

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

**The metalinguistic awareness of Hong Kong
secondary school teachers of English**

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ABSTRACT
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES
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Doctor of Philosophy
THE METALINGUISTIC AWARENESS OF
HONG KONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
by Stephen James Andrews

The study is concerned with the language knowledge and awareness of L2 teachers, with specific reference to grammar. A theoretically-based construct, teacher metalinguistic awareness (TMA), is proposed as a pedagogically-related reflective dimension of communicative language ability : a sub-component of pedagogical content knowledge specific to the teacher of language. The model places emphasis on both the declarative and procedural dimensions of TMA.

The main purpose of the study is to examine the validity of the construct by investigating the metalinguistic awareness of a number of teachers of English, all non-native speakers without professional training, working in Hong Kong secondary schools. However, the issues raised are applicable to all L2 teachers (and, arguably, to L1 teachers, too). Employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques, the study investigates the relationship between communicative language ability and the declarative dimension of TMA, explores potential influences upon the development of a teacher's metalinguistic awareness, and observes the ways in which TMA can affect a teacher's professional activity. At the same time, it provides insights into the TMA of the specific group of teachers forming the focus of the research.

The results lend support for the model : declarative TMA and communicative language ability appear to be distinct but related factors of language ability. Both factors are shown to be vital to the consistently successful application of TMA in practice, especially in relation to the teacher's mediation of input for learning. However, the impact of TMA on pedagogical practice is also affected by factors associated with personality, attitude, context, and professional background. Evidence suggests that the development of an individual's TMA (and communicative language ability) is influenced by a cluster of experiential factors specific to that teacher. The levels of communicative language ability and TMA among the research subjects are in general disturbingly low.

The study explores an area of considerable current interest and crucial importance to the profession, but which has received scant research attention hitherto. The TMA construct and the model of the hypothesised relationships between TMA, communicative language ability, and pedagogical content knowledge represent a contribution to learning because they increase our understanding of this area of teacher knowledge and teacher thinking, and provide a theoretical framework for further research into teacher language awareness.

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Preface

The present study had its origins more than ten years ago. I was then working at the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), overseeing UCLES' take-over of responsibility for the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Certificate and Diploma schemes for teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). During this period I first became acutely conscious of teacher-trainers' concerns about the language awareness of native-speaker trainees at both Certificate (pre-service) and Diploma (in-service) levels. At the same time, my close involvement with the Cambridge Examinations in English for Language Teachers (CEELT), for which I also had overall responsibility, made me realise that issues of language awareness and the relationship between language competence and teaching competence were potentially of equal importance in the case of the non-native-speaker L2 teacher.

Teacher language awareness, particularly in relation to grammar, was a subject in which I rapidly developed a great interest, initially with specific reference to native-speaker teachers. Members of the TEFL profession with whom I had close contact in the late eighties (especially the members of the various RSA/UCLES scheme committees) had a strong influence on my initial thinking, and also on my first attempts to conduct research in this area (see, for example, the 1991 paper published as Andrews 1994a).

When I subsequently moved to Hong Kong in 1990 to take up a full-time post in teacher education, I already had it in mind that I would like to undertake doctoral research in relation to teacher language awareness. It was an area which clearly needed to be investigated, for while there seemed to be widespread recognition within the profession of the importance of language awareness for teachers, the construct itself nevertheless remained woolly, amorphous, ill-defined, and under-researched.

My initial intention was to investigate the language awareness of native-speaker EFL teachers. However, the experience of working with teachers in Hong Kong confirmed my previous impression that the issues were equally relevant to non-native-speaker teachers. For that reason, and in the light of an increasing interest in teacher language awareness within Hong Kong, I decided to focus my research upon non-native-speaker teachers in Hong Kong secondary schools. I therefore took the opportunity to examine teacher language awareness, and the relationship between language competence and teaching competence, among a small group of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English. The thesis presents a report of this research.

Acknowledgements

Although I am solely responsible for the final version of this thesis, the ideas it contains are the product of almost thirty years' professional involvement in language education, and have inevitably been influenced by colleagues, past and present. I would like to express my thanks to all those I have had the good fortune to encounter within the profession, too numerous to mention individually, whose ideas may have had an impact upon my own thinking.

At the same time, it would not have been possible for me to complete this study without the support of institutions and individuals whose specific contributions are acknowledged below.

First of all, I wish to thank my supervisor, Christopher Brumfit, for the help he has provided over the past five years. At all times, he has been the ideal supervisor, providing intellectual inspiration from the outset, demonstrating patience and flexibility when faced with the idiosyncratic study schedule of a student based for much of the year in Hong Kong, and offering prompt, incisive and constructive feedback on all draft material submitted for comment. I am also grateful to Rosamond Mitchell, Keith Jones, and Janet Hooper, who gave generously of their time in responding to requests for advice at various stages of the study.

This thesis would not have been completed without the practical support of the University of Hong Kong, and its generous provision of study leave during my five years of doctoral research, for which I am most grateful. I should also like to express thanks to my colleagues (past and present) within the Faculty of Education, and especially to all those in the Department of Curriculum Studies who have had to cover for me during my inevitable periods of absence. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the unstinting support given to me both by my Head of Department, Amy Tsui, and the Head of the English Section, Peter Falvey.

I must also place on record my gratitude to all my research subjects, in particular the seventeen teachers who took part in the main study. Their generous commitment of time and effort was absolutely crucial to the completion of the study, and the good humour with which they responded to all my requests, however unreasonable, was an enormous source of encouragement. In order to protect their anonymity, it is not possible to thank them by name, but the magnitude of their contribution cannot be overstated.

Although the seventeen research subjects made a specific contribution to the study, all my students (past and present) have had an influence upon the ideas developed and explored within the thesis. Over thirty years I have had the opportunity to teach students from all over the world, an enriching experience for which I am extremely grateful. The study has been particularly influenced by the practising and prospective teachers I have had the pleasure of working with during my nine years in Hong Kong. They have been, and continue to be, a source of inspiration. Among my present students, I am grateful to Agnes Lam, Stephen Lee and Ken Ho for their assistance.

Finally, I should like to thank my wife, Bonnie, my four children, and my mother-in-law for their constant support and encouragement, and for helping me to retain a sense of perspective throughout the past five years. My apologies for all those times when I failed to appreciate that there are more important things in life than doctoral research.

This thesis is dedicated to my mother-in-law, Kathleen McCarthy, an inspirational woman with an abiding love of Hong Kong.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 This study is concerned with the grammar knowledge and awareness of L2 teachers. It focuses upon a group of teachers working in a specific context - secondary schools in Hong Kong - although the issues the study raises, and the techniques it employs, are relevant to any investigation of the interaction between what L2 teachers know and what they do. Within the specific research context, the study examines :

- what teachers are expected to do about grammar;
- what, according to the implications of research, they might usefully be doing about grammar;
- what, because of their grammar knowledge and awareness, they are equipped to do about grammar; and
- what they are actually doing about grammar, and why.

Instead of talking about teachers' grammar knowledge and awareness, the study uses the term **teacher metalinguistic awareness (TMA)**, a construct which is proposed as a pedagogically-related reflective dimension of communicative language ability¹ (Bachman 1990:chapter 4) : a sub-component of pedagogical content knowledge specific to the teacher of language. TMA is seen as being in principle applicable to the full range of a teacher's language knowledge and awareness : however, as mentioned above, the focus of the present study is on TMA as it applies to grammar.

The main purpose of the study is to examine the validity of the construct by investigating the metalinguistic awareness of a number of teachers of English, all non-native-speakers of English working in Hong Kong secondary schools. The study explores potential influences upon the development of an individual teacher's metalinguistic awareness, observes the ways in which TMA can affect a teacher's professional activity, and examines how it interacts with other aspects of pedagogical content knowledge. At

¹ Bachman's model of *communicative language ability* consists of "... both knowledge, or competence, and the capacity for implementing, or executing that competence in appropriate, contextualised communicative language use" (Bachman 1990:84). It subsumes language competence, strategic competence and psychophysiological mechanisms.

the same time, the study attempts to provide insights into the TMA of the specific group of teachers under investigation.

This introductory chapter begins by outlining the contextual background to the study, and concludes by providing an overview of the thesis.

1.2 Contextual background

1.2.1 In the present decade there has been increasing concern about low standards of English in Hong Kong (relative, for example, to Singapore). Both the business community and the tertiary institutions have complained of inadequate standards. There is a general view that standards are lower than they used to be, a view which, according to a study by Hirvela and Law (Hirvela and Law 1991), is shared by Hong Kong teachers of English : 81% of Hirvela and Law's sample agreed or strongly agreed that "The English standard of Hong Kong students has declined in recent years"(1991:32).

This perception of falling standards persists in spite of the fact that, as Johnson (1994a) notes, there has been "a remarkable shift towards bilingualism"(1994a:182), with the percentage of Hong Kong people considering themselves speakers of both English and Chinese rising from 32% in 1983 to 56.8% in 1993 (Bolton and Luke 1993, Bacon-Shone and Bolton forthcoming, both cited by Johnson 1994a:182). The perception lingers despite reassurances to the contrary from the Hong Kong Examinations Authority, whose research suggests that, at senior secondary level at least, there is no such decline (King 1994:21-22). This is, as Johnson (1994a) observes, "a paradox of success perceived as failure", the explanation being that the supply of bilinguals has failed "...to meet a rapidly escalating demand, quantitatively and qualitatively : This demand is the result of changes in the Hong Kong labour market, a shift from manufacturing to service industry, and an expansion of tertiary education"(1994a:182).

1.2.2 A characteristic 'knee-jerk' reaction amongst those lamenting declining standards is to blame 'new-fangled', 'foreign' approaches to teaching, i.e. communicative language teaching (CLT), and to demand (cf. the UK) the return

to a focus upon the teaching of grammar (see, for example, Cheung, M quoted in Chu 1994, and also the views of the erstwhile Director of Education, Dominic Wong, 1994). Interestingly, while the popular reaction in some quarters has been to demand the reinstatement of grammar, the Government has forged ahead with efforts to introduce a task-based curriculum which focuses even less on grammar than the present one². This new approach, known as TOC (Target-oriented curriculum) and intended eventually to apply to most if not all subjects in the curriculum, is the product of something which began as an assessment initiative, starting life as TRA (Target-related assessment) in Hong Kong Education Commission Report No.4 (ECR4 1990:72-86) and later metamorphosing into TTRA (Targets and target-related assessment - see, for example, Clark 1993). Both the actions of Government in pressing ahead with TOC and the popular reaction to CLT appear to ignore the realities of curriculum innovation, and the 'fact' that for the majority of teachers the impact of CLT on their day-to-day teaching has been at most superficial (Evans 1997, cf. Mitchell 1988).

1.2.3 As well as dissatisfaction with learners' standards of English, there is also officially-expressed concern about the quality of teachers. Education Commission Report No.6 (ECR6, December 1995), in proposing a comprehensive strategy for enhancing the language proficiency of Hong Kong students in both English and Chinese, addresses this issue in some detail. In the view of the Commission, one of the major problems affecting language in education in Hong Kong is the fact that many teachers of languages lack proper training : "It is the Commission's view that the major weaknesses in language in education stem from the lack of a coherent framework for the formulation, monitoring, and evaluation of policy, and the fact that a large number of language teachers are not fully trained"(ECR6:vii). This final comment is developed in the body of the report : "One of the major problems besetting the teaching of languages in schools in

² A draft revised Curriculum Development Council Syllabus for English Language (Secondary 1-5) was circulated within the Hong Kong educational community for comment in March 1999 (Curriculum Development Council 1999).

Hong Kong is the large number of language teachers who are not 'subject-trained'. A teacher is subject-trained if the subjects he or she teaches relate to the academic and professional training they received..."(ECR6:18).

It is less than clear precisely what ECR6 means by 'subject-trained' (for example, does a degree in English Literature make a teacher subject-trained to teach English Language?) The apparently simple distinction between subject-trained and non-subject-trained is also somewhat blurred by the fact that in Hong Kong secondary schools there are teachers of English who have:

- a) neither subject-training nor professional training (e.g. just a degree in Accounting);
- b) subject-training but no professional training (e.g. just a degree in English);
- c) no subject-training, but professional training (e.g. a degree in Applied Physics and a postgraduate certificate in education (PCEd) as an English Major);
- d) both subject-training and professional training (e.g. a degree in English and a PCEd as an English Major).

The Commission's figures fail to differentiate in this way. The proportion of teachers lacking both subject-training and professional training may well be rather higher than the Commission's figures suggest. A survey carried out in 1991 by the Education Department, for example, suggested that only 27% of graduate secondary school English teachers were subject-trained, while a mere 21% had both subject-training and professional training (Coniam et al 1994). However, even by the Commission's somewhat conservative estimate, over 42% of graduate teachers at secondary level are 'non-subject-trained'(ECR6:19).

Later in the report, the Commission asserts : "...the current problem ... is that many of our language teachers, particularly those teaching English, lack depth of knowledge in the subject, or skills in teaching it as a subject, or both"(ECR6:49). The Commission's response to this problem is to recommend : "... that the concept of 'benchmark' qualifications for all language teachers should be explored ... with a view to making more concrete proposals to the Government as soon as possible..."(ECR6:51).

The assumption underlying these comments and the resulting recommendation seems to be that many secondary school teachers of English in Hong Kong have inadequate levels of language ability, subject content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge (to use the terminology adopted by the 'benchmark' consultancy team - see Coniam and Falvey 1996). As a result, it is implied, such teachers may be deficient as sources of input for learning. It is intended that the thesis should shed some light on the validity of such assumptions, since all the teachers taking part in the study lack professional training, and approximately half lack subject training.

1.2.4 The study is itself based upon certain assumptions about learners of English in Hong Kong :

1.2.4.1 that for the majority of secondary school learners in Hong Kong (especially those of average and below average ability, and those in Chinese-medium schools), one of the most significant factors in their acquisition of English is likely to be what happens in the L2 classroom, rather than anything that might result from their broader linguistic experience;

1.2.4.2 that, for most learners, Hong Kong is more akin to an EFL, than to an ESL, situation;

1.2.4.3 that the average learner in Hong Kong is not strongly motivated to learn English for any reason beyond that of needing to pass a public exam (this low motivation arising from, for example, the minimal role English plays in Hong Kong family life, cultural life and in the students' own personal lives, and the perceived unlikelihood for many students that English might play an important role in their future lives).

1.2.5 These assumptions do not imply that the medium of instruction issue (MOI) is being ignored : an estimated 90% of secondary schools were reported as being English-medium (EMI) according to 1992 Education Department statistics (Johnson 1994a:189), and one might indeed expect exposure to English across the curriculum to play at least as important a role as lessons in the L2 in promoting the acquisition of English. In reality, however, for most learners, their education

in 'Anglo-Chinese' (the supposedly English-medium) schools provides nothing like the degree of immersion required to promote 'additive bilingualism' - defined by Johnson (Johnson 1994b:17) as "... a high level of proficiency in the L2 with no loss in the development of the L1 or in levels of educational attainment".

Instead, all too often, their experience represents a series of missed opportunities for language acquisition outside the L2 classroom. So-called 'mixed-mode' teaching, when teachers switch between Cantonese and English, is extremely commonplace : many lessons in Anglo-Chinese schools are conducted almost entirely in Cantonese, with only the technical terms (and the text-book) in English. Even in the 6th form, five years after the vast majority of students have made the nominal transition from Chinese-medium primary schooling to English-medium secondary schooling, according to Johnson et al (1991), in Maths and Science only 10% of teaching is in English. As Johnson (1994b) comments : "Schools with Band 1³ students maintain the highest levels of English use, while schools with students in Bands 3, 4 and 5 (i.e. the average and below average) tend to use very little" (Johnson 1994b:20).

In 1997, the Education Department announced plans for a move towards mother-tongue teaching (CMI) in the majority of secondary schools, at least in the junior forms (Education Department 1997a). At the time of writing (summer 1999), many 'Anglo-Chinese' secondary schools had gone through the first year of transition to CMI, with the 1998-99 Form 1 intake having been taught through the medium of Chinese. Under the present policy, only 114 out of a total of 421 secondary schools have been permitted to continue with EMI. It can therefore be anticipated that unless there is a major change in the government's views on

³ In Hong Kong, at the end of primary school, students are placed in bands (1 being the highest and 5 the lowest) following a process known as Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA). The SSPA process combines the school's internal assessment of a student with that student's performance on an Academic Aptitude Test (AAT) focusing on verbal and numerical reasoning. Although banding applies to individual students, schools tend to be given the band label of the majority of their student intake.

MOI, the L2 classroom, and the subject teacher, will increasingly become the principal source (direct or indirect) of L2 input for the great majority of Hong Kong secondary school learners of English.

1.3 **Overview of thesis**

- 1.3.1 The thesis contains eight chapters. The first, the present chapter, outlines the context of the study and provides an overview of the thesis.
- 1.3.2 The second chapter presents a review of the literature relating to the metalinguistic awareness of the teacher, and the role of grammar in L2 teaching and learning. It begins by examining different conceptions of language knowledge, explores the relationship between communicative language ability and metalinguistic awareness, and develops a model of teacher metalinguistic awareness. It then discusses the theoretical and empirical bases for form-focused instruction, and examines the potential interaction between a teacher's metalinguistic awareness and her role(s) in promoting the development of her students' communicative language ability. Finally it draws together insights from the literature relating to possible influences upon the development of a teacher's metalinguistic awareness, and the ways in which these might impact upon teaching.
- 1.3.3 The third chapter is a historical survey of the role of grammar in the teaching (and learning) of English in Hong Kong secondary schools. The aims of the chapter are to set in a historical context the approach to the teaching of grammar expected of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English; to shed light on the prevailing approach when present-day teachers were going through secondary school themselves; and to evaluate the demands placed upon the metalinguistic awareness of the present-day teacher.
- 1.3.4 The fourth chapter presents a detailed description of the research design. It begins by outlining a series of initial hypotheses and assumptions influencing the design of the study. It then sets out the specific research questions to be addressed by the study, questions arising from the theoretical framework and the

series of initial hypotheses and assumptions. Finally it describes and justifies the selection of the quantitative and qualitative procedures adopted for the research.

1.3.5 Chapters five and six report the results of the research. Chapter five focuses upon what the quantitative data reveal both about TMA in general, and also about the metalinguistic awareness of the specific sample of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English. Discussion focuses upon those research questions relating to the nature of teacher metalinguistic awareness, its relationship with communicative language ability, and on any apparent patterns of influence upon its nature and development.

1.3.6 Chapter six describes how TMA reveals itself in pedagogical practice. The chapter draws primarily on the qualitative data gathered through classroom observation and semi-structured interview. Discussion focuses upon those research questions concerned with the relationship between a teacher's metalinguistic awareness and how she handles grammatical issues in her teaching.

1.3.7 The seventh chapter presents a critical analysis of the results of the study. It addresses a range of issues relating to the specific group of teachers. These include how well equipped they are in terms of their metalinguistic awareness to carry out those aspects of their role concerned with fostering the developing communicative language ability of their students, and the relationship between the declarative and procedural dimensions of their metalinguistic awareness. It then discusses some of the more general implications of the study, considering in particular the possible consequences of a deficiency in TMA or of a lack of confidence in metalinguistic awareness, upon both teaching and students' learning.

1.3.8 The final chapter presents a brief summary of the study, draws conclusions about the relationship between TMA and L2 teaching both in general and in relation to the specific context of the study, and makes a number of recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2 Metalinguistic awareness and the language teacher

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an introduction to the context of the study, and an overview of the thesis. The present chapter turns its attention to the literature relating to the metalinguistic awareness of the teacher, and the role of grammar in L2 teaching and learning. This review of the literature has three broad aims :

- i) to provide a theoretical and empirical basis for the development of a model of TMA;
- ii) to examine the role TMA might play in the context of L2 teaching and learning;
- and iii) to identify and explore potential influences on TMA.

The chapter begins by reviewing the literature relating to metalinguistic awareness. It examines different conceptions of language knowledge, explores the relationship between communicative language ability and metalinguistic awareness, and develops a model of TMA. The second part of the chapter discusses the theoretical and empirical bases for form-focused instruction, and examines the potential interaction between a teacher's metalinguistic awareness and her role(s) in promoting development of her students' communicative language ability. The final part of the chapter draws together insights from the literature relating to possible influences upon the development of a teacher's metalinguistic awareness, and the ways in which these might impact upon teaching.

2.2 Metalinguistic awareness

2.2.1 'Language awareness'/'Knowledge about Language'

There would appear to be an obvious connection between the metalinguistic awareness of L2 teachers and the terms 'language awareness' and 'Knowledge about Language'(KAL), which have received considerable attention in educational circles (especially in the UK) in recent years, in relation to both pupils and teachers.

Mitchell et al describe KAL as a new title for an old concern : "that pupils learning languages in formal settings should acquire some explicit understandings and knowledge of the nature of language, alongside the development of practical language skills" (Mitchell et al 1994). Hawkins, demonstrating that the concern is far from new,

charts the history of the debate about language awareness/KAL in the curriculum during this century : he sees the concern as arising initially from dissatisfaction with the teaching of English, and developing more recently into a perception that failure to foster 'awareness of language' (Halliday 1971) was hindering children's progress in both mother-tongue and L2 (Hawkins 1992).

Hawkins' own view of language awareness sees much of its value residing in its ability to provide a bridge between the teaching of the mother-tongue and of foreign languages (see, for example, Hawkins 1981, 1984). Much of the recent debate in the UK, however, has centred on the place of KAL in the National Curriculum for English, and the model of explicit KAL which should be adopted for inclusion. According to van Lier, this has led to a rather narrow perception of KAL in some quarters : "...in the media and elsewhere KAL is often interpreted as a renewed call for formal grammar teaching" (van Lier 1996:80).

Finding a useful definition of language awareness/KAL is far from easy. As van Lier points out, the definition agreed by the 1982 Language Awareness Working Party - "Language Awareness is a person's sensitivity to and conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life" (Donmall 1985:7) - is open to a wide range of interpretations. It is also less than clear whether the two terms - language awareness and KAL - are synonymous or distinct in meaning. Although van Lier identifies one specific interpretation of KAL, which might perhaps classify it as a sub-component of language awareness, he points out that : "In principle this term [KAL] should be compatible with any conception of language awareness, all the way along the continuum from the most utopian to the most utilitarian position" (van Lier 1996:80).

There seem to be a range of models of KAL - Mitchell and Brumfit (1993), for example, contrast those appearing in the Kingman Report (DES 1988), the Cox Report (DES 1989) and one version of the ill-fated LINC materials (LINC n.d.) - while discussion of the concept of language awareness draws attention to the "... increased lack of clarity and consensus regarding its meaning" (James and Garrett 1991:3), and its 'multifaceted' nature (Stainton 1992:110). Some interpretations indeed seem to be in direct contradiction : while Stainton (1992), for example, in her 'dynamic model of language awareness' uses KAL to cover both implicit and explicit knowledge, apparently

employing language awareness solely for explicit knowledge (Stainton 1992:112-113), Cameron (1992), by contrast, reserves KAL for explicit knowledge at various stages of intellectual development (Cameron 1992:14-15).

The variety of activity related to 'language awareness'/KAL has also made it increasingly difficult to pin down the concept : as indicated by Mitchell et al, KAL-related concerns have now broadened to include the relationships between languages, language development in young children, the nature of social interaction, language-choice and personal identity, individual and societal bilingualism and multilingualism, language variation and the (mis)uses of language for social control, as well as the more traditional questions (of central importance to both mother-tongue and L2 teachers) about the contribution made by explicit study of language to the learning of language, i.e. mastery of the system (Mitchell et al 1994:5).

This interest in language awareness/KAL has focused primarily on the awareness/knowledge required by children, although inevitably any changes in expectations about the knowledge to be acquired by learners have implications for the knowledge-base needed by teachers. In the past few years, there has been a certain amount of research, mainly in the UK, on the language awareness of teachers of both L1 and L2 (see, for example, Brumfit 1988, Chandler, Robinson and Noyes 1988, Mitchell and Hooper 1991, Wray 1993, Mitchell et al 1994, Williamson and Hardman 1995, Brumfit and Mitchell 1995, Brumfit et al 1996, and McNeill 1999). In Hong Kong, too, this latter topic has started to become a preoccupation among educationists. For example, Education Commission Report Number 6 (ECR6 December 1995), in expressing concern about the proportion of secondary school teachers of English who are not subject-trained, makes reference to the need for 'bench-mark' qualifications for all language teachers (see Falvey and Coniam 1997). It then recommends the specification of minimum language proficiency standards to be met by all teachers, and suggests that "...teacher education institutions should give more attention to language awareness and language skills issues" (ECR6:xv). However, as with so much discussion of language awareness, it is less than clear precisely what meaning the Commission attaches to the phrase, particularly since these latter recommendations apply to teachers of all subjects rather than just of languages. In relation to L2 education, Thornbury defines the language awareness of

teachers very simply as "...the knowledge that teachers have of the underlying systems of the language that enables them to teach effectively" (Thornbury 1997:x). As a starting-point, Thornbury's definition has much to commend it, although one immediate question it raises is the nature of such knowledge.

2.2.2 Explicit and implicit knowledge

If there is a single unifying feature of all the language awareness/KAL-inspired interests and activities outlined above, it appears to be concern with '**explicit** knowledge about language', a phrase which appears in all three aims of the journal *Language Awareness*. The implication in the repeated use of the word **explicit** is that there is a distinction between "...conscious or overt knowledge about language" and "...intuitive awareness that children demonstrate when they use language" (Goodman 1990), i.e. between **explicit** and **implicit** knowledge.

This distinction, according to Robinson (Robinson 1997), has been the subject of much recent debate in cognitive psychology about general theories of human learning, with, for example, Anderson (1983) claiming that "...separate systems are responsible for declarative (factual) knowledge and procedural knowledge of how to apply factual knowledge during skilled performance" (Robinson 1997:47). The relationship between these two systems is controversial. Anderson argues that there is an interface between the two systems and describes mechanisms responsible for converting declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge, while other cognitive psychologists (for example, Squire (1992) and Willingham et al (1989)) claim that "...the two knowledge bases are qualitatively different and non-interfaced" (Robinson 1997:47). Reber (1993) argues that human learning takes place by means of two functionally separate systems, while suggesting that there is some interaction between the systems during learning. According to this dual-system model of human learning : "Implicit learning takes place in the absence of conscious efforts to learn the structure of a complex stimulus domain, in contrast to explicit learning, which takes place when learners consciously search for or apply rules to the stimulus domain" (Robinson 1997:48).

As Ellis points out (Ellis 1994), a parallel distinction (with similar disagreements about the interface between the two types of knowledge) is also central to two major

theories of second language acquisition (SLA) : Krashen's Monitor Model (Krashen 1981, 1982) and Bialystok's Theory of L2 Learning (1978, 1979). In the L2 context, explicit knowledge, according to Ellis, "...is generally used to refer to knowledge that is available to the learner as a conscious representation" (Ellis 1994:355). It differs from what Ellis calls 'metalingual knowledge' - knowledge of the technical terminology for labelling linguistic features - since learners may make their knowledge explicit with or without the use of such terminology, although as Alderson et al (1996) point out "... it would appear that whatever ... explicit knowledge consists of, it must include metalanguage, and this metalanguage must include words for grammatical categories and functions" (Alderson et al 1996:2). Implicit knowledge is said by Ellis to consist of two types - formulaic knowledge (ready-made chunks of language) and rule-based implicit knowledge: "In both cases, the knowledge is intuitive and, therefore, largely hidden; learners are not conscious of what they know. It becomes manifest only in actual performance" (Ellis 1994:356).

Krashen's Monitor Theory is based upon a distinction between 'acquired knowledge' and 'learned knowledge', a distinction which is essentially the same as that between implicit and explicit knowledge. According to Krashen, 'acquisition' is a subconscious process which takes place only when the learner is focused on conveying meaning - it is unaffected by practice, error correction or any other form-focused activities. Such activities may, however, give rise to conscious 'learning'. The 'learned system' resulting from the latter process is, in Krashen's opinion, of use only when the learner has time to monitor the output from her 'acquired system'. Krashen espouses what is known as the *non-interface position* - the controversial view that 'learned knowledge' cannot be converted into 'acquired knowledge' (Krashen 1981, 1982). By contrast, Bialystok's theory, although also based on the distinction between implicit and explicit knowledge, does allow for an interface between the two systems : explicit knowledge can become implicit as a result of formal practising and inferencing (Bialystok 1978, 1979). Following the initial presentation of her model, Bialystok's subsequent papers (e.g. Bialystok 1981, 1982) move away from presenting L2 knowledge as a dichotomy. Instead, she outlines a revised model of L2 proficiency with two dimensions: one of analysed/unanalysed knowledge (with explicit and implicit knowledge becoming respectively the analysed and unanalysed ends of the continuum) and the other of

automatic/non-automatic access to information. Bialystok explains the change of terminology as being motivated by what she considers a confusing over-interpretation of explicit knowledge, by which term she did not intend to imply conscious knowledge of rules, only the potential for bringing them to consciousness. Whatever the preferred terminology, the distinction between on the one hand applying rules of grammar successfully in production and comprehension, and on the other hand being able to explain those rules is of considerable significance for the L2 teacher. Conventional wisdom (though perhaps not shared by Krashen) would suggest that both types of knowledge are essential for the L2 teacher; equally clearly, such a teacher faces potential problems with both.

2.2.3 Consciousness-raising/input-enhancement

As Ellis (1994) points out, "underlying the whole question of the relationship between explicit and implicit knowledge and how they are internalised is the question of 'consciousness' in language learning" (Ellis 1994:361). The concept of 'consciousness' and the nature of the role played by the learner's conscious mental processes in L2 acquisition have been widely discussed in the literature (see, for example, the studies cited in Schmidt 1993:207). Schmidt (1990), in exploring the role of consciousness in L2 learning, adopts a view that the importance of unconscious learning has been exaggerated. He distinguishes three senses of 'consciousness' : 'consciousness as awareness', 'consciousness as intention', and 'consciousness as knowledge'. Schmidt also differentiates between levels of awareness - which he labels 'perception', 'noticing' and 'understanding'. Noticing - defined by Schmidt as 'availability for verbal report' - is seen by Ellis as being "...of considerable theoretical importance because it accounts for which features in the input are attended to and so become *intake*¹" (Ellis 1994:361)

One term which has come to the fore in recent reassessments of the role of explicit knowledge of grammar in L2 acquisition is 'consciousness-raising' or CR (see, for

¹ Ellis (1990) defines **input** as "...the target language samples to which the learner is exposed", while **intake** is "...that portion of the input which the learner actively attends to and is, therefore, used for acquisition". In other words, intake refers to that subset of the total samples available which are **salient** at any given time (Ellis 1990:96)

example, Sharwood Smith 1981, Rutherford and Sharwood Smith 1985, Rutherford 1987). CR, for Rutherford and Sharwood Smith, "...is intended to embrace a continuum ranging from intensive promotion of conscious awareness through pedagogical role articulation on the one end, to the mere exposure of the learner to specific grammatical phenomena on the other" (1988:3). This conception of CR is seen as wholly compatible with Bialystok's 1981 framework discussed above (Rutherford and Sharwood Smith 1985:275), incorporating, as it does, degrees of explicitness and elaboration by the teacher, and the possibility, but not the necessity, of learners 'verbalising' or 'articulating' what they have become aware of (Sharwood Smith 1981:162).

Sharwood Smith links the notions of explicit and implicit knowledge with Krashen's distinction between learned competence and acquired competence (Krashen 1981, 1982). Sharwood Smith views Krashen's dichotomy and his assumption that there is no interface between the two types of knowledge as simplistic (Sharwood Smith 1981:166). Sharwood Smith himself sees explicit and implicit learning, in Stern's words, "...not as dichotomous, but as a continuum, in which the two approaches complement each other" (Stern 1992:332). Sharwood Smith's more recent work (see, for example, Sharwood Smith 1991) develops what he describes as "...a more finely-tuned approach to CR" (1991:119), which he now sees in terms of two dimensions : explicitness and elaboration (1991:119-120). He also abandons the term CR, because of the difficulty of defining consciousness satisfactorily, preferring instead 'input enhancement' (1991:120). His argument, as summarised by White et al (1991) is that "...one can know only that aspects of the input have been highlighted in some way; it is impossible to tell whether the learner's consciousness has been raised' (White et al 1991:417). Sharwood Smith distinguishes between what he calls 'externally created salience' (e.g. by the teacher) and 'internally created salience' (by learning mechanisms), to bring out the point that "... what is made salient by the teacher may not be perceived as salient by the learner" (1991:120-121). It is clear that CR/input enhancement/creating salience, involving judgements along the explicitness/elaboration dimensions, - indeed any structuring ('tuning' or mediation) of language input - places significant demands on the metalinguistic awareness of the L2 teacher.

2.2.4 Metalinguistic and epilinguistic processes

The term 'metalinguistic', which has already been used several times in the preceding pages, is open to various interpretations, including that to which Ellis (1994) applies the epithet 'metalingual'². The use of 'metalinguistic' in the present study owes much to the work of Gombert (Gombert 1992). In his 1992 book, Gombert outlines three alternative psycholinguistic approaches to the notions relating to metalinguistic ability :

- i) metalinguistics as concerned with the subject's awareness of her declarative *knowledge* of language, its structure and functioning (Gombert cites, for example, C.Chomsky 1979, Read 1978);
- ii) metalinguistic activity as part of the treatment of language, either in production or comprehension, "...characterised by an *intentional monitoring* which the subject applies to the processes of attention and selection which are at work in language processing (Cazden 1976, Hakes 1980)" (Gombert 1992:3); and
- iii) metalinguistic activity as encompassing both declarative and procedural aspects of knowledge (but with, in the view of Bialystok at least, these two 'cognitive dimensions' being relatively independent)(Gombert 1992:4).

As Gombert shows, there is a range of psycholinguistic definitions of the term 'metalinguistic' from which to choose. He goes on to propose the adoption of Culoli's distinction (Culoli 1968:108) between **metalinguistic** activities

"...comprising: 1) activities of reflection on language and its use; 2) subjects' ability intentionally to monitor and plan their own methods of linguistic processing (in both comprehension and production)"

and **epilinguistic** activities

"...related to metalinguistic behaviour but...not...consciously monitored by the subject"(Gombert 1992:13).

Epiprocesses "...entail functional control, which is ...'intuitive' rather than deliberate or conscious. In contrast, metaprocessses are characterised by conscious awareness and control; thus, for instance, spontaneous self-correction of an ungrammatical sentence is evidence of epilinguistic control, whereas the ability to repeat back an ungrammatical

² As noted earlier, 'metalingual knowledge' is defined by Ellis as "...knowledge of the technical terminology needed to describe language" (Ellis 1994:714).

sentence suggests metalinguistic control" (Carlisle 1993:553).

Gombert further distinguishes between metaphonological, metasyntactic, metalexical, metasemantic, metapragmatic and metatextual activities. As the focus of the present study is on grammar, it may be helpful to note Gombert's definition of metasyntactic competence : "...the ability to reason consciously about the syntactic aspects of language, and to exercise intentional control over the application of grammatical rules" (1992:39).

For the purposes of the present study, although the focus is on morphology and syntax, the term **metalinguistic** will be used in preference to **metasyntactic**, because of its greater familiarity. The term **epilinguistic**, though clearly of use in the discussion of the various aspects and stages of child language development, will not be used in the present study. Instead, epilinguistic processes will be subsumed within the broad notion of communicative language ability. Where necessary, the terms **explicit** and **implicit** knowledge will be employed in the senses used by Bialystok (1979).

2.2.5 Metalinguistic awareness, communicative language ability and knowledge of subject-matter

So far in this chapter we have noted the increased interest in language awareness/KAL and the implications this might have for the breadth of the knowledge-base required of the L2 teacher. We have also briefly examined certain issues in the continuing debate about the nature of L2 knowledge, in particular the role of consciousness, and the distinctions between implicit and explicit knowledge, and procedural and declarative knowledge. In the light of this discussion, and following our adoption of Gombert's definition of the term 'metalinguistic', it may now be helpful to try and illustrate what a teacher's metalinguistic awareness might actually encompass, with reference to models of communicative competence, such as those put forward by, for example, Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983) or Bachman (1990).

In each of these models, the overall notion of communicative competence (or 'communicative language ability' in Bachman's terms) is seen as comprising three or four closely related competences : grammatical (linguistic), sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic. What is perhaps most significant for the purposes of the present study is the fact

that the L2 teacher requires what one might refer to as 'meta-communicative language ability', not in the way in which Bialystok and Ryan use the term 'metacommunicative' (i.e. for circumstances in which the subject's attention is focused on the communicative intention rather than on formal aspects of the activity)(described by Gombert 1992:11), but rather in terms of Flavell's (1981) definition of metacognition : 'cognition about cognition'(quoted by Gombert 1992:7). In this latter sense, the term 'meta-communicative language ability' would refer to cognition about communicative language ability - a vital part of the assortment of knowledge and skills the L2 teacher brings to the pedagogical task. In the interests of keeping stylistic infelicities to a minimum, the term **metalinguistic awareness** will be used in preference to meta-communicative language ability.

As proposed in Andrews (1996), one way of illustrating the scope of teacher metalinguistic awareness is by means of modifications to the language competence component of Bachman's model of communicative language ability (Bachman 1990:87). One might start by mapping on a metalinguistic dimension at every level of the model (see Figure 1 below), as an indication that any native user of a language possesses two interrelated strands of competence : the epilinguistic and the metalinguistic, in Gombert's terms. However, if one then considers the knowledge required by the teacher of a language, it is clear that yet another layer of complexity needs to be incorporated in the model. As mentioned above, the teacher of a language, whether it is L1 or L2, needs to be able to bring an extra cognitive dimension to the tasks of planning and teaching : cognitions about language competence and metalinguistic competence, as shown in Figure 1, but also embracing strategic competence (as part of communicative language ability) and knowledge of subject-matter, in that the cognitions are informed by a language systems knowledge-base. It is to this overall additional dimension that the term metalinguistic awareness is being applied. Although the present study is confined to grammar, the term metalinguistic is used instead of metasyntactic, partly (as mentioned above) because of its greater familiarity, but also because there is an inevitable interaction between metasyntactic awareness and other aspects of metalinguistic awareness.

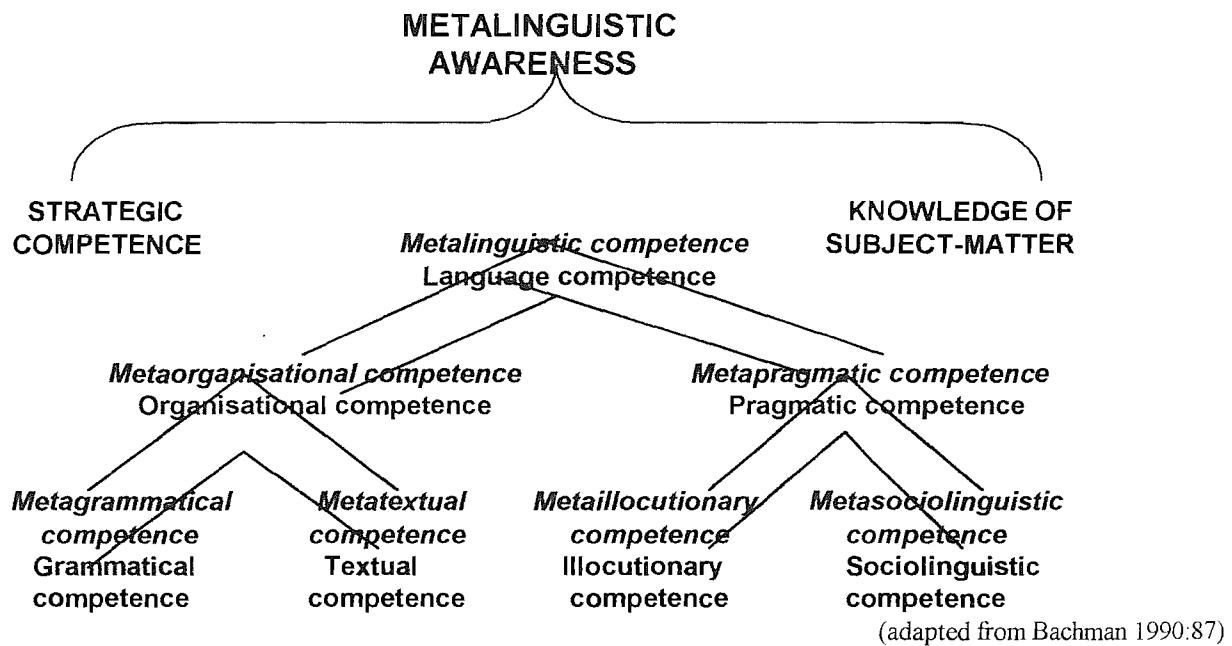


Figure 1 : Teacher metalinguistic awareness and language competence

2.2.6 Metalinguistic awareness and pedagogical content knowledge

In discussing the metalinguistic awareness of teachers, however, one should also consider the relationship between TMA and pedagogical content knowledge, and whether a separate language-specific construct is needed, given the availability of the more generic term. Pedagogical content knowledge is a concept particularly associated with Shulman (see, for example, Shulman 1986 and the collection of papers in Brophy 1991). According to Brophy, pedagogical content knowledge is :"...a special form of professional understanding that is unique to teachers and combines knowledge of the content to be taught with knowledge of what students know or think they know about this content and knowledge of how this content can be represented to the students through examples, analogies etc in ways that are most likely to be effective in helping them to attain the intended outcomes of instruction" (Brophy 1991:xii)

At first sight, the concept of pedagogical content knowledge appears to embrace many of the same concerns as TMA. However, Brophy's definition is extremely wide-ranging : presumably in the language context such knowledge would have to encompass among other things both an understanding of language learning/language acquisition theories and language teaching approaches, and a pedagogically-oriented KAL. Also, it could be argued that taking from general education a term like pedagogical content

knowledge and applying it to language teaching entails the risk of over-simplifying the process of language teaching, in which content and medium of instruction are inextricably linked, because language is taught through language.

For these reasons, the term **metalinguistic awareness** has been chosen for use in this study in preference to a more generic and all-embracing term such as pedagogical content knowledge in order to emphasise the unique features of the language teacher's pedagogical content knowledge, of which metalinguistic awareness may be seen as a major sub-component. The term is meant to reflect the qualitative differences between the language knowledge/awareness of the educated user of a language and that required by the teacher of that language. In order to be an effective communicator in the language, in both the spoken and written media, the former needs to draw upon both implicit and explicit knowledge (in the performance of epilinguistic and metalinguistic activities, in Gombert's terms). The teacher also needs to be able to draw on such knowledge. The extent to which she is able to do so determines how well she is able to act as a model for her students. However, effective L2 teaching requires of the teacher more than just the possession of such knowledge and the ability to draw upon it for communicative purposes, i.e. more than just her communicative language ability. The L2 teacher also needs to reflect upon that knowledge and ability, and upon her knowledge of the underlying systems of the language, in order to ensure that her students receive maximally useful input for learning. These reflections bring an extra cognitive dimension to the teacher's language knowledge/awareness, which informs the tasks of planning and teaching. The model in Figure 2 below is intended to illustrate this view of teacher metalinguistic awareness and the relationship between TMA, communicative language ability and pedagogical content knowledge.

At the same time, the term **metalinguistic awareness** allows emphasis to be placed on the dynamic nature of the TMA construct, a dynamism implicit in Shulman's own cyclical model of pedagogical reasoning and action (Shulman 1987). The use of 'awareness' in preference to 'knowledge' underlines the important difference between the possession of knowledge and the use made of such knowledge : the declarative and procedural dimensions. Shulman's construct incorporates a procedural as well as a declarative dimension, as does TMA, with knowledge of subject-matter (i.e. the language

systems knowledge-base) at the core of the declarative dimension of TMA. In the case of metalinguistic awareness, the dynamism and bidimensionality of the construct mean that cognitions and reflections about language are seen in action, interacting with other aspects of communicative language ability, "...in contrast to a view of teachers' language awareness which sees it simply as declarative KAL related to pedagogy" (Andrews 1997:149).

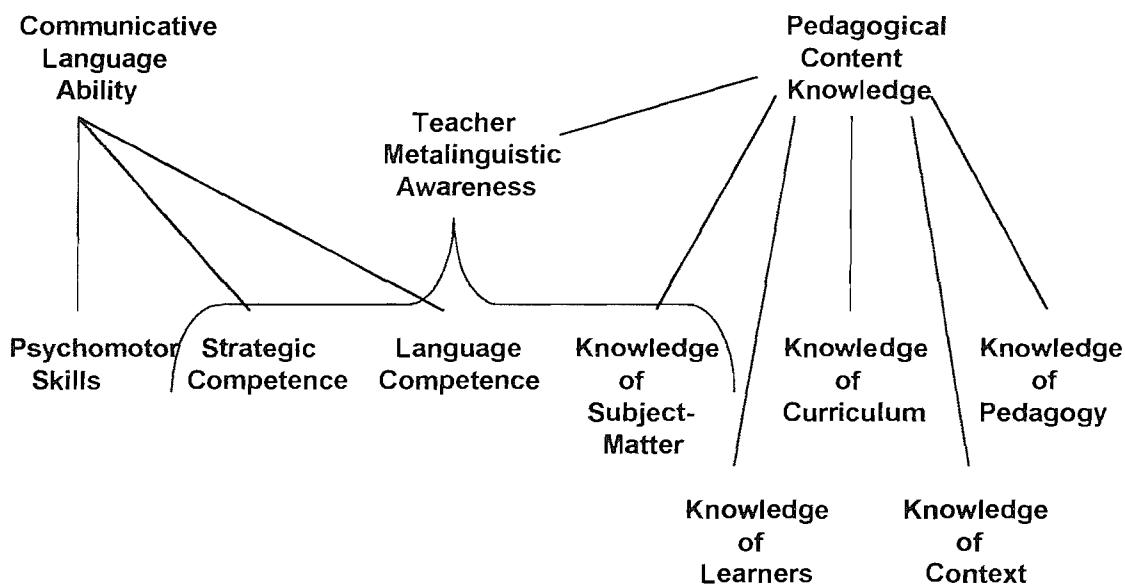


Figure 2 : The relationship between TMA, communicative language ability and pedagogical content knowledge

2.2.7 Metalinguistic awareness and teacher behaviour

Having now defined metalinguistic awareness, and noted that the present study is focusing specifically upon the grammatical components of the overall model, it is appropriate to consider how metalinguistic awareness might ideally manifest itself in teacher behaviour. Andrews (1994a) attempted to throw light on that question by asking trainers of English native-speaker teachers of EFL to characterise the grammatical knowledge and awareness of teachers (**metalinguistic awareness** in the terminology adopted for the present study). The table below gives an indication of the range of aspects mentioned by the trainers :

- 1) Knowledge of grammatical terminology
- 2) Understanding of the concepts associated with terms
- 3) Awareness of meaning/language in communication
- 4) Ability to reflect on language and analyse language forms
- 5) Ability to select/grade language and break down grammar points for teaching purposes
- 6) Ability to analyse grammar from learners' perspective
- 7) Ability to anticipate learners' grammatical difficulties
- 8) Ability to deal confidently with spontaneous grammar questions
- 9) Ability to think on one's feet in dealing with grammar problems
- 10) Ability to explain grammar to students without complex metalanguage
- 11) Awareness of 'correctness' and ability to justify an opinion about what is acceptable usage and what is not
- 12) Sensitivity to language/awareness of how language works

Table 1 : What characterises grammatical knowledge/awareness?
- the views of teacher-trainers

(Andrews 1994a:75)

Such a table inevitably raises as many questions as it answers. One might ask, for example, what precisely is meant by 'complex metalanguage' (point 10). Presumably the point at issue is whether the metalanguage means something to the learners, rather than any inherent complexity in the terminology employed. Nevertheless, the table may be of some value as a check-list, indicating something of the multifaceted nature of teacher metalinguistic awareness.

It is also interesting to compare Andrews's list with that offered by Leech (Leech 1994), arising from his discussion of the 'mature communicative knowledge' of grammar required by the teacher. According to Leech :

"A 'model' teacher of languages should :

- a) be capable of putting across a sense of how grammar interacts with the lexicon as a communicative system...;
- b) be able to analyse the grammatical problems that learners encounter;
- c) have the ability and confidence to evaluate the use of grammar, especially by learners, against criteria of accuracy, appropriateness and expressiveness;
- d) be aware of the contrastive relations between native language and foreign language;

e) understand and implement the processes of simplification by which overt knowledge of grammar can best be presented to learners at different stages of learning. (Leech 1994:18)

As with any such list, one might wish to suggest certain modifications, and make explicit certain ideas which are perhaps implicit. For instance, in relation to a), one would want to emphasise that this interaction of the grammar and the lexicon should relate not only to such interaction within the sentence - Leech refers to "...words, phrases, sentences, and their categories and structures... (1994:19) - but also to the interaction of form and meaning in longer stretches of text. With reference to b), one might wish to add the qualifying comment "...from the learners' (or learner's) perspective", while with e) one would want to highlight Leech's further comment "...whatever the level of learning, the degree of explicit explanation needs to be reduced to the simplest level consistent with its pedagogical purpose" (1994:21), and also to add another aspect of simplification, that the teacher should control her own use of language.

Whatever minor adjustments one might feel inclined to make to both these lists, however, they provide a useful inventory of facets of teacher behaviour to look out for when observing samples of teacher metalinguistic awareness in action. The lists are of particular relevance to this study because of their principal focus on grammar.

2.3

Teacher metalinguistic awareness and the role of the teacher in L2 instruction

2.3.1 Teacher metalinguistic awareness and form-focused instruction

The previous sections of this chapter have explored the nature of teacher metalinguistic awareness, proposing a model to illustrate its relationship with communicative language ability, and listing ways in which metalinguistic awareness might ideally manifest itself in teacher behaviour. As indicated above, grammar is central to this view of teacher metalinguistic awareness, and forms the focus of the present study.

Before moving on, however, it is important to consider the extent to which postulating a construct **teacher metalinguistic awareness** with explicit knowledge of grammar at its core presupposes a form-focused approach to language teaching. This question is of particular importance given the challenges to form-focused instruction in recent years (see, for example, Krashen 1982, Prabhu 1987), and also in view of the

proposed moves in Hong Kong schools towards a task-based syllabus for English (see chapters 1 and 3).

2.3.2 The history of form-focused instruction

Grammar, and a focus on form, have been at the heart of language teaching for hundreds of years. As Howatt (1984) recounts, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: "Young children arrived at the grammar school at about the age of eight ... and were immediately force-fed with a diet of unrelenting Latin grammar rules and definitions" (Howatt 1984:32). The debate about the centrality of the role of grammar in language teaching has almost as long a history, with the grammar-based orthodoxy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries being challenged by the ideas of, for example, Ascham (1515-1568), Webbe (c1560-1633) and Comenius (1592-1670). Of these, Webbe's views were the most extreme : Howatt (1984) describes how Webbe dispensed with grammar completely, stating that "no man can run speedily to the mark of language that is shackled and ingiv'd with grammar precepts" (Webbe 1622, cited in Howatt 1984:34). Comenius, too, is often referred to as an advocate of an anti-grammar viewpoint, because of statements like 'All languages are easier to learn by practice than from rules'. But, as Stern (1983) points out, such statements should be treated with caution, since "...this proposition ... is ... followed by another less frequently quoted statement : 'But rules assist and strengthen the knowledge derived from practice'"(Stern 1983:78).

The debate about the importance of grammar in language teaching and the role of form-focused instruction has continued on and off ever since, with the different viewpoints in many ways paralleling those of earlier times. In the nineteenth century, for example, the grammar-translation method (firmly established in the grammar schools as the favoured approach for foreign language teaching) had much in common with the way classical languages had been taught in the past; the late nineteenth century 'Reform Movement', with its text-based inductive approach to the teaching of grammar, had similarities with Ascham's inductive grammar; while the various 'natural methods' (often collectively described as Direct Method), with their advocacy of learning via assimilation and interaction, reflected many of the ideas expressed by Webbe 250 years earlier.

In the twentieth century, too, the debate has gone on, against a background of

increased interest in research and "the scientific study of language problems" (Stern 1983:103). In Britain the first divisions between ELT and foreign-language teaching became apparent, with the monolingual approach of the Direct Method becoming the consensus in ELT, while grammar-translation continued to hold sway in the teaching of most other languages. The role of grammar was still seen as central to L2 teaching - although several of Palmer's ideas, such as his 'subconscious assimilation' (Palmer 1917), foreshadowed Krashen's Monitor Model - and as late as the 1950's and 1960's, the differences with regard to grammar centred much more upon **how** it should be taught than on **whether** it should be taught. Thus, for example, Hornby's 'Situational Approach' (Hornby 1950), the audiolingual approach (see, for example, Brooks 1964), and the cognitive code learning theory (as outlined, for instance, by Chastain 1971) may have differed significantly in their treatment of grammar and as to whether rules should be taught inductively or deductively, but none of them denied the importance of form-focused instruction.

More recently, within the range of approaches emerging as part of the 'communicative' movement, grammar has passed through a period in which its importance as the central focus for instruction has been challenged. This has been partly caused by the "switch of attention from teaching the language system to teaching the language as communication" (Howatt 1984:277). But it is also, as Ellis (1992) points out, the result of a shift in our approach to language teaching pedagogy: "The starting point, which was once 'What does the target language consist of and how do I teach it?' has become 'How do learners acquire a second language and what do I have to do to facilitate it?'" (Ellis 1992:37). Ellis quotes Corder's explicit summary of this change in perspective : "Efficient foreign language teaching must work with rather than against natural processes, facilitate rather than impede learning. Teachers and teaching materials must adapt to the learner rather than vice-versa" (Corder 1976, quoted in Ellis 1992:37). The effect of statements like Corder's has been to encourage a great deal of thinking about and research into the role of the classroom as a setting within which opportunities for learning are provided rather than as a place where language (grammar) is formally taught.

However, it would be misleading to imply that there is a consistent view of the role of form-focused instruction among those who would claim to espouse a

communicative approach to language teaching. While many teachers have de-emphasised the importance of grammar in their classrooms, many others have adhered to a P-P-P (Presentation-Practice-Production) model of teaching, where : a) new language is presented to learners in order to make the form and meaning clear and memorable; b) the learners engage in concentrated controlled (and often mechanical) practice of the new language in order to "transfer what they know from short-term to long-term memory" (Ur 1988:7); and c) the learners participate in simulated communication tasks "set up to provide opportunities for the use of those forms which have been presented and practised in a controlled manner"(Ellis 1992:102). Teaching manuals like Gower and Walters (1983) justify concentrated controlled practice on the following grounds : "Repetition practice helps to develop habits ... habit-formation is ... a small, if essential, part of learning to communicate"(Gower and Walters 1983:83). The rationale for such a view is no longer derived from behaviourist learning theory, as it was by the proponents of audiolingualism, nor is it based, as Ellis (1992) suggests it could be, on cognitive learning theory, according to which "Practice serves to draw the learner's attention to the salient features of a new structure so that the essential attributes are not obliterated through overgeneralisation or transfer"(Ellis 1992:105). Instead, it is perhaps one of "these assumptions [which] go unchallenged and ... become part of the mythology of language teaching"(Ellis 1992:234), in spite of being, as Ellis points out, a pedagogic construct which may have limited psycholinguistic validity : "It assumes that the acquisition of grammatical structures involves a gradual automisation of production, from controlled to automatic and it ignores the very real constraints that exist on the ability of the teacher to influence what goes on inside the learner's head from the outside"(Ellis 1992:237).

Within the communicative framework, at least within what Howatt characterises as the 'weak' interpretation of the communicative approach to language teaching (Howatt 1984:286), form-focused instruction has certainly retained a role. For instance, Littlewood (1981) sees form-focused activities as a starting-point for meaning-focused (i.e. communicative) activities : "Structural practice may still be a useful tool, especially when the teacher wishes to focus attention sharply and unambiguously on an important feature of the structural system"(Littlewood 1981:10). Even with somewhat more radical versions of the communicative approach, such as those advocating a 'deep-end' strategy (for

example, Brumfit 1978, Johnson 1980), where the teaching sequence begins rather than ends with communicative activity, there is still a place for form-focused presentation and practice of grammar features which the learners have demonstrably failed to master.

2.3.3 The arguments against form-focused instruction

In the past thirty years, various opponents of form-focused instruction have emerged. The first was probably Newmark, who, in his 1966 paper 'How not to interfere in language learning' (Newmark 1966) asserted that classroom L2 learning would be much more effective if teachers would stop 'interfering' in the learning process. In the early seventies, Dulay and Burt developed the argument further, in a paper entitled 'Should we teach children syntax?'(Dulay and Burt 1973), a question which they answered in the negative. Dulay and Burt's proposal was that "If children were exposed to a natural communication situation, the 'natural processes' responsible for second language (L2) acquisition would be activated and a resulting 'natural order' of development occur"(Ellis 1992:53). The ideas of Corder (1976), referred to in 2.3.2, were also a strong influence upon those who advocated abandoning formal instruction.

In the eighties, the main opponents of form-focused instruction were Krashen (1981, 1982) and Prabhu (1987). Krashen's represents the more extreme view. As discussed in 2.2.2, his so-called 'non-interface' position is that learning does not become acquisition. He therefore rejects formal instruction "...because it does not contribute to the development of the kind of implicit knowledge needed for normal communication"(Ellis 1994:653). According to Krashen, explicit knowledge cannot be converted into implicit knowledge, however much formal instruction is provided, and although formal instruction may promote the learning of explicit knowledge, the latter is seen as having very limited use, for purposes of monitoring, and then only when the learner has time to monitor her output.

Krashen's view that "grammatical competence cannot be taught"(Ellis 1994:652) is not shared by Prabhu (1987) : according to Ellis "Prabhu does not actually claim that grammar cannot be learned through formal instruction, only that learning it through communication is more effective"(Ellis 1994:652). Prabhu's Communicational Teaching Project in Bangalore was set up to test the hypothesis that grammatical competence is

acquired most efficiently when learners are actively engaged in tasks focused on meaning. In his 1987 book, Prabhu claims that : "...the development of competence in a second language requires not systematisation of language inputs or maximisation of planned practice, but rather the creation of conditions in which learners engage in an effort to cope with communication"(Prabhu 1987:1). Systematising input and maximising form-focused practice were therefore rejected because they "...were regarded as being unhelpful to the development of grammatical competence and detrimental to the desired preoccupation with meaning in the classroom"(Prabhu 1987:1).

Not only do Krashen and Prabhu dismiss the value of planned interventions by the teacher in the form of grammar-focused presentation and practice activities, but they also reject the role of unplanned interventions through error correction. Meaning-focused feedback is permissible, but language-focused error correction is seen as being detrimental (Krashen 1982).

2.3.4 Empirical evidence regarding the value of form-focused instruction

Having considered the theoretical arguments against form-focused instruction, it would now be appropriate to examine the relevant research evidence. Long, in his 1983 paper 'Does second language instruction make a difference?', surveyed a range of research studies and concluded that : "Put rather crudely, instruction is good for you, regardless of your proficiency level, of the wider linguistic environment in which you receive it, and of the type of test you are going to perform on" (Long 1983:379).

A decade later, in considering the question 'Does formal instruction work?', Ellis, in his comprehensive review of second language acquisition research (Ellis 1994), distinguished four aspects of the broad question which have been addressed by SLA researchers :

- a) whether learners receiving formal instruction achieve higher levels of L2 proficiency than those who do not receive such instruction;
- b) whether formal instruction affects the accuracy with which learners use specific language items/rules;
- c) whether formal instruction affects the order or sequence of acquisition; and
- d) whether the effects of form-focused instruction are lasting.

In relation to a), there are a number of studies (including Savignon 1972, Spada 1986, and Montgomery and Eisenstein 1985) which appear to "...support the claim that formal instruction helps learners ... to develop greater L2 proficiency, particularly if it is linked with opportunities for natural exposure. Foreign learners appear to benefit by developing greater communicative skills, while second language learners benefit by developing greater linguistic accuracy"(Ellis 1994:616). Although there are design flaws in some of the studies, and several of them fail to find out what actually took place in classrooms in the name of 'instruction', Ellis nevertheless concludes that there is still fairly convincing evidence that "...learners progress most rapidly when they experience both formal instruction and communicative exposure"(Ellis 1994:617).

With regard to b), there are a large number of relevant studies. Some suggest that formal instruction has no overall effect on accuracy (such as Ellis 1984, in Ellis 1992:53-74); some imply that formal instruction can have a negative effect by impeding the normal processes of acquisition (see, for example, Felix 1981, Lightbown 1983, and Pica 1983); while several others (for instance, Harley 1989, White 1991, White et al 1981) indicate that grammar teaching can have positive effects on accuracy. In the face of these apparently conflicting findings, Ellis concludes that there is enough evidence to suggest that formal instruction can promote definite gains in accuracy : "If the structure is 'simple' in the sense that it does not involve complex processing operations and is clearly related to a specific function, and if the formal instruction is extensive and well-planned, it is likely to work"(Ellis 1994:623). However, a key factor may be the learner's stage of development : if the learner is not yet developmentally ready to learn a particular structure, formal instruction may not have an immediate effect. It may, nevertheless, have a delayed effect, acting as an 'acquisition facilitator'(Seliger 1979) by "...in some ways [priming] the learner so that acquisition becomes easier when she is ready to assimilate the new material"(Ellis 1990:169).

Research relating to c) has focused on two main issues. In the late seventies and early eighties, there were a number of studies (for example, Perkins and Larsen-Freeman 1975, Fathman 1978, and Pica 1983) which attempted to shed light on whether classroom learners reveal different accuracy/acquisition orders from naturalistic learners. These studies were based on the earlier so-called morpheme studies (for example, Dulay and

Burt 1973, which had concluded that, with naturalistic child L2 learners, there might be 'a universal or natural order' in which certain morphemes are acquired). Ellis suggests that the results of the studies of classroom learners should be considered as "...at best, only weak evidence that formal instruction has no effect on the developmental route"(Ellis 1994:631), not only because of criticism of the methodology of the morpheme studies (as expressed, for example, by Hatch 1978), but also because of doubts about the linear view of L2 acquisition upon which they are based.

As for whether formal instruction can affect the sequence of acquisition by, for example, helping learners to avoid transitional constructions, there are several relevant studies. A number of these suggest that formal instruction cannot affect the sequence of acquisition (for instance, Pavesi 1984 and 1986, Felix and Hahn 1985, and Pienemann 1984 and 1989). However, Ellis's 1989 study indicates that instructed learners progress along the sequence much faster than naturalistic learners. There is also evidence that grammatical features not subject to developmental constraints may be amenable to instruction (Pienemann 1984), and that formal instruction may help students to comprehend the meaning of grammatical structures, even if it does not enable them to use structures in production (Buczowska and Weist 1991). Ellis points out that, as all the related research has focused on implicit knowledge, it may be that explicit knowledge of grammar rules is not acquired in a fixed order or sequence : "If ... the goal of grammar teaching is explicit knowledge rather than implicit knowledge, it may not be necessary to take account of the learner's stage of development. The teachability hypothesis, as formulated by Pienemann, ... may be of relevance only for grammar instruction that has implicit knowledge as its goal"(Ellis 1994:635-636).

As for d), and the durability of the effects of formal instruction, the evidence appears inconclusive. As Doughty and Williams point out, "The studies that have thus far demonstrated long-term effects have generally had two characteristics : 1) They have integrated attention to meaning and attention to form, and 2) focus on form continues beyond a short, isolated treatment period"(Doughty and Williams 1998:252). Ellis concludes from his own review of such studies that "... for the effects of the instruction to be lasting, learners need subsequent and possibly continuous access to communication that utilises the features that have been taught"(Ellis 1994:637).

At the moment, therefore, the consensus seems to be that formal instruction does work. The question which then arises is which kind of formal instruction works best. Long (1991) distinguishes between focusing on forms (isolating language forms to teach and test one at a time) and focusing on form - teaching which alternates "in some principled way between a focus on meaning and a focus on form"(Long 1991:47), as where, for example, teaching follows a task-based syllabus, but learners focus on specific formal features while carrying out communicative activities. Studies such as Doughty (1991) suggest that there are distinct learning advantages in such an approach. Lightbown and Spada's 1990 paper indicates that corrective feedback can also help to promote L2 acquisition as part of a focus-on-form approach, "...when it occurs in response to naturally-occurring errors or in the context of ongoing efforts to communicate"(Ellis 1994:640).

At the same time, Ellis suggests that it would be premature to reject a focus-on-forms approach. Drawing on a range of research studies, he concludes that a focus-on-forms approach may well be of value, especially if rules are presented explicitly and supported by examples (as suggested by N.Ellis 1993), and if the instruction is aimed at i) promoting explicit knowledge through consciousness-raising (see Fotos 1993), and ii) enabling learners to establish form-meaning patterns during comprehension (as in VanPatten and Cadierno 1993). Ellis also points out that traditional approaches, such as practice, should not be dismissed : "... there is evidence that these approaches can work for some target features. Also, practice may well serve as one of the ways in which learners can improve their accuracy over linguistic features they have already acquired"(Ellis 1994:647).

2.3.5 **Metalinguistic awareness and the role(s) of the teacher**

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that teacher metalinguistic awareness can potentially play a crucial role in determining the success of any focus-on-forms approach designed to help develop learners' explicit knowledge. For instance, with the traditional P-P-P teaching sequence described earlier, teacher metalinguistic awareness is a significant factor at each stage from lesson preparation through to the provision of corrective feedback.

Less obviously perhaps, a meaning-focused approach may in fact pose no less of a challenge to a teacher's metalinguistic awareness. For example, the selection of suitable learning tasks in a meaning-focused approach may involve considering such factors as the potential linguistic demands of the task and the linguistic capacity of the learners to cope with those demands. Also, learners following a course which adopts a meaning-focused approach may in fact attend to form, and therefore demand from the teacher explanations of formal features, and feedback on the form of their attempts at producing English. In addition, approaches to teaching which claim to be meaning-focused may in any case be covertly form-focused or may have a form-focused strand.

The types of demand which might be exerted on TMA within a meaning-focused approach (of the focus-on-form type referred to in Long 1991) are perhaps most clearly illustrated by the analysis of a single hypothetical teacher task. Let us imagine, for example, that a teacher has assigned her class of elementary students a meaning-focused writing activity leading to the production of a short piece of text, and that she is providing corrective feedback to a student whose text contained a number of errors. In such a situation, one might suggest that the metalinguistically aware teacher would approach her task in the following way :

- i) treating the text as a single unit rather than simply a series of discrete sentences;
- ii) perceiving the corrective feedback task as one of interpreting the writer's intended message and finding correct and appropriate forms for conveying that message.

In actually performing the task, the metalinguistically aware teacher would then :

- iii) successfully identify the errors needing to be corrected, the reasons why they need correction, and make principled decisions about prioritising errors for immediate corrective feedback;
- iv) communicate corrective feedback to the student both accurately (giving correct information and, if using metalanguage, doing so correctly) and clearly (conveying understanding of the points being made, and being explicit and precise in the explanations offered); and
- v) use strategies which took account of the individual student's own state of grammatical development and ability to comprehend - for example, making connections to previous learning, using familiar examples, referring to related

concepts in the student's L1, and controlling her own use of language.

This list both indicates the range of challenges which many pedagogical tasks pose to teacher metalinguistic awareness, and illustrates the interaction between metalinguistic awareness and communicative language ability referred to earlier.

Even within those approaches which are the least sympathetic to form-focused instruction (such as those inspired by the work of Krashen), one could argue that TMA plays a significant part in the effectiveness or otherwise of what takes place in the classroom. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Krashen 1981, 1985), for example, proposes that comprehensible input is a major causative factor in L2 acquisition. If a teacher wanted her classroom to be a major source of comprehensible input and therefore an 'acquisition-rich' environment, then she would presumably need to make decisions about the current stage of development of her students' 'acquired systems', and :

- a) select texts providing comprehensible input;
- b) devise tasks entailing an appropriate level of linguistic challenge; and
- c) control her own language to a level a little beyond the students' current level of competence.

All of these tasks would pose considerable challenges to the teacher's metalinguistic awareness.

2.3.6 The role of teacher metalinguistic awareness in structuring input for learners

In the context of any L2 classroom, the three main sources of input for learners are materials, other learners, and the teacher herself. The model in Figure 3 below (from Andrews forthcoming) is intended to show how a teacher's metalinguistic awareness can interact with the language produced by all three sources, operating as a kind of 'filter' affecting the way in which each source of input is made available to the learner. The language in teaching materials, for example, may be filtered as a result of having been specifically selected by the teacher or mediated through teacher presentation. On the other hand, it may be available to students in 'unfiltered' form, as when a textbook is studied at home independently of the teacher. The language produced by learners may also be 'filtered' through the teacher's metalinguistic awareness, as a result, for instance, of mediation through teacher correction, or it may be available to other learners in

unfiltered form, as in unmonitored group discussion. Even the language produced by the teacher herself may not necessarily be filtered by the teacher's metalinguistic awareness. In any language lesson the teacher may produce language where she is fully aware of the potential of that language as input for learning and therefore structures it accordingly. In the same lesson, however, there will almost certainly be many teacher utterances which are less consciously monitored, and which are not intended by the teacher to lead to learning, but which are nevertheless potentially available to the learner as input.

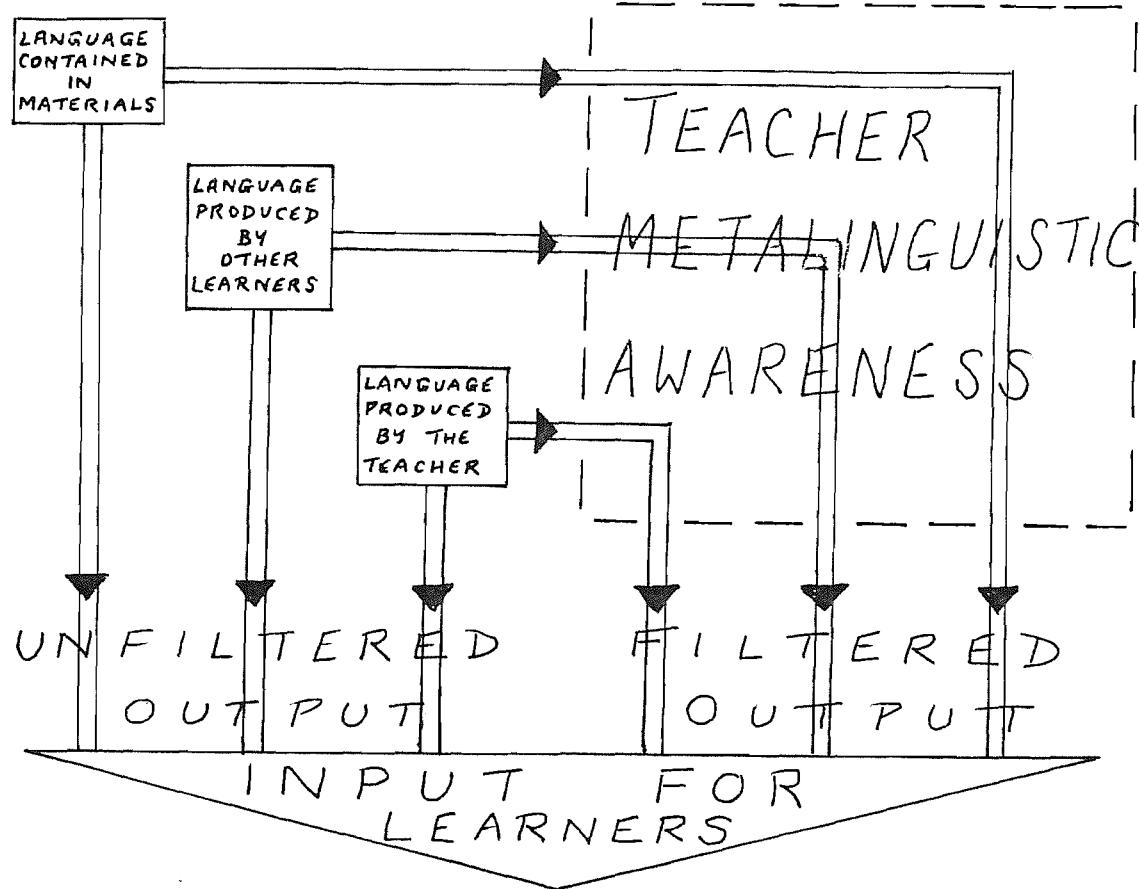


Figure 3 : The role of TMA in structuring input for learners

2.4

Influences on the development of teacher metalinguistic awareness (TMA)

2.4.1 TMA as the product of an amalgam of influences

One of the main conclusions drawn in Andrews (1994b) was that each teacher "... is an amalgam of different characteristics and the product of a range of linguistic and educational experiences, any of which, singly or in combination, may have had some impact upon that individual's grammatical knowledge and awareness"(Andrews

1994b:519). This final section of the chapter discusses some of the potential influences on the development of a teacher's metalinguistic awareness, and the ways in which these might impact upon teaching.

2.4.2 The teacher's experience as a bilingual

One possible influence on the development of a teacher's metalinguistic awareness is her experience as a bilingual. Bilingualism is itself somewhat difficult to define. Hoffman (1991), for example, talks of the elusiveness of the phenomenon (Hoffman 1991:17), while Baetens Beardsmore describes bilingualism as having 'open-ended semantics' (1982:1). Hoffman reviews a variety of definitions, and contrasts what she calls the 'perfectionist' or 'maximalist' definitions of e.g. Bloomfield – "near-native control of two or more languages" (Bloomfield 1933:56) - with the 'minimalist' views of e.g. Haugen (1953:7) "... who sees 'the point where a speaker can first produce complete meaningful utterances in the other language' as the beginning of bilingualism" (Hoffman 1991:21-22). Perhaps the following statement by Baetens Beardsmore provides a useful midway position : "Bilingualism...must be able to account for the presence of at least two languages within one and the same speaker, remembering that ability in those two languages may or may not be equal, and that the way the two or more languages are used plays a highly significant role"(Baetens Beardsmore 1982:3). Following such a definition, it must be assumed that the vast majority of L2 teachers worldwide are bilingual (in many cases trilingual, or multilingual), since they are teaching a language other than their own L1. The exceptions will be those teachers who are native-speakers of the language they are teaching, who may be monolingual according to anything but a minimalist definition of bilingualism.

It is not clear from the literature precisely how a teacher's bilingual experience may influence the development of her metalinguistic awareness. However, insights into one possible kind of influence may be found in discussion of the extent to which bilingualism has a significant impact upon the metalinguistic awareness of children. For example, Bialystok examines the following statement of Vygotsky : "The [bilingual] child learns to see his language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and this leads to awareness of his linguistic

operations" (Vygotsky 1962:110, cited in Bialystok 1991:113). McLaughlin, based on a review of the relevant research literature, states that : "It seems clear that the child who has mastered two languages has a linguistic advantage over the monolingual child. Bilingual children become aware that there are two ways of saying the same thing"(McLaughlin 1984:214). Cummins' 1978 study produces results which are consistent with Vygotsky's hypothesis, but he acknowledges the limitations of both his own study and other similar studies (Cummins and Swain 1986:31).

Bialystok (1991) relates Vygotsky's statement to her information processing model, in which there are two components : analysis or restructuring of the mental representation of language, and control over attention, and she reinterprets Vygotsky's statement as a claim "...that bilingual children have enhanced awareness of the analysis and control components of processing"(Bialystok 1991:138). Having contrasted the linguistic experiences of bilingual and monolingual children, Bialystok concludes : "There are no universal advantages, nor are there universal liabilities in being bilingual. But processing systems developed to serve two linguistic systems are necessarily different from the same processing systems that operate in the service of only one. Bilingual children, then, ultimately and inevitably process language differently from monolingual children"(Bialystok 1991:138-139). However, Diaz and Klingler (1991), reviewing a number of studies including Bialystok (1986), conclude that "...bilingualism positively affects children's executive control of language processing. It is possible that the systematic separation of form and meaning that is experienced in an early bilingual experience gives children an added control of language processing, as the works of Vygotsky (1962)...had suggested"(Diaz and Klingler 1991:175).

Diaz and Klingler discuss another related issue which has been extensively researched : the relationship between an early experience of bilingualism and cognitive development. Romaine (1989) concludes from her review of the literature that "... the question of whether there is a cognitive advantage to bilingualism is ... unresolved"(Romaine 1989:109). However, Diaz and Klingler (1991) survey several studies relating to the interaction between early bilingual experience and cognitive development and draw a number of more positive conclusions about the impact of bilingualism, among them :

- “1. Bilingual children show consistent advantages in tasks of both verbal and non-verbal abilities.
- 2. Bilingual children show advanced metalinguistic abilities, especially manifested in their control of language processing.
- 3. Cognitive and metalinguistic advantages appear in bilingual situations that involve systematic uses of the two languages, such as simultaneous acquisition or bilingual education.
- 4. The cognitive effects of bilingualism appear relatively early on in the process of becoming bilingual and do not require high levels of bilingual proficiency nor the achievement of balanced bilingualism”(Diaz and Klingler 1991:183-184).

Whatever conclusions one draws from these contrasting interpretations of the literature, it is far from clear whether the apparent differences between monolingual and bilingual children have any influence upon the behaviour of adults, such as L2 teachers, or whether the effects of bilingualism (either metalinguistic or cognitive) prevail in adulthood. If one examines the literature for indications of the influence of bilingualism upon the metalinguistic awareness of L2 teachers, the evidence is inconclusive. Andrews (1994b) makes a potentially relevant comparison between the metalinguistic awareness of native-speaker and non-native-speaker teachers of English (a comparison also explored in Andrews 1999). Andrews (1994b) compares the performance (on a task testing metalinguistic awareness) of a group of Cantonese-speaking teachers of English with the performance on an identical task in a separate study (Bloor 1986) of two groups of native-speaker students, one of language specialists ('linguists') and the other of 'non-linguists'. If the comparison is in any way valid, one might be tempted to infer that bilingualism played a part in causing the first two groups to perform markedly better than the third. Such a difference might, however, be equally attributable to the probability that both the first two groups, in contrast with the third, will have received substantial amounts of form-focused language instruction (with metalanguage) during their education.

2.4.3 The teacher's experience of formal (language) learning

Another major influence upon the development of teachers' metalinguistic

awareness is their experience of formal (language) learning. Even before their first contact with classrooms as teachers, newcomers to the profession - whether they are beginning teacher training, or starting their careers without such training - already have a set of personal conceptions or beliefs about teaching and learning. This is the result of what Lortie (1975) describes as the long 'apprenticeship of observation' which teachers have undergone as pupils, and which has given them a preconception of what teaching is like.

Various researchers have emphasised the importance of "... these formative impressions of teaching ... [as] ... a powerful influence in shaping the beginning teacher's classroom practice" (Calderhead 1988:52), for example Lacey 1977, Tabachnick and Zeichner 1984, and Zeichner, Tabachnick and Densmore 1987. Zeichner, Tabachnick and Densmore talk about teacher perspectives, "... which they define as the ways in which teachers understand, interpret, and define their environment and use such interpretation to guide their actions" (Richards 1996:283), while Connelly and Clandinin (1985) talk of images, which shape teacher thinking at different levels of abstraction. As Calderhead (1988) points out, these images "... seem to be quite powerful influences on students' developing practice" (Calderhead 1988:54).

The 'apprenticeship of observation' appears to influence general views of teaching and teachers as well as subject-specific issues. It affects metalinguistic awareness in terms of subject knowledge, general beliefs and attitudes towards language and how it is best taught/learnt, and conceptions of ways in which specific language items might be taught. Various studies, related both to language and to other subjects, illustrate the nature and extent of the influence. Bennett (1993) refers to a study by Kruger and Summers (1989) on primary teachers' understanding of science concepts, which revealed that the majority of teachers' views were based on "... a mixture of intuitive beliefs and half-remembered textbook science from their school days, sometimes with incorrect or imprecise use of scientific language" (Kruger and Summers 1989 cited in Bennett 1993:10), while Woods' 1996 study of L2 teachers makes more positive links between teacher beliefs about effective teaching and their previous experiences as language learners. A number of researchers (including Grossman 1990) have also suggested that teachers' recollections of themselves as students can have a strong influence on what they

expect of their own students as well as on their conceptions of how their students learn.

Richards (1996) suggests that teachers' experiences as learners have a formative influence upon the development of what he calls teacher maxims : "... rational principles which serve as a source of how teachers interpret their responsibilities and implement their plans and which motivate teachers' interactive decisions during a lesson. These principles function like rules for best behaviour in that they guide the teacher's selection of choices from among a range of alternatives"(Richards 1996:286). He cites Tsui (1995) as a powerful illustration of the way in which different school cultures, and indeed contrasting cultural backgrounds can influence the development of teacher maxims. Tsui's 1995 case-study compares two teachers who work in the same Hong Kong school, but who come from very different backgrounds and have correspondingly contrasting attitudes. For Tsui's Hong Kong Chinese teacher, the classroom was "... a place where students learn in a well-disciplined manner, and the teacher should be in control of herself, her students, and her subject", while her New Zealander, having been brought up in a much less traditional system, had a very different approach to teaching. Tsui concludes that "... differences in cultural and educational backgrounds seemed to permeate the practical theories underlying the two teachers' classroom practices"(Tsui 1995:357-359, cited by Richards 1996:290-291).

2.4.4 The teacher's subject knowledge

Although subject knowledge is not exactly the same as metalinguistic awareness, since the latter involves reflections upon knowledge, and has a procedural dimension, subject knowledge is nevertheless a vital part of TMA, forming the basis of the declarative dimension. As such, it can exert a powerful influence upon the L2 teacher's classroom performance.

In the past fifteen years, the importance of subject-matter knowledge in teaching has been increasingly recognised by educational researchers. Elbaz (1983), for example, in outlining her conception of teacher knowledge as 'practical knowledge' emphasises that "...this [practical] experiential knowledge is informed by the teacher's theoretical knowledge of subject matter..."(Elbaz 1983:5), while Leinhardt and Greeno (1986) make the following assertion : "We consider skill in teaching to rest on two fundamental

systems of knowledge, lesson structure and subject matter" (Leinhardt and Greeno 1986:85).

A major catalyst for research in the area of teacher subject knowledge was Shulman's (1986) call for educational researchers to search for the 'missing paradigm' in research on teaching : subject matter (Carlsen 1991:115). One of the results of this recognition of the 'missing paradigm' problem was a research programme on 'Knowledge Growth in Teaching' involving Shulman and several of his colleagues (see Brophy 1991 for reports of a number of the related studies). However, although Shulman's focus on subject matter knowledge and what he calls pedagogical content knowledge (see 2.2.6 above) has had a considerable influence upon researchers, the distinction he draws between the two types of knowledge is not new. As Gudmundsdottir (1991) points out, recognition of the difference between subject matter knowledge and pedagogically structured subject knowledge dates back at least as far as Dewey (see, for example, Dewey 1902 and 1904), who suggested '... that scholarly knowledge of the discipline is different from the knowledge needed for teaching' (Gudmundsdottir 1991:266).

One of the difficulties in evaluating the influence of subject-matter knowledge is that of defining the precise nature of such knowledge. Carlsen (1991) discusses Schwab's (1964) distinction between substantive knowledge structures (the "conceptual tools, models and principles that guide inquiry in a discipline") and syntactic knowledge structures (including "a discipline's canons of evidence and proof, and rules concerning how they are applied") (Carlsen 1991:117). As Carlsen describes, many writers since Schwab have gone on to reveal further layers of complexity. For example, West, Fensham and Garrard (1985) distinguish between disciplinary knowledge ('public knowledge') and the knowledge of individuals ('private understandings') (West et al 1985, cited in Carlsen 1991:117), while a number of researchers differentiate between subject-matter knowledge and the orientation of individual teachers towards such knowledge (see, for instance, Brophy 1991:351).

As well as the difficulty of providing a precise definition of subject-matter knowledge, there is also a problem with applying commonsense measures to the assessment of a teacher's possession of such knowledge. Within a subject such as English, for example, the fact that it is, as Grossman (1991) points out, such 'a diffuse discipline'

(Grossman 1991:246) makes it questionable whether possession of a degree in English (which may have wholly or to a large extent entailed the study of English literature) provides the degree-holder with subject-matter knowledge relevant to the teaching of English language. In any evaluation of a teacher's possession of subject knowledge, there is clearly a need for more systematic measures of the substantive and syntactic structures underlying a teacher's knowledge.

Whatever the difficulties associated with the concept of teachers' subject-matter knowledge, however, there is a clear consensus in the literature about both the importance of such knowledge in relation to the process of teaching and learning, and also the relationship of such knowledge to pedagogical content knowledge. Gudmundsdottir (1991), for example, talks about ways in which teachers "... restructure their content knowledge to make it pedagogical" (Gudmundsdottir 1991:266). Calderhead (1988) acknowledges the significance of such restructuring, but refers to the inherent difficulty of translating subject knowledge into classroom action : "... student teachers with a well developed knowledge base have been found when planning and teaching in this subject area still to draw upon the observed practices of their supervising teacher rather than their own store of subject matter knowledge" (Calderhead and Miller 1986 cited in Calderhead 1988:57). It seems reasonable to infer that aspects of the L2 teacher's subject knowledge are restructured as metalinguistic awareness in a similar manner, and with similar difficulty.

It is worth noting insights from research concerning the ways in which teacher subject matter knowledge impacts upon teaching and learning. For example, in biology and physics, Hashweh (1987) contrasts the behaviours of what he calls knowledgeable and unknowledgeable teachers, finding, among other things, that "... when activities were provided by the textbook, unknowledgeable teachers followed them closely. Knowledgeable teachers made many modifications that reflected their prior knowledge and approach. When no activities were provided, only knowledgeable teachers could generate activities on their own" (Hashweh 1987:116). Meanwhile, Carlsen (1991), investigating the teaching of biology by beginning teachers, found a relationship between teacher subject-matter knowledge and classroom discourse : "When teachers understood well the topics they were teaching, their actions encouraged student questions and other

student participation in discourse. When the teachers taught unfamiliar topics, they tended to discourage student participation in discourse" (Carlsen 1991:134).

Although earlier in the chapter the language-specific term metalinguistic awareness was selected for use in this study in preference to the generic term pedagogical content knowledge, it was emphasised that this was not intended to imply total rejection of pedagogical content knowledge as a construct. Indeed, TMA was spoken of as a major sub-component of pedagogical content knowledge specific to the language teacher. As Tsui (forthcoming) points out, "... studies of teachers' content knowledge ... show that central to successful teaching is pedagogical content knowledge, which is the transformation of subject matter knowledge into forms of representation which are accessible to learners. The transformation process requires an adequate understanding of the subject matter, knowledge of learners, curriculum, context and pedagogy" (Tsui forthcoming:xx). The present study acknowledges the significance of this conception of pedagogical content knowledge for L2 teachers as much as for teachers of other subjects. However, as argued earlier (see 2.2.6 above), the case of the teacher of language is unique, given that language is both the content and medium of instruction. For that reason, the construct metalinguistic awareness has been proposed as forming a bridge between language competence/strategic competence (as the major components of communicative language ability) and knowledge of subject-matter (as a central part of pedagogical content knowledge). As such, it can be seen both as a pedagogically related reflective dimension of communicative language ability, and also as a sub-component of the L2 teacher's pedagogical content knowledge, which interacts with the other sub-components.

2.4.5 The teacher's professional training

A further possible influence upon the development of a teacher's metalinguistic awareness is her experience of teacher education, if any. It might be expected that teacher education would be a potential source of teacher metalinguistic awareness as a result of causing at least some student teachers to confront and refine the knowledge and conceptions which they bring from their own experience of classrooms as pupils. Grossman (1991), for example, asserts the teacher educator's scope for influence in this

area : “Teacher educators can help prospective students examine their knowledge and beliefs about a subject and reflect on how this knowledge influences both their beliefs about teaching their subject and their classroom practice”(Grossman 1991:260). However, as Calderhead (1988) points out, the effects of teacher education are variable : “In our experience, a few students do seem to survive a one-year postgraduate training course relatively unaffected by it, whilst others quickly realise the patchiness and generality of the knowledge they have acquired from their childhood observations”(Calderhead 1988:52).

As described earlier, the formative effects of experience as a pupil are very strong, and may be impervious to the influence of teacher education. This is recognised by Calderhead (1988), who acknowledges that “... one of the basic challenges facing teacher education may be persuading some students that there is much more to be learned in becoming a teacher”(Calderhead 1988:52). The chances of achieving this are not necessarily high. According to Lanier and Little (1986), teachers generally consider professional training to be of little value (Lanier and Little 1986, discussed in Calderhead 1988:53), which is hardly surprising given Lanier and Little's (1986) scathing comments about teacher educators, whom they characterise as “...largely rigid, shallow, anti-intellectual and conforming”(Bennett 1993:3).

The nature of the content of any teacher education programme is also likely to be a factor affecting the extent to which such training influences the development of TMA. Some programmes integrate the study of subject matter knowledge and pedagogy in ways which might be expected to promote the development of metalinguistic awareness, while others focus principally on pedagogy. If a teacher education programme incorporates a practicum, this may also constitute a potential influence. However, it might be argued that any such influence could be the result of experience of teaching, and of reflection upon that experience, rather than of direct input from the teacher education course.

Whatever reservations there might be about the effects of teacher education, or about the possibilities of disentangling such influences from those of experience and subject matter knowledge, there is nevertheless evidence from the literature that teacher education can have an influence upon the development of teachers' conceptions of teaching. Grossman's 1990 study of six teachers of English is an illustration of such

evidence. Three of Grossman's teachers had experienced professional preparation, while the other three had not. The three professionally trained teachers all had similar conceptions of teaching, which they attributed to the influence of the input from the professional courses they had followed. The three teachers without professional training, on the other hand, had widely differing conceptions of teaching English.

Given the evidence from such studies, it seems reasonable to suggest that the development of a teacher's metalinguistic awareness may be influenced by experience of teacher education. This would appear to be confirmed by Wray's 1993 study of the effects of initial training upon student teachers' knowledge about language, which reported marked changes in both knowledge and beliefs about language and literacy as a result of such training (Wray 1993). It is clear, however, that the impact of any such influence is both unpredictable and hard to distinguish from other influences. It is unpredictable because student-teachers, as noted by Calderhead (1988) above, vary in their receptivity to the content of teacher education programmes. It may be hard to disentangle from other influences both because of the potential role of teaching experience during the practicum, and also because of the part which reflection must necessarily play if any significant development is to take place.

2.4.6 The teacher's experience of teaching

Although, as we have seen, a teacher's subject knowledge and professional training have considerable importance in the development of her overall knowledge base as a teacher, there are other major influences on the development of that knowledge base. Among potential influences is the teacher's experience of teaching, which may facilitate the teacher's transition from novice to expert.

In the past decade or so, there has been considerable research interest in the study of expertise, both in general and with specific reference to teaching. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986), for example, having examined expertise in a range of skills, outline a five-stage model of progress towards expertise. They put forward a view of expertise as being primarily intuitive, with intuitions being acquired through experience : "A high level of skill in any *unstructured* problem area seems to require considerable concrete experience with real situations..." (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1986:20).

Glaser and Chi (1988), summarising a number of studies on expertise, also emphasise the role of experience in the development of a specialised domain of knowledge. They describe how experience facilitates the development of automaticity in performing certain aspects of tasks, which in turn helps to free up mental capacity for problem solving and for storage of information. According to Glaser and Chi, experts also have strong self-monitoring or metacognitive skills : "... the superior monitoring skills and self-knowledge of experts reflect their greater domain knowledge as well as a different representation of that knowledge"(Glaser and Chi 1988:xx).

If such 'know-how' is related to the characteristics of the metalinguistically aware teacher outlined earlier, a number of parallels can be seen, in particular automaticity, speed of problem-solving, and strong metacognitive skills. Glaser and Chi describe the key difference between novices and experts as being "... the expert's possession of an organised body of conceptual and procedural knowledge that can be readily accessed and used with superior monitoring and self-regulating skills"(Glaser and Chi 1988:xxi). A similar statement could be made to characterise the metalinguistically aware teacher.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) outline a theory of expertise developed from the study of writing. One major contribution of their research has been to distinguish between experience and expertise. In writing, for example, practice does not automatically result in expertise : it may simply result in someone writing fluently but badly. This accords with Ericsson and Smith's (1991) recommendation that "... one should be particularly careful about accepting one's number of years of experience as an accurate measure of one's level of expertise"(Ericsson and Smith 1991:27). It seems that experience may be necessary for the development of expertise, but it is not in itself sufficient to ensure that novices become experts. As Bereiter and Scardamalia point out : "The problem is how to ensure that novices develop into experts rather than into experienced non-experts"(Bereiter and Scardamalia 1993:18). Tsui (forthcoming) makes a similar point : "While experience is undoubtedly a crucial factor, it will only contribute to expertise if practitioners are capable of learning from it ... To learn from experience requires that practitioners constantly reflect on their practices" (Tsui forthcoming:xxx).

In the past few years there have been a number of studies of expertise specifically focused on teaching (see, for example, Berliner and Carter 1989, Borko and Livingston

1989, Carter et al 1987 and 1988, Leinhardt 1989, Livingston and Borko 1989). In differentiating between novice and expert teachers, Borko and Livingston (1989) identify a number of characteristics which, by extrapolation, would also seem to reflect the relationship between experience and the development of metalinguistic awareness. For instance, they refer to the difficulties (such as the length of time required for planning, and the inability to anticipate student problems) encountered by novice teachers teaching a course for the first time, observing that “Any teacher will think and act like a novice, to some extent, the first time he or she attempts to teach a particular body of knowledge”(Borko and Livingston 1989:489). Borko and Livingston also describe the way in which expert teachers can draw upon a range of schemata in their planning and their teaching : “Whereas experts' propositional structures for pedagogical content knowledge include stores of powerful explanations, demonstrations, and examples for representing subject matter to students, novices must develop these representations as part of the planning process for each lesson”(Borko and Livingston 1989:490-491). Because they possess “... an extensive network of interconnected, easily accessible cognitive schemata”(Borko and Livingston 1989:491), expert teachers are also able to improvise, in ways which novice teachers cannot. According to Borko and Livingston, experts are also better equipped to predict student problems : “Their better-developed propositional structures for content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and knowledge of learners, and the more extensive interconnections among these schemata, enable them to predict misconceptions the students may have and areas of learning these misconceptions are likely to affect”(Borko and Livingston 1989:491).

It is clear that there are many similarities in the ways in which metalinguistic awareness and expertise affect teaching performance. It is also evident that experience plays a considerable part in the development of both metalinguistic awareness and expertise. In recognising the parallels between the performance of expert teachers and metalinguistically aware teachers, however, it is important to emphasise that experience is only one source of teacher expertise/metalinguistic awareness, and that experience is in itself no guarantee of expertise/metalinguistic awareness.

2.4.7 The teacher's reflections upon experience

In recent years there has been increasing interest in the role of reflection in the development of teacher knowledge. Van Manen (1977) identifies three levels of reflection, ranging from technical rationality, where "...the dominant concern is with the efficient and effective application of educational knowledge for the purposes of attaining ends which are accepted as given" (Zeichner and Liston 1987:24) to critical reflection, where "...both the teaching (ends and means) and the surrounding contexts are viewed as problematic - that is, as value-governed selections from a larger universe of possibilities" (ibid:25).

In Schon's highly influential work (see, for example, Schon 1983 and 1987), he attacks the technical rationality model of professional knowledge as being a misrepresentation of professional activity. Instead, according to Schon, much professional performance is intuitive and tacit 'knowing-in-action' : "When we go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life, we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way. Often we cannot say what it is that we know. When we try to describe it, we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate. Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowing is in our action" (Schon 1983:49). Schon develops the concepts of 'reflection-on-action', 'reflection-in-action' and reframing to explain how professionals develop their "in situ competence and artistry" (Hoyle and John 1995:71) by bringing "past experiences to bear on present problems" (ibid:72).

The role of reflection in the development of pedagogical reasoning and the concept of the teacher as reflective practitioner have become almost commonplaces both in the general teacher education literature (see, for example, Shulman 1987, Zeichner and Liston 1987) and latterly in discussion of the L2 teacher (for instance, Wallace 1991, Richards and Lockhart 1994). Shulman's (1987) model of pedagogical reasoning and action consists of five processes, one of which is reflection : "This is what a teacher does when he or she looks back at the teaching and learning that has occurred, and reconstructs, reenacts, and/or recaptures the events, the emotions, and the accomplishments. It is that set of processes through which a professional learns from

experience"(Shulman 1987:19).

As we have seen above, experience is a powerful potential influence upon the development of teacher knowledge in general and metalinguistic awareness in particular. As Carter (1990) points out, "... teachers' knowledge is not highly abstract and propositional ... Rather it is experiential, procedural, situational and particularistic"(Carter 1990:307). Therefore, in order for students and practising teachers to learn from experience, it is often argued that they need to reflect about their teaching and its contexts, becoming "... more aware of themselves and their environments in a way that changes their perceptions of what is possible" (Zeichner and Liston 1987:25). As suggested above, one would hypothesise a similar role for reflection in the development of a teacher's metalinguistic awareness.

2.4.8 The teacher's beliefs and attitudes, and their impact in the classroom

Teacher beliefs and attitudes have been referred to at several points in the discussion above of influences upon the development of teacher metalinguistic awareness. It is clear that they are themselves shaped by these various influences, and that at the same time they permeate everything that a teacher does as part of her professional endeavours. This close interrelationship with other influential factors makes it very difficult, however, to identify the specific effects of teacher beliefs and attitudes : indeed, one could argue that it impossible to separate belief, knowledge and experience. Elbaz (1983), in outlining her conception of a teacher's practical knowledge, emphasises the role of "... the teacher's feelings, values, needs and beliefs"(1983:134) in helping the teacher to integrate her experiential and theoretical knowledge and orient these to her practical situation.

Connelly and Clandinin (1985) develop the concept of practical knowledge by coining the term personal practical knowledge, a construct which is, according to Golombok (1998) "characterised by personal philosophies, metaphors, rhythms, and narrative unity as representing forms in the language of practice"(Golombok 1998:448). Clandinin's (1992) definition of personal practical knowledge is illustrative of the extent to which belief, knowledge, experience, context and reflection are intertwined : "It is knowledge that reflects the individual's prior knowledge and acknowledges the contextual

nature of that teacher's knowledge. It is a kind of knowledge carved out of, and shaped by, situations; knowledge that is constructed and reconstructed as we live out our stories and retell and relive them through processes of reflection" (Clandinin 1992:125).

The importance of teacher beliefs in L2 teaching has been discussed by, among others, Woods (1996), Richards (1996), and Borg (1998). Woods' case-studies illustrate both the powerful effects of teacher beliefs upon practice, and also the close interrelationship of beliefs and knowledge. Richards, meanwhile, develops the concept of teacher maxims, rational principles for professional behaviour (see 2.4.3 above). According to Richards, these maxims derive from teachers' belief systems "...founded on the goals, values, and beliefs teachers hold in relation to the content and process of teaching and their understanding of the systems in which they work and their roles within it. These beliefs and values serve as the background to much of the teachers' decision making and action and hence constitute what has been termed the *culture of teaching*" (Richards 1996:284).

The implications of such studies for teacher metalinguistic awareness are not hard to find. The belief systems of the L2 teacher incorporate a linguistic dimension, as Borg's study illustrates (Borg 1998), and this forms part of a teacher's metalinguistic awareness. These beliefs (about, for example, what grammar is, how it is best taught and learnt) have a strong influence upon the planning and execution of lessons. At the same time, beliefs are dynamic, as is TMA (see 2.2.6 above) : by influencing classroom action and decision-making, and by being, at least potentially, reflected upon, they both inform and form part of the development of a teacher's metalinguistic awareness.

Chapter 3 A historical survey of the role of grammar in the teaching and learning of English in Hong Kong secondary schools

3.1 Introduction

The opening chapter of the thesis provided an overview of this study of the metalinguistic awareness of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English (their TMA), and a brief outline of the contextual background to the study. The second chapter then presented a review of the literature relating to TMA and the role of grammar in L2 teaching and learning. The review was intended to provide a theoretical and empirical basis for a model of TMA, to examine the role TMA might play in the context of L2 teaching and learning, and to identify and explore potential influences on the development of TMA.

The present chapter returns to discussion of the contextual background. It aims to relate the issues raised in the previous chapter to the Hong Kong secondary school context, by examining the development of ELT in Hong Kong from its beginnings until the present day. This historical perspective allows current views of grammar and language pedagogy to be seen against a background of consistent tension between the roles of English and Chinese, and also between formal and informal language learning. The chapter looks at the role which grammar has played in the teaching and learning of English in Hong Kong over the years, and considers the demands which ELT places upon the metalinguistic awareness of present-day secondary school teachers of English in Hong Kong.

3.2 Language education, ELT, and the role of grammar in Hong Kong schools, 1841-1941

The teaching of English was recognised as important in Hong Kong from as early a stage in its colonial history as the 1840's, because of the demand from the Church, the Government, and commercial enterprises for English-speaking Chinese who could operate as clergymen, interpreters and clerks. In 1854, the Education Committee recommended that "the study of English should in this English colony be encouraged as much as possible" (cited in Sweeting 1990:147). However, although the teaching of English flourished in the Mission Schools, the Government itself took no immediate action to implement the Committee's recommendation. It was in fact only

in the 1860's that the Government began to play a significant role in educational policy-making, and in 1862, the Government Central School opened, with the study of English becoming an obligatory part of the curriculum from 1866. Although the first Headmaster, Frederick Stewart, tried to teach and maintain two cultures and two languages, many of the pupils seem to have valued the school mainly as a place for learning English. Stewart remarked that "... many of the boys leave as soon as they can perform the duties of compilors or copying clerks" (cited in Bickley 1991:20).

In 1878, the Governor, Sir John Pope-Hennessy, expressed dissatisfaction with the standard of English acquired in the Central School, and organised a conference to consider the teaching of English in Hong Kong. The conference made a series of clear recommendations, including that the teaching of English should be the primary concern of Government educational policy, and that English should be taught in all schools supported by the Government, since "political and commercial interests rendered the study of English of primary importance in all Government schools" (cited in Sweeting 1990:210).

The conference's report recommended that less time should be spent on Chinese instruction in order that more time could be spent on English, a recommendation which was vigorously opposed by Frederick Stewart. Stewart's view eventually prevailed, with an Education Commission report in 1881 recommending that equal amounts of time should be devoted to Chinese and English in the Lower School, and that no boy should be admitted to the Upper School without a "competent knowledge of his own language" (cited in Bickley 1991:21). The Upper School curriculum for the Central School at this time aimed not just to teach English but to "impart a sound and liberal education" (cited in Bickley 1991:21). The only Chinese lessons in the Upper School were translation. The full curriculum consisted of Reading, Dictation, Translation, Euclid, Algebra, Writing, Grammar, Parsing, Geography, Arithmetic, Chemistry, Mensuration, Composition, Drawing, Map Drawing and Colloquial English (Bickley 1991:21).

The equal importance accorded to both Chinese and English was reaffirmed some twenty years later by the then Governor, Sir Frederick Lugard, and as Bickley notes, the Government has endeavoured to keep this balance to the present day, although it was only in 1972 that Chinese became an official language alongside English (Bickley 1991:23). This emphasis on the importance of both languages gave

rise in the first part of the twentieth century to a bilingual education plan known as the *pari-passu* system, by which it was intended “that all Chinese pupils would be compelled to keep their knowledge of Chinese ‘in step’ with their attainments in English studies”(Sweeting 1990:220). However, according to Edward Burney, commissioned by the Colonial Office in 1935 to report on the state of public education : “Without doubt many pupils leave the schools with something less than a really good knowledge of English, particularly as regards their ability to speak it and understand it when spoken to them. There is also some doubt whether, in many instances, their knowledge of Chinese can be regarded as satisfactory”(Burney 1935:24).

Hong Kong’s language policy, its need for proficient users of Chinese and English, and the best ways to promote proficiency in the two languages have continued to be issues which preoccupy those involved with education in Hong Kong (see, for example, ECR6, December 1995, and the discussion in 1.2 above). The Government’s 1997 pamphlet ‘Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools’ makes clear the view of the present administration that equal priority should be given to English and Chinese : “Our aim is for our students to be *biliterate* (i.e. master written Chinese and English) and *trilingual* (i.e. speak fluent Cantonese, Putonghua and English)”(Education Department 1997b:Foreword). A number of policies are intended to contribute to the achievement of this objective, among them a move to Chinese-medium instruction (CMI) in the vast majority of secondary schools, the introduction of language ‘benchmark’ qualifications both for language teachers and teachers of other subjects, and measures to enhance English language teaching and learning in CMI schools.

Assessment played an important role in Hong Kong’s education system from an early stage. For instance, the Government Central School introduced ‘public’ examinations as early as 1864 – ‘public’ in the sense that question and answer papers were open to public inspection and “...guests, sometimes including the Governor, were invited to give oral tests to the pupils”(Sweeting 1990:207). In 1886, the Cambridge Local Examinations were administered in Hong Kong for the first time and in 1889 a switch was made to the Oxford Local Examinations. From 1914, students in the upper classes of Anglo-Chinese schools were encouraged to take the Matriculation and Junior Local Examinations of the University of Hong Kong. In

1935, the Junior Local Examinations were replaced by School Certificate (the HKCE) administered by the Education Department, and these and the Matriculation examinations dominated the assessment scene in Hong Kong (of English Language, and all subjects) until 1977, when the Hong Kong Examinations Authority, a self-financed public body, was set up (King 1994:3).

The effects of assessment upon teaching and learning practices in Hong Kong secondary schools have frequently been noted. Burney, for instance, observed that “...not only are the methods of teaching influenced by the examination, or rather by the fear of it ... but syllabuses are determined by speculation about questions likely to be set and the curriculum is ... very rigidly limited ... to examination requirements”(Burney 1935:11). Nearly fifty years later, a visiting panel of education experts noted similar effects : “In the ‘non-exam’ years, the atmosphere seemed fairly relaxed, but in the examination preparatory forms all was deadly earnest and students were seen taking notes, laboriously completing model answers and learning texts by rote”(Llewellyn et al 1982:53).

For the first eighty years of English teaching in colonial Hong Kong, the subject was largely taught using materials aimed at native-speakers of English. The English curriculum of the time typically focused on the study of English Literature, Grammar, the writing of precis and compositions, and reading. However, in his 1935 report, Edward Burney made clear his view that this was an inappropriate approach, given that the teaching of English was intended to serve a vocational need. Burney recommended that “... the teaching of English in the schools of Hong Kong should be reformed on a frankly utilitarian basis, i.e. the pupils should be taught to understand, speak, read and write such and so much English as they are likely to need for their subsequent careers and no more. This means that for most of them at any rate no time would be given to the study of English literature...”(Burney 1935:24). Burney also recommended that teaching should focus on “... a much simplified vocabulary and grammar”(ibid.). Shortly after this, the Lindsell Committee on the Training of Teachers (1938) made a number of recommendations for changes to the syllabus for teacher training, among them the inclusion of an oral test in English as part of each year’s examination; a revision of the Method and Class Management course to emphasise the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language; and a reduction in the time devoted to the study of English Literature (Bickley 1987). Some of the

recommendations of the Burney report and the Lindsell Committee began to be implemented in the late 30's, but the arrival of the Second World War, and the Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong put an end to virtually all educational endeavours for four years. Bickley, drawing on the Education Department's annual report for 1946-47, describes how, during the Occupation, "... a dwindling number of children received any education at all and there was an almost total absence of the English language during the period. Many school buildings with their furniture, equipment and library books were lost and, in most schools, pupils had to begin their education again in the same class in which they were at the beginning of the occupation" (Bickley 1987:191).

3.3 ELT and the role of grammar in Hong Kong schools, 1946-1964

In the period following the Second World War¹, two approaches to ELT predominated in Hong Kong : the Grammar-Translation Method and the Direct Method. The former was the approach employed in most schools, while the latter was the preferred approach in a few schools (particularly those employing expatriate teachers), where textbooks such as Gatenby's 'Direct Method English Course' were used. The latter was also the approach advocated in the teacher training colleges (Bickley 1987:192).

The teaching of English at this time was very compartmentalised. In primary schools, for instance, twelve periods of English per week were timetabled as Reading, Grammar, Conversation and Dictation, with Translation often being taught as a separate topic. The textbooks used in the majority of schools employing the Grammar-Translation Approach were those originally intended for mother-tongue learners, and, as Bickley notes, "The grammar which appeared in the textbooks was often that most applicable to Latin and the student was therefore obliged to learn the

¹ It is worth noting that the oldest teachers of English currently serving in Hong Kong secondary schools would have begun their careers during this post-war period. The subjects who form the focus of the present study (whose average age is below thirty) would generally have been taught English by teachers who either entered the profession before 1964 or who were themselves at school at this time.

rules and grammatical terms of that language at the expense of the forms of modern English"(Bickley 1987:192).

It would appear that neither of the two approaches was especially successful. A Committee on Higher Education (the Keswick Committee) reporting in 1952 felt that there were serious weaknesses in the teaching of English in schools. Among its recommendations, the Committee proposed that there should be two types of courses for teachers, "... the first to improve teachers' own knowledge of the language and the second to instruct them in modern methods of teaching English as a foreign language"(Bickley 1987:194). Although it is unclear what the Committee meant by 'knowledge of the language', it is interesting to note this concern about the knowledge-base of English teachers being expressed more than forty years before very similar concerns were voiced in ECR6 (as discussed in 1.2.3).

Shortly afterwards, the Government took a range of measures which had an impact on ELT in Hong Kong schools, including the establishment of a new Syllabuses and Textbooks Committee within the Education Department. In 1953, the English Sub-Committee of the Syllabuses and Textbooks Committee drew up a model English syllabus for primary schools, built around the Oxford English Course for Malaya. The Oxford Course, which was eventually adapted for Hong Kong, formed the basis for the primary and secondary model English syllabuses in Hong Kong until 1962, with the 1959 syllabus for Anglo-Chinese secondary schools following the lead of the earlier primary syllabus.

As Bickley notes, the Oxford Course could be seen as incorporating many of the features of the Direct Method in that it advocated a primarily oral initial approach, active teaching methods, and a focus on the four skills rather than on information about the forms of language, but at the same time it systematically graded vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation features for presentation (Bickley 1987:194). The role of grammar in the Oxford Course is described by its author, French, as follows : "English cannot be learnt by knowing its grammar, but skill in the use of the language already learnt can be extended by a wise use of grammatical analysis ... Grammar lessons must run parallel with the other English lessons and should be given at a late stage in learning anything new"(cited in the 1962 Reprint of the 'English Bulletin' 1953-1959:92).

Whatever the Education Department's intentions regarding the Direct Method (or Oral Approach, as it was often referred to), and whatever French's views of the role of grammar, it is clear that traditional approaches to the teaching of English and traditional views of the role of grammar persisted in many schools. Cheng, writing in the 'English Bulletin' in the 50's, notes that "... certain old methods of teaching English still prevail in quite a number of less fortunate schools. In these schools, English is rigidly divided into compartments like 'Reading', 'Grammar', 'Conversation', 'Dictation', and 'Composition'... Formal grammar is taught in 'Grammar lessons' as from the beginners' stage. It is quite common to find a Chinese pupil who knows the grammatical terms and rules by heart but who cannot write correct English" (1962 'English Bulletin' Reprint:195). Paces, in the same volume, provides a vivid description of a 'Grammar' lesson of the time : "Mr X ... entered the classroom with the seriousness traditionally associated with his profession. A courteous 'Good morning'; then at once, 'Open your textbooks, page so and so. The Uses of the Infinitive'. There followed the reading by the teacher of the rules governing the use of the infinitive together with their exceptions and complexities, followed by examples as contained in the book. The class listened in polite attention as the rules were read out. Now and then, the teacher paraphrased a sentence with the object of clarification. Now and then ... he asked, 'Any questions?' A second's pause and then, on again till the exercise was reached ... The class, as it were, stirred in its slumbers. The teacher read the question and chose a pupil to answer. But he chose in turn so that only the next boy need keep awake, awaiting his question. And if he made a mistake, it did not matter, for the teacher was ready to supply the right answer, then to pass on to the next in due order" (1962 'English Bulletin' Reprint:155-156).

The conflict between the 'official view' of the role of grammar (as articulated, for example, by French) and the more traditional views espoused by many teachers can be clearly seen in the regular lively debate in the pages of the 'English Bulletin' at the time, as in the following 'Question and Answer' between a teacher (asking the question) and the editors (providing the answer) :

Q : Why do you oppose the teaching of grammar?

A : We do not ... Our opposition is to the wrong way of approaching grammar, to the teaching of formal grammar to young beginners, to the

uninspired following of ‘grammar books’, to the idea that grammar teaches learners how to speak, and the like. (1962 ‘English Bulletin’ reprint:92)

Evidence of the continued adherence in many classrooms to traditional styles of grammar teaching can be seen very clearly in the following excerpt from a Panel Discussion on Pattern Practice and Grammar at a 1964 Teachers’ Conference : “...it has to be said that one can go into some schools in the Colony, one can sit through three lessons, see three different teachers, but everyone of them is opening a formal grammar book and reading from it. Not only a formal grammar book, but very often a very bad formal grammar book”(Blatchford 1964:70-71).

3.4 ELT and the role of grammar in Hong Kong schools, 1965-1980

In the 60’s and 70’s, the design of Hong Kong’s English syllabuses for both primary and secondary schools was strongly influenced by the ‘Oral-Structural Approach’ (associated with, for example, A.S.Hornby), as advocated by the British Council’s English language specialist seconded to the Hong Kong Government at that time, Douglas Howe. The 1967 primary English syllabus, and the revised versions published in 1973 and 1976 all reflected this approach. According to Bickley, Howe recommended a four-stage approach for teaching new items, based on five assumptions about language. The five assumptions were : language is speech; language is a skill; language is patterned; language is complex; and every language is unique. The four stages of the approach were : oral presentation of the new item; oral practice (repetition) of the new item in a meaningful situation; controlled practice in a meaningful situation; and freer practice using the new item in purposeful activity (Bickley 1987:204).

The 1975 secondary syllabus was based on similar principles. In fact, one section of the document lists fourteen principles of the oral-structural approach. Among them are the following :

- “a) Learning to speak a new language is basically a question of establishing a new set of speech habits : this can be done to a large extent by repeating the *patterns* of the language often enough to make them automatic...;

- b) The four language skills should be taught and exercised in the following order: hear (and understand); speak; see (i.e. read); write. Thus *all* language material should be introduced orally first...;
- c) Systematic practice in the use of patterns is in itself grammar teaching. Grammar teaching in the traditional sense is merely labelling and is largely a waste of time"(Curriculum Development Committee 1975:156).

The syllabus document made clear that these fourteen principles were meant as guidelines rather than rigid rules to be followed at all times, but they were offered in the belief that "... a teaching programme that takes these principles into account is likely to be more successful, other things being equal, than one that does not"(ibid:156).

In spite of documents such as these, and the best intentions of the Education Department and those involved in the training of English teachers, it would appear that many English classrooms in Hong Kong saw little change in the years that followed. Reynolds, in his 1974 research report on English Language Teaching and Textbooks in Hong Kong, remarks: "One gets the impression that language teaching in Hong Kong is lacking in clear objectives ... Much local language teaching seems to be a matter of aimless routine, determined by traditional practices"(Reynolds 1974:22). According to Reynolds, as well as lacking clear objectives, English teaching in Hong Kong also lacked a clear or coherent methodological approach : "There is no one clear-cut methodological approach to the teaching of English employed in classrooms or textbooks in Hong Kong; bits and scraps of various methods are employed which have no consistent rationale to back them up; the teaching of English consists of carrying on various traditional routines which, it is hoped, will lead to mastery of the language"(Reynolds 1974:29). However, as Reynolds acknowledges "In this, Hong Kong may not be all that different from other parts of the world"(ibid.). Among the 'bits and scraps', Reynolds identified a continuing focus on learning 'about' language : "In spite of disclaimers to the contrary there is a good deal of learning 'about' language in one form or another. We seem unable to get away, in practice, from the assumption that learning 'about' a language is an aid to mastery of the language ... The theory that you learn a language by learning 'about' it is implicitly accepted in many classrooms and textbooks in Hong Kong"(ibid:32-33).

The decade in which Reynolds was writing was a period of great change in Hong Kong's education system. Until the 60's, there were "... two separate and relatively balanced English and Chinese medium streams" (Johnson 1994:187). However, education "... in either stream was, up to that time, only for a minority of children, the majority of children receiving little or no formal education through either language" (ibid:186). At the start of the 70's, many children in Hong Kong still did not go to primary school, and only one third of primary school students went on to secondary school. This situation changed dramatically over the next ten years. In 1971 primary schooling became free and compulsory, while junior secondary education (Forms 1-3) became free and compulsory in 1978. As a result of these changes, by the end of the decade secondary enrolments in Hong Kong had overtaken those for the primary schools. The changes also had a remarkable impact upon the medium of instruction balance. The Government's desired proportion of English to Chinese medium students was twenty percent English : eighty percent Chinese in 1984, revised to thirty percent English : seventy percent Chinese in 1990. The reality, according to Johnson, was very different. In 1988 the ratio in primary schools was ten percent English to ninety percent Chinese. At secondary level, however, the situation was completely reversed : the percentage of students in schools designated as English-medium was over ninety percent, while fewer than ten percent of secondary students attended schools claiming to be Chinese-medium (ibid:186-187). With the power to determine the medium of instruction in schools devolved to school principals in 1974, there seemed to be little the Government could do to prevent this major divergence between language policy and language practice.

Reynolds discusses a number of characteristics of ELT in Hong Kong in the early 70's which are largely unchanged twenty-five years later : the stranglehold of examinations, as noted earlier in 3.2 ("The problem of examinations is worldwide; in Hong Kong, however, a number of factors contribute to its assuming a particularly virulent form"); the tyranny of the textbook ("In Hong Kong ... the textbook is taught, but not the students"); classes of forty or more (which, according to Reynolds, leave the teacher "compelled to make his [sic] teaching textbook-centred rather than student-centred"); and the lack of trained teachers (with the result that "... a number of people are engaged in second-language teaching who are unsure either of their language ability or of their teaching ability, or both") (Reynolds 1974:35-41). The

huge expansion of the secondary sector in the 70's inevitably led to an increase in the ability range of pupils proceeding to that level. The Government attempted to address this problem in a number of ways, including the provision of additional teachers for 'remedial' English teaching (enabling the conventional large class to be split into two in some junior forms). However, this only served to increase the demand for teachers of English, however inadequately prepared. As noted in 1.2.3 above, the fact that many English teachers in Hong Kong lack proper training continues to be a major concern twenty-five years later.

3.5 ELT and the role of grammar in Hong Kong, 1981 onwards : the 'communicative' era

Less than three years after the publication of the Oral-Structural secondary syllabus, another British Council English Language Officer, Ray Tongue, was appointed Adviser to the Director of Education "... to address the problem of 'declining' standards of English in the schools" (Evans 1996:30). Tongue was "a firm advocate of the communicative approach" (Bickley 1987:207), and criticised the Grammar-Translation Approach and the Oral-Structural Approach because "...they paid insufficient attention to language functions and to the purposes for which language was being learned" (ibid.). As Evans points out, decisions were made to dispense with the Oral-Structural Approach soon after Tongue's arrival, at a point when it was highly unlikely that it had been fully implemented, and for reasons which reflected developments in language pedagogy in Europe rather than the unique circumstances of the Hong Kong educational context (Evans 1996:48).

A 1978 editorial in the South China Morning Post provides a clear illustration of community concerns about standards of English at the time : "...methods of teaching English in many Anglo-Chinese and Chinese-stream schools are outdated, inefficient, plagued by the curse of rote learning and completely out of touch with the reality of teaching the rising generation of Cantonese-speakers how to use the English language as a medium of communication" (South China Morning Post, 10 October 1978, cited in Evans 1996:30). A study conducted during the same period lent support to this perception of the low standards of English achieved by many Hong Kong students : "Two-fifths of pupils from English-medium schools and four-fifths from

Chinese-medium schools do not attain a standard of English that is acceptable to society, either educationally or for employment" (Yu 1979:31).

In a 1981 paper discussing English teaching at primary level in Hong Kong, Tongue was sharply critical of the way the language was typically taught at the time : his observations led him to conclude that in most primary English classrooms the aim was to have learners know about the language being taught, the information about the language was normally supplied in the learners' mother tongue, and the teaching was based on isolated and uncontextualised sentences. Tongue cited the following sentence from a Hong Kong primary textbook of the time as a classic example of the latter : '***Siu Leng is younger than her mother***' (Tongue 1981:5). Tongue's arrival in Hong Kong was the catalyst for an overhaul of the primary and secondary syllabuses in accordance with communicative principles. The Introduction to the 1981 English syllabus for Primary 1-6 outlines the major changes. The first two changes reflected worldwide trends in curriculum design : a focus on function as much as on form, and a specification of learning objectives taking the present interests and future needs of the learners into account from the outset. The third major change was motivated by developments in the Hong Kong education system : because the basic educational cycle for each child was now nine years, and many more children than before were being educated to the end of Form Five, it was felt appropriate that the design of the syllabus should be conceived as a continuous whole for the eleven years from Lower Primary to Form Five. The syllabus also stated explicitly that change was motivated by disappointment with the results of the Oral-Structural Approach ("If we consider the experience of teachers of English as a second or foreign language all over the world who have taught in accordance with the oral-structural approach, we shall find that most of them express disappointment with the results they have achieved" (Curriculum Development Committee 1981:7)), and by the widespread dissatisfaction with the standards of English, referred to earlier, "... which is continually being expressed by parents, teachers, employers and other members of the Hong Kong community" (ibid.).

The introduction of CLT into Hong Kong secondary schools was not without its critics. For example, Etherton, in a 1981 paper entitled 'How relevant is the Communicative Approach for Hong Kong schools?' queried the wisdom of introducing a syllabus model which had not been piloted under conditions similar to

Hong Kong (Etherton 1981), and in an ‘English Bulletin’ of the time, he asked “Is it reasonable to rely on intuition and faith when devising a syllabus for one million children of mixed ability and interests?”(cited in Evans 1997:40). Nevertheless, the implementation of the ‘communicative’ primary syllabus went ahead in two stages in 1984 and 1985, while the secondary version was introduced in three stages between 1986 and 1988. In reality, the methods advocated in the new syllabus did not represent a radical departure from past practice. As Evans notes, the approach corresponds broadly to Howatt’s ‘weak’ version of CLT (Howatt 1984:286). As a result, “...old techniques for presenting and practising structures are largely retained, but unlike the 1975 syllabus, the revised syllabus provides a detailed component on methodology designed to provide a communicative dimension to English lessons”(Evans 1996:33). At the time of writing (summer 1999), this revised syllabus is still in force at secondary level. However, further change is on the horizon: primary schools are currently experiencing a phased introduction of a Target-Oriented Curriculum (TOC) in English (and other subjects), and the Education Department is clearly keen to promote ‘task-based learning’ (TBL) in secondary level English. Further guidelines for implementing the secondary syllabus were issued early in 1996 (“...designed to provide teachers with a framework for designing a ‘progressive’ school-based English curriculum which is underpinned by the specific needs of their students”(Evans 1996:48)), while, as mentioned in 1.2.2, a new ‘task-based’ secondary English syllabus exists in draft form (Curriculum Development Council 1999) and has been piloted in a number of schools.

Despite the efforts devoted to the introduction of CLT, not least by those institutions involved in English Language teacher education in Hong Kong, there is, as Evans notes, “... considerable anecdotal evidence to suggest that the instructional practices of many English teachers in Hong Kong secondary schools bear little resemblance to even the relatively weak interpretation of CLT embodied in the curriculum”(Evans 1997:40). This perception is reinforced by the 1994 report of the Education Commission’s Working Group on language proficiency, which asserts that many schools have “... still not embraced the communicative approach, preferring to concentrate on the formal features of the language at the expense of encouraging students to use the language”(Education Commission 1994:25).

The evidence for this apparent discrepancy between policy and practice is, however, not just anecdotal. Various recent studies of Hong Kong English classrooms (for example, Wu 1993, and Pennington 1995a) suggest that CLT has had little or no impact on patterns of interaction, with the characteristic teacher-centred, transmissional (Young and Lee 1987) style of teaching continuing to predominate. Richards et al's 1992 study of the culture of the English Language teacher, drawing on the responses of a sample of 249 Hong Kong secondary English teachers, identified two distinct groups of teachers, those who claimed to adopt a functional approach to language teaching, and those who favoured a grammar-based approach (Richards et al 1992:96). Whichever approach they espoused, however, the classroom activities they most frequently employed were very traditional in nature : the two most highly ranked activities were (1) doing reading and writing activities from the textbook, and (2) doing written grammar exercises (*ibid*:90).

Evans' 1997 study of classroom practices from the students' perspective reports similar findings. His sample of 300 undergraduates in Hong Kong, reflecting on their experience in Secondary Form 4, were asked to indicate the degree of emphasis placed by their English teacher on ten areas of language learning, six of which reflected CLT principles and four of which represented traditional concerns of Hong Kong English teachers. The three areas ranked as receiving the greatest emphasis were all 'traditional concerns': (1) preparing for the HKCEE², (2) mastering English grammar, and (3) speaking and writing in correct English (Evans 1997:43-44). The students' recollections of the frequency of twenty learning activities in English lessons reveal much the same pattern. The four activities ranked as occurring with the greatest frequency were : (1) writing compositions, (2) writing summaries, (3) doing reading comprehension exercises, and (4) doing written grammar exercises (*ibid*:46). It is worth noting, however, that there was some evidence of CLT activity in some classrooms, leading Evans to conclude that "... perhaps a quarter of the subjects' teachers – presumably experienced English specialists in good schools – may have

² The HKCE (Hong Kong Certificate of Education) is the public examination taken in a range of subjects at the end of Secondary Form 5. The final E in HKCEE refers to the examination in English Language. The English Language public examination taken at the end of Form 7 is the 'Use of English' (UE).

introduced some communicative practices within a generally eclectic instructional repertoire"(ibid:51).

There are a number of possible reasons why, as discussed in 1.2.2, the impact of CLT upon the practices of most teachers has been at best superficial. Evans' 1996 analysis of the contextual factors inhibiting the successful implementation of CLT as a curriculum innovation in Hong Kong identifies several possible reasons. First is the limited role which English plays in the lives of most Hong Kong people. Although English is extensively used in official, formal situations in Hong Kong, and proficiency in the language is regarded by most Hong Kong Chinese as the 'principal determinant of upward and outward mobility' (So 1992, cited in Evans 1996:36), Hong Kong is largely a monolingual society, and Cantonese is "... overwhelmingly the language of the home, the street and the entertainment media"(Education Commission 1994:36). There is therefore a perceived irrelevance in a syllabus which focuses on the development of basic communication skills in English when in fact English plays no part whatsoever in real-life interpersonal communication for the vast majority of students (see 1.2.4).

The influence of the examination syllabus is another factor which has almost certainly inhibited the implementation of CLT in Hong Kong schools. Hong Kong is a highly competitive, exam-oriented society, where students typically have a very instrumental attitude towards their studies, devoting most attention to those aspects of each subject which are weighted most heavily in the public exams (see, for example, Andrews and Fullilove 1994). Evans points out that while the syllabuses for the teaching of English in Hong Kong schools since the early 50's have been based upon an Oral Approach, the public exams have until recently paid little or no attention to oral testing, focusing instead on reading comprehension, precis, composition, grammar and usage. According to Evans, "...it would be reasonable to argue ... that for much of the post-war period there has been a wide gulf between official policy and classroom practice; between what the Education Department wants to see happening in the classroom (oral work) and what actually does happen (written work)"(Evans 1996:40). At the same time, however, it should be acknowledged that a number of recent changes in the English public exams (particularly the introduction of the UE oral in 1994, and related modifications to the HKCEE oral) have been

introduced with the intention of exerting a positive washback effect upon classroom practices (King 1994:24).

The culture of Hong Kong schools is also seen by Evans as having an inhibiting effect upon the implementation of curriculum innovations like CLT. According to Pennington, Hong Kong English teachers “have a difficult, high-stress work situation”(Pennington 1995b:708). They typically “... work under conditions of low autonomy, with little influence over strategic decisions, few opportunities for collaboration with colleagues and indeed little emphasis on collegiality; minimal positive feedback or work incentives such as promotions or societal recognition; and generally poor resources in the way of an orderly environment, administrative support, adequate physical conditions, instructional resources, and reasonable workloads”(ibid.).

The characteristics of the materials, the background of the teachers and the expectations of the students are also seen as militating against the successful implementation of CLT. Factors such as the pressures of a highly competitive publishing market, the influence of public exams on pedagogy and teachers’ lack of specialist training have, according to Evans, led publishers to prefer “... to produce somewhat traditional, examination-oriented ‘teacher-proof’ coursebooks rather than books which reflect the principles of the syllabus”(Evans 1996:43). The lack of specialist training among so many teachers of English in Hong Kong secondary schools (discussed in 1.2.3 above) leads such teachers to rely heavily on these ‘teacher-proof’ textbooks, and results in a tendency “...to adopt a didactic, transmissional style of teaching”(Evans 1996:45). In doing so, they conform to a style of teaching which, according to MacLennan (1988), Hong Kong students seem to favour : they may perceive it as boring (Evans 1995: 47), but it is seen as an effective way of satisfying their expectation of good examination results (Evans 1996:44). It is, however, a style of teaching which is a long way removed from the principles of CLT.

3.6 Approaches to the teaching of grammar – teacher recollections

The historical survey of ELT in Hong Kong schools, as outlined in the preceding sections of this chapter, reveals that there has frequently been a gap between policy and practice throughout the past one hundred and fifty years. During

this period approaches to teaching have undoubtedly evolved, but there have probably been more changes at the policy level than in the classroom itself. Whatever the approved approach at an official level, it seems that a variety of approaches have always been employed in the schools themselves : just as fifty years ago there were some teachers favouring a Grammar-Translation Approach and others preferring the Direct Method (Bickley 1987:192), now there are some who claim to adopt a grammar-based approach and others who claim to espouse a functional approach (Richards et al 1992:96). At the same time, throughout the entire history of ELT in Hong Kong, grammar appears to have played a significant part in the practices of the vast majority of teachers, irrespective of the approach they claimed, or were expected, to favour.

Many of these same points can be noted in the reflections upon their ELT learning experience of the specific sample of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English who form the focus of the main study of the thesis. The sample consists of seventeen subjects, all but one of whom received most of their schooling in Hong Kong. At the time the study was conducted (during the academic year 1996-97), the ages of the subjects ranged from twenty-four to thirty-nine, with the average age being twenty-nine. All of them were therefore at secondary school in the 70's and 80's. All but the youngest subjects would have completed their secondary education before the 'communicative' syllabus was introduced into secondary schools in the late 80's. They therefore would have received the bulk of their schooling at a time when the Oral-Structural Approach was the major influence on syllabus design. By contrast, the entire teaching experience of all but one of the subjects has been obtained since the implementation of the communicative syllabus. The subjects' reflections on their English language learning experiences and the role which grammar played were gathered in a series of semi-structured interviews (see 4.4.6.3 below for a description of the procedure).

In considering the recollections of these teachers, it is important to note the following : the subjects are reflecting on experiences of schooling which happened some time ago, and which involved being taught by a range of different teachers (the average subject, for example, would have left school at least ten years before, and been exposed to at least five teachers of English); the subjects attended a variety of schools (some genuinely English-medium, some Chinese-medium, and some where

much of the teaching was mixed-code or mixed-mode); the subjects now work in a wide range of schools, with student intakes ranging from Band 1 to Band 4 (the majority of the subjects have taught in more than one school, while one has taught for all but one term in the same school she attended as a pupil). Inevitably, all these factors have an influence upon the subjects' recollections. It is nevertheless interesting to note the extent to which their reflections are consistent with the points made in the historical survey.

Of the sixteen subjects who attended secondary schools in Hong Kong, eight feel that there was a greater emphasis on grammar in the past than there is now, while six consider that there was less emphasis on grammar in the past than there is now. Two of the subjects feel that the emphasis is broadly similar, but that the approach to grammar may have changed somewhat.

Those who recall a greater emphasis on grammar remember a number of features of their school days : for example, whole lessons focusing on the explicit teaching of grammar :

“ ... at that time ...the theme of a lesson is actually the name of a grammatical point ... for example ...today we’re going to talk about present perfect tense, today we’re going to talk about passive voice. Yes, so that’s very erm grammar-focused” (Shirley S/SSIA/6)

a style of teaching involving a great deal of mechanical practice :

“... every day when I went into my English class, I sat there and did a lot of ... grammar exercises, filling in blanks, answering questions, writing sentences mechanically ... every day was like that actually in my days” (Yan Y/SSIA/3)

a much greater use of metalinguistic terminology :

“ ... when I was in school, my teachers taught me quite a number of terms, subject, verb or relative clauses ... they use such terms to teach us. But now it seems that we’re avoiding such terms ... instead of saying ‘preposition’, give them examples ... fill in the blanks you think ‘to’ or ‘at’ or ‘in’ instead of using the terms. But in the past we did use grammatical terms” (Lydia L/SSIA/3)

a very exam-focused style of teaching :

“... I think of my past teachers and ... they just check answers for exercises ... M/C ... grammar exercises ... and especially form 6 and 7, just leave us to do the exercise and do the timing for us ... at that time no oral examinations for UE and the teachers did not encourage us to speak in English ... just do exercise, usage and writing ...” (Eva E/SSIA/5)

and lots of grammar-related handouts and worksheets :

“... teachers gave us lots of exercise to do and they would give us ... notes, and then handouts, worksheets ... lots of handouts, worksheets to do ... I think many lessons were spent on grammar items”. (Diana D/SSIA/5)

For this group of subjects, it seems that the approach to grammar has changed to the extent that there is a greater emphasis on more meaningful activities :

“... these days we do a lot of tasks ... we make sure that they get to know what they’re doing, and they find the meaning and the purpose in doing the task that they do. I mean, in my school days we weren’t told that we have to find meaning ... or we weren’t given any real meaning to the task ... in any that we did”. (Wendy W/SSIA/3)

However, judging from the comments of a number of the subjects, the change seems to be primarily for motivational reasons :

“Students are not as patient as we were in the past. If we kept using that old method, certainly they will ... be very bored, and they won’t ... bother to do your work at all”. (Yan Y/SSIA/3)

“I think in the past is kind of boring. We just accept it. The teacher say “You have to learn it, it’s very important”, then we learn it. But nowadays ... because everyone is complaining ‘Oh, grammar is really boring’, so as a teacher, I will try to make it more interesting”. (Pearl P/SSIA/3)

Although, according to this group of subjects, the approach to grammar has evolved to a certain extent, they nevertheless see grammar as continuing to play a central part in the teaching and learning of English. For some of the subjects, this is because they perceive grammar as having an important role in communication :

“I still think it forms the core of everything. Because ... without the correct grammar, we can hardly communicate, or it's very difficult to communicate. So I think it's a core, actually”. (Yan Y/SSIA/4)

For others, the thinking is more pragmatic : the importance of grammar (at least from the students' perspective) is thought to lie more in its potential contribution to success in public exams than any role it might play in communication :

“still ... because of the exam system in Hong Kong, students are tested on their knowledge of language, so ... for the sake of the examination, the teacher still have to teach grammar. Even though students are not really using grammar to communicate, you still have to pass the exam. So you have to teach the students grammar, and students sometimes are motivated to learn grammar, because they want to pass the exam”. (Shirley S/SSIA/6)

The other group of six subjects who recall less emphasis on grammar in ELT when they were at school tend to be those who attended schools where the teaching was wholly in English except during the Chinese and Chinese History lessons. These subjects recall little or no explicit attention to grammar in their English lessons :

“... my teachers didn't teach grammar explicitly. We were told to watch TV programmes, to listen to the ... English news, to read, to learn phrases, to learn examples, but they didn't teach grammar ... I mean, in detail or explicitly”.

(Joanna J/SSIA/4)

A number of this group seem to feel that the absence of explicit grammar teaching during their own schooling causes them difficulties now that they are themselves teaching :

“ ... for grammar I think it's very difficult to teach ... because when I was growing up, I was educated in Hong Kong, but our school never sort of teach grammars ... When people are talking 'infinitive', I have to think 'what is infinitive?' And even the first time I say 'gerund', ... 'oh gosh, what is gerund?' I don't have the technical terms ... to get used to the idea of ... when you teach grammar, you have to go through, OK first of all we know the term, what is infinitive, and then we have to ... it's like this form and this form, all right? When I was studying, we don't have grammar lessons at all. We have a book, but nobody

ever opened it at all. We just sort of learned it through, I don't know, reading, speaking or listening". (Maggie M/SSIA/2)

Another of the subjects in this group describes the fear that she has of grammar, a feeling she attributes to her experience of learning English at school :

"I recall when I was studying in secondary school, we don't have grammar lessons like now ... because our teachers don't teach us any grammar at all ... Actually I am very afraid of grammar. I think ... it was influenced by the secondary school. So I am afraid to teach grammar to my students, too". (Rose R/SSIA/4)

As might be expected, the changes of approach to the teaching of grammar noted by this group of subjects are quite different from those reported by the first group. One of the subjects in this group reports an increase in the amount of explanation :

"I think there's more explanation now. Because I have to explain to them every year. It seems that they are blank. Every year I come into the classroom and I will start from the beginning. But in the past, our teacher just explained it once, and then give a lot of homework, and that's it, and there's not too much explanation". (Pearl P/SSIA/2)

Another of the subjects expresses the feeling that her students would not be able to cope with learning grammar implicitly, as she herself did, and that instead they need to have grammar presented to them as explicit formulae :

"For some reason ... it did seem simple to learn when I was young, but ... when I look at my students, they have no idea how to get those things. They have to go formula type. They have to ... OK, if you have such situation, then you use -ing form". (Maggie M/SSIA/2)

Another subject expresses similar views, emphasising the influence of textbooks and examinations on what he perceives as an increase in the attention paid to grammar :

"... we follow strictly the textbook, this one the Oxford Book 3. They have the grammar items, then we have to teach them ... Because if their [i.e. the students] standard is quite low, then they're not able to learn those grammar items. But to them it's quite important, because there's something they can study ... the

grammar. Cos they've got all the forms, like mathematics they have the forms, and they get factors. To them it's quite helpful, cos they can study for their exams. But to me, I don't think it's enough to teach them so many grammar items".

(Tony T/SSIA/3)

3.7 The demands placed by present-day ELT upon the TMA of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English

From this survey of the history of ELT in Hong Kong, and the role which grammar has played, it is clear that the explicit teaching of grammar has formed a significant part of ELT classroom practice in Hong Kong from the earliest colonial times. It is equally clear that there is still a great deal of form-focused teaching taking place in Hong Kong schools, in spite of official endeavours to promote a more meaning-focused 'communicative' approach in both primary and secondary schools.

The previous chapter presented a model indicating the ways in which a teacher's metalinguistic awareness can interact with the three main sources of input for learners : materials, other learners, and the teacher herself. In the typical Hong Kong classroom, the least significant of these three sources is likely to be other learners, since the prevailing classroom culture tends to keep learners' public production of language to a minimum. In the Hong Kong context it is also important to note that the materials used are normally published textbooks : very few secondary teachers of English in Hong Kong have the time, inclination, confidence, or competence to produce materials of their own for classroom use on a regular basis.

The previous chapter also made the point that a form-focused approach, designed to develop learners' explicit knowledge of language, places obvious demands upon a teacher's metalinguistic awareness, and that TMA can potentially play a crucial role in determining the success of any such approach. As suggested above, this statement would certainly apply to the vast majority of English classrooms in Hong Kong secondary schools, where most of the teaching is form-focused, and even the more 'communicative' approaches to teaching still incorporate a 'P-P-P' teaching sequence. For secondary teachers of English in Hong Kong, one would therefore hypothesise that TMA would be a significant factor at each stage from lesson preparation through to the provision of corrective feedback. Chapter six of the

thesis sheds light on this hypothesis, by reporting on the TMA of the seventeen subjects in the main study as revealed in practice, both in the classroom and in their performance of pedagogically related tasks.

Chapter 4 Research design

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 has proposed a language-specific construct, teacher metalinguistic awareness (TMA), as a pedagogically-related reflective dimension of communicative language ability. It has also been suggested that TMA has both declarative and procedural aspects. As discussed in 2.2.6 and 2.4.4, the suggestion is that models of pedagogical content knowledge such as that proposed by, for example, Shulman (1986) are too general and all-embracing to capture fully the unique characteristics of the language teacher's pedagogical content knowledge. However, as noted earlier, TMA is not proposed as a replacement for pedagogical content knowledge, but rather as a refinement: a sub-component specific to the language teacher which interacts with the other constituent components of the broader construct as well as with communicative language ability.

The main purpose of the present study is to examine the validity of proposing such a construct by investigating the metalinguistic awareness of a number of teachers, exploring potential influences upon the development of an individual teacher's metalinguistic awareness, observing the ways in which TMA can affect a teacher's professional activity, and how it interacts with other aspects of pedagogical content knowledge. At the same time, it is intended that the study might provide insights into the TMA of the specific group of teachers forming the focus of the research. As mentioned previously, the focus of the present study is on grammar, although the construct TMA is in principle applicable to the full range of a teacher's language knowledge and awareness.

Given that the purpose of the study is interpretive-descriptive, exploratory and explanatory, the selected research approach has a qualitative as well as a quantitative dimension. Although a tentative theoretical model of TMA has been proposed in the previous chapter, it would not lend itself to a deductive, hypothesis-driven method of research in which a series of hypotheses are generated, tested and modified by the empirical study. The theoretical framework which exists is very much a theory in development. The research is therefore designed so that the data collected can inform the refinement of the theoretical model at the same time as increasing understanding of the

metalinguistic awareness of individual teachers.

The remainder of the chapter presents a detailed description of the research design. Section 4.2 outlines a series of initial conclusions, assumptions and hypotheses influencing the design of the present study. The section which follows sets out the specific research questions to be addressed by the study, questions arising from the theoretical framework and the series of initial conclusions, assumptions and hypotheses. The final section describes and justifies the selection of the procedures adopted for the research.

4.2 Initial conclusions, assumptions and hypotheses

4.2.1 The present study is based upon certain initial conclusions, assumptions and hypotheses. Firstly, there are conclusions concerning the origins and shaping of the communicative language ability and metalinguistic awareness of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English. These conclusions are drawn from the historical evidence presented in chapter 3 and from nine years' close acquaintance with Hong Kong teachers and their schools :

4.2.1.1 that the majority of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English will have had some form-focused language instruction (with metalanguage) during their schooling;

4.2.1.2 that the majority will also have had experience of some kind of 'immersion' in an English-medium study environment, for some beginning as early as at primary level. At secondary level the degree of immersion will have varied considerably, depending on the school attended, while at tertiary level a number will have experienced immersion in an English-medium living and study environment. Almost all teachers will have therefore at some time been exposed to significant quantities of meaning-focused input outside the classroom setting.

4.2.2 Secondly, there are certain contextual, common-sense assumptions about the levels of communicative language ability, subject-matter knowledge, and metalinguistic awareness of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English. Assumption 4.2.2.1 derives from experience and reflects an on-going concern. It

seems reasonable to assume that 4.2.2.2 – 4.2.2.5 are also true. All five assumptions raise issues which are worthy of further investigation. The assumptions are as follows :

- 4.2.2.1 that the levels of communicative language ability, subject-matter knowledge and metalinguistic awareness among Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English vary widely;
- 4.2.2.2 that the teachers' levels of communicative language ability, subject-matter knowledge, and metalinguistic awareness may reflect in systematic ways certain patterns in their bilingual/educational profiles;
- 4.2.2.3 that teachers may lack confidence or have excessive confidence in their communicative language ability, subject-matter knowledge and/or metalinguistic awareness;
- 4.2.2.4 that a lack (or excess) of confidence may not necessarily reflect the level of ability/knowledge/awareness;
- 4.2.2.5 that a lack (or excess) of confidence may itself adversely affect a teacher's ability to handle formal features of language.

4.2.3 Thirdly, and again based on historical evidence and nine years' experience of Hong Kong classrooms, there are hypotheses about the role the teacher plays in controlling classroom input, and the effect that this has upon the nature and quality of that input (see the discussion and model in 2.3.6 above) :

- 4.2.3.1 that in almost all Hong Kong secondary schools L2 classroom input is mediated by/dependent upon the teacher, whether that input is a) produced by the teacher herself, b) provided by the teacher (via the textbook or other teacher-selected materials), or c) produced by the learners in response to a) or b);
- 4.2.3.2 that (as suggested in 2.3.6) the nature and quality of classroom input are crucially dependent upon the teacher's communicative language ability, subject-matter knowledge and metalinguistic awareness.

4.2.4 Exploration of the TMA construct is intended to shed light on these conclusions, assumptions and hypotheses, as well as on the specific research questions outlined in the following section.

4.3 Research questions

The main research questions to be addressed in the study are listed below. As mentioned in 4.1 above, it is intended that the data collected in the investigation of these questions will be analysed with regard both to what is revealed about teacher metalinguistic awareness (TMA) in general and about the sample of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English in particular :

4.3.1 What is TMA?

4.3.1.1 Is it different from communicative language ability?

4.3.1.2 Is it different from subject-matter knowledge?

4.3.1.3 Is it different from pedagogical content knowledge?

4.3.2 What influences TMA?

In what ways and to what extent is it influenced by :

4.3.2.1 language background?

4.3.2.2 educational background?

4.3.2.3 experience of teaching?

4.3.2.4 other factors?

4.3.3 How does TMA impact upon a teacher's professional practice?

In what ways and to what extent does TMA affect :

4.3.3.1 pre-lesson

linguistic aspects of the planning of grammar teaching?

4.3.3.2 in-lesson

classroom execution of grammar teaching, including :

making grammatical input salient?

explaining grammar?

dealing with learners' grammatical errors?

real-time decisions about grammar issues arising during the lesson?

4.3.3.3 post-lesson

reflections upon the teaching and learning of grammar?

4.3.4 How does TMA interact with other aspects of pedagogical content knowledge?

In what ways and to what extent is TMA related to beliefs and attitudes re :

4.3.4.1 grammar (including approaches to the teaching of grammar)?

4.3.4.2 communicative language teaching (CLT)?

4.3.4.3 the role of grammar in CLT?

4.4 Methodology

4.4.1 The present study focuses on a major sub-group of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English - graduates without professional training - rather than attempting to investigate English teachers as a whole. The decision to limit the scope in this way was taken partly for reasons of practicality and partly because this sub-group encapsulates many of the concerns of the Hong Kong Education Commission discussed in 1.2.3.

Data collection was planned to take place over a fifteen-month period, beginning with a base-line study in March 1996 and ending with the grammar teaching project reports written in May/June 1997. The following sections outline the methodological procedures utilised at the various stages of the study and the reasons for their selection. Figure 4 presents a summary of the different stages of data collection. Figure 5 gives an overview of the conceptual design of the study, showing how the data collection procedures are intended to shed light on the issues raised by the four broad research questions.

4.4.2 Base-line study - objectives and sampling

4.4.2.1 Objectives

The first phase of data collection was a base-line study, which was conducted in March 1996. The objective of this base-line study was to obtain an overview of the metalinguistic awareness of the sub-group of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English referred to above. At the same time it was intended that the base-line study would provide information which would enable the principled selection of a representative set of subjects for more in-depth study. Because of the numbers involved and the type of information required, quantitative techniques were adopted for all five parts of the base-line study.

March 1996

BASE-LINE STUDY

- Group interview
- M/C test of grammar and vocabulary
- Composition
- Test of language awareness
- Questionnaire

September 1996

**SELECTION OF
MAIN STUDY GROUP**

September/October 1996

MAIN STUDY

Questionnaire

October 1996

Videotape of
grammar lesson

October/November 1996

Semi-structured
interview 1

October/November 1996

Lesson planning task

November/December 1996

Explanation task

March/April 1997

Classroom observation +
semi-structured
interview 2

May 1997

Grammar teaching
project reports

Figure 4 : Summary of the stages of data collection

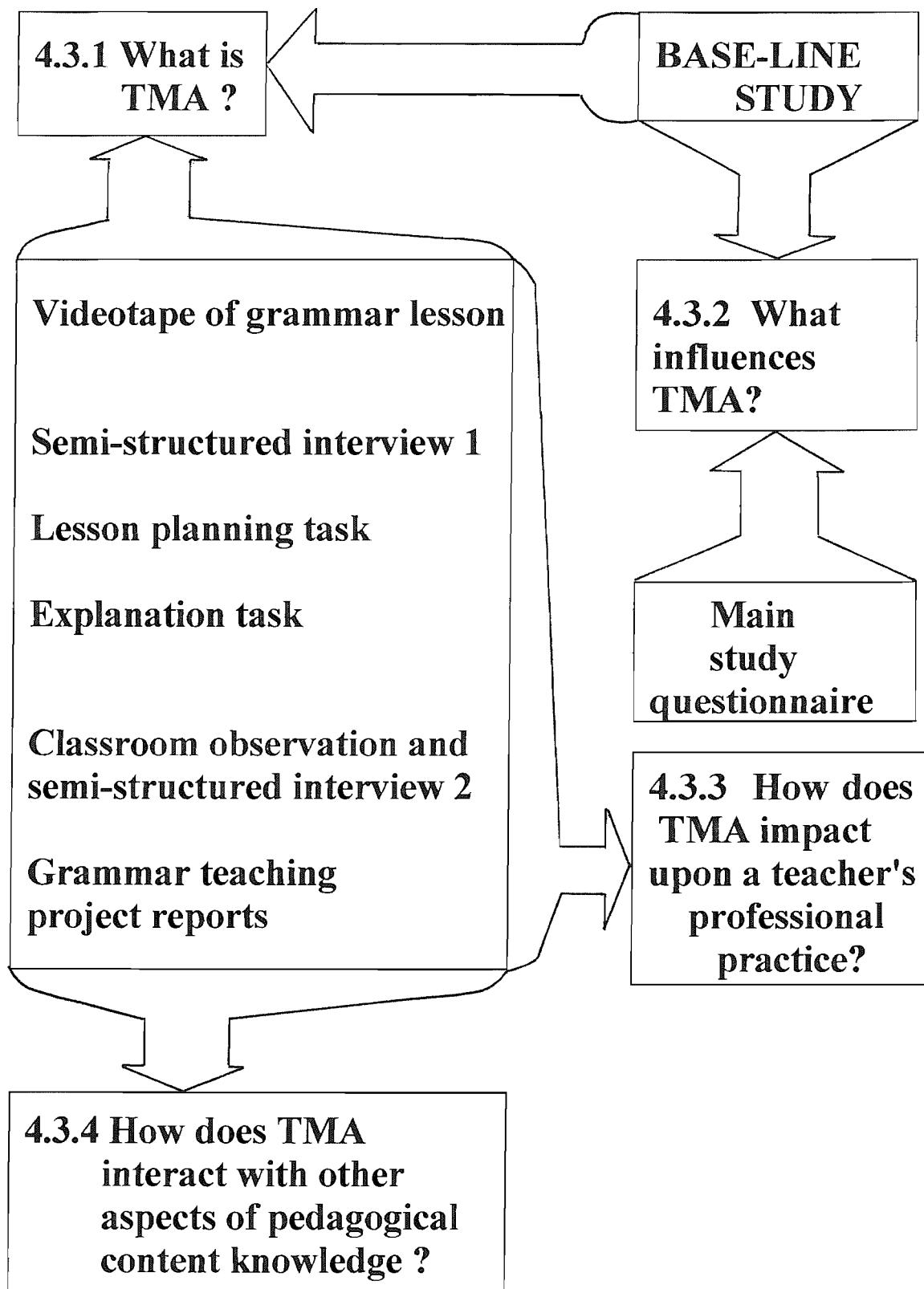


Figure 5 : Overview of the conceptual design of the study

4.4.2.2 Sampling

The sampling for the base-line study was random : the subjects who participated were the whole batch of English Major applicants for the University of Hong Kong (HKU) part-time Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PCEd) programme starting in September 1996. As individuals they were therefore self-selecting rather than selected by the researcher. The PCEd is a two-year course offering professional training to teachers who have begun their classroom careers with just a first degree. It should be noted that the composition of the subjects for this study was similar to that of the overall workforce of Hong Kong graduate secondary school teachers of English in at least one important respect, in that a large proportion had first degrees in subject areas quite unrelated to English Language.

4.4.3 Base-line study : methods of data collection

The base-line study consisted of the following battery of testing tasks :

- i) a group interview;
- ii) a multiple-choice test of grammar/vocabulary;
- iii) a composition; and
- iv) a test of language awareness (with four components).

Subjects were also asked to complete a questionnaire about their beliefs and attitudes towards language, language learning and language teaching. Copies of the written testing tasks and the questionnaire are provided in Appendix 1.

For several years applicants for the HKU PCEd programme have had a group interview, a writing test and a multiple-choice test as part of their selection procedure. The battery of tasks making up the base-line study therefore represented a modification and extension of what they would normally have encountered as part of the PCEd admissions exercise. However, it was explained to all applicants by letter in advance that there was a research dimension to the admissions exercise on this particular occasion and that a) they could opt out of the videotaped group interview if they wished, and b) completion of the questionnaire was not part of the admissions exercise and was therefore voluntary. A copy of the letter is contained in Appendix 2. In the event, only 1

out of 187 subjects chose not to be videotaped, while just under ten percent of the subjects either did not complete the questionnaire or did not complete it fully.

The four parts of the base-line study test battery were designed and administered as outlined in the following sub-sections. The questionnaire is discussed in 4.4.4.

4.4.3.1 Group interview

Subjects took part in a half-hour group interview in batches of ten to twelve. The interviews were conducted by the researcher and a small number of colleagues. The interviews followed a standard format : subjects introduced themselves to other members of the group and then participated in a discussion of language teaching issues relating to their own classroom experience. The interviews were all videotaped. Oral proficiency was subsequently rated globally on a 4-point scale (4 = Very good, 3 = Good, 2 = Fair, 1 = Poor).

In adopting this approach to the evaluation of oral proficiency, it was acknowledged that there were major limitations. Subjects were not being challenged in the same way as they might have been by a range of tasks and organisational formats : as a result, finer distinctions in spoken language ability could easily be masked. Given, however, that for practical reasons administration of the whole battery of tasks had to fit into a single morning, it was not possible to attempt a more rigorous assessment of the oral proficiency of so many people. On balance, it was concluded that the advantages of obtaining a rough estimate of spoken language ability outweighed the obvious disadvantages of such large groupings and such a limited range of oral activities. It was also felt that the videotaping of the interviews would enhance the reliability of the ratings, since all subjects would be marked by the same assessor(s), who could concentrate solely upon evaluation rather than having to function simultaneously as interlocutor/facilitator.

4.4.3.2 Multiple-choice test

The multiple-choice test (M_C) used in the base-line study was that which has been employed as part of the PCEd admissions process for five years. It is a fifty-item test of grammar and vocabulary, where each item has five possible completions. Each of the items is drawn from a bank of Hong Kong

Examinations Authority (HKEA) multiple-choice questions which have been shown to discriminate well. This bank of items has also been calibrated against the performance of Hong Kong secondary school pupils of different ages (see Coniam 1995). As a result, it has been possible to assemble a test of fifty items on an ascending scale of difficulty. The test takes twenty minutes to administer and is machine-marked.

4.4.3.3 Composition

Subjects were given a half-hour test of continuous writing made up of two tasks related to their work as teachers of English. The first task was a piece of functional writing : subjects were asked to imagine that a native-speaker teacher was joining the staff of their school next term and that they had been asked by the Head of English to draft a letter inviting the new staff member to an informal lunch gathering of all the English teachers. The second task was a piece of argumentative writing in which subjects discussed the role of grammar in teaching and learning English in Hong Kong secondary schools and the relationship of grammar and communication.

Each piece of writing was independently evaluated by two assessors using a rating system similar to that used for the Cambridge Examinations in English for Language Teachers (CEELT)¹. Assessment involved the use of three separate five-point scales : content and organisation, accuracy of language, and range and appropriacy of language. The marks awarded to each subject by the two assessors were averaged : each subject therefore ended up with a numerical rating of written language ability with a maximum of 30. Before they marked the whole batch of compositions, the assessors took part in a standardisation/training exercise.

The argumentative writing task had a second, covert purpose. As well as

¹ The Cambridge Examinations in English for Language Teachers have been offered by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) since 1987. They are specifically designed to test the communicative language ability of teachers as revealed in their performance of professionally related tasks.

providing a means of evaluating subjects' written language proficiency, it also shed light on their beliefs and attitudes towards grammar and its relationship with communication and CLT. This offered a useful method of triangulation with information obtained from other sources.

4.4.3.4 Test of language awareness

This was a twenty-minute test aimed at obtaining information about the declarative dimension of the subjects' TMA (referred to as 'language awareness' for convenience). Given the study's focus on grammar, the test attempted to measure subjects' explicit knowledge of grammar and grammatical terminology (i.e. the grammatical component of their subject-matter knowledge). Before doing the actual test, subjects completed a brief questionnaire with information about their linguistic, educational, and professional backgrounds. The gathering of this information was intended to serve two purposes. First, it would allow for the possibility of investigating the relationship between aspects of subjects' backgrounds and their performance on different parts of the battery of tests (4.3.2). Second, it would help to ensure that the composition of subjects selected for the main study reflected patterns in the larger population, particularly in terms of educational background (subject and location of tertiary study).

The test itself was based largely on that devised by Alderson et al (see, for example, Steel and Alderson 1994, Alderson et al 1996, 1997), which itself drew heavily upon an earlier test designed by Bloor (see, for example, Bloor 1986). There were a variety of reasons for adopting the Alderson et al test as the basis for the test of language awareness. First, it had already been carefully trialled as part of Alderson et al's own study. Second, it had been shown to measure a factor of language knowledge/ability which was relatively unrelated to communicative language ability (Alderson et al 1996:11-12). Third, it appeared to have construct validity as a measure of the declarative dimension of TMA in that it was potentially revealing about both knowledge of metalanguage and also the ability to state grammatical rules (with or without the use of metalinguistic terminology). The test was adapted for two reasons: first, the Alderson et al test included exercises in French, which were, for obvious reasons, inappropriate in the present

study, and second, it was felt that the test might be improved by the addition of a task intended to shed light specifically on subjects' ability to produce appropriate metalinguistic terms. Further discussion of the modified test can be found in Andrews (1999).

The test had two sections, with ten minutes assigned to each. After ten minutes subjects had to move on to section 2, whether or not they had finished section 1. Each section was worth a total of sixty marks. The first section was made up of two components (MA_RECOG and MA_PROD), the first of which consisted of two tasks taken from Alderson et al, and in turn from Bloor. The focus of both components of the first section was grammatical terminology. The first task in the MA_RECOG component provided subjects with a sentence and fourteen different grammatical categories (for instance, countable noun, preposition, and finite verb). Subjects had to select one example of each grammatical item from the sentence. The second task in the MA_RECOG component comprised four items, each consisting of a sentence and a grammatical function (for example, direct object). Subjects had to underline the word(s) in the sentence which performed the particular function. The other component of the first section (MA_PROD) was designed specifically for this test and was made up of twelve items. Each item consisted of a sentence in which a word or phrase was underlined. Subjects were asked to provide a grammatical term which would precisely describe each of the underlined items.

The second section of the test consisted of two components, taken from Alderson et al, one testing subjects' ability to identify and correct errors (CORR), and the other examining their ability to explain grammatical rules (MA_RULES). Each of the components consisted of fifteen items. The two components were combined in the actual test, so that for each of fifteen sentences subjects were asked to a) rewrite the faulty part of the sentence correctly (CORR), and b) explain the grammatical rule which had been broken (MA_RULES).

The test was examiner-marked using a mark-scheme modified by the researcher from that devised by Alderson et al. On each item it was possible to score a maximum of two marks. For most of the items in MA_PROD and all the

items in MA_RULES it was also possible to gain one mark for a partially correct answer. For example, in MA_PROD item five, where subjects were required to provide a full grammatical description for the word *very* in the sentence *You play tennis very well*, the response *adverb of degree* earned two marks, while *adverb* alone (or *degree* alone) earned only one mark. The two exceptions in MA_PROD were item one *It's a lovely day, isn't it?* and item three *Alice fell asleep during the lecture*. For these items, the respective responses *question tag* and *preposition* earned two marks, and there were no partially correct answers. A similar marking system applied throughout MA_RULES. For instance, in item three, when explaining the correction of the sentence *Every day I am making good resolutions* to read *Every day I make good resolutions*, a response such as “*Simple present tense should be used when we talk about a habitual action*” gained the full two marks. “*Present tense is used when referring to the time word – every day*” earned one mark, while “*Tense of the verb should agree with the time given*” was given no marks.

4.4.4 Base-line study - questionnaire

Having completed the battery of tests described above, subjects were then invited to respond to a questionnaire containing sixty statements of belief about language and language learning. Subjects were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each statement on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). If they did not know whether they agreed with a statement, or if they did not understand it, they could tick the appropriate box. Subjects were given fifteen minutes to respond to the sixty statements. The decision to administer the questionnaire under test conditions instead of allowing subjects to complete it at home was taken for two reasons. First, it would ensure that responses were spontaneous and personal rather than being drawn from a reference book. Second, it was felt that the response rate would be greatly enhanced. As mentioned earlier, completion of the questionnaire was voluntary : in the event, 170 (approximately 90%) of the subjects stayed on and fully completed this final task.

The principal aim of the questionnaire was to obtain an overview of the beliefs and attitudes of this large sample of untrained graduate Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English. At the same time, it was intended that the responses of those subjects eventually participating in the main study could be triangulated with data about their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour gathered from other sources. It was assumed that this triangulation might be useful in two ways. First, it would facilitate cross-checking between subjects' questionnaire responses, their interview responses, and their behaviour both in the classroom and in performing professionally related tasks. Second, if triangulation revealed close consistency between the findings from the different sources, it would lend authority to the questionnaire as a source of information about the whole sample.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections : the first section, comprising twenty items, was headed Language and language learning, while the second and major section, with forty items, focused on Second language teaching. In the overall design of the questionnaire an attempt was made to assemble a set of statements likely to elicit a spread of agreement and disagreement. As part of the design there were also certain statements which functioned primarily as checks on the consistency of a subject's responses, either by being synonymous with an earlier statement or by expressing a directly opposing view.

The first section was designed with the intention of exploring subjects' familiarity with issues relating to language and language learning as well as eliciting their opinions on such issues. With some of the issues it was comparatively easy for subjects to have formed an opinion based on their experiences as teachers, e.g. statement **14 The most important factor in successful L2 learning is motivation**, whether or not they possessed any background knowledge. Others were more dependent upon some familiarity with the base disciplines, for example sociolinguistics (e.g. statement **3 Some varieties of language are better than others**), psycholinguistics/L2 acquisition (e.g. statements **16 Learners cannot learn new language if they are not 'developmentally ready' for it** and **19 Learners can learn new language just by hearing and understanding it**), and linguistics (e.g. statements **4 All**

languages are systematically organised and 7 There is less grammar in spoken language than in written language).

The forty statements in the second section were selected in order to investigate subjects' beliefs about various aspects of second language teaching. However, the statements did not attempt to cover the whole range of pedagogical issues. Instead, given the focus of the study, the forty statements concentrated almost entirely upon beliefs relating to communicative language teaching, grammar and the relationship between the two. Therefore, some statements made no direct reference to grammar (e.g. statements **37 Learners should be encouraged to attempt to communicate from the very beginning** and **26 Learners need to be exposed to authentic materials**), some made no mention of communication or principles of communicative language teaching (e.g. statements **22 Teachers should teach simple grammatical structures before more complex ones** and **24 Learners should finish practising one grammatical structure before starting to learn another**), while a number of others focused more explicitly upon the relationship between grammar and communication (e.g. statements **23 Learners should be encouraged to get their message across even if they lack specific grammatical knowledge** and **45 Teachers should focus on structure and form, rather than meaning**).

Within the second section an attempt was also made to find out subjects' beliefs about certain specific issues concerning the teaching and learning of grammar. In particular, a number of statements focused on the role of explanation (e.g. statements **31 Teachers should always explain grammar rules to learners** and **52 Grammar explanation should be avoided by the teacher**), including the role of L1 (e.g. statement **38 Teachers should use the learners' L1 to explain grammar rules**) and the use of metalanguage (e.g. statement **40 Learners should be able to use the common grammatical terms in the L2 correctly when discussing grammar**). Other recurrent themes in this second section were drilling (e.g. statement **47 Teachers should always drill new grammatical structures**), and the role of error (e.g. statements **27 Learners' mistakes should be corrected as soon as possible to prevent the formation of bad habits** and **54**

Learners should be encouraged to create language by a process of trial and error).

4.4.5 Main study -objectives and sampling

4.4.5.1 Objectives

As mentioned above, the broad aims of the main study were twofold: first, to examine the validity of the proposed construct teacher metalinguistic awareness by analysing different aspects of teacher knowledge, belief, decision-making and behaviour; and second, to explore the nature, extent and limitations of the metalinguistic awareness of the chosen subjects. The study was not designed so that conclusions could be drawn about levels of metalinguistic awareness among the whole population of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English. It was intended, however, that the study might shed some light on patterns of metalinguistic awareness among the sub-group of teachers under study, namely graduates without professional training.

4.4.5.2 Sampling

With these objectives in mind, the process of sampling for the main study was purposive : selection of subjects was based where possible upon a systematic analysis of the data from the base-line study, so that subjects in the main study could be broadly representative of trends within the larger sample (and arguably, therefore, of the whole population of such teachers). At the same time, practical considerations also played a significant part in the sampling process.

It was planned from the outset that, for practical reasons, the subjects for the study would be the PCEd (Part-time) English Major group to be taught by the researcher during the period 1996-98. There are normally three groups of English Majors, with twenty-one teachers in each group. In theory, therefore, the twenty-one subjects for the research study could be selected from a pool of sixty-three successful applicants for the programme. In practice, however, the pool of potential subjects was limited for a number of reasons, the most significant being the inclusion in the sixty-three successful applicants of a) six English native-speaker teachers, and b) twenty teachers who had been on the waiting-list for

admission to the PCEd from the previous year and who had therefore not taken part in the base-line study. As a result, the sampling process in fact involved choosing twenty-one subjects from a pool of thirty-seven.

In making the final selection, an attempt was made to achieve a broad similarity between the main study subjects and the base-line study population in the following respects :

- i) means of performance on the base-line study tasks;
- ii) range of performance on the base-line study tasks (with examples of performance across the full range);
- iii) gender - the proportion of females to males;
- iv) location of tertiary education - the proportion of those educated in Hong Kong and those who studied overseas;
- v) relevance of degree - the proportion of those with degrees of apparent relevance to ELT and those without.

At the same time, however, it was acknowledged that the main study group and the base-line study population would not be perfectly matched. In at least two respects, this was inevitable : their scores on the M_C test, and their years of teaching experience. These are two of the main criteria for admission to the PCEd programme. Therefore, the main study group, all of whom had been accepted for the programme, would necessarily have a higher mean M_C score and more teaching experience than the base-line study population, many of whom had not been selected for admission. This slight mismatch was not felt to be a problem : it was thought to be of far greater importance that the two groups should share a similar range of characteristics, of both performance and background.

Once twenty-one potential subjects for the main study had been identified, and three PCEd teaching groups drawn up accordingly, it was necessary for ethical reasons to explain to the chosen sample the nature and purpose of the study, and the demands which involvement would place upon each individual (see Appendix 3 for a copy of the letter inviting participation). It was made clear to the twenty-one that participation was entirely voluntary. In the

event, seventeen teachers agreed to become subjects for the main study. There was one hundred percent participation from these seventeen in every component of the main study. The four potential subjects who decided not to take part in the main research study continued as fully integrated members of the researcher's PCED class. Their withdrawal from the main study group had little effect upon the balance of sampling factors outlined above.

As anticipated, the main study group (MSG) and the base-line study population (BSP) were not perfectly matched. However, the final composition of the main study group reflected the broad range of characteristics exhibited by the larger population. Table 2 below shows the mean test scores of the two groups, with the expected difference of performance on the M_C test. Perhaps not surprisingly, the MSG also performed better than the BSP on the other parts of the test battery, although, as the standard deviations indicate, the range of performance among the members of the MSG was similar to that shown by the BSP as a whole.

| | Main study group (MSG) | | Base-line study Population (BSP) | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------|--|--------------|
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. |
| M_C | 68.35% | 11.47 | 53.3% | 16.93 |
| ORAL | 80.9% | 16.61 | 73.4% | 16.97 |
| WRITING | 63.3% | 12.42 | 60.7% | 12.71 |
| MA TOTAL | 71.1% | 10.16 | 65.0% | 13.16 |

Table 2 : The test performance of the MSG and BSP compared

The gender balance within the two groups was very similar (81.8% of the BSP subjects were female compared with 82.4% in the MSG). As expected, the MSG were generally slightly older than the BSP : only 5.9% of the MSG came from the youngest age category (20-24 years old) compared with 36.4% of the BSP. As for location of tertiary education, the composition of the MSG broadly reflected the split between Hong Kong- and overseas-educated subjects found amongst the BSP as a whole, with a slightly higher proportion of the MSG being educated overseas (47.1% as opposed to 35.9%). Members of the two groups also

had first degrees in a similar range of disciplines, with a somewhat higher proportion of the MSG having degrees of apparent relevance to ELT (59% as against 40% of the BSP).

Although the final composition of the two groups was not a perfect match, it was felt that the differences were not sufficient to invalidate the extrapolation of findings from the main study. Indeed, one might hypothesise that any weaknesses in the TMA of the MSG would be even more marked among the BSP as a whole, given their generally weaker test scores, their relative youth (and therefore inexperience), and their lower proportion of relevant qualifications.

4.4.6 Main study - methods of data collection

The design of the main study was primarily non-emergent, in that formal data analysis followed the bulk of the data collection. At the same time, however, early data collection activity influenced the design of subsequent tasks (such as the interviews), and the overall design was deliberately open-ended to allow for the possible addition of further data collection activities as appropriate.

A range of research instruments was used in the data collection, the main instruments being semi-structured interview, classroom observation, questionnaire, and two pedagogically related tasks. In a number of cases, one instrument was the main source of information relating to a particular research question. Other instruments were intended to contribute to a triangulation of method, by enabling aspects of the same phenomenon to be observed from a number of angles in order that a more complete picture might be obtained. This was felt to be especially necessary in exploring the impact of TMA on pedagogical practice (4.3.3), so that the procedural dimension of a teacher's metalinguistic awareness could be examined in the performance of different professional activities and on several occasions.

The following sub-sections present a description and explanation of the research instruments. The instruments are discussed in chronological order of administration.

4.4.6.1 Questionnaire

The main questionnaire (the Teacher Profile Questionnaire in Appendix 4) was intended to supplement the background information gathered as part of the test of language awareness (see 4.4.3.4). It was therefore designed to shed further light on potential influences upon the development of the TMA of the main study subjects, by facilitating the examination of possible links between aspects of a subject's background and her metalinguistic awareness. The questionnaire consisted of three sections, focusing on the subjects' language, educational and professional backgrounds. Subjects were given this questionnaire at the beginning of their PCEd course, and were asked to complete it at home in their own time.

The first section, Language Profile, asked subjects about the languages they could speak. Subjects were asked to identify the languages they spoke, to rank them according to how well they could speak them, and to say how and where they had learnt them. They were asked to rate their own ability in each language, and to provide information about the language(s) they used in different social groupings. This section also included a set of questions relating to the subjects' experience of studying English at school : the extent to which their teachers used English to teach English, the priority given to grammar, and the amount of grammatical terminology that was used in English classes.

In the second section, Education Profile, subjects were asked for information about their school and tertiary education. The questions about school focused upon location and medium of instruction. Subjects were also asked about the qualifications they obtained at school, and their involvement (if any) in English-medium extra-curricular activities. Most of the questions about tertiary education were intended to elicit detailed information about the content of each subject's degree programme, including the precise focus of any English study.

The third section, Professional Profile, sought information about subjects' teaching experience : the schools in which they had worked, the subjects and forms they had taught. One set of questions focused specifically upon subjects' experience of teaching English. These questions mirrored those in the first section relating to the subjects' experience as learners, and were designed to shed light on

the possible influence of formal language learning experience upon subjects' own classroom practices as teachers (as discussed in 2.4.3 above).

4.4.6.2 Videotape of grammar lesson

This videotaped classroom data was intended to be a major source of information about the impact of TMA on a teacher's pedagogical practice (4.3.3). Each subject was asked to provide a videotape of a lesson which was largely or wholly devoted to grammar. It was emphasised that the lesson was to be a natural part of the teaching sequence with a particular class rather than a one-off. This part of the main study was deliberately placed at the beginning of the data collection programme and at the beginning of the PCEd course, in order that each subject's classroom grammar teaching could be observed before professional training (or participation in the research process itself) could have a significant impact upon individual practices. Subjects were asked where possible to make their own arrangements for videotaping, so that the recordings could be made within the shortest possible time rather than being dependent upon a visit by the researcher. In the event, two-thirds of the group made their own recordings, with the other one-third soliciting the help of the researcher.

Subjects were given a detailed set of procedures to be followed both for the lesson and for the recording. In addition to the videotape, they were requested to provide a plan of the lesson and a set of post-lesson comments. In the plan subjects were asked to outline : overall learning objectives for the lesson, learner activities intended to realise those objectives, their purpose in selecting each activity, and their reasons for the way they organised each activity. In relation to the lesson's grammar focus, subjects were asked to identify each language point, to provide an estimate of the students' previous exposure to that point, to specify how the lesson was intended to advance students' understanding of/ability to use that language point, and to indicate how this understanding/ability would be evaluated. In the post-lesson comments, subjects were asked for immediate reactions and brief reflections in note-form, recording their feelings about what seemed to work well and why, what seemed to work less well and why, and what they would do differently next time and why. A sample of the set of instructions

given to subjects can be found in Appendix 5.

4.4.6.3 Semi-structured interview 1

Semi-structured interviews were adopted as a major research instrument for the main study. It was felt that interviews were essential as a means of probing in depth each subject's knowledge, understandings, beliefs, attitudes and practices in relation to the teaching and learning of grammar. Interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed to allow for detailed analysis. The semi-structured mode of interview was employed because it would allow the advantages of a structured overall framework, with all subjects being asked a similar range of questions, to be combined with the benefits of flexibility. For example, the semi-structured format would allow for follow-up questions, and for clarification of both questions and responses in ways which questionnaires inevitably cannot.

In adopting the interview as a technique, it was acknowledged that the role relationship of interviewer-interviewee (in this case an asymmetrical teacher-student relationship) might be seen as problematic, because of the possible influence of the element of power. The decision to employ the technique was motivated by the belief that its advantages far outweighed the disadvantages. It was also felt that these disadvantages were in any case potential rather than actual, for the following reasons :

- i) the subjects, although students, were all relatively mature adults;
- ii) anyone who felt in any way threatened by the prospect of participating in the research study and being interviewed had already had the chance to withdraw (as four potential subjects had opted to do);
- iii) the first cycle of interviews was scheduled to begin six weeks into the course, during which time the researcher would work to establish a relationship which was not based on an unequal distribution of power;
- iv) the interviews were planned to take place in the subjects' schools, in an environment which was 'home territory' for them, and where the teacher-student relationship was, to some extent at least, de-emphasised.

Nevertheless, it was accepted by the researcher that some subjects, when

interviewed, might say what they thought the researcher wanted to hear rather than what they genuinely believed. It was felt that this risk could be offset to some extent by the use of multiple techniques, including those where subjects talked to each other without the researcher being present.

Another potentially problematic aspect of the interview was the fact that it took place in the subjects' L2, the researcher's L1. However, this was a feature of the whole study, not only the interview : the data were being gathered and analysed by a linguistic and cultural outsider, whose perspective needed to be understood in any evaluation of the findings. As far as the interview was concerned, it was felt that the use of the subjects' L2 should not cause great difficulty given that they were all teachers of that language, accustomed to using it to discuss professional issues.

The first of the semi-structured interviews was deliberately wide-ranging, with questions designed to elicit data relating to the nature of TMA (4.3.1), its impact upon pedagogical practice (4.3.3), and its interaction with other aspects of pedagogical practice (4.3.4). Each interview was planned to last about forty minutes. The framework for the interview had four linked sections. Each section had a theme. Within each section, there were a number of questions planned, with cues suggesting potential follow-up. The first set of questions asked subjects to talk about their approach to teaching, their understanding of the term communicative language teaching (CLT), and whether they would describe their own approach as communicative. They were also asked where grammar fitted in to their teaching, what exactly they understood by grammar, and about the place of grammar in approaches like CLT. The second section focused more concretely upon the grammar lessons taught by the subjects, with questions about what they did with a particular class and why, and invited them to describe grammar lessons which had worked well and those which had worked less well. The third section concentrated on grammatical error, the questions being designed to reveal subjects' understandings of the role of error in learning and their views about how grammatical errors should be treated. The final section moved to more general issues relating to the role grammar plays in teaching and learning. Subjects were

presented with the alternative conceptions of 'knowing grammar' - conscious/explicit knowledge and practical control of grammar - and were asked their views as to the sort of grammar knowledge needed by learners of a language. They were also asked for their opinions about the most effective ways for learners to acquire grammatical knowledge, and whether grammar should be taught. A copy of the interview semi-script is provided in Appendix 6.

4.4.6.4 Pedagogically related tasks

As part of the main study, subjects were asked to perform two pedagogically related tasks. One of the tasks was a group discussion, while the other was an individual task. In each case performance was videotaped for subsequent transcription and analysis. The tasks were designed to focus upon two different aspects of teacher activity in which TMA might be challenged and therefore revealed : planning of a grammar lesson; and explanation of a grammatical problem. The role of the two tasks was mainly to provide further information relating to 4.3.3 : the impact of TMA on pedagogical practice. It was also felt, however, that light might also be shed on 4.3.1 : the nature of TMA. The two tasks were administered over a three-month period. They are described in chronological order of administration. Details of the tasks can be found in Appendix 7 :

Task 1 - Lesson planning

This design of this task was based on Palfreyman (1993). A study in which the technique was piloted is discussed in Andrews (1996). The task involved the subjects, working either in pairs or groups of three, discussing the planning of a grammar lesson in which the Present Perfect was to be presented to a Form 3 class. Subjects were provided with a reference grammar and blank paper, for use should they require them. However, it was made clear to each group that they were not required to produce a written lesson plan, but rather to discuss how they would plan the lesson, with notes supporting the discussion as was felt appropriate by each group.

Task 2 - Explanation

This was a task which subjects performed individually. A detailed description of the pilot version of this task, together with the rationale, can be found in Andrews (1997). The aim of the task was to challenge subjects to explain a grammar point under controlled conditions. Subjects performed the task on two occasions, one providing an opportunity for preparation and the other not. There were a number of other variations in the two administrations of the task : these were intended to enable subjects' performance to be observed under different conditions.

On the first occasion each subject performed a similar contextualised explanation role-play task : they were asked to imagine that they had given their Form 3 class a composition and that they were now going over some of the most common mistakes in class. Each subject was then given a short paragraph containing one major grammatical error posing problems at two levels : an obvious, 'surface' formal error, and an underlying error related to the overall meaning conveyed by the extract. After being given one minute to look through the composition extract, the subject was asked to perform. The researcher was the only person present, and functioned as the imagined group of students. There were three different composition extracts in order to limit the chances of subject performance being affected by discussion with someone who had already performed.

On the second occasion each subject selected for similar treatment a composition extract produced by one of her own students. This meant that subjects could make use of a composition they had already corrected and that they therefore had the opportunity for preparation. For this second explanation, the other members of the PCEd group joined the researcher in representing the imagined class of learners.

4.4.6.5 Classroom observation + semi-structured interview 2

This part of the main study was integrated with practices normally forming part of the PCEd programme. In the first year of the course, students receive three non-assessed, formative visits during which their teaching is

observed and discussed with their Major Methods tutor. In this instance, the seventeen subjects were asked to arrange for the visit to take place when one of their lessons was due to have a grammatical focus. Each lesson was audio-taped for future reference, and observed by the researcher, who made observation notes.

Discussion of each lesson took place in the subject's school immediately after the class. This discussion was also audiotaped. At one stage of the design process, lesson videotaping and delayed interviews were considered as an option, with subjects' recall of events being stimulated by the viewing of lesson extracts. Although such an approach might have produced interesting data, it was felt that there were considerable advantages in eliciting subjects' thoughts about a lesson they had just taught when events were fresh in their minds. The discussion differed from the researcher's normal practice in PCEd post-lesson discussions in that it followed a semi-structured format rather than being open-ended, for the reasons noted in 4.4.6.3 above. As with the pedagogically related tasks, the objective in this part of the study was principally to shed light on the impact of TMA upon pedagogical practice (4.3.3), although it was felt that the combination of observation and interview might also be revealing in relation both to the nature of TMA (4.3.1) and the way in which TMA interacts with other aspects of pedagogical content knowledge (4.3.4).

In this second interview, in contrast with the first, the range of the questions was quite limited, with attention being concentrated upon the lesson which had just been observed. After eliciting each subject's immediate reactions to the lesson, questioning focused entirely upon the lesson plan and the events of the lesson. Subjects were asked to describe how the lesson fitted in with any previous related teaching, what assumptions they had made about students' prior knowledge and potential difficulties concerning the grammatical topic, and what their specific objectives were for the observed lesson. The first questions about the actual lesson represented an attempt to find out whether it had differed in any way either from the subjects' normal practices in teaching grammar or from their experience of teaching the same grammar point on previous occasions. Subjects were then asked to comment on those parts of the lesson a) which seemed to have

gone well, b) which caused problems either for them or their students, and c) which they would approach differently if given the chance again. The next phase of the interview had no scripted questions, the aim being to elicit comments on specific incidents or things said during the lesson. Finally, subjects were asked about their plans for follow-up to the observed lesson. Appendix 8 contains the semi-script for this interview.

4.4.6.6 Grammar teaching project reports

This part of the main study was closely linked with 4.4.6.5, and was also integrated with subjects' work as participants on the PCEd programme. As part of the current study programme for the PCEd (Part-time), the main assessed piece of work for Year 1 English Major Methods students involves the development and piloting of a package of materials for teaching a grammar point of their own choosing. Students submit a two-part essay. In the first part they are required to describe the grammatical area, analyse features which might potentially cause teaching/learning problems, and describe and explain the teaching strategies and learning tasks they would choose to employ. In the second part they are asked to discuss their experience of implementing the strategies with their chosen class, to reflect on what happened in the lesson(s) and why, and to discuss possible modifications.

It was felt that such a task had obvious potential as a research instrument, since it might be highly revealing as an additional source of information regarding the nature of TMA (4.3.1), its impact on pedagogical practice (4.3.3), and its interaction with other aspects of pedagogical content knowledge (4.3.4). It also had enormous practical advantages in that it placed no additional demands upon subjects' time : the whole PCEd group would be doing the same task, whether or not they were part of the main study group.

The observation visit and semi-structured interview described in 4.4.6.5 were integrated with this part of the research in that in every case the lesson observed and discussed was one which the subject had planned for the assignment. A copy of the task specifications is contained in Appendix 9.

4.5 Data analysis

The data from the main study were analysed qualitatively using a range of techniques. The base-line study data were analysed quantitatively, with examination of the relationship between performance on tests of communicative language ability and language awareness, and between subjects' performance on the tests and aspects of their language, educational and professional backgrounds. The analysis techniques are described in more detail in chapters 5 and 6.

Chapter 5 The metalinguistic awareness of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English – patterns and influences

5.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this study, as outlined in the previous chapter, is to examine the validity of the language-specific construct, teacher metalinguistic awareness (TMA), proposed in chapter 2 as a pedagogically-related reflective dimension of communicative language ability: a sub-component of pedagogical content knowledge specific to the teacher of language. The previous chapter has presented a detailed description of the design of the study, which focuses specifically on TMA as it relates to grammar.

In order to shed light on the validity of proposing such a construct, the study sets out to investigate the TMA of a number of teachers. It also aims to explore potential influences upon the development of an individual's TMA, to examine ways in which TMA can affect a teacher's professional activity, and to observe how TMA interacts with other aspects of pedagogical content knowledge. At the same time, the study is intended to provide insights into the TMA of the specific group of teachers who are the focus of the research : graduate secondary school teachers of English in Hong Kong who lack professional training.

The present chapter reports findings related to a number of these issues, drawing in the main on an analysis of the quantitative data gathered from those teachers who participated in the base-line study. Section 5.2 begins by examining what the data reveal about the nature of the TMA construct in general. The next section focuses specifically on the base-line study group of Hong Kong teachers, and examines their levels of communicative language ability and language awareness¹. Section 5.4 discusses the impact of aspects of a teacher's background and experience upon the level and development of her metalinguistic awareness and communicative language ability, with reference to the data gathered from the base-line study group.

¹ For the sake of convenience, the grammatical component of subject-matter knowledge is referred to as language awareness in the rest of the chapter. This explicit knowledge of grammar and grammatical terminology, which is the core of the declarative dimension of TMA, is what is assessed in the Language Awareness test (4.4.3.4).

This is followed, in section 5.5, by a more detailed examination of influences on the development of TMA and communicative language ability, looking this time at data gathered from the main study group. Section 5.6 attempts to examine the relationship between levels of communicative language ability/language awareness and other aspects of pedagogical content knowledge, in particular beliefs about grammar pedagogy.

5.2 What is TMA? - teacher metalinguistic awareness, communicative language ability and knowledge of subject-matter

The nature of this relationship has been discussed in 2.2.5. Central to the argument which has been developed is the view that TMA has declarative and procedural dimensions. At the core of the declarative dimension is the language systems knowledge-base of the L2 teacher. This knowledge is not a feature of the communicative language ability of most educated users of a language. It is knowledge of subject-matter, which is of particular relevance to teachers of language. It should therefore be seen as a sub-component of pedagogical content knowledge, rather than forming part of communicative language ability. At the same time, however, this pedagogically-oriented explicit knowledge about language clearly has very strong links with the implicit and explicit knowledge which underpin communicative language ability. As indicated in figure 2 in 2.2.6, the reflective, metacognitive dimension of TMA embraces these different facets of the L2 teacher's language ability/awareness, and brings them together, with reflections upon one potentially informing the other.

The test battery data gathered as part of the baseline study were analysed in an attempt to shed light on these arguments. In particular, the aim was to find out more about the nature of the TMA construct, and to explore the relationships between TMA, communicative language ability, and knowledge of subject-matter (with specific reference to grammar). Each of the various components of the test battery was intended to measure a different feature of language ability. It was hypothesised, however, that some of the features were more closely related than others : that the four components of the Language Awareness test were all linked to the declarative dimension of TMA, and were principally measuring the grammatical component of subject-matter knowledge, while the other three parts of the test battery were more concerned with aspects of communicative language ability.

In order to investigate the relationships between the different features of language ability measured by the test battery, and explore the possibility that the number of variables could be reduced, factor analysis was employed. According to Kinnear and Gray (1994) : “The purpose of factor analysis is to discern and to quantify the dimensions supposed to underlie performance on a variety of tasks”(Kinnear and Gray 1994:215). Bryman and Cramer (1997) suggest that factor analysis can be seen “... as a tool to bring order to the way we see things by determining which of them are related and which of them are not” (Bryman and Cramer 1997:277). For both reasons it seemed to be a particularly appropriate technique to employ at this point in the study. The reliability of factor analysis is dependent upon the size of the sample (Bryman and Cramer 1997:279). However, this was not considered to be a problem in the present case, given the size of the base-line study group (n = 187).

In the first instance, an exploratory factor analysis of the data was carried out (using SPSS for Windows) in order to enable the relationships between the seven different variables to be examined without imposing any particular model on the data. The stages of an exploratory factor analysis are as follows. First, a correlation matrix is computed for the relevant variables. If the matrix shows no significant correlations, then a factor analysis would not normally be conducted, because it would be assumed that the variables were unrelated. If, however, there are significant correlations, then a factor analysis is carried out to describe the variation or variance shared by the scores of people on three or more variables. This form of factor analysis is known as principal-axis factoring. It is assumed that the factors emerging from such an analysis are unrelated to each other (i.e. orthogonal). Principal-axis factoring was used in the present study, in preference to the form of factor analysis known as principal-components analysis, because the former focuses only on the variance which is shared with other variables, whereas the latter analyses all the variance of a variable.

The first stage of such an analysis produces a list of factors and the amount of variance they account for (their eigenvalue). Kinnear and Gray (1994) suggest that the factors “... can be thought of as classificatory axes, with respect to which the tests in a battery can be ‘plotted’. The greater the value of a test’s coordinate, or loading, on a factor, the more important is that factor in accounting for the correlations between that test and others in the battery”(Kinnear and Gray 1994:215-216). At this point, a decision is made on how many factors to retain. The commonly used approach known

as Kaiser's criterion (which was employed in this study) involves excluding any factor with an eigenvalue below one (i.e. any factor which explains less variance than a single variable). The next stage of factor analysis involves rotating the factors in order to increase the loading of some items and reduce that of others, thus making the factors easier to interpret. "The purpose of any rotation is to achieve a configuration of loadings having the qualities collectively known as simple structure which, loosely conceived, is the set of loadings that shows the maximum number of tests loading on the minimum number of factors" (Kinnear and Gray 1994:217). The oblique form of rotation (Obimin), in which factors are correlated, was used in this case, rather than orthogonal rotation, which can force factors to be unrelated even though they may be related in real life. Oblique rotation in SPSS produces three matrices. The one generally used to interpret the factors is known as the structure matrix. This shows the measure of association between a variable and a factor (i.e. the loading).

The factor analysis was conducted following these procedures. First of all, a correlation matrix was computed for the seven different components of the test battery: the group interview (ORAL), the multiple-choice test of grammar/vocabulary (M_C), the composition (WRITING), and the four components of the test of language awareness (Metalanguage Recognition : MA_RECOG, Metalanguage Production : MA_PROD, Error Correction : CORR and Explanations and Rules : MA_RULES). The matrix is shown below as Table 3.

Correlation Matrix

| | M-C | ORAL | WRITING | MA-RECOG | MA-PROD | CORR | MA-RULES |
|-----------------|-------|-------|---------|----------|---------|-------|----------|
| Correlation M_C | 1.000 | .490 | .509 | .203 | .248 | .372 | .352 |
| ORAL | .490 | 1.000 | .337 | .099 | .117 | .166 | .163 |
| WRITING | .509 | .337 | 1.000 | .057 | .011 | .214 | .194 |
| MA_RECOG | .203 | .099 | .057 | 1.000 | .390 | .287 | .305 |
| MA_PROD | .248 | .117 | .011 | .390 | 1.000 | .372 | .639 |
| CORR | .372 | .166 | .214 | .287 | .372 | 1.000 | .574 |
| MA_RULES | .352 | .163 | .194 | .305 | .639 | .574 | 1.000 |
| Sig. (1-tailed) | | | | | | | |
| M_C | .000 | .000 | .000 | .003 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| ORAL | .000 | .000 | .000 | .090 | .057 | .012 | .013 |
| WRITING | .000 | .000 | .222 | .222 | .442 | .002 | .004 |
| MA-RECOG | .003 | .090 | .442 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| MA-PROD | .000 | .057 | .002 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| CORR | .000 | .012 | .004 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| MA-RULES | .000 | .013 | .004 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |

Table 3 : Correlation matrix – test scores

The first point to note is that all the components correlate positively with one another, the majority of them being significantly correlated at less than the 0.05 level.

Most of the intercorrelations are not especially high, but they suggest that all the components are to some extent interrelated, presumably because of their common focus on language abilities.

Closer examination of the intercorrelations shows the following:

- i) the four components of the Language Awareness test all correlate significantly with one another. The two highest of these intercorrelations (.639 between MA_RULES and MA_PROD, and .574 between MA_RULES and CORR) are to be expected : both the first two components involve the production of metalinguistic terminology, while performance on each item in the MA_RULES test depends to a large extent on the successful completion of the preceding CORR item. The other intercorrelations are more modest, ranging from .287 to .390. Nevertheless, one could argue that the overall set of Language Awareness intercorrelations suggests some degree of homogeneity of construct;
- ii) the intercorrelations between the other three tests (M_C, ORAL, and WRITING) indicate a similar homogeneity of construct. The ORAL and WRITING tests, in particular, correlate reasonably highly with M_C (.490 and .509 respectively), and somewhat more modestly with each other (.337). At the same time, their correlations with the four components of the Language Awareness test are low : those which are significant range from .163 to .214. The M_C test is significantly correlated with every other component. However, its highest correlations are with WRITING (.509) and ORAL (.490).

Given that the intercorrelations pointed to two clusters of components of the test battery which seemed to be related (with M_C possibly belonging to both), it was anticipated that factor analysis might also result in the components forming two factors. This was indeed the case.

The output for the initial factors extracted by principal-axis factoring is presented in Table 4 below. As the table shows, there are two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. The other five factors all have eigenvalues smaller than 1, indicating that they are less important :

| Factor | Initial Eigenvalues | | | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | | | Rotation Total |
|--------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | |
| 1 | 2.810 | 40.144 | 40.144 | 2.354 | 33.635 | 33.635 | 2.084 |
| 2 | 1.465 | 20.925 | 61.069 | .963 | 13.763 | 47.398 | 1.695 |
| 3 | .786 | 11.226 | 72.295 | | | | |
| 4 | .685 | 9.782 | 82.077 | | | | |
| 5 | .561 | 8.010 | 90.087 | | | | |
| 6 | .409 | 5.839 | 95.926 | | | | |
| 7 | .285 | 4.074 | 100.000 | | | | |

Table 4 : Initial factors extracted by principal-axis factoring

The structure matrix and factor plot diagram produced as a result of rotation provide further support for the hypothesis that there are two relatively independent factors underlying performance on the test battery. As the structure matrix (Table 5) shows, there are four variables which load strongly on Factor 1 : the four components of the Language Awareness test, with loadings ranging from .443 to .843.

| | Factor | |
|----------|--------|------|
| | 1 | 2 |
| MA_RULES | .843 | .325 |
| MA_PROD | .754 | .150 |
| CORR | .607 | .362 |
| MA_RECOG | .443 | .157 |
| M_C | .419 | .849 |
| WRITING | .162 | .618 |
| ORAL | .194 | .555 |

Extraction Method : Principal Axis Factoring
 Rotation Method : Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization

Table 5 : Structure matrix

The other three variables (the M_C, ORAL and WRITING components) load strongly on Factor 2, with loadings ranging from .555 up to .849. The factor plot diagram in Figure 6 provides a clear visual representation of these two clusters of variables.

Since exploratory factor analysis seemed to show two relatively independent factors – the declarative dimension of TMA (or language awareness) and communicative language ability – confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the fit of this model. Whereas an exploratory analysis is used to discover and detect features and relationships, and to generate models or hypotheses, in a confirmatory analysis “...one builds a model assumed to describe, explain, or account

for the empirical data in terms of relatively few parameters" (Jöreskog and Sörbom 1997:22).

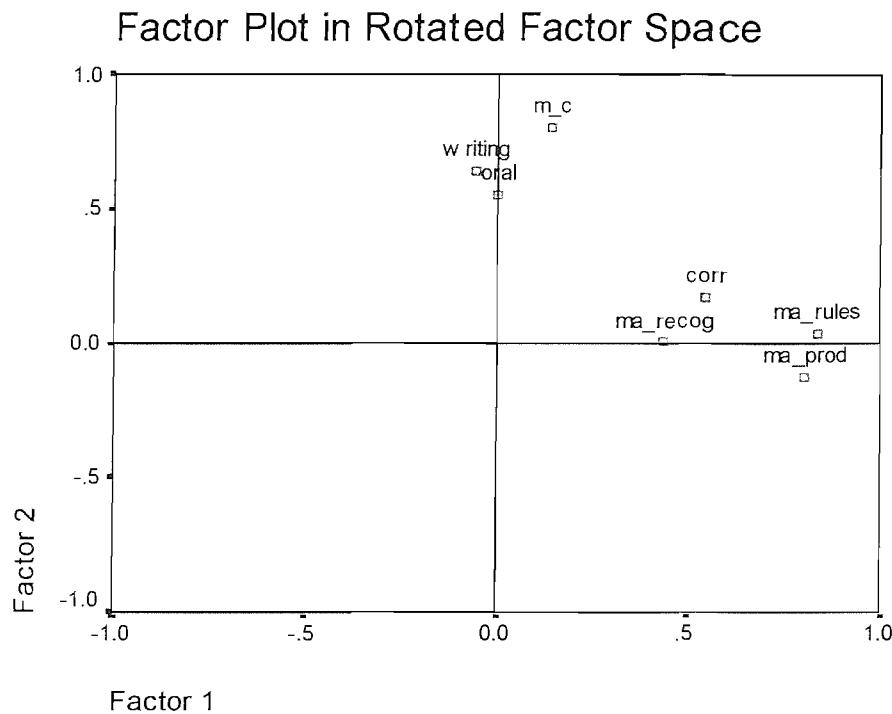


Figure 6 : Factor plot diagram

The confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using the LISREL 8.14 program (Jöreskog and Sörbom 1993). The goodness of fit statistics (Table 6 below) appear to offer clear confirmation of the initial analysis, with a GFI of .96 :

| |
|---|
| ROOT MEAN SQUARE RESIDUAL (RMR) = 0.051 |
| STANDARDISED RMR = 0.051 |
| GOODNESS OF FIT INDEX (GFI) = 0.96 |
| ADJUSTED GOODNESS OF FIT INDEX (AGFI) = 0.91 |
| PARSIMONY GOODNESS OF FIT INDEX (PGFI) = 0.45 |

Table 6 : Confirmatory factor analysis - goodness of fit statistics

Given that M_C had a relatively high loading (.419) on Factor 1, as well as loading very strongly on Factor 2 (.849), confirmatory factor analysis was carried out on two hypothetical models : the first with M_C included only in Factor 1, and the second with M_C included as part of both factors. The difference in chi-square (27.01 compared with 25.05) was not significant for one degree of freedom. This would suggest that there was no significant improvement in the fit of the model when M_C was included as part of both factors, and would appear to confirm the hypothetical model suggested by the exploratory analysis.

The results of these analyses are consistent with the results reported by Alderson et al (Alderson et al 1996, 1997), who conclude that : 'The relationship between metalinguistic knowledge and language proficiency is weak. Metalinguistic knowledge and language proficiency appear to constitute two separate factors of linguistic ability' (Alderson et al 1997:118). At the same time, these results from the base-line study seem to lend support for the model of TMA hypothesised above, which presents the two factors as separate, but brought together through the metacognitive, reflective processes of TMA. As the tables above have illustrated, the factors have been shown to be broadly separate. However, they are nevertheless interrelated, albeit relatively weakly. This is indicated both by the intercorrelations of the seven test components (which are all positive) and by the way in which M_C loads quite heavily on both factors.

5.3 The language awareness and communicative language ability of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English

The base-line study data have limited potential for generalisation to the whole body of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English, since the sample only draws upon graduates without professional training. Nevertheless, given the size of the sample ($n = 187^2$), the figures can be taken as a useful indication of the levels of language awareness and communicative language ability of the wider population of this sub-group of teachers, who form a substantial proportion of the total English-teaching workforce in Hong Kong secondary schools, as noted in chapter 1.

The results of the M_C test, a fifty-item test of grammar and vocabulary, reveal a very wide range of performance, ranging from a low of 20% to a high of 98%. As Figure 7 indicates, the mean score was a relatively low 53.32%. Given that the subjects are all serving teachers of English, it is a worrying fact that over half (50.3%) achieved a mere 50% or less on this test.

Performances on the Oral and the Writing tests were somewhat better. The mean score on the Oral was 73.39%, with 55.1% of subjects achieving 75% (or 3 = Good, on the 4-point scale). The range of performance is shown in Figure 8 below.

² Except for the Oral, where $n = 186$.

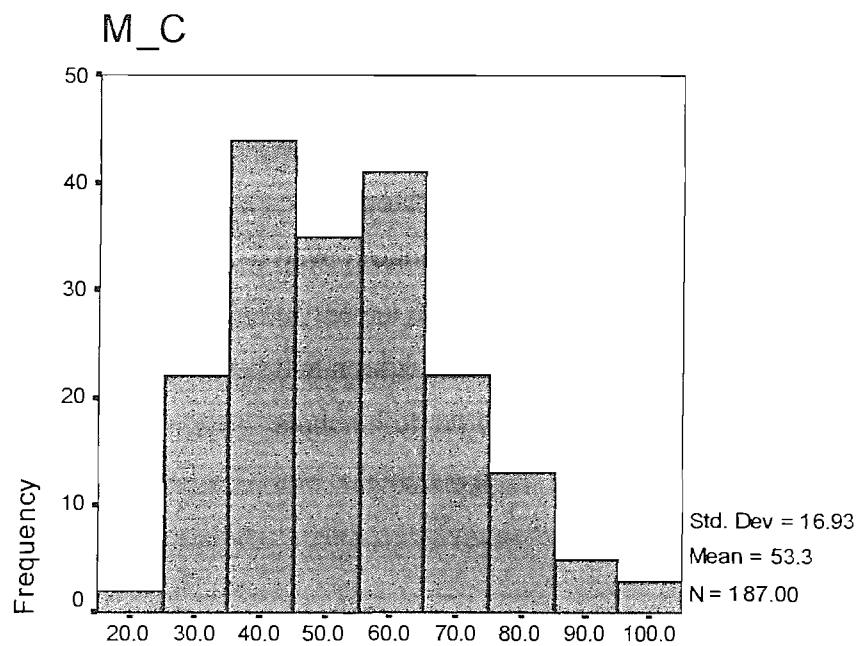


Figure 7 : M/C test frequencies

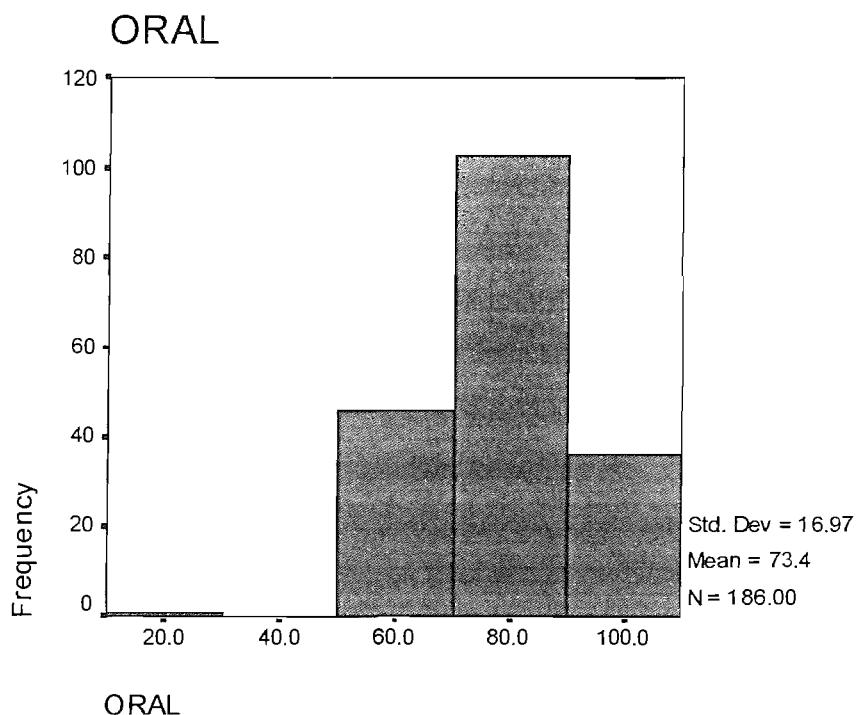


Figure 8 : Oral test frequencies

For the Writing test, the mean score was 60.7%. As with the M_C, there was a wide range of performance, from a high of 100% down to a low of 30%, as shown in

Figure 9 below. Although the mean score for the Writing test is somewhat higher than for the M_C, the implications of the results can hardly be described as satisfactory. As outlined in 4.4.3.3, each of the two writing tasks was marked on three separate five-point scales. A satisfactory level of performance on each of those three scales would have produced a score of 9 out of 15 for each writing task, or 60%. As many as 48% of the subjects failed to achieve such a score on the overall Writing test, suggesting that a large number of teachers are not adequately equipped to act as models for their students of how to produce accurate, well-expressed, communicatively appropriate and coherent written English.

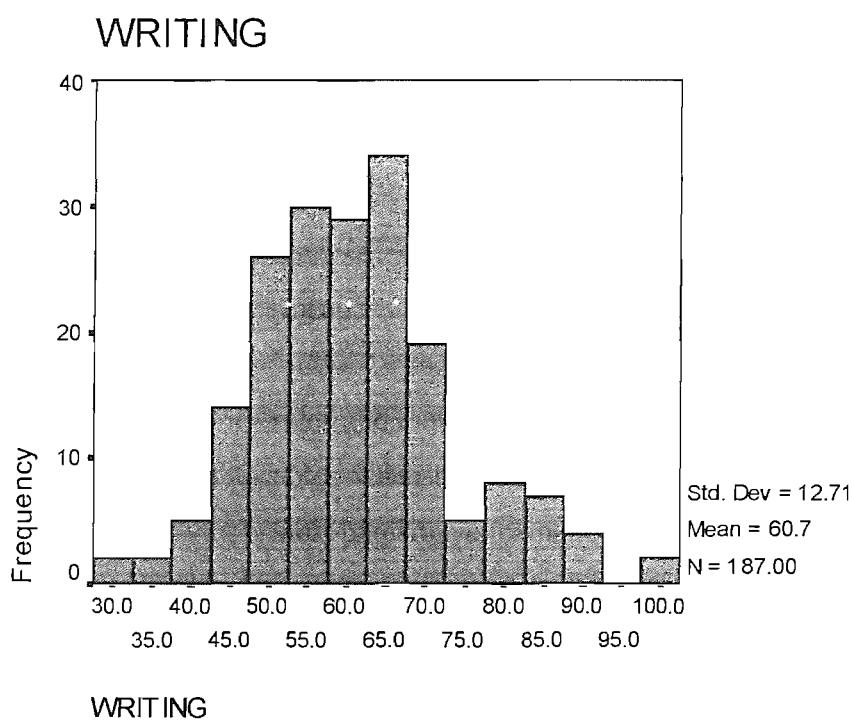
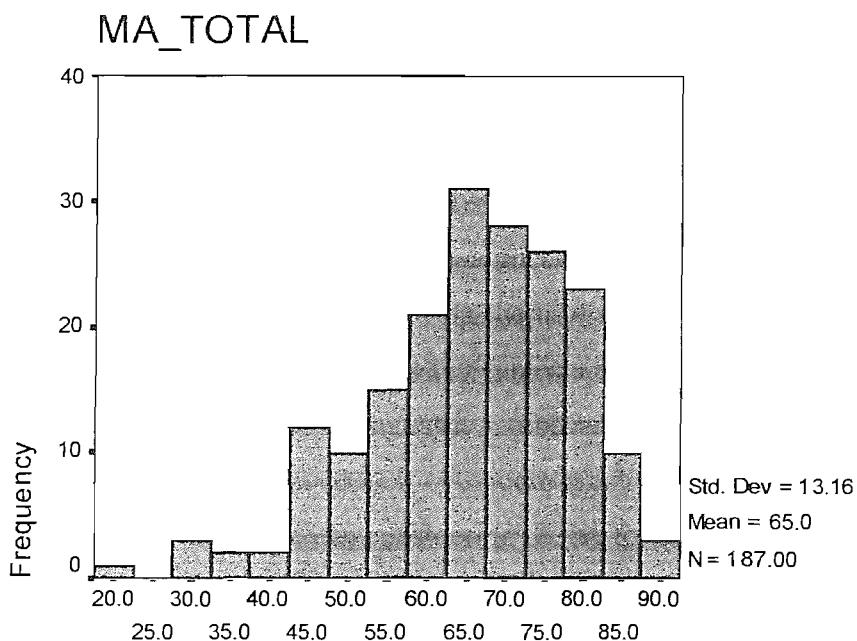


Figure 9 : Writing test frequencies

The subjects' performance on the Language Awareness test is of particular interest, since the test examines their explicit knowledge of grammar and grammatical terminology, which is seen as the core of any teacher's metalinguistic awareness. As Figure 10 below shows, performance on this test also revealed wide variations, with scores ranging from a high of 90% to a low of 20%, and a mean of 65.04%.



MA_TOTAL

Figure 10 : Language Awareness test frequencies

When performance across the four sections of the Language Awareness test is analysed, it is noteworthy that the error correction task (CORR) proved the easiest (mean = 80.62), followed by the metalanguage recognition task (MA_RECOG, mean = 75.09), the metalanguage production task (MA_PROD, mean = 63.17), and the rules and explanations task (MA_RULES, mean = 38.95). A similar pattern has been noted when the test has been administered to other groups (see Andrews 1999). The most plausible explanation for this pattern would seem to be that each successive task in that sequence places a greater cognitive burden upon a subject's TMA than the one before. The error correction task is in many ways a test of language competence, and therefore of communicative language ability, rather than of explicit knowledge about language (an impression which is supported by the fact that it correlates more highly with M_C than any other components of the Language Awareness test do). The metalanguage recognition tasks, whilst testing a subject's explicit knowledge about language, are cognitively less demanding than the two subsequent tasks in that subjects are not required to supply any terms, but only to match given terms to examples. The metalanguage production task adds to the cognitive burden by requiring subjects to look within their own mental store of explicit knowledge about language in order to seek the appropriate metalinguistic terms to describe a language item, while the rules and explanations task increases the cognitive demand still further.



by requiring subjects to a) reflect upon a grammatical error which they have corrected, b) make explicit the rule which has been broken, and c) employ appropriate metalanguage in order to explain the rule.

The most striking feature of the performance of the base-line study group on the Language Awareness test is their generally poor performance on the MA_RULES task, requiring them to state/explain a rule which had been broken (mean 38.95%). Given that the subjects are all serving teachers and the task did not involve complex metalanguage or obscure rules of grammar, this is cause for concern, particularly since their classroom practice typically involves rule explanation³.

In considering the performance of the base-line study group of serving teachers on the various components of the Language Awareness test, it is perhaps worth comparing it with the performance of a group of prospective teachers of English in Hong Kong secondary schools (as reported in Andrews 1999). The latter were all school-leavers beginning a four-year full-time undergraduate course in English Language Education. As Figure 11 below shows, the serving teachers outperformed the prospective teachers in all four components of the test, with the marked differences on the MA_PROD and MA_RULES tasks being statistically significant (MA_PROD $t = -3.794$, $p < .001$; MA_RULES $t = -6.868$, $p < .001$) :

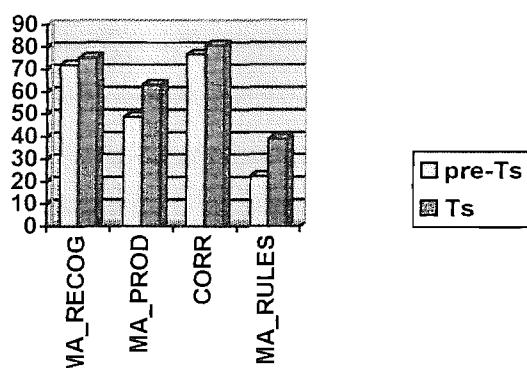


Figure 11 : Mean performance on the Language Awareness test
- serving teachers and prospective teachers

³ Although some rule explanation in Hong Kong secondary schools involves the use of Cantonese, or a mixture of codes, many teachers do use English (wholly or in part) in their explanations, and all textbook explanations are in English with English terminology.

These differences may be influenced by a variety of factors, including study background, since just over half of the serving teachers (the base-line study group) have first degrees in an area which is broadly relevant to the teaching of English⁴. One of the likeliest influential factors would seem to be teaching experience, since that is what all the serving teachers have, and all the prospective teachers lack. It therefore seems reasonable to hypothesise that L2 teaching experience may have a significant impact upon the development of a teacher's explicit knowledge of grammar and grammatical terminology. However, such a statement immediately raises a host of follow-up questions. For example, is it quantity of teaching experience which is the determining factor, or quality of experience, or both? Also, is the impact of teaching experience influenced in any way by the relevance or otherwise of a subject's previous study experience? The next section of the chapter attempts to explore in more detail the relationships between a subject's background and her levels of communicative language ability and language awareness.

5.4 The language awareness and communicative language ability of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English – influences on development

As outlined in 4.4.3.4, before doing the Language Awareness test, subjects completed a brief biodata questionnaire, providing information about their linguistic, educational, and professional backgrounds. This facilitated the exploration of relationships between aspects of subjects' backgrounds and their performance on different parts of the test battery by means of chi-square tests. First of all, scores on each of the test variables were collapsed into groupings. Chi-square tests were then applied to examine whether there were statistically significant relationships between the test score variables and biodata variables. Table 7 below gives an indication of the relationships which were statistically significant. As Table 7 reveals, the majority of significant relationships (shown in bold) were between components of the Language Awareness test and the time spent in an English-speaking country (both the total and the longest continuous time), the place of first degree, and the subject of first degree. The columns represent the dependent variables - performance on the test battery –

⁴ The following 1st degrees were treated as being in some way subject-related : English Language, English Literature, Linguistics, TESL, Communication and Translation.

with the last two columns relating to conflated scores for the whole test battery (CONFLATE) and for the three tests of communicative language ability : M_C, ORAL and WRITING (CONFL_2). The rows represent the independent variables : the biodata.

| | M_C | ORAL | WRITING | MA TOTAL | MA RECOG | MA PROD | CORR | MA RULES | CONFL | CONF2 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Age | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | .034 | NS | .036 | NS | NS |
| Sex | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| Total time in Eng-sp. country | NS | .031 | NS | .003 | NS | .001 | NS | .031 | NS | NS |
| Cont. time in Eng-sp. country | NS | .014 | NS | .001 | NS | .000 | NS | .049 | NS | NS |
| Teaching experience | NS | NS | .028 | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| Place of 1st degree | NS | .010 | NS | .000 | .010 | .000 | NS | .003 | NS | NS |
| Subject of 1st degree | .000 | .007 | NS | .000 | .009 | .000 | NS | .002 | .000 | .000 |

Table 7 : Cross-tabulations between scores on base-line test battery and biodata variables : chi-squared tests of significance

In order to explore the nature of these significant relationships a little further, one way ANOVA or t-tests were used to compare the mean performances of the groups within each category, the choice of procedure depending on whether there were more than two groups, or only two. With respect to age, the subjects were allocated to three groups : group 1 20-24 years old, group 2 25-29 years old, and group 3 over 30. One way ANOVA confirmed there were significant differences in performance on both MA_PROD ($F = 5.094$, $p < .05$) and MA_RULES ($F = 4.373$, $p < .05$). Interestingly, the group performing significantly better each time was not the eldest, as might have been hypothesised because of their greater teaching experience, but the youngest, as shown in Figure 12 below. This somewhat unexpected result may perhaps be attributed (in some cases at least) to the influence of recent subject-related study, since 66% of the youngest age-group had a relevant 1st degree, compared with 51.3% of the overall sample.

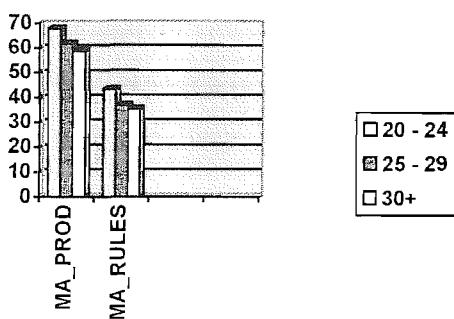


Figure 12 : Mean performance on MA-PROD and MA-RULES according to age

The amount of time spent in an English-speaking country (both the total time and the longest continuous period) was associated with two differences in test performance. First, as might be expected, those subjects spending longest in English-speaking countries (more than three years) performed significantly better on the Oral than those who had only spent 1 to 13 weeks in total or 1 to 4 weeks consecutively there (in total $F = 3.744$ $p < .05$, consecutively $F = 2.809$ $p < .05$). Interestingly, those who had spent no time in an English-speaking country did not produce the weakest Oral performance, possibly because 77.5% of that group ($n = 40$) had relevant 1st degrees compared with 50.8% of the whole sample.

The other major differences linked to the time spent in an English-speaking country all related to performance on the Language Awareness test, both the test as a whole and the two most cognitively demanding components, MA_PROD and MA_RULES. In relation to the total time spent in an English-speaking country, the F and p values were as follows : MA_TOTAL $F = 6.982$ $p < .001$, MA_PROD $F = 8.906$ $p < .001$, MA_RULES $F = 4.928$ $p < .01$. For the longest consecutive period, the F and p values were : MA_TOTAL $F = 6.583$ $p < .001$, MA_PROD $F = 8.679$ $p < .001$, MA_RULES $F = 3.919$ $p < .05$. Figure 13 below shows the pattern of performance of the subjects grouped according to the total time spent in an English-speaking country. The group with no experience of immersion in an English-speaking environment performed significantly better than the group with the most experience on all three measures, a pattern repeated where subjects were grouped according to the longest consecutive period in such an environment. In attempting to explain this difference, it

is again worth bearing in mind the potential influence of degree subject. As many as 77.5% of the non-immersion group had relevant first degrees. By contrast, only 26.1% of the group with more than three years immersion ($n = 45$) had relevant first degrees.

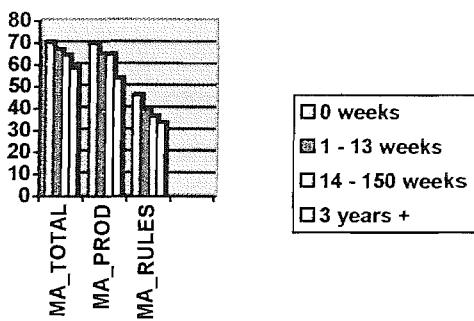


Figure 13 : Mean performance on MA-TOTAL, MA-PROD, and MA-RULES according to total time spent in an English-speaking environment

Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, and contradicting the hypothesis in 5.3, the chi-square test involving teaching experience showed a significant relationship with only one test variable : Writing. There was no significant relationship between years of teaching experience and any component of the Language Awareness test. The most marked difference in performance on the Writing test, and one which is hard to explain, was between those with 1 to 2 years of experience ($n = 62$, mean = 63.97%) and those with 2 to 3 years' experience ($n = 39$, mean = 57.13%). However, one way ANOVA suggested that this difference was not statistically significant ($F = 2.606$ $p>.05$).

The two biodata variables showing the greatest number of significant relationships with test scores were place of first degree and subject of first degree. As subjects had initially been assigned to two categories for each of these variables for the chi-square test (Place = Hong Kong or overseas, Subject = English-related or not), t-tests were used to compare the means. These t-tests indicated that there were significant differences between the groups on each of the test variables shown in bold in Table 7, as illustrated in Table 8 below.

| | M_C | ORAL | WRITING | MA TOTAL | MA RECOG | MA PROD | CORR | MA RULES | CONFL | CONF2 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Place of 1 st degree | NS | $t = -2.126$ $p < .05$ | NS | $t = 4.458$ $p < .001$ | $t = 2.626$ $p < .01$ | $t = 4.880$ $p < .001$ | NS | $t = 4.074$ $p < .001$ | NS | NS |
| Subject of 1 st degree | $t = 2.591$ $p < .05$ | $t = 1.549$ NS at .05 level | NS | $t = 4.134$ $p < .001$ | $t = 2.028$ $p < .05$ | $t = 4.859$ $p < .001$ | NS | $t = 4.358$ $p < .001$ | $t = 2.994$ $p < .01$ | $t = 2.244$ $p < .05$ |

Table 8 : t-tests comparing mean performance on test variables according to place and subject of 1st degree - t-values and significance levels

In order to investigate the nature of these differences more closely, certain subjects were selected for more detailed examination. In relation to place of first degree, attention was focused specifically on native-speakers of Cantonese who obtained their first degrees in three locations : Hong Kong (n = 114), the UK (n = 12), and the USA/Canada (n = 40). One way ANOVA indicated that there were statistically significant differences in mean performance on the M_C test and on every part of the Language Awareness test. The F and p values were as follows : M_C (F = 3.931, p<.05), MA_TOTAL (F = 11.955, p<.001), MA_RECOG (F = 3.173, p<.05), MA_PROD (F = 12.237, p<.001), CORR (F = 4.214, p<.05), and MA_RULES (F=11.233, p<.001). The differences are similar in pattern on all but the MA_RULES test, with the Hong Kong-educated group performing best, the USA/Canada group performing worst, and the UK group occupying a position somewhere between the two. On MA_RULES, both the overseas-educated groups performed equally poorly. Figure 14 below shows the patterns of performance for M_C, MA_TOTAL and MA_RULES.

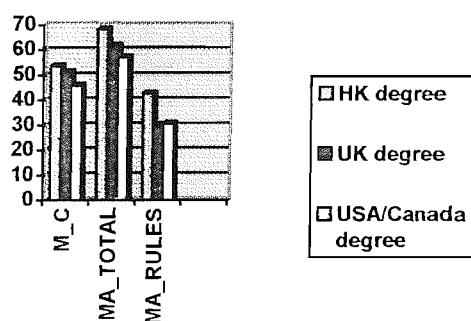


Figure 14 : Mean performance on M-C, MA-TOTAL and MA-RULES according to location of first degree study

However, as has been implied in various comments above, it would be dangerous to assume a clear-cut relationship between any single biodata variable and either strong or weak performance on any of the testing variables. The majority of those in the sample who were educated in Hong Kong also have first degrees related to English (66%). The figure for those who were educated in the USA/Canada is much lower (17%). This would suggest that differences in performance might be associated with a group of factors rather than being attributable to any one single factor.

In order to examine more closely the relationship between subject of first degree and test performance, the three largest subject groupings were selected for comparison: English Language⁵ (n = 40), English Literature (n = 21) and Social Science (n = 67). Earlier comparisons discussed above had treated the English Language and English Literature specialists as members of a single subject-related category. Again, only the performance of the Cantonese native-speakers was included in the comparison. One way ANOVA revealed that there were statistically significant differences in mean performance on every part of the test battery (including the two conflated scores) except for CORR. The F and p values were as follows : M_C (F = 12.248, p<.001), ORAL (F = 3.793, p<.05), WRITING (F = 4.962, p<.01), MA_TOTAL (F = 13.708, p<.001), MA_RECOG (F = 8.914, p<.001), MA_PROD (F = 16.450, p<.001), MA_RULES (F = 11.505, p<.001), CONFLATE (F = 12.170, p<.001) and CONFL_2 (F = 10.247, p<.001).

Consistently the weakest group was the Social Science Majors. On all of the testing measures mentioned, except for ORAL, the gap between their performance and that of at least one of the other groups was statistically significant. The relative performances of the two English-related subject groups varied according to the nature of the test. On the tests of Language Awareness, particularly the overall test (MA_TOTAL) and the first two sections (MA_RECOG and MA_PROD), the differences between the mean performance of the English Language specialists and both other groups were statistically significant. Figure 15 below illustrates this.

⁵ Those who spent 50% or more of their degree course focusing on study of English Language were treated as English Language specialists. Those who spent the bulk of their time on literature were classified as English Literature specialists.

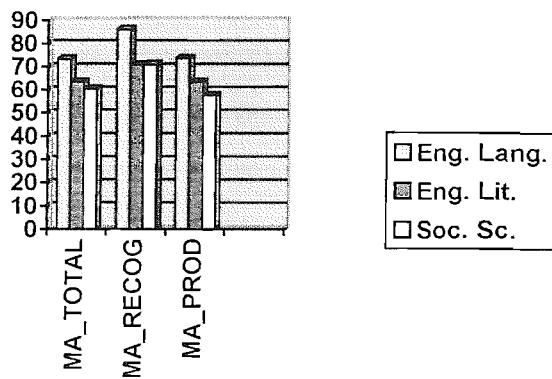


Figure 15 : Mean performance on MA-TOTAL, MA-RECOG and MA-PROD according to subject of first degree study

On most of the testing variables, the English Language specialists achieved the highest mean score. Interestingly, however, this pattern of performance was not repeated on either of the direct measures of communicative language ability : ORAL and WRITING. On each of these, the English Literature specialists performed best, with the difference between their performance and that of the Social Science specialists in WRITING being statistically significant. Figure 16 shows the pattern of mean performance on these two measures. On the M_C and MA_RULES measures, the mean performance of the English Literature specialists fell more or less halfway between the performance of the other two groups, as illustrated in Figure 17 below.

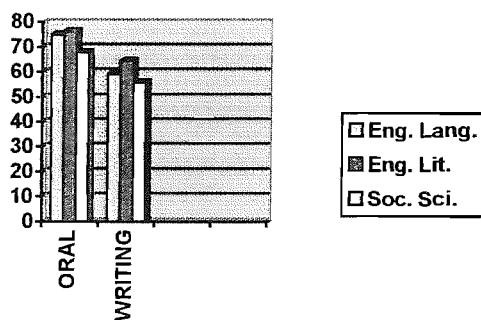


Figure 16 : Mean performance on ORAL and WRITING according to subject of first degree study

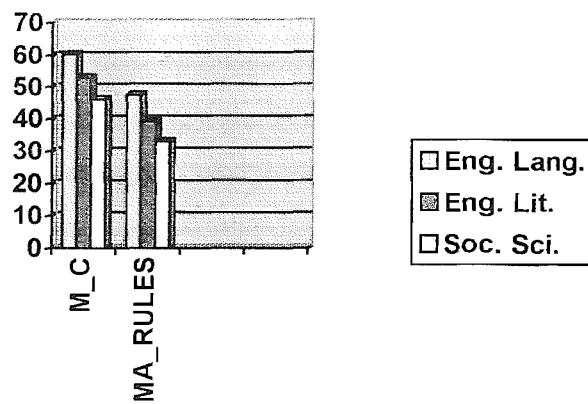


Figure 17 : Mean performance on M-C and MA-RULES according to subject of first degree study

On both conflated scores, the English Literature group performed almost as well as the English Language group. Figure 18 below shows that the mean performance of the two English subject-related groups on the conflated communicative language ability measures (CONFL_2) was almost indistinguishable.

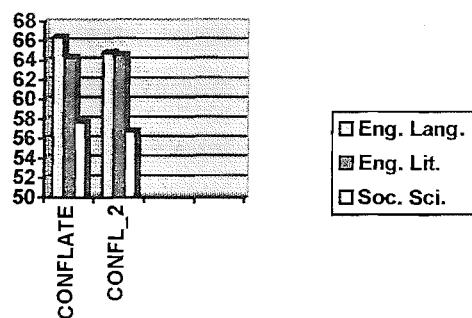


Figure 18 : Mean performance on CONFLATE and CONFL-2 according to subject of first degree study

The preceding discussion gives a clear indication that those with subject-related first degrees, whether primarily in English Language or Literature, tend to have significantly higher levels of communicative language ability than those with first degrees unrelated to English, such as Social Science. There is an equally clear indication that those with first degrees in English Language tend to have levels of language awareness which are significantly higher than those with first degrees either in English Literature or in totally non-related areas like Social Science. The amount of teaching experience, on the other hand, seems to have little or no consistent relationship with strengths or weaknesses of performance on any of the testing variables.

Other biodata factors shown to have statistically significant relationships with patterns of test performance are location of first degree and time spent in an English-speaking country. It should be noted, however, that these two factors tend to have a close association. Those gaining first degrees overseas have, except for graduates from Taiwan, spent a considerable amount of time in English-speaking countries, while the vast majority of those gaining first degrees in Hong Kong have not. It is therefore difficult to associate patterns of performance with any one variable in isolation. Nevertheless, it would appear that subject of first degree is the factor most consistently associated with particular patterns of performance.

At the same time, it should of course be noted that this is only a limited set of somewhat crude quantitative and categorical measures of experience. The numbers unfortunately tell us nothing about the quality of the experiences discussed above. One might hypothesise that it is the quality of an experience which determines the extent to which that experience is likely to have an impact upon someone's personal and professional development. This may be true not only of those experiences which have been shown to have statistically significant relationships with measures of communicative language ability and language awareness, but also of teaching experience. Although there were no statistically significant differences in mean test performance associated with years of teaching experience, it would nevertheless be dangerous to rule out the possible influence of the quality of that experience upon particular individuals, not only on the declarative dimension of TMA (as measurable by tests) but also on the procedural dimension.

The possibility that combinations of background factors might be associated with especially strong or weak performance on the tests of communicative language ability and language awareness has not been systematically explored so far. As suggested in the preceding paragraphs, there are indications that such combinations (with subject of first degree at their heart) are more likely to be linked to the level and development of communicative language ability and language awareness than any one factor in isolation. In order to test this hypothesis, the profiles of the highest and lowest scorers were examined in order to identify any characteristic biodata profiles.

The profiles of the top twenty Cantonese native-speaker performers on tests of communicative language ability and language awareness reveal a number of similarities. Indeed, five subjects appear in both lists : all with first degrees from Hong Kong, all in areas related to English (three in English Language), and none

having spent more than thirteen weeks in an English-speaking country. The profiles of the top twenty performers on the Language Awareness test show a particularly high degree of consistency : 95% have first degrees from Hong Kong, 80% have degrees related to English, and 90% have spent less than thirteen weeks in an English-speaking country. The communicative language ability measures have a similar pattern, but less marked : 70% have first degrees from Hong Kong, 60% have degrees related to English, and 55% have spent less than thirteen weeks in an English-speaking country. 40% of the top twenty communicative language ability performers have all three background factors.

The profiles of the bottom twenty Cantonese native-speaker performers on the communicative language ability and language awareness measures also reveal certain similarities, although the associations are less clear-cut. Again five subjects appear on both lists, but their profiles differ. Three have degrees from Hong Kong, one from the USA/Canada, and one from Taiwan. One has a relevant first degree, while the other four have non-related first degrees. All have spent less than a year in an English-speaking country, three of them less than thirteen weeks. The list of the bottom twenty performers on the Language Awareness test contains fewer Hong Kong graduates than the top twenty list : 50% have overseas first degrees. There are also, as one might expect, fewer holders of English-related degrees (although these still comprise 45% of the subjects), and more with prolonged immersion in English-speaking environments (40% with more than one year). The bottom twenty performers on the communicative language ability measures have an identical pattern to the top twenty in terms of the place of their first degree and the length of time spent in an English-speaking country : 70% have first degrees from Hong Kong and 55% have spent less than thirteen weeks in an English-speaking country. However, there is a difference in the pattern of degree subject : only 25% have English-related degrees, while 65% have degrees in Social Science.

These analyses appear to confirm that the biodata variable associated most closely with performance on the test variables is subject of first degree, with English specialists consistently outperforming holders of non-related first degrees. The trend is particularly marked on the Language Awareness test, but can also be observed in relation to the communicative language ability measures. Those with first degrees from Hong Kong also tend to score higher than those with overseas first degrees, especially on the Language Awareness test. There is, however, no evidence of cause

and effect in any of these relationships, and it is a matter of conjecture, for example, precisely which aspects of the experiences associated with first degree study in Hong Kong lead to such differences.

5.5 Influences on the development of TMA – insights from the main study group

In order to extend the investigation of potential influences upon the development of the declarative dimension of TMA, the performances of the main study group ($n = 17$) were examined in relation to their biodata, supplemented by information provided in response to the main study questionnaire (see 4.4.6.1 for a description of the instrument). The sampling process by which the main study group was selected has been reported in 4.4.5.2.

The similarities and differences in the composition of the base-line and main study groups have also been described in the same section. In terms of test performance, the main study group generally obtained better scores than the larger group from which it was drawn. This was not surprising, since (for practical reasons) members of the main study group were selected from that sub-group of the base-line study group who were actually offered places on the HKU PCEd programme, and selection was partly dependent on their M_C performance. The main study group also tended to be older and to have more teaching experience than the base-line study population. This was again unavoidable, because admissions policy for the PCEd favours applicants with the most experience. Otherwise, the main study group exhibited a range of test performance and of study experience similar to that of the base-line study group.

The profiles of those in the main study group performing best and worst on the test measures show a number of similarities with the base-line study group, as Tables 9 and 10 show. The influence of first degree subject seems to be consistent, for example, with English Language specialists appearing near the top in both the communicative language ability and language awareness tables, and with no one in that category (except perhaps Lydia) coming in the bottom five of either table. The impact of immersion in an English-speaking environment (as a result of overseas study) is less clear in relation to the main study group. On the communicative language ability measures, for example, five of the top eight performers received their

tertiary education in the USA/Canada. As Table 9 reveals, however, the same is also true of all the bottom three performers.

| Communicative language ability measures – Main study group ‘Top 5’ | |
|--|--|
| 1 Flora | School and university in the UK First degree in non-related subject |
| 2= Wendy | College and university in Canada First degree in non-related subject |
| 2= Yan | HK educated (school 100% EMI) First degree in English Language and Literature |
| 4 Maggie | University in the USA (HK school 100% EMI) First degree in non-related subject |
| 5 Shirley | HK educated (school mainly EMI) First degree in English Language and Literature (+ higher degree in Linguistics) |
| Communicative language ability measures – Main study group ‘Bottom 5’ | |
| 13= Lydia | HK educated First degree in English and Economics |
| 13= Rose | HK educated (school 100% EMI) First degree in English (mainly Literature) |
| 15 Benjamin | HK and USA educated Diploma (HK) then first degree (USA) in English (mainly Literature) |
| 16 Clara | University in Canada First degree one-third relevant |
| 17 Pearl | University in the USA First degree in non-related subject |

Table 9 : Communicative language ability rankings (Main study group)

A brief examination of the profiles of some of the subjects in Tables 9 and 10 gives some indication of how a range of factors may come together and affect each individual's development. If, for example, one considers the two top main study group performers on the Language Awareness test, Shirley and Yan, who also both obtained high scores on the communicative language ability measures, they have similarities in background but also a number of differences. Both were educated in Hong Kong at secondary and tertiary levels, but both experienced English language ‘immersion’ through attending schools which were mainly or wholly EMI. They also followed similar degree courses at the same institution, combining the study of English Language and Literature in more or less equal proportions. In other ways, however, they are very different. There are many indications that Shirley has an active interest in languages in general, and English in particular. She is multilingual, having learnt Putonghua and Japanese in addition to Cantonese and English. She was actively involved in English clubs and

societies both at school and university, and uses English socially to some extent with her friends. She has also pursued her studies of English to a higher level, completing an MPhil study of an area of English syntax.

| Language awareness measures – Main study group ‘Top 6’ | |
|--|---|
| 1 Shirley | HK educated (school mainly EMI) First degree in English Language and Literature (+ higher Degree in Linguistics) [Communicative language ability #5] |
| 2 Yan | HK educated (school 100% EMI) First degree in English Language and Literature [Communicative language ability #2=] |
| 3= Hilda | School and university in the USA First degree in related area |
| 3= Tony | College and university in Canada First degree in non-related area |
| 5= Joanna | HK educated (school mainly EMI) First degree in English Language in TESL) |
| 5= Eva | HK educated First degree in English Language and Literature (+ higher degree in English/TESL) |
| Language awareness measures – Main study group ‘Bottom 5’ | |
| 13 Flora | School and university in the UK First degree in non-related subject |
| 14= Wendy | College and university in Canada First degree in non-related subject [Communicative language ability #2=] |
| 14= Agnes | HK educated (school 100% EMI) First degree in Comparative Literature |
| 16 Rose | HK educated (school 100% EMI) First degree in English (mainly Literature) [Communicative language ability #13=] |
| 17 Pearl | University in the USA First degree in non-related subject [Communicative language ability #17] |

Table 10 : Language awareness rankings (Main study group)

Yan's experiences, by contrast, suggest rather less of an interest in language learning per se (he knows only Cantonese and English), and much less of an affinity with English. Indeed, his lack of a European first name may be seen as indicative. He took no part in extra-curricular activities in English either at school or university, and apparently has no social contacts which involve the use of English. His one obvious link with English culture is his passionate interest in the fortunes of Manchester United. It is also perhaps worth noting that Yan has

considerably more teaching experience than any other subjects in the main study group : ten years, all in the same school.

At the other end of the scale, there are two subjects, Rose and Pearl, who come in the bottom five on measures of both language awareness and communicative language ability. Rose and Pearl are very different in background and experience, as becomes clear from their profiles. At first sight, Rose's performance is somewhat surprising given certain aspects of her background. She attended a school which is wholly EMI, and studied English Literature (with some Language) at Hong Kong Baptist University, a course which might have been expected to enhance her knowledge of vocabulary and usage to a level well above that indicated by her relatively low M_C score. She is also a confident and quite fluent oral communicator, who uses English to some extent with her friends, and who indeed regards English as her main language, because of her work. At the same time, however, her English grades in school public examinations were not especially good (a 'C' at HKCEE and a 'D' in the UE), and, as noted in 3.6, her school experiences have left her "*very afraid of grammar*". There is also nothing in Rose's background to suggest a particularly strong affinity with language learning or with English. She has only ever learnt Cantonese and English. At school and university she had no involvement with English clubs and societies, or with any extra-curricular activities which entailed the use of English.

Pearl's background is very different. Having attended a primary school where the medium of instruction was Putonghua, and a secondary school where most of the teaching was 'mixed-code', she completed her studies in the USA, first of all obtaining a degree in Accounting and then doing a 'Special Major' in Home Economics. English continues to play a role in her social life now that she is back in Hong Kong : she uses it to some extent both with her immediate family and friends. Nevertheless, she performed at a consistently poor level across all the measures of communicative language ability and language awareness. Her weak performance on the Language Awareness test (and also perhaps M_C) may be explained in part by the fact that she does not appear to have formally studied English beyond HKCE level. She obtained a grade 'C' in HKCE English, and in fact her five additional passes at Certificate level were all at a fairly mediocre level : one 'C', two 'D's and two 'E's. As for Pearl's score in Writing, which was below the mean for the base-line study group, one might hypothesise that although

she studied at tertiary level in the USA, her chosen specialisms would not have required her to develop her writing skills to a very advanced level.

As the above discussion has shown, there are many background factors which may influence the development of an individual teacher's metalinguistic awareness. It was suggested in 3.4.1 that each teacher '...is an amalgam of different characteristics and the product of a range of linguistic and educational experiences, any of which, singly or in combination, may have had some impact upon that individual's grammatical knowledge and awareness' (Andrews 1994b:519). The data discussed so far in this chapter support this contention. Although the analysis has identified significant relationships between particular linguistic or educational experiences and levels of communicative language ability and language awareness, these are only tendencies within the data. They certainly do not justify assumptions that, for example, holders of English Language degrees from Hong Kong will have higher levels of language awareness than holders of non-related degrees from the USA or Canada. As table 10 illustrates, this is not necessarily the case. It is also important to bear in mind that in this chapter the discussion has been limited to potential influences upon the development of the declarative dimension of TMA, and not the procedural dimension. It could be hypothesised that an even more complex blend of experiences will have combined to influence and mould each individual's TMA across the two dimensions.

5.6 **Communicative language ability, language awareness and beliefs about grammar pedagogy**

Previous sections of this chapter have focused upon levels of teachers' language awareness (i.e. the declarative dimension of TMA) and communicative language ability, and how aspects of a teacher's background and experience impact upon the level and development of her language awareness and communicative language ability. This final section of the chapter explores the relationship between levels of communicative language ability/language awareness, linguistic/educational background, and beliefs about language pedagogy with particular reference to grammar.

As described in 4.4.4, the base-line study group responded to a sixty-item questionnaire concerned with beliefs about language and language learning. Subjects were asked to show their agreement or disagreement with each statement

on a five-point Likert scale. The discussion in this section is based on an analysis of that questionnaire. As mentioned in 4.4.4, some of the base-line study group did not complete the questionnaire. In this part of the discussion, therefore, $n = 170$. Given that the focus of this study is TMA with specific reference to grammar, the analysis concentrates solely upon those aspects of the questionnaire relating to grammar pedagogy.

As a first step in the analysis, responses on a similar theme were grouped together, enabling teachers to be given a rating for each of the following six areas of belief:

- i) Belief in a form/accuracy-based approach to the teaching and learning of English (ACCTS)
(6 items – max. 30)
- ii) Belief in an explicit, deductive, sentence-based approach to the teaching and learning of grammar (DEDGRTS)
(10 items – max. 50)
- iii) Belief in an inductive, learner-centred approach to the teaching and learning of grammar (INDGRTS)
(8 items – max. 40)
- iv) Belief in a communication/meaning-based approach to the teaching and learning of English (CLTMNGTS)
(12 items – max. 60)
- v) Belief in the value of drilling/rote-learning (DRLMEMTS)
(4 items – max. 20)
- vi) Belief in the importance of using metalanguage (MLIMPTS)
(3 items – max. 15)

Then, where appropriate, responses on individual items on the 1 – 5 Likert scale were reversed before subjects' scores were computed for each of these six areas of belief. For example, responses to the negatively-worded statement **57 Mechanical drilling is of no value in language teaching** were reversed before scores were included in each subject's DRLMEMTS rating.

The overall profiles for the base-line study group are shown in Table 11 below. For all the areas of belief except CLTMNGTS, the means were very close to representing an average response of 3 on each item. This would imply that the opinions of the base-line study population were fairly equally divided on these five

issues. The mean for CLTMNGTS was somewhat higher (mean = 3.53), which would suggest, at the level of belief if not implementation, a general acceptance of broad communicative principles. Although the standard deviations are relatively small, it is interesting to note the diversity of opinion about each issue, as indicated by the range of scores. The CLTMNGTS scores, for example, extended from a low of 21 up to a high of 56 (max. = 60), while the MLIMPTS scores ranged from the minimum of 3 to the maximum of 15.

| | ACC TS Max. 30 | INDGR TS Max. 40 | DEDGR TS Max. 50 | DRLMEM TS Max. 20 | CLTMNG TS Max. 60 | MLIMP TS Max. 15 |
|--------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| N | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 | 170 |
| Mean | 18.4588 | 24.7294 | 30.7824 | 13.5412 | 42.3412 | 9.5529 |
| S.D. | 4.0894 | 3.8366 | 4.2891 | 2.7737 | 5.5642 | 2.4950 |
| Range | 19.00 | 24.00 | 24.00 | 14.00 | 35.00 | 12.00 |

Table 11 : Base-line study group beliefs about grammar pedagogy

It might be anticipated that there would be some degree of relationship between beliefs in these different areas, that, for example, INDGRTS might correlate positively with CLTMNGTS, but negatively with DEDGRTS. In order to test this hypothesis, and to explore the strength of the relationships between the six areas of belief, a correlation matrix was computed. The matrix is shown in Table 12.

| | | INDGR TS | ACC TS | DEDGR TS | DRLMEM TS | CLTMNG TS | MLIMP TS |
|----------|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| INDGRTS | Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) | 1.000 .000 | -.349** .000 | -.404** .000 | -.101 .191 | .318** .000 | -.047 .545 |
| ACCTS | Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) | -.349** .000 | 1.000 .000 | .533** .000 | .231** .002 | -.192* .012 | .360** .000 |
| DEDGRTS | Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) | -.404** .000 | .533** .000 | 1.000 .000 | .351** .000 | -.007 .933 | .373** .000 |
| DRLMEMTS | Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) | -.101 .191 | .231** .002 | .351** .000 | 1.000 .000 | .072 .351 | .170* .026 |
| CLTMNGTS | Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) | .318** .000 | -.192* .012 | -.007 .933 | .072 .351 | 1.000 .000 | .364** .000 |
| MLIMPTS | Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) | -.047 .545 | .360** .000 | .373** .000 | .170* .026 | .364** .000 | 1.000 .000 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 12 : Correlation matrix – areas of belief about grammar pedagogy

In general, the intercorrelations are much as might have been expected, with the strongest positive intercorrelation between ACCTS and DEDGRTS (.533) and the

strongest negative intercorrelations between INDGRTS and DEDGRTS (-.404) and INDGRTS and ACCTS (-.349). There are, however, a number of points about the matrix which are worth noting. First, although the majority of positive and negative intercorrelations are statistically significant, they are perhaps not as high as might have been anticipated. The size of the negative intercorrelation between INDGRTS and DEDGRTS (-.404), for instance, is not especially high, possibly because the two areas of belief are not necessarily mutually exclusive : a teacher may in fact see advantages in both approaches to grammar pedagogy, favouring one or the other according to the situation or the grammar item. It is also noteworthy that while there is a modest positive intercorrelation between INDGRTS and CLTMNGTS (.318), there is no significant intercorrelation, either positive or negative, between DEDGRTS and CLTMNGTS. This would suggest that although there is some relationship between an inductive approach to grammar pedagogy and a belief in CLT, belief in a deductive approach is not wholly incompatible with espousing CLT principles. The intercorrelations involving MLIMPTS are also interesting, since they imply that belief in the use of metalanguage in the classroom is not tied to one particular approach to grammar pedagogy.

In order to explore the relationship between levels of communicative language ability/language awareness, linguistic/educational background, and beliefs about language pedagogy with particular reference to grammar, chi-square tests were used. The intention was to see whether there were statistically significant relationships between the test score/biodata variables (the independent variables) on the one hand, and beliefs about grammar pedagogy (the dependent variables) on the other. Table 13 below gives an indication of the relationships which were statistically significant (shown in bold). As Table 13 reveals, there were almost no statistically significant relationships between the biodata variables and the belief variables. In other words, there was no suggestion in the data that beliefs about grammar pedagogy were influenced by such factors as subject of first degree. The majority of significant relationships with the belief variables involved the Language Awareness test and the conflated test score variables.

The nature of these significant relationships was investigated more closely by means of one way ANOVA or t-tests. These procedures made it possible to compare the mean belief ratings of the groups within each category of test performance. In a number of cases, the procedures revealed no statistically significant differences

between the means : for example, between the mean DRLMEMTS ratings for the three different age groups (one way ANOVA, $F = 1.183$, $p>.05$), and between the mean ACCTS ratings for the two place of degree study options, Hong Kong or overseas (t-test, $t = -.506$, $p>.05$). The most interesting relationships fell into three groups : between i) the INDGRTS ratings and MA_TOTAL/MA_PROD; ii) the DEDGRTS ratings and MA_RULES; and iii) the CLTMNGTS ratings and CONFLATE/CONFL_2.

| | INDGR TS | ACC TS | DEDGR TS | DRLMEM TS | CLTMNG TS | MLIMP TS |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| Age | NS | NS | NS | .018 | NS | NS |
| Sex | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| Total time in Eng-sp. country | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| Cont. time in Eng-sp. country | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| Teaching Experience | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| Place of 1st degree | NS | .050 | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| Subject of 1st degree | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| M_C | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| ORAL | NS | NS | NS | .007 | NS | NS |
| WRITING | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| MA_TOTAL | .025 | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| MA_RECOG | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| MA_PROD | .040 | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| CORR | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | .027 |
| MA_RULES | NS | NS | .014 | NS | NS | NS |
| CONFLATE | NS | NS | NS | NS | .019 | NS |
| CONFL_2 | NS | .023 | NS | NS | .038 | NS |

Table 13 : Cross-tabulations between beliefs about grammar pedagogy and biodata/test score variables : chi-squared tests of significance

Figures 19 and 20 below illustrate i) : the differences between the mean INDGRTS ratings in relation to MA_TOTAL and MA_PROD. One way ANOVA confirmed that there were statistically significant differences between the mean INDGRTS ratings on both MA_TOTAL ($F = 4.879$, $p<.01$) and MA_PROD ($F = 4.249$, $p<.01$). The statistically significant difference was between those with the lowest test score and those with the highest test score : those with the strongest belief

in an inductive approach to grammar pedagogy tended to be those with the best performance on MA_TOTAL and MA_RULES.

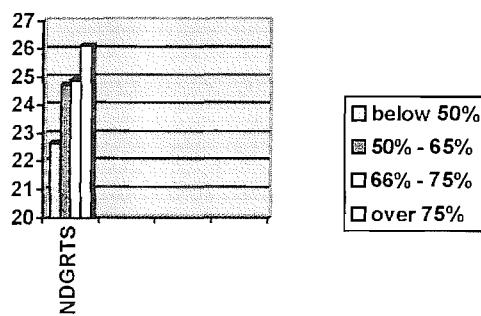


Figure 19 : Mean ratings on the INDGRTS scale according to performance on MA-TOTAL

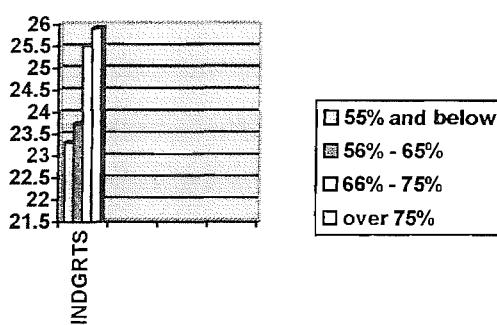


Figure 20 : Mean ratings on the INDGRTS scale according to performance on MA-PROD

Figure 21 shows ii) : the differences between the mean DEDGRTS ratings in relation to MA_RULES :

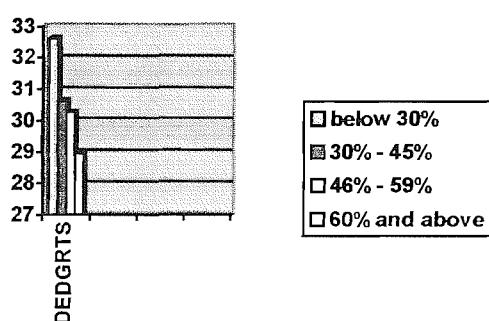


Figure 21 : Mean ratings on the DEDGRTS scale according to performance on MA-RULES

One way ANOVA confirmed that there were statistically significant differences in the mean ratings ($F = 4.319$, $p < .01$). The significant difference was again between those with the lowest and highest test scores. This time, however, those with the lowest test scores tended to have the highest ratings : in other words, those who were most strongly in favour of an explicit, deductive approach to grammar pedagogy tended to be those with the weakest performance on MA_RULES.

The statistical procedures which have been employed cannot, of course, reveal the causes of any relationships which are shown to be significant. It is interesting, however, to note the link between the differences highlighted in Figures 19 to 21, and to speculate about the underlying causes. There is a suggestion, based on this analysis of the data, that those most in favour of an inductive approach to grammar teaching are those who have a relatively high level of declarative TMA (as indicated by performance on MA_TOTAL and MA_PROD). By contrast, those who are the strongest supporters of a deductive approach to grammar teaching are those who have a relatively low level of declarative TMA (as suggested by performance on MA_RULES). One factor which might underlie these findings and have some influence upon these tendencies is the level of confidence a teacher has in her declarative TMA. It seems reasonable to hypothesise that belief in an inductive (and therefore learner-centred) approach to grammar pedagogy is dependent upon a certain degree of teacher self-confidence, a confidence in part associated with a high level of declarative TMA. At the same time, one might speculate that teachers who lack confidence in their own declarative TMA would tend to be those who prefer to cling to the security of a deductive (teacher- and textbook-centred) approach to grammar pedagogy.

Figures 22 and 23 illustrate iii) : the differences between the mean CLTMNGTS ratings in relation to performance on the conflated test measures. Figure 22 focuses on CONFLATE, which is based on all the test measures, while Figure 23 concentrates on CONFL_2, based on the communicative language ability measures. One way ANOVA confirmed that there were significant differences on the mean ratings on the CLTMNGTS scale according to performance on both conflated test measures (CONFLATE $F = 3.195$, $p < .05$; CONFL_2 $F = 3.428$, $p < .05$). In both cases, the significant difference was between those with the lowest and the highest test scores. Those with the highest conflated test scores (with or without the Language Awareness test) tended to be those with the highest CLTMNGTS ratings : in other

words, those who were the strongest supporters of CLT tended to be those with the highest overall communicative language ability. As with the earlier findings, any explanation is necessarily only speculative. However, it is again tempting to point out the possible connection with teacher self-confidence : that a teacher is more likely to express support for communicative principles in language pedagogy if she has confidence in her own ability as a communicator.

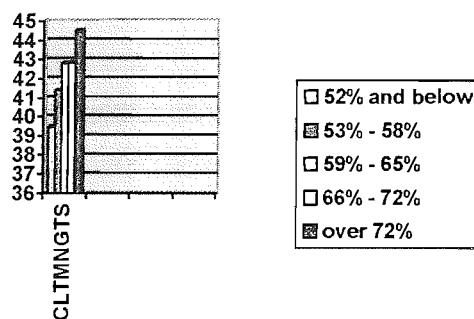


Figure 22 : Mean ratings on the CLTMNGTS scale according to performance on CONFLATE

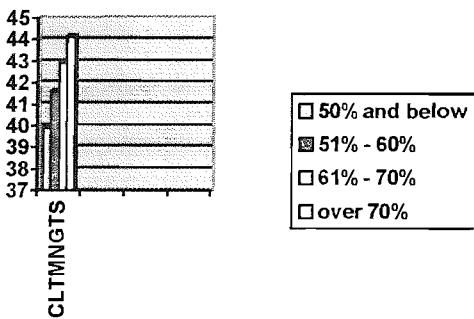


Figure 23 : Mean ratings on the CLTMNGTS scale according to performance on CONFL-2

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, various issues relating to TMA have been explored by means of an analysis of test and questionnaire data. A number of significant points have emerged.

First, the correlation and factor analyses described in 5.2.2 seem to lend support for the model of TMA outlined in 2.2.5 and 2.2.6. The declarative dimension

of TMA (as measured by the Language Awareness test) and communicative language ability appear to be distinct but related factors of language ability.

Second, the levels of both communicative language ability and language awareness of this sub-group of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English are in general depressingly low, as shown in 5.3. This gives good cause to doubt the value of many such teachers either as model communicators in English or as sources of grammar information.

Third, the analyses reported in 5.4 and 5.5 have confirmed the complexity of the relationship between communicative language ability/language awareness and potential influences upon their development. Certain factors such as subject of first degree are related with some consistency to characteristics of performance on the language awareness and communicative language ability measures, while others such as the amount of teaching experience appear not to be. However, it seems likely that the development of an individual teacher's language awareness and communicative language ability is influenced by a cluster of interrelated experiential factors rather than by any one factor in isolation.

Fourth, there appears to be little or no significant relationship between the experiences as summarised in the biodata and the beliefs about grammar pedagogy which form part of any teacher's pedagogical content knowledge. However, the analyses described in 5.6 suggest that there are significant relationships between levels of communicative language ability/language awareness and beliefs about grammar/language pedagogy. It seems that teachers who prefer an inductive approach to grammar teaching tend to be those with higher levels of declarative TMA, while those who favour a deductive approach tend to have lower levels of declarative TMA. Also, support for principles of CLT appears to be associated with higher levels of communicative language ability (with or without the addition of the language awareness measures). It seems plausible, although there is no hard evidence to support this hypothesis, that confidence may be a major factor underlying these links between levels of communicative language ability/language awareness and beliefs about the teaching and learning of grammar.

The following chapter focuses upon the procedural dimension of TMA. The chapter draws on a range of qualitative data in order to explore the relationship between a teacher's metalinguistic awareness and how she handles grammatical issues in her teaching.

Chapter 6 The metalinguistic awareness of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English – TMA and pedagogical practice

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored a range of issues relating to TMA, drawing in the main on quantitative data gathered as part of the base-line study. The intention was to examine the validity of the TMA construct, and to learn more about TMA in general, while at the same time providing insights into the TMA of the specific group of teachers being investigated. The analysis produced a number of interesting general findings concerning the nature of TMA, its relationship with communicative language ability, and influences upon the development of both. The possible connection between levels of communicative language ability and language awareness (more specifically, the grammatical component of subject-matter knowledge), and beliefs about grammar pedagogy was also examined. In addition, the levels of communicative language ability and language awareness of this particular sub-group of Hong Kong secondary school teachers were critically evaluated.

The focus of the previous chapter was the declarative dimension of TMA : the language systems knowledge-base of the L2 teacher. As has been argued throughout the study, however, TMA has both declarative and procedural dimensions. The present chapter therefore switches attention to the procedural dimension : how TMA affects a teacher's pedagogical practices. The chapter is based upon analysis of the qualitative data collected as part of the main study, which involved seventeen subjects. It begins by examining the beliefs about grammar pedagogy of the main study group, and then explores the relationship between TMA and pedagogical practice, by trying to assess the impact of TMA on what takes place in the L2 classroom while observing what pedagogical practice reveals about the nature of TMA.

The present chapter has three further sections. First of all, section 6.2 examines the subjects' pedagogical content knowledge as it relates to grammar (i.e. their conceptions of the role of grammar in L2 pedagogy in Hong Kong secondary schools). The discussion in this part of the chapter draws upon a range of data sources to shed light on the feelings, beliefs and understandings which inform the procedural dimension of the

subjects' TMA. The following section, section 6.3, forms the core of the chapter, offering a detailed examination of how TMA reveals itself in teaching, and how it impacts on teaching, based principally upon an analysis of classroom and interview data. The final section, section 6.4, provides a summary of the chapter's findings.

6.2 Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English – their feelings, beliefs and understandings about grammar pedagogy

Chapter 3 of the thesis surveyed one hundred and fifty years of ELT in Hong Kong with the intention of providing a broad historical context within which the practices of the present generation of Hong Kong secondary school teachers might be better understood. In this section of the present chapter the aim is to offer more specific contextual information. Statements made by the main study subjects about their beliefs and practices in relation to the teaching and learning of grammar are summarised and interpreted in order to present a conceptual background for the discussion in section 6.3 of the metalinguistic awareness of these teachers as shown in their pedagogical practice.

As mentioned in 6.1 above, this chapter is based mainly upon the qualitative data gathered during the main study. The handling and analysis of the data were conducted as follows. First, the audiotaped semi-structured interview data (see 4.4.6.3 and 4.4.6.5) and the videotapes of the pedagogically related tasks (4.4.6.4) were transcribed. The transcripts, together with all other written data, were classified for ease of retrieval and identification (see Appendix 10 for details of the system of classification, and Appendix 11 for the classified data set of one of the main study subjects). All the data (on paper, audiotape and videotape) were then reviewed. The research questions were re-examined in the light of the data review, and a framework for the discussion of those questions was drawn up. Different data sources were linked and prioritised as appropriate in relation to each question. As a result, certain data sources were foregrounded because of their apparent central relevance to the discussion of particular issues, while others (of relevance, but less central) were to be referred to for triangulation purposes and as sources of illustrations and unexpected illumination. For this part of the chapter, for example, it was clear that the principal source of data would be the first semi-structured interview (as described in 4.4.6.3). The most important other sources of data would be the

argumentative writing task on grammar and communication (4.4.3.3), the lesson planning discussion (4.4.6.4 – Task 1) and the grammar teaching project report (4.4.6.6).

The procedures for handling analysis of the data for this part of the chapter were as follows. First, the interview data were read carefully, potentially important or revealing remarks were highlighted, and notes were written in the margin of the transcripts. Then, for each of the seventeen subjects, notes were made in relation to ten broad areas (nine concerning pedagogical content knowledge and one TMA). At the same time, individual subject notes were also made from relevant sections of the triangulation sources. A large grid was then used to obtain an overview of the pedagogical content knowledge of the main study group. The interview responses of all seventeen subjects in relation to the ten broad areas were summarised on the grid and, where appropriate, quantified. Relevant information from the triangulation sources was added to the summary grid. This grid, with constant cross-referencing to the original data sources, was the basis for the report which follows (See Appendix 12 for the summary grid).

6.2.1 Feelings about grammar among teachers and learners

“Grammar has always been a nightmare for Chinese students, especially when they think of those technical terms and the thickness of their grammar textbook”(Maggie M/COMP/1). Maggie’s sweeping generalisation may be somewhat extreme, but thirteen of the seventeen subjects report strongly negative reactions to grammar among their students. According to Eva, *“...they ... find that grammar is very boring. They did find that ...and they told me”*(Eva E/SSIA/9), while Shirley notes that *“...some of the students said that they hate grammar, grammar is boring”*(Shirley S/SSIA/6). Just one of the subjects reports a slightly more positive response among her learners, albeit with enthusiasm only reaching the level of passive interest: *“...but the response is ... when I teach grammar, they always pay attention to you, they are always interested in listening ... I don’t know why”*(Hilda H/SSIA/7).

The majority of the subjects (nine out of seventeen) appear to feel as unenthusiastic about teaching grammar as their students do about studying it. This is even the case with Hilda, despite her claim that her students listen with interest

to her grammar explanations : “*I always find that you know... teaching grammar is very boring, though they want to learn*”(Hilda H/SSIA/13).

As many of the comments suggest, however, these feelings of boredom (among student and teacher alike) are in response to an approach to grammar teaching typically consisting of deductive presentation followed by mechanical practice exercises. Clara describes how her students respond to this style of presentation : “*...if we just follow the books ...and then tell them the rules that they have to follow it's very boring, and the students won't want to listen to you*”(Clara SSIA/6), while Flora confirms the unpopularity of the exercises : “*...they said they actually detest these grammar exercises, and I must say I find them very boring, tedious as well*”(Flora F/SSIA/3).

Some of the teachers consciously try to address the problem of students' negative attitudes towards grammar by enlivening their own grammar teaching:“*... I think whether it's boring or not depends on how you deal with it. Sometimes I myself feel learning is something very, very boring in nature. So what I can do is ... make the activities more interesting, make the communication between me and the class more fun, closer and so on. In that way, I make it less boring*”(Yan Y/SSIA/3). Others are simply frustrated by an inability to find more interesting ways of teaching something they consider essential : “*I have to talk much during the lessons ... at least thirty minutes, I think ... and I'll make the lesson boring...I don't like it actually ...they look very tired and you know it's very frustrating ... but sometimes I have to do that...*”(Karen K/SSIA/5). Wendy reports similar feelings of dissatisfaction with her own teaching : “*I won't say it (grammar)'s a chore but I cannot agree that ...I love doing it. I feel it's awfully essential. I just feel that I don't have the most interesting way of delivering the lessons*”(Wendy W/SSIA/3).

Only three of the teachers appear to associate grammar teaching with any degree of enjoyment, and in each of these statements the enjoyment is qualified. Lydia, for instance, contrasts the teaching of yes/no questions and tenses : “*I enjoy teaching ... yes/no questions. It's quite lively. I can ask them many, many questions, and they can answer me many questions. They are very curious, they*

have a lot of questions to ask. So I enjoy that lesson, but ...for example tenses...that is quite painful, tenses”(Lydia L/SSIA/3).

More than a quarter of the main study subjects reveal a marked lack of confidence in their ability to handle grammar adequately. In 3.6, for example, Rose's admissions of a fear of grammar and of grammar teaching were recorded. Maggie, too, confesses that “*I'm not much of a grammar person*”(Maggie M/SSIA/2), and gives a graphic description of her fears of teaching the infinitive again after her previous experience two years earlier: “*I can foresee when I get into infinitive, that's where I got a trouble ... because two years ago, also Form 4, when we get to infinitive, we're dragging on for the whole two weeks, and we don't know what we're doing...I've no idea what, how to teach them, and they've no idea what infinitive is. But ...when I get into infinitive I get so nervous. They don't understand it, I don't understand it, and I don't know how to teach it ... we just don't have any way of connecting to each other at all. So ... that's my fear*”(Maggie M/SSIA/6).

In some cases, this lack of confidence is reinforced by a sense of inadequacy in dealing with something as important as grammar : “*I'm always afraid that my students don't understand grammar ... I think it's very challenging teaching grammar ... sometimes I'm afraid that they feel bored, and I know that they must know that grammar, otherwise they don't know that language*”(Agnes A/SSIA/4). In Agnes's case, lack of confidence leads her to blame her own teaching when students continue to make mistakes with grammar items she has taught : “*...when I mark their compositions, that mistake appear again. I've taught this grammar, so how can the mistake come again? So I blame myself ... That lesson is not effective, they make the same mistakes in the composition*”(Agnes A/SSIA/7). Several of the other respondents express a similar dissatisfaction with their own grammar teaching and its apparent lack of impact upon learners' performance in English. Eva's comments reflect those made by a number in the main study group: “*In fact I'm not quite satisfied with my own teaching methods because I find that even after I've taught them a*

grammar area, they always make mistake in the composition, and I think ... composition is the real standard of the students”(Eva E/SSIA/2).

6.2.2 What sort of grammar knowledge do Hong Kong students need? – teacher perceptions

As several of the comments in 6.2.1 indicate, the great majority of the subjects see grammar as playing a highly important role for Hong Kong students. Joanna, for example, states that : “*...the teaching of grammar is absolutely essential in view of the poor English standard of Hong Kong secondary school students”(Joanna J/COMP/1).* Agnes asserts the central role of grammar : “*Grammar is the basis of English language. Without it, I am sure that no one can use the language at all”(Agnes A/COMP/1), and emphasises its importance in relation to all four skills, a point also made by Diana : “*If one wants to communicate well with others, one must be able to master the four skills : writing, reading, listening and speaking. All these four skills require knowledge of grammar”(Diana D/COMP/1).* Tony expresses an equally strong belief in the importance of grammar (and therefore of grammar teaching) for L2 learners : “*How can students who learn English as a second language know how to communicate without a basic knowledge of grammar? Students are not born to know the language. We need to give them some rules to follow”(Tony T/COMP/1).**

Shirley speaks for the small number of subjects with a relatively sophisticated understanding of CLT when she advocates a change of approach to grammar rather than a drastic diminution of its role : “*Grammar definitely has a role to play in teaching and learning English. But ... I think we should kind of teach grammar in a communicative setting ... Instead of teaching grammatical items in isolation ... we should treat the grammatical items in meaningful contexts”(Shirley S/COMP/1).*

Maggie is perhaps the least wholehearted in her commitment to the importance of grammar. This might be expected in view of her comment quoted earlier (see 6.2.1), and also the ranking within the main study group of her

responses on the beliefs questionnaire (1st on the CLTMNGTS and INDGRTS ratings, 15th on DEDGRTS and 17th on the ACCTS rating). Nevertheless, even Maggie acknowledges a role for grammar : “*... if you think of language as a way of communicating,...the only important point will be people to understand you and you to understand people. Grammar helps you. But it's not necessarily the main focus, and should not be the main focus of ... the learning part*”(Maggie M/SSIA/10).

When considering whether their students’ primary need is for implicit or explicit knowledge of grammar, all seventeen subjects seem to agree that the former - practical control of grammar for communicative purposes - is of greater importance. According to Agnes, for instance : “*I think they need to know grammar, but ... as long as they ... can communicate, I think that's enough ... In fact, I don't request my students to understand all these terms as long as they can express themselves*”(Agnes A/SSIA/11). Flora places a similar emphasis on fluency rather than accuracy per se: “*To be able to use the language is more important than being a hundred percent grammatically correct all the time ...to be able to communicate ... as long as they're expressing themselves, and I understand what they're trying to say...*”, although, in common with one or two others, she expresses a somewhat wistful longing for accuracy as well as fluency: “*...but obviously it would be nicer if they were a hundred percent accurate as well*”(Flora F/SSIA/8-9).

There is rather more disagreement among respondents about the usefulness of explicit grammar knowledge for L2 learners, particularly about its impact upon the development of the implicit knowledge which underpins effective communication (the interface issue discussed in 2.2.2). Seven of the main study group believe that explicit knowledge has a direct impact on the development of practical control of grammar. For example, Karen reports that : “*I remember some days ago I told my students ... OK you're learning the item ... but I hope that later, when you understand this, when you can handle this, then ... the usage of this item ... can become your instinct and you can use it naturally ... You don't have to remember, for example, OK I'm talking about*

the past situation and then, yes, past situation the past tense. No. I hope that they can understand grammar ... and then it can become their instinct”(Karen K/SSIA/15).

Two of the seven base their belief in the value of explicit knowledge on their own experiences as learners. In Lydia's view, for example : “*...knowledge of grammar facilitates their learning ... according to my own experience ... because I can generalise ... I can check the grammar points myself, I can look up some books ... and then I will be able to understand what these books are talking about. If I have some knowledge of grammar, it helps me to study on my own”(Lydia L/SSIA/11).*

Yan, meanwhile, links Hong Kong students' need for explicit knowledge of grammar with the fact that the great majority are learning in what is effectively a foreign-language context. Explicit knowledge can therefore support learning in ways similar to those mentioned by Lydia : “*... it's foreign language actually in Hong Kong so ... you have to give them rules so they feel a little bit ... safer ... or things that they can ... refer to when ... they check their own work ... and produce work by themselves. So I think the rules are important”(Yan Y/SSIA/13).*

Six other respondents are rather more circumspect about the role of explicit knowledge, seeing students' needs as being only for 'the basics'. Benjamin and Tony, for instance, express similar views. According to Benjamin : “*... some people who speak English very well ... don't know much grammar I think. So in that sense maybe grammar is not a must for them ... But of course the basic rules you have to know. S-V-O, the S-V-O, is the basic ones. You have to know that”(Benjamin B/SSIA/11), while Tony asserts that : “*... they need [explicit knowledge] but not that deep. You know, like they don't need so difficult ones like ... past perfect continuous tense... They need the basics”(Tony T/SSIA/10).**

Of the other four respondents, one expresses doubts about the value of explicit knowledge : “*...of course they need to have a practical control of it ... the implicit knowledge ... 'know' in that sense, yes. But whether they need to*

have ... explicit knowledge, conscious knowledge ... maybe that helps to a certain extent, I'm not sure ... but maybe they don't really need that"(Shirley S/SSIA/12). One of the remaining respondents sees the primary purpose of supplying explicit knowledge of grammar as being to serve learners' needs for reassurance that their English lessons actually have some serious content : "*...just the purpose of reassuring that ... they have learned something about English*"(Eva E/SSIA/13), while another links students' need for explicit grammar knowledge with the specific demands of written exams : "*I don't think they need to know both* [explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge] ... *Well, grammar is need if you want to write good composition, but if you just want to learn it ... for communication, grammar is not important at all. But because the student here in Hong Kong ... they have to prepare for the compo examination so they need to know grammar well. They know to write good sentences*"(Hilda H/SSIA/12).

The beliefs of the final respondent, Rose, seem to be somewhat confused, as her questionnaire response ratings within the main study group suggest (2nd on the CLTMNGTS rating, but 3rd and 5th on the DEDGRTS and ACCTS ratings). On the one hand, in each of the data sources she makes statements downplaying the importance of grammar in relation to communication, for example : "*... I'm not saying that grammar is not important at all. But in comparing to communication, I think the first priority is to have confident in speaking English first*"(Rose R/COMP/2), and : "*...As long as we can communicate with the others, it's OK ... Maybe when they study in higher level, they have to [have explicit grammar knowledge] ... But not the secondary students ... I think it depends on the personal interest ... we can't force someone to have an explicit knowledge in the grammar item*"(Rose R/SSIA/11). At the same time, however, she makes statements suggesting that she actually has a firm belief in the link between explicit grammar knowledge and practical control of grammar : "*...I think we have to teach grammar actually ... in a more detailed way because they'll forget it immediately after what you have taught ... So we have to teach*

them grammar, and then by teaching this grammar here, they can at least have some control over their grammar items”(Rose R/SSIA/11).

6.2.3 Approaches to grammar pedagogy

As suggested in 6.2.1, the predominant approach to grammar pedagogy adopted by these teachers is deductive. Ten of the seventeen describe their accustomed style of teaching in similar ways. Pearl, for instance, says that in a typical grammar lesson with her Form 1 students she will : “*...explain the structure and then ask them to do exercise. And I will ask them questions to see whether they understand me or not*”(Pearl P/SSIA/3). She later outlines the procedure in more detail : “*So, for example, I ... explain to them when to use present tense, and I tell them tomorrow I will ask you ... the reasons why we have to use present tense. So go home and study. And then I will give them the examples, write on the board, and then I ask them to do some exercise. Check the answers with them, and then give them homework to do. And the next day I ask them, and if they don't know, then I have to ask them to go home and study again*”(Pearl P/SSIA/4).

Diana describes the employment of an equally deductive approach in her Form 3 class : “*Well, usually I will spend say ten minutes explaining the rules ... the form or the use of that special grammar item ... and then after that maybe I give them some exercise to do, or if possible I will give them some games to play ... Of course the games have ... to be related ... to the grammar items they learn*”(Diana D/SSIA/7).

Lydia justifies her very similar ‘transmission’ style of grammar teaching as follows : “*... teaching is to give them information, give them some idea, and then we can do it together in class, so if they have any difficulty, they can let me know ... so that I will try to solve ... But we don't have too many lessons, so they have to do the homework as well, and then they have to remember the rules ... and they have to memorise it*”(Lydia L/SSIA/5).

Karen, in discussion with Lydia and Eva, suggests that she feels a deductive approach is more suited to her particular students :

Karen : “*It depends on what kind of students we have. For my students I don't think they can handle it well just by looking at the examples, just by looking at the mistakes the other classmates made, because they have to understand it before. And how about you?*”

Lydia : “*My students need explanation*”

Karen : “*Yeah*”

(LEK/LP/11)

Not all the respondents espouse a deductive style of grammar teaching, however. Seven out of the seventeen describe approaches to grammar pedagogy which are rather more inductive in style. Wendy, for example, describes her handling of comparative adjectives in the previous day's Form 1 class : “*I drew two boxes on the board, one big one small ... I just told them well, this is box A and this is box B, and then I asked them ... in a sentence describe their sizes, and compare the sizes. They did it very well ... so then I put the price on the boxes and they also did it very well. And then I asked them “Why would you put ‘-er’ after ‘big’, and why wouldn't you put ‘-er’ after expensive?” And then they were able to tell me the explanation too*”(Wendy W/SSIA/5)

According to Clara's description, her typical approach is also towards the inductive end of the inductive/deductive continuum : “*Usually I set up a situation for them to discuss. For example I will prepare some of the materials regarding to the grammar item ... and then before I introduce the grammar item I'll ... try to see whether they can work on their worksheet first. And then I will introduce the grammar item and then do the follow-up exercise*”(Clara C/SSIA/5). However, Clara makes clear her belief that such an approach is not feasible with every type of learner : “*For the Band 1 student they can do it, really. But ...the opposite for the Band 5 student, you can just explain it to them*”(Clara C/SSIA/5).

Among the seven more inductive teachers (according to their interview descriptions and, in all but two cases, to their belief questionnaire ratings) there are two subjects who have recently moved out of mainstream secondary school teaching and into a sixth form technical institute, where the prevailing culture appears to favour task-based learning. Joanna, for example, contrasts her former

secondary school approach : “*Just explain the rules, and then get them to do the exercises. No games, no interaction*”(Joanna J/SSIA/5) with her more inductive technical institute approach : “*I will get my students to look at a passage which was written in passives ... and then ask them to explain to me why the passive has to be used, why not active. What's the purpose, or what are the advantages ... what are the good reasons for using passive?*”(Joanna J/SSIA/6). When asked to explain her change of approach, she answers as follows : “*For what reason? I don't know ... just something automatic. I think now I don't believe in explanation ... I may have changed my view towards language teaching, or grammar teaching. Or ... just because of the fact that I'm now in a different situation*”(Joanna J/SSIA/7).

Whatever the preferred style of presentation, inductive or deductive, grammar learning is treated by all fifteen mainstream secondary school teachers as a linear process of accumulating grammatical entities. Eva, for example, by inclination one of the more inductive teachers, reports that : “*... we have one book ... wholly of grammar. And the title of the grammar, for example, agreement, plural singular, countable and uncountable nouns ... and I will tell my students 'Today I will do that particular topic' ...*”(Eva E/SSIA/3). Karen, the respondent with the strongest preference for a deductive approach (as indicated by both her beliefs questionnaire rating and her interview responses) describes how she applies this step-by-step approach to the teaching of tenses with her Form 4 class : “*... for example, for tenses ... I split it into some parts ... into two to three weeks ... and then maybe one day for present, present perfect, present perfect continuous. And then I went to passive form ... And next week again OK we go to past tense*”(Karen K/SSIA/6). Rose outlines a similar approach with her Form 2 class : “*... For Form 2 ... I will teach grammar in a more detailed way because ... most of them come from a Chinese primary school, so we don't expect much from them. So we have to teach it one by one and then step by step, and then deal with more example ... copy some notes on the blackboard, and then see whether ... they understand it or not*”(Rose R/SSIA/6).

The two respondents now teaching in technical institutes report a rather different approach : “*We will teach grammar ... only if a particular grammar point is, or can be, incorporated into a certain function ... which is trade related*” (Shirley S/SSIA/1). This approach is embodied in the technical institute syllabus : “*... in our syllabus ... it is stated that a grammar point should not be dealt with ... in isolation. It has to be incorporated in meaningful context*”(Shirley S/SSIA/7).

Several of the mainstream secondary school teachers indicate that they would also prefer to be able to adopt a different approach to grammar pedagogy. Benjamin, for example, having described his approach to grammar teaching as “*just like instant noodles*”(Benjamin B/SSIB/11), “*just feed them, and then have the response and do some evaluation*”(Benjamin B/SSIA/3), reveals that he would much prefer to deal with grammar more flexibly, as it arises, in response to students’ needs : “*I would like to do it really more freely ... when it is needed ... when the student have inquiries and they’re curious to learn something and then I can teach them all right, but it is not necessary to be fixed*”(Benjamin B/SSIA/5). Tony also wishes that it were possible in his school to adopt an approach which aimed at teaching grammar through activities : “*... the way we can learn English is that ... we pick it up in our daily life. But if we just teach them the forms, and we teach them the structures ... very abstract things ... it doesn’t help them at all. But, too bad, in our school ... we tend to teach them those theoretical things. More than the practical ones ... We do need some basic things, but then we have to have the students read more, and listen more, talk more, with the help of some grammar. And they can learn, they can learn by this*”(Tony T/SSIA/11).

The subjects mention a number of factors which constrain the ways in which they can handle grammar. Eleven of the fifteen mainstream secondary teachers mention the role of the public examinations, particularly at Forms 4 and 5 (leading to the HKCEE) and Forms 6 and 7 (in preparation for the UE). Maggie, for example, expresses her perception of the influence of the exams, as it affects the teaching of conditional sentences : “*... the EA [the Hong Kong Examinations*

Authority] *concentrates on the form rather than the usage [sic] of the grammatical item, the discrepancy in the use of tenses is more important than the reason for using. In our imperfect world of examination-oriented syllabus, teachers are almost forced to concentrate on the form of conditional clauses, in order to help students to score a better mark in the HKCEE*"(Maggie M/GP/1). Hilda says that she cannot teach in the way she would wish with either Form 5 or Form 6, partly because the students in those classes expect grammar-focused teaching : "*So for Form 5 I have to follow the syllabus, give them exam practice paper ... and Form 6 too ... cos you have to prepare them for the examination. And they like to do exam practice paper. You know, if you tell them to do something else, they think it's meaningless. So you have to cater for their needs*"(Hilda H/SSIA/2).

Several other constraints are discussed by the subjects. The demands of a rigid and over-crowded syllabus, for example, are mentioned by nine of the fifteen mainstream secondary teachers. Flora describes the limits placed on her teaching at Form 3 : "*...we have to ... follow our teaching schedule, and we have to have so many dictations ... and per chapter we cover so many grammar exercises*"(Flora F/SSIA/2). Eva reports that the syllabus in her school obliges her to do mechanical grammar exercises even though she doubts their usefulness : "*... I have thought about that whether they're useful or not ... Sometimes for filling in the blanks ... for example, to change all the verb to past tense, they do not need to think. Change all the nouns to plural, they do not think whether it's plural in the whole sentence ... But first of all I need to fulfil the syllabus ... therefore I do them*"(Eva E/SSIA/7). In a number of cases, the inflexible syllabus is enforced by an equally inflexible panel chairperson (head of department), as Maggie recounts : "*I don't have much choice in doing what kind of things that we have to do in class because the panel chairman force us to do grammar*"(Maggie M/SSIA/2).

The other limiting factor mentioned most frequently is time. In some cases, this pressure is linked to the syllabus. According to Pearl : "*...they have a very long syllabus, so I have to hurry up with the syllabus*"(Pearl P/SSIA/1).

Tony makes a similar point : “*I should teach in a more active way, but I just don't have enough time ... I have to teach according to the syllabus*”(Tony T/SSIA/2). For others, the problem is related to the amount of time needed to devise one's own materials and activities. As Maggie puts it : “*... I find it difficult to like integrate grammar into communicative teaching, because you have to use a lot of time on preparing. For example, if you want to do some situational role-play, or just some games, you need to spend another two hours preparing. It could be just like a fifteen-minute game, and it may not work at all. You still have to do a lot of traditional explanation, afterward or beforehand*”(Maggie M/SSIA/3).

The attitude and ability of learners is the other constraining factor mentioned by several respondents (seven out of seventeen). The narrow exam focus of many students has already been referred to by Hilda (H/SSIA/2), while Clara has spoken of the difficulties of teaching Band 5 students (C/SSIA/5), a challenge which often causes her to resort to Cantonese : “*...usually for explaining the grammar, I sometimes use the Chinese, because I'm afraid they can't understand what I'm saying*”(Clara C/SSIA/5).

Tony highlights the problem (mentioned by a number of subjects) of students' passivity and unwillingness to speak English : “*... the students are quite passive. And sometimes they have discipline problem ... and they're not willing to speak ... English, and sometimes I have to force to use Cantonese to explain, because if they don't understand, they keep yelling at me*”(Tony T/SSIA/1)

Agnes suggests that student attitudes oblige teachers to be more creative, an obligation which a lack of time has so far prevented her from fulfilling to her satisfaction : “*... students nowadays are very different from those in the past ... it's because we have ... to motivate them, that's why we have to change our teaching method ... But I'm quite busy, so I can't really do much on this. So I blame myself for this, because I haven't been very creative*”(Agnes A/SSIA/5).

Yan, operating under similar pressures, seems almost to regret the changes he has made in his approach to the teaching of grammar : “*I learned English*

through this old-fashioned boring way, and I feel I'm quite successful ... I think I've changed the ways simply to cope with the students. I don't know if I believe in all that sorts of ... ideas or not"(Yan Y/SSIA/4). Rose, on the other hand, thinks that the limited capabilities of present-day learners force the adoption of a 'traditional' approach to language teaching/learning : "*...I don't think that students nowadays can learn English by communicative method ... I think we have to learn grammar in a more traditional way. That means taking notes, and then remembering, and then recite the rules ... I think we have to memorise it instead of making use of the communicative method to learn grammar*"(Rose R/SSIA/5).

6.2.4 The impact of CLT

It was suggested in 3.5 that the impact of CLT on most Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English had been fairly superficial, although certain communicative principles and practices might have been absorbed into the pedagogical styles and repertoires of a sizeable minority. That perception is largely confirmed by analysis of what the seventeen main study subjects say about their teaching.

Several of the subjects seem to have a very narrow view of CLT, which limits its focus to oral activity. Lydia, for example, equates a communicative approach with chatting to students, something she only has time for with lower forms : "*... talk to them and see if they understand what I'm talking ... sometimes I'll ask them some questions. But it is for lower forms ... For the Form 7 classes is ... little chance for me to chat with them*"(Lydia L/SSIA/2). Hilda also links communicative activities with oral interaction : "*...interaction, interpersonal interactions, we ask questions, we try to elicit their response ... communicative approach ... usually I consider it as an oral practice, you know ... ask and answer*"(Hilda H/SSIA/2), while Flora makes a similar connection : "*... when I bring up an issue ... I talk about it and then I ask their opinions and then ... get them to discuss their opinions ... or in a group ... get them to conclude what they've discussed ... I think that's communicative*"(Flora

F/SSIA/2). Meanwhile, Pearl, whose teaching is only with the most junior forms, relates communicative activity to classroom language : “*... the first topic I teach in class is classroom language ... this is a way for us, at least in this small environment ... they have to talk to me and I have to talk to them ... I say ‘Well, you learn the language and then you can’ ... I encourage them to talk to me ... so I think this is communication*”(Pearl P/SSIA/1-2).

Others among the subjects seem to have a somewhat broader conception of CLT. Agnes, for example, recognises the application of ‘communicative’ to both productive and receptive skills : “*I think all sorts of skills ... like speaking, listening ... writing ... all sorts of activities are communicative*”(Agnes A/SSIA/3), and the link to learners’ future communicative needs : “*We can’t create a real-life situation for them sometimes, but I think we can apply these knowledge to various circumstances they may come across in the future. In that sense I think that’s communicative*”(Agnes A/SSIA/3).

In Benjamin’s case, CLT is not an approach he claims to employ himself : “*I don’t think I am doing this ... communicative method ... I’m not sure if communicative method works*”(Benjamin B/SSIA/3). The ‘communicative method’ which Benjamin has doubts about (“*...because discipline is a problem*”) (Benjamin B/SSIA/3) seems to be acquisition-focused, with an emphasis on ‘comprehensible input’ : “*...the teachers just doesn’t teach grammar ... they just teach like ... a ordinary environment ...just talk with the students, almost in English, and if they ask ‘I want to speak in Cantonese’, you just say ‘No, but I would try to talk with you in English in another way, to make it ... understandable’ ...*”(Benjamin B/SSIA/3).

About a third of the subjects discuss their practices in ways suggesting that they have, at least in part, adopted a communicative approach in their general teaching. Wendy, for example, describes her task-based approach, although it is noteworthy that she seems to apply it only to the productive skills : “*Certainly communicative work is emphasised these days ... we do a lot of tasks ... activity with a purpose ... artificial and natural ... in which they get to do a lot of work, they need to produce ... Interesting tasks because students ... need to see what’s*

in it for them ... and they get their first-hand experience ... they get to speak, write, or produce in whatever way ... sentences" (Wendy W/SSIA/3&10).

Of the seventeen subjects, Shirley reveals the closest understanding and the most comprehensive adoption of CLT principles and practices. She describes the approach she employs in her technical institute as follows : “*... they are really using ... language to communicate, doing something meaningful, instead of ... say, the mechanical drills ... Here ... you use passive in, for example, writing a report ... because you want the tone to be more impersonal ... so that is you're using language in a meaningful context*”(Shirley S/SSIA/5). She also gives a wry account of her rather less successful efforts to apply similar strategies in the secondary school context, where the prevailing culture ensures a continuing focus on grammatical structures : “*I try to be communicative. But ... not always successful, you know ... It is very difficult to always find something meaningful to deal with grammar points ... For example, you're teaching present perfect tense. Well, I can ask the students to do ... questionnaires, you interview your partner and find out something about their experience ... So that is what I try to do. But very often ... I still have to kind of do some mechanical exercises with the students*”(Shirley S/SSIA/7).

Johnson (1998) describes five ways in which the standard form of communicative methodology represents an enrichment of its predecessors : the teaching of appropriateness; the central importance of message-focus; the replication of psycholinguistic processes used in communication (such as top-down processing); the emphasis on risk-taking skills (in both production and reception); and the development of free practice techniques (Johnson and Johnson (eds) 1998:69-72). In order to measure the degree to which CLT has been adopted by these teachers, it may be useful to consider how far each of these five characteristics is apparent in their descriptions of their pedagogical practices.

Partly, no doubt, through the influence of Hong Kong secondary school coursebooks (all of which in recent years have incorporated a functional-notional dimension within their multi-faceted syllabus framework), the teaching of appropriateness seems to have taken root, at least to some extent. As Hilda

describes, in relation to her teaching of the upper forms : “*... usually for each of the chapter, there might be a language focus. So we'll look at part of the passage ... where the language is focused on, and then we extract it ... we talk about the aims of using these, what is the purpose of using this language*”(Hilda H/SSIA/3). Diana also notes the way in which textbooks encourage a focus on speech acts as well as grammatical structure : “*Nowadays ... the grammar exercises in the textbooks, they try to be communicative ... They will set a context ... a situation for that exercise ... and also some function ... is it for greeting, or for what purpose?*”(Diana D/SSIA/6).

Although the starting point for teaching is often still the structure rather than the function, Yan's description of his teaching of the present participle “*... as an adjective clause*” (Yan Y/SSIA/5) illustrates the importance which many of the teachers seem to accord to communicative function :“*... I think they need to know a bigger picture, because the function of ... that present participle is to describe, it's used as an adjective ... There are many ways to describe a person ... So I think you've got to link it up with what they've already known ...*”(Yan Y/SSIA/6).

Message focus has also become part of the approach of at least some of the teachers. Joanna perhaps gives the most unequivocal support to this characteristic of the communicative approach :“*... what I want my students to do is just to get the message across. It doesn't matter whether they have some minor grammatical mistakes. I think it's OK as long as the message is conveyed*”(Joanna J/SSIA/10). Among the mainstream secondary teachers, too, there is some employment of message-focused activities. Diana, for example, reports the experiences of her Form 3 class with such activities, also involving risk-taking :“*They have a chance to share their opinions, their ideas with their classmates ... I would not correct their mistakes ... They can talk whatever things they like about that topic, and I'm not going to give them any guidance about what the things they're going to talk about ... And they ... feel ease because they can ... just enjoy talking, and no one is going to laugh at the things they say*”(Diana D/SSIA/4). Eva has also made use of such activities,

although her attempts to give tasks a personal message focus appear to have been a source of considerable frustration : “*... I'm discouraged to use activities in grammar lessons ... because they're not sincere in the way they ... make answers ... they won't tell the truth ... Maybe they don't want to share in this way ... they find it's not natural to use English ... to talk about something they find is quite personal*”(Eva E/SSIA/9).

For the majority of the subjects, however, both message focus and risk-taking activities tend to be confined to those lessons which are set aside for exam-related oral practice. The introduction of the UE oral and the changes to the HKCEE oral appear to have had an impact on the attitudes and practices of all those subjects with classes at form 4 and above. Yan, for instance, mentions that : “*... I also teach Form 4 and 5, and recently they put much emphasis on the oral paper ... and I think my students in the past they lack ... this sort of training when they were in lower forms ... so they do not do quite well in the examination ... So actually it's quite examination-oriented, that's why I want to ... try to make them talk more ...*”(Yan Y/SSIA/2).

As a result of these changes to the exam syllabus, all those subjects working with upper forms have on their teaching schedule designated oral lessons in which (at least part of the time) they conduct free practice activities with a message focus. These are activities targeted at fluency rather than accuracy, and risk-taking is encouraged. For that reason, the teachers all adopt a non-interventionist strategy as far as grammatical errors are concerned. As Lydia, for instance, says : “*... I just don't want to disturb them ... My Form 7 students are quite passive, and some girls are quite shy ... If they keep talking and expressing their ideas, I will be very happy then. So usually I won't correct their grammatical mistakes*”(Lydia L/SSIA/10). Maggie makes a similar point : “*... if you interfere into a group discussion, they get more conscious about the grammar rather than the content. But when you're doing the UE oral level, I think what the marker's more aware of is the content – are you discussing what you're asked to? – rather than every grammatical mistake you've made*” (Maggie M/SSIA/9). As Maggie's comment makes clear, the adoption of

communicative principles in such oral lessons tends to be motivated primarily by exam considerations rather than forming part of any coherent overall pedagogical approach.

Of Johnson's five characteristics of 'standard' communicative methodology, the one which seems to have had the least impact on the pedagogical practices of these teachers is the replication of the psychological processes involved in communication. This is particularly the case with the receptive skills. Indeed, only one of the seventeen subjects (Agnes) makes any overt connections between CLT and listening and reading. This may appear somewhat surprising, given that most textbooks used in Hong Kong secondary schools contain reading and listening tasks intended to foster the use of top-down processing strategies. It is, however, the researcher's experience, based on eight years' observation of more than five hundred English lessons in Hong Kong, that teachers frequently (and without seeming to perceive any incongruity) deal with reading passages by getting students to study the text at home in minute detail in preparation for a lesson in which they are then asked to skim, scan, and guess the meanings of words in the text using contextual clues.

6.2.5 Feelings, beliefs, understandings – their impact on pedagogical practice

The teachers' feelings, beliefs and understandings about grammar and grammar teaching within their particular field of operations combine to inform what these teachers consider to be necessary, feasible and desirable in relation to grammar pedagogy. They therefore have a profound impact upon the ways in which teachers engage with grammar-related issues in their pedagogical practice.

Table 14 below summarises the main patterns of such feelings, beliefs and understandings reported in 6.2. It also highlights how these influences contribute to the narrowly form-focused style of teaching which characterises (with a certain degree of variation) the pedagogical practice of the main study subjects. It is within this context that TMA exerts its influence, in ways described in 6.3.

| Influential factors | Impact on pedagogical practice | |
|--|---|--|
| Feelings about grammar and the teaching and learning of grammar | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students perceived to consider grammar as boring, but important for exams. For teachers, it is also important (for exams, but also because of its central role in communication). Grammar teaching is a source of frustration for many teachers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For some teachers, grammar and grammar teaching are a source of anxiety. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perseverance with grammar-based lessons seen as an unpleasant necessity. Limited expectations, despite teacher efforts, of student enjoyment or achievement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tendency to abdicate grammar responsibilities to textbooks or materials supplied by others. |
| Beliefs about grammar and the teaching and learning of grammar | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students' primary need perceived as practical control of grammar for communication. Students also thought to need explicit grammar knowledge to support the development of their implicit knowledge and to help them cope with exam demands. Grammar learning is a process of accumulating entities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grammar teaching needs to be 'active'/'creative' BUT Teachers are constrained by the need to complete syllabus, prepare students for exams, and cater for their limited ability/interest. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explicit, form-focused teaching, often involving deductive presentation and mechanical practice. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constraints limit scope for teachers' own contributions. Students are 'spoon-fed' explicit grammar information in 'digestible' form, accompanied by undemanding practice activities. |
| Understandings about grammar and the teaching and learning of grammar | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptance of students' need to know the function(s) associated with a grammar item, not just the form(s). Limited understanding of ways in which grammar might be practised. Limited familiarity with communicative tasks, which are generally not seen as linked to the acquisition of grammar. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation generally focuses on meaning/use, as well as features of form. Practice activities are form-focused, rather than message-focused. Task-related oral activity (with message-focus and risk-taking) takes place only in the context of preparation for public oral exams. |

Table 14 : Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English - how their feelings, beliefs, and understandings about grammar impact on their pedagogical practice

6.3 TMA and pedagogical practice

The previous section outlined the feelings, beliefs and understandings about grammar pedagogy of the seventeen Hong Kong secondary school teachers comprising

the main study group. The aim was to provide a context for the analysis of TMA and pedagogical practice which follows.

The analysis in section 6.2 revealed that amongst these teachers grammar teaching is seen as a boring necessity, a view apparently shared by their students. The feelings of boredom may be related at least in part to the conservative classroom practices employed by most of the subjects in their grammar teaching. All of the mainstream secondary teachers in the group adopt an 'accumulated entities' approach to grammar pedagogy, following a conventional 'presentation-practice-production' pattern. Typically (though not exclusively), their style of presentation is deductive, their practice activities are mechanical and form-focused, and production takes the form of composition. Many of the subjects seem to feel constrained to follow such a pattern because of rigid and overcrowded teaching syllabuses, the demands of the examinations, and the characteristics of their students. At the same time, some features of CLT do nevertheless seem to have been absorbed, into the belief system if not necessarily into pedagogical practice. There is recognition among all the subjects, for instance, that students need grammar primarily for communicative purposes, and that such grammar knowledge should embrace both form/usage and meaning/use. The impact of other features of CLT, however, seems generally to have been limited to specific parts of the syllabus, especially the oral lesson, where (largely in response to examination changes) spoken free practice activities with a message focus have become a conventional part of the repertoire.

The data source prioritised for analysis in relation to this part of the chapter was the videotaped grammar lesson (as described in 4.4.6.2). The most important additional sources of data were the second semi-structured interview (4.4.6.5) and the pedagogically related tasks (4.4.6.4). Given the study's central interest in the role of TMA in structuring input for learners, particular attention was paid to teacher mediation of the three sources of input discussed in 2.3.6 : materials, other learners, and the teacher herself. The analysis therefore concentrated principally upon the execution of each of the videotaped grammar lessons, attempting to identify the different ways in which TMA appeared to have an impact upon those three potential sources of input, as well as its influence upon preparation and post-lesson reflection. It was assumed that the investigation of TMA

within these areas of pedagogical practice would also reveal more about the nature of the TMA construct.

Precise quantification of the different patterns of interaction between TMA and pedagogical practice was generally not attempted because it was felt to be neither relevant to the aims of this part of the analysis nor appropriate, given that the lessons were not strictly comparable. Although the lessons all took place within a specific educational context and with a focus on grammar, they were nevertheless quite varied, having taken place in a range of institutional settings, with learners of different ages (from Form 1 to post-Form 5) and different levels of academic aptitude (from Band 1 to Band 4).

Analysis of the data began with a viewing of all the videotaped lessons and associated documentation (lesson plans and post-lesson comments). Viewing notes were made (GRLN), including transcriptions and detailed analyses of those parts of each lesson which shed light on the teacher's metalinguistic awareness. These notes together with the transcripts of all other relevant data sources were then examined, and samples of teacher behaviour or comment ('episodes') were highlighted to indicate their relevance to one or more of the following five areas : preparation, input/materials, input/learners, input/teacher, and post-lesson reflection. Within each area different themes emerged, and episodes were categorised according to their relevance to each theme. Thematically related episodes were then compared, and narratives were drawn up reflecting the variety of ways in which TMA impacts upon the pedagogical practice of the seventeen subjects. These thematic narratives comprise the remainder of this section. The final section of the chapter summarises the general findings about TMA emerging from the narratives.

In the narratives which follow, it should be emphasised that it is not the intention to paint an excessively negative picture of the TMA of the subjects. Many of the episodes described are indeed instances of behaviour which might be evaluated negatively. However, the aim here is not to be judgemental. The function of such episodes in the narratives is simply to illustrate the range of ways in which TMA interacts with aspects of pedagogical practice. This can, unfortunately, be illustrated rather more strikingly by negative instances than positive ones.

It should also be noted that the ways in which TMA interacts with pedagogical practice are inevitably affected by factors specific to the context within which teachers are operating, and by the views of grammar pedagogy prevailing within each institution and the system of which that institution forms part. For this reason, the contextual background of the present subjects was outlined in some detail in 6.2. In other settings, with different types of teacher, and alternative views of grammar pedagogy predominating, TMA may be seen to interact with pedagogical practice in other ways, both positive and negative.

The last point to note is that no attempt was made to gather data on how learners and learning are affected by the teacher's metalinguistic awareness. The focus of the present study is limited to the teacher herself. Therefore, for obvious reasons, in the following comments on pedagogical practice, it is only possible to talk about the potential impact of such practice on students.

6.3.1 TMA and lesson preparation

In considering how TMA influences the preparation of lessons, there are a number of points which need to be borne in mind, particularly in the Hong Kong secondary school context. First of all, it is questionable how much detailed lesson preparation actually takes place on a day-to-day basis. For many hard-pressed teachers, such as the seventeen main study subjects, it seems that much of the responsibility for the preparation of classes is abdicated to coursebooks, supplementary texts or materials produced in-house¹. Where preparation does take place, anecdotal evidence suggests that in everyday practice many teachers tend to give priority to aspects of methodology and classroom management rather than engaging with issues of content, except in a fairly superficial way.

A number of factors constraining the amount of preparation have already been mentioned in 6.2. For example, lack of time and the inflexibility of the

¹ This is particularly true of the fifteen mainstream secondary teachers. The two subjects now working in technical institutes are expected to take rather more personal responsibility for the content as well as the conduct of their lessons.

syllabus limit both the opportunity and the scope for teacher creativity. It could also be argued that, for many teachers (and certainly for some of the seventeen main study subjects), lack of confidence and relative inexperience are additional factors which inhibit the extent to which a teacher imposes herself upon the content of teaching. One might therefore suppose that TMA impacts less on the preparation of lessons than it does in the actual classroom itself.

Nevertheless, the data reveal a range of ways in which TMA seems to affect preparation and therefore the input subsequently made available to learners in the classroom, as outlined in the following paragraphs. It is not being argued, however, that TMA is solely responsible for the incidents described, but rather that it is a major contributing factor.

The first, and perhaps most obvious way in which TMA can be seen to impact upon lesson preparation is through the effects of the teacher's own understanding of the grammatical area. Two observed lessons illustrate the opposite extremes of such effects especially clearly. The first relates to a lesson given by Yan, and is a particularly good example of the positive influence of metalinguistic awareness on preparation. Yan's TMA enables him, before the lesson, to spot what appears to be a flaw in the coursebook's handling of the grammar area under focus, a flaw which he is able to exploit to his (and his students') advantage.

Yan's lesson is focused upon the use of the present participle to join two sentences with the same subject. The first practice exercise in the coursebook requires students to :

Rewrite the sentences using the correct -ing participle. Follow the example :

1) *Peter received a call on his radio. He went straight to the scene of the robbery.*
Receiving a call on his radio, Peter went straight to the scene of the robbery

(Sampson 1994)

The fourth item in the exercise is problematic, however, because the two sentences do not have the same subject (*The ambulance arrived a few minutes later. The man was taken to hospital.*) Fortunately, when Yan prepared the lesson, his TMA was fully engaged, enabling him to evaluate each item against his understanding of the grammar area. As a result, he noticed the potential

difficulty, and was able to transform it into an interesting learning challenge, by setting his students the task of resolving the problem. During the actual lesson, with Yan's guidance, the students are able to do this by making a change to the second sentence (*The ambulance took the man to hospital*) so that they can then join the sentences in accordance with the desired pattern (*Arriving a few minutes later, the ambulance took the man to hospital*)(Yan Y/GRLa/1).

A lesson given by Tony provides an equally clear example of the negative influence of this aspect of TMA upon preparation. Tony's aim in his lesson is to help his students: “*... to learn the difference between the past perfect tense and simple past tense and to understand in what situation these two tenses are used so that they themselves can use the tenses correctly*”(Tony T/GRLa/1). As Tony comments in his plan : “*Learners have learnt what simple past tense and past perfect tense are, but they are confused with the difference between the two. They seldom use the tenses correctly in their writing and can hardly realize the meaning of the past perfect tense in their reading*”(Tony T/GRLa/1). Unfortunately, the text written by Tony in preparation for the lesson suggests that he is as confused as his own students about the use of the Past Perfect. The story begins with three simple sentences containing Past Perfect Vgps. However, the tense selection is inappropriate in each case, since there is no past time of orientation justifying the use of Past Perfect rather than Past Simple : “*On the 7th January 1996, a terrible accident had happened. A man and a dog had been killed by a lorry near the road. They had become ghosts! One week later, an old man drove his car near the place where the accident had taken place....*” (Tony T/GRLa/3).

The second major way in which TMA affects lesson preparation is an extension of the first, in that it relates to the ability of the teacher to analyse the target grammatical area from a learner/learning perspective. Assuming that the teacher has analysed the relevant structure(s), she then has to identify an appropriate focus for teaching, and select materials/tasks which will result in practice of the structure in the manner intended, while being appropriate to the

students' level. The data provide a number of examples of the impact of TMA upon these aspects of preparation.

On the evidence of her plan, materials, post-lesson reflections, and the class itself, the preparation of Karen's videotaped lesson seems to have been affected in this way. First, there is a mismatch between the aims of her lesson and the focus of her self-produced materials. The lesson is intended to teach students how to ask questions, as preparation for a task in the HKCEE Oral in which candidates have to obtain information from an examiner. However, Karen's practice activities consist entirely of blank-filling exercises, for example *a) _____ you like chocolates? Yes, I do* (Karen K/GRLN/1). In addition, the level of difficulty is inappropriate for her Form 4 students, as she herself acknowledges : *"The worksheets, especially p1 to p4, were too simple for the class, and thus made them feel bored"* (Karen K/GRL/1).

The preparation of Maggie's videotaped lesson also appears to have been affected by her TMA. Maggie is endeavouring to teach passive voice to her Form 3 class. The springboard for her lesson is a unit in the coursebook entitled *Active or passive?*. However, Maggie attempts to bring in a number of creative ideas of her own, with mixed results. For instance, she tries to make use of newspaper extracts and their headlines, giving her students focus questions on her worksheet *"What is done - and by whom? These are the questions you should ask regarding active/passive voice"* (Maggie M/GRL/6). However, in her preparation, she appears to have underestimated the problems posed by the first and most prominent of her extracts, headlined *"Fired up by Thai cuisine"*. Not only is it difficult to relate her focus questions to the headline, but the headline itself is also almost certainly beyond the competence of most of her students, both because of the lexis and also the problem of identifying a subject for the ellipted VP.

Two other sources of data shed light on TMA in the context of lesson planning : the lesson planning task (4.4.6.4 Task 1) and the post-lesson discussion which constituted the second of the semi-structured interviews (4.4.6.5). Both of these procedures presented an opportunity to gather data on lesson planning under circumstances in which the effects of the real-world constraints mentioned above

were minimised. As a result, TMA could perhaps be expected to have a more direct influence on the planning behaviour which was revealed.

The lesson planning task required subjects to discuss how to plan a lesson presenting the Present Perfect to a Form 3 class. As in the pilot study (Andrews 1996), the emphasis of discussion varied from group to group. Two of the seven pairs/triads focused almost entirely on issues of methodology and classroom management, four gave more or less equal attention to methodology and content, while one concentrated almost entirely on content. Although it could be argued that the performance of any individual will be influenced by the composition of the pair/triad to which she is allocated, the discussions are nevertheless revealing about the subjects, about their TMA, and more generally about processes and priorities in lesson planning.

The two triads focusing principally on methodology and classroom management (Wendy/Clara/Tony and Lydia/Eva/Karen) spend most of the time brainstorming ideas for tasks and situations, and discussing aspects of class organisation such as group-work and timing. Neither group makes any attempt to engage in a serious examination of issues arising from the specific language content. The only times when either group focuses on language-related matters are when, in one group, there is talk of the need to distinguish between the Present Perfect and the Past Simple, and in the other, when the participants try to think of situations linking the present and the past.

The four pairs/triads who give attention to both content and methodology in their discussions do so with varying degrees of sophistication. Hilda and Yan, for example, show awareness of the need to keep issues of form and function in mind throughout, largely due to Yan's prompting, both at the beginning of the discussion : *"I think it will be a good idea for us to think about ... first ... the different functions of the present perfect tense"* (Yan HY/LP/3), and as it progresses : *"Should we concentrate on one aspect only? Because it is only a 40-minute ... lesson ... Which one will be easy?"* (Yan HY/LP/4). Diana, Joanna and Agnes talk about a wider range of content matters, all highly pertinent, with Diana to the fore. Their discussion takes in the differences between the Present

Perfect and Past Simple, the difficulties of conveying the distinctions between the Simple and Progressive forms of the Present Perfect, and the problems associated with students' dependency on adverbials of time as a basis for tense selection.

Maggie and Shirley's discussion is rather different, with the roles of the two participants in sharp contrast. While Shirley takes on content issues with considerable confidence, even to the extent of criticising the grammar book (Leech 1985) for its reference to the use of Present Perfect for actions which happened very recently : "*I think this kind of definition is very confusing ... If I say a minute ago, that's very recent past, but we still use the simple past, right?*" (Shirley MS/LP/4), Maggie again reveals her nervousness when faced with grammar : "*Starting to get nervous about this grammar ... Gosh, present perfect!*" (Maggie MS/LP/3). Not surprisingly, perhaps, Shirley generally guides the discussion when it focuses on content, while Maggie's main contribution is in proposing a number of creative (but not always appropriate) ideas for teaching activities.

In Benjamin and Rose's discussion, meanwhile, any engagement with issues of content is at a rather less sophisticated level. Their own understanding of the distinction between the Past Simple and Present Perfect appears to be quite simplistic, and they seem to have considerable difficulty in using the reference grammar to find out more. They also manage to talk themselves out of having to address the complex issue of the Present Perfect Progressive :

- R : "Do we have to mention present perfect continuous?"*
- B : "No ... But what if student ask ... what's the difference if I ... continue to do something?"*
- R : "I think we don't have to mention the present perfect continuous"*
- B : "Because students are not that smart enough to ask that question"*

(BR/LP/8)

The remaining pair, Flora and Pearl, focus entirely on content in their discussion, but in a way which is naïve, uninformed and metalinguistically unaware. Their initial uncertainty how to proceed in the absence of a coursebook leads them to rely heavily on the reference grammar provided. As a result, they

decide, without a second thought, that their 40-minute lesson should cover the forms and all five uses of the Present Perfect as listed in the grammar, without considering issues of selection and sequencing.

As the brief summary above indicates, most of the pairs/triads reveal some awareness of content issues, such as the need to identify functions for the Present Perfect Simple which might enable it to be distinguished from the Past Simple and the Present Perfect Progressive. For whatever reason, however, none of the groups examines those issues in any depth or enters into detailed informed exploration of major pedagogical issues relating to those functions, such as their selection and sequencing for teaching purposes. In other words, the subjects' engagement with content is only at a relatively superficial level. It is unclear whether this is in itself a reflection of their TMA. It is, however, consistent with the evidence of planning behaviour and the impact of TMA provided by the videotaped lessons.

Preparation of the grammar lesson preceding the second semi-structured interview afforded subjects their best opportunity for careful planning and thoughtful analysis of content. The interviews indicated that most had researched their selected grammar area with some care, and were therefore, perhaps untypically, well-informed. Most had also reflected competently on their students' previous learning and on the learning difficulties posed by the grammar area. Some, however, had demonstrably failed to do so, despite specific instructions, as revealed by the following exchanges with Benjamin about his Form 4 lesson on the conditionals :

SJA : "What did you have in mind that they would already know?"

B : "Because I assume their level is not very good, I think I need to elaborate every steps and give more information...and probably they will have problems with passive voice. So I try to avoid assigning the exercise using passive voice."

SJA : "So did you assume that they had already had some exposure to conditional sentences?"

B : "When I come to class and after 30 minutes I think they have already

experienced them”.....

SJA : “Were there any difficulties that you anticipated that they might have [with conditionals] ...from their point of view?”

B : “Their point of view? ... Actually I didn’t think much ... I’m not trying to think of it” (Benjamin B/SSIB/4)

Even under such favourable conditions, a number of subjects still revealed TMA limitations in the way they had reflected on their grammar area. Hilda, for instance, in preparing her lesson on *going to + verb* to express future intention (eg *I’m going to retire when I’m 60*), had mixed in sentences like *I’m going to the cinema tonight*, without (as her interview comments revealed) realising that they are in fact examples of a different structure (Hilda H/SSIB/8-9).

Maggie’s comments on her lesson on conditionals also suggest an incomplete explicit knowledge of the relevant grammar. During the lesson, to the amusement of her students, Maggie used as example sentences *If the Principal were nice, the students would enjoy school life* and *If the Principal had been nice, the students would have enjoyed school life*. Maggie told the class that the first situation was unlikely, and the second impossible, making no reference to time in her explanation. When asked in the post-lesson interview why the second situation was impossible, Maggie gives a fanciful (and grammatically incorrect) justification, suggesting that even with detailed preparation she had not managed to achieve a full understanding of conditionals : “*Well, actually what I’ve in mind is like this situation is impossible because of her personality. It’s not about the time. I think most of the student understand that it’s not about time that cannot be changed, so we slightly change the use of that*”(Maggie M/SSIB/6).

The discussion in 6.3.1 has suggested that in relation to the preparation of grammar lessons the crucial impact of TMA is upon the analysis of the grammar from the learner/learning perspective. As we have noted, this affects the teacher’s ability to identify the key features of the grammar area for learning and to make them salient within the prepared input. It also affects the teacher’s ability to

evaluate potential practice tasks to ensure that they are appropriate to the learners' level and serve the desired learning outcomes.

Table 15 below summarises the influences exerted by a number of different factors, singly or in combination, on the potential impact of TMA on lesson preparation. The table distinguishes between the positive and negative impacts of each influential factor. However, as the arrows are intended to indicate, the influence of each factor is a matter of degree, with the descriptors outlining the opposite extremes.

| Influences upon the impact of TMA on lesson preparation | | |
|--|--|---|
| Influential factors | Positive | Negative |
| Contextual factors (e.g. time/syllabus) | <p>Teacher has e.g. sufficient time for lesson preparation, and sufficient freedom/control over content of teaching to engage fully with language-related issues of lesson before entering classroom. Teacher's students are cooperative/responsive.</p> | <p>Teacher has limited chances to engage with language-related issues before lesson because of e.g. lack of time and/or lack of personal control over content of lesson. Teacher's students are uncooperative and/or unresponsive.</p> |
| Attitudinal factors (e.g. interest/confidence) | <p>Teacher is interested in language-related issues, and understands the importance of engaging with them personally and directly.</p> <p>Teacher has confidence in own explicit grammar knowledge, and communicative language ability. Teacher is also confident about assuming responsibility for shaping the language-related content of the lesson.</p> | <p>Teacher finds language-related issues uninteresting, and perceives no need to engage with them personally and directly. Teacher lacks confidence in own explicit grammar knowledge and communicative language ability, and may be frightened by grammar. As a result, teacher may adopt avoidance strategies, such as abdicating language content responsibility to textbooks..</p> |
| Professional factors (e.g. knowledge/experience) | <p>Teacher has good explicit grammar knowledge, good communicative language ability, and positive previous experiences of grammar teaching to inform pre-lesson reflections about language-related issues, and therefore to influence language-related aspects of preparation, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying key features for learning • Making them salient in prepared input • Matching practice tasks to learners' level and lesson objectives | <p>Teacher has limited explicit knowledge, and/or weaknesses in communicative language ability. Teacher also has limited and/or negative previous experiences of grammar teaching. Any one or more of these can have a potentially negative impact on pre-lesson reflections and language-related aspects of preparation, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying key features for learning • Making them salient in prepared input • Matching practice tasks to learners' level and lesson objectives |

Table 15 : The impact of TMA on lesson preparation – influential factors

6.3.2 The impact of TMA on teacher mediation of materials

As has already been noted, the three main sources of input for L2 learners in the instructed-learning setting are materials, other learners, and the teacher herself. In the classroom context, the grammatical content of teaching materials is very often mediated through the teacher, who acts as a bridge between those materials and the learners, attempting to make salient the key features of the particular grammar area. The quality of such mediation demands not only declarative knowledge of the relevant grammar. It is also crucially dependent upon the teacher's readiness and ability to reflect on that grammar, analysing it from the learner's perspective. It is therefore directly affected by both dimensions of the teacher's metalinguistic awareness.

The data are full of episodes involving teacher mediation of the grammatical content of materials. There are several instances of competent mediation seen across both observed lessons : for example, Shirley and Joanna working with in-house and self-produced materials in technical institutes, and Diana and Yan using published coursebooks in the conventional secondary school setting. There are also, however, numerous cases of rather less helpful mediation.

In some instances, the mediation is unhelpful simply because the teacher does not (and perhaps cannot) go significantly beyond what is presented in the materials. Rose's classroom behaviour provides an illustration. In the videotaped lesson, for example, Rose is teaching reported speech to a Form 4 class. For the whole lesson, she makes use of "*...standardised exercises for the whole form prepared by the teachers ... [where] ... you have to explain the sentence first and then ask them to fill in the blanks*" (Rose R/SSIA/3-4). One feature of the input throughout the lesson is that the '*standardised exercises*' encourage a very formulaic application of all the 'rules' of reported speech. As a result, the students are asked to produce extremely unnatural sentences when transforming direct speech into indirect speech, for example : "*The farmer told his wife "Go and feed the ducks now* → *The farmer told his wife to go and feed the ducks then*". The inadequacies of such input should, of course, be seen as a product of the materials rather than any direct contribution from the teacher. However, there is

little evidence that Rose's TMA is actively engaged in filtering the content of the worksheets. Whether this is due to a lack of time, a lack of confidence, or a lack of metalinguistic awareness is hard to judge. As noted in 3.6, Rose admits to a fear of grammar and of teaching grammar, so a lack of confidence might, at least in part, explain the difference in handling grammar-related input which can be observed across a number of her lessons. At the same time, the fact that Rose appears to perceive no weakness in the exercises, even when prompted to do so in a post-lesson discussion, is perhaps indicative of the limitations of her TMA.

Flora's mediation of materials is also less helpful than it might be. Although Flora engages with the grammatical content more than Rose does, she seems unable to provide genuinely informative examples of her own. She also uncritically incorporates coursebook misconceptions or oversimplifications into her own teaching, for example “... *if you were commentating a football match, then you would use present progressive tense*” (Flora F/GRLN/1). In her handling of grammatical materials, her additional contributions do not normally contain anything that is totally incorrect. However, it appears that she may have reflected insufficiently on her mediation of the input from the perspective of its usefulness to the learner. For example, she gives an explanation (arising from an exercise in the coursebook) of how to join sentences using *because/as* to indicate reason, and *so* to show result. Flora's examples refer to past time, and she tantalisingly introduces the possible need to use Past Perfect in the clause describing the first event, but without giving any indication as to the reasons for doing so. She also inadvertently confuses matters by pointing to the first clause of her blackboard example (which describes the second event) when saying “*first event*”, and vice-versa (Flora F/GRLN/1-2). As a result, her mediation of the content of the materials is of little or no help to her students.

In a number of other cases, the limitations of a teacher's metalinguistic awareness can be seen to have a still less positive impact upon her mediation of materials. Among the videotaped lessons there are episodes where the teacher's mediation, instead of making salient the key features of the grammar area, draws the attention of learners to a feature which is of less value to them. Benjamin's

lesson on the 'Future Continuous', for instance, involves precisely such mediation, which leads him into making some incorrect generalisations.

One might argue that the major learning difficulty for students encountering the Future Progressive would be understanding its specific meaning/use in relation to other ways of talking about future time. However, Benjamin appears not to perceive this. Instead, he goes to great lengths, using a time-line, simply to point out that the time referred to is future not present : "*I'm talking at this point of time* [pointing to TODAY on time-line] ... *I'm saying Tom will be washing his car tomorrow morning. This period, OK?* [pointing to TOMORROW MORNING on time-line] ... *I'm talking about this time and it hasn't existed yet, OK? The time still doesn't happen yet, right? When we are talking the situation like this, we use future continuous tense*" (Benjamin B/GRLN/1). Benjamin then spends much of the remainder of the lesson trying to establish an association of the 'Future Continuous' with certain time adverbials, possibly because he sees this as being potentially helpful in the examination context. Unfortunately, his generalisations seem to overlook the use of such adverbials with other ways of referring to the future : "*I want to introduce you to some words of time that we always use to tell the future continuous tense, OK? later, in three weeks' time, tomorrow morning*" (Benjamin B/GRLN/2).

Another form of potentially unhelpful teacher mediation of materials occurs when the grammatical content is reinterpreted by the teacher in a way which obfuscates rather than clarifies. Clara's Form 5 lesson on modal auxiliaries provides a vivid illustration. For much of the lesson Clara goes through the rules about modals presented in the coursebook, shrouding each one in confusion rather than making the key point salient. For instance, she reinterprets the coursebook rule that modals do not add an *-s* to the 3rd person singular to mean instead that it is not necessary to add an *-s* to the following verb when the modal is in the 3rd person singular. Her illustrative example of the error to avoid is *He can speaks several languages*, and she gives no example of the actual point intended in the coursebook. Later she turns to two further rules set out in the coursebook : that interrogative and negative uses of modals do not require *do*, and that modals are

followed by the infinitive without *to*, except in the case of *ought*. Clara confusingly joins her treatment of these two rules together : “*We don’t have any negative form, and we don’t need to put the do into the sentence when we use the modal verb. So except with the exceptional case the modal verb ought* [writes on blackboard] *What can you suggest to put after ought? Infinitive to. Good*”(Clara C/GRLN/1).

Maggie’s videotaped lesson on the passive contains an example of another form of unhelpful mediation of materials : diverting attention from the key grammatical point by going off at a tangent. At one point in the middle of her lesson, in which she largely makes use of her own ideas and materials, she turns to the coursebook explanation of when passive voice is used. She elaborates briefly on some of these points : “*You put your emphasis on the action being done*”(Maggie M/GRLN/1). However, she then suddenly draws students’ attention away from these main points to two ways of making polite requests (used the previous day in a letter of application) : *It would be appreciated if.../I would be grateful if...* Maggie first of all says both are passive, then concedes of the second that “*Well, actually this one is not exactly passive*” (Maggie M/GRLN/1), before attempting to mask her confusion with another switch of topic to make the point that *It would be appreciated if...* is more polite than *Would you do something for me?*

A number of TMA-related factors could be said to contribute to the teacher behaviour described in the examples above. Insufficient knowledge and reflection about the grammar seem to play a part in each case. In addition, however, there appears to be a lack of analysis of the grammar from a learning perspective, and in particular a failure to reflect sufficiently upon the potential impact of teacher mediation upon learners’ understanding.

6.3.3 The impact of TMA on teacher mediation of learner output

Interaction with the spoken output produced by learners potentially represents the most challenging of demands upon a teacher’s metalinguistic awareness, because of its unpredictability and the spontaneity of response it

requires. In the typical teacher-centred Hong Kong classroom, where students' few public utterances are often inaudible to anyone but the teacher, learner output is generally the least available of the three potential sources of input for learning discussed in 2.3.6. It is nevertheless an important potential source, and the data contain both positive and less positive examples of the influence of TMA on teacher mediation of such learner output.

There would seem to be a number of issues to consider when examining the impact of TMA on teacher mediation of learner output : whether the mediation conveys an understanding by the teacher of the point being made; whether the mediation is correct and precise; whether the teacher's amendments of learner output are syntactically accurate and functionally appropriate; whether any 'rule' supplied by the teacher is a correct representation of the grammar; and whether the mediation provides an adequate basis for a student to make an accurate generalisation (see the discussion in Andrews 1997:159).

There are a number of subjects whose TMA appears to have a constructive impact upon their handling of student utterances, and whose mediation generally fulfils the criteria above. These teachers are able to think on their feet, and to shape their responses in a way which seems more likely to promote learning than to hinder it. Yan, Diana and Shirley all deal with learner output confidently and in a consistently clear and helpful manner. Yan's videotaped Form 3 lesson on modals provides an illustration. At one point, he asks his students in pairs to produce rules relating to the conduct of the English lesson. He then elicits some of the rules, and lists five of them on the board. Noting that all five examples are expressed negatively, using the negative form of the modal *can*, Yan invites the class to think how they would re-express the rules positively. As he elicits their ideas, his highly developed TMA is demonstrated by his skilful deflection of the inappropriate suggestion *may*. Yan illustrates its meaning and clarifies its unsuitability for expressing rules without using any metalanguage : *"Rewrite them in a positive way. Besides the word can, what can we use? What other words like the word can? ... [Ss : "Must"] ... For rules we can use must. What else? ... [Ss : "May"] ... erm may uhuh ... Is it a good one? For rules? If I say*

You may speak in English, if you don't want to, then you don't do it, right? So will it be OK? No. If you use the word may, it means that if you do it, very good ... if you don't do it, OK, fine. So for rules maybe not a good one" (Yan Y/GRLN/1).

Variations in teacher mediation of learner output can be noted in the ways in which Pearl and Shirley deal with errors in the formation of the same question : **How much does it cost?** In Shirley's technical institute class, the error arises in the context of finding out information about a laptop computer : “*It costs \$20,000. So how's the question? D'you say How much is the computer cost? ... But how much ... It is a verb, right?* [pointing to *costs* on her OHT] *so How much...? [student : does] Yes, right. The whole question again. How much...? [students : How much does the computer cost?] Yes, right. How much does the computer cost? [writing] Cost, -s or no -s? No -s, right? Because you have does here [writing], so you have no -s” (Shirley S/GRLN/1).*

Pearl's encounter with a similar error occurs in a very different context – a Form 1 secondary class. It is important to bear such contrasts in mind when attempting to assess the extent to which TMA impacts upon the mediation of learner output, since (as noted in 2.2.7 and elsewhere) one facet of TMA is the teacher's ability to tailor her own output (and therefore her mediation of other sources of input) to the learners' level. During Pearl's videotaped lesson a student produces the following sentence in completing a mechanical question-formation exercise : **How much it is cost?** Pearl responds as follows : “*Cost is a verb, OK? When cost is a verb, what should we use? Yes? [inaudible student response] ... does it cost ... does it cost. When you have the verb, you do not use is. You use does or do. Here you say How much does it cost? Do you get it?*” (Pearl P/GRLN/1).

It could be argued that there are certain similarities in their treatment of error (the emphasis on *cost* as a verb, for example), and that Pearl's abbreviated mediation might reflect a conscious attempt to take account of the learners' age and level. However, there do seem to be qualitative differences in the mediation which takes place, which cannot be accounted for simply in terms of contextual

factors. In Shirley's case, the error is dealt with clearly and comprehensively. Pearl's explanation, by contrast, is less clear : there is a generalisation ("*When you have the verb, you do not use is*") which is potentially very confusing in a lesson focusing on both Present Simple and Present Progressive verb forms, as well as the verb *to be*. Pearl's explanation is also less comprehensive : for whatever reason, her mediation overlooks the student's error of word order in a WH-question.

Wendy's videotaped lesson, like Pearl's, provides several instances of teacher mediation of learner output at Form 1 level. However, in Wendy's case, there seems to be a greater awareness of potential sources of learner confusion, and sensitivity to the age/level of the students, suggesting that Wendy's TMA is more fully attuned to the task at hand. The lesson is focused on the Present Simple, and early in the lesson Wendy has been at pains to establish correct subject-verb agreement. As she links adverbs of frequency with her practice of the Present Simple, one student completes a blackboard sentence to read *She sometimes boil water in the morning*. Wendy reacts as follows : "Sometimes? *But who is boiling? Is she boiling or sometimes boiling?* [Student : Sometimes] *No. She ... It's not just this one* [i.e. the word immediately in front of the verb, to which she points] *You have to see the person or the thing. This* [pointing to sometimes] *is about time, right? Is it a person? No. This is about time. This* [pointing to she] *is a person. You have to look for the he/she/it or the name or I/you*" (Wendy W/GRLN/1).

Among the seventeen videotaped lessons, there are a number of less positive episodes revealing different facets of the potential influence of TMA on teacher mediation of learner output. One episode vividly illustrates the challenges to TMA posed by the spontaneous learner contribution. In Flora's lesson, as she gives a reasonably clear exposition of the uses of the Present Progressive (based on the coursebook), she mentions how the form can be used to talk about plans for the future, with the sentence *I am going to Mary's party tomorrow* as her example. At that point, one student in her Form 3 class (a group untypical in the Hong Kong context, consisting in the main of orally confident students

originating from the Indian sub-continent) suggests *I will be going* as an alternative. This contribution takes Flora completely by surprise, her body language revealing her discomfiture all too obviously. She plainly recognises the correctness of the student's suggestion (as might be expected of someone whose own language proficiency is of near native-speaker level). At the same time, however, she clearly has no idea how to handle it. Eventually, after a long pause, she responds "Yes", and then potentially adds to any learner confusion by bringing in yet another similar structure, *going to + verb*, illustrated by the rather curious example *I am going to catch my train tomorrow* (Flora F/GRLN/1). The incident is highly revealing about a teacher whose TMA seems ill-equipped to deal with unexpected contributions.

Another teacher potentially creating confusion by her mediation of learner contributions is Maggie. Towards the start of her Form 3 lesson on passive voice, she gives her students a Calvin and Hobbes strip cartoon to look at, and asks them to describe it in groups using active and passive voice. Her students perform the task enthusiastically. However, having been given no reasons for the selection of one form in preference to the other, they produce some very odd sentences : "**Hobbes is watched by Calvin**" "**The wild sound is made by Hobbes**" "**Hobbes' mouth was put in by Calvin**" Maggie accepts these sentences with no apparent hesitation, and concludes the activity by saying "**So it's really simple to use active and passive voice. The question you should be asking yourself is 'What is being done?' and 'By whom?' 'By which person?'**" (Maggie M/GRLN/1). In the context of a lesson apparently intended to establish an understanding of the forms and uses of passive voice, Maggie's response to her students' contributions seems quite inappropriate, indicating a mismatch between her TMA and her creativity.

The quality of a teacher's corrective feedback on learner output is, as has already been suggested, crucially dependent on her metalinguistic awareness. There are several episodes in the data where such teacher mediation fails to fulfil one or more of the criteria above, and seems unlikely to facilitate learner understanding. Pearl's videotaped lesson provides a number of such examples. For instance, when she checks her students' completion of a blank-filling

exercise, one student provides the answer *My brother is swimming very well. Perhaps he can give you swimming lessons*. Pearl correctly indicates that there is an error. However, the manner of her mediation suggests an inability to view the problem from the learners' perspective. As a result, her correction seems likely to convey very little either to the student making the error or to the rest of the class. She simply laughs and says "*My brother is swimming very well?* [miming breast-stroke movements] *He is swimming all the time?* [laughs again]" (Pearl P/GRLN/1) before eliciting the correct answer from another student.

Meanwhile, the inadequacies of Clara's corrective feedback, in her Form 5 lesson on modals, reveal her TMA to be unequal to this particular task. After her mediation of the coursebook content (described in 6.3.2), she gives the class a blank-filling exercise to complete. One of the first items in the exercise reads *He did very little work for his exam. He _____ (pass)*, where the desired completion (according to the Teacher's Book) is *can't have passed*. When Clara goes through the exercise with her students, one suggests the completion *could have passed*. The following is Clara's response : "*So in this case actually it's better to use he can't have passed because you are just predicting something to happen, but you are not sure whether he can pass or not. You just predict it. Since he is not working hard, so he has the chance of failing in the exam, OK? If the test paper was returned to that student, you can say he could have passed or he couldn't have passed*" (Clara C/GRLN/1-2). Modality is undoubtedly one of the more difficult areas of English grammar for both teachers and learners. On the evidence of Clara's handling of the area, however, it seems reasonable to suggest that any student in her class who achieves a clear understanding of modality does so in spite of the teacher rather than because of her.

6.3.4 The impact of TMA on teacher-produced input for learning

The third major source of input for learners discussed in 2.3.6, and often the most important in the classroom context, is the output produced by the teacher herself. This section examines what the data reveal about the effects of TMA upon teacher-produced input for learning.

As has been noted in relation both to the process of lesson preparation and to teacher mediation of the other sources of input, the declarative dimension of a teacher's metalinguistic awareness clearly has a crucial underlying role. The analysis has already indicated a number of teachers with a generally sound explicit knowledge of grammar (or at least of those grammatical areas relating to the lessons observed). At the same time, there are several others whose TMA seems to be significantly affected by gaps in their explicit knowledge.

Rose is very frank about the limitations of her own knowledge, and provides a vivid example of its impact on input for learning as she describes the difficulties she experienced in a recent lesson teaching passive voice, and her inability to assist the efforts of one student to relate form to meaning "*It's easy if you ask them to rewrite the sentences, because they find it easy to follow. However ... they just don't know when we are supposed to use passive voice and when we are supposed to use active voice. And one of the students even asked me 'Miss Wong, why do we have to use passive voice in our daily life?' and I find this question difficult to answer, ha, and I 'Oh, I'll tell you next time' ... and then I asked my colleagues 'Why do we use and teach passive voice?' and no one can give me the correct answer. And then I go home and think about it. But even now I really don't know how to handle that student's questions. I finish the worksheets with them and they know how to rewrite the sentences. But I don't know how to explain to them*" (Rose R/SSIA/8).

There are a number of instances in the videotaped lessons when such limitations can be seen to have a direct effect on the output produced by the teacher. For example, Eva, who otherwise appears to have a relatively sound explicit knowledge of grammar, reveals a flaw in her own understanding of one small grammar point, which she passes directly on to her students in a clear, but misinformed explanation. The setting is a Form 2 lesson on gerunds and infinitives. Eva begins the lesson by focusing on a verb which she says can be followed by either the gerund or the infinitive : *like*. Her examples are *I like + gerund (I like swimming)* and *I like + infinitive (I like to swim this morning)*. She then discusses the 'difference in meaning' : "*In fact both sentences are*

correct, but the meaning is different. What is the difference? I like swimming I am saying what is one of my hobbies ... I like to swim this morning I am not talking about my hobby, but what I want to do this morning" (Eva E/GRLN/1).

It is clear from the data that the procedural dimension of TMA is just as important as the declarative dimension in determining the quality of the output teachers produce (with varying degrees of spontaneity) as input for learning. The videotaped grammar lessons contain numerous episodes illustrating the impact of TMA on teachers' monitoring of the language they produce with learning in mind. Several of the teachers manage to talk about grammar with clarity and apparent understanding, in a way which makes salient the key feature(s) of the target structure. However, there are just as many lessons where the clarity of the teacher's output is undermined by the influence of a less than adequate level of metalinguistic awareness.

Joanna's lesson with technical institute students on passive voice illustrates the clarity of some of the subjects' output. Joanna's aim is to draw students' attention to the use of the passive : "*You all know the form, but when do we use it? What are the reasons? That's the most important thing to think about*"(Joanna J/GRLN/1). Having initially made her point with an example from a news report, she turns her attention to a parallel example, one more directly relevant to the learners, from technical writing : "*Does it matter who carried out the experiment? What is the focus of that piece of writing? ... The focus is on the procedure, on the steps, but not the one who carried out the steps, OK? So that is why we also have to use passive voice*"(Joanna J/GRLN/1). She then makes a similar point to explain the non-use of the agent : "*Do we have to use by us or by them here? Why not? ... Think about the situations when we use passive ... When it is not important who did or does the action. So that's why you don't have to include these in the sentences ... The focus, remember, the focus is on the action. We just focus on the action, not the one who did the action*" (Joanna J/GRLN/1). All of Joanna's contributions are clear, consistent in focus, and expressed in a way that suggests her TMA is fully engaged in the monitoring of her output.

Karen is one of a number of teachers whose output, by contrast, gives the appearance of being inadequately monitored. Her observed lessons reveal no major weaknesses in her explicit knowledge of grammar, but she has a tendency to talk too much, with seemingly insufficient reflection upon the intelligibility or usefulness of what she is saying. As a consequence, her output is often a potential source of some confusion. In her videotaped Form 4 lesson on question formation, for instance, she attempts to help her students understand some of the complexities of modal meaning. In relation to the question Will you come at 8 a.m.?, she explains the use of the modal as follows : “*For this word will we have two kinds of meaning. Number 1 you can say that it’s about future tense ... maybe it’s now 4 a.m., and then Will you come at 8 a.m.? Future tense ... Or another one maybe ... Do you know that traditionally if I say I shall go/I will go, they are different? Can you remember? I shall go is about future, I shall go future tense. And then I will go maybe the underlying meaning is like this I must go/I have to go. And then for this one again it’s the same Will you come at 8 a.m.? Maybe it’s about the future and secondly you can say that Do you have to come? Or Will you really come? Because I hope that you can come. And then Yes, I will come, I must come, I will come ... something like that” (Karen K/GRLN/2).*

The selection of examples illustrating the use(s) of a particular structure is certainly affected by TMA, as a number of the videotaped lessons reveal. Hilda’s Form 5 class on modals shows the problems that can arise when a teacher’s metalinguistic awareness is either not fully engaged in monitoring the quality of her output, or is perhaps simply not up to the task. Hilda tries to link form to function via example, with less than illuminating results, because of her inappropriate exemplification.

Hilda begins by discussing the use of modals to express possibility, and in transforming the sentence *It is possible that she will arrive soon*, she employs each of the following modals “*She may/she might/she can/she will/she would arrive soon*” as though they are interchangeable in meaning. She then creates further potential for confusion as she introduces examples of modals expressing

probability, with the following three sentences presented as though the modality is identical : “*She can be right/They could be right/They would be right*”. As the exposition continues, so the problems mount up. Hilda introduces another area of modal meaning : willingness (“*That means will you do somebody a favour*”). She then inexplicably links willingness to *should/ought*, and once more provides three ill-chosen examples : “*Should we start now?*”, “*You ought to finish your work by tomorrow*”, and “*Everybody have to study hard*” before summing up with the comment “*So willingness means that whether you’re willing to do something*” (Hilda H/GRLN/1).

The use of metalinguistic terminology is another feature of teacher output crucially affected by both dimensions of TMA. The declarative dimension determines the extent to which the teacher has an accurate command of such metalanguage, while the procedural dimension dictates the teacher’s ability to use her knowledge appropriately. Pearl’s videotaped Form 1 lesson illustrates the potential for confusion arising from a teacher’s uncertain and inconsistent use of grammatical terms. Pearl endeavours to make a contrast between two verb forms she initially identifies as *Present Tense* and *Present Continuous*. Then, when she introduces verbs not normally used in the ‘Present Continuous’, she says : “*There are many verbs we do not use them in the Simple Present Continuous* (sic) ... *For example, we don’t say I’m liking food, we only say I like food ... So you can use like in the Simple Present Tense, not the Simple Continuous Tense* (sic)”(Pearl P/GRLN/1).

Even the teacher’s use of the blackboard is in part influenced by her metalinguistic awareness, to the extent that she is aware of the potential of visual output as a source of clarification or confusion. Tony’s videotaped lesson provides an example of the latter. The focus of the lesson is the use of adjectives in certain sentence patterns, the first of them being *adjective + for + noun/pronoun + infinitive*. Tony draws eight columns on the blackboard, heading them as follows : *1) it, 2) is, 3) adj, 4) for, 5) noun/pronoun, 6) to, 7) verb, 8) obj*. He then puts some sample adjectives in his third column : *difficult, important, possible, necessary, easy, convenient*. He explains the meaning of

each adjective, using *near* and *easy* in his explanation of *convenient*. As he does so, however, he writes the word *near* under *convenient* in his column of adjectives, seemingly unaware of the possible misunderstanding by the students that *near* might fit into the same pattern of usage.

The impact of TMA on teacher-produced input for learning is thrown into especially sharp focus by the subjects' performance on the explanation tasks (4.4.6.4 Task 2). The first of the two explanation role-plays is of particular interest, since it involves all seventeen subjects performing a similarly demanding task. It therefore allows for comparison.

The stimulus for each subject's explanation was a fabricated composition extract. There were three texts of parallel difficulty. Each text contained one major grammatical error posing a challenge at two levels : an obvious formal problem with an underlying conceptual issue to be considered. Analysis of subjects' performance shows varying success in meeting the challenge. More than half of the seventeen subjects were unable to identify the underlying error, while only seven succeeded in fully correcting it. Given that the none of the texts was difficult (see Appendix 7), this level of performance is not impressive. However, it is not especially surprising, in view of the limited TMA of several subjects, which has already been noted.

As for quality of the explanations, eleven out of seventeen subjects made unnecessary corrections, in one case (Lydia) actually introducing an error into the text. There were also wide variations in the clarity of subjects' explanations, with problems being most evident in the performance of teachers like Pearl, Hilda, Karen and Benjamin, some of whose TMA weaknesses have been discussed above.

The way in which subjects justified their corrections was a particularly revealing feature of the explanation task. Some, like Rose, seemed capable of offering only minimal justification : "*Most probably you'll be better to write...*" and "*...will be much better*" (Rose R/EXPA/1). Others, by contrast, showed that they could provide correct justifications for amendments in terms appropriate to the learners' level, while at the same time making reference to previous learning,

and generalisations about language. Wendy, for example, corrects the sentence *If I taller, I will be in the school basketball team* as follows : “If I taller ... *Remember I told you how to use this. If I were taller* because you can't be taller. *Well, you can be taller, but you can't be taller in a minute, OK? If I were taller* ... *This is what you wrote I will be in the school team* ... *Maybe we need to change about this. We've talked about that, using were, would and could together. This is what I want you to look at*” (Wendy W/EXPA/1-2).

Lydia's performance reveals both strengths and weaknesses in her TMA. Having introduced an error into the text through her first (and unnecessary) correction, she then identifies and fully corrects the major error, only to end up providing an incorrect justification for her amendment. Her composition extract refers to preparations for a forthcoming volleyball tournament, the final sentence reading “*I am tired because I playing four times this week*”. Lydia's correction begins promisingly, but the final sentence shows something at fault with her TMA: “*There isn't such a tense as playing, right? So the tense must be wrong. Now, if we look at the time here, it's this week. So what kind of tense should we use for this week? Must be present, right? Present tense, we have simple present tense, present continuous tense, and present perfect, OK? Now, and for the action playing, has it already happened? ... Actually the action happened. And it is for four times, OK. For action which started in the past, and then it is carried on up to now, or maybe into the future, we can use the present perfect tense*”(Lydia L/EXPA/1).

Meanwhile, Joanna's far-reaching text amendments, while masking any awareness of error gravity, suggest a relatively sophisticated understanding of register and discourse features. She sets out to “*improve*” the following extract: “*It is our Sports Day next week. I am running in the 800 metres. I am not very fit. I should to start training a few weeks ago*”. Having made changes to the first two sentences in order to make the first “*more formal*” and the second less “*colloquial*”, she then turns her attention to the last two sentences : “*Now if I am to improve it, I will put it in this way. How do you find this one? I should have started some training some time earlier because I am not that fit. So I will link*

these two sentences with a conjunction because, because these two show kind of cause and effect relationship”(Joanna J/EXPA/1). It might be argued that the sophistication of Joanna’s amendments and her use of metalanguage show a lack of awareness of the learners’ perspective, given the Form 3 level of the target audience. Whether this is due to weaknesses in that area of her TMA, the artificiality of the role-play situation, or to a lack of experience with average Form 3 students is not clear.

6.3.5 The impact of TMA on teachers’ post-lesson reflections

The role of teacher reflection in the development of pedagogical reasoning and the concept of the teacher as reflective practitioner were discussed in 2.4.7. It was suggested that reflection can be a powerful influence upon teachers’ ability to learn from experience. It was hypothesised that reflection might be equally influential upon the development of a teacher’s metalinguistic awareness.

At the same time, it might be expected that the quality of any L2 teacher’s reflections would be affected by the extent of that teacher’s metalinguistic awareness. This assumes, however, that reflection consistently forms part of the teacher’s pedagogical practice. In any systematic sense, this is probably not the case for the average teacher, for whom lesson follows lesson in quick succession. Certainly, the main study data suggest that post-lesson reflection is an activity to which most of the subjects are unaccustomed. Whether through lack of time, lack of inclination, or lack of awareness, it is not something they appear to indulge in regularly. However, to the extent that such reflection takes place at all, it would seem likely to be affected by TMA.

There are three sources of data which shed light on the relationship between TMA and teachers’ post-lesson reflections : the videotaped grammar lesson (4.4.6.2), the second semi-structured interview (4.4.6.5), and the grammar teaching project report (4.4.6.6). It is important to note, however, that the reflections in each data source were prompted, not spontaneous. As a result, the data may not be indicative of what happens on a day-to-day basis. Given the limited amount of systematic reflection that generally appears to take place, the

analysis in this section may reveal more about the nature and level of the subjects' TMA than about its impact upon regular pedagogical practice. However, the data do shed light on the extent to which the subjects' ability to reflect may be constrained by their TMA.

The data from the videotaped grammar lessons suggest that issues related to methodology, classroom management and student responsiveness are uppermost in the minds of the main study group in any self-directed reflection which takes place. As part of the package of materials to accompany the video, each subject was asked to provide notes of their immediate post-lesson reactions, with particular reference to the grammar part of the lesson : what seemed to work well, and why; what seemed to work less well, and why; what they would do differently next time, and why (for the complete instructions see Appendix 5).

In the event, only ten out of seventeen subjects provided any reflections, for reasons about which one can only speculate. Of those ten sets of reflections, eight emphasise student responsiveness in ways not related to grammar. Clara's notes, for example, focus entirely on the learning atmosphere, ending with the comment : *"In conclusion, I think I had better improve or change the students' learning attitudes towards the lessons in order to carry out the lesson more effectively and efficiently"* (Clara C/GRL/2). Only five out of ten mention grammar at all, three of them only briefly : Lydia makes reference to a point of learner confusion, while Diana and Yan both note a positive student response and performance on the grammar part of their lessons. Just two of the subjects focus on the grammar content at any length in their reflections. Eva expresses a number of post-lesson thoughts related to content, thoughts which link the specific lesson with more general concerns of grammar pedagogy, as in the following comment : *"I find 'infinitives' and 'gerunds' two of the most difficult grammar areas in teaching. I cannot work out any rules or pattern to help illustrating the concepts. Students can only learn them by using them, through mistakes or drilling"* (Eva E/GRL/3-4). Ironically, the teacher who provides the most detailed discussion of the grammar features of her lesson is Hilda. As indicated in 6.3.4 above, much of Hilda's output on the uses of modal verbs was potentially very

confusing. However, her reflection notes begin : “*Students seem to understand more about the ways how modal verbs are used to describe certainty, possibilities, obligation and so on*” (Hilda H/GRL/4). If Hilda’s perception is correct, one is tempted to suggest that, as in Clara’s case, any such understanding has been achieved in spite of rather than because of the teacher.

Each subject’s second semi-structured interview immediately followed a grammar lesson. The interview therefore afforded an opportunity for the subjects to reflect on their teaching, and for those reflections to be analysed. Although the interview (and the preceding class observation) took place some months after the videotaped lesson, the subjects’ spontaneous initial post-lesson reflections are consistent with those provided in writing after the earlier class. Most of the subjects focus principally on aspects of methodology, classroom management and student responsiveness, while twelve out of seventeen refer to nothing else. Agnes’s first thoughts on her lesson are typical : “*Er ... students are very noisy ... and I see that they don’t listen to my instructions. And once they get the worksheets, they start talking without listening to my instructions ... It seem they can do on their own, even without me*” (Agnes A/SSIB/1).

The cues in the body of the semi-structured interview were designed to prompt each subject to reflect on grammar-related aspects of the lesson. Most of the subjects demonstrate the ability to engage in such reflections, at least to some extent, while ten of the seventeen do so with a degree of insight. Joanna, for instance, reveals dissatisfaction with various features of her lesson on passive voice : “*I’m not sure whether it is useful if I just ask them to ... label the diagram and sort of underline the passage. What I want them to do is to associate the passive with the context and I don’t know whether I successfully conveyed this message*” (Joanna J/SSIB/9). Diana also reflects on the problems of relating form to meaning, in her case in the context of teaching ‘Type 3’ conditionals : “*...this grammar item ... it’s quite difficult for them to understand, and to know how to use. And for me it’s quite difficult to tell them. Because we’re talking about past event. And it’s a kind of unreal hypothesis. So*

... I think it's quite difficult to teach them in ... an easy way, and interesting way"(Diana D/SSIB/1).

Other subjects in their reflections seem to have greater difficulty in focusing on content-related issues, even when prompted to do so. Karen, for example, when comparing her current teaching of conditionals with the experience of previous years, is principally concerned with the affective dimension of her lesson : "*... Last year ... my students were passive and they would feel bored easily ... I have to admit they were bored actually at that time. But this year because ... they're more active and they're cheerful as you can see. And then I feel happier actually in the lessons*"(Karen K/SSIB/8). Even when prompted to make a comparison "*... in terms of actually learning the grammar*", Karen is drawn once more to the boredom/interest factor : "*I think the difference is that this year my students can learn, not in a better way, but in a quicker way maybe, because they feel interested in the lessons, and they feel more interested than the students in the past*" (Karen K/SSIB/9).

Meanwhile, Pearl's reflections are all at a very superficial level, as might be expected of a teacher whose TMA has already been shown to have severe limitations. She is pleased with her lesson, and expresses particular satisfaction with a controlled practice activity (referred to as a "*game*") which she feels the students enjoyed. When she is asked to explain the 'success' of the activity, Pearl's reflections focus entirely on student involvement : "*I think they enjoy the game. So at least they worked together. And when I go to them, they make mistakes. So I said 'Well, you cannot ... it's wrong'. And then they change it, and ... everyone work on it. So I think that works well*"(Pearl P/SSIB/6). When prompted in a follow-up question to explain the mistakes evidently made by many learners, Pearl shows no inclination to address either issues relating to the particular structure(s) or indeed grammar pedagogy more generally. Her simplistic explanation is that the fault lies entirely with the learners, and she limits her reflective comment to a single damning generalisation about present-day students: "*I think the students nowadays they don't think clearly ... They just*

put whatever things down ... There's something wrong in their learning process" (Pearl P/SSIB/6).

The grammar teaching project report gave the subjects the most extended opportunities for reflection, with several weeks assigned to a task with grammar-related reflection built into the specifications. Nevertheless, seven of the seventeen confine their reflections mainly or entirely to issues of methodology and classroom management. The most noteworthy aspect of the quality of the reflections in the reports is that they are entirely consistent with the levels of reflectivity displayed on other occasions. The reports produced by Joanna and Eva, for instance, contain very thoughtful reflections on content issues. There are several others, however, whose reflections are clearly affected by limitations of TMA. Rose's comments, for example, are very superficial, Clara restricts herself to vague generalities instead of dealing with specific content, while Pearl's only grammar-related reflections are simply a regurgitation of comments made previously by the researcher in his capacity as teaching practice supervisor.

What is clear from all three data sources is that in general subjects' own reflective thoughts are instinctively drawn towards issues of methodology and classroom management rather than issues of language content, even when a lesson has a specific language focus. The majority of the respondents appear to be capable of a measure of grammar-related reflection when prompted to address issues of content. However, some show a very limited capacity for such reflection, even when afforded every opportunity. One compelling reason for such limited reflectivity is underdeveloped TMA.

Under normal teaching conditions, there are inevitable constraints on opportunities for reflection. Factors such as lack of time impose obvious practical limits on the length and frequency of reflective activity. However, the extent to which any self-generated reflection on lesson content takes place is likely to be directly affected by a teacher's metalinguistic awareness, as undoubtedly will the quality of any such reflections.

6.4 Conclusion

The present chapter has looked in detail at the TMA of the seventeen main study subjects, as seen against the background of their beliefs and understandings about grammar pedagogy. The data analysed in section 6.3 have revealed a number of points about TMA and its impact upon pedagogical practice. They have also shown the wide range in levels of TMA among the seventeen main study subjects. This final section of the chapter summarises the general findings about TMA. It is important to note that the following comments refer specifically to TMA in the context of a form-focused approach to L2 instruction. Further research would be necessary to investigate the nature and impact of TMA within a meaning-focused approach.

It is evident from the data that explicit knowledge of grammar is crucial to the successful application of TMA in pedagogical practice. At all stages – in preparation, teaching, and post-lesson reflection – the quality of a teacher's thinking, actions and reactions in relation to grammar learning have been clearly shown to be dependent on a sound underlying language systems knowledge-base. It is equally evident, however, that explicit knowledge of grammar, while a necessary part of a teacher's metalinguistic awareness, is not sufficient by itself to ensure that that teacher will deal with grammar-related issues in ways which are most conducive to learning.

It is also clear from the data that communicative language ability plays a vital role in the application of TMA. It not only affects the quality of the teacher's reflections about language. It also has a significant impact upon the way in which teacher-produced input and the teacher's mediation of other input sources are conveyed to learners.

The extent to which the teacher seriously engages with grammar-related issues is another key factor affecting the application of TMA in pedagogical practice. The data seem to suggest that the degree of teacher engagement may be related in part to that teacher's self-confidence, or lack of confidence, in relation to grammar. It may also be affected by the relative importance which the teacher accords to content issues rather than questions of methodology, classroom organisation, and student responsiveness.

Assuming that the teacher does engage with specific issues of grammar pedagogy, there are a number of other factors which affect the application of TMA in the classroom. The contextual factors identified in table 15 play a significant role. Equally important are

personality factors such as sensitivity, perception, vision, reflectiveness, and alertness. Figure 24 below illustrates the key influences on the procedural dimension of TMA.

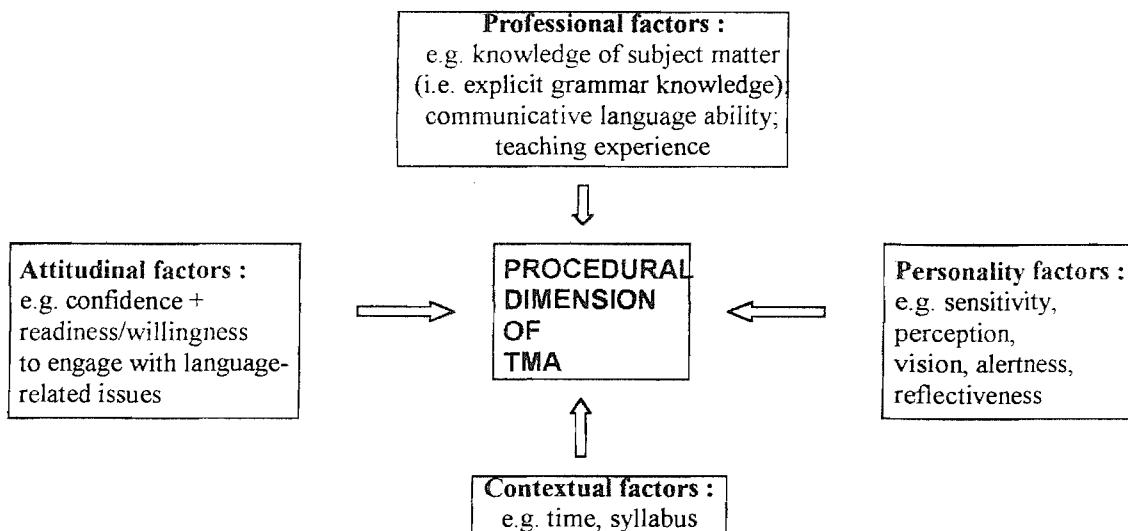


Figure 24 : Key influences on the operation of TMA

In the classroom context, there are a large number of grammar-related tasks which the teacher might perform with the intention of facilitating learning. As the data have shown, each of these tasks is potentially affected by the quality of that teacher's metalinguistic awareness. The major pre-lesson task in which TMA plays a part involves analysing the grammatical area from the learner and learning perspective, identifying the most appropriate learning objectives, and selecting materials and tasks which are most likely to serve those objectives, bearing in mind such learner factors as their age and previous learning.

Within the classroom, as the analysis in 6.3 has indicated, TMA has a profound effect upon the teacher's performance of a range of tasks. These tasks include : i) mediating what is made available to learners as input; ii) making salient the key grammatical features within that input; iii) providing exemplification and clarification, as appropriate; iv) monitoring students' output; v) monitoring one's own output; vi) helping the students to make useful generalisations based upon the input; and vii) limiting the potential sources of learner confusion in the input; while all the time viii) reflecting on the potential impact of all such mediation on the learners' understanding.

Careful preparation can, to some extent, help the teacher to meet these challenges. However, in the classroom, many of these tasks need to be performed spontaneously and

in 'real time'. This means that effective operation of the procedural dimension of TMA involves not just vision, perception, sensitivity and reflection. It also demands alertness and quick thinking, a knowledge-base which can be readily accessed, and a good level of communicative language ability. Table 16 below summarises the potential impact of TMA, positive and negative, upon pedagogical practice. As in table 15, the descriptors outline the opposite extremes, when each potential impact is in fact a matter of degree.

| Impact of TMA in the classroom | |
|---|---|
| Positive | Negative |
| Teacher acts as a bridge between the language content of the materials and the learners, making salient the key features of the grammar area. | Teacher does little or nothing to act as a bridge/make salient the key features of the grammar area (e.g. doesn't go beyond the language content as presented in the materials). |
| Teacher 'filters' the content of published materials, and notices/avoids potential pitfalls. | Teacher is unwilling/unable to 'filter' content. As a result, teacher may overlook or accept misconceptions and/or inaccuracies in materials. |
| Teacher 'filters' own classroom output (spoken and written) to ensure that it is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • structurally accurate • functionally appropriate • clearly expressed • pitched at the learners' level • an adequate basis for learner generalisations | Teacher does not appear to 'filter' own classroom output (spoken and/or written). As a result, teacher's output may be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • structurally inaccurate • functionally inappropriate • confusingly expressed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pitched at an inappropriate level for the learners • an inadequate basis for learner generalisations |
| Teacher 'filters' learner output (as appropriate in the context of form-focused activity). Mediation takes the learners' perspective into account, and is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • correct, precise and intelligible • structurally accurate • functionally appropriate • pitched at the learners' level • an adequate basis for learner generalisations | Teacher's mediation of learner output in form-focused activity is inadequate. As a result, incorrect learner output may be ignored, the learners' perspective may not be taken into account, and teacher mediation may be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incorrect, imprecise and/or unintelligible • structurally inaccurate • functionally inappropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pitched at an inappropriate level for the learners • an inadequate basis for learner generalisations |
| Teacher is able to operate 'filter' in 'real time', reacting spontaneously and constructively to issues of language content as they arise in class. | Teacher has difficulty in operating 'filter' in 'real time', and in reacting spontaneously and constructively to issues of language content as they arise in class. |
| Teacher is able to employ metalanguage to support learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • correctly • appropriately | Teacher's use of metalanguage to support learning is incorrect and/or inappropriate (e.g. excessive, or at a level beyond the learners' comprehension) |

Table 16 : The impact of TMA in the classroom

The data contain several examples of pedagogical practice where the teacher's metalinguistic awareness is engaged, and where the input made available to learners has been 'filtered' in ways which seem likely to promote rather than inhibit learning. The data sources consistently reflect positively on the TMA of, for example, Yan, Diana, Shirley, Joanna and Wendy. However, there are numerous other instances which show the more negative side, where, through lack of engagement, lack of awareness, lack of knowledge, limited communicative language ability (or a combination of these factors), the input made available for learning is inadequately 'filtered'. These negative examples range, as has been shown in 6.3, from teachers (like Flora and Rose) who appear unable to 'filter' input very constructively, to others (such as Hilda and Clara) whose interventions actually seem to make learning difficult.

The following chapter presents a critical analysis of the results of the study. It addresses a range of issues relating to the main study group, including the relationship between the declarative and procedural dimensions of their metalinguistic awareness. It then goes on to discuss some of the more general implications of the study.

Chapter 7 Reflections on the study

7.1 Introduction

The two previous chapters have provided a detailed report and commentary on the results of the study. Chapter five concentrated on the quantitative data, examining what they revealed about the TMA construct and also about the metalinguistic awareness of the base-line study group of 187 Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English. The discussion in that chapter centred upon the nature of TMA, how it relates to communicative language ability, and patterns of influence upon its nature and development. Chapter six focused specifically on the main study group of seventeen teachers, exploring the qualitative data for insights into the way in which TMA operates in pedagogical practice, as revealed by interview and also by performance (in teaching and other related tasks).

The present chapter offers critical reflections on these findings. First of all, in 7.2, the discussion centres upon the specific group of teachers whose metalinguistic awareness has formed the focus of the study, examining how well equipped they are in terms of their TMA to fulfil their pedagogical roles. Then, in the following section, 7.3, more general issues relating to TMA are considered, in particular the relationship between the declarative and procedural dimensions, and the role of 'engagement'. The next section, 7.4, reflects upon the possible consequences of a deficiency of TMA, or of a lack of confidence in metalinguistic awareness, on teaching and therefore potentially on learning. The final section, 7.5, considers the implications of the findings for teacher education.

7.2 Reflections on the metalinguistic awareness of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English

As we have seen from the discussion in chapter six, the impact of TMA on pedagogical practice is influenced by a number of factors, including aspects of the teacher's attitude and personality, in addition to contextual factors. These various influences have a powerful effect upon the willingness of the teacher to engage with language-related issues, and upon her capacity for 'reflection-on-action' and 'reflection-in-action', as well as on the feasibility of each teacher's personal engagement with and reflection on language-related issues in their teaching.

However, central to any teacher's metalinguistic awareness are two factors specific to language. The first of these language-specific factors is the teacher's subject-matter knowledge (explicit knowledge of grammar, within the restricted focus of the present study), which, it has been argued, constitutes the declarative dimension of TMA. The second of these factors is the teacher's communicative language ability. This not only informs the quality of the teacher's metalinguistic reflections. It also has a direct effect upon the structural accuracy and functional appropriacy of her mediation of all three potential sources of language input.

If we look more closely at the performance of the main study group on the tests measuring these two factors (the Language Awareness test, with its four components testing explicit grammar knowledge, and the three tests focusing on different facets of communicative language ability), it is clear that there is a very wide variation among subjects. As Table 17 below shows, scores on the M_C test range from a low of 50% to a high of 94%, while on the overall Language Awareness test (MA_TOTAL) they go from 51% to 90%.

| Subject | Communicative language ability measures | | | 'Language awareness' measures | | | | |
|-----------------|--|--------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------|
| | Individual components | | | | | | | |
| | Total | M_C % | Oral % | Writing % | MA_TOTAL % | MA_Recog % | MA_Prod % | Corr % |
| Agnes | 66 | 75 | 58 | 58 | 61 | 46 | 87 | 37 |
| Benjamin | 60 | 75 | 48 | 74 | 89 | 67 | 87 | 50 |
| Clara | 64 | 50 | 52 | 75 | 78 | 67 | 100 | 53 |
| Diana | 70 | 75 | 55 | 76 | 94 | 71 | 87 | 47 |
| Eva | 70 | 75 | 55 | 77 | 89 | 83 | 80 | 53 |
| Flora | 94 | 100 | 83 | 67 | 83 | 50 | 93 | 33 |
| Hilda | 54 | 75 | 80 | 79 | 78 | 79 | 93 | 67 |
| Joanna | 72 | 75 | 48 | 77 | 83 | 83 | 87 | 53 |
| Karen | 70 | 75 | 73 | 71 | 89 | 71 | 87 | 33 |
| Lydia | 66 | 75 | 52 | 72 | 83 | 67 | 100 | 33 |
| Maggie | 82 | 100 | 73 | 68 | 83 | 67 | 87 | 30 |
| Pearl | 56 | 50 | 57 | 51 | 72 | 42 | 73 | 10 |
| Rose | 50 | 75 | 68 | 57 | 83 | 29 | 80 | 23 |
| Shirley | 72 | 100 | 67 | 90 | 94 | 88 | 93 | 83 |
| Tony | 56 | 100 | 50 | 79 | 100 | 79 | 87 | 47 |
| Wendy | 82 | 100 | 77 | 58 | 83 | 63 | 53 | 27 |
| Yan | 78 | 100 | 80 | 80 | 94 | 75 | 93 | 53 |

Table 17 : Main study group – performance on measures of communicative language ability and explicit grammar knowledge

If these are the levels of communicative language ability and explicit grammar knowledge underlying the application of TMA in pedagogical practice as described in 6.3, then in a number of cases they are not particularly impressive, and may help to explain some of the weaknesses which were noted in that earlier discussion. On the measures of communicative language ability, as noted in 4.4.5, it is true that the main study group performed reasonably well – certainly better in general than the base-line study population. For example, the main study group's mean score on the M_C test was markedly higher (68.35% compared with 53.5%), while all but two of the main study group achieved ratings of Good or Very Good for the Oral. However, on the Writing tasks, many of that same group did not perform at all well, with nine out of seventeen subjects scoring below 60, identified in 5.3 as the minimum level of satisfactory performance.

On the measures of explicit grammar knowledge, the performance of the main study group was again better than that of the base-line study population (with an overall mean score of 71.1% compared with 65%). On the two cognitively less demanding tasks (error recognition/correction, and recognising metalanguage), the main study group performed relatively well, with mean scores of 86.3% for CORR and 84.5% for MA_RECOG. However, this was not matched by their performance on the productive tests, in particular the MA_RULES task, for which their mean score was only 43.1%. As Table 17 reveals, a number of the subjects gained very low marks indeed in this section of the test, and only six out of seventeen scored above 50%. Given that the task did not involve any complex or obscure rules of grammar, and that explanation typically forms part of classroom practice in Hong Kong secondary schools, such a level of performance among serving teachers has to be a cause for concern.

It is even more worrying that the scores achieved by the base-line study population are that much lower, since the size of that population (n=187) and the randomness of the sampling make it reasonable to hypothesise that their levels of communicative language ability and explicit grammar knowledge (as recorded in the data) are more representative of the general population of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English without professional training than those achieved by the main study group. As noted in 5.3, over half the base-line study population attained only 50% or less on the M_C test, and 48% failed to achieve a satisfactory score

(60%) on the Writing test, while on the MA_RULES task the mean was a mere 38.95%, and only 22.5% of the subjects (or 42 out of 187) scored above 50%.

It was argued in 2.2.8 that the demands on a teacher's metalinguistic awareness and communicative language ability would be considerable, especially in the context of a focus-on-forms approach to teaching. The average Hong Kong secondary school is a prime example of such a context, and chapter six has illustrated clearly the types of language-related demand to which teachers are required to respond. On the evidence of the present study, there seems little doubt that a significant proportion of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English without professional training lack the levels of communicative language ability and explicit grammar knowledge which would enable them to play a wholly constructive role in making language available to the learner as input. According to the discussion in 6.3, there are a number of subjects in the main study group, often with above average levels of communicative language ability or explicit grammar knowledge, who are unable to cope satisfactorily with the challenges to their TMA encountered in the course of their pedagogical practice. Among the base-line study population (and arguably among the general population of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English without professional training), where the levels of communicative language ability and explicit grammar knowledge are generally that much lower, it seems plausible to expect that the inadequacies of TMA in pedagogical practice would be even more widespread.

At the same time, however, it is clear that the relationship between levels of communicative language ability, explicit knowledge of grammar (the declarative dimension of TMA), and TMA in pedagogical practice (the procedural dimension) is not a simple or direct one. Language-related factors are undoubtedly of great importance in determining the quality of teacher-produced input and the effectiveness of the teacher's mediation of other potential input sources. However, there are (as was noted, for instance, in 6.4) other factors – of personality, attitude and context – which also have a powerful influence upon the application of TMA in the classroom.

In order to explore the impact of these various influences a little further, the relationship between the declarative and procedural dimensions of TMA and the various other factors affecting the application of TMA in pedagogical practice will be examined in relation to the main study group. It should be noted, however, that within each individual teacher, these factors will interact in a variety of ways, with differing

consequences. Just as the precise combination of factors may vary from individual to individual, so one should not expect the interaction of the factors to be stable and constant for each teacher on every occasion. Attitudinal and contextual factors may well differ from day to day, and even from class to class. Even the impact of professional factors such as explicit knowledge of grammar may vary to a certain extent, depending on the particular grammar structure.

If we consider the relationship between the declarative dimension of TMA (as measured by performance on the Language Awareness test) and the procedural dimension (as revealed in pedagogical practice), then the first thing to remark is that, on the evidence provided by the small sample in the main study group, there appears to be no direct and consistent relationship between performance on the single assessment measure and performance in the classroom. The top four performers on the Language Awareness test include Shirley and Yan, whose TMA showed up very well in pedagogical practice. However, the other two subjects in that list are Hilda and Tony, both of whom, in different ways, have been shown to have major problems with language-related issues in their teaching. This is consonant with the conclusion in 6.4 that a satisfactory level of explicit knowledge of grammar, while forming a necessary part of TMA, is not in itself a guarantee that the teacher will handle grammar-related issues in a manner likely to facilitate learning.

If the classroom performance of all subjects scoring over 70% on MA_TOTAL is considered, then the relationship is no clearer. Eleven out of the seventeen main study subjects achieved such a score, and although Diana and Joanna (in addition to Shirley and Yan) are among that group, both of them with TMA which appears to cope well with the demands of grammar teaching, the eleven also include such subjects as Benjamin and Clara, neither of whose mediation of input for learning is wholly satisfactory, on the evidence presented in 6.3.

Performance on the M_C test (as an indication of underlying language competence) appears to be no more reliable a predictor of TMA in pedagogical practice, if considered in isolation. The top six performers include Shirley, Yan, Wendy and Joanna, all of whose TMA responds well to the challenges of the classroom. The other two 'top six' performers, however, are Flora and Maggie, who both (as noted in 6.3), experience some difficulties when confronted with grammar-related issues.

On the basis of the evidence provided by the main study group, it would appear that a more consistent relationship between test performance and the procedural dimension of TMA can be found when the MA_TOTAL and M_C test scores are looked at together. Those subjects in the top band of performance, scoring 70% or more on both measures, were Shirley, Yan, Diana, Joanna, Eva and Karen. Of those six, only Karen reveals major classroom TMA deficiencies, while Shirley, Yan, Diana and Joanna in particular all performed consistently well. In Karen's case (as discussed in 6.3.4), the weaknesses in her performance appear to be caused not so much by gaps in her explicit grammar knowledge as by a tendency to talk too much, with inadequate monitoring of her own output. It is also important to note that the language-related aspects of Karen's classroom performance are further undermined both by a lack of confidence in her own knowledge of grammar (the legacy of her experiences as a learner)¹, and by her overriding concern with the affective dimension of her teaching, as discussed in 6.3.5.

The low scores on the two measures also seem, on this small sample, to relate reasonably consistently with classroom performance. The only two main study subjects in the bottom band, with scores below 60% on MA_TOTAL and M_C, are Rose and Pearl, both of whose TMA in practice has been shown to be inadequate in a variety of ways.

For those subjects with a less balanced pattern of scores on the two tests, it is more difficult to predict the relationship between their TMA and classroom practice. In such cases, it seems reasonable to suggest that other factors may have a particularly significant impact upon pedagogical practice, with the procedural dimension of TMA being the result of interaction between partial knowledge/competence and factors of personality, attitude and context.

If these hypothesised prediction factors (performance on both MA_TOTAL and M_C) are now applied to the base-line study population, then the figures indicating the proportion of teachers falling into the top and bottom bands merely add to the concerns expressed earlier about general levels of communicative language

¹ In the first semi-structured interview, Karen reflects "...to be honest ... I could not tell the difference between maybe ... present perfect tense and past perfect tense, even in form 5 ... And that's why sometimes ... I don't think I have enough confidence" (Karen K/SSIA/6-7).

ability and explicit grammar knowledge. Whereas 35.3% of the main study group achieved scores of 70% or above on the two measures, only 10.7% of the base-line study population did so, with that figure being reduced to a mere 8.2% when the main study group subjects are removed. By contrast, while only two of the main study group (or 11.8%) scored 60% or below on the two measures, fifty subjects representing 26.7% of the base-line study population did so, with the percentage rising to 28.2% with the removal of the main study group. These figures lead to worrying conclusions : while roughly 10% of Hong Kong secondary school English teachers without professional training may generally be well equipped and able to cope with grammar-related issues in their teaching, more than 25% are likely to be experiencing significant difficulties, with inevitable consequences for the quality of their students' learning opportunities.

The majority of teachers in both the main study group and the base-line study population fall somewhere between these two levels. In a minority of cases, both scores are within the relatively narrow 61%-69% range. More frequently, however, the test performance of these teachers is inconsistent, with a relatively low score on one measure set against a relatively high score on the other. With such teachers one might suggest that their classroom performance on language-related issues is also likely to be inconsistent, with their TMA being perhaps more susceptible to the influences of contextual, attitudinal and personality factors. This can be seen from a more detailed examination of four of the main study subjects with divergent scores : Maggie, Wendy, Hilda and Clara.

Maggie (M_C 82%, MA_TOTAL 68%) is a one-off, an iconoclast who holds strong, often anti-establishment views, and has no hesitation in voicing them. She is a fluent, confident communicator, who is full of energy and ideas. Maggie is very firmly committed to communicative principles, and feels constrained by the pressures imposed by the syllabus, the English Panel chairperson, and the public examinations, which, in her view, push her to give greater priority to grammar-related issues than she would otherwise choose to do. At the same time, however, she suffers from a marked lack of confidence in her own explicit knowledge of grammar, a feeling which is probably justified if her extremely low score on MA_RULES is anything to go by (30% - see Table 17). In Maggie's case, this combination of factors – professional, contextual, attitudinal, and personality – does not have a positive influence on the procedural dimension of her TMA. Maggie, perhaps because her own

learning of English was very much immersion-based, seems to find it difficult to view content from the learner's perspective, and, as illustrated in 6.3, this gives rise to numerous problems in practice.

Wendy (M_C 82%, MA_TOTAL 58%), though very different from Maggie in personality, has certain similarities. Like Maggie, she studied for some years in North America, and, again like Maggie, she majored in a subject not related to English Language teaching. Wendy's communicative language ability is a reflection of her years of immersion : she is a very fluent, confident communicator both orally and in writing. Her explicit knowledge of grammar, by contrast, is comparatively weak according to the Language Awareness test, with her MA_TOTAL score (58%) putting her in the bottom four of the main study group (see Table 10). However, she expresses no lack of confidence in her own explicit knowledge. She also does not appear to consider herself unduly constrained by the context in which she works : indeed, her school environment appears to be one in which a communicative, task-based approach is encouraged, at least to some extent (see 6..2.4). Most crucially perhaps, Wendy has a personality which is conducive to the positive application of TMA in pedagogical practice. She is sensitive, perceptive and thoughtful – traits which might be in part associated with her background as a student of Fine Arts – and she reveals herself to be a teacher who appears able to view language content issues from a learner/learning perspective. As a result, on the evidence presented in 6.3, she seems to have few major TMA-related problems in her teaching, in spite of a less than solid language systems knowledge-base. One could speculate, however, that more complex areas of grammar with higher level classes might expose the limitations of Wendy's TMA at its current stage of development, posing challenges with which she would have difficulty in coping.

Hilda (M_C 54%, MA_TOTAL 79%) illustrates a different combination of influences again. Educated in the United States at school and university, with a degree in a subject related to English (Communication), Hilda is a very confident communicator, who reveals no self-doubt whatsoever. Her test performance, however, suggests that her self-confidence is perhaps not entirely justified. Although her score on the Language Awareness test was the second highest in the main study group, her M_C score was the second lowest (see Table 17). These contradictory scores indicate that Hilda's grammar knowledge-base is not quite so firmly founded as her MA_TOTAL score alone might suggest. Contextual factors do not seem to have a

particularly strong impact upon the TMA-related aspects of Hilda's classroom performance : although she comments on the extent to which exams affect her teaching (not surprisingly since she is responsible for two senior form classes), she does not convey the impression that she is forced into a mode of addressing language-related issues in her teaching with which she is uncomfortable. Perhaps the most significant negative influence on Hilda's TMA is personality. There are a number of instances in the data where Hilda's powers of perception might be called into question. For example, it is slightly surprising that she believes her own students to be interested in listening to grammar explanations when almost every other teacher reports the opposite (6.2.1). Still more puzzling is her reflective comment on her videotaped lesson (6.3.5) expressing the belief that her students had understood the different uses of modal verbs - this following a lesson which, to the viewer, had been confusing to say the least. It seems reasonable to suggest that lack of perception affects Hilda's ability to approach language-related issues from the learner/learning perspective, while the limitations of her own language competence undermine the effectiveness of her mediation of input for learning.

Meanwhile, Clara's TMA is associated with yet another blend of potentially influential factors. Although Clara (M_C 64%, MA_TOTAL 75%) went to university in Canada, gaining a degree one third of which was relevant to English Language teaching, her communicative skills are not good. She is one of only two in the main study group whose Oral proficiency was rated as low as Fair, while her performance on the Writing tasks was little better, a score of 52% falling well below the minimum satisfactory level of 60%. By contrast, her M_C score is a rather more respectable 64%, and a mark of 75% in the Language Awareness test places her in the top half of the main study group, both scores suggesting a reasonably solid underlying knowledge-base. There are no obvious contextual or personality factors influencing the TMA-related aspects of Clara's classroom performance : indeed, her two changes of school during the period of data collection have barely given her a chance to be strongly affected by the teaching context. One could argue, however, that those same changes have had attitudinal consequences, encouraging Clara's concern with the learning atmosphere in her classes (see 6.3.5) at the expense of content-related issues. The most significant influences on Clara's TMA in fact seem to be her explicit knowledge of grammar and her communicative language ability, with the relative strengths of the former frequently being counteracted by the weaknesses of the latter.

The videotaped lesson causes Clara particular difficulty, because although her explicit knowledge of grammar may be basically sound, the complexities of modality clearly pose a challenge with which she finds it hard to cope. In this instance, the limitations of her communicative language ability only serve to compound her problems, by reducing the intelligibility of her explanations.

Much of the above discussion is, of course, conjecture, arising from the data analysis described in chapters five and six. Follow-up research focusing in more detail, not just on the relationship between test performance and pedagogical practice, but also on the influence of personality factors and of attitudinal factors such as confidence, would be invaluable as a way of testing these hypotheses and shedding more light on the TMA construct.

The conclusions to be drawn about the TMA of Hong Kong secondary school English teachers without professional training are not positive, however. There seems little doubt that while there are some teachers who are well equipped to deal with content-related issues, there are many more who are less adequately equipped, and a significant proportion who are very poorly equipped indeed. Inevitably, there are serious potential consequences for teaching and learning, a topic which is explored further in 7.4.

Although the present study does not focus upon Hong Kong secondary school English teachers as a whole, there seems to be no compelling reason for greater optimism about the TMA of those teachers who have undergone professional training. It is possible that, if teacher education has achieved its aims, the trained practitioner may be more reflective, more sensitive to what takes place in the classroom, more conscious of the need to consider content issues in any lesson preparation which takes place, and more aware of learners and learning. However, the language systems knowledge-bases of trained and untrained teachers are likely to be very similar : the Major Methods component of professional training programmes in Hong Kong is almost entirely concerned with issues of methodology rather than subject-matter. Therefore, the body of trained teachers might be expected to show just as wide a variation in levels of explicit knowledge of grammar as that revealed among the untrained teachers who comprise the base-line study population. Research comparing the TMA of trained and untrained teachers would be valuable as follow-up to the present study.

7.3 Reflections on the nature of TMA

The previous section of the chapter concentrated on the subjects of the study – Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English without professional training – and what the data reveal about the metalinguistic awareness of that specific group of teachers. As has been made clear throughout the thesis, however, the aims of this research are general as well as particular : the study is intended to shed light upon TMA as a construct as well as on the metalinguistic awareness of those teachers forming the focus of the study. This section of the chapter therefore offers reflections on what the study suggests about the nature of TMA.

A number of findings relating to the nature of TMA have emerged from the data, all generally consistent with the model proposed in 2.2.5 and 2.2.6. The factor analysis in chapter 5, for example, seems to imply that communicative language ability and the declarative dimension of TMA (narrowly operationalised as explicit knowledge of grammar within the present study) are indeed two separate factors of linguistic ability (cf. Alderson et al 1996, 1997). At the same time, there appears to be some interrelationship between the two factors, suggesting that they are to a certain extent linked, as implied in 2.2.6.

One of the chief characteristics of the model of TMA outlined in chapter two is the importance of both the declarative and procedural dimensions. It was argued in 2.2.6 that TMA is a dynamic construct, in which both dimensions play a crucial role. Therefore, while the language systems knowledge-base is at the core of the declarative dimension of each teacher's metalinguistic awareness, and informs pedagogical practice, the quality of the teacher's knowledge-base (as measured, for instance, by a test) is no guarantee that language-related issues will be handled sensitively and effectively in the classroom. TMA needs to be seen in practice, and there are a variety of factors besides explicit knowledge which affect the impact of TMA in practice, including communicative language ability, as well as contextual, personality and attitudinal factors.

The detailed examination of TMA in pedagogical practice reported in 6.3 seems to confirm the validity of that earlier argument, and underlines the importance of considering both dimensions when evaluating any teacher's metalinguistic awareness. It also confirms that a good result on a test of Language Awareness should not be taken as a wholly reliable predictor of the way language-related issues are dealt with in class. Hilda and Tony illustrate these points clearly. Although these two

teachers obtained the joint third highest MA_TOTAL scores in the main study group (79%), they both experience difficulties in practice (as shown in 6.3.1 and 6.3.4) when attempting to go to the next level of cognitive demand beyond those examined in the Language Awareness test : the challenge of producing structurally accurate and functionally appropriate examples of their own to illustrate particular form-function relationships. It could be argued on the basis of such findings that the Language Awareness test would be improved as a measure of the declarative dimension of TMA (and a predictor of the application of TMA in practice) by the addition of a task involving a similar level of cognitive and metalinguistic challenge.

When dealing with grammar in pedagogical practice, the L2 teacher performs tasks which impose a wide range of cognitive demands. Very often, the demands become that much greater, because the teacher needs to be able to react spontaneously to language-related issues as they arise in class. This combination of factors makes the procedural dimension of TMA crucially important in determining the quality of the input made available to students for learning.

The data have also shed some light on the relationship between a teacher's language, educational and professional background, and the development of the declarative dimension of her metalinguistic awareness. It was suggested in 2.4.1 that each teacher is an individual, an amalgam of different characteristics and the product of a range of experiences. In chapter five, similar conclusions are drawn from the analysis of the quantitative data. It appears that there are no consistent relationships between individual background factors and especially strong or weak performance on the tests of communicative language ability and language awareness. At the same time, however, it is clear from the data that the factor most closely associated with performance on the tests is subject of first degree, with English specialists consistently scoring more highly than holders of non-related degrees. Place of first degree is also associated with a particular pattern of performance, holders of Hong Kong degrees consistently outscoring those with degrees from overseas.

A similar pattern seems to emerge from analysis of the qualitative data, and an examination of the relationship between individual background factors and TMA in practice. As reported in 6.4, the data sources consistently reflect positively on the TMA of five teachers : Yan, Diana, Shirley, Joanna and Wendy. All except Wendy are English specialists with first degrees from Hong Kong. By contrast, the majority of those encountering problems with TMA in practice are holders of degrees in a non-

related subject and/or from an overseas institution. As was pointed out in 5.5, however, these relationships are only tendencies within the data. The data do not justify assumptions of any direct relationship, and there is every indication that each teacher's metalinguistic awareness is the product of a unique and complex blend of personal experiences.

Somewhat surprisingly, there were no statistically significant differences in test performance associated with years of teaching experience. The hypothesis that quantity of teaching experience is in some way associated with differences in TMA (both the declarative and procedural dimensions) is still worthy of further investigation, however - ideally with a population exhibiting a wider range of years of experience than the base-line population in the present study. It would also be interesting to examine the impact of the qualitative aspects of experience, as discussed in 5.4. Indeed, the whole area of influences upon the development of TMA would benefit from more research, not only within the Hong Kong context, but with a range of teachers (of L1, L2, L3) in a variety of settings.

The complexity of the relationship between the declarative and procedural dimensions of TMA has already been explored in the previous section in relation to the main study subjects. As the discussion has shown, the language systems knowledge-base is a vital foundation for the metalinguistically aware teacher. There is, however, an essential difference between the two dimensions, between what one might label as **knowledge** (the declarative dimension) and **awareness** (the procedural dimension). As we have seen, there are teachers who have knowledge, whose declarative dimension of TMA is very sound, but who lack awareness. Such teachers possess the relevant knowledge-base, but they lack the ability, for example, to view language acquisition issues from the learner/learning perspective, and/or to monitor aspects of their own output. Equally, there may be teachers who have awareness, but lack knowledge. Teachers with such a profile may be capable of reflection, and of perceiving the needs and problems of students, and may be conscious of the importance of viewing what is to be taught from the learning perspective. They may nevertheless find their attempts to engage with content-related issues undermined by a lack of knowledge.

Although overall teaching competence is not a factor which has been actively considered in the present study – indeed, the commentary has deliberately remained non-evaluative on matters of general pedagogy – there is clearly a significant, but also

complex, relationship between overall competence as an L2 teacher and TMA. One might argue, for example, that it is perfectly possible to be a metalinguistically aware teacher without necessarily being an exceptionally good teacher. Indeed, a number of subjects in the main study group seem to fall into such a category. Lack of excellence as a classroom practitioner could reveal itself in a host of ways, none of them related to language content. At the same time, however, it is plausible to suggest that one cannot be a good L2 teacher unless one is also metalinguistically aware, i.e. TMA is necessary but not sufficient to ensure overall teaching competence.

It could, of course, be argued that the personality factors identified in 6.4 as affecting the procedural dimension of TMA are the very qualities likely to be associated with good teaching : sensitivity, perception, vision, reflectiveness, and alertness. Clearly, the links between declarative and procedural TMA, and between TMA and teaching competence would benefit greatly from closer study. One potentially fruitful way of researching these connections would be to investigate the TMA of 'the good language teacher'². Such research might focus, for example, on the extent of the good language teacher's language systems knowledge-base, the way in which it is drawn upon in pedagogical practice, and how TMA interacts with more general aspects of the teaching competence of such a practitioner.

On reflection, one of the main points to emerge from the analysis of the qualitative data, as described in chapter six, is the importance to the procedural dimension of TMA of teacher engagement with issues of language content. The focus on negative instances of TMA in the discussion in the previous chapter may have conveyed the misleading impression that competent, metalinguistically aware handling of language matters in pedagogical practice requires little of the teacher beyond the avoidance of error. Protecting one's students from an excess of inaccurate input and ill-informed metalinguistic comment may indeed make a potentially

² Such teachers might be identified by, for example, the achievement of a Distinction in the Practical Component of one of the RSA/Cambridge Diplomas for teachers : the Diploma in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language to Adults (DTEFLA), the Diploma for Overseas Teachers of English (DOLE), or the new Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA). In the Hong Kong context, the attainment of a Distinction on the PCEd could serve as a similar means of identification.

positive contribution to learning. However, the desire to avoid error can also have its negative side, in which the teacher's primary aim seems to be to guard against the exposure of her own ignorance rather than to facilitate her students' learning. For the procedural dimension of TMA to operate to the maximum potential benefit of learners, it is essential for the teacher to go beyond mere error avoidance and to engage willingly and wholeheartedly with issues of language content.

It was argued in chapter six that engagement is a key factor affecting the application of TMA in pedagogical practice. Engagement is itself influenced by other factors, including the teacher's (lack of) confidence, and the extent to which, when thinking about her teaching, she is prepared to give priority to issues of language content as against questions of methodology, classroom organisation, and student responsiveness. The potential consequences of both lack of engagement with content and of deficiencies in TMA are all too apparent from the data – particularly in the classroom itself, but also in relation to both preparation and post-lesson reflection, when they occur. Any limitations in a teacher's metalinguistic awareness are that much more likely to have a negative impact in the classroom if the teacher is insufficiently engaged with the mediation of the input made available to learners.

Figure 25 below is a visual representation of the relationship between engagement and awareness. Since engagement and awareness are both matters of degree, the individual teacher might be placed at any point on the diagram.

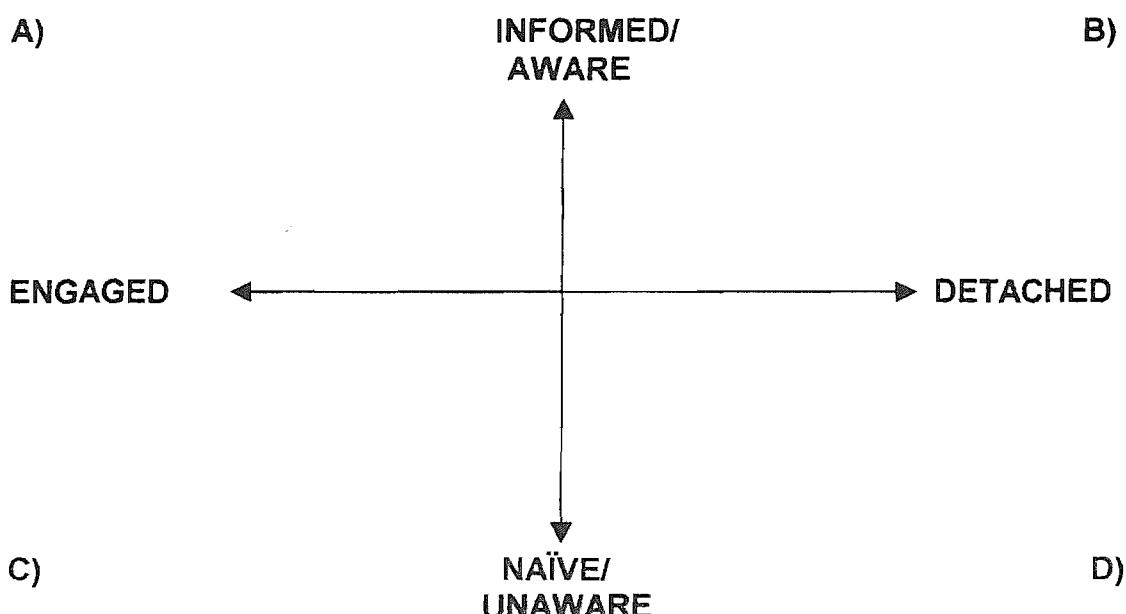


Figure 25 : Styles of teacher engagement

The following definitions are intended as engagement/awareness profiles for the four most extreme positions shown in Figure 25. Teacher A engages with content fully, in a principled manner. She possesses a sound language systems knowledge-base, is well aware of issues of language content, confident about her ability to handle them, and fully prepared to engage with them from a learner/learning perspective. Teacher B, by contrast, adopts a position of principled, informed detachment from content issues. Like Teacher A, she too possesses a very solid language systems knowledge-base, but she espouses a set of teacher beliefs which emphasise fluency/acquisition to the virtual exclusion of any explicit focus on grammar. Teacher C attempts to engage with issues of language content, but does so in a naïve, ill-informed way. She appreciates the need to try to engage with such issues, but lacks the knowledge-base, the awareness and/or the confidence to do so effectively. Teacher D does not attempt to engage with issues of language content, and lacks the language systems knowledge-base which might enable her to do so effectively. She may be unaware of the desirability of engaging with the language-related aspects of her teaching, or she may simply be unsure how best to engage with content.

Figure 25 represents an attempt to make sense of impressions formed after analysis of a range of qualitative data sources. This is, however, an area which would benefit greatly from further research, perhaps by means of detailed case-studies of a small sample of teachers. The nature of teacher engagement with language-related issues, influences upon the engagement/detachment of individual teachers, and the impact of engagement on both the development and application of TMA are all worthy of investigation. At the same time, it would be useful to examine the causes of teacher (lack of) confidence in relation to grammar, and the impact of such feelings upon pedagogical practice, including teachers' employment of avoidance strategies. These are all areas where the present study has shed less light than intended.

7.4 Reflections on the impact of TMA deficiency upon teaching and learning

The previous section offered reflections on what the study reveals about TMA as a construct, including the relationship between the declarative and procedural dimensions of TMA, and the significance to the application of TMA in practice of the teacher's readiness to engage with language-related issues in her teaching. Figure 25 attempted to reflect the potential for both positive and negative pedagogical outcomes

from the interaction between engagement and awareness. The present section turns its attention specifically to the negative, and to those teachers whose profiles would place them in the bottom half of Figure 25 : those lacking a sound language systems knowledge-base and/or the awareness to make effective use of such knowledge as they possess. The aim is to examine the impact of a TMA deficiency upon teaching, and to speculate about any consequent effects upon learning.

The impact of TMA deficiencies on teaching can be seen all too clearly within the specific context focused upon in chapter six, which records a depressingly large number of negative instances from a range of lessons in Hong Kong secondary classrooms. The negative impact may take a variety of forms, and affect all stages of pedagogical practice from preparation to post-lesson reflection, but on the evidence of the present study the possible consequences for the learner typically include exposure to potential input :

- which is structurally inaccurate/functionally inappropriate;
- which fails to make the key learning point salient;
- which contains misleading and/or unintelligible teacher meta-talk;
- which is pitched at an inappropriate level of difficulty; and
- which encourages incorrect generalisations by learners.

In other contexts and with different teachers, deficiencies in metalinguistic awareness may or may not have a similar impact on teaching and learning. This would depend, among other things, upon individual, institutional and systemic views of language pedagogy. Variations in such views will inevitably result in alternative conceptions of how grammar might best be handled in teaching, with potential consequences for the way in which TMA interacts with pedagogical practice. It is still possible to hypothesise that there might in fact be similar forms of negative impact across a range of settings and among teachers with a variety of backgrounds. However, this could only be tested by further research.

The extent to which teachers are aware of their own deficiencies, and the impact of this (lack of) awareness on their teaching is another area which would benefit from more research. There are, for example, teachers who lack self-awareness, and who have no real sense of the extent of their weaknesses in handling the grammar-related aspects of their teaching. There are also teachers who are so concerned with affective issues, and with trying to arouse or retain a measure of

student interest, that they pay little or no attention to the language dimension of their lessons. There are others, however, who are well aware of their deficiencies and who lack confidence in dealing with grammar as a result. This lack of confidence may lead in turn to the employment by the teacher, consciously or unconsciously, of avoidance strategies, such as abdicating responsibility to the textbook for all decisions on issues of language content. The consequences for students of such avoidance strategies are rather hard to predict, since they depend at least in part upon the quality of the textbook. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that the more the teacher adopts avoidance strategies and opts out of engaging with grammar-related issues, the less support the students receive for their learning via teacher mediation of the various potential sources of language input. As suggested in 7.3, the role of teacher confidence about grammar-related issues, the strategies adopted by teachers as a result of (lack of) confidence, and indeed the impact of such strategies upon learners and learning would repay closer study.

The impact of a teacher's metalinguistic awareness upon her students' learning is certainly an area which requires further research, especially since it was deliberately excluded from the present study. The hypothesis that TMA has no impact upon the nature and/or quality of student learning is one that needs to be tested. One might speculate that TMA has the potential to influence learning both positively and negatively, but for the moment any thoughts must be pure speculation.

Given the diversity of factors which affect learning in general, and L2 learning in particular, the part played specifically by TMA is necessarily difficult to evaluate. It becomes that much harder to isolate the influence of TMA as a variable if one wishes to make a comparison across a range of teachers and settings, because different approaches to grammar teaching may affect the interaction between TMA and pedagogical practice, with some approaches severely limiting the extent to which the teacher plays anything beyond a minimal role in shaping the input to which learners are exposed. However, in any L2 learning situation where the main source of potential learning is the classroom, the teacher's metalinguistic awareness inevitably affects the quality of the language potentially available to learners as input, in ways described in 2.3.5 and 2.3.6.

The relationship between teaching and learning is, of course, very complex. The provision of high quality input is no guarantee of accurate and durable learning of the target language item(s), or of the ability to transform such learning into effective

performance in communication. The reverse is also true : the student may end up achieving accurate and durable learning combined with an ability to employ the newly learned items effectively in communication, in spite of exposure to input with the types of deficiency mentioned above. However, common sense suggests that learning is likely to be facilitated by exposure to input which is structurally accurate, functionally appropriate, pitched at a suitable level, and otherwise possessing the desirable qualities listed at the start of section 6.3.3. TMA has an obvious influence upon the quality of such exposure, as has been amply demonstrated in 6.3. It is equally logical to conclude that exposure to input with the deficiencies mentioned above is likely to inhibit rather than promote opportunities for accurate learning. It may also encourage the possibility of learned inaccuracy.

We must await the results of future research for insights into the precise nature of the relationship between TMA and learning. In the meantime, however, it seems reasonable to assert that a grave disservice is being done to students, of whom there are many in Hong Kong, whose opportunities for L2 learning are blighted by years of exposure to teachers with a level of metalinguistic awareness which is not equal to the demands of pedagogical practice.

7.5 Reflections on the implications for teacher education

It has been argued above that deficiencies in TMA can have potentially very serious consequences for students' opportunities for learning. It has also been shown in 6.3 that these deficiencies may lie not only in the declarative dimension (relating to gaps in the language systems knowledge-base) but also in the procedural dimension, affecting the way in which TMA is applied in pedagogical practice.

On the basis of such evidence, there seems to be a strong case for focusing considerable attention on the development of TMA within teacher education programmes. In doing so, equal priority should be given to the two dimensions, by aiming both to enhance teachers' explicit knowledge of grammar, and to fostering the development of those characteristics which crucially affect the procedural dimension. This is not to deny the importance of the declarative dimension of TMA. On the contrary, it is evident that L2 teachers are simply not equipped to deal competently with content issues without a solid language systems knowledge-base. At the same time, however, as has been argued on various occasions, the possession of this knowledge-base is not in itself sufficient to ensure that learners are exposed to input

in ways most likely to facilitate learning. The latter is dependent on a variety of factors, including pedagogical content knowledge, but most certainly also including the procedural dimension of TMA.

In attempting to foster an active awareness of content issues, however, it would seem sensible not to isolate TMA from broader aspects of teacher thinking and teacher reflectivity. Instead, the development of TMA could be promoted as part of an endeavour to encourage reflection across the broad spectrum of pedagogical concerns. The TMA component of such a programme would have as its objective increasing teachers' understanding of the need to engage with content issues, and enhancing their own awareness of the potential impact of TMA upon student learning, as well as encouraging teachers to strengthen their language systems knowledge-base. By incorporating attention to TMA in an L2 teacher education programme aimed more broadly at fostering reflective teaching, the objective would be to develop content-related reflection as part of a generally enhanced reflectivity, and to foster the development of qualities such as sensitivity, perception, alertness and vision, noted earlier as being essential both to TMA and to general teaching competence. Ideally, the reflective practitioner would then, as her career develops, focus as much attention, in both teaching and reflection, on content-related issues (and the improvement of her knowledge and self-awareness in that regard) as on methodology (and increasing her repertoire of teaching skills and activities).

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.1 The contribution of the study

As was noted in chapter one, there has been increasing interest in the language awareness of L2 teachers in recent years. In Hong Kong, for instance, which provides the specific geographical context for the present study, the topic has played a prominent role in the current debate about the quality of L2 teachers. Indeed, concerns about teacher language awareness were a major theme in Education Commission Report No.6 (ECR6, December 1995), which proposed a comprehensive strategy for enhancing the language proficiency of Hong Kong students in both English and Chinese. Those same concerns also acted as a catalyst for the on-going moves to introduce 'benchmark' qualifications for language teachers (see 1.2.3 and 2.2.1 for further discussion of both ECR6 and 'benchmarking').

However, teacher language awareness is far from being a topic of purely local interest and significance. On the contrary, it is of just as much relevance and importance in any setting in which languages are formally taught, whether the teacher is a native-speaker or a non-native-speaker of the language in question. Therefore, although the study has focused upon non-native-speaker teachers operating within the particular context of Hong Kong, the issues raised should be seen as applicable to L2 (L3) teachers (and, arguably, L1 teachers, too) of all backgrounds and working in any setting. Acknowledgement of the general applicability of such issues can be seen in the publication of a number of recent texts aimed at enhancing the language awareness of teachers (see, for example, Wright 1994, Bolitho and Tomlinson 1995, and Thornbury 1997). Recognition of a growing concern with language awareness considerations is also implicit in the increased attention which has been paid to the teaching and assessment of language awareness within the revamped and unified RSA/Cambridge Diploma scheme for English Language teachers, now known as DELTA¹, and targeted at teachers of all nationalities and training institutions around the globe.

In spite of this increased interest and activity, however, there has been relatively little published research on the language awareness of teachers (apart from

¹ DELTA is the Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (UCLES 1998).

that mentioned in 2.2.1, and occasional other isolated examples, including, in the L2 domain, those reporting the researcher's own earlier small-scale studies). It is therefore one of the principal contributions of the present study that it explores an area which is of considerable current interest and indeed crucial importance to the profession, but which has hitherto received scant attention, in research terms.

In its exploration of this relatively uncharted territory, the study has contributed a theoretically-based construct, **teacher metalinguistic awareness** (or **TMA**), and a model of the hypothesised relationships between TMA, communicative language ability, and pedagogical content knowledge. The validity of the construct and of the model has been examined within the context of an investigation of the language awareness of one specific group of teachers. The robustness of both construct and model should now be put to the test by application to other contexts and to different teachers.

The construct and the model represent a contribution to learning because they increase our understanding of this area of teacher knowledge and teacher thinking, and provide a theoretical framework for further research into teacher language awareness. At the same time, the research tools employed in the present study might usefully be adopted or adapted for use in subsequent explorations of TMA in different situations.

It also seems reasonable to suggest that the study contributes more generally to an understanding of the relationship between teacher knowledge (particularly knowledge of subject-matter) and pedagogical practice. Although this relationship has been explored with specific reference to L2 teachers, and with the uniqueness of the process of language teaching being emphasised, many of the issues raised are of more general relevance.

8.2 The major findings of the present study

The main findings of the study have been discussed in detail in chapters five and six. Chapter five focused upon the TMA construct, its relationship with communicative language ability, and patterns of influence upon the nature and development of TMA, drawing primarily upon the quantitative aspects of the study. Chapter six concentrated on the impact of TMA upon pedagogical practice, as revealed by analysis of the qualitative data. Following the detailed presentation of the

findings, chapter seven offered a series of critical reflections on the discussion in the two previous chapters.

In summary, the principal findings of the study are as follows :

- Correlation and factor analyses lend support for the model of TMA outlined in chapter two. The declarative dimension of TMA and communicative language ability appear to be distinct but related factors of language ability.
- The levels of communicative language ability and TMA (as measured by test performance and exhibited in pedagogical practice) of the specific sample of Hong Kong secondary school teachers of English without professional training are generally rather low. As a result, the value of many such teachers as model communicators in English, sources of grammar information, or mediators of input for learning must be called into question.
- There is no simple way of expressing the relationship between communicative language ability, the declarative dimension of TMA, and potential influences on their development. Although certain background factors such as subject of 1st degree relate with some consistency to characteristics of test performance, it seems likely that the development of each teacher's metalinguistic awareness and communicative language ability is influenced by a cluster of interrelated experiential factors specific to that individual.
- There is some evidence that there is a relationship between levels of communicative language ability/declarative TMA and beliefs about grammar/language pedagogy. Teachers with a preference for inductive approaches to language teaching tend to be those with higher levels of declarative TMA, while those favouring a deductive approach tend to have lower levels of declarative TMA. Also, there appears to be an association between support for CLT principles and higher levels of communicative language ability.
- Explicit knowledge of grammar (declarative TMA) is vital to the consistently successful application of TMA in practice. However, the possession of such knowledge is not sufficient to ensure that the teacher will deal with grammar-related issues in ways which are most likely to be conducive to learning.
- Communicative language ability plays a crucial role in the application of TMA in pedagogical practice, not only affecting the quality of teacher reflections about

language, but also impacting upon the quality of teacher output and the teacher's mediation of all three potential sources of input for learning.

- TMA has been shown to have the potential to exert positive or negative effects upon the teacher's mediation of the three potential sources of input for learning - materials, learner output, and the teacher's own output. The TMA 'filter' affects, among other things, the structural accuracy, functional appropriacy, and clarity of input made available in the L2 classroom, as well as the extent to which such input is pitched at the learners' level.
- There is also considerable evidence that TMA has a marked effect upon the teacher's performance of a number of tasks widely believed to facilitate learning : for instance, making salient the key grammatical features within input, providing examples and explanations, helping learners to make useful generalisations, and limiting potential sources of learner confusion.
- The precise ways in which TMA impacts upon pedagogical practice are so diverse that it is very difficult to say anything more concrete than that they are affected by a combination of factors associated with personality, attitude, context, and professional background.

8.3 Recommendations for further research

A study of this kind always leaves many questions unanswered, and a number of these have been highlighted in the previous chapters as areas which would benefit from further research. One potentially problematic issue relating to the whole study (and discussed in 4.4.6.3) is the extent to which the gathering and interpretation of the qualitative data were affected by the cultural and linguistic background of the researcher, as they inevitably must have been. A replication study, this time by a cultural and linguistic 'insider', would be a valuable additional contribution to our understanding of TMA.

There are in fact several ways in which the area of teacher language awareness, and the questions raised in the present study, could usefully be explored in the future. The following are just a few examples of aspects of TMA which would benefit from further investigation :

- The TMA of other types of Hong Kong teacher (i.e. with different language, educational and professional backgrounds)

- The TMA of L2/L3 teachers in other contexts (both teachers of English and of other languages)
- The impact of TMA in contexts where the prevailing approach to language pedagogy places less emphasis on a 'focus on forms'
- The TMA of L1 teachers (both of English and of other languages)
- Comparison of the metalinguistic awareness of teachers who are native-speakers and those who are non-native-speakers of the language being taught
- Influences upon the development of TMA, including the potential impact of professional training
- Dimensions of TMA other than grammar, and the links between grammar-related TMA and teacher awareness of other aspects of the language systems
- The impact of TMA upon learners and learning
- The relationship between the declarative and procedural dimensions of TMA, and between TMA and general teaching competence
- How TMA might best be developed, both the declarative dimension and, more especially, the procedural dimension
- Factors affecting the impact of TMA upon pedagogical practice, including 'engagement' and teacher confidence
- The relationship between the L2 TMA of the non-native-speaker teacher and that same teacher's L1 metalinguistic awareness.

These are just some of the many issues relating to TMA which warrant further investigation. It is to be hoped that the present study acts as a catalyst for many future research projects within this crucially important area of L2 education.

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LANGUAGE AWARENESS TEST

This test is designed to help us estimate your awareness of grammatical terminology. Before doing this part of the test, please provide the information requested below. This information is for research purposes only, and will be treated as confidential.

Name : _____

Official
use only

Age : _____

Are you male/female? (*ring*)

What is your first language (i.e. mother tongue)? _____

Roughly how much time in total (in weeks) have you spent in an English-speaking country? _____ (weeks)

What is the longest continuous period that you have spent in an English-speaking country? _____ (weeks)

Is either of your parents a native-speaker of English? mother/father/neither (*ring*)

Which school are you currently working in? _____

How many years' full-time teaching experience do you have? _____

Which subjects do you teach? (*ring* main teaching subject)

What was your first degree? _____

Where did you obtain your first degree? (*institution AND country*)

What subjects did you study for your first degree? (*ring* main subject)

List any further qualifications (with details of subject and place of study)

This test has two sections. Each section is timed : you will have 10 minutes for Section 1 and 10 minutes for Section 2. When you are asked to move on to the next section, do so instantly, even if you have not finished the section you are on. If you finish the first section early, you may move on to the next section straight away.

SECTION 1. GRAMMATICAL TERMS (10 minutes)

1. From the sentence below select one example of the grammatical item requested and write it in the space provided. NOTE: You may select the same word (s) more than once if appropriate:

Materials are delivered to the factory by a supplier, who usually has no technical knowledge, but who happens to have the right contacts.

- a) verb _____
- b) noun _____
- c) countable noun _____
- d) passive verb _____
- e) adjective _____
- f) adverb _____
- g) indefinite article _____
- h) preposition _____
- i) relative pronoun _____
- j) auxiliary verb _____
- k) past participle _____
- l) conjunction _____
- m) finite verb _____
- n) infinitive verb _____

2. In the following sentences, underline the item requested in brackets:
 - a) Poor little Joe stood out in the snow. (SUBJECT)
 - b) Joe had nowhere to shelter. (PREDICATE)
 - c) The policeman chased Joe down the street. (DIRECT OBJECT)
 - d) The woman gave him some money. (INDIRECT OBJECT)

3. INSTRUCTIONS

Look at the twelve sentences below. What grammatical terms would you use to describe the item underlined in each of the sentences?

NOTE: For each item provide a full description.

Examples :

1. It was the most exciting film she had ever seen.

superlative adjective

2. I saw Jenny last Saturday.

verb in past simple tense

SENTENCES

1. It's a lovely day, isn't it?

2. Tim often comes to class late.

3. Alice fell asleep during the lecture.

4. Whose book is that? It's mine.

5. You play tennis very well.

6. I look forward to receiving a reply to my letter.

7. You should have paid your tax bill last week.

8. After several hours of questioning, the police let the prisoner go.

9. Mrs Wong has been living in that flat for years.

10. There are still a lot of things to be done.

11. I'm not feeling very well today : I have a terrible headache.

12. Mary did her homework faster than I did.

SECTION 2 ENGLISH ERROR IDENTIFICATION (10 minutes)

INSTRUCTIONS

This section has 15 English sentences each of which has a mistake.

For each sentence:

1. Rewrite the faulty part of the sentence correctly. (There will only be one part that is wrong.) Do NOT rewrite the whole sentence.
2. Underneath each sentence explain the grammatical rule which you think has been broken.

Example:

1. I often goes to the cinema.

Correct version: go

Rule: The verb must agree with the subject

(Do not write: "Change 'goes' to 'go' ".)

Section 2: English Sentences

1. I walk to work very quick.

Correct version: _____

Rule: _____

2. When her said that, Jack hit her.

Correct version: _____

Rule: _____

3. Every day I am making good resolutions.

Correct version: _____

Rule: _____

4. She's the taller of the four sisters.

Correct version: _____

Rule: _____

5. I live in a flat at a top of an old house.

Correct version: _____

Rule: _____

6. Do you know anyone having lost a cat?

Correct version: _____

Rule: _____

7. The children put on their coat.

Correct version: _____

Rule: _____

8. He tried and ate something but he couldn't.

Correct version: _____

Rule: _____

9. I don't like people which are always apologising.

Correct version: _____

Rule: _____

10. I opened the door, but I couldn't see nobody.

Correct version: _____

Rule: _____

11. When I was a small baby I have colic.

Correct version: _____

Rule: _____

12. I'll tell you as soon as I'll know.

Correct version: _____

Rule: _____

13. I heard him went downstairs.

Correct version: _____

Rule: _____

14. Give the spanner to I.

Correct version: _____

Rule: _____

15. She has phoned a few minutes ago.

Correct version: _____

Rule: _____

THE END

WRITING TEST (30 minutes)

Name : _____

You have **two** short composition tasks. You have a total of 30 minutes for the two tasks. Try to spend an equal amount of time on each task. When you finish the first task, go straight on to the second.

1. An English native-speaker, Connie Davis, is coming to teach English in your school from the beginning of next term. Your English Panel Chair has decided that it would be a good idea for Ms Davis to meet all of you before she starts work at your school. It has therefore been suggested that Ms Davis should be invited to join you all for lunch in a restaurant not far from your school. You have been asked to write a letter to Ms Davis on behalf of the Panel Chair.

Write a **brief** letter of invitation. Include in your letter directions for getting to the restaurant (Ms Davis will be coming from Central).

2. "Secondary school students of English in Hong Kong don't need to know grammar. They need to know how to communicate."
Do you agree with this opinion? What is your view of the role of grammar in teaching and learning English at secondary level? Discuss.

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

ENGLISH TEST

DO NOT WRITE ON THIS QUESTION PAPER.

In the following questions, choose the best answer.

Shade in the boxes on your answer sheet.

Use a SOFT PENCIL only.

There are 50 questions in this section.

Time allowed: 20 minutes

01. To put it _____, the man's an idiot.

- A. bluntly
- B. obviously
- C. surely
- D. strictly

02. The results of the competition _____ in the newspapers.

- A. can read
- B. will appear
- C. have published
- D. may find

03. His behaviour in class is awful; I don't know how his teacher _____ it.

- A. makes up with
- B. gets up to
- C. keeps up with
- D. puts up with

04. Oh my goodness, this room is in a terrible mess! What can _____ here last weekend?

- A. happen
- B. be happening
- C. be happened
- D. have happened

05. I can't read his handwriting. Can you _____ what his letter says?

- A. put out
- B. get on
- C. work out
- D. catch up

06. As you approach middle age, it's time to think about _____ some money _____ for the future.

- A. putting _____ inside
- B. saving _____ down
- C. setting _____ aside
- D. leaving _____ outside

07. I'd like to hear from you as soon as _____

- A. your convenience.
- B. you have convenience.
- C. at your convenience.
- D. it is convenient.

08. Is there anything _____

- A. the matter?
- B. the problem?
- C. the question?
- D. the bother?

09. Michael : Did you enjoy the play? Was it good?

Margaret : Yes, _____, I did. It was superb.

- A. by the way
- B. as a matter of fact
- C. anyway
- D. all the same

10. Mike : Who's that student coming in the gate? It's 9.30!

Steve: I _____ it's William. He's always late.

- A. wonder
- B. sure
- C. bet
- D. doubt

11. After the football match, the crowd _____ out of the stadium.

- A. poured
- B. melted
- C. drew
- D. dismissed
- E. left

12. The media are treating the conference _____ the start of the election campaign.

- A. to
- B. at
- C. for
- D. as

13. In some parts of the world, the police have unfortunately acquired a reputation for treating _____ citizens like criminals.

- A. lawful
- B. legitimate
- C. law-abiding
- D. judicial

14. Don't go to a rock concert unless you're in the right _____ of mind to enjoy it.

- A. frame
- B. way
- C. set
- D. turn

15. Michael _____ outside the cinema to look at the posters of the stars.

- A. arrested
- B. entered
- C. paused
- D. hung
- E. settled

16. Albert Ip was a very _____ speaker, and could convince even the most sceptical audience.

- A. articulate
- B. ambiguous
- C. attentive
- D. authoritarian

17. The fighting between the two warring factions started again after a complete _____ in negotiations.

- A. break up
- B. breakdown
- C. outbreak
- D. breakage

18. Tom: I'm rather surprised Peter got the job, _____ his inexperience.

May: Yes, you're right. He hasn't done much in that field before.

- A. in view of
- B. by virtue of
- C. with regard to
- D. in recognition of

19. John: Did you know? - there are more recordings of Vivaldi's Four Seasons than _____ any other piece of music.

Mary: That's incredible.

- A. really
- B. practically
- C. actually
- D. hardly

20. English people have a _____ to talk about the weather all the time.
A. tendency
B. habit
C. way
D. characteristic

21. "Don't look behind you," Mary whispered to me under her _____.
A. voice
B. lips
C. mouth
D. breath
E. tongue

22. It's kind of you to offer to help me, Margaret, but please don't _____ yourself on my account.
A. extend
B. interfere
C. risk
D. trouble
E. prevent

23. Richard's story fooled many people, but it did not _____ to close examination.
A. keep up
B. put up
C. stand up
D. pay up
E. look up

24. By any _____, a doctor's job is a difficult one.
A. reasons
B. limits
C. standards
D. levels

25. Make sure that you read the contract before signing, and don't forget to check the _____ print.
A. little
B. tiny
C. small
D. minute

26. In view of the _____ circumstances, the magistrate did not impose a fine.
A. unfair
B. extensive
C. extenuating
D. qualifying

27. When Albert went to Thailand he knew _____ no Thai, but within six months he had become fluent.

- A. entirely
- B. virtually
- C. barely
- D. scarcely

28. On _____ to power, the new prime minister promised a change of policy concerning the environment.

- A. arriving
- B. reaching
- C. achieving
- D. coming

29. The villagers showed few signs of _____ towards the new residents, despite the newcomers' very different ways.

- A. objection
- B. animosity
- C. disgust
- D. refusal

30. Our friend has a flat on Lamma Island which he has kindly placed at our _____ for the holiday.

- A. usage
- B. disposal
- C. pleasure
- D. disposition

31. The minister's statement yesterday was seen as tantamount _____ an admission of guilt on his part.

- A. with
- B. to
- C. of
- D. by

32. The advertising for brandy on Hong Kong television is nothing _____ of ridiculous.

- A. less
- B. more
- C. short
- D. far

33. During the trial, no _____ was made to the defendant's four previous convictions.

- A. statement
- B. mention
- C. reference
- D. comment

34. When I went to France last summer, the thing I enjoyed most was sitting in a pavement cafe, _____ the taste of the delicious local wine.

- A. sensing
- B. sipping
- C. savouring
- D. indulging

35. Watson thought it was a _____ detail, but the detective Holmes immediately realised its importance.

- A. common
- B. plain
- C. just
- D. mere
- E. flat

36. The subject of this new book is very _____ - I expect it will sell well.

- A. engaged
- B. current
- C. actual
- D. interested
- E. topical

37. As a manager, Michael Wong worked hard to build up a strong team - within the limitations _____ by his budget, that is.

- A. forced
- B. placed
- C. imposed
- D. restricted

38. In the talk on 'Fit for Life', particular emphasis was _____ on the importance of a healthy diet.

- A. placed
- B. given
- C. provided
- D. made

39. The workers' continued _____ to change finally gave the management no option but to close down the factory.

- A. resolution
- B. opposition
- C. repression
- D. rejection

40. I always _____ this town with my childhood, because I spent so many of my summer holidays here.

- A. associate
- B. remind
- C. relate
- D. reminisce

41. Go on, finish the dessert. It needs _____ up because it won't last until tomorrow.

- A. eat
- B. eating
- C. to eat
- D. eaten

42. I enjoyed the aerobics class very much, but the next day I felt very _____ and tired.

- A. stiff
- B. heavy
- C. aching
- D. hurting
- E. painful

43. Whenever we go past Mrs Wong's flat, she is _____ looking out of the window.

- A. continuously
- B. invariably
- C. unavoidably
- D. interminably

44. The life of the small businessman is tough: it is _____ with financial risks.

- A. fraught
- B. intense
- C. stressful
- D. heavy

45. Mr Ho used his job in television as a _____ to a career in local politics.

- A. springboard
- B. turning-point
- C. milestone
- D. highway

46. Why don't you suggest something this time John, _____ that you are so clever?

- A. allowing
- B. seeing
- C. believing
- D. judging

47. As a squash player, Keith was older and not as fast as his younger opponents, but he had the great _____ of experience.

- A. advantage
- B. deal
- C. help
- D. value
- E. profit

48. Richard's article was much too long, so the editor asked him to _____ it.

- A. contract
- B. cut
- C. shrink
- D. lessen

49. _____ your help, I would never have got the job.

- A. Except
- B. Apart from
- C. But for
- D. As for

50. You should buy this magazine - its cookery section is _____ with delicious recipes.

- A. full
- B. packed
- C. thick
- D. compiled

END OF TEST

Section D : Beliefs about language, language learning and language teaching

Name: _____

Look at the statements in the two tables below. Decide whether you agree or disagree with each one and how strongly. Rate your agreement/disagreement on a scale of 1 to 5 [1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*]. Tick the appropriate box next to each statement. **Respond to each statement as quickly as possible.** If you don't know whether you agree, or if you don't understand the statement, tick the appropriate box :

[*N.B. L1 = First language; L2 = Second language*]

I) Language and language learning

| | strongly disagree | | strongly agree | | Don't know | Don't understand |
|--|----------------------|---|-------------------|---|---------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 1) Language is used primarily for social reasons | | | | | | |
| 2) Language is central to the process of learning | | | | | | |
| 3) Some varieties of language are better than others | | | | | | |
| 4) All languages are systematically organised | | | | | | |
| 5) Language change should be resisted as far as possible | | | | | | |
| 6) Reading is a process of bringing meaning to a written text | | | | | | |
| 7) There is less grammar in spoken language than in written language | | | | | | |
| 8) Language is intimately related with a person's sense of personal and social identity | | | | | | |
| 9) When using language to communicate, it is more important to be grammatically accurate than socially appropriate | | | | | | |
| 10) Children are born with an ability to discover for themselves the underlying rules of a language system | | | | | | |
| 11) In order to learn a new language successfully, it is necessary to begin as early as possible | | | | | | |
| 12) Parents ought to correct their young children's L1 grammar when they make mistakes | | | | | | |
| 13) L2 learning is very similar to L1 learning | | | | | | |
| 14) The most important factor in successful L2 learning is motivation | | | | | | |
| 15) Most of the mistakes made by L2 learners are caused by interference from their L1 | | | | | | |
| 16) Learners cannot learn new language if they are not 'developmentally ready' for it | | | | | | |
| 17) It is necessary to be highly intelligent in order to be a successful language learner | | | | | | |
| 18) Drilling and memorisation are essential to the successful learning of new language forms | | | | | | |
| 19) Learners can learn new language just by hearing and understanding it | | | | | | |
| 20) Languages are learnt mainly by imitation | | | | | | |

| | strongly disagree | | strongly agree | | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|-------------------|---|---|---------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Don't know | Don't understand |
| 21) Learners learn what teachers teach | | | | | | | |
| 22) Teachers should teach simple grammatical structures before more complex ones | | | | | | | |
| 23) Learners should be encouraged to get their message across even if they lack specific grammatical knowledge | | | | | | | |
| 24) Learners should finish practising one grammatical structure before starting to learn another | | | | | | | |
| 25) If learners can communicate successfully, then grammatical mistakes are not important | | | | | | | |
| 26) Learners need to be exposed to authentic materials | | | | | | | |
| 27) Learners' mistakes should always be corrected as soon as possible to prevent the formation of bad habits | | | | | | | |
| 28) The materials learners use should contain only grammatical structures they have already studied | | | | | | | |
| 29) Learners should be encouraged to speak/write accurately from the beginning | | | | | | | |
| 30) When learners take part in pair work or group work, they learn each other's mistakes | | | | | | | |
| 31) Teachers should always explain grammar rules to learners | | | | | | | |
| 32) With a class of 40, the disadvantages of pair work and group work are much more significant than the advantages | | | | | | | |
| 33) Learners should be allowed to make grammatical mistakes | | | | | | | |
| 34) Teachers should use grammatical terms to explain grammar rules to learners | | | | | | | |
| 35) Teachers should teach material orally before presenting it in written form | | | | | | | |
| 36) Teachers should begin teaching a new grammar point by giving examples | | | | | | | |
| 37) Learners should be encouraged to attempt to communicate from the very beginning | | | | | | | |
| 38) Teachers should use the learners' L1 to explain grammar rules | | | | | | | |
| 39) The teaching of written language should focus on understanding and producing whole texts | | | | | | | |
| 40) Learners should be able to use the common grammatical terms in the L2 correctly when discussing grammar | | | | | | | |

| | strongly disagree | strongly agree | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|-------------------|---|---|---|---------------|---------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Don't know | Don't understand |
| 41) Accuracy (i.e. correctness of form) is a primary goal in teaching | | | | | | | |
| 42) New grammar points should be presented and practised in situations | | | | | | | |
| 43) Teachers should specify the language that learners are to use in activities | | | | | | | |
| 44) Teachers should begin teaching a new grammar point by explaining the rule | | | | | | | |
| 45) Teachers should focus on structure and form, rather than meaning | | | | | | | |
| 46) Teachers should help learners to work out grammar rules for themselves | | | | | | | |
| 47) Teachers should always drill new grammatical structures | | | | | | | |
| 48) Learners learn best when teachers tell them all their grammatical mistakes | | | | | | | |
| 49) The most effective way of teaching grammar involves using sentence-based exercises | | | | | | | |
| 50) L2 teaching means helping learners learn to communicate | | | | | | | |
| 51) Learners should understand all the common grammatical terms in the L2 | | | | | | | |
| 52) Grammar explanation should be avoided by the teacher | | | | | | | |
| 53) The learners' L1 should be the medium of instruction in L2 classes | | | | | | | |
| 54) Learners should be encouraged to create language by a process of trial and error | | | | | | | |
| 55) The basic unit for teaching and language practice should be the sentence | | | | | | | |
| 56) Learners should interact in the L2 with other people (including their class-mates) as much as possible | | | | | | | |
| 57) Mechanical drilling is of no value in language teaching | | | | | | | |
| 58) The teaching of spoken language should focus on understanding and producing language in a conversational context | | | | | | | |
| 59) If learners memorise rules and facts about grammar, it will help them to produce correct language in spontaneous situations | | | | | | | |
| 60) If learners think about what they are doing, it prevents them from doing it well | | | | | | | |

Your cooperation in completing this questionnaire is greatly appreciated. If you feel that any further questions or information would be useful for the researcher, please write on the back of the final page.

APPENDIX 2

14 February 1996

Dear PCEd Applicant

The purpose of this letter is to inform you about arrangements for this year's admissions exercise.

As you will be aware, because the University of Hong Kong PCEd programme is taught and examined through the medium of English, we administer an English test to all applicants for admission. This year, in response to the emphasis that ECR6 has placed upon 'benchmark qualifications' for language teachers, the Faculty of Education has decided to pilot a new version of the English test. This pilot will involve the prospective English Majors on the part-time programme only.

The pilot test will comprise the following :

- a) a group interview;
- b) a multiple-choice test of grammar/vocabulary;
- c) a composition;
- and d) a test of language awareness.

The group interviews will be videotaped. Please note that this videotaping is for research purposes only, and has **no** significance at all for admissions. If any of you object to taking part in a videotaped interview, please notify the Faculty straight away, so that an alternative arrangement can be made. However, in the interests of research, it would be greatly appreciated if you would participate in the videotaping.

At the end of the test, you will be asked to fill in a two-part questionnaire. This is also for research purposes only, and any information obtained will be treated as confidential. Completion of the questionnaire is optional. However, we would be very grateful if you could spare the time to assist us in our research endeavours.

We look forward to welcoming you to the Faculty on Saturday 9 March.

Yours sincerely



香港 大學

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM STUDIES

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19 September 1996

Dear PCEd student

Major Methods 1996-98

Welcome to the English Major Methods part of the PCEd programme! I am delighted that you are going to be a member of my group for the next two years. I am sure that in the coming months we shall all get to know each other very well. I am equally sure that we shall be able to learn a great deal from each other as we share our experience of teaching a variety of students in a wide range of schools and colleges.

While you are a member of this group, I very much hope that you will agree to assist me in some research which is very closely related to your daily work in the classroom and our endeavours in trying to help Hong Kong students develop their English Language Proficiency. You probably remember that you very kindly assisted me with an earlier phase of my research project when you came for the interview and tests in March. I greatly appreciated your assistance then. The purpose of the present letter is to ask if you would be prepared to cooperate with me again in the second phase.

As you are no doubt aware, Education Commission Report No.6 (Dec.1995) focuses on the enhancement of language proficiency in education. As part of the Commission's comprehensive strategy, great emphasis is placed on teachers' language skills and the need for teachers of all subjects to be competent to teach through their school's designated medium of instruction. The report also expresses particular concern about the training of teachers of languages, and underlines the need for teacher education institutions to ensure that "...adequate attention is given to issues of language awareness and language skills in initial training programmes for all teachers" (ECR6:51). In response to this, I intend to ensure that in the Major Methods we do give adequate attention to issues of language awareness (with particular reference to grammar). It is hoped that by participating actively in the course, you will also have every opportunity to practise the four language skills (including speaking - in English!)

The recommendations of the Education Commission help to provide a context for my research, which focuses on the language awareness of teachers of English. Assuming that you are willing to cooperate in the research, I will try to ensure that I place as few extra demands on you as I can, and that as far as possible the research can be integrated naturally with the scheduled teaching of the sessions. I feel sure that if you agree to participate, your involvement will help your own professional development by encouraging you to reflect upon your teaching, especially in areas relating to the development of students' language knowledge/awareness.

Most, if not all, of my data collection would take place during the current academic year. However, I would keep any imposition on your time to an absolute minimum : I know

how very busy Hong Kong teachers are, and I would not dream of encroaching on your free time if it can be avoided. The only requests I would make of you outside class-time during the whole of this academic year are the following :

- 1) that those of you who have not already completed the questionnaire I gave out in March should do so as soon as possible
[a replacement copy will be given to you];
- 2) that each of you provides me with a video-recording in which you teach a grammar-focused lesson
[I would supply the video-cassette. If you can arrange for a technician or colleague in the school to tape your lesson, that would be ideal from every point of view. If necessary, however, I could come and do the taping];
- 3) that no more than twice during the year (once in the autumn and once in the spring) you would permit me to visit you at your school and interview you for about thirty minutes
[the second of these interviews would not really be an extra commitment since it would take place immediately after one of the observation visits I would be making to your school as a scheduled part of the PCED];
- 4) that no more than twice during the year (again once in the autumn and once in the spring) you would come to the university at 4.00 on a Tuesday or Thursday instead of 5.00 in order to carry out a teaching-related task with one or more classmates
[the scheduling of these 4.00 - 5.00 slots can be arranged to fit in with your other commitments. If necessary, I can contact your Principal to request permission for you to leave school early on these two occasions].

I should add that any data collected is for research purposes only, and will be dealt with in the strictest confidence. In any report of the research, subjects will be referred to using an invented name, not their own.

Please give this matter careful thought over the next few days. If there are questions or concerns about any aspect of the proposal, I am of course very happy to discuss them with you. I apologise for bothering you with this request. I very much hope, however, that you will agree as a whole group to take part in this research. I also hope that it is an experience from which we shall all be able to learn a lot.

I am attaching a letter for you to respond to my proposal. I should be very grateful if you could return this to me during next Thursday's session at the latest.

Many thanks

Yours sincerely



Stephen Andrews

September 1996

Dear Mr Andrews

I have read your letter asking if I would be willing to assist you in your research project. I understand what my participation would involve. I understand that any data collected would be for research purposes only and would be treated in the strictest confidence.

On condition that the research is conducted as described in your letter dated 19 September 1996, I am willing / not willing [*delete as appropriate*] to participate.

Yours sincerely

[Name : _____]

APPENDIX 4

Teacher Profile Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a study of **teacher language awareness**. The information collected from the completed questionnaires will be treated as **confidential** and used for **research purposes only**. Your name will not be used in any published report of the results, but is needed to allow cross-referencing of data from different components of the study. Please answer the questions as **accurately** and **fully** as you can.

Name : _____

Section A : Language profile

I) List all the languages you speak (including your first language). List them in order according to how well you speak them (i.e. lang.1 = the language you speak best; lang.2 = the next best etc):

lang.1 _____ lang.2 _____ lang.3 _____ lang.4 _____

[If you speak more than four languages, list the four at which you are best]

II) For each language listed in I), give the following information :

[Write the name of each language in the appropriate box in each table]

i) How old were you when you started learning the language?

| | lang.1 _____ | lang.2 _____ | lang.3 _____ | lang.4 _____ |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Age first learned | | | | |

ii) Where did you start learning the language? [For each language, tick one A box and one B box.]

| | lang.1 _____ | lang.2 _____ | lang.3 _____ | lang.4 _____ |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| A1 at home | | | | |
| A2 school | | | | |
| A3 elsewhere [specify where] | | | | |
| B1 in Hong Kong | | | | |
| B2 overseas [specify where] | | | | |

iii) How did you learn each of the languages you speak ?

[Tick one or more response for each language. Where appropriate, distinguish between written and spoken versions of the language in question, by writing Wr or Sp next to the tick]

| | | lang.1 _____ | lang.2 _____ | lang.3 _____ | lang.4 _____ |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| language lessons at : | primary school | | | | |
| | secondary school | | | | |
| | college/university | | | | |
| | other institute [specify in box] | | | | |
| because the language was the medium of instruction at: | primary school | | | | |
| | secondary school | | | | |
| | college/university | | | | |
| 'naturally' from interaction with: | family | | | | |
| | friends | | | | |
| | colleagues | | | | |
| through self-study | | | | | |

iv) If you were taught the language, or it was the **medium of instruction** during your education, indicate **for how many years (yrs)** and **for how many hours per week (hpw)** on average :

| | | lang.1 yrs hpw | lang.2 yrs hpw | lang.3 yrs hpw | lang.4 yrs hpw |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| language lessons at: | primary school | | | | |
| | secondary school | | | | |
| | college/university | | | | |
| | other institute [specify in box] | | | | |
| medium of instruction at : | primary school | | | | |
| | secondary school | | | | |
| | college/university | | | | |

v) What qualifications have you obtained in each language?

[For each language give the **name of the qualification**, the **date it was awarded**, and the **grade obtained** (if any). If you have no qualification in a particular language, leave the **name of qualification** box empty.]

| | name of qual. | date awarded | grade obtained |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| lang.1 _____ | | | |
| lang.2 _____ | | | |
| lang.3 _____ | | | |
| lang.4 _____ | | | |

vi) How would you rate your ability in each language ?

[Give a rating from 1 to 5 for each of the abilities mentioned in the table.

1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = moderate, 4 = competent, 5 = very good]

| | lang.1 | lang.2 | lang.3 | lang.4 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| a) ability to communicate effectively in speaking | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| b) ability to speak with grammatical accuracy | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| c) ability to understand but not speak | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| d) ability to communicate effectively in writing | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| e) ability to write with grammatical accuracy | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| f) ability to read but not write | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| g) ability to recognise whether a sentence is grammatically correct or not | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| h) ability to use grammatical terms in the language to talk about the language | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

vii) Provide the following information about when you **studied English in English lessons at secondary school**:

| | F1-3 | F4-5 | F6-7 |
|---|------|------|------|
| How much(%) of the average English lesson was conducted in English ? | | | |
| How much(%) class time on average was spent on the teaching of grammar ? | | | |
| How often did your English teacher(s) use grammatical terms in your English lessons ? [Give a rating from 1 to 5. 1 = never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = at least once a week, 4 = at least once a class, 5 = several times per class] | | | |

III) Which language do you normally use with :

your immediate family ? your extended family ? your friends ?
your colleagues ? your students ?

Answer this question by completing the table below.

Show how much (%) you use each language with each group :

[e.g. if you use only one language with a particular group, write 100% in the appropriate box; if you generally use one language with a group, but occasionally use another, write 80% for the former language and 20% for the latter. Make sure your total adds up to 100%.

Write the name of each language in the appropriate box]

| | lang.1 _____ | lang.2 _____ | lang.3 _____ | lang.4 _____ | TOTAL |
|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| immediate family | | | | | |
| extended family | | | | | |
| friends | | | | | |
| colleagues | | | | | |
| students | | | | | |

IV) Which language do you consider to be your **main language** ? _____
Why do you consider this to be your main language ? _____

Is there another language which is **almost as important** ? _____

Section B : Education profile

) **School**

Please provide the following information about your school education (primary and secondary) :

i) Where and when did you go to school ?

| | Primary school 1 | Primary school 2 | Secondary school 1 | Secondary school 2 |
|--|------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Where did you go to school ? [Give name of school and location, eg. city overseas, area of Hong Kong] | | | | |
| When did you go to school ? | | | | |

ii) What was the **medium of instruction** in your school?

| | Primary school 1 | Primary school 2 | Secondary school 1 | Secondary school 2 |
|---|------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| What was the <u>official</u> medium of instruction? | | | | |
| What was the <u>actual</u> medium of instruction? | | | | |
| If the medium of instruction was <u>mixed-code</u> , show the average proportion [%] of language use in subjects other than English and Chinese : | | | | |
| Cantonese | | | | |
| English | | | | |

iii) What **qualifications** did you obtain at school ? Give details of your 'A' level (or equivalent) results in **all subjects** in the table below. Give details of 'O' level (or equivalent) results **for languages only**. If you took the Use of English exam, fill in the appropriate information :

| Subject | Level (eg.HKALE, HKCE) | Date taken | Place taken | Grade obtained |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------|-------------|----------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Use of English | | | | |

iv) Were you involved in any **extra-curricular activities** at school which were **conducted mainly in English** ?

If so, give information about the **activity** and the **nature of your involvement** :

| extra-curricular activity | nature of involvement | age at which involved | hours per week of involvement |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

II)

Tertiary education

i) Give the following information about your tertiary education. Include any courses not completed.

| | First degree | Other degree studies |
|---|----------------|----------------------|
| Place of study | | |
| Dates of study | | |
| Name of course | | |
| Medium of instruction | | |
| Main subject(s) studied | 1) 2) 3) | 1) 2) 3) |
| Proportion of time [%] spent on each main subject | 1) 2) 3) | 1) 2) 3) |
| Title of degree award | | |
| Class of degree award (or Grade-point average) | | |
| Date of degree award | | |

ii) If your tertiary studies included English, indicate the proportion [%] of your English studies spent on the following :

[Make sure the total in each column adds up to 100%]

| | First degree | Other degree studies |
|---|--------------|----------------------|
| practical communication skills (eg. speaking) | | |
| linguistics (eg. grammar, phonology) | | |
| translation | | |
| literature | | |
| culture | | |
| other (please specify) : | | |
| 1) _____ | | |
| 2) _____ | | |
| TOTAL : | | |

iii) Were you involved in any **non-study** activities at university which were **conducted mainly in English** ?

If so, give the following information about the activity and the nature of your involvement:

| non-study activity | nature of involvement | number of years of involvement | hours per week of involvement |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Section C : Professional profile

I) Give the following information about **the school(s) in which you have worked** :
 [If you have worked in more than 3 schools, give details of those in which you worked the longest]

| | Current school | Previous school 1 | Previous school 2 |
|---|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Name of school | | | |
| Band(s) of students | | | |
| Official medium of instruction | | | |
| Estimated % of English used in school in subjects other than English | | | |
| 5-day/6-day or 7-day cycle ? | | | |

II) Please give information about **your own work** in these schools :

| | Current school | Previous school 1 | Previous school 2 |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Dates of employment [month and year] | | | |
| Subjects taught [Indicate % of time spent on each] | 1) 2) 3) | 1) 2) 3) | 1) 2) 3) |
| Forms taught [by subject] | Subj.1) Subj.2) Subj.3) | Subj.1) Subj.2) Subj.3) | Subj.1) Subj.2) Subj.3) |

III) Now give information about your **English teaching** :

| | Current school | Previous school 1 | Previous school 2 |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Which forms do/did you teach ? [Give hours per week/hours per cycle] | | | |
| How much (%) of your average English lesson is conducted in English? | F1-3 F4-5 F6-7 | F1-3 F4-5 F6-7 | F1-3 F4-5 F6-7 |
| How much (%) class time on average do you spend on the teaching of grammar ? | F1-3 F4-5 F6-7 | F1-3 F4-5 F6-7 | F1-3 F4-5 F6-7 |
| How often do you think you use grammatical terms in your English classes ? [Give a rating from 1 to 5. 1 = never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = at least once a week, 4 = at least once a class, 5 = several times per lesson] | F1-3 F4-5 F6-7 | F1-3 F4-5 F6-7 | F1-3 F4-5 F6-7 |

Videotaped lesson

I should be very grateful if you could follow the procedures outlined below when making arrangements for your lesson to be videotaped :

Before recording - planning :

- 1) Identify a suitable lesson for recording. This should be a lesson in which there will be a grammar focus for at least a significant part of the time. The lesson should ideally be a natural part of your teaching sequence with the particular class, and not a one-off.
- 2) Make the necessary practical arrangements for the lesson recording.
- 3) Let the class know what is going to be happening, but please do so in a way which makes it a non-threatening, 'normal' experience. I know that the presence of a camera will inevitably be unusual for them, but I would like their behaviour (and yours) to be as natural as possible, so please treat the recording process as casually as you can.
- 4) Produce a written plan for the lesson. This need not follow a specific format. However, it should certainly outline :
 - a) your overall learning objectives for the lesson;
 - b) the learner activities intended to help them realise those objectives;
 - c) your purpose in the selection of each activity; and
 - d) the reasons for the way you organise each activity.
- 5) With reference to the grammar focus, the plan should :
 - a) identify each language point;
 - b) provide an estimate of the students' previous exposure to that point;
 - c) specify how the particular lesson is intended to advance their understanding of/ability to use that language point; and
 - d) indicate how you are going to evaluate this understanding/ability.

For the cameraman (or woman!) :

- 1) Collect video-cassette from you.
- 2) Check that camera is functioning (eg battery is fully charged etc). Please note that sound quality is relatively important, in that I would like to hear what you are saying (I realise that the students may be inaudible - that is an unfortunate fact of life in so many Hong Kong classrooms!)
- 3) Reassure the camera-operator that there is absolutely no need for sophisticated camera-work, or a professional-quality recording!
- 4) Precisely where you place the camera will inevitably depend on the particular classroom. However, you should aim to have the camera located conveniently and relatively inconspicuously near the back and to the side of the classroom, where it can focus on you without being a major distraction to the class. If you move around during the lesson, the camera might focus on your movement (in order to make sense of what you are saying), but the whole process should be as unobtrusive as possible.

In the classroom :

- 1) If it is possible to have the camera and operator in position one or two minutes before the class begins, that would be the ideal. If that cannot be arranged, try to ensure that the setting-up process is as rapid, smooth and minimally disruptive for the students as possible.
- 2) Then try to forget that the video is there! Just teach the lesson as 'normally' as you can. The more naturally you behave, the more easily the students will ignore the presence of the camera.

After recording :

- 1) As soon after the lesson as possible, write down your feelings about the lesson, particularly about the grammar part and the students' response to it. I would be especially interested in your feelings about :
 - what seemed to work well, and why
 - what seemed to work less well, and why
 - what you'd do differently next time, and why

These comments should simply be a set of immediate reactions and brief reflections **in note-form** - I do not expect or want you to write an essay, not even a very short one! Make a photocopy of your lesson-plan and post-lesson comments for your own records and for reference when you review the lesson.

- 2) Give me the following :
 - a) the recorded video-cassette;
 - b) the lesson plan (including a photocopy of lesson materials, eg textbook pages/worksheets) together with your post-lesson comments;
 - c) a blank video-cassette.
- 3) I will then copy your lesson on to the blank cassette, and return this to you. At this point we will agree a mutually convenient time for a one-to-one discussion of the lesson. This discussion is **NOT** part of my research. You are strongly advised to watch the lesson again immediately before our meeting, so that you can ensure that our discussion focuses on those issues which most interest/concern you. These issues can cover any aspect of the lesson - they need not be restricted to grammar.

Many thanks!

Steve Andrews
10 October 1996

APPENDIX 6

Strategies for interview (Third draft)

[Broad framework - specific questions may arise from pre-interview analysis of attitudes etc revealed by each subject in a) the Writing Test essay focusing on grammar, and b) the Attitudes/Beliefs questionnaire]

1) Background questions -

getting to know you/icebreaker questions
follow-up/ clarification questions (relating to aspects of background mentioned in main questionnaire)

2) Approaches to teaching/the role played by grammar

what sort of things do you do with your eg F3 class (things which typify your approach as a teacher)?
do you have a similar approach with all the classes you teach? why?/why not?

would you describe these 'things you do'/classroom activities as 'communicative'? in what ways?/why?

where does grammar fit in to what you do with your eg F3 class?

- when you talk about 'grammar' in that (eg F3) context, what does it mean?
- how does 'grammar' fit in with your overall approach, and the sort of things you like to do as a teacher?

does the role of grammar nowadays seem different from when you were learning languages at school? in what ways?/why?

with the introduction of approaches like CLT in recent years, where do you think this leaves grammar? why do you think that?

3) Grammar lessons -

with your eg F3 class, do you ever teach whole lessons which you'd call 'grammar lessons' or 'lessons with a grammar focus'? why?/why not?

what about with the other forms you teach?

tell me what happens in that sort of lesson with your eg F3

- what do you mean by X/Y/Z?
- why do you do X/Y/Z?

imagine you're teaching a new grammar point to your eg F3 class [ask T to select a point taught recently, or to suggest a point, eg comparative adjectives]

- tell me what you'd do
- what do you mean by X/Y/Z?
- why do you do X/Y/Z?

tell me about a recent grammar lesson/bit of grammar-focused teaching which seemed to work well

- in what ways did you feel it worked well?
what made it work well?

tell me about a recent grammar lesson/bit of grammar-focused teaching which caused you/your students problems

- what sort of problems arose?
why do you think you/they had these problems?
how did you react/try to overcome the problems?
what effect did your efforts have?/why?

4) Grammatical errors - the role of error and the treatment of error

imagine you are teaching a new grammatical structure and your students make errors with that structure

- why do you think that happens?
tell me what you'd do and why

imagine you teach a new grammatical structure and your students make very few errors with it - then in subsequent lessons/homework exercises they make several errors with that structure

- why do you think that happens?
tell me what you'd do and why

imagine you give your students a) a composition task, b) a discussion task, and they make several grammatical errors

- tell me what you'd do and why

5) Grammar and its role in T & L

do you think learners of a language need to 'know grammar'?

in which sense : conscious/explicit knowledge or practical control?

do you think learners need conscious/explicit knowledge of grammar?

why?/why not?

how do learners acquire a) practical control of grammar, b) conscious knowledge of grammar most effectively?

why is X particularly effective in promoting the acquisition of grammar?

is it necessary to teach grammar (in the sense(s) in which you think learners need to know it)? why?/why not?

how is it best to teach grammar in your view? why?/why not?

Lesson planning discussion - experimental study

Task-sheet

Imagine you and your colleague are going to teach a lesson presenting the Present Perfect to a Form 3 class.

Discuss (**IN ENGLISH**) how you would plan the lesson. You have 40 minutes for the task.

Try to complete as much of the task as you can within that time, but **don't worry if you don't finish**. The most important thing is to discuss your plan in English.

If you want to refer to a grammar book, please use the one provided. Paper is available for you to use to draft your plan, make notes etc.

Thank you again for your assistance.

Steve Andrews

Task-sheet A

You are the teacher of a Form 3 class of average ability. You recently gave your students a composition concerned with sport. You have corrected your students' compositions and are going over some of their mistakes in class.

Look at the extract below. Identify that part of the extract which, in your view, requires some clarification.

Give your explanation to your imagined class. You have a maximum of one and a half minutes. If you wish to make use of the blackboard, please do so.

*EXTRACT : It is our Sports Day next week. I am running
in the 800 metres. I am not very fit. I should
to start training a few weeks ago.*

Task-sheet B

You are the teacher of a Form 3 class of average ability. You recently gave your students a composition concerned with sport. You have corrected your students' compositions and are going over some of their mistakes in class.

Look at the extract below. Identify that part of the extract which, in your view, requires some clarification.

Give your explanation to your imagined class. You have a maximum of one and a half minutes. If you wish to make use of the blackboard, please do so.

*EXTRACT : I like basketball, and I am quite good. But I
am very small. If I taller, I will be in the
school basketball team.*

Task-sheet C

You are the teacher of a Form 3 class of average ability. You recently gave your students a composition concerned with sport. You have corrected your students' compositions and are going over some of their mistakes in class.

Look at the extract below. Identify that part of the extract which, in your view, requires some clarification.

Give your explanation to your imagined class. You have a maximum of one and a half minutes. If you wish to make use of the blackboard, please do so.

EXTRACT : *Our team is in a volleyball tournament on*

Saturday. We are practising very hard. I am

tired because I playing four times this week.

Strategies for second interview (First draft)

1) Initial reactions immediately after the lesson

What are your first thoughts about the lesson?

- how do you feel it went, and why?
- how do you think your students reacted, and why?

2) The lesson plan

Your objectives in this lesson :

- what was your chosen grammar focus ?
- was this an introductory lesson on this grammar point, or part of a series?

[- *if there were previous lessons in this series:*

what was the focus of the previous lesson(s)?

how did your objectives differ from the objectives of this lesson?

what did you do in that previous lesson, and why?

what did you require the students to do, and why?

what aspects of that lesson went well, and why?

what aspects of that lesson were less successful, and why?

how did the events of the previous lesson affect your planning of this lesson?]

- how did this lesson/series of lessons relate to students' previous learning ?

 what did you assume they already knew?

 what difficulties did you anticipate?

 how was your planning of this lesson/series of lessons affected by your assumptions of prior knowledge/anticipation of difficulties?

- what were your specific objectives in this lesson?

 why did you specify these particular objectives?

 how were the activities in the lesson intended to lead to the achievement of these objectives?

 what was the intended purpose of each activity?

 how was the design of each activity intended to help achieve that purpose?

3) The lesson - what actually happened in the classroom

Was the lesson different from what you usually do?

- eg did you deal with this particular grammar point differently from :
 - when you last taught it?
 - how you normally deal with grammar points?
- if so, in what ways was it different, and why?
- if not, why did you approach things in exactly the same way as usual?

Which part(s) of the lesson went well in your opinion?

- in what ways do you think they went well?
- what do you think made them go well?

Which part(s) of the lesson caused you/your students problems?

- what sort of problems arose?
- why do you think those problems arose?
- how did you react/try to overcome those problems?
- what effect did your efforts have?/why?

If you could teach the lesson again, what would you do differently, and why?

4) Questions about specific incidents/things said during the lesson

5) Follow-up in subsequent lessons

What do you plan to do next in relation to this particular grammar point?
Why?

PCED English Major Year 1Grammar Teaching Action Research Assignment1) **Introduction**

A) Grammar teaching occupies much of the teaching time of secondary school English lessons. Nevertheless, it seems that many students fail to acquire a good, working knowledge of English grammar. In particular, they have great difficulty in **applying** their knowledge of grammar to the process of communication.

It could be argued that these problems are partly a result of the way grammar tends to be taught in our secondary schools. The following two criticisms are frequently made about the way grammar is handled by teachers and textbooks:

- i) in the most widely used textbook materials, there is often a major weakness in the presentation/practice of grammar items, in using isolated and uncontextualised sentences, or unnatural language situations;
- ii) teachers (and textbooks) tend to concentrate on **form** rather than **meaning**.

B) Our aim in this assignment is to encourage you to explore ways of teaching grammar which avoid the two criticisms mentioned above. Specifically, we want you to :

- i) examine a grammar area of your choice in depth;
- ii) think about ways of teaching your chosen grammar area;
- iii) try out your ideas in class;
- iv) evaluate their effectiveness.

2) **What you have to do**

- i) Select an area of English grammar (*for example* a tense, a type of clause, adjectives, passive voice) that you will be teaching with a particular class;
- ii) Research into the chosen grammatical area, focusing in particular on **form**, **function**, and the **contexts** in which the structures/items are used;
- iii) Explore the features of the area that cause problems in **teaching** and **learning** in the secondary language class;

- iv) Think of **strategies** that you think would be effective in teaching your chosen area, and a **variety of activities** in which students can use the structures/items in meaningful and interesting ways;
- v) Teach the structures/items in class, making use of your strategies/activities;
- vi) Evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies/activities, and suggest modifications in the light of student performance/feedback;
- vii) Think about the strategies/activities you will use, based on your experience, if you revisit this grammatical area later in the year.

3) **What you have to hand in**

i) Part 1

An essay in which you discuss your chosen grammatical area. This should consist of three sections :

- a description of form and function of the selected structures/items, and of the contexts with which they are typically associated;
- an analysis of those features of your chosen area which cause particular teaching/learning problems;
- a description, discussion and explanation of your selected strategies, and the tasks/activities you will use to put them into practice
[N.B. You should make clear to the reader the relationship between each task/activity and your selected strategies];

[N.B. Your tasks and activities should involve a variety of skills.

What is NOT required is a collection of mechanical/meaningless transformation/sentence-completion exercises copied from textbooks]

ii) Part 2

An essay in which you discuss the implementation of your strategies with a particular class. This should consist of three sections :

- an outline of how you planned to sequence the teaching of your selected grammatical area with the chosen class
[N.B. It is NOT necessary to submit lesson plans, but simply a description which makes clear to the reader what you planned to do, in what sequence, and why];

- a description and evaluation of what **actually happened** when you implemented your strategies
[N.B. This should take into account student responsiveness, interest and participation, as well as other aspects of teaching and learning];
- a discussion of how, based on this experience, you would approach the teaching of follow-up lessons on this grammatical area with the same class.

DEADLINE 1 May 1997

N.B. : This is the deadline for submission of the complete assignment. If, however, you would like to have feedback on your draft version of Part 1 **before** you actually implement your strategies, please approach your lecturer.

Remember : This assignment is intended to be a **learning** activity, in which you explore new ideas in teaching and reflect upon the experience of trying them out. Take every opportunity to discuss both your ideas and their implementation with your classmates and lecturer(s).

Classification of qualitative data

1. The fictitious first names assigned to each of the seventeen main study subjects become a single letter code, the first digit in the coding of each data source, as follows :

Agnes = A, Benjamin = B, Clara = C, Diana = D, Eva = E, Flora = F, Hilda = H, Joanna = J, Karen = K, Lydia = L, Maggie = M, Pearl = P, Rose = R, Shirley = S, Tony = T, Wendy = W, and Yan = Y.

Where the data source involves more than one subject, then the letter code for each subject involved is used to identify the data source. For example, if Rose and Benjamin work together on a lesson planning task, then that source is initially identified as RB.

2. Each type of data has a letter code :

| | | |
|------|---|---|
| SSIA | = | the first semi-structured interview; |
| SSIB | = | the second semi-structured interview; |
| LP | = | the lesson planning task; |
| EXPA | = | the first explanation task; |
| EXPB | = | the second explanation task; |
| GRLN | = | notes on the videotaped grammar lesson (researcher observations); |
| GRL | = | materials relating to videotaped lesson supplied by subject (teaching materials and post-lesson reflections); |
| GRLa | = | materials relating to other observed grammar lessons supplied by subject; |
| GP | = | grammar teaching project report; |
| COMP | = | the composition on the relationship between grammar and communication produced as part of the battery of written tests. |

3. Each reference to the qualitative data within the text is followed by a source coding, with transcript page number. For example, R/SSIA/16 is page 16 of Rose's first semi-structured interview, while RB/LP/10 is page 10 of Rose and Benjamin's lesson planning discussion.

Karen -- Interview 1

Interviewer: A
 Interviewee (Karen): K
 (()): unclear phrases or words

A: Thank you very much for agreeing to do this.
 K: You're welcome, it's my pleasure.
 A: Emm... OK, well let me, let me start by asking you just a few general questions here, how long have you been teaching in this school?
 K: In this school?
 A: Hmm.
 K: Emm... since 1994.
 A: And this is the first school you've taught [] in?
 K: No, [] it's the second one.
 A: Where did you teach before this school?
 K: Err... Lai King Catholic Secondary School.
 A: Ahha. And how long were you there?
 K: One year.
 A: Ahha.
 K: And I left, emm... left this and then I quit the job actually, err... because I wanted to change the field at that year, that year. And then, err... I went out to work in a err... business company, and ha... half a year later I found out that err... yeh, teaching was the most sui... err... most suitable job for me again and then I came here, yeh.
 A: And so, are you, do you feel you made the right decision?
 K: Yes, especially sometimes when I, when I can get satisfaction. But sometimes not, maybe... and you know some students are... not all the students like emm... my class. Some students err... especially in this school, err... many colleagues, don't know why, because many students here, they are very, very passive, passive and then... And they are very good at actually, and don't have any behavioural problem but they are very passive. And if I want them to answer some questions I have to call their names, call their names and then they will give me answers.
 A: Alright. How does this school compare with your previous school?
 K: Ha... it's much better. I think the main reason is that emm... the previous school in that year emm... I was very, very inexperienced, err... green in that year and then, I remember I had a science class like... err... form 4 science class like now. And then they were very, very terrible and some of them, especially the boys, and they were very naughty and they did not listen to me during the lessons. And then I felt very frustrated in that year, and then I think it was one of the reasons why I quitted the job.
 A: Alright.
 K: Hmm... but now, I think I have already built up the image as a teacher, and then err... inside the classroom, and they... err.. they know that I can play with them, I can communicate with them well but they know that I am the teacher, and they know what my practice is.
 A: Right.

K: And then they have to err... say "good morning", "goodbye", and then if they want to ask questions they have to raise their hands, and they know all the practice. But outside the classroom then, I do like that... err... just like err... in the picnic day yeh... err.. they played happily with me and then... we can have good relationship. Yeh.

A: That's good.

K: It's much better, three years later.

A: Right. And what, how does the.. the, the band of the students compare between the two schools, what is it?

K: I think they are almost the same. Yeh. Even the potentials and the abilities of the students. They're almost the same, but... emm... for this school, I do think that the students here emm... they are nice students. Most of the students are very nice. Maybe and you know that... I've said it before, this school is.. err... theoretically band 2, band 1 to 2 actually, band 1 to band 2 school but... when they go up... when they go up and you'll find that and the banding is declining. Yeh. Ex... especially language, especially language and then... they're almost the same...

A: So, alright... so will you take this form 4 class to form 5 next year?

K: Yeh, [] sure. Yeh.

A: you're, [] you're teaching all the way through? Right. How do you think they'll get on, what would you predict for the Certificate?

K: Hmm... for a few students, I, I don't think that I can help them much, because they don't have the initiative, and then I talked to them for many, many times. A few of them... but they, they don't like study and then... they're very, very lazy at home and then emm... the last term test results were very terrible, some of them. Hmm... and for this class, I don't have much expectation because emm... some, some of their standard, standard is not very high... er... and I can say that it's not up to standard but, but I want to help them because many of them, most of them are very nice, and you can see that, especially girls and even some boys, err... they're not naughty, yeh, and they can sit quietly, yeh during the lessons ... and then I really want to help them. I think that I have to do much, for example later, later and we'll have... err... some extra classes, during holidays or after school you know, because especially last month, we had emm... we had the Choral Speaking. We attended the Speech Festival, and then we have wasted so many lessons, you know ha... and then emm... to catch up with the schedule and then later, and we'll do much. I can't say err... just like last year, I hmm... I had a form 5 class, form 5 class, and then... I felt good and they like me and then I like them.... and we had good relationship. And, but they turn out, yeh, turn out, you know that and the results, emm... not many of them, not many of them em... can go up to form 6 and many of them, have to go out to find oth... other schools, or maybe they have to quit their studies. It's the reality I think that, even if I would try to help them all the time, sometimes yeh, they un... they understood that, and they appreciate that. I know that but... yeh sometimes, Hong Kong students... yeh...

A: OK well let's think, think about that form 4 class then. Can you tell me – it's a general thing really - ... what sort of things do you do with that class which you think are typical of your approach as a teacher?

K: Do you mean that emm... typical approach, yeh, yes I am teaching...

A: Well, what, what sort of things do you like doing with, with... the, the with... what activities do you do in the class which which reflect the kind of things you like to do as a teacher?

K: Oh yeh. Hmm... I think emm... communication. Yeh, I like it. I remember some years ago... err... I can't remember who... some people asked me the same question... on, why do you like teaching, and then err... which part did you enjoy most? Similar, I think communication I ... I think it's the main point, OK? It's the most important part between teacher and other students. Got to teach... if I can communicate with them in a ... very good way and then err... in a very, very err... very how to say that emm... in natural way emm... and friendly way... and it's quite helpful, it's quite useful if we can be friends and then they would listen to me at least.

A: So, how does carry over into the, the sort of activities that you do in the classroom?

K: emm... and I'll play jokes on them, err... maybe sometimes you know some students will tell me some secrets about the classmates. Emm... if I find that if... the secrets are not very important, err. maybe, it's very interesting and then I'll try to say something about this err... during the lessons and maybe... emm... if one student is making a mistake and the others are laughing at him and then I will try to stop them with a smile and then... and they will find out that Miss Chan is also smiling at him, but, but OK she tells us not to do that, and then ... I don't know how to say, I don't mean that err.. I'll embarrass my students, but... I want to do the same thing err... with them, laugh with them and then smile with them... and talk about the same things with them.

A: And would you do all that in English or in Cantonese, or what?

K: Yeh you can say that emm... you should notice that err... I asked two students to prepare...err...a song for next week because emm... I just set out a new rule er... one err... actually, I set it one month ago... I don't know if it is good and... maybe you can give me some advice... emm... I just want to err... make sure that they can speak...er... more English, yeh in the lessons. And then if they... if they speak any Cantonese, or if any classmate hear that ... he says that... they're speaking in Cantonese and they will tell me, and then emm.. and we'll jot down their names, and three times, and then they have to sing a song in front of the classmates, and the classmates are very happy and... sometimes I can't hear what they're saying...but, but the girl will tell me, "oh Miss Chan, he's speaking in Cantonese" and then all the classmates are very happy.. yeh, and... I think at moments like this, it's very good for the lesson, and they are very excited, you can see that. And they can stop immediately. Yeh.

A: Yeh, right. Emm... I mean thinking about the things that you do with your form 4 classes, would you describe any of these things as communicative in inverted commas?

K: Sorry, I beg your pardon?

A: Would you describe any of the activities that you do with your form 4 class as communicative?

K: Ha... err... not all the time, yeh, I try to do that. Err.. but you know for some lessons especially err... for example, paper 2, err... reading comprehension, emm... I just had double lessons this morning, err.. in class... 4E. Err... and then err... I had to check err... I had to go through all the questions with them. And... I told them that it was... a bit boring, but I, I don't think that err... I... I told them that I had to check the answers with you because there are... were so many difficult questions and, for example, comprehension and some inference questions that they did not know. And then and the procedure was.. err... a bit boring. And then, what I did was that I err... I tried to emm... after... ten questions maybe after a piece of comprehension, I asked some of them, maybe they look sleepy, and then ask them to OK go to the washroom to wash your face. And then they like that and they go out. And then, maybe OK, for some of them I just... call their names and ask them... are you day-dreaming, and the others will look at him, and then... yeh... he wake up immediately... Emm... in between explanation I will... sometimes I will.. err... again, play jokes yeh say some interesting or funny things yeh, for example, er... every time some students will speak Cantonese and then again, and they are very, very excited, and then... ahh.. look at him again, and then I'll s... I'll spend one minute on it... emm.. talking and laughing with them. But for some lessons I, I can't do that and then hmm... at the very beginning I told my student that err... some lessons would be quite boring because maybe emm... I have to teach them grammar items, I have to check answers with them... I can't make all the lessons interesting but I'm trying my best, I told them.

A: So which, which bits would you describe as communicative then? What, which things that you do, would you call communicative?

K: Maybe emm... oral lessons, oral lessons... yeh ... err... communicative, oral lessons maybe.. er...

A: And in what sense would they be communicative?

K: Yeh, I'm thinking about this term here... yeh... communicative... actually last week in the Educational Studies Core, we studied this term, and we discussed this term... emm... communicative err... To me I ... this term, it means that err.. we can communicate and then... err... and then I can teach them something maybe and they can learn something, in a communicative way and then not one-way teaching but two-way, and that two-way, and then... they can give me responses and they can say something during the lessons. Hmm... oral lessons maybe... emm... or even when we're checking answers err... checking some sentences and then, actually I keep on err... calling them... calling them to answer me questions especially some passive classes. Emm... I ask them to stand up... maybe err... sometimes I ask them to discuss, discuss with each other and to see yeh... how their answers are like, or are different. Hmm...

A: Well let's, let's, let...

K: I, I don't know how to say.

A: No, OK. well let's move on to, to... thinking about grammar then.

K: Yeh.

A: Now with your form 4 classes, where does, where does grammar fit in to what you do with your form 4 classes?

K: Hmm... in form 4 classes, I think that emm... grammar, hmm... is very important especially at the beginning, at the beginning. Em... in September and October I spent much time on teaching them tenses and actually, err... it was revision, tenses, reported speech, passive voice... it's very important and then, emm... because they have to make use of their knowledge, knowledge about grammatical items for all the papers, for all the papers, paper I to paper IV. When I... I think it's very important and then. All the times, err... especially in these three months, I do... I think that I'm still doing that, I'm still doing that. Emm... I'll place my focus on teaching them grammar. And actually, I just started doing paper II. And we just emm... we've just started one lesson, one lesson err... one chapter, yeh. And they've just started to do two pieces of comprehension and cloze passages. I don't know if it's too late but err... yeh I try to... have some revisions on the grammar and teach them grammar first, and then later, when we have some problems about err... the grammar and then, and then OK, emm... maybe if it's not very serious and then, err... I'll try to mention this again. If I find that, err.. many students did not know that, and then... I'll maybe... err... spare one lesson again.

A: Yep, and so...

A: Hmm... [] so when you're, when you're teaching that, when you say you're teaching grammar, do you mean that you're... what? ... you're explaining explicitly all about these different grammar points? ...

K: First explicitly, yeh... emm... just like tenses, hmm... yeh, I explain the differences between err... present tense, err... past tense and then err.. present perfect and past tense, something like that. And then, and then emm... I ask them to make sentences, examples at home. And then, and then emm... I ask them, I encourage them to emm... hmm... to write the diaries and compositions with a variety of tenses, not past tense only, not present tense only. And then err... we had... quiz, quiz or dictations, something like that. Err.. to consolidate their knowledge. Yeh.

A: and how does grammar relate to things that you like to do? I mean, is it something that you... hate doing yourself, or you... or you worry about doing yourself? Or is it something that you like doing yourself? ... or?

K: Hmm... just as what you said, I... I have to talk much, during the lessons. The teacher, maybe err.. not all the time, not the whole lesson, but... at least 30 minutes I think, I, emm... the teacher is... talking. Yeh, only the teacher, and then I don't think it's good but, sometimes if... the problem is serious, you know I... I think I have to do that. And then, and then I, I don't think the students do not like that, because emm... a few of them know that, but many of them... need the revision. And they will pay attention and they'll listen to me. And a few of them will get bored yeh. Err... teacher will talk much, and then maybe... err.. it may be quite boring for some students. And the lesson, I'll make the lesson boring. I don't like it actually and then... err.. they... and they look very tired and then... yeh and you know it's very frustrating. Yeh... but... sometimes I have to do that, I have to do that... and, and... and what I'll do is to keep asking them questions.

Keep waking them up. When I'm teaching. Or... err... after teaching, for example for tenses, err... I split it into some parts. I did not err... teach them all the tenses err... in one week or even in two lessons, no. err.. I split it into... two to three weeks. Yeh. Two to three weeks and then, maybe err... one day, one day for present, present perfect, present perfect continuous. And then... emm... I went to err.. passive form, yeh. And you know in passive form and there are many examples about tenses and then we can talk about this again. And next week again, OK err... we go to past tense. Yeh. I try to do that, because yeh, the lesson is quite boring when I am teaching, and they can't say anything. And they have to look at the board and listen to me all the time. Yeh.

A: When you ... thinking back to when you were at school, and yourself learning English, what...

K: Very [] boring.

A: was the role of [] grammar the same then? Or is it, is it different now, do you think, in... in [] teaching?

K: Yeh. I'm actually... err... many of us emm... err even my group-mates emm... we've talked about this. Err... I remember in the past, when we were students, the teachers were... yeh... and they were teaching in.. a more comfortable way than we're doing now. I remember emm... what they did, yeh and they, and they just... they just had one textbook maybe, a textbook of... for English lessons and then every lesson, and we had to... go through err.. chapter 1 and then chapter 2 maybe and.. cover all the pages in the textbook and then... I can't remember if I had.. some notes at that time. No extra notes, no extra work, and they just worked the textbook. If I wanted to learn more I had to go out, go out to find some sources so err... yeh you know, private tutor maybe, yeh and some friends, yeh... and... some teachers at that time, even form 7 teacher, I remember err... we had one textbook again. And we learned something like err... skimming and scanning. And then we... and ... err... and we open the textbook and then again... OK err... skim this paragraph and scan this paragraph and err.. and then every lesson was very, very boring. And that's why I think that... nowadays students are... yeh, emm... err... they're luckier. Yeh.. many, many st... many, many teachers, not all, yeh. Many, many teachers I think that... err... to be honest, including me, I prepared many sets of notes for them, many extra work, err... extra activities and then notes for them, and they can learn more, if they like.

A: do you think when you were at school there was... more attention to grammar, or less attention to grammar? Or is it more or less the same?

K: [] hmm... grammar...

Emm... just based on my experience err... less attention on grammar

A: in the past.

K: in the past, yeh.

A: Why is that I wonder...?

K: Err... maybe the banding of my school, I think that, err its.. one of the ways the banding in my school err.. in that year, maybe band 2 to 3, yeh, it was not a very good school. The teachers I remember, unluckily, they were not very good teachers, and then... to be honest, I did not, I could not tell the difference between

err... maybe err... present tense, and past perfect.. err... present perfect tense and past perfect tense, even in form 5. And then I did not know the meanings of emm... all the words like err... nouns, adjectives, adverbs in form 5. I started learning all these things from form 6 because I... emm... I went to another school, a better school, and then hmm... I started learning this err... in form 6 and 7 and then even in university. And that's why I... sometimes I... I feel very emm.. frustrated and then... I, I don't think I have enough confidence, maybe you know that... learning in Hong Kong, learning language in Hong Kong, I'm one of them, and we have many limitations, limitations... and... especially oral skills. I ... even now, I, I know that emm... I can't speak in a very, very, very good way, and then, maybe, but acceptable at least now after a few years yeh... hmm... In that year maybe emm... I don't know if it is... hmm... my school, yeh, secondary school, form 1 to form 5 especially, hmm... and they did not pay much attention.

A: so, where do you see grammar fitting into your own language learning experience and so on? Say when you were in form 5, when you left form 5, you, you didn't think you, you, you had lots of confusion about grammar and you didn't know gramma... grammatical terms and that got better in form 6 and 7 and so on... Emm... I mean how, how important do you see the learning of grammar in relation to your... overall ability to communicate?

K: Very important... very important, and you know that... err... many teachers and even err... many foreigners like you... err... we stress that maybe I will say that... err.. yeh, naturally, err... people will make some grammatical... err.. s... err... some grammatical mistakes when they're speaking. It doesn't... matter if you're making some mistakes, but you know that when I'm speaking, even now, if I'm aware that, err.. I'm making some mistakes and then... I feel... yeh uneasy, you know that. Now I think that emm... for oral, and then I'm even writing, naturally, yeh... maybe hmm... it's not a very good experience err I remember the first year, yeh, in Hong Kong U, and then emm... I started studying a course, one them... a course like Shakespeare.. yeh.. And the tutor was very good at that time, and she was very nice, she helped me a lot. But I know that the first assignment, especially the first one, you know I, err... at that time I... had never learned anything about literature. Yeh, and then... emm... understanding the contents... or emm... and you know the ideas err... the meanings, and the... err.. underlying theme was not very difficult but... when I was writing, when I was writing the assignment, yeh, and the first one especially I... made many, many mistakes and my tutor told me that... yeh, and then at that time, ah... I, I, I knew that, yeh and there were still many things I had to learn even, as an undergraduate and then I... I did not tell that.. emm... the others but my family members maybe.. yeh... emm... It was very important especially at that time, I... I knew that... yeh. I can't, I couldn't catch up with... the other students maybe the schedule or the courses. If I did not recall that, if I did not study more about my grammar, yeh. Even tenses and vocab. [Yeh... was very important. Yeh.

A: So, [I mean nowadays, in theory we talk about communicative language teaching, or the communicative approach so, where do you think grammar fits into... a communicative approach?

K: because you... hmm... you want to get others to know what you're talking about. Err... I don't mean err... accurate grammar is, very, very important, in... err... in communication but, I think that er... grammar if you want to communicate with others, if I want to help students, yeh, to be able to communicate with others maybe err... in writing or speaking, yeh... at least, and they have to understand the basic grammatical err... items OK and they have to understand them. Err.. at least err... for example if you... want to talk about err... now, and then you know... which tense you have to use and the vocab. Err... and maybe err... and the form, and if you're writing, if you're writing a piece of dialogue and they have to know how to, how to write it in... in a correct way, yeh. Not very, very important, but it is important, if they want to communicate with others.

A: OK, what about grammar, now grammar lessons. Do you... do you ever... teach whole lessons which you would call grammar lessons?

K: Yes.

A: Right. Why do you do that?

K: ha... just as what I said... err... usually I will check err... if they can understand emm... this grammatical item, at the very beginning and then maybe emm a very simple phrase, you have the dictation, a, a test, and then, if I, if I know that yeh... many of them, most of them, yeh, cannot do well, and then I will stop teaching. Yeh.

A: So, what, what do you do typically in, in that sort of lesson? If you, if you're going to have to teach them grammar, er, what do you do?

K: Emm... I'll give them notes, yeh and, normally I'll prepare a set of notes, a set of notes for them to... to follow.

A: Right.

K: yeh, and then I, I prepare notes, and then, hmm... during the lessons, I will err... start going through all the points with them. Yeh and then er... in between I'll ask them to make examples, maybe I will give them some examples on the board. Hmm.. you know, ask them, if they have any questions, and I'll check if they have any question but they don't tell me. Hmm... yeh, something like that.

A: So, basic, they will have notes and you would be explaining

K: Yeh.

A: the notes to them?

K: Yeh.

A: And then after that, what happens, do they do any... other activities in relation to that grammar point?

K: Hmm... it depends err... tenses, maybe I'll ask them to... emm... emm... to make examples, or to write err... a paragraph at home. Or maybe err... if it is, passive voice, I'll ask them to er... talk to each other, maybe I'll give them some sentences, and then and they, and they try to change them into passive form, and then and they can check their work with each other and then, hmm... and I'll ask them.. hmm... to give me the answers on the board, or they just tell me, sometimes, for example if it is reported speech like this, and I taught them one

month ago, one month ago, and then hmm... now I ask them to change all the sentences into reported speech, it's, it's a revision again. Yeh, the second revision. Can you take that as perhaps as the example to... what, what, when you taught reported speech, what did you do, any?

K: Reported speech?

A: Yeh.

K: Hmm... yeh.

A: |How did the lesson go?

K: Hmm... I remember, err.. first I asked a few students, err... to change, to change the sentences, OK, err... into reported speech, and to see if they, err.. if they knew that at that time.

A: So what you wrote some sentences on the board?

K: Yeh.

A: Yeh, hmm...

K: Yes. And then err... ha... and obviously because I, I know that, and they're not good at this and obviously and there're many mistakes on the board, yeh, and then I'll ask them, to... err... and... I remember yeh... I give them words, give them notes, OK. Because I've already prepared normally emm.. notes, and then... maybe er... I tried to introduce some important points. For example, reported speech ... err ... it's not very difficult and.. they have to pay attention to some parts.. emm... and they have to change the pronoun, yeh... and the time adverbials and then, the tense. And then I'll do some examples with them on the board together, err... ask them to give me answers, or I give them answers... yeh. And then later, again, hmm.. I ask them to do some err... exercises, exercises, and they have a grammar book, and do them at home, and next time we try to check some answers and then I can see that if they can understand.

A: Hmm... so what, what do you see is the purpose of, for example, the notes that you give them? Why, why do you give them notes?

K: |notes?

Emm... there are two reasons, one is very funny actually. Err... number 1 that is, I think that, sometimes, I, emm.. I'll speak fast, and then emm... and maybe err... you can see that err.. you can't see that maybe in this lesson emm... I cannot make use of the board very well. Yeh.. sometimes I forgot.. emm... I'll forget to write down the important things, or some difficult words on the board, and then, I go through them with them, yeh, and then, and they can't catch it. And then I think that if they have notes, maybe it would be better. And the second point is that, it's very interesting, and then...er.... And you know that nowadays, Hong Kong students and they like going out, going out to learn English, to learn English, especially English. And some students told me that err... form 7 students and form 5 students, and they, hmm... I ask them "why do you like to have extra class, OK, outside?" Sometimes because I find out that err... I taught them the same things as their teachers, as their teachers did outside. But they thought that they could not remember what I said, but they could remember what they said, and I asked them why, and they said that, because they have notes, they have very emm... a set of very good notes, and then emm... even the layout, typing, yeh and the paper they use are white papers and something like that, yes,

and they said that, and they like the notes and they, yeh. Make the students think that if they have a set of notes, it will be better for them, maybe now, now OK and they are not hard-working, and later, and then I have the notes and later, maybe err... half a year later, and then I... want to start working, and then if I have the notes in hand and then OK, I know what to do. They like that. Yeh, it's mainly because like this. They like that. And I do think that, it's helpful and then, with the notes and they, at least, yeh. Maybe it's the third reason, at least, if they do not pay attention during the lessons, I think that at least they have something to read at ... home.

A: Right, right. Well can you think about a recent grammar lesson which seemed to work well? Emm.. where you felt at the end of the lesson, well that was OK?

K: Yeh, you know I have two form 4 classes, yeh. Yeh... (a student came in) yes... you know I have two form 4 classes, it depends. 4B is better emm... and you.. you can see that they are more active, yeh. But 4E, it's very strange, there are more boys, you know there're 30 boys and 10 girls. But, they are very passive during the lessons. I, I once told them that, yeh er... I was teaching, I was talking, er... err, alone and then, it was like that I was talking to... haha... something, but not to some people, and they laughed yeh... they were very passive and then, when I... remember OK ... if I am teaching them grammar or anything actually, and the atmosphere is not very good because, yeh. many boys and they like playing basketball, and sometimes they feel tired during the lessons. But after the lessons they're very energetic. Yeh and then hmm... and the lesson is more bo... is more boring. And 4B, even if I'm teaching grammar, even if I'm checking err... answers in comprehension err... passages, and then, they can give me good responses, and then emm... and they will not fall asleep, and I can make the lessons more interesting, and you know, it's two-way. If they can give me responses, I will be happier. And then I can... I think I can teach better, if they can give me some reactions. 4E sometimes I tell them that... I would also feel bored.

A: but I mean can you think of a particular grammar le... grammar lesson a particular grammar point, where it's, where you felt... this gram... you know this was a good lesson, this worked well?

K: hmm... hmm...

A: Do they leave you with a s... similar feeling in these lessons?

K: what do you mean by similar feeling, good?

A: Well, I don't know. I mean do you know... I mean... I, I often come out of a class thinking... that was terrible, ... about my own teaching, or that one... that class was OK, that was a good lesson. Emm ... and I'm just wondering whether you can think of a particular grammar lesson which is, where you've felt that it... it was good emm...

K: First I have to.. er.. tell you... emm... what's the definition of err... a good lesson to me. Good lesson I think that maybe it's not a very boring lesson, and then students get involved, and then emm... at last, most importantly, and they get something after the lesson, and they know what I'm talking about, what I want to tell them. Hmm... many lessons are actually, err passive voice maybe, passive voice... er.. I've just spent two lessons, on, on this item, because it's not a very

difficult item but some of them er... make mistakes at that time. And then hmm... two lessons and again. For this one I remember I did, I did not give them any notes, because it was much easier I think, emm... I did not give them notes. I just again, write down some examples, at the very beginning wrote down some examples and then asked them to give me the answers. And then to see if they... err.. could understand at that time, and then later, later, err... many mistakes were made and then I would tell them because, yeh, it was not difficult I would tell them... er... which parts they had to pay attention to for example, don't con... don't confused passive voice with reported speech, you don't have to change the tense, and, and... we just have to change pronoun, err... er... and... and then and... and the position of subject and object and something like that. Two or three points only. And then I give them more examples to do. At home, or in the class. And we check the answers together. And... later, yeh, err.. I know that they understand, they understand this, and this now... and they understand this and they can write correct passive form sentences.

A: So, it worked well, what in, in what sense? In the sense that they... are able to understand?

K: Yeh, they get this and... and the process, and the process was not very terrible, yeh, emm... because I, I did not have to s... say much, you know that. Passive form, it's not very difficult, and then and they could follow me easily, yeh I think maybe it was one of the reasons and they could follow me and... err... I did not say much, and then and... they could, they could err... recall their memory you know that. Err... recall.. because and.. they had learned this before, and then... yeh... Sometimes maybe if students find that... err.. if students think that emm... this item, and they can handle the item, more easily, if it's not a difficult item, they'll be happier and they will learn more [] enthusiasm... emm... enthusiastically. Yeh.

A: So, [] you think it was... the, the fact that the item was not very complicated that [] made it work well?

K: Ye... and the coming one will be err... conditional sentences and.. I'm afraid of this you know... it's very complicated and difficult. And I think that I have to... spend at least three to four lessons on this. Emm... again, I have to give them notes, I think that I must give them notes, actually emm.. and then and we have to go through all the meanings and the definitions and then we have to do many, many err... questions and to let them understand.

A: Hmm... can you think of a... of another grammar point you've taught recently, which caused problems? Maybe caused you problems or caused your students problems?

K: Hmm... maybe... what is it... I can't think of others now... cos we've just... err... gone through some items.

A: But you're anticipating problems with conditionals?

K: Yeh, conditionals.

A: Why, why particularly?

K: Because of my past experience, experience you know... er... err...

A: What's...

K: [] Last year, yeh, last...

A: Lahha. Can you tell me about last year?

K: Yeh last year I taught them... I taught them this and then, and you know that, conditional sentences, conditional tenses are very confusing, confusing. And then hmm... maybe the main obstacle was that, err.. at that time, I insisted on err... teaching them in English during the lessons, during the lessons. And then, some of them could not understand that, could not understand, even if I err... had tried to teach them for several times. And later, and later I gave up. I tried to explain err... more slowly, and then in Cantonese. Maybe the ideas themselves are very difficult and then, they could not follow me, follow me err... immediately and then, it took time. Yeh, maybe it was not really a problem but it took time, yeh, at that time, because they could not tell the difference between ex... err... especially you know type 3 and 4, yeh err... impossible and then with the last type err... "should have been", yeh even the structure they can't remember the structure and the meaning. And I'm afraid that err... my students are... these two classes, form 4 classes and... and the foundation, yeh... is not very good and then maybe I... again I have to...err... spend much time on telling them the differences among them.

A: Hmm... so when it happened, when you had problems last year, your first tactic was to try and explain in Cantonese to get over those. Was that what you tried to do?

K: Hmm... and again, err... it depends maybe err... I'll start err, teaching in English again. But if I find that err... they can't follow me, emm... sometimes and even now, or sometimes if I emm... if I meet some problems if I think that and... they can't understand some difficult words, and I... don't want to waste my time on err... telling them the exact meaning in English. Yeh, and then I will just tell them the meaning in Cantonese, and maybe some difficult item, some difficult item and then I will tell them directly in Cantonese, in one sentence or two sentences, sentences and then and... I think that it will facilitate the teaching .. and they, yeh. It's time wasting if I just keep on talking in English and then they can't understand.

A: So did that help you last year with the conditional problem, when you switched to Cantonese?

K: Yeh, yes. And this year I think err... some students and.. they can follow me even if I'm speaking in English. Many students err... 4B maybe and... they can understand what I'm talking. Maybe if they can do that, I don't have to switch to Cantonese. But for the other classes, maybe if they can't, I will do that. Yeh.

A: Can I ask you some questions about grammatical errors now?

K: Yeh...

A: I mean imagine that you're teaching a new grammar, a new grammar structure, and when you first introduce it, the students make lots of errors with it. Why do you think that happens?

K: you mean I'm teaching a new er... grammar item, yeh, yeh.

A: You're teaching a brand new grammar structure and the first time you get them to try and practise it, they make lots of mistakes with it. Why do you think that happens?

K: Hmm.. ahh... firstly I'll think that err.. they can't understand, they can't understand and then I have to explain er... to further explain. Er... secondly, for s... a few students I... I know that er... maybe and they cannot pay attention emm... thirdly maybe, err this structure this item is really very difficult, difficult for form 4 students and then hmm... I have to help them much, explain again yeh.

A: Yeh what, what do you do then if, if you have that situation but they're making lots of mistakes, what do you do?

K: First, I'll try to encourage them. Er... it's the new item it doesn't matter if you're making mistakes. Andd then er... and later, I will emm... yeh, and usually I know that er... they're making [] mistakes because I ask them... er... do some exercises on the board or in the [] book and then, I will err... if they're doing your... err... if they're doing the questions on the board, I will just base on, base on the mistakes, mistakes they've made. And then discuss them with their classmates, with them. Emm... and then, if they can't understand, if they still can't un, err.. understand that, and then I will explain, explain the item again, in detailed. Er... in lower speed.

A: What about... right, and what about if you, teach a new grammar structure and... first of all they have no problems with it at all. They manage to ... they do the s.. the practice exercises OK. Then, a few lessons later, the same grammar point comes up again, and they make lots of mistakes with it again, why do you think that sometimes happens?

K: Maybe they can't really understand that, because some tenses emm... I try to tell them that er... we students and we human beings er we can, err... er we can control, control the tenses [] but, yeh, but we're not controlled by the tenses and you don't have to [] follow their rules, err.. strictly err.. present perfect tense and it was it.. [] but you can think of the situation, situation for example er... and you want err... if you're talking about the past tense and then OK ... just before, before going and you want to describe err... something just happened before and then you know that err.. time line you go back... but sometimes and they can't understand and... because they like err.. they like memorising the... rules OK, yeh, the... that rules, and then er... present tense, OK, "E-S-S" and then truth and something like that, and they can't understand them, and then, in that case I will remind them again and again. Because I think that err... it's very natural yeh, when I was a student, yeh. Even I could understand this, I would make mistakes because maybe emm... it was a kind of habit, yeh emm... maybe er now and they cannot get used to the new, new structure and they cannot yeh, use the new structure well, and later after more and more... emm.. practices...

(the other side of the tape)

A: ... about grammar errors. Imagine you give your students a composition, and when you collect the composition in, you find lots of... or you find a number of grammatical mistakes in the composition. What do you do about that?

K: My normal practice is like this... err.. any kind of writing for example a diary, err.. composition, emm... and first I will do something ... by myself ... and I'll

jot down the types of mistakes, err... tenses are very serious, prepositions, and then emm... I'll try to collect the types OK and summarise the types and then I maybe, if it is very serious and I will talk about this in the lesson later, and then emm.. next I will prepare err... a proof-reading sheet emm... I'll try to get some typical mistakes, typical mistakes from some of them and then... I'll try a proof-reading sheet for them and then OK I... when they get, get the... on the prepositions later yeh, and they emm.. you know give them the proof-reading sheet at the same time OK em... look at your mistakes, many, many mistakes, that some of you made, and then, try to correct the mistake and we talk about the mistakes together and maybe I'll err.. remind them of some er... items at the same time er... tense and, why do you use this one er.. think about this and we discuss together.

A: Hmm... so why do you, why do you focus on mistakes in this way?

K: Hmm... why? Because err... in the examination accuracy is very important, yeh examinations and them... To me I think that examination is not the only reason, yeh err.. it's very important of course, exam-oriented err.. to some extent, yeh, My teaching is exam-oriented but.. hmm... I do think that as I said, hmm... I think that emm... correct err.. grammar is quite important now. Actually if they err... making a few mistakes only, I will overlook them and then I will tell them yeh, it's very good. There're just a few mistakes but you know that, usually especially form 4 students and... yeh when I'm marking their work and then, err... and the situation is like that, I'm rewriting a composition for them and then that's why we... use the marking code. And then I do not give them the answers. And then... yeh.

A: what about in, what about in... in an oral lesson when you've got... for example the form 4 that I've just seen ... If you get them doing... perhaps in group discussion for example and you hear, they're making lots of grammatical mistakes, what do you do about that?

K: Hmm... if it is not err.. serious, I mean err.. if it does not, if it does not er... change the meaning of the original form... the original question, or... and then I'll.. I will not stop that. Maybe, maybe, err... if I find that the mistake and the problem is common (()) in the class and then I will talk to them later, later when we are er... when we're discussing the results together. But I will not stop them. Emm... I think there's some mistakes especially when we're speaking, especially tenses and then.. sometimes OK, w... err.. we switch to past tense and then switch back to present tense, it's very confusing. And then hmm... if err... if the mistake on this changed the meaning and then I would tell them, I would tell them immediately at that time. Yeh, what do you mean, did, yeh... and they want to ask something about yesterday, yeh, and he will answer me I don't know, and then ok, and which tense you should use? Very important mistake. Yeh.

A: OK some last, just a last set of questions, emm... general questions. Do you think learners of a language need to know grammar?

K: Yeh. Yes.

A: Right, now in what, in what sense do they need to know grammar? Do they need to know grammar in the sense of... emm... being able to control gram... the

grammatical structure when they're speaking, when they're writing, sort of practical control? Or do you mean, do you

K:] Yeh, and understand

A: mean that they need to have an explicit knowledge of... grammar

K: and [writing, yeh.

A: rules [about how you form the present perfect, or reported speech, or passive voice, or do they need both types of knowledge?

K: Hmm... I think the... err they have to know err... and if they learn grammar, yeh, even if they want to understand a passage, if they can't understand the... maybe err... if it's written in conditional sentence, conditional tense it's very complicated and then yeh, "I I should have been here". Something like that. How can they understand? Yeh. They can't get the meaning, if they want to err... express their view in a sense, and then. They can't do that and the others cannot understand that.

A: right, so you, so... that... do you think they need then actual explicit knowledge of the rules of grammar?

K: No. hmm... I remember some days ago I told my students err... for example, err... I hope that I err.. now, OK you're learning the item, yeh, explicitly, err.. of course I did not use this word, yeh, explicitly and then emm.. but I hope that later, when you understand this, when you can handle this, then you can... and this item maybe emm... the usage of this item err... can become your instinct and you can use it naturally. You don't have to err.. remember for example, ah yeh... now ok I'm talking about err.. the past situation, and then yes, past situation the past tense, no. I hope that, they can understand grammar if they can, if they can monitor grammar well, and then, it can become their instinct, yeh.

A: So, do you think, do you see that there is a relationship then between learning it explicitly and being able to use it in this automatic way?

K: Yeh

A: Does one help the other, or..., I mean do, do learners need to learn it explicitly in order then later on to be able to use it automatically, do you think?

K: Can.. some students you know that and they need, they need... they need err... direct and then clear guideline, and they can't understand if I, just teach them err... by giving them some examples and by setting a situation for them and then and they do practise together and they learn from each other. They can't, they can't follow in this way, yeh, and for some students, and they... and they have to follow me err... in the other way, and I have to give them explicit, actually err... teaching and then I have to explain explicitly and something like that. And I... sometimes I can't understand and I know that some... er... especially err.. primary schools and then they are teaching students in this way. Err... learning through activities and it's very good if.. I don't think... emm... I think that if it's not Hong Kong, yeh, learning through activities, because, through activities and then after school, yeh, and then err... the ((difference...)) through then and they can communicate, they can make use of the new item, the new structure, in the daily life. But Hong Kong students, OK, learning to communi... err... in activities are later when go from err... Cantonese again. Nothing about English, about... this language and then, yeh... they

A: So, so, so...

K: can't handle it well.

A: Right. So, do you think that in, in a id... in an ideal world, what is the best way of acquiring this sort of practical ability to use grammar automatically?

K: Hmm... I remember because er... I studied a course like this er... when I was in the university err... er... language and society and something like that. Hmm... I agree, err.. at that time I really agreed that.. the points and even now, in society like that... er... maybe just like, just like any foreign country, if they learn a... can make use of the language, all the time, all the time, even I think that, even err... the teacher, does not teach them err.. explicitly, yeh, and they don't know err... much about the grammar and... they can learn from the others. They can learn from practice and experience. But Hong Kong students cannot do that. Besides teachers and they don't have... other err.. people their parents and their friends... and we are the only ones to help them and to tell them the rules and then, after school and they will not touch English. Yeh, and they will not have any chance. And then, I think that in society, if they can yeh, make use of the language all the time, it's very good for the learner.

A: How do you think, how do you think learners learn the explicit knowledge of grammar most effectively?

K: Most effectively? Hmm... maybe err.. sometimes, it... err.. it may be boring, and then... yeh, in their learning process... because they must, they must do something and they must try, err... try to memorise some rules at the beginning. But... hmm... if the teachers or the students themselves, and they can learn and teach... in a better way, emm.. they can make the lesson more interesting teachers... the students they can give responses, they're eager to learn, and then and even, err... even learning explicitly, emm... they can get something. Yeh and later, later I think that,... if they can understand that, and they will yeh, it's right that and they... will start learning implicitly and they'll feel interest and because yeh... and they get confidence. Yeh they can handle this.

A: So, is it necessary to teach grammar, do you think?

K: yes.

A: in what sense, in the explicit sense?

K: Hmm... Or in both senses?

K: Both I... I think both.

A: why, why do you think...

K: The former part must be explicitly, yeh, and they have to understand all the rules, they have to understand. And then, later, later I can give them some activities and to draw their attention and to arouse their interest, and... maybe, yeh, they can handle and they can get interest in this, later, and then if they can make use of this, maybe emm... err.. in oral lessons, and then, yeh, and they will find that interesting. But, firstly, we have to do that. Tell them what to do. It's just something is that, for example how to form questions, form questions, and they really don't know, how to form some correct questions er... "what?" and then "where?" and the tense. If I do not teach

them, I think that hmm... and, they will make the mistakes yeh, all the time emm... to form 5 again as same as this, and then, that's why I have to teach them. OK.

A: So, how, how is it best to teach grammar, do you think?

K: Again, err... err... with good notes, and then err... interesting teaching, and maybe emm... interesting teaching and some... activities and some related topics, maybe and the topics they're interested in, hmm... err... and some encouragement, yeh.

A: [And by interesting teaching, what, what, what do you mean? For example...]

K: [Interesting teaching, yeh emm...]

A: Do err, do you.. I mean, are you, are you thinking of specific, particular,

K: [I mean, the atmosphere, yeh.]

A: particular techniques, or just the... just trying to make the thing fun and... the atmosphere?

K: [Yeh.]

Yeh it's my way... ha... err... it's my weakness because I have never learned about this and then I don't know how to teach in an interesting way, but I... just try to make the lesson interesting, yeh. Em... when I, when we go to some, some words, some interesting ideas and then I will focus on this, and then I'll talk with that, for a while and then later, and then... maybe some, some jokes and we can talk together and something like that. I don't know any interesting skills, yeh.

A: Right, OK thank you very, very much.

Karen -- Post-lesson interview (30-4-97)

Interviewer: A
Interviewee (Karen): K
(()): unclear phrases or words

A: OK, so Karen, what are your first thoughts about that lesson?
K: haha... err... again, err... to be honest I think if you were not here, I would err.. I would try to slow down my speech, and maybe, because emm... there were two to three activities and then err... And to be honest again, if you were not here, I would ask more students to emm.. to give me their examples or to read aloud their sentences. But emm... I think I have to, I have to err... make it sure that I can err... handle the lesson in a better way and then I don't want to err... cancel so many activities because of time management, and something like that. And then that's why err... I try to go on to the second activity, though I thought that it was not very err... natural. I stop there, and then I... just hastily, and then I, I went to another part.

A: So, if, if... ideally... so forgetting the...

K: [It was different from...

A: If [I hadn't been there, a nice type 3 conditional, if I hadn't been there,

K: [yeh, the lesson, yeh...

A: and... [you would have let that first, that, that... sentence

K: yeh, [hahaha...

A: chain sort of activity, you would have let that... go on for longer?

K: Yeh.

A: With what purpose in mind? Why would you have done it like that?

K: Why...? ha... err...

A: I mean I am not disagreeing with you at all, I'm just wondering why

K: [Yeh.

A: you would, why you feel that?

K: Emm... though you.. you have said that emm... actually it was err... it was not emm... a formal class observation. But I, I still, I still think that err... it's a kind of assignment, and something like that and then... yeh, hmm.. ha... err.. Normally I think err.. all teachers will want to show the better, better part, emm... to the others, every time when there's someone else in the classroom, besides the teachers and the students I think they want to do something special, and to do something interesting emm more interesting than the other lessons maybe, yeh.

A: But I mean you say you would have done it, you would have let that... first activity go on longer.

K: Yeh.

A: why?

K: Oh yeh. Because I... I want to...err... listen to more examples and to... see that if all of them, all of them err... can handle these sentences, and this err... all the types well.

A: Right.

K: Yeh.

A: What about from the students' point of view? Do you think they would have... benefited more, if you'd done it that way?

K: Yeh, as you could see err... some of them would like to... er... to read aloud the sentences, and they would feel happy, err because err... all the class, classmates, or the teachers, especially the teacher would listen to him, will listen to her and then, they would like to do that to make sure if... if their work was correct. Yeh.

A: Hmm... how, how did you feel about, from the ... from the students' point of view, about that lesson? How do you feel they reacted to the lesson as a whole?

K: hmm.. emm... and I think they felt a bit uneasy like me... because at the beginning of the lesson, one student er... and you did not hear that, one student said to me in Cantonese, er...er... he said that "do we have to err... co-operate with you?" or something like that. But... because emm... emm... I hadn't told them before, err... before I went into the room and then, they felt surprised and then they thought that err... usually the teacher will need co-operation in this way and then, I said to him that err no... just behave as usual. And then, and that's the, that's the case I think s... some of them at least, some of them would feel, err.. would feel uneasy and maybe and they would try to emm... behave back to their usual and something like that, but...

A: Well, because of er... an observer...?

K: Yeh, because of you. Yeh... but hmm.. and the second point maybe and they would become... a bit more silent, err... a bit more co-operative. But anyway this class, err... as I've told you before, and they're... they're quite responsive usually, and then... not quite different from the other lessons but err... a bit. Yeh.

A: Right, right, right. And thinking, thinking about the, the... the, the plan for the... overall package, then you're focussing on conditionals.

K: Yeh.

A: Right. Emm... the lesson that I've just seen was at what point in the series? How many...?

K: Hmm... actually it's the second one. It's the second one.

A: Right.

K: Emm... as I've written on the.. you can have a look later, err... actually err.. in the past few months, err... every time they encountered the emm... some sentences, err.. some conditional sentences, err... I would try to explain a little bit to them. But hmm... but I would tell them every time I would tell them, err.. we would go to the detail later, in the second term.

A: Hmm...

K: And then, err... two days ago, two days ago and that was the first formal lesson we were talking about conditional sentences.

A: Alright, OK. So, so in that first lesson, what did you do, what was the focus of the first lesson?

K: Err... I remember, in that lesson, err at the beginning, I wrote down some sentences on the board and I tried to ask them er... if they could distinguish among them. Now emm... and some difficult sentences, like err.. "if it rain tomorrow, I will stay at home", "if it rained.." and "if it had rained yesterday" and something like that. And I try to explain to them, and then, err.. in the second half of the lesson, I ask them to make some simple sentences, err.. with... err... with

my help maybe, with given words. Err... with my guidelines. And for example, and... and they've just had their term test and then, at that time I asked them to... err... make some sentences like err.. they did not get good result, and then "if I had" yeh... and just emm... and they just followed it closely. Emm.. instructions and the notes, they had in hand. And then.. in that lesson, what we did was that yeh. My explanation, explanation and then... they err... sentence making, practice and something like that.

A: So, the beginning was, was... explanation from you, or were you getting... examples from... them? What was, what was happening?

K: The beginning, I wrote down some examples on the board, and then I ask them. Ask them to look at the... and then err... I ask them if they, if they could er... understand, if they could tell the difference among them. And then... I asked some of them hmm... I remember, a few of you could understand err.. emm... the difference between the first and the second type. And for the last one, last one, I went to the detail with them. Because it was the most difficult part, I thought yeh...

A: Right.

Right. Hmm... and which bits of that lesson went well, and why, do you think? Which, which parts of that lesson was successful,

K: Sorry? - Lyeh.

A: from your [] point of view?

K: The last lesson?

A: Yes.

K: Successful, haha..?

A: That first lesson, yeh.

K: Hmm.. I think... err... because my objective in the last lesson was to explain, in detail and was to make them understand and then, I think the most successful part was that err... they could understand in that lesson. And then, just like this lesson, I can see that err yeh. And they understand what to do and how to make sentences, and then that my explanation yeh.

A: Then what... so how did you get evidence that they had understood?

K: Because haha... because of the activities emm... they could, they could err... err... follow my instructions, and they could do what I expected, yeh. And then... err...

A: And the sort of things you were asking them to do...

K: Yeh [] emm... []

A: were [] what?

K: Anyway, I, I, I think that.. emm.. emm... I still need some more evidence and for example I... I ask them to do some exercises at home, and we'll check the exercises next lesson and... go to some difficult questions again next time. And maybe emm... at the end I'll give them a quiz, a quiz and then I... I can further make sure that err they, really understand how to make use of that. Yeh, emm.. at this moment, I, I feel satisfied because they, they can emm... maybe, maybe err... they can at least handle and understand, OK, but emm... I'm sure that, err... I can expect that, when they come across some very difficult sentences, or when they

err... are doing some cloze passages, yeh, that means emm... they have to... make sentences, or they have to find out answers in context, or maybe in a paragraph in a cloze passage and then.. there will be problems.

A: hmm...

K: But at this moment yeh, hmm... I think it's not bad.

A: Hmm... so, were there any things in that first lesson that you were not so happy about, that you thought "oh I wish I hadn't done that" or... "I wish I'd done that differently"?

K: Last lesson... I... was unhappy about that? Hmm... no actually, because in every lesson, I... ha... I'll find a few of them, a few of them err... hmm... I find they're err... not paying attention to me emm... maybe emm... not listening to me, and just like the last lesson, err.. one or two of them err... and they... they did nothing, or emm... and they that... they had done nothing, before, before I came to ask them to start doing that and then... every lesson I, I can see some of them like this. And then... not the serious problem, I think.

A: Well let's go back ... thinking ... thinking about when you were planning the, the whole package.

K: Yeh.

A: What did you assume that your students already knew? What, what assumptions did you make about previous learning?

K: Yeh, err... as I know, they, they have already learned something about this in... err.. form 1 or form 2. Especially err.. type 1 and type 2, the simpler ones.

A: Hmm...

K: And then I... I just expected they understand the err.. relation between err.. if... and then the next one is the result hmm... I just expected that they understand ha... type 1 type 2 very well but I have to remind

A: Right, right.

K: them of the pattern. Yeh. But not the [meaning emm... And about the meaning, type 3, err.. it took me much [time to explain in detail. And especially the pattern we're doing, yeh. Past perfect.

A: I mean when you were, so when you were planning the package, what difficulties did you think they might have?

K: Hmm... understanding, and then emm...

A: Understanding what?

K: Understanding the meaning, err... understand the meaning correctly I mean.. yeh.

A: Of what, of the individual types or of the whole conditional concept?

K: [Yeh. Especially, especially the differences among three types, three [types.

A: Right. [

K: Ahh... and then emm... and the correct use, use of... err.. the tenses. Tenses and maybe even PP. they can't, they can't remember it well, OK. every time er... again, maybe. Err... it's the problem about err... about boredom again, and then I try to, every time I try to make it interesting but... I can't be successful every time. Err.. and this time... actually thanks to your help err.. the activities come from the book that you recommend. 'Grammar Practice Activities'. Yeh. I really find... find it useful. Hmm... and then I think it would be better if I can get

some help from other sources because I... yeh. Hmm... and usually I'll tell my friend, and my students, I lack a sense of humour, and every time, it's hard for me to make a lesson to make err.. my teaching interesting and then.. yeh. I can expect that emm.. they will feel bored, if I just explain, explain the types err... step by step and something like that and then, yeh... I try not to... err... I tried... hmm... I try to eliminate the problems like this.

A: hmm... but I mean thinking ... if I came back to the first thing you mentioned about... the, the problem of differentiating between the meanings.

K: Yeh.

A: How did your planning of the lessons, how was that intended to get over that problem?

K: Err... I remember last lesson, err... I mean the first lesson, err... I try to... I try to tell them the difference in the way that err emm... I've one situation, and the same situation, and then I tried to make different sentences, based on this situation and then I... I thought that it would be easier for them to understand and for example if ... just like I said, err... "if I study hard, I will get good results", "if I studied hard", and then I will tell them err... because I know that I'm quite lazy and then I will not err... I will not study hard actually and then, "if I studied hard", and the last one maybe err yeh, just remember the term test, if I'd yeh.. I think that if I just base on one same situation and they can get better understanding.

A: Right.

K: Yeh.

A: Hmm... hmm... emm... thinking about the lesson that we've just... th... that I've just watched, emm... What were your specific objectives in this lesson... that I've just watched?

K: hmm. I think emm... consolidation.

A: Of what?

K: Of... ha... of their understanding, of their knowledge. Yeh.. emm...

A: Of which aspect of conditional sentences particularly?

K: Hmm.. and again, hmm... emm hmm... how to distinguish among the meanings, and the er... forms, yeh. Oh it's still at the first stage, I think.. initial stage and then... I just hope that they can really tell the differences among them. And then, and they just know how to use

them correctly. That is my goal now, I think.

A: Right. [So, how were the activities in this lesson intended to help you achieve those objectives?

K: Emm.. as you could see I, err.. and they were, when they were conducting the activities and I walked around, and... and I tried to err... look at their sentences. And then, I would tell them if they made serious mistakes, err for example err... some of them will err... and they miss the important word like err... emm and the verb "to be" and some of them made a s... serious mistake like the first one, "if I"..."if I would" at the next one, "I will" and then, I, I would tell them immediately at that time. At that time and then... because err... you know, because of the size of the class, it's hard to have individual help.

A: Hmm...

K: Yeh, and then I tried to do that in this way usually.

A: Hmm... I mean with that first activity, emm... where they were making the... the sort of chains of sentences, to what extent do you think

K: yeh.

A: that was helping them - distinguish between type 1 and type 2 conditionals? I mean, some of them had a type 1 to start with and others had a type 2 to start with.

K: hmm.. hmm... hmm...

A: err... I remember I discussed, I have discussed this with one of my colleagues, before you came ... and then whe emm... emm... she gave me the same advice, and she said that.. it... it might be not very good because err... some of them they, err... will do type 1 and type 2. But I don't know what to do because err... time is not enough, it's limited. err... And then I just.. I just wanted to make sure they, they could practise type 1 and type 2, and then I tried to hmm.. I tried to strike a balance. Err.. four type 1 and maybe five type 2, and then I hope that err... they could try to... errr... try to practise. Maybe another reason was that I thought, they was... emm.. they were not very bad at type 1 and type 2. And then I could err... I could hmm...hmm... I could practise with them in this way err... not in detail maybe, and then and err.. and they could, if they could err... handle type 1 well, even type 2 and yeh, and they may be able to do that.

A: Hmm... I mean maybe it's something to think about when you're

K: |Yeh.

A: when you're, | when you're... doing the assignment, I mean it's

K: | I know it... it's a problem

A: not, it's not, not a big problem at all But if, if one of the... the, the problems that you anticipated they might have was the difficulty of distinguishing when you use the type 1 and when you use the type 2, emm... I mean you may want to think when you're looking back over what you've done, well, I wonder if I could modify the activity in any way to make the... difference in use more apparent. I mean you did, I, I, I notice that you did... err.. at one or two points try and emphasise what the difference you know when it's more... if it is a possible thing it's type 1, and if it's unlikely it's got to be... type 2. You were saying things of that sort, but... emm... It's just something to think about. I don't know, you may, you may feel that you... that emm... yeh, it's something to... discuss at least when you... cos in the assignment, you... the idea is that you... reflect upon what you've done and think about ways in which you might modify, and that's yeh, it's not a major problem, but it might be something, it's, it's an issue

K: |Yeh.

A: it's something to... to talk about.

K: |I think I... I think I'm... emm.. I know what you mean, err maybe er... do you mean that if I can emm...I've a new idea now, err.. if I can just give them a situation, and then ask them to emm... to make a decision themselves which type we should use, type 1 or type 2 and then they make a sentences by themselves and they make a decision by themselves but not er... like the worksheet OK, I, emm... I had already told them err... type 1, and then OK,

and they knew what to do actually and then type 2. Yeh. Err.. next time maybe, yeh, I still have, 4E haha.. yeh. I can do that with them.

I'll [give them a situation...

A: Well, it may be, may be interesting, yes. If... I, if... what's the situ... just you know if it just the... the... I suppose the... the verb and the... you know, "go to Japan", for example, cos I... I mean as you've said, that was I think the one you said, the, the... emm... the choice of whether it's type 1 or type, type 2, is, is simply really that... the, the perception of the speaker as to whether that's a, a likely event or an unlikely event. And so if you just give them... the... infinitive, and let them decide, emm... and if they can explain why they decided... then, then I think that.. you know, you may... it may be more... slightly... more... fruitful way in terms of getting them to think about the difference between the two, the two types, that... if that's what you want to do. Emm... and then the last task you were trying

to... what, get them to focus on... type 3?

The [last type. Yeh.

A: And how did you feel about that one?

K: hmm... emm... and again err... I think for this type err... we still need more time, yeh, because it's quite difficult and then if we... if we had err.. enough time and then I think we would.. have err... make more sentences emm... focused on more parts. It s... it seemed that they, they could err... give me some examples correctly, but I thought, but I thought er.. at that time when they.. they still need a few of them, because I did not call their names, and then err... maybe they did not understand the sentences well and they did not understand how to use them, something like that.

A: I mean to what extent did you find that they were having difficulty with idea of regret, emm... I mean was that causing any problems? Cos you, you...

K: I don't think so. Yeh... er... they, they know this word when we talk about err... gerund. Ha.. yeh. Regret, -ing and something like that. Err...

A: But I mean were they able to think of things that they regretted, did they ... err... that's what I mean. Even if they understood the word, I mean were they able to.. to look back

oh yeh...

A: on their life, or whatever... ha... [emm...

K: [Yeh, I know [what you mean. Emm... and maybe as, as you could see the example like err... umbrella, taking an umbrella and then, they regret. Yeh err... and they're... they're still young I think emm... when I start the topic regret, I hmm... I, I could expect that emm... they would not tell me something they really regret because they, they, they're quite young and maybe emm.. umbrella and maybe emm... study... study hard and maybe err... err... wake up early and something, something like that. Yeh, and they are not so... sometimes they're not creative err maybe and they are not mature enough to give me.. yeh... e... err... a better example maybe. But...

A: Yes cos I mean they're u... you... I thought you did it well actually trying to.. you exemplified things, when you gave them an example of a... a sort of small... not a personal.. regret, but a

K: social situation. Emm... but... again I suppose
A: You feel unhappy, yeh. No regret.

K: they, they... that may be s... quite difficult for them at their level of... maturity to... reflect upon social issues and express regret about that... I don't know...

K: maybe I try to simplify like emm... you feel hap... You feel sad about
A: Don't know, well, I don't know...

K: that... ha...

A: hmm... well no, I think it's, it's, it's... it's the way to do it, but I'm not quite sure emm... I'm not quite sure whether you can expect very much back from students of that age, in a sense, because they, they... it's quite difficult for them... emm... yeh maybe that.. as you said they're too young to... to look back with regret on... in serious ways, they maybe, you know it's... lost umbrellas, or forgotten umbrellas, or... forgotten homework and that's about the... the limit of it probably. Emm... thinking about the le... the lesson that I've just seen and then what actually happened in the classroom. Was that lesson different from what you usually do? I mean for ex... for example err emm... if you've taught conditionals before, was that different from the way you've taught conditionals in the past, or... very similar?

K: [haha... err... two years ago, yeh. Err... less boring, ha...
A: What, this is less boring, or that was less... this is less bor...
K: Yeh. [Yeh, this is less boring because I tried to make it more interesting. Err... less boring, and then err... and because of the students again, emm... and they're more responsive all the times, and then the result will be, would be different from before. Yeh. In the last class I taught they were very passive. And they would feel bored all the time.

A: Hmm...
K: Yeh.
A: But I mean thinking about the... OK, so you've got differences there because of the characteristics of the class. But, what about in terms of what you did? Emm... was it... was it different this time from last time?
K: Hmm... I tried to emm... I tried to design some activities err... but actually I, I really think that sometimes err teachers will be affected err.. by the students, by the students err... because I remember err... yeh, just as what I said, about last year my err... my class emm... my students they were, they were passive and they would feel bored easily and then, you know... and the teachers I mean I... I, emm.. I was seriously affected and sometimes I.. emm... I would try to just try to emm... convey my knowledge to them, yeh. Err... in the same way every time, in every lesson and then, yeh. Emm... and they could learn something and they could err.. if they were patient enough they, if they were attentive, and they would get something. But I... I have to admit that they, they... they were bored actually at that time. But this year because the students err they're more active and they're cheerful as you can see. And then, I, hmm.. I feel happier actually in the lessons. And then I emm... sometimes I will try to play with them. Emm... I will try to tell them some jokes and then to make the lessons more interesting because they,

they would get excited and they would get happy easily. And then, yeh. And you could say emm.. it's the motivation, and then I...I try to teach in a more interesting way because they like that. And then I try...

A: [Hmm... I mean in this lesson, in this lesson, you were really trying to get them to use the grammar item?

K: Yeh.

A: Now in the... when you taught it two years ago, was, was that the same? Or was it much more you explaining, and them ... or what?

K: Yeh, [emm... and the difference is that err... two years ago, I... I explained it, and [you say emm... in a deductive way, yeh, explained it and then, I [explained it in detail err... If they could not understand, I explained it again, and then I give them some examples, and I asked to... to give me some examples, I asked them to do some exercises and then we check together. If I find that there were some problems and then I explained again. And then I, we have exercises and quizzes. Something like that, in this way, yeh. Err... a boring way but again, err... I don't think they could not learn anything but, just in this way.

A: I mean you... you're making a difference of... of... of... interest and boredom and so on, but in terms of actually learning the grammar, do you think there's any... I mean, is there any difference between the... the... effectiveness of what you've been... the sort of thing you've been doing today, and the sort of thing you were doing two years ago, do you think?

K: I don't know actually err... Maybe... we're just focusing on err... conditional sentences, but emm... at this moment I, I don't know if they really err... understand, understand the types very well, but err... maybe I'll just take the other examples like err... tenses err... or maybe the other grammatical items. Err... I think the difference is that, this year my students can learn emm... not in a better way but, err... in a, a quicker way maybe, because they, they feel interested in the lessons, and they feel more interested than the students in the past. And then if they like the lessons, if they feel interest, and then they will pay attention and then err they can learn and they can practise in a better way and then ... I think besides err... interest and boredom, another difference is err... the speed. Yeh, that they can handle.

A: Hmm... hmm...

K: Handle the item.

A: I mean I was very, that... I was very impressed with the sentences you were reading out that they produced. I mean they were very, they were very good actually, weren't they? some of those. Emm... and... they

K: [Yeh, I agree.

A: certainly seem to have the idea of the [meaning very well, and that was... it... I, I thought they were doing that [superbly well really. Emm... I mean which bits of the lesson went, [went particularly well in your opinion. I mean, which bits of that... of the... of today's class were you...

were [you happy about? Yeh.

K: Today? [

Err... I [think the... just like I mentioned, the sentences they emm... they

read out. Yeh. Because they were really creative and interesting and funny, and then emm.. hmm... I like that because err... I felt happy and, my class felt happy yeh. And then if they, if they feel happy, I'm sure that emm... and they'll listen more attentively and they will go on ... err in an easier way and something like that and then, yeh. That's the best part because of their effort I think ... their emm... and their creativity.

A: Hmm...

K: Yeh.

A: But they could also feel the sense of achievement in the way, cos they l... they, they... they'd done a, a solid bit of work, all of them, and it was good stuff, yeh.. err.. emm.. I mean, which bits, were there bits of the lesson which you were a bit less happy about at all? Either from your point of view as the teacher or, where you looking at the students' response, where they didn't quite respond in the way that you expected them to?

K: I think emm... if we're talking about the problems, it's nothing related to my students err... again, emm... it's about my time, err... time management, yeh. I could not handle the time very well again, because I tried to... input so many activities in one lesson. I think two lessons would be much better. Yeh. Em... and then, err... as you, as you could see and they just followed my instruction and they did what I asked them to do and then, yeh, and they did it well but, err... my arrangement, yeh, my planning, I, I think it's the problem. I tried to... ha... plan so many activities, so many parts every time into one lesson.

A: I mean at what point, you, you s... you, you say you left out one activity in the end. At what point did you decide you were going to leave out that activity? Did you decide, was it before the lesson started ... or did it reach a point in the lesson where you thought "I'm not gonna have a chance to do this", or what?

K: Emm... I think it may be because err... when actually it's quite common in every lesson or before every lesson I will, prepare err... different parts emm... different materials and because just in case, just in case err... err... I have enough time I have more time to the other part, and maybe just in case, if I, if I see that [err... my students feel bored, err feel uninterested in, in the part I'm talking about and I will err... try to, err... try to finish it, or try to stop it for a while and go to another part, another more interesting part, and then, err.. I mean, I will prepare err... a number of materials every time, and just like this time, err... I think if I have time, err... if the students er.. if the students, if they'd not been so creative, and then maybe I would have to err... include the other parts. And because time, time might be left and then, yeh... and they, and they had nothing to do. I'm just in case I think. But... err... I tried to cancel this, this activity, another reason is that hmm... I was very sure that I would not be able to cover this activity, because there was one lesson only. Yeh.. I just prepared to this... yeh.

A: Right, right, right.

K: For safety's sake, ha yeh.

A: But there weren't any particular points in the lesson where you were conscious of any other problems you needed to deal with. I mean, the students didn't come up

with any examples that you hadn't anticipated or, emm... there weren't any difficulties from that point of view?

K: Emm... any difficulties... hmm...

A: I mean I didn't think that... I did, I didn't foresee, I'm not asking you that because I thought there were difficulties. I was just wondering whether you were sitting there, and or... standing there out in front of... or going round and, and you were finding they'd put things that you hadn't expected, or there were sort of learning difficulties arising that you hadn't anticipated or...

K: Hmm... and they were just minor mistakes. Minor problems. OK. emm... and again just as I have said, err... I don't think this lesson, in this lesson OK, err ... err ... I could really make sure if they were able to handle conditional sentences very well and then, and that's why we still need some exercises ((any case)) but, in this lesson again, I think they did quite well. Err... err... at least, there were not serious mistakes about the err.. pattern, and maybe they're understanding and then, that's OK.

A: Hmm. May I... I was interested whe... where at the end when you were telling them to do exercises from that that 'English Grammar in Use', their response was not exactly positive, emm...

K: Because yeh... emm... that's another story because err... they

A: Why do you think that...

K: usually blame me that, err.. because I... I usually ask them to bring err.. one or two books and again, for safety sake. And then, usually I cannot make use of one of them, and then they find it very heavy, you know, the.. their schoolbags. And then emm... and they'll give me a response like this every time. Err... I usually, will make use of this again tomorrow, because today you can see they have the book in hand, but I did not use that.

A: Right.

K: Yeh ha...

A: I mean how valuable do you find the exercises in that? Presumably you're ... they're going to do something on... the conditional from there. Why are you wanting them to do that?

K: Hmm... emm... to further practise maybe err... I think s... sometimes they really need some mechanical exercises, even they're mechanical. Maybe it's quite strange but, I think err.. if they cannot, if they cannot err.. handle the pattern of the form correctly and then, yeh. Err... and there's nothing they can do err... err.. to create their own sentences. And then and that's why every time, even they're mechanical, I will ask them to do some exercises. In order to make them get familiar with the pattern. Yeh.

A: Right, right. So, you... you're doing that as a sort of what... follow up or consolidation of what they've done today in a way. Is that, is that the idea?

K: Yeh. Emm... and tomorrow I'll try to choose some difficult parts and... some... emm... difficult questions maybe emm... to check and discuss with them. And we'll not go through all the exercise I suppose. And they've got the answer key. And then, just focus on some difficult part, and then, and maybe I'll ask them again, if they really have some problems and I'll invite some of them to make some sentences again. And then to make sure if they really understand or... today

maybe err... and they pretended to... be able to understand emm... tomorrow I'll learn the truth.

A: Right, right. Well let me ask you a condi... one, just a couple of last

K: [Yeh.]

A: questions, a conditional question here. If you could teach the lesson again, is there anything that you would do differently?

K: Hmm... emm... the first point, I can't think how to avoid this... the time management again, but actually I have no idea er... what can I do next time if I could do that again, yeh, err... how could I ha... how could I manage the time... better? I think that I have to err... do something differently about, especially about the time, but... I have no idea. What can I do....? Yeh.

A: Yes, I'm not sure, I mean... er... I mean, I didn't feel that you were rushing the activity particularly. Although emm... I would have been quite happy for you to have... carried on with that sentence chaining activity for longer, and not do the type 3 activity. It wouldn't have worried me at all emm... So if that was... what you felt was a natural thing to do, I mean I would have been quite happy for you just to... gone with what seemed to you the natural thing to do rather than worry about putting on ... a special show of different, different things. And I think that's, that's emm... no I think you have to be flexible, you need to be responsive to the class, emm... I mean one of things I'm, I'm going to say tomorrow to people – because this is something I've seen with a number of other people - is that they've... they had good activities emm... which they have done too quickly ... almost too quickly, emm... because they want to get on to the next activity, emm... and I think that that's a pity, because often you don't ... I don't think your, I mean you know, you, you... I've seen some of your classmates who have... stopped an activity much earlier than you did, emm... because they wanted to go on to the next activity, and I think that's emm... yeh because they think they've got to cover everything that's in their lesson plan, and would have a... I, I think that's you know... a mistake really. I wouldn't worry about that too much. Emm... OK, just one last question - obviously people want to get into this room, emm... with... you ... what're you gon... what are you going to do next? Is basically the ne... the, the.. you're going to... pick up things in relation to the exercises, is that right? And then and, and what else?

K: And then emm... I'll ask them to do... err... to make more examples, more sentences, in...

A: What, related to that or, or from a different...

K: Yeh, related to that. There's you.. you could hear.. er... from... I'm going to assign err... one lesson maybe... yeh. Emm... just spend one lesson on conditional sentences again tomorrow. I think that's enough. And then in the next lesson I will go to another part. And then... maybe err... after checking these exercises, if I find that, and again I'll try to be flexible, yeh, if I find that there are still some serious problem with them and I'll spend more lessons with them. But if not, I think I can.. hmm... try to complete them, after checking the exercises with them, and then I will give them a quiz, at the end of the package, yeh.

A: I mean, did anything happen today that made, that has made you change your ideas about what you're going to do tomorrow?

K: Yeh, but to another class. Err, actually I've got a problem that, emm... can I... can I try to cover, the err.. cover what... err.. my theories ... maybe err.. my teaching to another class, in my essay? I mean err... I'm teaching conditional sentences, but err... what you have watched was 4B, 4B, err... but, tomorrow, I think I will make some amendments err to 4E and for example err... the first activity, I'll change the format, err... I'll give them some situations and I ask them to... make a decision by themselves, type 1 and type 2 and something like that, and can I include.. this... ?

A: Well what I, what I would strongly suggest ... cos you're in a very lucky position actually, having, having two classes, emm ... I would strongly suggest that you... discuss in your assignment, the changes that you made, you know, disc... dis... disc... discuss what happened you taught it with 4B, and... why you changed it, and, and... then try it with 4E and discuss what happens with the 4... it's that's lovely. I mean if you can do that, that would be great. Emm... because that will really give you an opportunity not just to... think about what's happened this time, but also to try out modifications and see what happens then. So, no, great ... do, do... yes, yes. Well, let me just give you the notes. I mean I thought, I thought it was a lovely lesson. I mean, I've got no problems with it at all actually, emm... and one of the things that is ... was nice was that, I, I thought you... I thought you managed the lesson very well. I mean I... err.. emm... I mean you always tell me each time I come that you're nervous, but you don't come across as nervous and the way you manage the their... the students, I think it's very good, emm... Let me just turn this...

Lydia/ Eva/ Karen – Lesson planning discussion

Lydia: L

Eva: E

Karen: K

(()): unclear phrases or words

[]: Actions

K: Shall we start now?

L: What are we supposed to do?

K: How to teach present perfect tense. Form 3.

E: They should have learned about this in lower forms.

K: They're supposed to. But I don't think that they can understand, form 3 students!

L: They know the form of present perfect tense, I think, but they don't know when to use it.

K: Yes.

L: That's the problem. First of all, I think we have to arouse their interest.

K: How?

L: Step one arouse their interest, but how?

K: By providing some activities.

L: Haha!

E: Sing songs.

L: Songs? Haha!

K: Yeah.

L: Which song?

K: Or ask them to

L: Which song has present perfect tense?

K: Present perfect tense, which song?

L: "Where have all the flowers gone"?

K: Yeah!

E: Yeah!

K: The whole song is like that.

L: We prepare the song, and then let them listen to the song, OK,
"Where have all the flowers gone"?

E: And they sing the song together.

L: Yes, they may sing it together.

K: Teach them to sing.

L: Arouse their interest!

[Everyone is jotting notes]

K: And then I think that for present perfect tense it's very complicated, and we have to prepare a set of notes, at least a simple set of notes, and to tell them every point, important point, for example, "just" and then experience... I think they have something in hand, it's easier for them to handle. Do you think that?

E: Give them notes. Do we need to discuss what kind of notes?

L: What do we have to include in the notes, the forms of the present perfect tense?

K: I don't think that we don't have to do that, [pointing at the paper] because how to plan a lesson to teach them. It's supposed that we all know what present perfect tense is, and we have to discuss the points and how to tell them, how to teach them. Is it?

E: OK. Give them notes, explain, do the exercise.

K: And how to explain maybe

E: The time line

K: And show them the relationship between the present and the past.

And what else? And show them the contrast between present perfect tense and the past tense, present perfect tense and present tense. Something like that. And how to show the contrast?

L: Using examples.

E: Using examples.

K: Using examples maybe, we can give them some situations. You have no book now, and how can you tell your teacher. Something like that.

E, L: Yeah!

L: Or can we get some hints from this grammar book? *[glancing at the grammar book on the table together]*

E: Just ask them to make sentences? Ask students to make sentences?

K: I think just after the song, and they we suppose their interest, their interest has been aroused. And then we try to give them some situations immediately and ask them to think about this, how to say, how to tell the others, something happened before just before, and how to tell the teachers you don't have any book now, you don't have your homework....situation based, and then, and write the answers on the board, maybe write the sentences on the board.

L: So, they use the present perfect tense automatically when they are producing the sentences. They use it automatically.

K: And at this moment, of course, they will make some mistakes. And then we can highlight the mistakes. Before we got to the details.

L: So we lead them to produce present perfect tense sentences, OK, and then we can imagine another situation. For example, we can ask them other questions, for example, "what did you do yesterday?" And then they will produce past tense sentences. And then we can compare them, compare the sentences, and point out the differences past tense and present perfect tense.

E: Ask them what they did yesterday. Result today.

L: Yea, questioning. And...

K: Questioning. [*jotting it down on her piece of paper*]

E: And they might not know some past participles. The spelling.

L: Oh, the regular verbs and the irregular verbs.

K: Can we do that in one lesson?

E: I think when they make sentences on their own.....

L: But at the end of a grammar book, usually there is a table for irregular verbs, so if they forget the spelling of some verbs, they can look it up there. And I think they studied these when they are in primary school or in form one and two. They should have memorized these irregular verbs.

K: They should have.

E: But they forget.

L: Yes, they forget.

K: Maybe I think that we still have much time left, we try to think about any idea we have, any activity in the lesson, and we try to arrange the order and then we go to the class organization and something like that.

E: The order to be done in one lesson you mean?

K: And the steps maybe. We have many ideas now: Number one, arouse the interest by using a song, and then give them situations and ask them to make sentences and questioning. Are they the same?

L: Hm.... Situation, well nearly the same! We need them to produce present perfect tenses, present perfect sentences using present perfect tense, and then we need them to produce sentences using simple past tense. And then we will know the difference. It's the same step I think, situation and questioning. Yes, what else can we do? Other

activities?

K: And how about just before we have said that they may have forgotten about irregular verbs. We can do some mechanical activities, for example, pair them up and then ask questions in present perfect tense, and the other just reply in present perfect tense, mechanical, and give them some hint. “Have you brought your textbook?”, and then “yes, I have brought my textbook.” And something like that.

L: Kind of a revision.

E: Do we need to prepare some notes for the situations for them? Because I think they don't have much to say.

L: They don't have much to say?! Hm...

E: Form three students I think they already know the answers.

L: So we have to prepare some guidelines for them, prepare some notes for them, for example, homework, or clean the dishes, and we provide some information for them, they mechanically produce sentences in present perfect tense and give answers in present perfect tense. Do you mean that? We provide the content.

K: My point is that we want them to get the familiarised with the structure because you know that after understanding the point many students they can't understand the structure well and they can't handle the structure well, and they don't know what it means. When they really go to the situation they have to make sense of it, and they have to make use of it, and they will make mistakes.

L: So we need drilling, we drill with them on the form. In this case, I think we have enough exercise for one lesson for such drilling from our grammar book.

E: Yeah.

L: Prepare some exercises for them. OK.

[jotting notes]

K: How can we start teaching them the points one by one?

L: You mean the usage, when to use them?

[Karen nods]

E: Use the time line.

L: Maybe we can introduce some words just like "since" or "for".

K: "just, already".

L: Maybe we can pick up such words and teach them the difference between "since" and "for". For how long is one period of time, and then since a date, since a time.

E: Teach them the short form.

L: En...ha

K: "Since, for, just, already" and then using the time line to help them understand the relationship.

E: Do we need to introduce the passive? Too much already!

K: We have just talk about, ah we have to show the relationship between the present and the past. We can just use the time line, but how about the contrast between the past and the present perfect?

E: Also using the time line.

K: And maybe we can use some cloze passages.

L: Cloze passage.

K: And the impression about past tense and about present perfect tense, and present tense.

L: You mean in one exercise, maybe they have to use present perfect tense to complete the answers, and sometimes they have to use simple past tense to complete the exercise. OK

K: And maybe give them MC. MC is much easier for form three students. What else? It's our own experience. Haha...

L: Can something be done in a group, any group work?

K: It's about the class organization. Maybe pair work! And then how about, this one? [pointing at her paper] The whole class are involved.

E: Ask them to change the lyrics of the song.

L: You may do that.

K: Change the tense. And how about questioning? Individually?

L: Hm... what do you think? Let volunteers answer the questions?

K: Form three?

E: Depends on their personality. For the situation, what can you figure? About the school life?

K: School life?

E: I have thought for the situation, for example, they are already form three students. We could ask them what they have achieved in the last two years.

L: Haha...yes.

K: For example, just like for the test or examination, we can just give them simple situations like, "Did you work hard?" And then "what's the result now?" Make sentence connecting these two points. And just look around to find some examples in the classroom.

L: "Who has been your classmate since form one?" And they automatically produce the sentences like "Amy or June has been my classmate since form one".

K: Maybe about the hair style, your hair seems long, and then... how to say I cut it for three months. Something like that. Try to give some interesting situations... [laughing]

L: We have forty minutes only.

E: So we don't need to do

K: We have five minutes for the song at least.

L: Five minutes maybe is not enough.

K: Do we have to teach them how to sing the song?

L: We can read the words.

K: It will take half the lesson.

L: And then let them point out.... Ha... We can play the song first.

K: And graveyard, and can you remember the words?

E: And tell them the meaning of this song. The background of this song.

L: And let them point out the present perfect tense, where is the present perfect tense used. It takes ten minutes I think. Three minutes for the first playing. And we play it once. And then it's three minutes.

E: And the meaning. And then they sing together.

K: We don't have to play the whole song.

L: That's possible. We can pick on sections.

K: What's our purpose actually in the lesson, one lesson? Do we have to teach them to understand present perfect tense? By the end of the lesson?

L: Some....I think what we can do is to let them to have some understanding of the use of present perfect tense within forty minutes.

E: I think they'll learn the form, but maybe they are not quite sure in using the form in context, in their composition.

K: And we can treat it as a revision lesson.

E: Feedback of composition. Pick up a comprehension passage from the textbook and ask them to underline the present perfect forms from the passage. Revision.

L: As a revision. So how long does it take for the first task? For the song it takes how long?

E: We have to decide what method we have to use.

K: Yea, how?

E: Do we all agree to have the song?

K: I think it's not a bad idea, but we can't play the whole song, and then maybe we can't ask them to sing, to learn to sing actually in one lesson. Then we just listen to part of the song, and try to point out some sentences with present perfect tense. Ask them why we use present perfect tense.

L: Yes.

K: And try to finish step one in five minutes.

L: OK. Five minutes. OK.

L: And then we go to step two. We have thirty-five minutes left.

K: Yea. Thirty-five.

L: And then how about the situation and then questioning? How long does it take?

E: Twenty minutes.

L: Twenty minutes?

E: It depends on their participation.

L: Yes. Their response.

K: Drilling, five minutes?

E: Five minutes.

L: We have ten minutes left.

K: Ten minutes, is that enough?

E: For playing out the "for" and "since", the construction.

K: Ten minutes left for the key points actually, the explanation. The explanation!

L: Haha.

K: Is it the most important?

L: Can we put

K: Yea, I think so, explanation first, after the song, and then the situations.

L: Situations. Explanation and then we put the drilling. Is that possible?

K: Too much time on questioning because maybe in this forty minutes

E: Fifteen minutes.

K: Maybe here they do not understand when to use present perfect tense at this moment. And then we spend much time on this asking them questions. And then?

E: In fact, in the classroom, we will explain the response when the students make mistakes, divide them - questioning and then explanation - and then two parts.

K: But can they handle that? It's supposed they have forgotten the important points, and then we just base on the mistakes they made, and then tell them, OK, for example, this is, experience and then, why don't you use present perfect tense.

E: In fact, nearly, I never explained these to my student in my former schools.

K: And they'll understand it?

E: Well, we have a grammar books. We just let them to do the homework, and then check the answers. I just read out the answers for them.

K: They can't understand, present perfect tense is not easy.

E: I think for isolated sentences, it's very difficult for them to grasp. For isolated sentences, of course, they'll know "I have lost my keys. (())looking for them". It's very simple. But what's difficult for them is in composition I think. Every time I finish marking a composition, I'll highlight them.

L: But my students seldom use present perfect tense in their compositions. They use simple present, simple past, and sometimes past perfect.

E: Then I underline, for example, simple past, and say that it should be

E: Then I underline, for example, simple past, and say that it should be present perfect. Because they are interested in the mistakes of their classmates.

K: It depends on what kind of students we have. For my students I don't think they can handle it well just by looking at the examples, just by looking at the mistakes the other classmates made because they have to understand it before. And how about you?

L: My students need explanation.

K: Yea.

L: They don't know the use of "since" and "for". And I have to explain that to them as well. When to use "since", and when to use "for". They mix these two words.

E: "since" and "for", yes, I agree. Very often.... I don't have the lesson just for present perfect because in the textbook, usually there is a after the comprehension there is a grammar part, I just follow the steps.

K: Yea, it's a difference because every year when I have a new class, and then I will start from tenses, because I think that they have to understand tenses before they get to know the other things, and then I will teach them tenses, what kind of tenses.

E: The most difficult part I think. Very abstract. Maybe my explanation is not good, therefore I don't explain. Because I always find that my students won't understand my explanation. They don't know what is meant by a point of time.

K: I know what you mean because it's the same. Sometimes we explained and they seem they don't understand, but we have to explain, and then, OK, at least you understand a little bit and then we give you examples, examples to consolidate your knowledge. And then you try to make examples, sentences to show me if you have

understood. My students' explanations are one by one, and then number one, you can use, and if it's about experience, and then if it is an action just happened, and then something like that.

E: I like telling stories to them, it's for me, I'll tell lots of stories about myself. Creative!

K: Haha [laughing]

L: In that case, you can teach in context. You can give them a passage using a lot of present perfect tenses. Maybe you can...

K: I'll do that later.

E: For present perfect?

K: Yea.

L: As a final step.

K: And maybe give them articles, newspaper articles. There are many examples.

L: And then they fill in some of the parts which are missing, and then they have to use present perfect tense.

E: Do you have (()) ?

K: That's why (()). Even form four and form six do the same thing. Form six students in my school, and I have to maybe remind them of the rules at the very beginning, and form four, I have to teach them at the very beginning.

L: Students usually forget what they have learned.

K: Yeah, and they haven't learned anything, they think that they haven't learned anything before..

E: Because of the teacher

K: No, maybe.

E: Yea, they complained that they learned nothing in grammar lessons.

K: Just a few of them, and then, sometimes, they just say "I dunno".

E: A majority of them complained to me that they learned nothing in

grammar lesson. They said that they have learned all the tenses in primary school. They don't want to learn it.

L: But they cannot use it. And that's the point.

E: In fact most of them can use them.

L: In your school?

E: Yes, in my school.

L: But my students cannot use the tenses correctly. Some of them write down "I was went to supermarket" or I don't know, or "I are caught a bird."

E: Passive and active.

L: They are all mixed up.

K: It takes time to correct their habits.

E: And if I did grammar, I'd terribly worry them.

L: Maybe your students are very smart.

E: Yea. I don't like to point out the present perfect, I don't like to write down the terms on the board. Like I'm going to tell you present perfect, I don't like that.

K: For present perfect tense I will do that. Some tenses I think they are difficult, present perfect and future perfect.

L: Maybe we have to stop.

K: Stop, can we? Forty minutes.

L: We begin at...

K: When do we start?

E: I think he will come in.

K: Maybe we can try to summarize.

L: It's just one lesson, so we can do much, right?

K: OK.

L: Maybe we can combine the explanation, can we combine it?

K: questioning? [referring to her paper] Yes!

L: Or we shorten the time for questioning, we just use ten minutes or so.

K: We can take her ideas, maybe some examples on the board, and then some mistakes, and then ...

L: And then we start explain to them.

K: To explain, ya.

L: Ten minutes for questioning, and then we have more time for explanation.

K: Five minutes for song and ten minutes for what... questioning

L: Situations

K: Situations.... Ten minutes? Another ten minutes for explanation?

E: Explanation?

L: Explanation.

K: OK.

E: Elaboration?

L: Explanation and elaboration.

K: OK.

E: Then how about the “for” and “since”?

L: That is included.

E: Included in the explanation?

K: Can we do that in ten minutes? Haha.. [laughing]

L: I think so because when we explain the rules, we can point out the “already”.

E: “Already”, yea.

K: And next we can go to the form and structure.

L: Just a revision.

K: The PP, the common words they use. And then they can start to do the drilling part.

L: Do we have so much time to do the revision?

K: We still have fifteen minutes.

E: The drilling takes how long? Five?

K: They ask each other questions.

L: Five?

K: Five minutes.

L: And then we can....

E: Ask them to report.

K: Ask them to report? To report what?

E: For mechanical drilling, you mean they make questions "What have you eaten just now?" Something like that? And then I ask Amy "What question did you ask her?" Then ask "What is her answer?" "Peter has eaten sandwiches" Something like that?

K: "wash your face" Something like that, we can ask. We can tell them, just ask questions about your partner, and look at him, look at her, and you'll find questions, and they will find it more interesting.

L: Or ask your partner questions about what he or she has done in the past three years or from form one to form three.

K: Anything interesting.

L: Yes we can ask them to report.

E: Five minutes for practice, another five minutes for reporting.

K: Reporting? Ah, do they have to report in reported speech?

E: I don't think so, just ask them to produce the form "Peter has done something."

L: Yea, or "Peter has known me for two years."

E: Reported speech is past perfect, too complicated.

L: Reported speech is not clear.

K: Then five minutes to report.

L: We have five minutes left.

E: Distribute notes, assigning homework.

L: Yes.

K: Five minutes allowance.

L: Conclusion, five minutes for conclusion.

E: Socialise.

K: Explanation, maybe they have questions.

L: Yea.

K: Usually, we don't have enough time, and we can't finish all the work.

L: Yes, five minutes for concluding, and homework and assignment.

K: Hm... hm. *[jotting down notes]*

E: Before you came, Mr Andrews has explained to me, he doesn't care about the product, he care about the processes of our discussion. He wants to know as many ideas as possible. Do we need to switch off the

K: I don't think that. Fifty minutes now, can we finish? And we say goodbye to the video. OK, we have to stop now.

8. Karen

Look at the board. I get some examples from one student, and I hope that you all can help me to find out the mistakes. OK, at first, I hope you can tell how many mistakes are there? Can you find out? Two or three, or four? Yes, two maybe, I don't know if this is true. Two mistakes, OK, can you tell me where they are? We try to go through these sentences together. "I like basketball, and I am quite good." OK, these two lines, is there any mistake? "I like basketball", it's OK. And many of you like basketball today. And "I am quite good." Look at this sentence, what do you mean? You're a good boy? And you're good in studies, and you're a good helper, and you're a good student, something like that. "I am quite good" I don't think the reader can understand what you mean. "I am quite good" and then you want to tell the reader you're quite good in some specific fields. And here, it's very obvious, you're quite good at basketball, sport, this kind of sport. And you have to tell them, tell the reader, you're not a good person, not a good person, maybe you want to tell them you're good at basketball only. OK it's the first mistake. And number two "but I am small." What do you mean? Is it your size? Small, you know that, large, small and medium, and we're talking about size, and can you say that? We go on, just look at this word, we understand that, you want to talk about your height, and then it's not your size. And then, taller, but if I, that means you want to say that it is a contrast, now it's the past, you are, OK, the opposite to this word is tall and then short, right? Tall and short. But I am short, "if I taller, I will be in the school basketball team". Can you tell me how many mistakes here? Maybe it's not difficult for you, as some of you are making the same mistake. Number one is same here, "If I taller", can you tell me the word form of this word? Is it a verb? And you can just say that "I taller". I write. I read. I sing a song. "taller" we all know that it's a very simple

word. It is an adjective, and then can you remember? I told you that. Adjective, before the adjective we need something, we can't say that 'I good'. Look at this, can you cross out this, "I good" and "quite good". No, it is an adjective, and then you know that we need a verb to be: is, am, are, was, were. "I am. I am" maybe you think that yes, "I am taller and then I will be in school basketball team". Is that all? It is the most difficult one, most difficult one, er. Don't think that. I can't blame you if you don't know the answer, it's very difficult for form three students like you because it is conditional sentence that you will start to learn in form four. But I will tell you a little bit about this. If, you know that, "if" sometimes you want to say something and you want to talk about the possibility and then if, for example, "if the weather is good, I will go out for picnic", something like that. Now look at this. You have just said that "I am short", and then it is the fact that you look short and you are short, at least you think that you are short. And then "if taller", and do you think that you are, or you can be taller. It is the fact that I am short and then you want to say something, maybe you think that it is impossible, you are not tall and you are not the member of the basketball team now. And you are very unlucky, and maybe you can get taller actually, but here, I can't say that you won't get taller, but here I know what you mean. You want to tell me that at now, at present, at least now, now you are not tall. And it is impossible for you to get taller, now you think that. And if it is impossible, impossible, and then usually we don't use present tense. It's about tense. And we try to use, change the tense, and then, one rule, one very simple rule, before you can go to the complex part, conditional sentences. A first simple rule, that is, if you want to make some conditional sentences, you want to say something that is impossible maybe. And we are here, we have go backward in the timeline. That means now "I am a student" and you want to say

something impossible to happen now. And then "if I were a teacher", because it is impossible, and we have to go backward. It is the first simple rule that you should remember. You understand that? "If I were a teacher", and then "I am quite short now", if I want to say that, "if I were taller", and then past tense, "I would be", past tense. "will", past tense is "would". "I would be in school basketball team". Can you understand?

..... **Despite his hardworking**, he usually **cannot gets** good results.
He is thinking if he **should goes** out to work.

Explanation 2 – (Karen) November 1996

| | |
|----------------|----|
| Karen -Teacher | K |
| Agnes | A |
| Benjamin | B |
| Lydia | L |
| Steve Andrews | S |
| Student (any) | St |
| Class | C |

(()): unclear phrases or words

[]: Actions

K: ... students, ah... form four students, band two students, science class.
OK, err... I can start now. And then we go on to look at two more examples, two more common mistakes made by some of you. First we look at the words in italics, and you can see that “despite his hardworking”. “Despite” and you remember we talked about the conjunctions one month ago, and then “despite” conjunctions we remember, “in spite of”, “despite”, “although”, “even though”, or “though”. One two three four five, and they have the same meanings, same meanings. Though, em... though I have worked hard, I can’t get good results, and you remember the meaning, of course. And then, but you know that the usage is different. For this three, although, even though and though, and they are followed by a noun, ing, or a

clause. You remember we have, we had a dictation before.
Um...yes?

St: A clause ?

K: A clause, yeah, and you remember what clause is ? With subject, plus a verb. And how about these two, despite, in spite of ? They can't be followed by a clause, and they are followed by...

B: Noun ?

K: Noun, yeah. And what else ? How about... "-ing" ? Are you day dreaming ?

B: Yeah.

K: Pay attention, and the last one, and the last one, OK, besides noun, or noun phrase, you remember noun phrase ? -ing ? And what else ? If you say that you are, some of you don't know how to change, how to change the adjectives, or the sentence into noun form, or -ing form, for example "I like it", "I like it", and I don't know how to change this into noun form, or ing form, and what else can you do ? We have three words, do you remember ? A very best alternative for you, to make use of this. "The fact that", with these three words and then you don't have to worry about this, and you can just continue. Despite the fact that I like it, I can't afford to buy it. And you can use these three words and then you don't have to worry about how to change this into noun or -ing or something like that. Three choices, and we look at this again, despite his, his hardworking, hardworking, it seems like an -ing word but you know that it is not. Hardworking, it is an, what is it? Agnes ?

A: Verb ?

K: No, hardworking, I am hardworking.

St: Adjective ?

K: Adjective, it is an adjective. And then, before an adjective, we need a verb, a verb. I am hardworking, and how to change the verb here to the -ing form ? I am hardworking, and you can't say I am, "a,m,i,n,g". An -ing form, that is, Benjamin ?

B: Sorry.

K: You don't know ?

B: I don't know.

K: Can't remember, it doesn't matter. And I hope that from now on you can remember this. OK, "being", and for the verb to be, -ing form, that's "being", "being". And then, despite, yes, being hardworking, being hardworking, and there's the first one, this one, this being hardworking. And the next noun, hardworking and you can make this word to become a noun phrase, make this word, noun phrase. OK, how to do that ? "Hard", it is an adjective, and then "work", it is a noun, it can be a noun here, and then, hard work, hard work. Despite his hard work, his hard work, and the third one, the simplest one, that is, despite the fact that he works hard, he works hard. Understand ? These three. OK, and then, we go on. He usually cannot get good results and next sentence "He's thinking if he should goes out to work". It is another common mistake. And remember we had a number of words, like... can, could, may, might, must, and what else ?

St: Will...

K: Will.

St: Would.

K: Would, and may be... ought to, or have to. After these words, after these words, can we use err... -ing form, verb in -ing form, or pp ?

K / EXPB / 4

Explain.2(Karen)
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No. Or, can we use err... past tense verb ? No. The only verb we can use is infinitive without to, without to, no es, no -ing, and no pp, no -ed. And then, you can correct the mistake, can you, err... Lydia ?

L: Get ?

K: Usually cannot get, after the verb "can", and then no "s", get, "g,e,t".
And the next one, he's thinking if he should... again, "g,o,e,s",

St: Go ?

K: “go” out, no “es”. And remember don’t make the mistake again, and pay attention next time. Bye.

Karen

- 1) F4 class going through notes + worksheets on 'How to ask questions', as preparation for the CE Oral.
- 2) K reveals difficulty in pitching materials at the right level for ss - her worksheets are very easy, as she admitted herself in her post-lesson written reflections ("The worksheets, especially P.1 to P.4, were too simple for the class, and thus made them feel bored").
- 3) She also has difficulty in tailoring her own spoken grammatical input to the level of her students (see her attempts to explain features of modal meaning).
- 4) K also seems to show limitations in her ability to analyse the learning problem from the ss' viewpoint (this = the interface between TMA & PCK). The worksheets are headed "**F4 ORAL SKILLS - HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS. In Paper IV, students are expected to ask appropriate Qs based on the hints given**" - i.e. the aim is clear, and the context (qs for use in an oral interview) is equally clear. However, the practice (in all the sheets covered in the lesson) is all blank-filling (eg "a _____ you like chocolates? Yes, I do"), not even confronting potentially much more problematic grammatical issues for ss like word order in question formation.
- 5) As a result, K's guidance to ss is at the level of tricks for successfully filling in blanks when you're already given part of the question : eg "John know that we have booked a table already? Probably he does. I'm not sure"). K says : "Simple present tense and you can see all the underlined verbs. Remember ... if the verbs are like this, no -ed no -ing, and then it's not PP, you can see that we can only use do, does or did"
- 6) K moves to a section dealing with using auxiliary verbs to form questions . Her example of an auxiliary is **have/has** : "He has done his homework already". She describes **have** as a helping word. However, it's unclear what **do/does/did** (in the previous section) are, if not auxiliaries - and the section is in fact only concerned with modal auxiliaries.
- 7) K's attempts to clarify modal verbs are less than illuminating : "Something like can/may/should/must/ought to [writing on B/B] ... when you talk about your mood, or your mode - mode, that means your style of speaking - or your feeling, you use these words : I must tell you the truth Shall I leave? Ask for permission ... and you can use these words to form questions"
- 8) K's attempts to explain **Would you mind...?** suggest that her own understanding may be quite accurate (politeness etc), but her ability to convey it clearly and comprehensibly to ss is flawed : "Would you mind closing the window for us? Would you mind? ... Someone used the word like Can you mind closing the window for us? Try to think about the answer. No I can't mind OK, I tell you the answer I can't mind. We can't say that because we know that it is a polite form, polite form. You will not say Yes, I mind/No, I don't mind/No, I can't mind/No, I mustn't mind. It's a polite form, and then usually we use the word would ... Would you close the window?/Would you mind closing the window? Would ... would. And then your answer is No. no, of course, no ... something like that. That means I don't mind. I can help you. Would you mind...?"

Prep -
Cont. / ssPrep
Cont. / To1/T
Qa / M/L

9) K seems to have some understanding that there are differences in modal function, as shown by her efforts to distinguish between the meanings of ***Shall we*** v. ***Can we/Could we*** to begin the question (almost certainly incomprehensible out of context to most ss.) “we look at the issue from another perspective?” - suggestion cf. yes/no question. However, it is questionable whether her efforts would clarify the difference for learners, particularly re the meaning conveyed by ***Can we?/Could we?*** : “For example *Shall we?* Or *Can we?* Or *Could we?* ... Let's look at the question from another perspective ... That means *Shall we...?/Shall we..?* if you think it's a suggestion. Or if you think that yes/no question *Can we...?* ... I don't think that we can solve the problem if we look at the question from this angle, this perspective and then *Can we change?/Could we..?* ... *Can we?/Could we?* Something like that ... simple question”

10) K's attempts to help ss understand some of the complexities of modal meaning only serve to confuse. For example, when she deals with the sentence “*Will you come at 8.00am?*” : “For this word *will* we have two kinds of meaning. Number 1 you can say that it's about future tense ... maybe it's now 4 am ... And then *Will you come at 8 am?* Future tense ... Or another one maybe ... Do you know that traditionally if I say *I shall go/I will go* they are different. Can you remember? *I shall go* is about future, *I shall go* future tense. And then *I will go* maybe the underlying meaning is like this *I must go/I have to go*. And then for this one again it's the same *Will you come at 8 am?* Maybe it's about the future and secondly you can say that *Do you have to come?* Or *Will you really come?* Because *I hope that you can come*. And then *Yes, I will come, I must come, I will come ... something like that*”

1/7

Qa

K/GRL/1

POST-LESSON COMMENTS

~ The whole class, including me, felt uneasy due to the presence of the camera and the cameraman, their Form teacher. The students were much quieter than usual and I was a lot more nervous than I usually am.

- The worksheets, especially P. 1 to P. 4, were too simple for the class, and thus made them feel bored.

I will try to ask students to form questions by themselves and provide them with some familiar situations so as to arouse their interest.

- I almost dominated the whole lesson and deprived students of any opportunity to get involved.

I will try to ask students to check the simple revision exercises among themselves (i.e. group discussion or pair work).

- I could not cover the 5 ways of questioning in one lesson.

I will try to focus my teaching on what I intended to cover.

- The students were extremely silent.

I will try to get them involved in some activities, instead of sitting and listening passively.

~ Anyway, I have to admit that it was one of my worst lessons. I tried to have a revision with my students since they had not done very well previously. Yet, the quality of the materials was not very good and I felt very uncomfortable during the whole period and found everything out of my control. Sorry for letting you down.

K/GRL/2

H.K.C.E.E. (Paper IV - Oral Examination)

Date : November 13, 1996

Time : 11:25 - 12:05

Class : 4E

Teacher : Karen

Goals :

General :

Revising and practicing question-forming and interview-conducting skills, and using them to conduct the interview / survey task in the H.K.C.E.E.

Specific :

Language Use :

- 1) Using 5 different ways to form questions.
- 2) Using appropriate expressions to complete the interview.

Learner Activities :

- a) Going through the examples about question-forming.
- b) Practicing question-forming skills.
- c) Learning and practicing how to start and deal with the interview task.
- d) Applying the above skills to conducting an interview with a classmate.

Materials and Aids :

Hardware : blackboard
Software : worksheets

Previous Learning :

Students have learnt how to form simple questions and had a quiz on this.

This lesson is a revision and application stage.

| STEPS | CLASS ORGANIZATION | PURPOSE |
|--|-----------------------|--|
| <u>Introduction & Set</u> T reminds Ls of the importance of questioning skills in the Cert. Exam. | T <-> Ls | Draw attention |
| <u>Step 1</u> Monitor & monitress distribute the worksheets, T check the no. of pages | T <-> Ls | Distribute language learning materials |
| <u>Step 2</u> T asks questions to check Ls 's understanding of question-forming skills | T <-> Ls C as I | Ensure that Ls remember what they have learnt |
| <u>Step 3</u> T asks Ls to complete the questions and check the answers | T <-> Ls C as I | Go through the 5 ways of questioning with Ls |
| <u>Step 4</u> T teaches & goes through the interviewing techniques with Ls | T <-> Ls | Familiarize Ls with the skills of conducting an interview with a stranger |
| <u>Step 5</u> T asks Ls to practice doing an interview with a classmate by using the appropriate questioning and interviewing skills (situations given) | T <-> Ls pair work | Check Ls 's ability to apply all the techniques to the situation-based tasks |
| <u>Follow-up</u> T asks Ls to produce a piece of dialogue at home in order to show their degree of understanding | T <-> Ls C as I | Get Ls to practice what they have learnt again |

HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS

In Paper IV, students are expected to ask appropriate Qs based on the hints given.

5 common ways to form Qs

1. The use of DO / Did / Does (Y/N)

Examples :

- a. _____ you like chocolates ?
Yes, I do.
- b. _____ you see the robbery last night ?
Yes, I saw it with my own eyes.
- c. _____ John know that we have booked a table already ?
Probably he does. I'm not sure.

Practise forming Qs.

I. You get up at 7a.m. every day.

II. John wanted to join the picnic.

III. Winnie helps to do the housework.

2. The use of auxiliary verbs to form Qs

Examples :

- a. _____ you come to visit me next week ?
- b. _____ you mind closing the window for us ?
- c. _____ we go now ?
- d. _____ we put on our school uniform ?

e. _____ I ask you a personal Q ?
f. _____ you tell me your opinions on this ?
g. _____ we look at the issue from another perspective ?

Practise forming Qs by using the bracketed auxiliary verbs
I. come at 8a.m. (will)

II. let's go now (shall)

III. open the window (would)

IV. know more about the incident (may)

3. The use of verb to be (is / am / are / was / were) to form Qs

Examples :

a. _____ the present service satisfactory ?
b. _____ the residents happy about the new policies ?
c. _____ she given sufficient help to do the project ?
d. _____ they warned by the teacher beforehand ?

Practise to write five Qs by using verb to be

I. You were told by the police about the incident last night.

II. Somebody is given a prize.

III. Joseph is satisfied with his term test results.

IV. The committee members are discussing the coming English week.

4. The use of Have / Has / Had

Examples :

- a. _____ John made any other suggestions in the meeting before he left ?
- b. _____ he done his homework ?
- c. _____ they been given enough time to complete the work ?

Practise to form Qs by using Have / Has / Had

I. they - working very hard on the project - recently

II. we - not be notified about the changes before we left

III. she - tried to do everything she can to help

5. The use of 5W & 1H

Examples :

- a. _____ do you mean by this ?
- b. _____ do we need to pay this amount of money ?
- c. _____ should we contact if we want to get more information ?
- d. _____ should we finish our survey ?
- e. _____ are you heading ?

K/GRL/7

f. _____ topic do you like most ?

g. _____ do you like to do it ?

Practise to form Qs by using 5W & 1H

I. somebody you talked to on the phone yesterday

II. something exactly you want to know

III. the day we can visit you, Thursday or Friday ?

IV. the market you usually go to

V. the place you stayed in Singapore

VI. the reason for not telling me the whole story

VII. the way of dealing with this problem

HOW TO CONDUCT A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW? C.M.W.

Part A, Task 1 is an interview. You need to read the five statements carefully and then formulate five Qs. Your Qs should be appropriate and relevant. *As for the sixth Q, you are free to ask any Q which is related to the topic.*

1. Introducing yourself

Use the name stated in the instruction sheet. *Do not use your own name.* Try to give some common ways you may use to introduce yourself.

- a. _____ Chris Wong. I'm doing a project on Housing. _____ ask you a few Qs ?
- b. _____ Chris Wong. I work for ABC company.
- c. _____ of WSC. One of my assignments is to find out people's views on pollution. _____ answering a few Qs ?
- d. (Telephone interview) _____ Chris Wong _____ ABC company. I'd like to conduct a survey on TV viewing habits. _____ a few simple Qs ?

2. Explain the purpose of the interview and assure the interviewee that it will be short as you don't want to take up too much of his/ her time.

- a. The _____ / _____ of this interview is to find out your opinion on the inflation rate in H.K.
- b. As you know, the District Board Election will be held next month. I want to _____ whether you'll go to cast your vote or not.

3. Tell the interviewee how many Qs you will ask him/her.

- a. _____ six Qs. It won't take up too much of your time.
- b. _____ six Qs I would like to ask you. Shall we start now ?
- c. _____ I'll ask six Qs only. It will take about five minutes to finish.

K/GRL/9

4. Repeat the answers while you are writing them down

You need to write down the answer briefly on the interview form. Repeat the key words while you are writing. There is no need for you to write in complete sentences. Write down the main points only. When you do your task 2, Examiner 2 will ask you Qs based on the information on this interview form.

- a. _____ You don't like to shop in TST. You _____ to go to TW.
- b. _____. You are saying that HK teenagers should be more concerned about current affairs. They shouldn't spend all their time studying.

5. Give appropriate but brief responses to the answers given. Don't just give asking Qs.

In real life situations, we don't just ask a Q and then move to the next one immediately. We respond to the answer by indicating our agreement, disapproval, reservation and so on before we raise another Q.

- a. _____. I can understand that.
- b. _____, you are right on this point.
- c. _____ I can't agree with you more.
- d. _____. Do you mean you won't support a local Chinese to be the new Governor ?
- e. _____. That's true.

Why have you plagiarized so much material?
Is it really necessary??

K/GP

PCED ENGLISH MAJOR YEAR 1

GRAMMAR TEACHING ACTION RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT
GRAMMAR AREA - CONDITIONAL

TUTOR : STEVE ANDREWS

NAME :

STUDENT NO. :

In that way is this 'traditional'
Many books talk of 3 types of
main +

K/GP/1

PART 1

Meaning

In grammar, a *conditional sentence* is a sentence in which the subordinate clause, usually beginning with 'if', gives a condition that must be fulfilled before the main clause says can be true, possible, or done.¹ Traditionally, there is also a common simplification which simply divide the conditional sentences in to four types, Types 0, 1, 2, and 3. According to this distinction, Type 0 implies that the action in the main clause is the automatic, natural or habitual result of the If-clause (subordinate clause). For example,

If we put the ice under the sun, it melts. (The ice must melt under the sun.)

Type 1 implies that the action in the If-clause is quite probable. For example,

If it rains tomorrow, we will stay at home. (I think it is likely to rain tomorrow.)

Type 2 is used when the supposition is contrary to known facts or when we do not expect the action in the If-clause to take place². For example,

If I were you, I would not let him go. (But I, of course, am not you.)

If his bicycle was stolen, he would call the police. (But I do not think that his bicycle will be stolen.)

The condition in Type 3 cannot be fulfilled because the action in the If-clause did not happen. None can change the past action. For example,

I would have passed the test if I had worked hard. (I did not work hard and surely I did not pass.)

It seems that the above explanations are unable to show the full picture of conditional sentences. Being an English teacher, I have to go to the details first and then I can judge whether I have to cover the more complicated parts or not in my teaching.

Conditional sentences can be generally divided in Direct and Indirect conditionals at the very beginning. For the Direct conditional, the truth of the prediction depends on the fulfillment of the condition while the Indirect conditional implies that the condition is not related to the situation.³

The **Indirect conditional** can be used to

1) Express politeness in the conventional sense. For example,

John is far too considerate, if I may say so.

It is obvious that the If-clause is not related to the main clause. The speaker is asking for the hearer's permission if he can give any comment on John.

2) show a *logical gap* between the two clauses. For example,

If you are going to London, it is crowded in summer.

Similarly, the two clauses are not related to each other directly. The speaker is only reminding the hearer of the fact that London is crowded in summer.

¹ English Language Dictionary, Collins Cobuild 1987.

² A Practice English Grammar, A.J. Thomson, A.V. Martinet, O.U.P. 1960.

³ A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language, Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Longman.

For the **Direct conditional**, it is more complex since there are subdivisions and further subdivisions. The Direct conditional can be sub-divided into Open (real) condition and Hypothetical condition.

Open condition implies that the situations mentioned are factual and of real possibility :

1) *Future possibilities* (=Type 1)

It refers to the future action which is very likely to happen. For example,

If you wake up early, you will be able to catch the 7 : 00 train.

2) *Present or Past habits*

It refers to one's present or past habitual actions. For example,

If he is in London, he is surely staying at Hilton.

If he was working, he always smoked.

3) *Deductions*

It refers to a reasonable conclusion reached by another situation or action. For example,

If you enjoyed his last novel, you will love this one.

By using **Hypothetical condition**, the speaker believes that the condition will not/ is not/ was not fulfilled.⁴ (=Types 2 & 3) It can be further explained in the following ways :

1) *Unreal now and improbable future* (=Type 2)

The If-clause refers to the unreal present action and the main clause tells the impossible future. For example,

If I had the time, I would not hesitate to help you. (But I do not have time so I will not/ cannot help you)

2) *Rejected past* (=Type 3)

The If-clause refers to the action that did not happen in the past and the main clause is then impossible to happen. For example,

If he had tried to leave the country, he would have been stopped at the frontier. (But he did not try)

3) *Rhetorical condition*

It looks like an Open condition, but the speaker is actually making a strong assertion. For example,

If they are Irish, I am the Pope. (I, of course, am not/ will not be the Pope. Then, they must not be Irish)

4) By using the word 'would', the speaker tries to make :

i) a *volition*, for example,

If I would buy a yacht, I could have a good time. (It is only my own wish)

This example looks a little odd!

ii) a *polite request*, for example,

If you would wait a moment, I will see if Mr. Jones is free. (I am asking you to wait a moment politely)

⁴ A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language, Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Longman.

Form

It does not matter which clause comes first.

Type 0 (Open condition – 2) Present habits; Hypothetical condition – 3) Rhetorical condition)

| If-clause | Main clause |
|-----------|-------------|
| Present | Present |

For example :

If there is a shortage of any product, prices of that product go up.

This is not the easiest example. It is just a simple because the main verb would need to be past perfect. It is considered the standard.

Type 1 (Open condition – 1) Future possibilities, 3) Deductions)

| If-clause | Main clause |
|--|---|
| Present/ present continuous/ present perfect | Future/ future continuous/ can/ may/ must/ should |

For example :

If you have finished your homework, I will switch on the television.

You may find Peter upstairs if you are looking for him.

Type 2 (Hypothetical condition – 1) Unreal now & improbable future)

| If-clause | Main clause |
|---------------|---------------------------|
| Past/ were to | Conditional (subjunctive) |

i) The pattern 'were to' is usually used in written English formally. For example,

If he were to leave, his mother would be very unhappy.

ii) The idiom "If I were you ..." usually contains the subjunctive 'were'. Yet, 'was' also occurs frequently nowadays. For example,

If I was you, I would not let him off.

*This sounds strange to me.
Please give me information
about this construction.*

iii) In literary sense, *inversion* of subject and auxiliary can be used to replace the subordinators like 'if'. For example,

If I were in his shoes, I would not accept the offer.

➤ *Were I in his shoes, I would not accept the offer.*

If you should change your mind, no one would blame you.

➤ *Should you change your mind, no one would blame you.*

Type 3 (Hypothetical condition – 2) Rejected past)

| If-clause | Main clause |
|--------------|--|
| Past perfect | Perfect conditional (would/ might/ could + have) |

Inversion may also occur without any subordinator. The most common style is used with the operator 'Had'. For example,

If I had known, I would have written the letter.

➤ *Had I known, I would have written the letter.*

We might have saved his life if we had found him earlier.

➤ *Had we found him earlier, we might have saved his life.*

- ◆ There seems to be a common rule that the If-clause (condition) and the main clause (consequence) belong to the same time period, *but* they do not need to.⁵ We can relate an unreal condition now to an unreal past or future consequence. For example,

If I were rich, I would have bought a yacht last year.

Or, we can relate a rejected past condition to its imagined present or future consequence. For example,

If I had caught that plane, I would be dead now.

- ◆ For the subordinators used in the If-clause, there are a great number of alternatives to 'if', though they may be used in different ways.

If, unless, but for, otherwise, provided that, on condition that, as long as

If is the most common and most versatile subordinator among all the subordinators.

'Unless' + affirmative verb = If + negative (not). For example,

Unless you start at once, you will be late.

= *If you do not start at once, you will be late.*

'But for' = If it were not for/ if it had not been for. For example,

But for the storm, we would have been in time.

= *If it had not been for the storm, we would have been in time.*

'Otherwise' = If this does not happen/ did not happen/ had not happened. For example,

We must be back before midnight; otherwise we will be locked out.

= *If we are not back before midnight, we will be locked out.*

'Provided that'/ 'on condition that'/ 'as long as' can replace 'if' when there is a strong idea of limitation or restriction. It is mainly used with permission. For example,

You can camp in my field provided that you leave no mess.

You can borrow my computer on condition that you return it next Monday.

She may go as long as he goes with her.

'Supposing'...? = What if ...? For example,

Supposing the plane is late ?

= What will happen if the plane is late ?

You've provided a very clear, and well researched description of the grammar area, that has revealed something of its complexity. I shall be very interested to know your selected unit & time, and why.

⁵Current English Grammar, Sylvia Chalker, Macmillan Publishers 1987.

Features of Conditional which may cause particular teaching and learning problems

It is said that we teach grammar to build up interest in the language, improve students' writing skills, help students to interpret literature, and understand human behaviors; but not to puzzle students' brain with a vast number of theories and mechanical exercises.⁶ Hence, before I start to plan my lessons and think of any teaching methods, I have to go through the grammar area in detail and try to identify any features which may cause problems to my teaching and my students' learning.

- One of the difficulties my students may face is that Conditional sentences look and sound similar to other tenses and may cause confusion. For example, students may mix up Conditional type 2 with Past tense. (If I had one million dollars, I would buy a house <-> I had one million dollars so I bought a house.) Besides, some exceptions may also cause trouble. For instance, the word 'would' can be used in the If-clause to show politeness while it is widely used in Conditional type 2 to show improbable present or future consequences. (If you would give me a hand, I will be able to finish the task on time <-> If you gave me a hand, I would be able to finish the task on time.) Thus, clearly organized notes and explanations as well as sufficient practice and consolidation work are essential in the teaching and learning process.
- Some difficult and confusing terms like 'rhetorical', 'hypothetical', 'open condition', 'direct condition' or 'indirect condition' will surely make students feel harder to handle the Condition. Hence, instead of going to the 'details' with my students like some grammar reference books do, I decide to place the focus of our lessons on the traditional four types, Type 0, 1, 2 and 3 and point out some useful and common exceptional cases to students. ✓
- Teaching in a school with students of different abilities is really a headache to teachers. I have to make the tasks more achievable to students, especially the average ones, by choosing some less difficult words and ask some able students to share their answers with the class or the groups first in order to give more examples and time to the slow achievers. ✓
- Students may find it quite difficult to handle the mixed-type Conditional sentences after they have got used to using different Conditional types. Drilling and exercises about mixed-type Conditional sentences should not be ignored at the later stage. } }
- Besides understanding the meaning, students may also find it hard to remember the different patterns like inversion, 'were to' and even the usage of different subordinators. I have to provide enough drillings and practice for students to get familiar with all of them. } }

I. They need all of this
I was hoping that you
would be selective.

If they link the selection of tense in the clauses of conditional sentences to time reference (as well as reality/unreality), then they should be able to understand "mixed" types because there is a change of time reference (eg present in main clause, past in if-clause)

⁶ Teaching English Today, Dwight L. Burton, Kenneth L. Donelson, Houghton Mifflin Co. 1975.

Selected Strategies and the tasks/ activities I will use in teaching Conditional

It is quite difficult to find any consensus on the very best type of grammar to teach and the way to teach.⁷ Some educators may think that language items should only be presented in contexts and situations which will clarify their meaning while some consider that prescriptive grammars with rules may be necessary for people's learning English as a second language. I personally prefer a mixture of both. It is partially due to the average level of my students and some of them are even quite weak. If I just focus on teaching them in a descriptive way with numerous activities and tasks, my students will not be able to handle the items well and they may even feel helpless since they have not learnt the items step by step. Nevertheless, I admit that learning grammar is not a static arbitrary process, but an open and changing one. Students should be encouraged to learn through the processes, instead of memorizing a product only. Hence, I have planned my lessons teaching Conditional as follows :

The Class I am going to teach is F. 4B of which I am their Form mistress as well as their English teacher. The ability of this class is at average level, though a few of them are extremely good or bad. So, I decide to gear my lessons to the average students, who have heard of Conditional before but not quite familiar with it. The class are active in general. They always welcome activities or discussions with other classmates and they usually respond in a positive way. Yet, a few of them are not really interested in English, even their studies. They will lose their interest or patience easily if the lessons are getting boring or they cannot get any satisfaction or fun from the lessons.

F. 4 students have learnt this item, Conditional, before, but not in detail. I am going to assign three lessons as the consolidation and application stage since they can be reminded of the area by some exercises and games.

In the first lesson, to begin with, I will draw students' attention to the mistakes they have made in their writing tasks by putting them on the board and asking students to explain the errors. The degree of students' understanding of the topic will be seen obviously and I will then start our teaching and learning process in an inductive way. I will ask students to make some sentences with the help of the words and the situations given to them. After they have put their sentences on the board, I will again invite some students to make any comments or corrections if necessary. Next, I will explain the sentences and some significant errors they have made in detail to the whole class. Students will then be reminded of the meaning and form of Conditional briefly.

Ten minutes after the lesson has started, I will distribute a set of briefly organized notes on Conditional sentences to students and go through the notes with them with a special focus on the examples provided. As I have mentioned, my students are not smart enough to learn the rather difficult grammatical item just by listening to the teacher and practicing with the classmates. Certain written materials are essential.

When the second lesson starts, to make sure that students have understood the meaning and form of the item and keep them motivated, I will then start an interesting activity with them. It will sound attractive to my students as it is like the game which was popularly played by some TV stars some months ago, especially when my class is a class of extremely energetic and active students. Students will be asked to move into small groups to start the game. They will then be asked to share their sentences with the whole class. By doing so, even the weaker students who do not understand and feel hesitated to ask any question will get a chance to learn and practice the item again. (For the detail of the game, please refer to the appendices attached)

Through this game which is particularly focusing on the first two types, students will undoubtedly find it easier to handle the simpler Conditional types and they will be positively encouraged because even the weaker students will be better-off after doing this simple task, especially with my help and their classmates' sharing.

⁷ Teaching English Today, Dwight L. Burton, Kenneth L. Donelson, Houghton Mifflin Co. 1975

K/GP/7

To further practice Conditional Type 2, which is a bit more difficult than Type 0 and 1, next, students will be asked to make three wishes. I will try to give them some interesting examples before they start like "I wish I were a beautiful lady!" Five minutes later, I will ask my students to rephrase the sentences by making traditional Type 2 sentences like "If I were a beautiful lady, I would join the beauty contest." Students' understanding about Type 2 will be consolidated.

I will try to sustain my students' motivation and the warm atmosphere by starting another activity which is aimed at practicing Type 3, the confusing type, with my students. Here, I will ask students to think of three things they regret having done. This part will not be easy to handle owing to the idea (regret) and the form (Type 3). My clear instruction and examples will be necessary before.

At the end of the second lesson, I will ask my students to do some relevant assignments at home. They will have to make another three sentences about Type 3 (Three things they feel glad that they have done). Besides, to consolidate students' understanding and their knowledge about the form, they will be asked to do some exercise about Conditional that they can find from their grammar exercise book at home.

The series of lessons will end at the third lesson, in which students will take a quiz on Conditional. It is not a quiz to put any pressure on students or frustrate them, but to let the teacher, me, evaluate their understanding and skills in a coordinated way.

PART 2

What actually happened and Reflections

As I expect, my students did not find Conditional sentences totally unfamiliar to them. They have already heard of some rules. Yet, when they were asked to point out the mistakes their classmates had made and explain them, they felt unsure and confused. Then when we went to the notes together, they felt them helpful since they got a clearer understanding of the item.

The lessons went to the climax when we started our activities. All students were involved actively with tasks. I tried to give students clear instructions about moving themselves into groups and especially how to start the game with some examples in advance. While they were doing their tasks, they were asked to write down their sentences so as to ensure that I could check whether they were really doing their work and I could also offer help if necessary. I tried to encourage students positively because I myself admit that Conditional is not an easy area for F. 4 students. I helped them with a smile and praised their creativity, even some of them were making some mistakes. Students felt relaxed and they enjoyed the learning process very much. Hence, they could manage to complete the following tasks later.

When it was nearly the end of the second activity, I discovered that the time left would not be enough for going to the third activity. Then, I made a good decision at the moment and flexibly changed it to be an assignment at home. Then, students had enough time to complete the second task and I had time to share my opinions with them at the end.

Yet, there were some points that I would like to improve if I am teaching Conditional next year. For the third activity, the word 'regret' caused some difficulties to students as some of them did not understand the word. For the others, even they knew the meaning of the word, as teenagers, they did not have much experience to regret about. Next time, I will try to give students more

interesting and personal examples in order to show them the way to follow. Or, I may rephrase the word as 'feel sad about' in order to make the task more achievable to all of them.

As for the first game, it seemed a bit too easy for students, though it was a good start for students to build up their confidence and interest in the item. Next time, I will try to change the way of giving instruction from providing the If-clause to setting the situations only. Then, students may have to judge which type they have to use and the task will be more constructive.

The last problem arose in the lesson when we had a quiz on Conditional. After the quiz, I found that many students could not apply their knowledge appropriately. Many of them understood the meaning of the different Conditional types, however, they were not familiar with the form, especially the usage of various subordinators. I then had to assign two more lessons for Conditional. Next year, I have to be more realistic and prepare to give enough time for students to succeed in handling it.

Might you not also need
to be selective in how much
you expect your students
to learn? Do they actually
need all these different subordinators
at this point?

K/GP/9

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You've clearly put a lot of thought and effort into this. Much of your discussion is very sensible. I must say, though, that you've really dealt with the issue of selectivity. If you as the teacher discover a lot of facts about a grammar area, I do not mean that your students need to be taught all of this. It's very important to be selective about what you teach, and to give them only what they can cope with. I think they can cope with it. From a practical point of view, it's a little confusing, and the main of photocopies pages is not helpful!

| | TEST SCORES | | | | QUESTIONNAIRE PROFILE SCORES | | | FEELINGS ABOUT GRAMMAR | | WHAT DO STUDENTS NEED? | | | PERCEPTION OF LINK BETWEEN GRAMMAR AND COMMUNICATION | |
|----------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|---|---|---|
| | M/C | DRNL | WR | M/A | CLT (Max 60) | IND (Max 40) | DED (Max 50) | ACC (Max 30) | STUDENTS | TEACHER | PRACT. (L1) | EARL. K. OF GR | BOTH | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| AGNES | 55 | 75 | 58 | 58 | 44 | 23 | 34 | 15 | Gr = boring | Lacks confidence D. difficult / challenging Hate it!!! | ✓ | ✓ | Expl k helps Teacher, peer control | Clear, strong view of link Gr seen as mainly relevant for writing (eg comp.) |
| | 63 (14 th) | (14 th) | (8 th) | (14 th) | (5 th) | (12 th) | | | | | | | | |
| BENJAMIN | 60 | 75 | 48 | 74 | 47 | 26 | 28 | 15 | Boring (because of gr. M.) | Enjoy gr. but feels not successful because not interested in learn | ✓ | ✓ | only need to know S+V+O + basic rules | Gr seen as mainly relevant for writing (eg comp.) |
| | 61 (15 th) | (9 th) | (3 rd) | (8 th) | (13 th) | (12 th) | | | | | | | | |
| CLARA | 64 | 50 | 52 | 75 | 36 | 27 | 29 | 20 | Boring | > boring (telling, lecturing, etc = boring) | ✓ | ✓ | One helps the other | Gr = imp in comm. both are esp. Gr helps to make more communicative with people |
| | 55 (16 th) | (8 th) | (16 th) | (6 th) | (9 th) | (2 nd) | | | | | | | | |
| DIANA | 70 | 75 | 55 | 76 | 41 | 24 | 30 | 17 | Concern about ability to communicate because (r) need to avoid boredom (r) | ability to apply gr. to new contexts (communicate) | ✓ | ✓ | (Expl k helps - connection with - learn easily - durability to use lang) | (concr) Clear, strong view of link > all 4 skills require k of gr & comm requires to all 4 skills |
| | 67 (9 th) | (7 th) | (13 th) | (10 th) | (8 th) | (10 th) | | | | | | | | |
| EVA | 70 | 75 | 55 | 77 | 39 | 26 | 29 | 20 | Boring (no exp.) | Dislike of customs (to make mistakes is worse than communicating) | ✓ | ✓ | Only of limited value - to remember - to remember - to help learn - th about lang | Clear understanding of importance of gr. in comm (concr) & clear goal comm. approach as communication |
| | 67 (9 th) | (5 th) | (14 th) | (8 th) | (9 th) | (2 nd) | | | | | | | | |
| FLORA | 94 | 100 | 83 | 67 | 47 | 28 | 31 | 23 | Detest gr. esp. Fault to perceive accuracy as art Don't understand F's explanations | Boring/unnecessary Fault to perceive accuracy as art Don't understand F's explanations | ✓ | ✓ | of basic skills but need to know them to use them & to communicate fluently with others | Clear understanding (exp & comm) objective = comm gr rules = only one up to a point |
| | 92 (1 st) | (13 th) | (3 rd) | (4 th) | (7 th) | (1 st) | | | | | | | | |
| HILDA | 54 | 75 | 80 | 79 | 42 | 24 | 32 | 19 | Ss interested! "listen, I'll try" | Boring | ✓ | ✓ | The gr. doesn't play a role in practical comm But only for use in exams | Vague/confused - gr. relevant for exams but no need for grade 6 skills |
| | 70 (7 th) | (3 rd) | (12 th) | (10 th) | (6 th) | (5 th) | | | | | | | | |
| JOANNA | 72 | 75 | 48 | 77 | 46 | 28 | 24 | 16 | Not interested but like to do | Not interested but like to do | ✓ | ✓ | needed for narrating/ proof-reading | Clear understanding of the role of gr. in life (1 st & from form to gr. → learning basic lang |
| | 65 (11 th) | (5 th) | (5 th) | (4 th) | (1 st) | (11 th) | | | | | | | | |
| KAREN | 70 | 75 | 73 | 71 | 44 | 21 | 37 | 19 | Boring in learning necessity | AIM | ✓ | ✓ | Expl k intended to make use motivation instead start with the expl k | Gr felt not to be imp in comm, but a certain basic k is needed - BUT & been on going gr. & gr. explanations |
| | 73 (6 th) | (11 th) | (8 th) | (17 th) | (1 st) | (5 th) | | | | | | | | |
| LYDIA | 66 | 75 | 52 | 72 | 32 | 27 | 29 | 19 | Too much = dry/boring (concr) | Enjoy gr. can be lively but... painful | ✓ | ✓ | K of gr Especially learning (telling, finding opportunities practiced control) | Clear perception of gr. understanding ability to use lang/communicate freely |
| | 64 (12 th) | (10 th) | (17 th) | (6 th) | (9 th) | (5 th) | | | | | | | | |
| MAGGIE | 82 | 100 | 73 | 68 | 56 | 32 | 26 | 9 | Gr = nightmare for all of us | Uncertain but V diff to teach | ✓ | | Some expl k = helped in promoting comm but k of vocab may be more useful than k of gr | Has strong sense of comm as priority, with gr. making it easier to convey/ understand meaning |
| | 85 (4 th) | (12 th) | (1 st) | (1 st) | (15 th) | (17 th) | | | | | | | | |
| PEARL | 56 | 50 | 57 | 51 | 44 | 23 | 36 | 20 | Tedious/boring | but essential to make it more interesting | Not clear what point | Not clear what point immediately = expl k can help, but then in long run it's better | Understanding at simple level - you can speak with gr. without gr, but if you want to express yourself better, you need gr | |
| | 54 (17 th) | (17 th) | (8 th) | (14 th) | (2 nd) | (2 nd) | | | | | | | | |
| ROSE | 50 | 75 | 68 | 57 | 49 | 22 | 35 | 19 | V boring | Afraid of gr/ afraid of T gr Concern about ability to apply gr | ✓ | | Objective = comm | Doesn't give impression of much understanding of the link between gr & comm |
| | 64 (12 th) | (16 th) | (2 nd) | (16 th) | (3 rd) | (5 th) | | | | | | | | |
| SHIRLEY | 72 | 100 | 67 | 90 | 46 | 30 | 23 | 18 | See not interested in it / v. boring / no purpose in much "drills" | Enjoy T gr practiced & are learning it for its own sake & it's linked to its needs | ✓ | | Implicit k = good runner whether expl k helps (it may do) | Very clear understanding of link between gr & comm & the treatment of the rel. to pedagogic purposes |
| | 80 (5 th) | (1 st) | (5 th) | (2 nd) | (17 th) | (9 th) | | | | | | | | |
| TONY | 56 | 100 | 50 | 79 | 43 | 24 | 29 | 13 | Se feel it's imp to learn gr - gives them sth solid to study for exams | Feels differently with the T gr cell am gr points | ✓ | ✓ | need 'formalities' - subconsciously but then use of gr correctly + basic expl k (not too deep) | Understands need to be learnt NOT just form, but how to use it + comm (links) Difference in evaluating linguistic areas |
| | 69 (8 th) | (3 rd) | (11 th) | (10 th) | (9 th) | (16 th) | | | | | | | | |
| WENDY | 82 | 100 | 77 | 58 | 46 | 24 | 35 | 15 | | Feels it's corrected but doesn't have interesting way to teach gr Doesn't love teaching gr | ✓ | ✓ | need balance - expl k helps dev of pre-struct., but we need for expl k of every gr rule | Clear understanding of link Gr = very part of life (without gr, you can't form) Comp. suggests gr in support role in relation to comm |
| | 86 (2 nd) | (14 th) | (5 th) | (10 th) | (3 rd) | (12 th) | | | | | | | | |
| YAN | 78 | 100 | 80 | 80 | 39 | 29 | 27 | 14 | See long and it boring ... | Basics need to be covered Get max poss interest/engagement | ✓ | ✓ | expl k helps us use gr in comm - motivating us - fun/interesting + good habit-forming | Clear understanding of link Gr = core, without gr = v. diff to communicate |
| | 86 (2 nd) | (2 nd) | (14 th) | (3 rd) | (14 th) | (15 th) | | | | | | | | |

| PREFERRED / ADOPTED APPROACH | MATCH BETWEEN PREFERENCES & PRACTICE | PRESSES AFFECTING APPROACH | PERCEPTIONS / UNDERSTANDINGS OF CLT | ASSIMILATION OF CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATIVE METHODOLOGY | |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| DEDUCTIVE / INDUCIVE? | ACCUM. ENTITIES? LINKED TO SKILLS? | | | | |
| Ded (intuitively) | ✓ BUT linked to skills with a higher level, only makes sense in the 'big picture' | Apparent consistency | Exam pressures in FS Changing ss attitudes → need to be more creative | Not so much relevant to cl. methodology More relevant in application to ss' future needs | Some assimilation of 'message focus' & 'task-taking' but limited |
| Ded | ✓ | Would prefer free approach to go pedagogically-dealing with go as a verb, easier & greater ss interest | Fixed schedule of go lessons | I don't T go - just talk to ss Don't think it works in school + No much understanding | Some assimilation of 'message focus' & the relative imp of ideas & accuracy in oral discussions |
| Ind | ✓ | Prefers ss to make mistakes before expl Would like to use more games etc & newspapers etc | Unmotivated to make mistakes The syllabus The next lesson (L1, repetition) Exam pressures | No clear understanding of CLT - 'the situational case' | Some assimilation of - the need to balance focus on 'message focus' with taking the word for 'productivity' (play-test) |
| Ded | ✓ BUT but doesn't explain | Believes in expl first → influenced by own T + doesn't match ss' interests Starting with situation - interesting, but without rules, ss can't handle it | Exams | Doesn't really understand the terminology associated with CLT, but | Clear assimilation of 'message focus', 'task-taking' (lit the priority of message) + the need to take focus away |
| Ind | ✓ | Would like to do more ss-oriented activities & experiments better work in T/B - but expl comes in only towards the end of the process | The syllabus - puts emphasis on ped practice | Seems to understand & is in contact + to have adopted aspects of CLT | Clear assimilation of 'message focus', 'task-taking' |
| Ded | ✓ | Employs T/B task deductive approach/sequence - Drawn from many ss' contexts / concentrated tasks, but is preoccupied with ss' inaccuracy | The T syllabus - drawing deductive/generative L2 contours post-positive | Doesn't appear to have much understanding at this level (CLT = discussing opinions on an issue) | * Assimilated as 'focus' + 'task-taking' BUT concern with accuracy (? association to outcome) HK & levels first of all ss |
| Ded | | Would prefer to be 'creative' rather than in T/B | Exam pressures (ss/loc) → ss like exam focus Lots of paper to practice for plant orientation to go Both important but creativity | Creates focus with oral (interpersonal/interaction) + with 'creativity' | Some assimilation of 'task-taking' in oral discussions but ? motivated by own thinking, or pushed by exam changes? |
| Ded (loc) | | Has abandoned TI approach No longer believes in expl | Not so much pressures as see. set | It's focus of CLT is more at level of the conception of T/B (focus on many lang, not rule-motivation) Creates ss' more in terms of techniques | Clear assimilation of 'message focus' 'task-taking' + focus on approach as well as on message accuracy |
| Ind (TI) | | | | | |
| Ded | ✓ | Has clear proof for deductive, with lots of T notes | Exam orientation emphasizes focus on accuracy competition with additional tasks → need to produce notes | V. unclear focus. Creates focus with teaching/analyzing with ss to promote lively atmosphere + 'two-way' teaching | Some assimilation of 'task-taking' in oral discussions |
| Ded | ✓ at F7 aware of in-emb of other 'papers' | Apparent consistency - sees imp of expl/drilling & memorization ('Maj. Ch.') - knows the use of loc. M1 then in loc. one ref. days | Exam - limit opportunities for that It's better It's limit address This Whole lesson - in go. To save ss from carrying too much | V. limited understanding - communicating to get things done, talking to exploring real questions | Some assimilation of 'task-taking' in oral discussions |
| Ind | ✓ BUT NOT BUT INCLINATION | V. strongly by induction Believes in ss learning through 'picking it up' with go expl as well as ss BUT constraints push a ded. approach, esp at F4 | Panel pushes lots of go in F4 Exams severely constrain adoption of CLT principles | Some understandings - focus on situation / performing tasks then lang / learning of lang required for that situation NOT on discrete grammar | Has assimilated 'task-taking', 'message focus' - believes in 'strong' form of CLT, with ss 'picking up' lang through communication |
| Ded | ✓ | Doesn't know what wrong Has vague intention to add interest / increase ss' activity - while keeping things simple & getting ss to work by | The need to cover in the syllabus → need to bring up The nature of ss - need more expl. than in the past | Again, sympathetic understanding at level of cl lang - T/B is have to communicate about cl environment in English | Little or nothing. Mention of use of role-play, but no indication that has learning 'message focus' or genuine adoption of role |
| Ded | ✓ | Acknowledges 'task' not bad, she employs her differences, but still believes in it! Multiple confusions | Having to stick to syllabus (F4) Exam preparation | Linked to oral - relates to activities involving the school environment/relation to daily life of ss | V. little assimilation - objective = comm. But ss 'unwilling' can't learn by comm Some assimilation of task-taking in oral discussions * |
| Ind | | By induction. Recalls see. set. days when constraints led to employment of ded. approach | Re see. set: The exam as constraint & motivator Con constraints on CLT - ss' not standard & big T's | Clear understanding that - lang need to communicate, ie cl. sit. meaningful - go is up. only in ref. to function | Has clearly assimilated many aspects of comm with 'message focus', 'task-taking', 'approaching', 'task-based' |
| Ded | ✓ | Own T style = declarative Would prefer to do things. He considers 'com', but constrained in present set | Lack of time Having to follow syll Exam (F4) Mismatch of syll F3-F4 Person ss/diverse problems/ different ability levels | Sees CLT as involving C/W, presentations, activities, oral, listening, mode etc. Would like to do, but constraints in present set Not suitable enough to evaluate CLT in HK | No evidence of real assimilation of comm principles |
| Ind | ✓ | Feels go can be taught Com'ly, but feels unable to do it well *Misconceptions between 'task' & 'ded' approach & 'instruction', esp belief in CLT/situation oriented | Lack of time Constrained syllabus | Sees 'tell their ideas' - in ref. to meaningful tasks - difficult to go not seen as comm Clear understanding of task-based CLT | Seems to have assimilated principles of task-based CLT (the e.g. 'task-taking' (com) form-function relationship) |
| Ind | ✓ | Has a very clearly worked out approach to teaching - student-centred/interactive | ss attitudes - interpretation 12m before Exam - promoting move to oral/aural | Focuses about form 'com' - links to contextualization of activity | Clear understanding of - form-function links 'message focus' 'task-taking' |

| CLARITY / CONSISTENCY OF OVERALL APPROACH TO GR. PEDAGOGY | INDICATIONS FROM TRIANGULATION DATA | |
|--|--|---|
| Consistent - but lack confidence | Gr = basis of lang So need gr for comm Tb need to incorporate gr in skills work | A |
| Claims for beliefs consistent with what he is able to do | Attitudes in ques + comm suggest recognition of the import of comm goals, BUT gr need to be formally taught to help us become more articulate in sp. lang | B |
| Consistent, but slightly uncertain Prof for deductive approach but with comm needing to be accounted | Doesn't give impression of having a clearly worked out view of gr pedagogy is its link with comm | C |
| Consistent - focused / Mang Unif | See first page | D |
| Consistent - though prof opposed to gr pedagogy Prof for inductive approach but sees theory of planning as necessary/dealing with comm | clearly asserts imp of gr in her comp. | E |
| Consistent - but seems conflicting - prof for comm, but tends - concern about accuracy - need to continue with original - schedule | See first page Very concerned for us to develop best for lang | F |
| No evidence of clearly taught and approach to gr pedagogy | Indications that gr/k is seen as only 1 of principally learning | H |
| Changes perception step on content - relatively abstract Tb inductive / comm style, but sees gr as imp at early stages | Some inconsistency - poor reflecting - changing views of Tb / see + changing views under influence of Tb | J |
| Consistent belief in gr exp & strategy for all lang. but not linked to own understand about b of gr | | K |
| Consistent belief in role of explanation & expl & gr - also - open = question / non-explicit / more systematic | But NB comm confirms need for balance - ss accept. for Tb in learning & need of gr living comm values | L |
| Clear mismatch between beliefs (y strong) & practices obliged to others | Comp. clearly confirms views (as does ques) | M |
| No evidence of clearly taught and approach to Tb pedagogy | Comp. reflects views w/ Tb Ques reflects nature of approach - deductive / accuracy focused | P |
| Contradictions / ambivalence Takes strongly comm focus in but seems to mitigate explicit & post secondary BUT behaviour in detailed gr T | reinforced by ques - is unable to cope with ss's own attempt to give message focus to learning | R |
| Clear, consistent philosophy of gr pedagogy with which I feel comfortable | Comp & q's are conforming clearly & view in favour of basically comm / ind. approach | S |
| Mismatch between the Tb-based deductive approach objectified by ss & the more active, 'practical' approach Tb would favour | Comp gives clear indications of view of rel. between gr & comm | T |
| Consistency of Tb with comm-oriented, st. centred approach - Tb does not mismatch with gr beliefs (seeing towards deductive) | Dose of deductive practices seems to contradict ques responses Otherwise consistency between comp & interview | W |
| U. consistent, clear thoughtful, well articulated view on gr pedagogy | Comp / Tb / ques data all consistent | Y |