I simply replied by saying, "I see." To me, the teacher's statement revealed a professional development need. I knew that there was very little point in arguing otherwise as the statement violated every rule of teaching disparate levels. In every book about mixed-level classes, the principle of pitching to the centre is advised against. Pitching to the centre is only desirable in homogenous classes. However, even in these classes of compatible proficiency levels, differentiated instruction may need to be considered as students learn at a different pace.

Another reason why I opted for silence in this instance was the fact that it had not been the first time I had encountered the belief in teaching to the centre, irrespective of the disparity in proficiency levels in class. I was walking along the hallway in a school once and bumped into one of the teachers, standing incensed outside the classroom. I asked them if all was well. The teacher raised their hands in the air and explained that they could not teach a class of Elementary students with a couple of Beginners. Feeling guilty for erring on the commercial side, I offered to help to which I received a "thank you." Before I departed, the teacher announced what they had decided to do. "I'm just going to teach to the centre," said the teacher.

### ***Frustrations Caused by Disparities in Students' Proficiency Levels***

Both these experiences helped me understand the frustrations involved in teaching disparate levels. These may include the amount of photocopying involved, the lack of control of the class, the physical exhaustion arising out of class management and the mental fatigue derived from the mental process of tracking progress on a range of separate tasks. In actual fact, I was fairly cognisant of these frustrating experiences. I once ran a workshop with over 55 literacy teachers in Sydney. Through it, I described the various roles of a teacher in a mixed-level class through the experience of an American teacher teaching under the banner of *no child should be left behind*. The female teacher in my story would set different tasks for different groups of students within the same classroom. Her students had different language proficiency levels, interests and learning preferences. She devised tasks for each language proficiency level, interest category and learning style. In some instances, she gave detailed instructions. With other groups she explained the tasks succinctly and encouraged the students to use their imagination and creativity. With some groups she offered a great deal of assistance whereas others received only positive reinforcement. The topics in the class differed as much as the proficiency levels. For every activity, she had answers prepared on overhead projector transparency sheets. To this female teacher, teaching was not her main goal. She was determined to create various zones of learning. She was focused on students' own learning experiences. The continuum in her lessons was not from control to freedom. The sequence in her lessons was from disengagement to engagement. Her students grew ever more engaged with the material throughout the lesson, maximising their chances of learning the language. Nonetheless, this was a public-school ESL teacher on a performance-based salary, teaching migrants in America. The remuneration reality with a great deal of our ELICOS teachers is different.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the concept of language disparity. It has equally outlined some frustrations and challenges arising out of the existence of disparate levels in English classes. Disparity in language levels may impinge upon a teacher's ability to help students gain a positive perception of learning. In other words, in classes of a wide range of proficiency levels, teachers whose training has not focused upon *differentiated instruction* may feel frustrated. This frustration may inhibit their ability to

perform at their best. In this case, the sense or perception, on the part of the students, of “not learning anything” in disparate classes may arise with relative ease.

## **Curriculum Implications**

### ***For Academic Managers***

It is imperative that Academic Managers develop detailed profiles of their teachers to establish the extent of their pre-service training. This profiling can be conducted with the assistance of the teachers themselves. Self-administered surveys in which teachers express their own attitude and aptitude in relation to teaching a disparate class may prove useful. In addition, Academic Managers may do well to consider placing those teachers with pre-service qualifications in Education with the most disparate of the classes. To aid in this placement, scatter charts can be used. For these charts to be of use, class scores must be recorded throughout the term. Ideally, there should be an average score for all macro skills and knowledge areas. For each one of these, at least two tests should be administered throughout the term. This way, Academic Managers can be in a good position to discern disparities in each one of the four macro skills (i.e. reading, listening, writing and speaking) and two knowledge areas (i.e. grammar and vocabulary). In this sense, it is almost meaningless to draw conclusions related to disparity on aggregate figures. In other words, if the results are grouped or averaged out, the disparity figures may prove misleading. Secondly, the results are only as good as the assessment tools. In this respect, reliable and valid tests must be used to provide an accurate reading of the time-series scores. These scores are said to be time-series because their recording occurs over the period of the term, which is either five or ten weeks long, in most instances.

### ***For Teachers***

Irrespective of an accurate placement of students, every class has a degree of disparity. This differential can expand or shrink depending on what happens inside and outside the classroom. Class activities, which help students to bridge the gap, may include interviews with weak students drafting questions and strong ones answering them. These activities may also include multi-levelled tasks such as the exercises in the Raymond Murphy grammar books. In these books, the exercises at the top of the page (i.e. 4.1) tend to be much more accessible than the exercises at the

bottom of the page (i.e. 4.7). Whilst these exercises may initially appear to reinforce the gap in proficiency in a class, closer inspection reveals a gradual progression towards a shrinking of the gap in a class. By allocating tasks which do not exceed the cognitive capacity of students, teachers help them gain confidence to tackle much more challenging exercises outside the classroom, where there is no time pressure to finish an exercise before everyone else in the class is bored. Other tasks can be given to students to complete outside the classroom. These would need to be adjusted to suit each student's proficiency level. The aim with these tasks is not to finely-tune them to the students' level. These need to be set so that students are challenged.

In addition, teachers ought to monitor the disparity in their classes. This ongoing monitoring of disparity levels should result in recommendations for "promotions". Students with exceptional performance should be promoted to higher levels. These "promotions" may also serve as incentives for "weak" students to bridge the proficiency gap.

# CHAPTER FOURTEEN

## LACK OF INFORMATION

### Introduction

This chapter examines the lack of availability of information about ELICOS as a contributing factor to the student perception of “not learning anything”.

It identifies aspects of ELICOS that new teachers may not be fully aware of.

### Case study 10: Dearth of Information about ELICOS

#### *Dearth of Information*

Once a DoS made an interesting comment about the availability of information about NEAS, the ELICOS accrediting scheme, or the designated authority up until recently. “When I started in ELICOS twelve years ago, you [as a teacher] were not told anything about NEAS. It was on a need to know basis. Now, there is even a requirement for NEAS standards to be made available to staff.” This insightful comment was followed by a challenge from another DoS. “Do they read these, though?” That question was answered in a job interview I conducted subsequently. However, I would not necessarily blame them. Often the demands placed upon their time far outstrip their capacity to cope.

In response to my question about her knowledge of the ELICOS industry in Australia, a young female ESL teacher indicated to me during the interview that there was very little insightful information about ELICOS around. She had limited experience in ESL and wished to learn further about ELICOS. This experience, which had been mostly casual and overseas, spanned a thirteen-month period. By my calculations, this young female teacher had completed some 849 hours of classroom teaching and an unspecified number of private tutoring hours. The teacher had completed Certificate IV in TESOL and an undergraduate degree. Completed at Teach



International Pty Ltd in Melbourne, the TESOL qualification had included over 120 hours of course contact hours plus a six-hour supervised practical component. It also included ten hours of “observational teaching”. I took this “observational teaching” to mean a “passive”, inductive process of watching someone teach. The course was described in the résumé as being “in-depth”. This “in-depth” TESOL course included no less than 33 units. I was intrigued by the description of the course. I decided to look it up. My first search words were, *Certificate IV in TESOL*. The top hits included, www.seek.com, the University of Adelaide and Wikipedia. www.seek.com described the course as short in duration and delivered in two modes – distance learning and in class. As I delved further into this posting, I became aware of another feature of the description of the course – its sales pitch. It was being sold as a pathway to freedom (travelling) and wealth (private tutoring). The duration of the course was rather confusing. It was said to be a standard 60 hours in length. However, the course was said to run over 29 weeks, with 20 hours a week, which would make it a 580-hour course or five times longer than NEAS’ required 100 contact hours. In other words, the course through www.seek.com was far from short.

I looked elsewhere for clarity. I decided to turn to *Teach International Pty Ltd*, from where the prospective, young female teacher had obtained her Certificate IV in TESOL. This Registered Training Organisation (RTO) seemed to be directing its graduates overseas rather than to Australia. It claimed to know about the existence of a skill, which people “fluent [in English] with minimum accent and native speakers possessed,” which simply needed harnessing. It suggested that this very skill could be turned into a “passport for travel and adventure.” Now, any young, thrill-seeking person would love that – travel and adventure. The practical component of this course was said to be with “real English students.” It was comforting to learn that Teach International Pty Ltd was not in the business of faking students. I then picked up the telephone and spoke to a lovely lady at Teach International Pty Ltd. I was interested in the description of the students. I learnt that the practicum at this training institution was conducted at a community centre with adult migrant students, whose tuition was free.

I came away from this search experience with two thoughts. On the one hand, both seek.com and Teach International Pty Ltd did a great job at selling Certificate IV in TESOL. On the other hand, I suspected that these Certificate IV RTOs and CELTA colleges were the only places where sufficient information was available for prospective teachers. On the webpage of Teach International Pty Ltd, there was enough information



about jobs, course structures and outcomes to make any prospective TESOL student sign up on the spot. There was even a dedicated Job Centre for graduates.

Having hypothesised about the availability of information about TESOL in Australia, I thought it might be prudent to verify my theories. I looked further into the second assumption – sufficient information for prospective teachers. However, I wished to know what information there was for prospective ELICOS teachers, those who had chosen to teach in Australia rather than overseas. I could find little. NEAS offered details of the qualifications required. Nonetheless, the trail ended at the NEAS' webpage. I took this dead-end to mean that the Australian context for Intensive English Courses for Overseas Students was not being sold to the TESOL new entrants. In this respect, I unveiled a disturbing reality. Both Michael Knight and some entry-level TESOL colleges were intent on exporting ELICOS from Australia. The former advocated the exportation of our courses, whereas the latter of our tax-paying, teaching expertise.

An additional inference drawn from the employment of this young, female teacher and the subsequent research into her TESOL qualifications was far starker than the merits of the training institutions. I learnt, too, that a gap existed in our recruitment of teachers. This young, female teacher did not have an awful lot of information or experience about full, fee-paying students, who worked to pay for their course tuition. Nor was she aware of the ELICOS students' traumas of life away from their social network. For this cohort of onshore students, value for money meant more than just attending classes. Their perception of value for their money differed considerably from that of migrants in Australia and offshore students. Unlike the migrants and offshore students, onshore, full fee-paying students wanted to exchange money for gains in learning.

## Conclusion

Despite the acknowledgement in the regulations of the need for staff members to be made aware of legislation, little has been done to enforce these regulations. This lack of enforcement spills over into the need for there to be sufficient information about overseas students.

In Australia, some effort has been made to address the second concern raised above, that is, the lack of knowledge about overseas students' *student experience*. The Labour Government has, at Federal level, engaged

with overseas students and created a unit, specialised in the assistance of overseas students in Australia. This latter development is praiseworthy.

However, unless teachers are made part of these developments within the context of the provisions for overseas students, little will change on the ground for overseas students. They will continue to be taught by teachers who know very little about and are unable to assist them with their challenges.

### **Implications for teacher recruitment**

In 1995, I entered the field of ELICOS in Australia, with little knowledge of the industry other than that there were accredited colleges, unaccredited organisations such as churches and a designated authority, which set standards for the industry. The names of the colleges did not differ from the names I had seen in England, where I had studied at Bell College. There was a Wilcox English College, International House, Homes College, and many others. Their campuses, though, appeared to be very close to each other in Sydney, as if clustered around the same honey pot. Most colleges were on George and Pitt streets. Most, if not all, bragged about being NEAS-accredited. NEAS was then the designated authority for the ELICOS industry, an acronym which stood for English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students. NEAS provided a means by which colleges could officially recruit overseas full-time students. In actual fact, it was through NEAS that colleges obtained their registration on CRICOS (another acronym). To my greatest surprise, some churches, especially in Burwood, announced free English lessons on their own billboards as a draw card for young, vulnerable devotees.

My knowledge of NEAS and its role in quality education for overseas students remained minimal until 2002 when I first became an Academic Manager. Aware of this lack of information, I implemented a range of knowledge management strategies such as information sessions with student service experts, information packs for new teachers, student surveys and teacher survey questions about their understanding of *student experience*.

# CHAPTER FIFTEEN

## RELIEF TEACHERS

### Introduction

This chapter discusses the provisions (or lack thereof) for relief teaching. It outlines the types of relief teaching currently in existence.

### Case study 11: Provisions for Relief Teaching

Relief work can be categorised into two types: relief teaching and emergency relief teaching. The former refers to the planned absence of an existing teacher. In this case, there is no actual emergency or crisis. Relief is often managed in a way that minimises disruption. In some cases, this means introducing the relief teacher to the class and having some sort of briefing from the class teacher. This category of relief teaching is ideal for all involved. For the students, it might be a welcome change. For the institution, relief teaching enables Academic Managers to observe prospective teachers and receive some informal (or formal) feedback from the students. For the relief teacher, coming in to replace an existing teacher may represent a “break”. Exceptional teachers move up on the preference list for upcoming openings. In addition, as a relief teacher, you may not need to set new rules, form habits or secure the commitment of the class to their studies, all essential features of productive learning. This hard work may have already been done for you.

Relief work is also referred to as emergency teaching. However, this label can be misleading. The meaning of the practice of requesting a relief teacher to come in at short notice and take up a class should really be emergency relief teaching. In other words, the terms *relief* and *emergency* ought not to be used interchangeably in this case for a simple reason. In real life, existing teachers notify their Academic Managers of their inability to come into work on the day, only a few hours before the class is due to start or the night before the lesson. If the Academic Manager’s list of relief teachers does not have anyone who lives within minutes of the college and wakes up at 6:00 a.m. every day in the hope of being called in,

a crisis may arise. The extent of the crisis depends on a range of issues. ●ne such challenge may be the ability to merge classes (last resort). An additional predicament may arise if the Academic Manager has a teaching load.

Different schools deal with emergency relief in unique ways. Some schools have emergency lessons put aside for each unit of the courses in their scope. ●thers may have lesson outlines, lesson records and textbooks ready for you to use. The more “organic” ones may have very little in a way of lesson planning guidance and depend heavily on what the class teacher decides to teach.

I once interviewed a former Director of Studies who had worked in this capacity in Japan. I asked him what guidance was given to teachers for lesson planning and relief work. His response fell into the category of an “organic” curriculum. He indicated to me that the teachers would refer to the previous lesson records to decide what to teach next. That would be fine, I suppose, if you had the time to figure this out and the experience to work out what sequence to follow. There is a great deal to say about sequencing lessons and if experience is not on your side, you may find this task of establishing what follows “the simple past” rather tediously daunting.

Fairly obviously, learning is maximised in those institutions where provisions exist for both relief teaching and emergency relief teaching. In institutions where an ad hoc approach is in place, students may be excused if they sense a degree of discontinuity every time a replacement teacher is employed. These students will grow dissatisfied and express their disappointment with their feet. As a result, private college proprietors will be forced to act if student satisfaction reaches commercially unacceptable lows.

## Conclusion

This chapter has drawn a distinction between relief teaching and emergency relief teaching. This distinction is pertinent to the concept of “not learning anything” in one significant manner. Unless relief teaching (emergency or otherwise) is guided, supported and monitored, substantive learning is unlikely to result from it.

## Curriculum Implications

### *For Teachers*

Relief teaching ought not to be seen as “baby-sitting” students. It must be seen as an opportunity to make a contribution to the maximisation of learning. This contribution can be made by focusing on learning. Such learning results from the development or creation of an atmosphere conducive to learning. For instance, by turning textbook exercises into learning-enhancing tasks, relief teachers are certain to create a learning atmosphere.

In addition, relief teaching must offer continuity. In this respect, knowledge of the place of a lesson in the syllabus is critical. Put otherwise, relief teachers must know exactly what is expected of them. Furthermore, relief teachers must understand what the outcomes of the lessons are. These teachers must develop their own ways to achieve these outcomes with little material and lesson preparation.

### *For Academic Managers*

Academic Managers play a critical role in ensuring relief teaching results in substantive learning. This role entails: creating guidelines for relief teaching, which demand, assist and monitor the outcome of relief lessons; training relief teachers; managing relief teachers, which may mean inviting them to remain involved in the activities of the ELT centre; and developing sufficient resources for relief teaching. At the very least, these resources must include detailed guidance on lesson delivery. Task development must be encouraged in this guidance. Additionally, in this guidance, exercise setting and “baby-sitting” must be described and discouraged. Moreover, observations of relief teaching must be conducted regularly.

### *For Principal Administrators*

Exceptional English teachers raise the profile and reputation of ELT centres in the eyes of overseas students. This equity can easily come undone because of a poorly trained relief teacher.

Therefore, it is in the best interests of Principal Administrators to ensure that Academic Managers have clear written guidelines for relief teaching, which identify “baby-sitting” and “exercise setting” lesson delivery styles.

These guidelines must be shown to be enforced to the satisfaction of the Principal Administrators.

Principal Administrators must review the results of student feedback on relief teachers fairly regularly.

# CHAPTER SIXTEEN

## TASK-BASED TEACHING

### Introduction

This chapter outlines an observation of a task-based lesson. In addition, it evaluates this lesson.

### Case study 12: Task-based Teaching

In late 2008, I went into a class to observe a new teacher. I had institutionalised a procedure whereby newly recruited teachers, irrespective of their years of experience, would be observed by either myself or the Curriculum Coordinator. The observation was intended to evaluate the extent of support required for the new teacher. It assumed that the new teacher was competent, but that they might need to brush up on some fundamental ESL teaching principles. One such principle referred to affective factors. The teacher was evaluated according to the extent to which they were able to strike a rapport with the class and engage the students. The other principle dealt with class management skills. Here the evaluation turned to the management of group dynamics e.g. pair, group and whole class work. The observation sheet had a 3-point scale from 0 (no assistance required) to 2 (assistance definitely required).

The teacher had just started with the college and was completing their second week. The female teacher had had just over four years of ESL teaching experience, most of it overseas. At the job interview, she had appeared to be fairly confident and was able to convincingly demonstrate how she could teach three activities out of a Face2Face textbook. Her résumé was not necessarily long but seemed to indicate relatively sufficient experience in ESL, with mostly full-time jobs.

The teacher had been given the observation sheet three days prior to the actual observation. Despite the time lead, the observation front page, which required such essential details as the profile of the class and the contents of the lesson, was only completed as the observation took place.



As a result, I sat at the back of the class without an observation sheet. Interestingly enough, a range of issues not included on the observation sheet became apparent within a few minutes of the start of the lesson. I stepped out to get a notepad as I suspected that the teacher would not, deliberately or otherwise, hand over the observation sheet to me. Upon returning to the classroom, I noticed that I had not missed out on much. The teacher was still trying to get two groups of five and six students each to get on with the task of creating a poster for a five-day tour down under. The teacher kept giving more and more instructions to the class and at some point, these changed. Instead of the initial five-day itinerary, the students were later asked to think of a three-day one.

● One group got off to a good start in a little over half an hour. The other group took a bit longer to get started. An hour into the activity, the teacher was still trying to get the slow group to complete the second of seven tasks. The teacher then decided to create a bit more enthusiasm by highlighting to the class that there was a speaking activity to follow. This last awareness raising activity put things into perspective for the class. It became clear then that the poster was only a means to an end. However, given the lengthy lead-in that had preceded the poster activity, one would be forgiven to think that it really was the end game.

There were a number of aspects of the lesson that were praiseworthy. The teacher appeared to be negotiating meaning with the students fairly constantly. The level of lesson preparation was fairly high. The teacher had brought in the right type of paper for the poster, scissors, glue and coloured pens. The students seemed to receive the right level of help when they requested it. In addition, there was a model of the poster on the board.

Nonetheless, the critical failure of the lesson related to time management. It took the class a whole hour to cut and paste a few pictures and copy “catchy phrases” from the whiteboard. In other words, the class could have completed this whole secondary (as opposed to primary or main) activity in half the time. There was little thinking involved or critical problem-solving. The wording for the poster was on the board.

The key ingredient to good time management is foresight. Had the teacher anticipated that one team would be much harder to get started, she would have altered the composition of the teams to ensure that there were leaders and followers in each team. The teacher would have appointed team leaders or writers. The teacher would have helped the students to understand what tasks were required by having a list of tasks on the

whiteboard. The teacher would have created a competition to get the teams motivated to get things done. As each team completed a task, the teacher would have simply ticked off the task and shown them what else needed to be done. In brief, better management of group dynamics could have helped the teacher achieve the end activity (i.e. the speaking activity) much more easily.

Secondly, there was very little understanding of the weakness of the activity, on the part of the teacher. In other words, the teacher appeared not to understand that the task of cutting out pictures might be very low on actual oral exchange. As the students cut out the pictures, the groups fell into an eerie silence. The teacher walked over to one group and asked them if they had finished when it was clear that they were cutting out pictures. A more exchange-inducing request would have been, “tell me about this picture you’re cutting out.”

Thirdly, in each one of the groups, there was one non-participating student. These students withdrew from the activity the moment more dominant members of the group gained prominence. These confident group members needed guidance in including others and allowing everyone to have a say.

Fourthly, the class could have been more effectively guided, if the model had been made the centre-piece of the activity. Most of the teacher’s instructions seemed to create greater dependence on her for clarity than on the model itself. The students kept looking at the teacher. Their actual model, their visual stimulus, was clearly ignored.

Fifthly, one aspect of the lesson which became apparent from the start related to affective factors. Although there was an attempt to help students, the teacher did not seem to converse with them. There was a clear divide between the person in control of the directives and the ones carrying out the tasks. It all became clear when the teacher turned to one student and asked them what their name was. Nevertheless, it is hard to categorically say that the fact that the teacher did not know the name of the students created the divide. Other factors such as the teacher’s delivery style may have contributed to the gulf.

## Conclusion

This chapter describes a language teaching style which is based on problem-solving, within a task-based approach. Throughout it, a range of shortfalls of this approach are presented. However, this chapter does not

intend to suggest that task-based teaching has no place in our ELICOS/ESL classrooms. On the contrary, it is always welcome as it generates activities to promote fluency. In this unfortunate case, it was not fully deployed. The missing ingredients in this lesson were language analysis and practice. Through language analysis in task-based teaching, students' attention is drawn to the forms, the sentence patterns and the grammatical rules employed. This analysis then leads to practice which provides the students with an opportunity to focus on accuracy. Without this full cycle, task-based teaching may lead to the perception of "not learning anything".

## Curriculum Implications

Teachers ought to ensure that students' own profiles shape their teaching styles. In this respect, the students' desire to have a combination of fluency and accuracy activities must inform the sequence of activities in a language classroom.

### *Academic Managers*

Academic Managers may assist teachers by emphasising, in the information made available to them before the start of a term, the need to strike a balance between fluency and accuracy activities. In addition, Academic Managers may institutionalise a requirement that lessons be prepared with adult learners' inner resource of pattern recognition in mind.

### *Teachers*

Teachers who embrace task-based teaching ought to understand the limitations of the method. In this respect, the task set may have limitations. One such limitation, which is apparent in the example given above, is the purpose of the task. If this is so that students accomplish a function (cf. Functional-Notional Syllabus for examples of functions), the task will fulfil a requirement of task-based teaching, which is aligned with students' aspirations of being culturally and linguistically appropriate. If, on the other hand, the task has no purpose other than to lead to a speaking activity (as is the case in the example above), accuracy will be jeopardised. Secondly, the full cycle of task-based teaching must be deployed, including language analysis and practice. In this sense, the initial pre-task and task-cycle stages must not occupy a considerable amount of class time.



**PART V**

**ALTERNATIVE:**

**FOCUS ON LEARNING**

# CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

## A NEW PARADIGM

### Introduction

This chapter summarises the information documented in this book thus far.

In addition, Chapter 17 proposes a new paradigm in English language teaching, which focuses on learning, rather than teaching, activities or materials.

### Developing a New Paradigm

#### *The Story Thus Far*

A teacher has lost his job because students complained of “not learning anything” and threatened to withdraw from their English course. When investigated further, these complaints proved insightful. I learnt that by “learning”, students meant the ability to recall and use language meaningfully. In addition, it meant the use of mental processes and habit-forming activities.

Additional investigations into the complaint of “not learning anything” revealed some potential contributing factors. Some of these contributing factors were said to include, inter alia: the textbook, teachers’ exercise setting strategies, formal training of ELT centre managers, a dearth of information about the industry, the teacher profile, disparate levels in classes, the quality of the learning experience in class, task-based teaching, the quality of feedback and provisions for emergency teaching.

In the absence of a single major contributing factor, I adopted a concept from psychology – locus of control – to generate a solution to the phenomenon of the student perception of “not learning anything”. Locus of control relates to our belief system. It represents our belief in our ability (or lack thereof) to control events in our lives. Therefore, I thought of the only person in a class who could have control over the events in it – the

teacher. I thought that if I focused on the teacher's lesson delivery style, I would be able to help ESL teachers maximise language learning.

### ***Research Questions (ROs)***

As a direct result of my belief in the teacher's ability to steer the sequence of events in a classroom towards enhanced learning, I have formulated two research questions: a) what impact might a change in the sequence of activities have upon the students' perception of "learning something" or "not learning anything"? and b) what learning engagement models would best encapsulate the teachers' lesson steps, intent and philosophies?

### ***Data Collection***

I gathered two types of data: qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative data for this section of the book were gathered through interviews with prospective teachers. These data represented sequences of classroom activities. Appendix A (Lesson Plans) provides details of these data.

The quantitative information was gleaned from a survey with 118 students from ELICOS colleges in Melbourne. For confidentiality reasons, only pertinent information arising out of the survey will be illustrated in this book.

The anonymity of the sources of both qualitative and quantitative data is maintained throughout the entire book.

### ***Data Analysis***

The analysis of the quantitative data was conducted through SPSS, version 21. This examination was mostly restricted to frequency counts and cross-tabulations due to the categorical nature of the variables in the survey.

The data examination related to the qualitative data was carried out in stages. This examination was undertaken through three layers of conceptualisation – operational, intermediate and conceptual or abstract.

### ***Operational Layer***

The operational layer refers to the steps in a lesson. In this respect, some teachers may start a lesson with a warm-up. Others may choose to start



with elicitation. The initial task with this level is one of listing the sequence of steps in a lesson.

●ne such sequence may include: warm-up-> vocabulary development associated with the listening -> prediction: what might this be about? -> key words -> handling the task: what technique to use for note-taking? -> listening to a recording: a lecture -> broad comprehension ●s -> listening to the recording again -> ●s-specific ideas -> discussion ->answer checking -> general discussion.

### *Intermediate Layer*

This intermediate layer is an inductive process of creating categories out of the steps or tasks in the operational layer. In other words, the steps in a lesson plan, which appeared to be performing the same function, were grouped together.

### *Conceptual Layer*

The categories generated through the intermediate layer were subsequently examined to interpret their overall philosophies. These philosophies were investigated through a series of questions, namely: *is the strategy underpinning this category behaviourist or cognitive?* In other words, this conceptual layer represented the “intent” of the categories.

Subsequently, the order of the two main philosophies of teaching (i.e. cognitive and behaviourist) was equally analysed. In this respect, I wanted to find out if there was a sequence from behaviour-forming to cognition-engagement. In addition, I sought to find out if the reverse was true – cognition-engagement to behaviour-forming. I looked further to see if an alternative theory was at play. ●ne such alternative was constructionism. The questions I used to examine the presence of constructionist beliefs in the sequence of steps was, *are these steps showing a belief in learning by doing? Are students being asked to use their problem-solving skills to learn English?* This search for an underpinning philosophy was intended to guide the labelling of the steps in the engagement models, which were to emerge from this examination. Throughout this process of working out a sequence for the factors underpinning the categories of steps adopted by the interviewees, I referred frequently to the students’ own perceptions of learning. These perceptions appeared to be placing “recall” halfway through the learning process. These students’ comments also seemed to be

asking for creative production (not reproduction) at the end of the sequence.

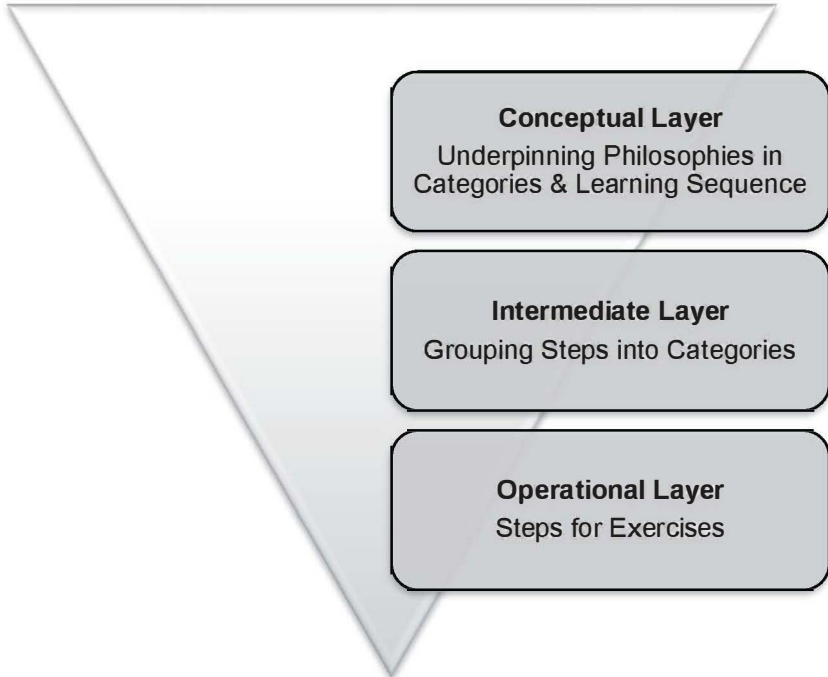


Figure 17. 1 Abstraction from Lesson Steps

### *Results of the Student Survey*

RQ1: what impact might a change in the sequence of activities have upon students' perception of "learning something" or "not learning anything"?

One hundred and eighteen ELICOS students studying English in Melbourne in 2011 completed the survey, which was made available through [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) for a period of two weeks. Table 17.1 shows the classes the survey respondents were enrolled into.

**Table 17. 1 Sample Characteristics**

Course Enrolled in	N	Percent
Conversational English level 3A	6	5.1
Conversational English level 4A	11	9.3
Conversational English level 4B	8	6.8
Conversational English level 5A	10	8.5
Conversational English level 6A	9	7.6
Academic English Level 1	6	5.1
IELTS Preparation Level 2	9	7.6
English for Vocational Study	8	6.8
Conversational English level 3B	2	1.7
Conversational English level 4C	2	1.7
Conversational English level 5B	23	19.5
Conversational English level 6B	1	.8
IELTS Preparation Level 1	2	1.7
Other	17	14.4
Total	114	96.6
Missing System	4	3.4
Total	118	100.0

Memorisation has played a key role in the learning experience of nearly three quarters (69.5% or 31.4% + 38.1%) of the survey participants (Table 17.2).

**Table 17. 2 Past Learning Experience**

Learning Experience	N	Percent
Other (please specify)	5	4.2
In my country, I learnt to memorise ideas	37	31.4
In my country, I learnt to memorise some ideas and research	45	38.1
In my country, I learnt to research ideas	11	9.3
In my country, I learnt to debate ideas, after researching them	20	16.9
Total	118	100.0

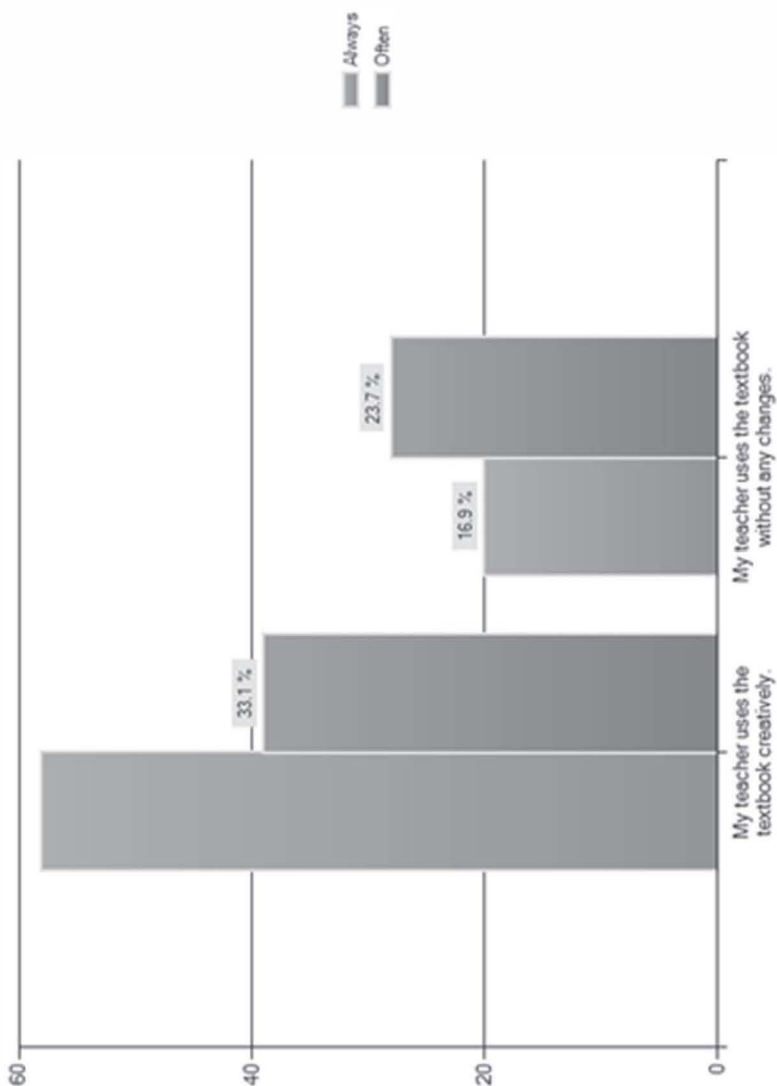
More than half of the ELICOS students surveyed (54.2%) liked to listen, see and touch things to learn about them (Table 17.3). In a large number of cases, visual stimuli were deemed to be important in the learning process (54.2%+22%).

**Table 17. 3 Learning Preferences**

Learning Preferences	N	Percent
Other (please specify)	4	3.4
I like to listen, see and touch things to learn about them	64	54.2
I like to listen to things to learn about them	16	13.6
I like to see things to learn about them	26	22.0
I like to feel things to learn about them	8	6.8
Total	118	100.0

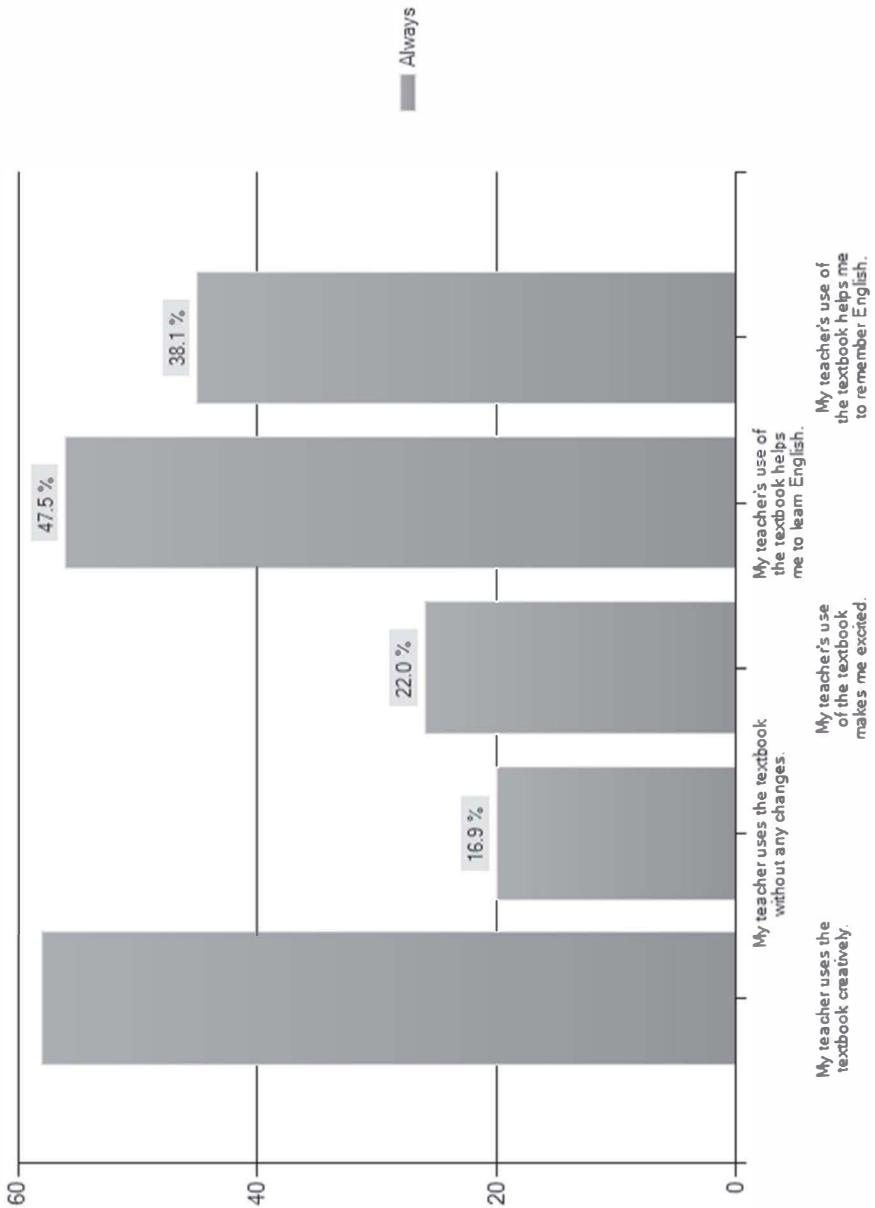
Just under a quarter of the students surveyed (23.7%) indicated that their teachers often used the textbook without any changes (Chart 17.1). In fact, just over half of the students (58%) thought that their teachers used the textbook creatively. In other words, most teachers were thought to use the textbook creatively.

Chart 17. 1 Students' Perceptions about Textbook Use



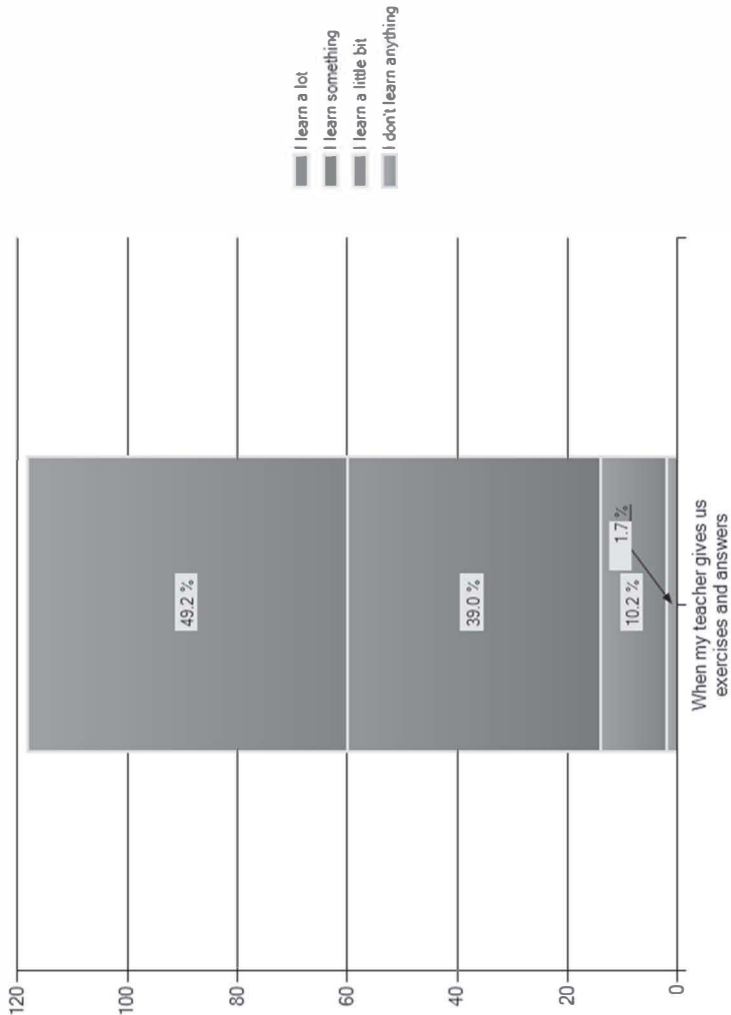
Nearly half of the students (47.5%) believed that their teachers' use of the textbook helped them to learn English. Just over a third (38%) thought that their teachers' use of the textbook helped them to remember English (Chart 17.2).

Chart 17. 2 Students' Perceptions about Teachers' Use of the Textbook



Almost half of the students (49.2%) learnt a lot when their teachers gave them exercises and answers (Chart 17.3). Conversely, only 1.7% of the students did not learn anything when exercises were set and answers given.

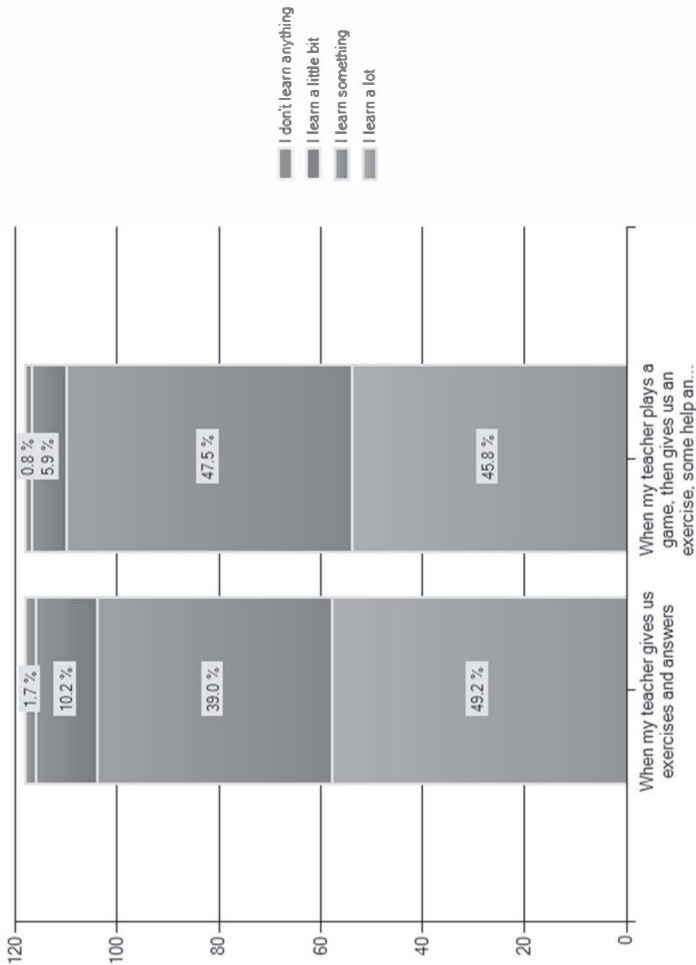
Chart 17. 3 Students' Perceptions about Completing Exercises and Getting Answers





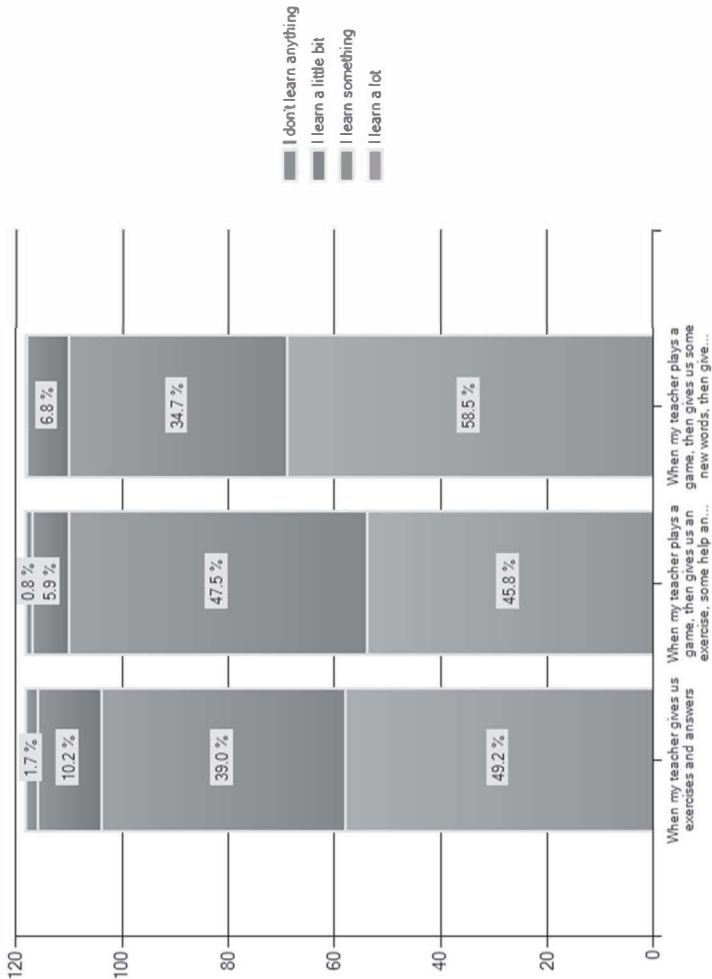
When games were interspersed with exercises, almost half of the students (45.8%) learnt a lot and nearly as many (47.5%) learnt something (Chart 17.4). Only 0.8% of the students learnt nothing through this technique. In other words, with the addition of games and help, the percentage of students who do not learn anything reduces from 1.7% to 0.8%, a 52.9% decline in their perception of not learning anything.

Chart 17. 4 Students' Perceptions about the Use of Exercises and Games



When games, vocabulary and exercises were combined, more than half of the students (58.5%) learnt a lot and over a third (34.7%) learnt something (Chart 17.5). When compared to the previous two techniques (cf. Chart 17.4 exercises + answers and games, exercises + answers), this combination of games, vocabulary and exercises appears to reduce the perception of “not learning anything” by 100%.

Chart 17. 5 Students’ Perceptions about the Use of Exercises, Games and Vocabulary



More than half of the students (55.6%) learnt a great deal when there was repetition, form analysis and reproduction of the target language. 14% of the students either learnt very little or nothing when exercises were set and answers given to them.

### *Results of the Teacher Interview*

**RQ2:** what learning engagement models would best encapsulate the students' suggestion of learning through habit formation (repetition), cognitive examination (concept checking) and creative production (dialogue)?

Ten interviews were conducted with ESL teachers in order to answer RQ2. Throughout the interviews, the teachers were asked to demonstrate how they would teach a certain textbook exercise. These demonstrations were written up in simplified lesson plans on an interview sheet. The interview sheet comprised the following fields: Part A – Teacher Details, Part B – Lesson Plan summary (demonstration) and Part C – Interview Notes. The details of these Lesson Plan summaries can be found in Appendix A. Each Lesson Plan summary documented the following:

- a) teacher gender
- b) teacher qualifications
- c) teacher experience
- d) exercise details
- e) lesson steps

The exercises were extracted from the Face2Face textbook series. These exercises were not altered throughout the interviews.

Table 17.4 illustrates the characteristics of the ten survey participants.

**Table 17. 4 Sample Characteristics**

Gender	Qualifications	TESOL Experience (yrs)	Country (TESOL Experience)
M- 2	PhD (TESOL) - 1	6 18 months - 3	Australia 7
F - 8	PhD (Other) - 1	4 9 years - 4	Malaysia 1
	Master (TESOL) - 3	1 26 years - 2	Japan - 3
	Master (Other) - 1	Unspecified - 1	Germany 1
	Diploma (Educ.) - 3		
	Bachelor (Arts) - 8		
	Bachelor (Other) - 2		

The ten teachers held a total of eighteen qualifications between them. These teachers had taught ESL in four different countries, namely: Australia, Malaysia, Japan and Germany. In some cases, some teachers had taught in two countries, with Australia and Japan being the most common combination.

To answer research question 2, three layers of conceptualisation were utilised, namely: operational layer, intermediate layer and conceptual layer.

### Operational Layer

Of the ten lessons documented in Appendix A, one was a reading exercise, six were listening exercises, two were grammar exercises and one was a vocabulary/speaking exercise. To facilitate analysis, these needed to be grouped under the respective skills and knowledge areas. Tables 17.5-17.8 show these skills (listening and reading) and knowledge areas (grammar and vocabulary).

The tables listed below only capture the essence of the steps in the simple present tense. With one exception, the verb used encapsulates mostly the students' actions. This exception refers to *concept check*. It is challenging to capture the actions undertaken by the student (which can be widely varied) in this case (i.e. concept check). A choice has thus been made to adopt this concept, which may, to some, represent a teacher's action.

Table 17. 5 Listening

Exercise	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10	Step 11
1	Discuss Define Key	Write Sentence	Share Writing	View Writing	Explore Pictures	Lead-in Q&A	Listen	Share Answers Read	Discuss	Q&A	Focus on Grammar
5	Words Turn to Book	Concept Check	Listen Brainstorm	Listen	Share Answers	Read Aloud	See Teacher	Transcript	Fill in Sentences	-	-
6	Page	View Exercise	Introduce Picture	Introduce Picture	Read Questions	Listen	Share Answers	-	-	-	-
10	Introduce Topic	Match Words	Discuss	Talk	Introduce Listening Task	Listen	Pair up	Explain Task	Listen	Find Mistakes	Share Answers

Most importantly, the duality of meaning of some words was dealt with by choosing the most explicit of the options. For instance, *listen* was also deemed to mean, *play the recording*.

Due to the size limitations in the table, shorter forms were preferred to longer ones. For example, instead of indicating *Discussion e.g. important moments in their lives*, the short form *discuss* was chosen. In this sense, *share answers with partners* became *share answers*.

Table 17. 6 Grammar

Exercise	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10	Step 11	Step 12	Step 13
2	Write Sentences on W/B	Elicit Differences in Sentences	Say the Rules	Give Examples for Rules	Concept Check	Elicit Form	Team up	Change Tense on W/B	Show Meaning	Elicit Tense	Check Answers	Extend Early Finishers	Write an Account
8	View Pictures	Answer Questions	Elicit Grammar	Concept Check	Practice Stress	Repeat	Concept Check	View Pictures	Answer Questions	Fill in Substitution table	Practise	Concept Check	Discuss

In some lessons, it became apparent that some of the steps represented “mental notes”. For instance, *focus on verbs, nouns and clues in the pictures* did not actually mean that anything was to happen in the classroom as a step. It simply guided the teacher throughout the activity with a view to the objective/outcome. These “mental notes” were still captured as a step (e.g. *focus on grammar*) for a simple reason. Often when an objective is pursued in a classroom, but its results are not obtained, ESL teachers improvise a step to ensure the achievement of such a goal.

**Table 17. 7 Reading**

Exercise	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10	Step 11
7	Explore Topic	View Words	Learn Vocabulary	Concept Check	Speak	Match gist & Para	-	-	-	-	-

It is equally important to make a distinction clear. The instructions in the textbook were regarded as exercises. The steps in the Lesson Plan summaries were deemed to be part of an activity. This is a deliberate distinction. Exercises are, in this publication, viewed as commands for one-two actions (e.g. *answer* and *share answers*). These tend to be void of preparation and follow-up. An activity, on the other hand, is performed in a series of steps, with the exercise representing one step in the middle or final stages of the sequence.

**Table 17. 8 Vocabulary/Speaking**

Exercise	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10	Step 11	Step 12	Step 13
9	Explore the Title	Elicit Chapter Essence	Cover Words & Meanings	Match Words & Meanings	Elicit Family Roles	Read Aloud	Elicit Task Details	Group Words	List Family Roles	Talk	Read Aloud	Share Answers	Discuss



### Intermediate Layer

The number of steps in the Lesson Plan summaries ranged from 6 to 13. ● Out of this range, three stages of an exercise had to be identified – initial, middle and final. To determine this, and due mostly to the complexities in establishing the start and end boundaries of each stage, a mathematical procedure was followed. This calculation entailed finding thirds. The first third in a range 1-9 covers steps 1-3. The last third in the same range encompasses steps 6-9.

**Table 17. 9 Operational Layer**

Stage	Listening	Reading	Grammar	Vocabulary
Initial	- Write	- Explore	- View	- Explore
	- View	- View	- Write	- Elicit
	- Elicit		- Elicit	
	- Answer			
Middle	- Explore	- Speak	- Discover	- Brainstorm
	- Listen	- Learn	Rules	- Read
	- Interpret	Vocabulary	- Drill	- Learn
	Questions		- Manipulate	Vocabulary
Final	- Answer	- Answer	- Manipulate	- Read
	Exercise	Exercise	- Answer	- Discuss
	- Share	- Concept	Exercise	
	Answers	Check	- Use	
		Speak	Language	
			Creatively	

#### *Initial Categories*

By grouping words into functional areas (i.e. symmetric actions, which appeared to be achieving similar objectives on either side of the stage central line), this research generated two categories for the initial stage of a lesson, namely: *activation* (i.e. elicit, explore and view) and *inductive engagement* (i.e. write and answer).

#### *Middle Categories*

In this particular case, four functional groupings were achieved. The first included *explore* and *brainstorm*. The second grouping listed *listen* and *read*. The third encompassed *interpret questions*, *discover rules*, *manipulate* and *learn vocabulary*. The first category was too symmetric to

the activation stage. It was regarded as *prolonged activation*. This comprised *explore* and *brainstorm*. *Inductive engagement* was thought to include *listen* and *read*. In this case, pattern recognition appeared to be the objective. *Cognitive Engagement* appeared to describe *interpret questions, discover rules, manipulate* and *learn vocabulary*.

In this middle stage, *drills* seemed to be the odd-one out. However, the purpose of their use may be construed to be the aiding of *recall*.

### *Final Stage*

The final stages of a sequence of tasks in an activity appeared to be grouped in three areas, namely: a) *answer exercise*, b) *share answers* and *concept check*, c) *speak, use language creatively* and *discuss*. The first was labelled as *transformation*. The grouping of *share answers* and *concept checking* was deemed to reflect reinforcement. The last grouping was coined *Creative concept checking*.

## Conceptual Layer

To examine the belief system or theory of learning in the choice and sequence of tasks in an activity within the context of an ESL class, I developed a table. Table 17.10 depicts the results of the conceptual examination of the lesson plans in Appendix A. In it, the theories of learning analysed are: behaviourism (habit-forming, stimulus-response, conditioning), cognitivism (discovery, manipulation) and constructionism (problem-solving, creative use). The order relates to the sequence in an activity and the choice of a theory of learning. To establish this sequence and choice pattern, the categories were grouped into three parts: initial (*activation* and *inductive engagement*), middle (*cognitive engagement, recall* and *transformation*) and final (*reinforcement* and *creative concept checking*).

**Table 17. 10 Conceptual Layer**

Categories	Theory	Order
Activation	Behaviourism/Constructionism	Mixed
Inductive Engagement	Behaviourism	
Cognitive Engagement	Cognitivism	Behaviourism
Recall	Behaviourism	(predominantly)
Transformation	Cognitivism	
Reinforcement	Behaviourism	Mixed
Creative concept checking	Cognitivism/Constructionism	

One category does not appear in Table 17.10, namely *prolonged activation* and this has been excluded because it has been deemed insignificant and most likely to be a “floating category” in a lesson. This is a “floating category” because it may crop up throughout the lesson anywhere and everywhere. For instance, before a reading, there might be reference to or elicitation of prior thematic or semantic knowledge related to the reading passage. This pre-empting of an activity is not limited to the initial stages of the lesson. It appears to be needed throughout the lesson, hence, its label as a “floating category”.

As illustrated in Table 17.10, teachers intersperse one theory with another throughout the lesson. This appears to be true of the initial and final stages of an activity. The middle stage seems to be better defined than the other stages, with behaviourism prevailing over cognitivism through this intermediary phase.

## Conclusions

This chapter has examined, quantitatively and qualitatively, the perceptions about learning English of 118 ESL students and ten teachers. Whilst the former data were examined through a statistical package, the latter were analysed through ethnographic methods of identifying hierarchies of words (hypemyms), i.e. steps grouped into categories, which were subsequently clustered around theories of learning.

Like the teachers, who mixed their teaching approaches throughout the lesson, the students indicated that they learnt best when there was a mixture of games, vocabulary and grammar activities. In fact, games were viewed as helping to boost learning by over 52 per cent. When games, vocabulary learning and grammar were mixed, the perception of learning increased by 100 per cent.

## Curriculum Implications

The findings in this research must be cautiously regarded as significant. These findings support Professor Nunan’s call for the need to converge the agenda of the teacher with that of the students. Most importantly, these findings appear to suggest that perhaps this commonality/convergence in agendas may already exist. It simply needs to be found at a deeper level of understanding – i.e. the conceptual layer.

### *For Students*

It is imperative that students seek ways in which they can influence the direction of the lesson. One such way is by enrolment interviews. Throughout the placement interview, students ought to express their views on the need for classes to be eclectic in nature. In this sense, students beginning an ESL course must indicate to their interviewers that diversity is critical to their learning. An alternative means by which students can demand variety is through the end of course surveys. These surveys often elicit comments. In most cases, ESL students do not write any comments. This practice must be stopped. Students must be encouraged to express their views on the need for teachers to adopt mixed methods in a single sequence of steps for each textbook exercise.

### *For Teachers*

Teachers, on the other hand, must have an enterprising view of classes, lessons and learning. Enterprise attitudes embrace criticism. In fact, enterprise attitudes elicit comments on their practice and grow with constructive criticism.

Secondly, ESL teachers must not prepare lessons in isolation. Lessons must be prepared with students, not only with students in mind. One such collective lesson preparation may involve the teacher establishing a monthly plan with the class for key goals to be achieved. Another simple way of collective lesson planning may include an activity whose completion depends on the efforts of both the teacher and the students. For instance, if a stage play was to be presented and the script co-written by both the teachers and the students, collective lesson planning would be employed.

### *For Academic Managers*

Academic Managers play a key role in influencing the direction of lessons in ESL. This influence is exerted most effectively through mentoring, coaching and training sessions, which follow observations. In examining the degree to which lessons are diversified, Academic Managers are able to establish the gaps in the professional development of ESL teachers relating to their ability to focus on learning.

A teacher who believes that a grammar lesson must only be about *pattern recognition* and *manipulation* needs a great deal of assistance to understand

the need to expand their perceptions. This teacher will need to value the role played by games in learning. This teacher will also need to appreciate the influence of warm-ups in learning. In addition, this teacher will require assistance in understanding the role of drills in learning.

This assistance can only be forthcoming if Academic Managers are trained to discern the sequence at a category level as shown in Table 17.10. Armed with this knowledge of a categorical sequence, Academic Managers will identify delivery styles. These Academic Managers will also be in a position to prevent teachers from losing their jobs due to their inability to generate learning in their English language lessons.

### *For ESL*

However, such knowledge of a learning-enhancing categorical sequence must be shared with the ESL industry as a theory of teaching, which focuses on learning. Chapter 18 presents this new theory.

# CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

## ENGLISH LEARNING MAXIMISATION SYSTEM

### Introduction

This chapter expands on the research findings outlined in the previous chapter. This expansion includes the development of a new approach to English language teaching, which is based on learning engagement models.

### New Paradigm

The new system of lesson delivery is, herein, denoted as ELMS, which stands for English Learning Maximisation System. ELMS is a philosophy of ESL teaching, which aims to maximise English learning in classroom contexts. It holds that English students learn best when their learning experience engages them cognitively and behaviourally. It focuses on the learning process, which is directed or guided by a teacher. In this sense, it differs from and may not be applied in circumstances where learning is self-directed.

Its features include: a sequence, differentiated application across skills and knowledge, and a value system. The descriptions of these features have been carefully selected to ensure there is clarity of use. In other words, the features of ELMS have a clear goal. Their descriptive labels are intended to convey this goal. In addition, the description of the main stages in ELMS is generated from the words used by the students. One example is *engagement*. This word arose from students' reports of the need to be "active" and not to listen to the teacher for an indefinite period of time. It also encapsulates the need for students to contribute to the learning process.

### *Sequence*

In ELMS, an English class experiences an initial activation of knowledge to establish the connection between prior and new knowledge. This



*activation* of knowledge is aided by aural practice and visual recording. It is further assisted by meaningful clues and contextualisation. *Inductive engagement* follows activation. *Inductive engagement* helps students to notice patterns in the language input. *Cognitive engagement or transformation* is the subsequent step in ELMS. This stage is often preceded by *recall* in new grammar lessons. In this sequence the final stage is *creative concept check*. This ARCC (as opposed to the PPP paradigm) sequence is outlined below.

### **Activation**

Activation enables students to prepare for learning in two significant ways. Firstly, a connection between old and new knowledge may remove the novelty of new knowledge, making it relatively more accessible. This type of activation can also potentially help generate useful recollections. Tune-in activities and pictorial elicitations, when purposefully employed, can establish this connection between old and new knowledge. Given the importance of this stage, aural and visual stimuli must be provided in a sequence which starts with the teacher and is progressively handed over to the students. For instance, a teacher-to- student interaction may give way to a student-to-teacher exchange before pair work is used. Secondly, activation may also be useful in modelling learning. In this respect, students learn how to learn through the activation stages. This imparting of knowledge about the learning process can be achieved through the employment of recall through activation. If students are asked to recall a rule, pattern or example for a rule, they will be forced to employ a step in the learning process – recall. Knowing how their recall can be of great benefit to them throughout their English language learning experience by reinforcing the use of memory, is a mechanism most students have used in the past to acquire new knowledge. Nonetheless, activation is not just about drawing attention to form. It is equally about generating meaning. This meaning-making aspect of activation is significantly aided by meaningful clues and confirmatory concept checking questions. These questions may include such confirmatory interrogations as *Does this action happen every day?*

### **Inductive Engagement**

Inductive engagement involves assisting students in the identification of patterns in a systematic and analytical fashion. Pattern-identification engagement is best achieved through activities which are relevant and challenging. In this sense, the aim is twofold. ● On the one hand, this stage



will see students being challenged to identify and interpret a repetitive structure in the language input. On the other hand, these activities must achieve engagement. Put another way, a match between the students' interests and the material ought to be achieved. For instance, a substitution table about a hobby which students can identify with could be used to engage students inductively.

## Recall

In their answers to my questions about learning, students used the word “remember” to refer to recall. In this sense, recall referred to the retention of new knowledge or simply the ability to access it when needed. Recall, however, in the AIRCC sequence has a similar meaning to remembering, albeit with a slightly differentiated application. In this sense, recall is employed to aid memory. In other words, teachers may opt to introduce a memory activity to help students memorise a language input item for future use. This is dissimilar to rote-learning in the sense that it is not the end in itself. Recall is a means to an end. The end result is the students' ability to access new knowledge and employ it meaningfully. Therefore, recall can only aid memory, in this sense, if used along a continuum, which starts with activation and ends with creative concept checking. In a vocabulary lesson, for instance, recall may be employed through a dictation. In addition, a song can be used to aid recall, especially if it contains several instances of the target language.

The best example of recall comes from an American memory guru – Harry Lorayne. Lorayne insists that we all have the ability to have a better than photographic memory. This inner resource within us only needs training. One technique you learn through Lorayne's media is to notice. Notice features, patterns and uniqueness associated with the object of analysis. Use those features, patterns and uniqueness to retrieve information about the object. In computer language, this would mean saving a file for future retrieval. Likewise, with our English lessons, we ought to aid recall by providing memory games, which allow students to see features, patterns and uniqueness of the target language. This is not to be confused with rote-learning. Rote-learning leaves a few of the steps in recall out. One such step is the recognition of features, patterns and uniqueness in the target language. Secondly, rote-learning is not often used as a means to an end. Recall is. Recall is only a step in a sequence of steps. Lessons must not stop at the recall stage. They must go on to creative concept check.

## Cognitive Engagement or Transformation

Whilst *inductive engagement* results in inferences about the way a structure or word (or a set of words) can be used, *cognitive engagement or transformation* sees students manipulate language input to fit into a context, in a controlled manner. This is the stage most textbook exercises fit into. Gap-fills, for instance, are cognitive exercises, which enable students to manipulate accessible language structures. This stage must be followed by validation. In Validation, students' answers are comprehensively validated for two main reasons. Firstly, this is a stage where students have a "feel" for the actual use of the language input. In the example of the Engineering student, this is the stage at which students "feel the words". This stage can, depending on the proficiency of the class (low, intermediate or high) and/or the lesson type (revision or new), be preceded by *recall* and followed by *language analysis*. *Recall* represents a memory game, which helps students to consolidate their inferences about the use of the language input. Language analysis is useful when the transformation exercise results are mostly poor. If students complete twelve exercises with a great deal of difficulty, language analysis may be required to consolidate their understanding of the language input. Language analysis consists mostly of diagrammatical information, which clearly shows the use of the target structure. In this case, confirmatory concept checking questions can be used with language analysis.

## Creative Concept Check

Creative concept checking extends the students' knowledge of the target language through a practical, hands-on activity. At this stage, a link between the classroom and the real world must be established. This link is achieved through a function or a notion. Students must be given tasks to achieve with the language. For instance, they may be asked to apologise, express regrets or convince a judge of their innocence, if their proficiency is advanced. The choice of function or notion must be guided by the usefulness and applicability of the language input. The function or notion with the greatest likelihood of employing the target language is selected in this case. A case in point is "wish". If this were to be the target language, the Creative concept check activity may focus on expressing regrets. I once taught an IELTS class the use of "wish" through a news article. In the article, a mother had left the backyard door unlocked whilst working inside the house. Her toddler wandered off through the door and into an oncoming train. After completing a textbook exercise, the students paired up. One person was the wife. The other was the husband, who had been at

work. The wife had the job of expressing her deepest regret, whereas the husband had to console her.

This stage also connects the target language with the productive skills of writing and speaking in this particular sequence. A writing task must be set to help the teacher establish the extent to which the target language has been internalised by all students (weak, who may not engage openly in speaking activities, and strong, who may hide accuracy challenges through open fluency). In this sense, the correct written production of the target language in most instances constitutes evidence of learning. This production must be validated through feedback. Homework may be set, if the number of errors raises questions as to whether or not learning has occurred. Oral practice of the result of what the students had produced wraps up this final stage.

### *Differentiated Application*

ELMS identifies four variations to the use of the sequence listed above. These variations or learning engagement models are shaped by two language input types – knowledge (grammar and vocabulary) and skills (receptive and productive). These variations are represented in four learning engagement models, namely: I – grammar, II – vocabulary and III – receptive skill development and IV – productive skill development.

#### I. Grammar Learning Engagement Model

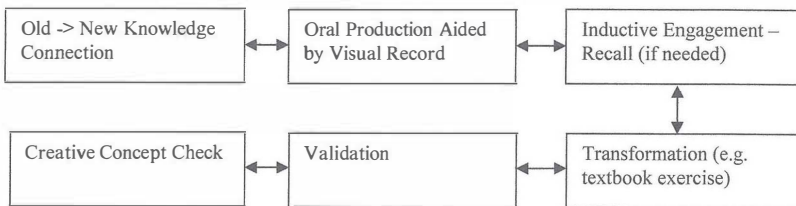


Figure 18. 1 Grammar Learning Engagement Model

The connection between old and new knowledge can be achieved through elicitation, preferably pictorial elicitation. In the following stage, Oral Production Aided by Visual Record, oral practice (e.g. drills, aural models, repetition, pronunciation practice, oral question and answer formulation, oral error correction and positive oral reinforcement) is guided by the teacher. Accuracy is not placed above fluency or communicability. In this sense, the selection of utterances ought to be meaningful. The aim of this

stage is the production of intelligible speech. This stage may be prolonged for low-level classes or brief for advanced ones. In homogenous classes, this may be teacher-controlled, whereas in heterogeneous classes it should be teacher-guided and aim to “hand over” control to students. In addition, throughout this stage, students should visualise the target language, with their attention drawn to peculiarities of the form of the language input. Inductive Engagement then follows. Through this stage, students are encouraged to identify patterns in the utterances generated from the previous stage and formulate rules, which would invariably be written up on the whiteboard. If required, the sentences should be removed from the board just after Inductive Engagement. A recall activity should then be used to match the results of the Inductive Engagement. In other words, before recall is used, the initial sentences, which led to inductive engagement, may be deleted from the whiteboard. The students can then be asked to use the rules they have inferred to recall the sentences previously written on the whiteboard. Textbook exercises may be subsequently used in the Transformation stage, followed by a validation activity, which represents a feedback session. The question to ask at the Validation stage is, can the students use the rules drawn from the patterns to complete academic tasks? The subsequent stage, Creative concept check, adopts a different question. At this outcome stage, the question to ask is, can the students use the rules and the examples from the Transformation stage to communicate in a specific scenario? This scenario ought to offer the greatest possible incentive to use the rules and examples practised thus far. As outlined above, this scenario is best set by reference to its purpose rather than the type of exercise employed. To put it another way, instead of asking the students to produce a role-play, the teacher may set a challenge – convince me that you are innocent of a crime. This challenge is bound to offer the class real freedom to choose the means by which such a function can be fulfilled.

## II. Vocabulary Learning Engagement Model

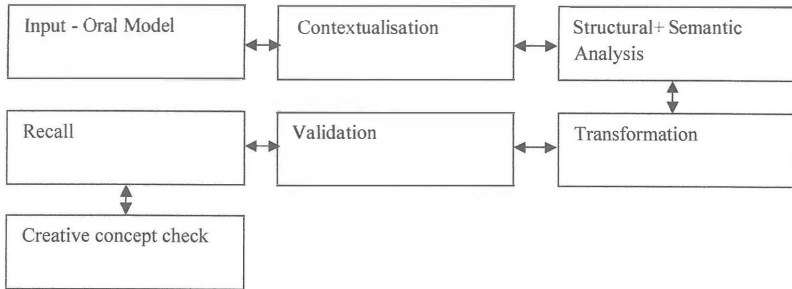


Figure 18. 2 Vocabulary Learning Engagement Model

The input in this model may be represented by a brainstorming activity, which generates a list of words. It could also be a table with new words. In addition, the input could be a text with keywords highlighted. The oral model in this case represents the respective sounds of the new vocabulary. This audio input ought to be aided by visualisation. In other words, students see the words they hear. The contextualisation of these words can be presented in a picture, passage or a transcript, depending on the proficiency level of the students. Low-level classes such as Beginners and Elementary may be best served through pictorial contextualisation. High-level classes such as Upper Intermediate and Advanced may work well with passages at this Contextualisation stage. Structural & Semantic Analysis directs the class to word meaning, word formation, stress, spelling and word class. Transformation may include a gapped sentence with relevant vocabulary in brackets. As part of this stage, synonym-matching can also be adopted. The subsequent stage of this sequence sees the validation of the students' answers, which should be accompanied by clarification through exemplification. In most cases, visualisation of the answers is essential at this stage. Most students tend to follow this stage best, if the answers are displayed on the whiteboard or projected on to a screen. A memory game must be attempted before the students are asked to use the new vocabulary in a creative, productive way to fulfil a set language function such as inviting friends to a party, requesting an extension for a utility bill etc.



### III. Receptive Skill Learning Engagement Model

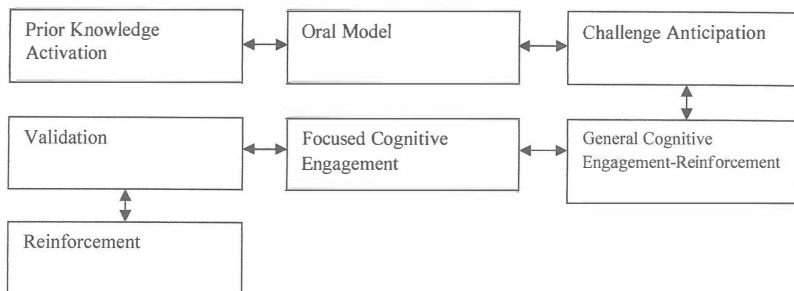


Figure 18. 3 Receptive Skill Learning Engagement Model

Receptive skills include listening and reading. In this case, the students' learning experience under ELMS starts with the *activation of prior knowledge*. This activation can be achieved through either a combination or the single use of themes and/or vocabulary. If themes (e.g. climate change, natural disasters etc.) are used, elicitation questions can be employed to aid recall of relevant past experience. The use of vocabulary can be useful in helping students conjure up images of past experience. The first tunes students into the broad context of the task. However, it may not necessarily activate the right knowledge as students engage with themes differently depending on their interests, prior knowledge and preferences. In this case, vocabulary elicitation may be a better activation method than themes. The *Oral model* can be used in two ways. In reading, it represents a round of reading aloud by the teacher, emphasising intonation, stress and a natural reading style. For instance, a story may be read in the manner in which it would naturally be read out. A news article would equally be read in its natural tone. In listening, oral models can be given to students by playing the recording once without the need for cognitive engagement. In other words, in the oral model, students are given an opportunity to appreciate the sound nuances of the new text (aural or written). *Challenges* may include new words, complex sentence patterns, foreign references (unfamiliar names, events etc.) and/or complexity of contents. These potential challenges must be pre-taught. Subsequently, students can be given a skimming task rather than a scanning one as part of the *General Cognitive Engagement*. *Reinforcement* follows. Through reinforcement, students are shown the actual place where the answers appear. Reinforcement consolidates students' answer-generating strategies. Focused Cognitive Engagement is similar to

transformation. It represents a controlled exercise. The last two stages in this sequence represent the tasks listed above for Validation and Reinforcement. Reinforcement in receptive skill development is essential as it generates and consolidates answer-generating strategies. Through this step students learn how to answer questions about listening and reading. Notice that there is a clear difference between Validation and Reinforcement. Whilst the former indicates reassurance, the latter means consolidation. In other words, in Validation, students check their answers. In reinforcement, however, their skills in answering questions are further harnessed.

#### IV. Productive Skill Learning Engagement Model

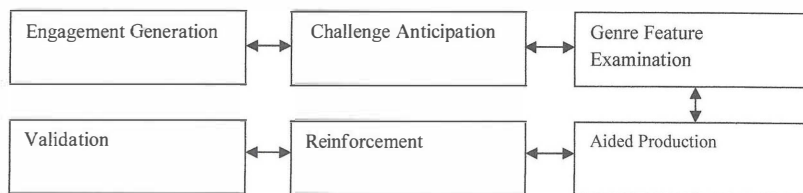


Figure 18. 4 Productive Skill Learning Engagement Model

In most classrooms, there is really no genuine need to produce oral or written work. However, this should not stop teachers from developing scenarios in which oral and written work is required. For instance, if the class was to be told that the Queen was about to visit and someone needed to give Her Majesty a brief, formal speech about a specific topic which was bound to employ the target language. The best written paper and oral execution (based on explicit, specific and transparent criteria), could win five bonus marks, which could be put towards their next test. Alternatively, they could earn themselves a full exemption from the next test. Adult students love the amusement of the imaginary world. They also adore being rewarded for their effort. To achieve this, *Engagement* would need to be generated either through a theme, vocabulary elicitation followed by a game or simply a quiz. Challenges in productive activities may include the students' own ability to produce a piece of work. For instance, if students were to be asked to produce a formal speech, they may need to be reminded of the features of formal language. A list might need to be produced on the whiteboard to help students make linguistic choices. The subsequent stage is the most important of all in productive language development. A genre must be specified at this stage. This could simply be a speech. Speeches have features such as opening and closing



remarks. These must be highlighted and reinforced. In those cases when the genre is familiar to the students, a brief revision of its features may suffice. In the subsequent stage, the first paragraph may be produced as a whole class activity. Reinforcement, subsequently, may be conducted individually. In this case, reinforcement may involve assistance with specific vocabulary, sentence pattern, word formation, spelling or any other help. A typical example of reinforcement is a case of a student who asks to read a sentence out loud to the teacher to see if it sounds right. Alternatively, it might be a case of a student who wishes to have a word spelt out. This stage of reinforcement must generate the perception in the students that the teacher is a resource rather than the invigilator. Once students have produced written work, their answers must be corrected. This does not need to be done thoroughly in class, if the writing precedes a speaking task.

Within this framework, teachers mix and match the engagement models as the lesson proceeds through the ARCC sequence.

### *Value System*

ELMS is a learning-oriented philosophy of TESOL. Its chief underpinnings are: recall aids learning, but does not represent it; manipulation shapes learning, but does not fully account for it; and learning depends on engagement. In brief, the ELMS philosophy is that learning results from a sequence of activities, which includes recall and manipulation, and results in high levels of student engagement.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter generates a system under which the learning engagement models can be understood and further examined. In addition, it offers some practical applications of the models.

This new system is coined as ELMS – English Learning Maximisation System. It is expected to replace Present-Practise-Produce or PPP in English language learning through teaching. In order words, ELMS is expected to become the norm in classroom-based instruction. This transition should afford ESL students with a unique opportunity to master English in a cost and time-effective manner.

## Curriculum Implications

I have seen time and time again the reluctance to move away from the PPP paradigm. Present-Practise-Produce frameworks instruct teachers to demonstrate language use, isolate target language, practise this in a controlled way and offer opportunities for students to produce the target language naturally. This approach has somehow withstood the test of time in TESOL. I was first instructed in it in 1986 through audio-lingualism. This training was provided by the British Council and spanned a period of four years. In this approach, a listening task or a role-play is the preferred method to demonstrate language. Often, but not always so, the teacher provides the target language and students' attention is drawn to this new input through colour-coding schemes. This philosophy came up in a job interview at one of the colleges I worked at as Director of Studies.

I had advertised for a teaching position and was conducting interviews. A highly experienced and qualified teacher (Bachelor of Education) had submitted a résumé, in response to my [www.seek.com](http://www.seek.com) advertisement, which the Curriculum Coordinator and I found to meet the profile of the teacher we needed. Throughout the interview, I posed the one question I could not miss out: "how do you structure your teaching?" With this question, which interestingly did not elicit clarification questions, I was seeking to understand how the teacher organised their lessons. I wanted to hear words such as scaffold, model, concept check and provide extension activities. I was prepared to clarify it, if the answer involved a warm-up, the target language and practice. Instead, after some two and a half decades since my audio-lingualism training, someone evoked that robotic delivery style again. "Isn't that the PPP thing?" The prospective teacher asked, seeking reassurance, his eyes staring at our raised eyebrows.

Despite its popularity and pervasiveness, PPP fails to capture some of the central concerns raised by the students recorded in this publication. One such concern relates to the recall-feel sequence. In other words, when the Engineering student asks to "feel the words" and compares this to the self-fulfilling realisation of being able to manipulate a formula with successful results, she stretches PPP beyond its "free practice" stage. It is not just about producing freely. It is about realising through trial and error, discovery and confirmation. This achievement may not necessarily occur in most "free practice" activities for a simple reason. Teachers do not focus sufficiently on the need to ensure that students discover, realise and self-fulfil through practice. Instead, the focus in most "free practice" activities is placed upon the reduction of teacher control. In this sense, two

concepts introduced to TESOL by Stephen Krashen become pertinent in this discussion – finely tuned input and roughly tuned input. In PPP, free practice may still be finely tuned. For instance, a role-play may be used in “free practice”. This role-play may simply recycle the language input, without offering students an opportunity to discover, realise or self-fulfil.

From the comments made by the students I interviewed for this publication, it is clear that a need exists for language input towards the end of the learning continuum (i.e. from known to unknown) to extend students’ knowledge. In addition, it must connect the language input with real-world linguistic tasks. Such an exercise is best set as a roughly tuned activity.

Moreover, there is a presentation step in PPP, which can potentially be stifling and disengaging – i.e. demonstration. I could spend page after page reminiscing about my experience with the British Council’s attempts to introduce the Audio-Lingual Method in Angola and the two-way dialogue performed by the teacher in front of the class. However, I shall not indulge here. Suffice to say, demonstration fails to account for the need to actively engage students.

# CHAPTER NINETEEN

## PROMOTING ELMS

### Introduction

This last chapter aims to outline the benefits of ELMS. In addition, this chapter clarifies the place of ELMS in the language teaching taxonomy.

### Benefits of the English Learning Maximisation System

ELMS is not to be confused with teaching methods such as the Audio-Lingual Method or its replacement, Communicative Language Teaching. The latter are teaching methodologies which emphasise either accuracy or fluency. The former (ELMS), is a philosophy of learning through teaching, which places considerable emphasis on maximising language learning. This learning is achieved by focusing on the processes students have noticed to generate the most amount of recall and contextualised re-use. These processes involve both habit formation and cognitive engagement activities.

In fact, ELMS adopts aspects of various methodologies. In *Creative concept check*, ELMS adopts some of the tenets of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) such as the use of meaningful language. In this step, ELMS, much like CLT, emphasises interaction and the establishment of a link between classroom practice and students' real-life linguistic needs. This *Creative concept check* stage also draws from the Notional-Functional Syllabus through production activities which are set with a function in mind. Most importantly, ELMS does not disregard the Audio-Lingual Method. It utilises this teaching methodology at the initial stages of its first model – I Grammar Input, without placing sole reliance on habit formation.

In actual fact, in ELMS, students' views of the learning process shape teaching. In this sense, to learn to communicate in English is a broad objective, which students have been able to break down into tangible, manageable chunks. In other words, students do not want to learn to

communicate every day. They want to put into practice aspects of their ability to communicate everyday so that over a period of time, their proficiency is tangibly improved. ESL students wish to be able to leave a classroom with a clear notion of having learnt one aspect of the language clearly. This aspect may be a function, a grammatical structure, a reading or listening strategy or a set of new words. Their philosophy is analogous with the concept of cumulative knowledge. In their view, the role of the teacher is to identify this cumulative knowledge, organise it into manageable chunks, assign chunks to lessons and develop engaging, stimulating activities to create a learning environment for their acquisition. To them, being able to communicate in English is the end of the course objective. In class, every day, they simply wish to be able to learn one part of that ability to communicate, hence the need for teaching to be structured in such a sequential and manageable way that every day represents a building block. In this sense, teachers ought not to say to the students, “I’d like you to communicate better.” Teachers need to be very precise as to what function, grammatical structure, skill or knowledge aspect they wish their students to acquire in the course of their lessons.

Therefore, if students are asked to listen to a recording, there ought to be a clear outcome for this activity. This outcome-driven teaching style can be achieved through ELMS. Other benefits can be derived from the use of ELMS. These are listed below.

### *Experience Alignment*

Often dedicated teachers spend hours preparing for their lessons. They believe that the lessons are theirs. Throughout this preparation, it is common to hear claims of lesson ownership such as, “I’m preparing my lessons.” The question forms used in these exchanges do not reveal less ownership. “How did your lesson go?” Some of these claims might be more linguistic artefacts than actually intentional ownership claims. In this case, *my* and *your* may actually mean *a* or *the*. “How did the lesson go?” one may ask. In other cases, the sense of ownership is actually intended and arises out of the time invested by the teacher in the preparation of the lesson. I once observed a teacher who seemed to have locked herself into teacher talk. For 20 minutes, the teacher attempted to elicit knowledge about a topic from the students, without any visual prompts or knowledge activation stage. I asked to see the teacher outside the classroom. I started a brief conversation outside the classroom by acknowledging the lacklustre participation on the part of the students. I then asked the teacher to explain the purpose of the elicitation, to which the teacher retorted,

“that’s my lesson. I ... oh, sorry, I just ... don’t know how to get back to the flow I had.” I apologised and stressed that there was a need to scaffold towards an actual activity.

With ELMS, teachers are able to align their purposes and means with students’ expectations. Students expect to be assisted, engaged, made to recall, encouraged to experiment with manageable chunks of language (one at a time) and validated. Similarly, teachers expect to have a sense of achievement at the end of the lessons. This sense of achievement can be achieved through the Creative concept check stage of ELMS.

### *Learning-Orientation*

ELMS should enable teachers to obtain instantaneous feedback on learning. This immediacy of feedback should enable teachers to become proactive in the identification of knowledge gains (or lack thereof). Because ELMS does not use “global tasks”, teachers should have objective outcomes as benchmarks against which learning can be measured. In other words, through both *Creative concept check* and *reinforcement* teachers should be able to instantaneously identify gaps in students’ knowledge or skill acquisition. This identification of gaps in learning should inform subsequent class activities.

### *Matching Means with Purposes*

With ELMS, teachers are able to match means with purposes. The four models in ELMS provide the *purpose* for various types of lesson delivery. What is required is for teachers to identify the means (or classroom steps) to fulfil the goal. For instance, if the *purpose* is to activate prior knowledge, teachers may adopt pictures and questions. If, on the other hand, the goal is to reinforce a reading strategy, teachers may bring in various texts and instruct students to use the target strategy.

Different teachers may adopt a wide range of different means to achieve the purposes in ELMS. However, these practitioners will not differ substantially in achievement as the purposes are retained as per the framework of ELMS. Teaching methodologies which focus on prescribing activities to teachers do not offer this flexibility in adoption. These stifling prescriptions take no account of the multitude of variables in a teaching context.



### *Ease of Adoption*

ELMS does not require a great deal of change to teachers' current practices. It is simply necessary that teachers place individual activities or exercises under each one of the steps in the models of ELMS. For instance, warm-ups (theme or language-based) can be used under *Engagement Generation* for productive skills. These would be useful also in *Prior Knowledge Activation*.

### *Non-Prescriptiveness*

ELMS does not prescribe any specific activities or exercises, although it favours concrete (as opposed to abstract) ones. Practitioners will need to select these specific tasks based on the proficiency level of their students and whether the class is homogenous or heterogeneous.

### *Task-Focus*

“Task developers” tend to distinguish an exercise from a task. The former is close-ended. In other words, it has a fixed answer. In addition, an exercise has little or no prospect of future use. For this reason, ELMS uses textbook exercises in the *Transformation* stage. In other words, an exercise is often set, completed and reviewed. A task, on the other hand, has a clear outcome which is achieved through a number of steps. Each step in a task leads to an end outcome. For instance, a teacher may develop a task in which the students highlight twelve new words from a text first. They then check the meaning of the words in groups, with the help of the teacher. These words are then contextualised in sentences, which are cohesively related to aid memory and recall. These two steps are followed by a game in which the words are used. This is subsequently followed by the placement of the twelve words into the list of new words for the class to find instances of in newspapers as homework. In this latter case, the outcome was to add the twelve words to the list of new words to learn. This is no different to primary schools giving students “golden words”. In this case, the task is to identify the “golden words” in newspaper sentences.

### *Stepwise Stages*

Through ELMS, the steps are non-linear, allowing teachers to select the extent to and manner in which a stage is utilised. The bi-directional arrows



in the descriptive models of the learning engagement models also suggest back-tracking, if necessary. In this system, progression is a function of engagement. The greater the student engagement is, the faster the pace of progression from stage to stage. However, teachers can choose to start at any point in the sequence. This decision about a starting point will often depend on the profile of the students. For instance, for low-level classes, there might be a need to start at the very beginning of the sequence. With more capable students, scaffolding may not need to be as prolonged.

### *Inclusiveness*

Whilst the history of ESL teaching methodology has seen various methods become superseded such as *The Silent Way*, *Suggestopedia* and *The Audio-Lingual Method* with the emergence of new approaches, ELMS is inclusive and does not disregard methodologies of teaching. Its focus on the maximisation of learning through teaching does not exclude the theme-based approach in the Notional-Functional Syllabus (through Creative concept check and Genre Feature Examination), the habit formation in the Audio-Lingual Method (through Oral Production Aided by Visual Record) or the focus on meaningful interaction in Communicative Language Teaching (through Creative concept check).

### **Conclusion**

ELMS offers a wide range of benefits. Its adoption will unveil benefits beyond the ones listed in this chapter.

In essence, ELMS focuses primarily on learning (rather than solely the learner as in the learner-centred approach). It removes the focus in English language teaching away from materials and activities. In this sense, it differs significantly from publications which give teachers tricks and hints on how to implement activities. Most importantly, it creates *activity developers* as opposed to *activity consumers*. In this case, ELMS users do not ask teachers in a staffroom if anyone knows a good warm-up. ELMS practitioners ask if anyone knows how the students learn best. Furthermore, what works for a certain group of students in terms of learning English becomes the focus of lesson preparation in ELMS.

## CONCLUSION

The ESL contribution made by this book is expected to be a shift in paradigm. Although this push for a paradigm shift has its origins in an action research project, it must not be less effective. To view it this way is to do the ESL industry a disservice for a range of reasons. Firstly, the research presented in this book is ground breaking in many significant ways. One such manner is the fact that real, genuine cases have triggered and guided the conduct of this mixed-methodology examination. Secondly, the new paradigm, ELMS, offers tangible benefits, which must not be ignored, especially in commercial ESL contexts. These settings are driven by customer satisfaction. Such satisfaction tends to be directly related to a student's perception of learning. Unless teaching focuses on learning (rather than itself), customer satisfaction will prove unattainable in many ESL classrooms. Thirdly, the encouragement to move away from PPP and into ARCC is grounded in the growing say ESL students have in their learning experience. ESL students in private colleges have the power to shape the employment prospects of teachers. These are fee-paying students whose future hinges on successful completion of ESL instruction. Their business is welcome by college proprietors who will soon value attention to learning, more than any other aspect of their equity, as a means to achieving growth in market share.

The paradigm shift in TESOL suggested by this book towards a focus on learning builds upon existing foci in the industry. It extends learner-centredness by emphasising students' mental learning processes. However, *learning-centredness*, as described in this book, also differs slightly from *learner-centredness*. In the latter concept, learner-centredness, an attempt is made to factor students' linguistic and paralinguistic characteristics into lesson planning and delivery. Nonetheless, these characteristics are multiple and complex in classes of multiple ages, nationalities and learning goals. This challenge is overcome in this book by placing the emphasis on the cognitive and mental processes involved in learning such as engagement, recall and transformation through *learning-centredness*. These mental processes are common across most cohorts of adult English language learners.

Finally, this book makes a significant finding in ESL. Students' and teachers' agendas are aligned at a deep level. In other words, like teachers, students prefer an eclectic style of delivery where grammar, games and vocabulary tasks are interspersed rather than taught separately. Like students, teachers mix theories of learning in their adoption of teaching steps. This inter-weaving of theories enriches the learning experience for students. In addition, it covers a wide range of learning styles, affording every student an effective opportunity to engage with instructional material, their classes and the English language.

A shift in direction towards learning within ESL can be started with this publication. In other words, ESL can begin to embrace learning-centric teaching from this book. This orientation can serve students, teachers, Academic Managers, and the whole ESL industry exceptionally well. By adopting a learning-centric teaching approach, teachers can enhance the likelihood of the occurrence of substantive learning. Likewise, if Academic Managers pursue a coaching, mentoring and monitoring approach centred on ARCC, learning is highly likely to be managed sufficiently effectively to prevent the loss of young ESL teachers, saving private ESL institutions massive amounts of otherwise wasted induction, coaching, mentoring and monitoring hours. In actual fact, every time a teacher loses their job, a sense of loss and waste lingers on. The Academic Manager, who has recruited, provided an orientation/induction and a placement of the teacher, is left with a sense of loss and waste. Therefore, the shift towards learning, which makes both scientific and commercial sense, must not be delayed. It must affect not only the classroom, but also curriculum design. In addition, this shift away from teaching and practice activities must be embraced by resource developers. Textbook designers must incorporate the concept of learning-centric teaching in the development of teaching materials. This contextualisation of material can benefit immensely from the adoption of ARCC, the sequence in ELMS.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



João Manuel da Costa Canajena holds undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in Education, Business Administration and Road Safety Management.

In 1986, he began teaching at a primary school in Angola. Following this initial teaching experience with little children from the impoverished slums of Luanda, Angola, Costa secured a job as an EFL teacher at a prestigious secondary school in Luanda. This was the school attended by the elite's children. The students' parents included Celebrities, Ministers, Judges and high-ranking public servants. The President at the time had two of his children attending this well-resourced public school. After a two-year period at St José de Cluny as an EFL coordinator, Costa became a teacher trainer at the Institute of Teacher Training Garcia Neto, in Luanda, Angola. Whilst studying Education at the University in Angola, Costa benefited from a scholarship to Australia where he completed a Postgraduate Diploma of TEFL and a Master of Education (TESOL). Following the completion of the Master of Education (IESOL) degree at the University of Sydney, Australia in 1994, Costa entered the ELICOS industry a year later as an IELTS Preparation teacher. He has since taught at ELICOS private colleges, AMES, Victoria University, Macquarie University, UNSW- Foundation College and TAFE South Western Institute in Sydney. Throughout his 17 years of teaching experience in

Australia, Costa has taught almost the full scope of ESL courses and a couple of Business qualifications. Amongst these, the following have featured prominently in his teaching: IELTS Preparation, General English, First Certificate, English for Academic Purposes, Accounting, Business Communication, High School Preparation, Certificate of Spoken and Written English, Language Literacy and Numeracy and Business English.

Since 2002, Costa has taken up managerial positions. Amongst these positions, he has been Director of Studies (or Academic Manager) for five ELICOS, NEAS-accredited colleges in Sydney and Melbourne. He has also been Curriculum Coordinator for a Federal Government-funded Language, Literacy and Numeracy programme in Sydney. In addition, Costa has held the position of Senior Education Officer for TAFE-Penrith in Sydney and managed a Federal Government-funded Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) project in the construction industry. As Compliance Manager for Registered Training Organisations, Costa has secured the accreditation and re-accreditation of various RTOs in Australia, as well as Federal Government funding for educational programmes.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Lesson Plans

### **A.1 Female, Master of Teaching with TESOL method, Bachelor of Arts (unrelated field), 6 months of ESL but 1 month of secondary school teaching**

Activity 1: p. 94, ex. 3a-b, F2F Intermediate (task: a) Look at photos A-C. What were the most important moments in these people's lives, do you think? b) Listen to Sandy, Miranda and Barry talking about important moments in their lives. Choose the correct answers.

Steps: 1. Discussion e.g. important moments in their lives, 2. S's write down a sentence about the important moment in their lives, 3. In pairs, S's share sentences, 4. Sentences on w/b, 5. Look at the pictures/focus on the pictures, 6. Q&A e.g. What's the setting? What's the important moment? 7. Listen individually, 8. Share answers with partners, 9. Discuss it as a class, 10. Q&A – why is this the answer? 11. Focus on verbs, nouns and clues in the pictures.

### **A.2 Female, Master of TESOL, Grad.Dip. Education, Bachelor of Arts (unrelated field); 14 months of ESL – Australia & Malaysia**

Activity 2: p. 31, ex. 7a, F2F Intermediate (task: Put the verbs in brackets in the Past Perfect or Past Simple).

Steps: 1. Two sentences on the board – “The dinner finished” / “The dinner had finished”, 2. Elicit the differences from the students, 3. S's give the rules, 4. S's give examples and complete the sentences on the board, 5. Teacher gives S's some feedback by adding, do you mean ...? 6. T elicits form, 7. S's get into two teams, 8. T writes a verb in the PS, S's run to the board to write past participle (PP), 9. T pulls out some sentences from the exercise + illustrates the exercise, 10. T gives S's PS and S's give PP, 11. T goes round the class + checks the S's answers, 12. If there are fast finishers, T gives them additional work, 13. S's write an account of an event + share it with the class.



**A.3 Female, Certificate IV in TESOL, Bachelor of Business, tutoring experience, student support (unspecified length of experience)**

Activity 3: p.23, ex. 5a F2F Upper Intermediate (Task: Listen to Kate talking about the diversity of what England has to offer as a holiday destination. Make notes on any additional information she gives about the places on the map).

Steps: 1. Write up the words/phrases on the W/B, 2. Ask S's to guess what the words mean, 3. Have the class use the first words in a sentence + decide which phrase or word can be used, 4. Get the students to talk amongst themselves, 5. Tell them to say the sentences out loud, 6. Get them to read out the sentences, if these sound right.

**A.4 Male, CELTA grade B, Honours – Bachelor of Arts, PhD (unrelated field), language courses, six years – five in ELICOS in Australia and one in EFL in Japan**

Activity 4: p.78, ex. 8, F2F Upper Intermediate (Task: Listen to Eddy talking about Hazel Henderson, an ordinary woman who has made a significant difference to the world. Choose the correct answer in these sentences).

Steps: 1. Get S's to refer to the photos [to do what?], 2. Elicit practical people, 3. Listen, 4. Elicit grammar in the sentences [S's will need some help with this], 5. Concept checking, 6. Show patterns, 7. Listen + match sentences with people, 8. Personalise: elicit activities that S's would do themselves but the teacher would model it first.

**A.5 Male, CELTA grade B, Bachelor of Arts (unrelated field), Master of Arts (unrelated field), 1.5 years – EFL in Japan**

Activity 5: p. 41, ex. 5a F2F Intermediate (Task: Listen to Gillian and Sue. Who likes shopping at KEA and who doesn't? What do they agree about?)

Steps: 1. Start with key words, with more advanced students helping others – give a short definition of key words, 2. Concept Questions, 3. Play through the tape once + twice, 4. Play each sentence, 5. S's call out the answers, 6. S's read out aloud, 7. Encourage S's to see the teacher, 8. Transcript on a website, 10. Gapped sentences.



**A.6 Female, CELTA grade pass, Master of Applied Linguistics, Bachelor of Arts (unrelated field), 10 years – EFL South Korea (University, Schools and Corporate), ELICOS in Australia**

Activity 6: p.62, ex. 2a, F2F Advanced (Task: John McRae is a professor of literature, an actor and a writer. Listen to him talking about what makes a good story and answer these questions).

Steps: 1. ● Open the books, 2. Show activity to S's, 3. Brainstorm re: picture, 4. Introduction to the main picture, 5. Read the questions, 6. Listen + answer the questions, 8. in pairs, S's check their answers.

**A.7 Female, Diploma of Education (ESL methods), Master of TESOL, Bachelor of Arts (English major), IELTS Examiner, CELTA Teacher Trainer, 26 years – ELICOS in Melbourne (University), AMES in Australia, EFL in Japan**

Activity 7: pp. 26-7, ex. 3a-b, F2F Advanced (task: a. check the meaning of these words; b. Read the article. Match headings a-e with paragraphs 1-5).

Steps: 1. Explore the topic, 2. Draw students' attention to the words in the text, 3. Pre-teach vocabulary, 4. Concept check the vocabulary e.g. S's -> S's explain the meaning of the words + T asks Y/N questions, 5. Speaking ●-A, 6. Matching gist + paragraphs.

**A.8 Female, CELTA grade A, Diploma in Education (English), Bachelor of Arts (unrelated field), Certificate IV in TAA, 7 years – ELICOS in Australia**

Activity 8: p. 29, ex. 7, “used to” F2F Intermediate (task: a) Look at these sentences. Then answer the questions).

Steps: 1. Pictures of a celebrity, 2. ●s re: picture of a job in the past, 3. ●s to elicit “used to”, 4. Concept check, 5. Stress on “used to”, 6. Repetition/drill, 7. ●s – concept check, 8. Picture of celebrity, 9. ●s- What do you think she did before?, 10. Substitution table, 11. Restricted practice (celebrities & past jobs), 12. ●s confusing answers, 13. ● – discussion re: students' own circumstances.

### **A.9 Female, Bachelor of Arts (with TESOL method), 9 years – GE, ELICOS in Australia and EFL in Germany**

Activity 9: pp. 46-7, ex. 1-3, F2F Pre-Intermediate (tasks: 1a) Put these words into two groups: family relationships and other relationships; 2a) Make a list of all the roles you play in life.; 3a) Work in pairs. Take turns to describe a person in the picture. Don't say his/her name. Your partner says who it is.

Steps: 1. Work with the title, 2. Elicit the essence of the chapter, 3. Give them words + get them to cover the words + their meanings, 4. Get them to uncover the words and match them with their meanings, 5. Elicit the roles in a family, 6. One student reads out, 7. Concept check – elicit the details of the task, 8. Pair work to group words, 9. S's work independently + list in point form (bullet points) the roles in those families, 10. In groups, S's talk about who is in their families + their roles, 11. Reading: S's read out aloud, 12. Answers on the board, 13. In groups, discussion: how many roles can a ...play?

### **A.10 Female, Grad.Cert. in Ed. (TESOL), Grad. Dip. Educ., Cert. IV in TAA, CELTA, Bachelor (unrelated field) – 4 years – ESL schools, Australia**

Activity 10: p. 77, ex. 4a-b, F2F Intermediate (task: a. look at the picture of a wedding. Match these words to the people; b. Listen to Peggy talking to her son, Leo, about her wedding anniversary. Then answer these questions).

Steps: 1. Introduce the topic of wedding – ask the S's if they have been to weddings, 2. Have the vocabulary + match the words with the pictures, 3. Discussion about Western weddings, 4. Talk about how people celebrate their anniversary, 5. Explain that we are going to listen to some people, 6. Listen to the dialogue- 1<sup>st</sup> just get them to listen to it once, 2<sup>nd</sup> get them to look at the Qs & listen for answers, 7. Sort the S's into pairs, 8. Explain the next task which is a summary of the dialogues, and they've to find five mistakes, 9. Get them to listen to it a couple of times, 10. Listen one final time to check their answers, 11. Ask each pair to point out one of the mistakes.

## Appendix B: Teachers' Profiles & Graduate Survey Scores

Template (all details have been removed as these have been deemed to be private)

Fig. B.1 Teachers' Profile Template

T	QUALS	EXPERIENCE			OTHER LGES	OTHER SKILLS
		Years	Countries	Courses		
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						

**Table B.1 Graduating Students' Feedback on Teacher 1**

lessons are well prepared	classes have a variety of media	lessons are very clear	I receive very clear explanations	I understand what to do in all tests	I get very clear answers to my questions	I feel that I'm treated fairly	I have enjoyed being in this class	I have learnt a lot	My English has improved
3	1	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	2	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3
3	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3
4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
2	4	3	3	4	2	4	3	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3
3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
3	2	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	3
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
<b>3.18</b>	<b>3.277</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>3.36</b>	<b>3.18</b>

**Table B.2 Graduating Students' Feedback on Teacher 2**

lessons are well prepared	classes have a variety of media	lessons are very clear	I receive very clear explanations	I understand what to do in all tests	I get very clear answers to my questions	I feel that I'm treated fairly	I have enjoyed being in this class	I have learnt a lot	My English has improved
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4
3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	2
3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	2
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4
4	2	3	2	3	3	3	1	1	1
3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2
4	3	3		4	4	4	4	4	3
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	3	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4
3.66	3.33	3.33	3.66	3.33	3.33	3.33	3.66	3.66	3.66

**Table B.3 Graduating Students' Feedback on Teacher 3**

lessons are well prepared	classes have a variety of media	lessons are very clear	I receive very clear explanations	I understand what to do in all tests	I get very clear answers to my questions	I feel that I'm treated fairly	I have enjoyed being in this class	I have learnt a lot	My English has improved
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	3
4	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	3.66	4	3.66	4	4	3.66	3.66	3.66

Table B.4 Graduating Students' Feedback on Teacher 4

lessons are well prepared	classes have a variety of media	lessons are very clear	I receive very clear explanations	I understand what to do in all tests	I get very clear answers to my questions	I feel that I'm treated fairly	I have enjoyed being in this class	I have learnt a lot	My English has improved
4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	3
4	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	3
4	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4



4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3
4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	4
3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4
3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3.72	3.72	3.90	3.81	3.72	3.72	3.63	3.63	3.72	3.90*

Note: \* entered on SPSS as 3.90 but shows up in tables as 3.



**Table B.6 Graduating Students' Feedback on Teacher 6**

lessons are well prepared	classes have a variety of media	lessons are very clear	I receive very clear explanations	I understand what to do in all tests	I get very clear answers to my questions	I feel that I'm treated fairly	I have enjoyed being in this class	I have learnt a lot	My English has improved
3	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	4
3	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	3
3	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4
3.5	4	4	4	3.5	4	4	4	4	4

**Table B.7 Graduating Students' Feedback on Teacher 7**

lessons are well prepared	classes have a variety of media	lessons are very clear	I receive very clear explanations	I understand what to do in all tests	I get very clear answers to my questions	I feel that I'm treated fairly	I have enjoyed being in this class	I have learnt a lot	My English has improved
3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4
3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3
4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4
3	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3
3	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3
4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
2	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
1	2	2	2	3	2	4	2	2	3
4	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
3.20	3.12	3.25	3.25	3.37	3.29	3.45	3.16	3.20	3.25

**Table B.8 Graduating Students' Feedback on Teacher 8**

lessons are well prepared	classes have a variety of media	lessons are very clear	I receive very clear explanations	I understand what to do in all tests	I get very clear answers to my questions	I feel that I'm treated fairly	I have enjoyed being in this class	I have learnt a lot	My English has improved
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	3	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3
3	3	3	4	2	4	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4
3	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	3
4	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	3
3	2	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3
3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3.66	4	3.66	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.66

## Appendix C: Statistical Examination of Teachers' Profiles

**Table C.1 Students' Improvement as a function of Teachers' Vocations**

		VOCATION				Total
		Writer	Management	Fashion	Sports	
ENGINPROV3	3.25	1	0	0	0	1
	3.66	0	2	1	0	3
	3.77	0	1	0	0	1
	4	0	1	0	1	2
	Total	1	4	2	1	8

**Table C.2 Students' Improvement as a function of Teachers' TESOL Qualification**

		TESOLQUAL				Total
		EFL Certificate	CELTA Pass	CELTA B	CELTA A	
ENGINPROV3	3.25	0	1	0	0	1
	3.66	1	0	1	1	3
	3.77	0	1	0	0	1
	4	1	0	0	1	2
	Total	2	2	2	2	8

**Table C.3 Students' Improvement as a function of Teachers' Skill Sets**

		SKILL SET						Total
		Artistic	Leadership	Administrative	Technical	Entrepreneurial	Manual	
ENGINPROV3	3.25	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	3.66	0	0	1	0	1	1	3
	3.77	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	4	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
	Total	2	1	1	1	2	1	8



**Table C.4 Students' Improvement as a function of Teachers' Age**

		AGE	ENGIMPROV
AGE	Pearson Correlation	1	.330
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.425
	N	8	8
ENGIMPROV	Pearson Correlation	.330	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.425	
	N	8	8

**Table C.5 Students' Improvement as a function of Teachers' First Degree**

		ENGIMPROV	FIRSTDEGR
ENGIMPROV	Pearson Correlation	1	.698
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.054
	N	8	8
FIRSTDEGR	Pearson Correlation	.698	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.054	
	N	8	8

**Table C.6 Students' Improvement as a function of Teachers' Teaching Experience**

		ENGIMPROV	EXPERIENCE
ENGIMPROV	Pearson Correlation	1	-.367
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.372
	N	8	8
EXPERIENCE	Pearson Correlation	-.367	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.372	
	N	8	8

**Table C.7 Students' Improvement as a function of Country of Teacher's Teaching Experience**

		ENGIMPROV	EXPCOUNT
ENGIMPROV	Pearson Correlation	1	.532
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.175
	N	8	8
EXPCOUNT	Pearson Correlation	.532	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.175	
	N	8	8

**Table C.8 Students' Improvement as a function of Courses Taught by Teachers**

		ENGIMPROV	COURSESTA
ENGIMPROV	Pearson Correlation	1	-.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.937
	N	8	8
COURSESTA	Pearson Correlation	-.034	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.937	
	N	8	8

**Table C.9 Students' Improvement as a function of Teachers' Second Language**

		ENGIMPROV	LANGSPOK
ENGIMPROV	Pearson Correlation	1	.693
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.057
	N	8	8
LANGSPOK	Pearson Correlation	.693	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.057	
	N	8	8

**Table C.10 Students' Improvement as a function of Teachers' Vocation**

		ENGIMPROV	VOCATION
ENGIMPROV	Pearson Correlation	1	.616
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.104
	N	8	8
VOCATION	Pearson Correlation	.616	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.104	
	N	8	8

**Table C.11 Students' Improvement as a function of Teachers' TESOL Qualifications**

		ENGIMPROV	TESOLQUAL
ENGIMPROV	Pearson Correlation	1	.149
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.725
	N	8	8
TESOLQUAL	Pearson Correlation	.149	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.725	
	N	8	8

**Table C.12 Students' Improvement as a function of Teachers' Skill Sets**

		ENGIMPROV	SKILL SET
ENGIMPROV	Pearson Correlation	1	-.323
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.435
	N	8	8
SKILL SET	Pearson Correlation	-.323	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.435	
	N	8	8

## Appendix D: E-Mail to (Removed Item)

**From:** João canoquena  
**Sent:** 26 January 2011 07:30  
**To:** (removed item)  
**Subject:** RE: Instant Grammar resources - ready-made lessons

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to express my deepest concern over the direction of resource development in ESL.

I have been Director of Studies for a number of NEAS-accredited colleges in Australia. My teaching career began in 1986.

I would very much like to see a greater adaptation in resource development to the real world. More importantly, I do believe that there is a massive divide between ESL resource development and mainstream education philosophies pertaining to material creation.

In mainstream education (i.e. primary, secondary and university), there has been a clear attempt to contextualise educational instruction and integrate classroom work with the real world. However, the same does not seem apparent in ESL.

For years, there has been a call for hands-on material. Constructionism is grounded in the idea of hands-on practice. Yet, in 2011, Oxford University Press puts out resources which do exactly the same these did in the last century – ask students to complete exercises.

May I suggest that there be a greater emphasis on students using language with a specific end in mind. After all, no native speaker of English uses the language for the sake of uttering words. There is ALWAYS an intent to achieve an end. In some cases, this purpose may simply mean obtaining services. In other cases, it may signify to persuade others. Irrespective of the intention, the reality is unequivocal – language is used for a reason.

Would it not be reasonable to assume that students wishing to learn English would also require the ability to use the language as a means to an end?

I guess my suggestion is to see activities which involve the following:

- a) lead-in (the current examples in your sample activities are brilliant for this)
- b) concept checking (or your own version entitled Test It)
- c) facilitated practice (group activity to ensure students can discern the use of the item under consideration; modelling, scaffolding and feedback are critical here)
- d) application of knowledge/empirical use/real-life application (or any variation of these terms)

Here the students would be asked to work in either pairs or individually and behave in a real-life situation.

For instance, if the lesson was about Adverbs of Frequency, students could be asked to write up a survey about the various habits of their classmates. Some titles of the surveys may include: Washing Your Hands Before a Meal; Using a Manual to Fix a Technical Problem etc.

I would like to see greater direction from institutions such as Oxford University Press for young teachers for a number of reasons. In the last decade, we have seen a decline in the course contact hours for ESL teachers. In other words, most ESL teachers today have attended a 100-hour course as opposed to 3-4 years. CELTA courses, whilst useful and cheap, do not offer the breadth and depth required for teachers to tackle the challenges of the real world such as committing to students' academic progress.

Secondly, apart from the shortcomings in the instruction of teachers, there is the ever-increasing demand for higher levels of English for employment and migration. Unless our young teachers are provided with clear benchmarks, the industry will soon become a white elephant parked on the sidelines of development.

I urge the university to review its output and seek advice from highly experienced teachers.

Warmest of regards,

João Canoquena

B.Ed.; Grad.Dip. TEFL; M.Ed. (TESOL); M.B.A.

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