EXPERIENCED TEACHERS' THOUGHTS AND THE TEACHING OF ORAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT
A teacher's thoughts are very much influenced by his knowledge systems and beliefs. These two components will certainly have an impact on the way he performs in the classroom. These will influence the conception of the teaching tasks, the teachers' teaching strategies and classroom decisions. These two components need to be studied in greater detail, identifying how they interact with each other and influence teachers' classroom practice. The researcher's purpose in this current investigation on oral communication is to construct a context to enable us to see the influence of experienced teachers' thought processes on their classroom practices. Predominant categories are thoughts pertaining to students' behaviour, classroom management, students' participation in classroom tasks and self improvement.

Teachers' thoughts, influenced by their knowledge systems and beliefs need to be studied in greater detail. How knowledge systems and beliefs interact with each other and the effects teachers' beliefs have on student outcomes are worthwhile areas of research. A comparison between novice teachers' thoughts and experienced teachers' thoughts can also shed more light into what governs good classroom practice.

INTRODUCTION
Experienced teachers have their own beliefs about teaching and learning that influence their teaching strategies and classroom management styles which are very different when compared to novice teachers. This research mirrors the studies of Lucy Loretha Lyla (1996) on "Master Teachers' Beliefs, Decisions and Practices in the ESL Reading classroom," and Gatbonton (2000) on "Investigating Experienced ESL Teachers' Pedagogical knowledge."

Studies on the characteristics of experienced teachers show that experienced teachers provide models of successful teaching that could serve as the scaffolding for novice teachers to achieve a greater degree of competence. (Berliner, 1992; 1995) However, not much research has been done on experienced teachers' thought processes. The number of studies (in ESL) that are carried out unfortunately trail behind their counterparts in the field of general education.

Research done on experienced teachers' knowledge systems also far outweighs that on teachers' beliefs for the simple reason that attitudes, values, expectations and assumptions about teaching and learning that teachers gather over time (Richards 2001) are subjective and difficult to measure quantitatively. However, both knowledge systems and beliefs are interrelated and they collectively influence teachers' classroom behaviour.

These two components need to be studied in greater detail, identifying how they interact with each other and influence teachers' classroom practice. The researcher's purpose in this current investigation is to construct a context to enable us to see the influence of experienced teachers' thought processes on their classroom practices. Predominant categories are thoughts pertaining to students' behaviour, classroom management, students' participation in classroom tasks and self improvement.

Objectives of the Study
This study investigates the hypothesis that access to the experienced teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) is possible through qualitative analyses of teachers' verbal protocols and

videotaped segments of teachers' classroom teaching. PCK is defined as teachers' own personal theories on learning and teaching which are then used in classroom teaching in a variety of situations. (Shulman, 1987)

This research focusses on a need for an analysis of experienced teachers' thoughts so that a more meaningful description of the area of cognition that influences teaching can be portrayed. The relationship between the experienced teachers' mental acts and their classroom actions and behaviour can then be established. It is with this in mind that the researcher hopes to explore the following in this paper:

1. What is the set of pedagogical thoughts that experienced teachers have when they teach oral communication?
2. Which of these pedagogical thoughts are more dominant than others?
3. If teachers refer constantly to certain ideas in pedagogy as they teach, what thoughts would be translated into their classroom behaviour?

This study aims at investigating the experienced teachers' thoughts when teaching oral communication in an ESL classroom. Teaching oral communication includes planning, classroom management as well as post active decisions. Probing into the thought processes will complement the overt studies of teachers' actions in the classroom.

Rationale of the Study

"Teacher candidates have a broad knowledge of instructional strategies that draws upon content and pedagogical knowledge and skills delineated in professional, state, and institutional standards to help all students learn. They facilitate student learning of the subject matter through presentation of the content in clear and meaningful ways and through the integration of knowledge." (NCATE, Standards, 2002 p. 15)

Teaching is indeed a complex and demanding process that involves many inter-related tasks (Clark and Peterson, 1986; Richards and Lockhart, 1994). As there are many different

classroom challenges and difficulties, how then does the experienced teacher cope with them? How closely does his classroom methodology and behaviour mirror his personal beliefs and conceptions?

How he goes about transmitting that knowledge is influenced by factors like, his experience, personality and classroom management. Why he chooses that particular style of teaching is reflective of his conceptions of learning theories and how he envisages students learn. It is thus necessary to probe experienced teachers' thought processes or mental acts which influence classroom teaching as this has a direct influence on students' learning (Clark and Peterson, 1986).

Extensive research has been done on the pedagogical content knowledge of experienced Maths and Science teachers but hardly any on the ESL teacher (Higgins 1999; Aleven, Popescu and Koedinger, 2001). Like the classic case of appreciating the gift and not the giver, the focus of ESL research seems to centre on teaching and learning strategies rather than on what propels such strategies to take place. As not much has been done to understand a teacher's cognition in relation to the ESL teacher, it is therefore pertinent not to depend heavily on mainstream educational research findings but to research further into the ESL teacher's cognition processes for new insights (Richards, 1993).

Schulman (1987) states that effective teachers are usually known for their classroom management skills, which is only a fraction of what an effective teacher is. In order to improve the education of young minds, he advocates that more in-depth studies be done in relation to the teacher's cognition. This study hopes to provide comprehensive examples of good instructional practice to further shape the future of education.

There is also a lack of data on what effective teaching is. He points out that "the best creations of its practitioners are devoid of a history of practice (Schulman, 1987). By creating a data bank where prized information about ESL teaching and learning practices is pooled together, there will be a rich resource especially for teacher trainees

and new teachers. (Freeman, 2000; Tsui and Bunton, 2000)

It is therefore necessary to record "experienced teacher thoughts, judgments and decisions about their teaching practices which would then serve as a model for prospective teachers and novices.

Lastly, while training in terms of workshops and conferences seems to centre on the teaching of reading and writing, techniques pertaining to the teaching of oral communication remain much of a personal skill. This study which focuses on the experienced teachers' thought processes and actions in the oral communication classroom will certainly benefit new teachers.

Literature review

Information that is necessary to broaden the theoretical aspect of teacher training programmes in TESL comes mainly from second language acquisition processes in the classroom as well as teaching in the classroom. It cannot be denied that studies related to the organization of group work, management of student input and output (Krashen and Terrell, 1983), management of form-focused teaching (Doughty and Williams, 1998) and corrective feedback (Lyster and Ranta, 1997) promote the understanding of ESL teaching and have impacted teacher training as well. However, for a more balanced and thorough understanding of ESL teaching, these overt studies need to be complemented by studies of the pedagogical content knowledge of teachers. (Richards and Gipe 1998). This pedagogical content knowledge will provide a basis for their classroom actions (Gatbonton, 2000) particularly in the area of teaching oral communication.

Significance of the Study

Since teachers' beliefs and conceptions about teaching and learning are reflected in their classroom actions, this provides a window to self-knowledge and self-improvement. Most times, teachers' thoughts remain private (Schon, 1987; Batten, Marland and Khamis, 1993) and unless they are encouraged to articulate what they think, valuable insights will be lost forever.

The study will also benefit teacher trainers

and trainees who can make use of the data as a basis for their own teaching of oral communication. They can compare their own beliefs with those of experienced teachers and gain valuable insights. They can also be encouraged to question their own beliefs, thus leading to new knowledge about themselves and about teaching and learning of oral communication. Experienced teachers too, can use this study as a check and balance to gauge their own beliefs and conceptions and work towards self knowledge and improvement.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

It is generally assumed that to promote teaching in the classroom, teachers utilize their own mental acts which have been accumulated over the years. As a result, if we can conduct further research into the processes of the mind, we will be able to gain much insight into the knowledge that lies behind them. The theoretical framework of this study is based primarily on the cognitive and constructivist theories of learning.

Cognitivists believe that reasoning and the active mind play an important role in learning. The experienced teacher is an active interpreter of his surroundings and the events that are within his environment. He assimilates new information based on prior knowledge and he is constantly trying to fit this new knowledge into categories that he is familiar with. In other words, he constantly searches for links between what is new and what he has experienced before.

Thus, new information or effective learning occurs (Hiebert and Lefevre 1986; Weinstein and Mayer 1986) each time the teacher is able to form relationships between what is new and what is familiar. This is defined by Hiebert and Lefevre (1986) as conceptual knowledge which means knowledge that is very rich in relationship. A strong relationship paves the way for better understanding and more meaningful teaching and learning.

The mind is seen as an information processing system (Knoers, 1994). Cognitivists focus on the role of the active mind and the stages of reasoning and thinking in the learning process. An experienced teacher constantly associates the

wealth of his teaching experiences with the challenges that he faces in the classroom. He selects and transforms information, makes hypothesis and decisions.

The experienced teacher's thoughts about the teaching and learning process will have an impact on the way he performs in the classroom. When transmitting knowledge to his students, he helps them assimilate the new knowledge by challenging them not only to memorise facts but also to think and to relate to their prior knowledge. According to Bruner, (Smith, 2002) intellectual ability is developed in stages through step-by-step changes in how the mind is used. According to Bruner (1960) the role of structure in learning and how it may be made central in teaching is highlighted.

"The teaching and learning of structure, rather than simply the mastery of facts and techniques, is at the center of the classic problem of transfer... If earlier learning is to render later learning easier, it must do so by providing a general picture in terms of which the relations between things encountered earlier and later are made as clear as possible."

Another key area is "readiness for learning". When an experienced teacher presents his content knowledge to his students, he is actually repackaging what he knows into bite-sized information that will be understood by the students at the students' intellectual level so that learning takes place. He is reinforcing Bruner's argument that ": any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development." (*ibid.*: 33) This forms the basis of the "spiral curriculum "which focuses on building upon basic ideas until the student has grasped the full formal apparatus that goes with them.' (*ibid.*: 13)

Experienced teachers engage in "intuitive and analytical thinking". Intuition ('the intellectual technique of arriving at plausible but tentative formulations without going through the analytical steps by which such formulations would be found to be valid or invalid conclusions' *ibid.*: 13) is often dismissed as unscientific but it plays an important role in the experienced teacher's productive thinking and decision making processes (*ibid.*: 62)

Another area of interest that surrounds an experienced teacher's thoughts is his culture which includes his racial background and religious beliefs. Jerome Bruner's reflections on education in *The Culture of Education* (1996) show the impact of culture in shaping the mind. According to him, culture "provides us with the toolkit by which we construct not only our worlds but our very conception of our selves and our powers' (*ibid.*: x). This orientation 'presupposes that human mental activity is neither solo nor conducted unassisted, even when it goes on "inside the head" (*ibid.*: xi)."

Finally, Bruner's concept of discovery learning refers to the ability to obtain knowledge for oneself. The experienced teacher organises his lesson plans in such a way that students are able to search, manipulate, explore, and investigate. His thoughts about the students, classroom participation and self-improvement will certainly have an impact on the way he teaches in the classroom.

METHODOLOGY
The researcher makes use of the qualitative approach of obtaining data. Interviews, classroom observations, simulated verbal recall, video and audio taping were carried out.

The Site and Subjects
The site is Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam and the subjects are three experienced teachers selected based on a questionnaire given to 20 experienced teachers. These three teachers have at least 10 years of teaching experience and they teach the oral communication component in the Mainstream English II course. Students pursuing a diploma course at the MARA University of Technology, Shah Alam have to enrol for Preparatory English (Bel 100) during the first semester, Mainstream English I (Bel 200) during their second semester and Mainstream English II (Bel 250) during their third semester.

The mainstream English II course is conducted over a 14-week period. Six hours are allocated for the programme each week, divided equally amongst the five components which are the teaching of grammar, reading, speaking,

listening and writing. The syllabi and testing procedure of all the components are modelled after the Malaysian University Entrance Test. (MUET) For the oral component, students are tested on individual speaking skills as well as the ability to hold discussions

Research design

Figure 1 shows the different stages of this research, its data collection methods and rationale.

Step 1: Ideas
- Creation of problem statement and research questions

Step 2 : Theory
- Review of literature on teachers' thought processes, teaching and learning theories, teachers' personality and teaching strategies.

The research design was based on Bruce L. Berg's (2004) model that encompasses both the research-before-theory and theory-before-research models. The research design was conceived as spiralling rather than linear as it progresses. The researcher began with an idea, gathered information related to theory, reconsidered, refined the idea, examined possible designs, reexamined theoretical assumptions and then refined these assumptions.

The researcher found this model very useful because there was new information and insights that were considered when the researcher was interpreting or reporting data. Consequently with every two steps forward, the researcher could have taken a step or two backwards before moving on to the next stage. It was therefore not a linear, forward movement. Conversely, the researcher spiralled forward, but did not actually leave any stage unexplored. This allowed the researcher to be reminded constantly of preliminary work that had been carried out before, the present task at hand, and future undertakings.

Classroom observation

In classroom observation, the researcher made use of the three categories of teachers' practical knowledge proposed by Meijer et al. (2001) as a guide and in stimulated verbal recall the researcher made use of Elizabeth Gatbonton's 21 pedagogical categories as a guide (Gatbonton, 2000). To get the best information from the various subjects, four types of questions were included in the survey instrument, namely essential questions, extra questions, throw-away-questions and probing questions. Essential questions exclusively concerned the central focus
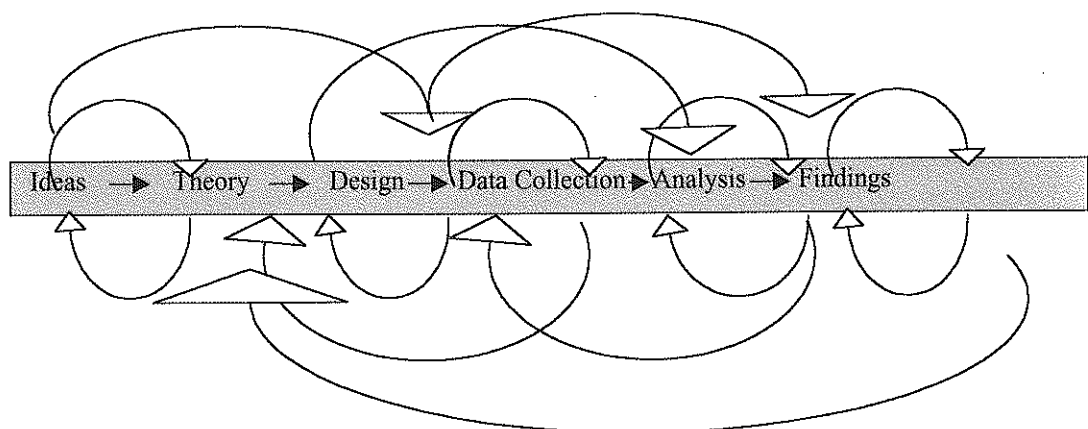

Figure 1. Spiralling design from ideas to findings

of the study. Extra questions referred to questions that are equivalent to the essential ones but worded differently so as to check the reliability of the responses (by examining how consistent the responses are) and also to see if the responses varied because of changes in sentence structures.

Throw-away questions might have been demographic or general questions to elicit background information or to build rapport with the subjects. Sometimes throw-away questions were necessary to put the subjects at ease should there be areas of sensitivity that might arise in the process of questioning. These questions were invaluable in providing overall or background information to the study. Probing questions were composed to elicit more information about what the subjects had already said in response to a question.

Selection of Subjects, Case Studies, Interviews and Video recordings

Three experienced teachers teaching Mainstream English II were selected. Each teacher taught at a different faculty to a class size of 30 – 35 students. As every teacher had a full work load of 18 teaching hours per week and a host of other administrative duties, willingness to participate in this research was an important criterion as being involved as a subject of this research would be yet another "task" to fulfill. Besides that, experienced teachers who had differing personalities and teaching styles added to the depth and richness of the data collected.

Case studies

The use of case studies to build and test theories in language teaching and learning has increased in recent years. Many scholars have argued that the social sciences rely too heavily on quantitative research methods. However, case studies are complementary rather than competitive.

In this study, the case studies place emphasis on within the case analysis and a detailed discussion of process tracing. Thought processes are personal, complicated and differ from one individual to another. In the process of describing and analyzing pedagogical thought processes, subjects needed to feel at ease to relate to the researcher what they thought and how they felt. This took time and a certain level of confidentiality.

Most times, the teachers' pedagogical thoughts remain private (Schon, 1987) and unless they are encouraged to articulate what they think, much valuable insights will remain embedded. In view of that, only three experienced teachers were selected. This enabled the researcher to spend time with them and establish rapport so that they would be comfortable to voice what they thought and how they felt.

Interviews

In order to gain a better understanding of teachers' pedagogical thought processes, the researcher used an interactive approach and a more or less unstructured interviewing style. (Ellis 1994).

For each subject, there were 7 interviews before the class and 7 interviews after the class. The interview questions were modelled after the Survey of Rational Beliefs developed by Albert Ellis and carried out by Demaria, Kassinove and Dill (1989).

Before the teacher entered the class, the researcher interviewed him to find out his plans for the lesson, what he thought he could achieve and how he intended to achieve it. The aims here were to find out what he thought about the teaching process especially in the area of teaching strategies that worked for him; about his students' learning strategies and attention span and about communicating what he knew to his students in an effective way. Interviews after class focussed on what the teacher thought he had done during class time and what he perceived he had accomplished. The aims of these interviews were to find out what he thought about the lesson that he had given, whether his plans had been actualized, and whether his expectations had been met.

Video recordings

There were three video recordings of each subject. The video recording enabled the researcher to describe classroom interaction vividly and objectively. Classroom interaction was both verbal

and non-verbal. As such, in a classroom of 30 students and one teacher, any attempt to record every aspect of interaction would be futile. The video was able to record gestures and all forms of interaction. A related benefit was that every single recorded shot could be paused, frozen and replayed so that the researcher was able to observe and collect data.

After the researcher had viewed the video tapes she viewed them again with the subject. While viewing the material, the subject was asked to recount aloud (into a tape recorder) or verbally recall what he was thinking of when the particular segment was being viewed. (Black and Halliwell, 2000). The aim of this stimulated recall interview was to get more information concerning the way the subject carried out the lesson, the way he responded to his students and the way he adapted his pre-planned lesson to the actual classroom situation. Besides that, this interview also allowed the researcher to clarify particular aspects of the lesson that had been video-taped.

The researcher carried out a total of seven observations for each subject.

The researcher made use of three categories suggested by Meijer et al. (1999). These categories were:
a) teachers' practical knowledge of subject matter
b) teachers' practical knowledge of students
c) teachers' practical knowledge of student learning and understanding.

All thought units were summarized and reclassified under major domains of pedagogical knowledge that could be inferred from the thoughts reported by the teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
1. Role of experienced teachers' pedagogy in their teaching of oral communication.
When experienced teachers teach oral communication, they carry with them ideas and beliefs about their students, their lessons and themselves as transmitters of knowledge.

(a) Thoughts on students
Since all the students need to obtain a pass in the oral communication paper before they graduate, all three teachers feel that most of the students are not pursuing the course out of interest but rather out of necessity. Only a handful of the students show signs of enjoyment as reflected in their lack of enthusiasm in classroom participation. These students are also those who are more fluent in the language and therefore are in a better position to participate in oral discussions.

Teacher A says, "Sometimes I feel as if I'm facing a brick wall when I try to get them to participate. Students are generally passive with the exception of two or three. When I ask them questions, I usually get a one-word answer. Even after several promptings, students find it difficult to go beyond standard answers."

Teacher B echoes the same sentiment. "Students are generally passive because of their poor command of the English language. Most of them think in their mother tongue and there is a lapse of time when they translate thoughts in the mother tongue to that of the second language. Most of them find this difficult and this hinders their performance."

Teacher C says, "Getting students to speak is more difficult than getting them to read or write. Reading or writing is usually silent and students have time to prepare. But for oral communication, the rest of the class is waiting for the student to speak. This sometimes 'freezes' the student and he rather keeps quiet than speak."

(b) Thoughts on classroom management
Classroom management includes the actual layout of the classroom and managing students' behaviour.

When viewed for the most part of the lessons, all three teachers did not seem to make any attempt to change the physical layout of the furniture in the classroom. This is because of putting a large number of students (30 and above) in a small classroom, making it difficult to rearrange the furniture. Students sit in rows facing the teacher.

However, when it comes to group discussions, students are encouraged to rearrange the furniture so that they sit in groups of four or five students. Only teacher B is seen to help the students rearrange the furniture. When queried about his action, teacher B says that it gets the students moving and the time taken to rearrange the furniture is shortened. Teacher B does not feel that it is improper for a teacher to be involved in carrying chairs and tables. On the contrary, he feels that it helps build rapport between the students and him.

Where latecomers are concerned, all three teachers do not prevent the students from entering the class even when they are late. Students are late for most of the classes. This is a problem as latecomers disrupt the lesson when they enter the class. However, none of the teachers are annoyed by this disturbance. Some students even enter the class an hour late, yet no disciplinary action is taken. The teachers feel that students have to move from one classroom to another for different subject lessons, so they do not make an issue out of late attendance. The teachers are aware that the students usually have to complete certain project papers the night before and preparation for tests given by other teachers.

(c) Thoughts on students' participation in classroom tasks

The teachers feel that students should actively participate in class; however this is often made difficult by the large number of students in a class and the lack of fluency in the language.

Teacher A says, *"I find that the students who are fluent in the language are naturally more vocal. Even if they sometimes are the only ones who respond to my questions, I do not mind. At least other students get to hear the language being spoken.'*

Teacher B says *"If I put them in groups they are able to interact and participate better. I make sure that each group has a good mix of better and weaker students. In this way, everyone gets to learn something. The better ones improve in their skill of helping others to communicate while the* *weaker ones learn from the more proficient ones as how to communicate."*

Teacher C says *" I find that I am listening to my own voice most of the time especially if the classes are late in the evenings and the students are tired. Nevertheless, I encourage group and pair work because these methods certainly help them to open up."*

(d) Thoughts on self-improvement

All three experienced teachers believe that learning should be an on-going process. They have been regularly attending workshops and seminars in their related fields for the last ten years. Teacher A after watching himself on video is amazed at his own mannerisms which he feels could be improved. Teacher B believes in reflection when he runs through regularly in his mind what he has done in the classroom. Teacher C has been keeping all her teaching notes in a file for the last ten years. She consistently goes through the file and adds onto the collection of materials. Materials that she finds not applicable are removed.

(e) Thoughts on the teaching tasks

The main conundrum that all three teachers face is to prepare the students for the final speaking test which consists of an individual presentation and a group discussion. They feel that all 'smaller' tasks administered during the classroom lessons should prepare students for this main task. These smaller tasks focus on reading for extra knowledge, organization of thoughts, proper sequencing of ideas and speaking with confidence.

(f) Thoughts on teaching strategies

The teachers believe that the teaching strategies that have worked best for them should be used repeatedly. Teacher A makes use of the questioning method regularly. Although most of these questions go unanswered and the teacher ends up answering them himself, he continues with the effort.

Teacher A says, 'It *does not matter if the students*

do not answer the questions. Even if I have to answer most of them myself, I use that as an opportunity to broaden their knowledge. I do that all the time – bringing in current issues from the newspapers and films that they are familiar with. I use questions as a platform to provide them with an additional world – knowledge. Students need to have broad-based knowledge so that they can discuss a wide range of topics."

Teacher B persistently makes use of drills. He says *"I believe drills, especially grammar rules is a must in the oral communication classroom. It seems childish to make the students repeat word after word and line after line. But it works. At least they can remember the correct sentence structures."*

Teacher C makes use of the sharing of personal experiences as a regular teaching strategy. *"It is important to let the students know that the teacher is similar to them in many ways. She is not someone living in the clouds or beyond their reach. When we discussed the importance of international sports in one oral exercise, I shared with them that I once participated as a mascot. I had to wear this "orang utan" suit which was very warm and walked around the stadium during the opening and closing ceremonies. This really made them wide-eyed."*

(g) Thoughts on cultures and beliefs
Teachers A and B are different cultural backgrounds, and have differing beliefs from those held by students. Teacher C shares the same culture and beliefs as his students. All three teachers feel that their own cultures and beliefs do not in any way prejudice them against their students. Understanding their students' cultures and beliefs also helps to foster closer teacher-student rapport and helps determine learning strategies.

Teacher A says, "I know my students' cultural background expects them to be submissive and passive most of the time. They speak softly because it is deemed rude in their culture to speak loudly especially if they are girls. This is totally in contrast with the test requirement of the oral

communication unit where the students are supposed to be active and speak loudly and clearly. I get around this problem by building up the teacher-student rapport and by explaining to them that what they do in the oral communication classroom is not violating any religious or cultural beliefs but rather helps to groom them to be more marketable graduates who are able to voice their ideas constructively."

2. Pedagogical thoughts that are more dominant than others

Predominant in all three teachers' pedagogical thoughts are thoughts on students, on classroom management, students' participation in classroom tasks, and self improvement.

All three teachers are concerned with students' attitudes towards the learning of English. They try to make the teaching and learning of English as relevant as possible to the everyday lives of the students. Teacher C particularly makes it a point to build rapport with the students by relating her own personal experiences when she was a teenager.

Thoughts on classroom management are also of great importance. Where logistics are concerned, all the three classes where the lessons are held are cluttered, hot and stuffy. Arrangement of furniture into other patterns would require much time and effort. Therefore, teachers make only minimal attempts to move any of the furniture so as not to use too much of classtime. All three teachers try to engage the attention of the students. No one is given more attention than the rest. To make lessons more challenging, teachers also make use of graded exercises on oral communication to cater for these three mixed ability classes.

As oral communication involves student participation, teachers try many ways to generate student-talk. This is uppermost in their minds, given that only a few vocal students will participate. All three teachers feel that there is a great need for student participation as oral communication means active participation

Besides that, there is also the necessity of teacher's self improvement through reflective practices and participation in related seminars, workshops and conferences. All three teachers

engage in self reflection whereby they analyse the effectiveness of the lessons taught and ruminate on how to improve on them. Although they believe that participation in seminars is crucial to professional development, they lament that funding difficulties often deter them from doing so.

3. The translation of pedagogical thoughts into classroom behaviour

Prominent teaching pedagogy observed are motivating students through encouragement and building teacher-student rapport.

The three teachers are seen constantly encouraging their students to contribute to classroom discussion. They do this by identifying the more vocal students to spearhead discussion groups. Besides that, they constantly praise students who get the right answers. Even if the students' answers are incorrect, the teachers do not reprimand them but encourage the students to try again.

The teachers also make use of the mother tongue when explaining concepts in the classroom. In one particular lesson, teacher B allows one of his weaker students to voice his opinion in front of the class using the mother tongue. The teacher argues that it is much easier for the students who are less proficient to report in the mother tongue to develop his confidence when giving opinions. However, when it comes to actual oral discussions, the teacher emphasizes the use of the English language.

The teachers also believe in occasional drills to develop mastery of some language functions. Teacher B in particular exhibits a fondness for drills especially in the teaching of grammar items. Students who are more proficient in the language feel that drilling is unnecessary while those who are less proficient in the language think it is a good method.

Building teacher-student rapport is also uppermost in the teachers' minds. All the three teachers are friendly and move around the class, initiating conversations with the students especially during group discussions. Teacher A in one of his lessons, helps to check on the malfunctioning of the air-conditioning unit. Teacher B also helps in the arranging of classroom furniture when he wants the students to sit and discuss in groups. There are many instances seen where the students in all the three classes treat their teachers more as friends than people in authority.

CONCLUSION

When the experienced teacher conducts a lesson he is not only teaching subject matter but is constantly thinking about his students, his lesson and his surroundings and trying to make the best of the given situation. These thoughts affect his behaviour and influence the learning environment. Thoughts about teaching and students are like filters and props for helping students to learn, to focus their attention and to organize.

He gets around challenges like late attendance by attempting to understand the students' predicament. He overcomes physical classroom constraints by making use of traditional classroom seating arrangements and the occasional re arranging of furniture for group work.

The experienced teachers' thoughts are important in the creation of tasks and the selection of methods of teaching. His classroom methodology is based on what has worked for him through years of classroom teaching. He is not afraid to stick to ideas that may be considered obsolete by others because he believes that they still work in his lessons. While the novice teacher may abandon his own instincts about methods that work, the experienced teacher knows what works and is not affected by what others think. Teachers' thoughts on teaching and learning accumulated over years of school experiences can cause them to be highly resistant to change.

The experienced teacher comes across more as a friend than an advisor because he knows that being a friend to his students is an effective tool in breaking imbibitions. Why he chooses a particular style of teaching is reflective of his conceptions of learning theories and how he envisages students learn.

Suggestions for Future Research

Teaching is more than just transmitting knowledge. It is important to examine the thoughts of the teacher- educator to understand what he is transmitting implicitly to the teacher trainees. Since the experienced teacher's thoughts affect his decisions and actions and his interactions with students, then his thoughts should be a focus for instruction and a target for change during teacher education.

Instead of trying to convince novice teachers that they are using the wrong methods, they should be encouraged to expand and elaborate their thoughts about good teaching. It is pertinent to encourage novice teachers to make comparisons between what they think good teaching is, and analyse their teaching plans to see the advantages and limitations. Educators simultaneously can make use of this comparison to do further research. Novice teachers should also be made aware of their own thoughts and of the other teacher trainees.

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