

Analysing TEFL Practices of Teachers Working with Adult Students in
Informal Settings

GUID: 2601843B

A Thesis in the Field of Education
for the Degree of Master of Science in Education

Word Count: 16,500*

University of Glasgow

August 2023

* Excluding title page, abstract, table of contents, footnotes, and chapter headings

Abstract

The following is a thesis paper written on the topic of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) to adult students outside of institutional contexts. The paper details an investigative study conducted into the teaching practices of two TEFL practitioners currently working in The Czech Republic and online. The study involved a round of interviews, a round of observations, and multiple cycles of data analysis employing naturalistic methods. A literature review is included, which contextualizes the findings within the scholarly work published roughly in the last four decades. The salient findings of the project as a whole are that the gap between theory and practice continues to this day, partly explained by the inaccessibility of TEFL classrooms to researchers, and that the majority of research that has been done is defined by a top-down approach. Future research is recommended to seek new knowledge from the practitioners, rather than prescribing intellectual theories to them.

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Chapter I.

Introduction

The rise of the TEFL industry can be described as a de-centralization of English Language Teaching (ELT) away from the traditional authorities on the subject, has been enabled by an apparently unending appetite for English language instruction which the traditional authorities could not possibly meet. The market has demanded a lifting of prescriptive restrictions on what English is and who can teach it. This new frontier of education, despite having now developed for over six decades, still resembles a kind of Wild West, where backpackers in Southeast Asia work, often illegally, alongside professional subject teachers with qualifications from the most prestigious institutions of higher education.

The modern consumer of ELT is faced with a never-ending parade of new private companies offering a smorgasbord of apps and “revolutionary” methods. Furthermore, the last three years have borne witness to several seismic shifts in the profession. The COVID-19 pandemic temporarily forced educators worldwide to adapt to online delivery models, virtually overnight, and a large proportion have never switched back. Shifting policy priorities in China gutted an entire industry which had previously represented the world’s largest market of English language education². Finally, the English language and its teaching has continued to become more and more politicised in a climate that is increasingly reminiscent of cold-war era power struggles between East and West.

²<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-bars-for-profit-tutoring-core-school-subjects-document-2021-07-23/>

The shifting landscape has also led to several positive developments. The ease of access to English language education has drastically increased around the world, and the increased demand has given many prospective practitioners opportunity for work and mobility across nations. The democratisation of the field has also allowed new and innovative approaches to flourish, and expanded opportunities for both students and practitioners, including non-native speakers, across all levels of society. Similarly, the capitalization of the industry has led to a significantly more egalitarian relationship between student and teacher and has encouraged student-centred teaching across the board.

Academics have valiantly attempted to study the field of ELT and to develop various models, theories, and methods to explain and inform the practice, with varying degrees of success. However, the Wild West still remains largely unexplored. Despite repetitive calls within the academic community for more in-field study, we still know comparatively little about how these various theories and methods manifest themselves, or not, in a significant proportion of language classrooms around the world or the practice of a significant number of teachers. There is a gap here which is very resistant to bridging, and the main challenge is that ELT has grown so far beyond the traditional educational institutions that much of today's practice is simply inaccessible to most scholars working within those institutions. They are therefore left to squabble among themselves over theory, largely ignored by so many practitioners.

We should not be too critical of the scholars, however. Despite significant challenges they have managed to persevere and, whenever they happen to align with state policy, to inform and improve current practice. The process is slow, and by the time

many theories eventually trickle down to the practitioner, the scholars may have already moved on, but still there is progress and for that we should give credit to the academic community.

As for TEFL practitioners, this is a vaguely defined term, including not only state-qualified or even TEFL-qualified teachers, but also many atypical teachers with little to no teacher training. Minimum requirements to work as a TEFL teacher vary by country, and in Europe it usually means having a 120-hr TEFL certification course and a Bachelor's degree in any field. However, it is possible to practise TEFL with nothing more than a high school diploma particularly in less developed countries. Consequently, a significant number of TEFL practitioners working today are often overlooked in the discourse between scholars. Furthermore, many TEFL practitioners work as freelancers for various clients. This leads to more distance between the actual context of the practice and the institutions of higher education where the scholarly research is being done, making it a blind spot in the literature. At the time of writing, no authoritative data on the actual numbers of these phenomena could be found, so the above information is based on my own anecdotal knowledge from more than half a decade working in this industry.

This project is an attempt to contribute to the literature, and hopefully add a few bricks on that proverbial bridge. As a freelance TEFL teacher whose practice is focused on online delivery of ELT to adults, I have unique access to one of the enclaves of TEFL which is resistant to inquiry. This project is an investigation into the practices of my colleagues, whose practice is similar to mine, and an exploration of the relevant literature.

The aim of this study is to generate new knowledge about pedagogic practice in TEFL from a bottom-up approach, meaning by studying the actual pedagogic practice of

practitioners. Since there is no hypothesis put forward, there is no agenda behind this study, and I have no allegiance to any particular theory or school of thought, this study is conducive to generating unfiltered insights into its subjects' pedagogic practice. It seeks to generate new knowledge by asking the following research questions: How does the practice of TEFL teachers working with adults outside of formal schooling compare to the literature on the subject?

The first section of the paper, after this introduction, is dedicated to the methodology used throughout the project, including the design of the study, the literature review, data collection, and analysis and interpretation. The following section is the literature review, followed by the findings, the discussion, and the conclusion.

Chapter II

Methodology

2.1 Process of the Literature Review

The literature review was approached with the following considerations. Firstly, it was restricted to roughly the past 40 years. This timeframe does not overwhelm the scope of this project but still captures the trends shaping EFL research today, such as the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching¹ (CLT) and popularisation of Task-Based Language Teaching³ (TBLT). Secondly, given the extensive nature of research into ELT, the search had to be restricted somehow for relevancy. This was achieved with the use of search terms such as TEFL, TESOL, EFL, ESL, in-classroom, and SLA on the SCOPUS database. Results were then evaluated for relevancy, looking for papers that reported on in-classroom studies, as well as theoretical papers oriented towards in-classroom pedagogy. Research into lingua-franca or world English was excluded as it was found to be more focused on questions of policy and social justice rather than in-classroom practices. Similarly, many papers from the linguistics discipline were excluded, as they were found to be more concerned with a scientific understanding of languages and their acquisition, rather than the practice of teaching.

Finally a simple Google search was run using the search phrase “most influential TEFL researchers”. This brought up links to several review publications and opinion

¹ Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is based on the belief that successful second language acquisition depends on the communication of real meaning between participants. Theoretically, by mimicking the natural usage of language, to communicate meaning, the exercise activates the students’ natural language acquisition strategies.

³ Related to CLT and relies on performing a non-language related task, thereby allowing a more organic adoption of the language in similar fashion to its actual usage as “a means to an end”.

pieces from the mainstream perspective. Although these papers were eventually discarded as irrelevant, they were instrumental in identifying researchers who have made a significant impact in the field. These names were then looked up on SCOPUS and their publications were ranked by number of citations. Through this approach, it was possible to identify influential academics and find their most widely cited publications.

An estimated forty to fifty papers were considered, and 21 were chosen for the final review. Peer-reviewed papers were prioritised, although several editorial pieces from prominent academics were also included as they provided valuable insight into their thinking. The selection criteria focused on in-classroom studies, articles about adult learners, articles on pedagogical theories, and review articles of the field.

The writing-up of the review was done in several stages. Firstly, the papers were grouped by researcher and arranged chronologically by publication date. Each researcher's selected body of works was considered and read through in its entirety, while writing notes on each individual paper which would eventually become the body of the review. This approach allowed each paper to stand on its own, and each researcher's contribution to be understood without prejudice. Once all papers had been considered and the corresponding remarks, grouped by author, had been written, they were rearranged into chronological order regardless of author.

A chronological listing may seem unorthodox as the literature review does not follow any thematic structure. However, this was a purposeful decision and is meant to highlight the non-congruent nature of the literature and its inconsistency over time. It is possible to arrange the literature thematically and develop a narrative of CLT or student-centredness for example. This approach would be suitable for an in-depth analysis of any

of the movements in the field, but it is too myopic for the purposes of this review. As a teacher-researcher, I have a unique perspective and justification for this decision.

When I read the literature, I look for practical applications that I can put to use in the classroom. Instead, what I find after reviewing more than four decades of research is a fragmented field of abstract theories and dogmatic, back-and-forth arguments between their proponents and detractors, all of which are intellectually seducing but afford little, if any, applicability in the classroom. The scant number of studies that are classroom-based or classroom-oriented are usually in artificial environments (e.g., teacher training courses) making them de-contextualised (Nunan, 1991).

Consequently, I find myself more confused about how to do my job after the review than when I started. I believe this lies at the heart of the disconnect between the scholar and the practitioner and I organised my literature review to reflect that. If the reader finds themselves unable to grasp the overarching themes of the review and finds themselves wondering if it has any point at all, this is by design.

Contents of the Literature Review

No.	Author	Year	Type	Remarks
1.	Krashen	1981	Theoretical / Case	Fundamental Pedagogic Principle rather than CLT. Defence of CI.
2.	Swan	1985	Theoretical / Critique	Critique of CLT as irrelevant to language classroom
3.	Swan	1985	Theoretical / Critique	Critique of CLT, exploration of practical barriers
4.	Nunan	1987	Investigative / Critique	Investigation of Classroom Practices, use of CLT
5.	Krashen	1989	Theoretical / Defence	Defence of CI over SBH and OH.

6.	Brown	1991	Literature Review	25-year Retrospective of TEFL Literature
7.	Nunan	1991	Review / Defence	Review of TBLT Research and defence of TBLT and CLT
8.	Nunan	1991	Review / Investigation	Investigation into classroom-oriented research
9.	Thornbury	1991	Theoretical / Case	Discussion of teachers' Metaphors
10.	Thornbury	1996	Investigative / Critique	Investigation into CLT and critique of current practice
11.	Thornbury	2000	Theoretical / Critique	Dogme philosophy, critical of coursebooks
12.	Thornbury	2001	Theoretical / Critique	Reflection on models of legitimacy in TEFL
13.	Thornbury	2005	Theoretical / Critique	Dogme philosophy, critical of coursebooks
14.	Swan	2005	Theoretical / Critique	Critical of TBLT and ideological swings in TEFL
15.	Krashen	2008	Review / Critique	Review of developments in TEFL, critical of CLT
16.	Ellis	2009	Theoretical / Defence	Defence of TBLT
17.	Nunan	2011	Classroom Study	Investigation of effective learner strategies, language classroom
18.	Thornbury	2013	Theoretical / Critique	Critique of Coursebooks
19.	Ur	2013	Theoretical / Critique	Critique of TBLT and generally the use of "Methods"
20.	Ur	2014	Theoretical / Defence	Defence of Language Pedagogy
21.	Ur	2019	Theoretical	Suggestions for balance between theory and practice

Table 1. Articles selected for the literature review in chronological order. The overall purpose of the paper is noted in the second column. The majority are theoretical, written to defend and / or critique certain theories.

2.2 Rationale

TEFL practitioner is a vaguely defined term and it includes not only state-qualified or even TEFL-qualified teachers, but also many atypical teachers with little to no teacher training or education. Minimum requirements to work as a TEFL teacher vary by country, and in Europe it usually means having a 120-hr TEFL certification course and a Bachelor's degree in any field. However, it is possible to practise TEFL with nothing more than a high school diploma, particularly in less developed countries in Eastern and Southern Europe, as well as Asia and Latin America. Consequently, a significant number of TEFL practitioners working today cannot be described as academics and are therefore often overlooked in the discourse of scholars. Further compounding the problem, many TEFL practitioners work as freelancers for various clients. This creates more distance between the actual context of the practice and the institutions of higher education where the scholarly research is being done, making it a blind spot in the literature. At the time of writing, no authoritative data on the actual numbers of these phenomena could be found, so the above information is based on my own anecdotal knowledge from more than half a decade working in this industry.

This study recruited teachers from the Spěváček language school, which are precisely the kind of practitioners that may shed some light on these knowledge gaps. Spěváček is a privately owned language school, headquartered in Prague, The Czech Republic. They hire teachers on a full-time and freelance basis and although they sometimes send them to work in formal schools, the bulk of their practice consists of in-company language tutoring, and evening courses for all ages. This site was chosen for its suitability for the study aims as outlined above, as well as because it is easily accessible

as I myself am a teacher working at this school. The original plan for this study was to recruit six to eight participants with various educational and professional backgrounds, however this number was not reached due to time constraints so the study was conducted with only two participants, who luckily do have quite different backgrounds and styles of teaching. The knowledge generated by the study will be a deeper understanding of the organic real-world practice of these two teachers and how it compares to the literature. Conceivably, the findings will either confirm what the literature tells us or contradict it. Likely it will do both to varying degrees. The extent to which these practitioners organically developed practice reflects the literature will reveal gaps in both and can therefore benefit the practitioners and the academic community.

This qualitative study can be described as a naturalistic case enquiry using multiple methods of data collection (Cohen et al, 2018). Harklau defines naturalistic study as gathering data from its natural context rather than a contrived experimental one, and as often lacking a specific hypothesis to test (2005). This approach is apt for this study, which is particularly interested in discovering what practitioners are doing in their actual classrooms and is based on a research question rather than a hypothesis. When designing the data collection methods, I considered several different approaches such as questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews, before ultimately choosing interviews and observations. Interviews were chosen over questionnaires as this tool is more flexible and allows for spontaneously pursuing a line of inquiry, whereas questionnaires may be limited to pre-planned topics. Observations were then chosen as the perfect companion to interviews for painting a comprehensive picture of the methods utilised in the classroom.

Collecting data from both teacher interviews and in-classroom observations (real or virtual) allows for the optimal capture of the subjective experiences of the participants, satisfying the nature of this type of research (Cohen et al, 2018; Savin-Baden, & Major, 2013; Wette, 2009, 2010). This methodology is effective because it captures both the practitioners' self-reported experiences and their observable practice, thus producing a more robust description of the social interaction of teaching (Cohen et al, 2018). It is also in line with the norms in the literature (Rose et al, 2020; Wette, 2009, 2010). This study also addresses long-standing calls in the literature for more in-classroom, teacher-researcher led studies as discussed most recently by Rose, & Galloway (2019), and studies focused on adult learners in non-university contexts (Rose et al, 2020). The proposed methodology is also aligned with my epistemological assumption of the EFL classroom as a socially constructed reality wherein the effectiveness and nature of the lived experience is socially mediated between student(s) and teachers and is effective at exploring such topics from a constructivist paradigm (Saldaña, 2016).

Data collected will focus exclusively on the teachers and no data will be explicitly collected from the students. This decision was made firstly because it reflects the aims of the study to better understand the teachers' practice rather than the students' experience. It also reduces stress on the students and minimises intervention into their study, an important ethical consideration.

Interviews and observations were conducted over video conference software, mainly because the site of the study is in another country from my habitual residence. The use of this software also garners several advantages. Besides the ability to record and automatically transcribe the data, capturing audio and visual information is crucial to the

study as a large proportion of foreign language teaching depends on audio-visual cues. Different teachers may use more or less cues in their practice, and it is important for the integrity of the study to capture this information. Finally, by recording the data I was able to review it at length, thereby deepening the quality of the findings.

Pre-existing questionnaire tools such as the Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI) were considered but ultimately rejected. As they are not specific to TEFL, they were found to be insufficiently applicable to gathering the data which is of interest to this study. Additionally, they use academic language, alienating those that do not have a background in education. Accordingly, the interview questions I designed are written in plain language and focus directly on the beliefs, planning, and process of teaching English. The questions chosen also took inspiration from the literature review, and specifically incorporate an adapted set of questions from one of the articles which discussed non-mainstream EFL teaching (Thornbury, 1991). These questions were suggested as tools for prompting pedagogical self-awareness in teachers, reflecting this study's research question on teachers' pedagogic practices. This inclusion lends additional academic credence to the design of the questions and will enable me to better capture the beliefs and attitudes of TEFL practitioners.

Data collection will be followed by a transcription and analytical coding process with multiple cycles. This approach will parse the raw data into a manageable format and allow for conventional content analysis, discovery of patterns, or emergent themes (Cohen et al, 2018; Saldaña, 2016). As this is an exploratory study within the naturalistic paradigm and has no hypothesis to test, no particular results are expected or desired (Harklau, 2005; Cohen et al, 2018).

2.3 Ethics

Given that this study involves adult volunteers in the course of their professional duties, ethical risk is naturally low. Nevertheless, all possible harms were considered and mitigated prior to the collection of data. Firstly, Spěváček language school, which is the site of the study, were asked to make a commitment in writing that participation in the study would be voluntary and would have no positive or negative repercussions for the teachers and their careers. Consent forms and plain language statements, translated by Spěváček if necessary, were provided to the participants, and both teachers and students were asked to consent to the in-classroom observations. Total time commitment required of participants was less than two hours, at least one of which was in the course of their regular employment-related duties and therefore not an extra burden on their schedule. Teaching observations are also a normal part of their professional experience, as many schools regularly observe lessons for professional development.

Data will be securely stored on the University of Glasgow's servers via the One-Drive account and will be retained for no more than seven years. Participants were given the option of opting-out of having their data retained, were informed that they retained all rights to their data, including access, future uses, and withdrawal of consent, and were informed of the respective procedures for exercising those rights. Once the data is transcribed, identifying information will be removed and replaced with pseudonyms, and no personally identifying information will appear in any final paper or publication arising from the study.

It is also important to keep in mind the limitations of this study, the most obvious being that it has only two subjects and the findings cannot therefore be generalised on

any meaningful scale. The naturalistic approach also limits the generalizability of the findings, as observing a single class from two teachers does not indicate what teachers generally do or even what these two teachers always do. Interviews also represent self-reported data, and although in this case the observation provides a degree of objectivity, the data is not validated empirically. Observations are also subject to observer bias and have the inherent risk of altering the natural phenomenon simply by observing it. Furthermore, the students in the study did not have an opportunity to provide input so we know little about their actual perception of what happened in the classroom beyond what can be observed. The data is also limited to a specific point in time as it only captures what happened in one class and not the entirety of the students' courses. The chosen methods of analysing the data (transcribing, coding, and interpretation) are by definition subjective and it is conceivable that different observers would come to different conclusions. All things considered, this study does little to definitively answer any questions, but it does raise some very important ones and hopefully inspires reflection in its participants, author, and readers.

2.4 Field Study Procedure

The teacher interview questions were organised into four main sections, background information, educational philosophy, lesson planning, and student characteristics. The first section was designed to accomplish two things, firstly to collect important data about the participants educational background and training, and secondly to help the participant ease into the interview with a familiar and comfortable topic.

The second section used open-ended questions encouraging participants to talk at length about their views on education, their beliefs about its purpose, and how their own

practice fits into that. The third section, lesson planning, had 7 primary questions while the other sections had 3 each. These ranged from describing their lesson planning process, their conscious or unconscious use of specific theoretical techniques, their preferences for certain exercises, their use of resources and materials in the classroom, and how their lesson planning process varies between classes and over time.

The final section was devoted to asking about their students' learner characteristics, and posed questions about their perception of students' attitudes, motivations, aptitude, and degree of learner autonomy. This section is not actually intended to gather factual information about the students, and it would do a poor job of it without supplementary data collected from the students themselves. Instead, this section was designed to deduce the teacher's perceptions of their students and what they think makes a good student or not. This is an important aspect of the data as it shows how the teachers' perceptions of students and perceptions of the classroom and of their teaching practice fit together and inform one another.

The second stage of data collection was lesson observations, which were recorded for subsequent analysis. During the observation itself, I took notes using a predetermined proforma adapted from a freely available document from the University of Suffolk⁴. This template was suitable because it was designed to facilitate observations of teachers' classes. Here I captured the flow of the classroom, order of activities, and made my own comments about what I observed. This observation was crucial to being able to collect, if not totally unbiased at least impartial, data about the actual practice of the teacher. The observation therefore allowed me to compare whatever insights I gleaned from the

⁴ https://libguides.uos.ac.uk/celt/cpd/PRE_observations

interview with the real-life applications of the teachers' principles. Interviews and observations were conducted online via video conferencing software, specifically Zoom and Google Meet. These tools made the study viable, as participants were recruited from a country I'm not residing in, as well as allowing for ease of recording and transcribing using built-in functionality.

The analysis of the interview occurred in three rounds. The first round was simply to rewatch the recording of the interview while correcting the computer-generated transcript. This unfocused first review was conducive to allowing the broad concepts and tonality of the data to reveal itself without the filter of any structured analytical framework of interpretation. The second round was merely a read-through of the transcript while marking down key words or concepts, especially any which repeated or had some conceptual link to the literature. This procedure followed an adapted coding style, wherein certain phrases or comments were annotated throughout the transcript. In the third and final round these comments and phrases were critically analysed for evidence of patterns and similarities.

The analysis of the observation followed a similar 3-round structure, with the first round being during the observation itself. Since in this case I was a silent participant in the call, I was able to make notes on my observation proforma sheet on what was occurring in the classroom, paying special attention to the overall structure of the lesson, its transitions from one topic or activity to another, and any teacher interventions. These notes were in point form, sometimes only key phrases. In the second round, which occurred several days after the first, I rewatched the recording, comparing it to my initial notes, and added several long-form notes to my observation proforma sheet. With the

significant advantage of being able to pause and rewatch any portion of the recording, I was able to make much deeper interpretations of what was going on in the lesson. The final round included filling out the pro-forma commentary sections narratively, describing what occurred in the class. Once the data analysis process was completed, I was ready to begin writing about the findings.

Chapter III

Literature Review

The review conducted seeks to fulfil several aims. Firstly, to understand the broad strokes of academic theory in the ELT field, specifically as they relate to adult students and teachers working outside of formal school contexts. Secondly, to determine how this knowledge is generated and from what sources. Thirdly, to map the prominent theories in the field so as to compare them to the practice of the teacher subjects in this study. Most importantly, from my perspective as a teacher-researcher, the aim of the review is to inform and improve the practice of TEFL in my own classroom and community.

3.1 The Fundamental Pedagogical Principle in Second Language Teaching

In the late 1970's and early 1980's, Krashen developed five hypotheses of second language acquisition, which he coined as the input, acquisition-learning, monitor, natural order, and affective filter hypotheses (Krashen, 1981). In his 1981 article, he combined the various theories and five hypotheses that he had developed for over a decade into what he called The Fundamental Pedagogic Principle, claiming that Comprehensible Input (CI), which he defined as target language (in our case English) input at a level just slightly beyond the learner's level, was the only determining factor in second language acquisition, mediated only by the learner's affective filter. The bulk of the paper is spent explaining how the five hypotheses work together under the umbrella of the Fundamental Pedagogic Principle, and exploring various case uses. Ultimately, Krashen believed that while different pedagogic practices have merit, the extent to which they lead to acquisition, understood as a subconscious process distinct from learning, depended on

how much CI they provided to its learners. He encouraged further research into how his principles might be applied in different contexts and through different methods, a test, learn, and innovate approach.

Other notable points made by Krashen includes his relative disregard for the importance of target language output to the acquisition process, even positing that an over-emphasis on forced output, particularly in the early stages can be detrimental insofar as it raises the learners affective filter (e.g. by making them anxious or self-conscious). This is in stark contrast to our modern fixation on encouraging student-talk-time over teacher-talk-time (STT & TTT) in the classroom.

Additionally, he criticises traditional grammar-type and audio-lingual methods as failing to provide sufficient authentic CI and praises the newer theories of his day, such as Total Physical Response⁵ (TPR) and the Communicative Approach⁶ (CLT), as they are more apt for providing CI. He also claims that recent empirical evidence supports his hypothesis and the newer methods. It is fair to summarise his position on classroom practices by saying that he prefers meaning over form, target language input to the student over output from the student, and breadth of material and contexts over repetitive drills.

3.2 A Critical Look at the Communicative Approach

Michael Swan's 1985 two-part paper, is firstly an exploration of what CLT is and its role in the language classroom, as well as how it fits into a broader instructional

⁵ TPR is a TEFL technique whereby the students respond with certain physical actions to language prompts provided by the teacher, e.g., if the teacher says "jump" the students have to physically jump.

strategy that strikes a balance between form and function. In the first part of the paper, Swan begins by recognizing that the definition of CLT lacks clarity and that the understanding and implementation of CLT varies widely between practitioners. What follows is a lengthy critical discussion of the various concepts that fall under the communicative umbrella, touching on the distinction between meaning and use, the importance of appropriacy, and the alleged distinction between skills and strategies.

Swan is largely critical of these concepts, referring to them at various times as dogmatic, over-generalized, and generally misguided, particularly insofar as it posits that students' communicative skills do not or cannot transfer over from their mother tongue. Swan argues that students, especially adults, have an already developed set of communicative strategies which are not language-specific, and therefore it is useless and somewhat patronising to devote class time to learning strategies such as predicting meaning. Swan concludes with the assertion that this theory is largely irrelevant to foreign language teaching. Although he accepts that CLT may indeed offer something of value to the language classroom, he claims that a confused theory will produce an inefficient practice.

On its face, Swan's critique has some merit, however as any experienced language teacher would know, communicative strategies are not wholly identical between languages. Much as even related languages, which might share some 80% or more of their grammatical structure, still have crucial differences in the last 20%, communicative strategies may indeed have a universally applicable core but there are still important distinctions in communicative strategies which are often rooted in cultural differences. An apt example that anyone who has taught English in Central and Eastern Europe has

probably experienced is the often-used communication strategy of asking someone “how are you?”. The non-native speaker may be forgiven for interpreting this question as meaning that the speaker wants to know about their physical or emotional wellbeing, when in most cases this communicative strategy is used by native English speakers to establish rapport and feelings of conviviality. Swan would argue that this is simply a more advanced form of lexis, so ultimately it seems that the usefulness of teaching communicative strategies largely depends on what the individual practitioner thinks of as communicative strategies.

The second part of the paper delves deeper into the practical issues related to the implementation of CLT. Swan questions the validity of the notional-functional syllabus which organises language content according to meanings which the student needs to be able to express, rather than by grammatical structure. He also describes the use of authentic materials (e.g., newspaper articles) as insufficient, and argues that there is still a need for specialty-made materials (e.g., grammatical exercises). Finally, he takes aim at what he calls the ‘real life fallacy’, the claim that classroom activities should be limited to contexts which are likely to be found in the real world, explaining that learning a foreign language necessarily includes a degree of artificiality and study of form if it is to reach any kind of mastery. As before, a lengthy discussion follows where these concepts are evaluated in-depth and criticised. A fair generalisation of the criticism might be that these concepts, if applied dogmatically, will inevitably lead to a less effective form of instruction. A balanced approach is recommended, wherein “communicative” tasks are used alongside studies of form and function, syllabus design integrates semantic

(meanings) and formal (structures) instruction, as well as authentic and specialty-made materials.

3.4 Communicative Language Teaching: Making it Work

David Nunan, an Australian academic, has also written at length on the topics of CLT and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Importantly, he has also written about the importance of classroom-based studies and “validating theory against what actually happens in the classroom” (1987) which is precisely what this study aims to do. Four of his publications have been selected for this review, the first being his 1987 paper on CLT.

This paper, based on classroom-based studies, investigates the practices occurring at the time in ESL classrooms, with a particular focus on the extent to which genuine communication is being used. The method of inquiry was to record, transcribe, and analyse five communicative language lessons, a method which is reflected in this study. The teachers were all highly qualified with at least graduate diplomas in TESOL and two MAs in applied linguistics. Most teachers had significant experience, the majority between seven and eighteen years, and one teacher with only two years. The teachers all expressed their commitment to CLT and had prepared their lessons accordingly. The student pool was of mixed nationalities and language backgrounds and levels varied from beginner to intermediate. No further details on the specifics of the subjects, such as location of the study or class size, was provided.

Nunan’s analysis revealed that while the teachers intended to follow CLT methods and did incorporate communicative activities in their lesson plan, the lessons universally failed to live up to the criteria of genuine communication, which he defined as an interaction during which each participant can decide if they say anything, what to

say, when to say it, and who to say it to. Instead, the teachers' lessons relied on contrived dialogue using predetermined questions and answers, and on repetitive drills to reinforce the language point. The observations also revealed that the power dynamic in the classroom was heavily weighted towards the teacher, who predominantly decided "who should say what, when", and that the students, instinctually aware of this dynamic, held back from genuine expression. Borrowing a categorization from Howatt (1984:279, cited in Nunan, 1987), Nunan describes this approach as a "weak" form of CLT, which is a simple attempt to incorporate communicative opportunities into a broader lesson plan.

Underlying constraints of the language classroom are considered as causes of this phenomenon, including the limited language ability of the students, their expectations about the class, and the contrived context of the classroom itself as a place where people gather only for practising a language. Restating the importance of classroom-based research, he goes on to discuss how to improve CLT practice by referring to the work of Long and Crookes (1986:2 cited in Nunan, 1987), themselves strong advocates of classroom-based research. Their proposed solution was to implement referential questions, meaning questions directed at the students to which the teacher did not already know the answer. In a small follow-up experiment, the theory was tested by asking another teacher to prepare a CLT lesson which emphasised these types of questions. The results of this small case study were positive, as the data collected demonstrated evidence of genuine communication once referential questions were implemented.

Nunan concludes his paper by once again asserting the importance of classroom-based studies such as this one, and calls for more research to follow, especially from teacher-researchers (Stenhouse, 1975:143 cited in Nunan 1987).

3.5 We Acquire Vocabulary and Spelling by Reading: Additional Evidence for the Input Hypothesis

In 1989 Krashen expanded on his CI theory, discussed earlier in this review, particularly as it relates to reading, which he claimed is the best and possibly only way to improve student's competence in vocabulary and spelling as well as being beneficial to overall language competence. Krashen considered two competing views, the skill-building hypothesis⁵ (SBH) and the output hypothesis⁷ (OH). Throughout the paper, Krashen reviews many studies in language acquisition while debating the merits of these competing theories, ultimately concluding that both SBH and OH struggle to accurately predict phenomena in second language acquisition which the CI hypothesis predicts with ease. However, the data does show that learning via traditional methods does in fact lead to gains in the target language which cannot be explained solely by the CI hypothesis. Krashen therefore accepted a combined view, defining the result of CI as acquired competence and the result of SBH and OH as learned competence. He maintains that while both types of competence may play a role in the learner's development, acquired competence is the superior one, being more efficient in activating actual language faculties as opposed to memorization.

⁵ The skill-building hypothesis posits that language is learned by the deliberate study of individual items and rules which are then made automatic through repetition (Krashen, 1989).

⁷ The output hypothesis argues that language is learned by attempting to produce it and adjusting that production, or output, based on its success or failure to communicate the intended meaning (Krashen, 1989).

3.6 TESOL at Twenty-Five: What Are the Issues?

In 1991, Brown published his comprehensive retrospective “TESOL at Twenty-Five: What are the Issues?”. Broadly speaking, he identified four major recurrent themes in the field of ESOL teaching:

1. A focus on learners’ and their intrinsic motivations for empowerment
2. The creep of socio-political issues and internationalisation of English
3. An increasingly task-based curriculum that emphasises global issues
4. A heavy emphasis on learner-centred methodology and strategy training

Brown largely sees these developments as positive, praising both CLT and TBLT as promising new developments. Seeing English language teachers as not just teachers but also agents of positive social change, Brown encourages learner-centredness and civic education as complementary to the aims of the language classroom.

3.7 Communicative Tasks and the Language Curriculum

The second of Nunan’s articles (1991) highlights the connection between CLT and TBLT, as well how these concepts manifest themselves in curriculum development. Nunan begins by describing the TBLT approach using five key points:

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language
2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation
3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language, but also on the learning process itself
4. An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning
5. An attempt to link classroom language

After this foundation is laid out, Nunan spends the first half of the paper discussing the field of TBLT research, including both theoretical and empirical studies.

Beginning in mainstream educational research, Tasks made their way into the language teaching curriculums as part of the overall push for authentic communication. Although some difficulty in defining the Task has persisted, it was generally believed to be valuable insofar as it could provide a non-language related purpose to the student's activity, thereby allowing a more organic adoption of the language in similar fashion to its actual usage as "a means to an end". TBLT can be implemented into curriculum development in two ways, which Nunan refers to respectively as the rehearsal and the psycho-linguistic rationales. The first rationale works backwards from any given real-world usage of the target language and develops relevant tasks for rehearsing the same, while the second rationale attempts to activate psycho-linguistics mechanisms of second language acquisition through classroom Tasks. Good Tasks can utilise both these principles at once, and their increasing importance in curriculum development also led to a loss of distinction between content-focused syllabus design and methodology. Task selection determines both the target destination as well as the route used to get there.

Nunan then claims that TBLT is supported by strong empirical backing and proceeds to lay out the literature in the field. He identifies five key elements of a Task as "goals, input data, activities/procedures, roles, and settings" (Anderson & Lynch, 1988; cited in Nunan, 1991), and goes on to discuss the empirical basis of each. Regarding Task goals, Nunan could not find much research from his contemporaries, however he does refer to a 1984 study by Brindley (cited in Nunan, 1991) which found that explicit goals likely resulted in more effective teaching outcomes. Research on Task input was more prevalent, and commonly took shape as investigations into the relative difficulty of audio

or textual input, with several factors being identified such as the type of text and how it's organised, and content familiarity.

The bulk of TBLT research was found to be dedicated to the actual activity behind the Task, with particular interest in what activities proved most effective for second language acquisition, the primary debate being between Krashen's CI hypothesis and the interactional modification theory espoused by Long (1985B, cited in Nunan 1991) and other critics of comprehensible input (Swain 1985; Doughty & Pica 1986; Cited in Nunan, 1991). Citing a 1985 article, Nunan argues that the relative failure of Canada's immersion programs to produce fluent speakers justifies criticisms of CI as insufficient and, by extension, provides further rationale for TBLT⁸ (Swain, 1985; cited in Nunan, 1991). Other areas of interest included what types of language were stimulated by different Tasks, this time citing a study which showed that transactional Tasks (i.e., mediating the exchange of good or services) differed in this regard from an interpersonal Task (i.e., mediating a social interaction), showing if nothing else that Tasks have a measurable effect which depends on the Type of task used (Berwick, 1988). Similarly, closed vs open Tasks⁹ were found to stimulate distinct interactional patterns, and open tasks were found more effective with students at higher levels of proficiency in the target language (Nunan, 1991; cited in Nunan 1991).

Additional research into teacher-learner roles and classroom settings is discussed briefly, summarising several significant findings such as clarity of teacher and learner roles in the Task is crucial, learner to learner or small group interactions are conducive to

⁸ As a former student in Canada's immersion program for six years, I tend to agree with Nunan.

⁹ Closed meaning tasks with a single or limited correct answer(s), such as a factual exchange, while open tasks have no specific correct answer and are conversational in nature.

increasing STT and error correction, and supplementary community-based experiences boost acquisition. Nunan concludes his paper by outlining what he believes future research should be focused on, calling for research to expand substantively to include a wider range of linguistic and psycholinguistic models, and methodologically by developing the scope of tools and techniques.

3.8 Methods in Second Language Classroom-Oriented Research: A Critical Review

Nunan's third article (1991) in this selection begins with a concise review of the current issues and goals of classroom-oriented research, followed by an analysis on 50 empirical investigations, chosen from the last 25 years. Studies were selected for the review for being representative of the field as indicated by number of citations and range of issues. Once selected, their respective rationales, environments, design, methods of data collection, and type of analysis carried out are investigated. The article concludes with a discussion on the findings and the future implications on classroom-oriented research.

His findings showed that a slight majority of studies, 28, were classroom-oriented (data collected outside the classroom) while only 15 were classroom-based (collected data directly from language classrooms). Almost all studies had pedagogy as a primary rationale, which Nunan sees as problematic for classroom-oriented studies as it decontextualizes the findings, a position which is shared by the design of this study. Out of 50 studies, 32 employed non-experimental methods of data collection, such as elicitation, often using a stimulus device or standardised testing. Observation methods were heavily favoured by classroom studies, while self-reported data was conspicuously unpopular, presumably because it was perceived as unreliable. Three broad categories of

data analysis were discovered in the literature, linguistic, statistical, and interpretive, with classroom studies favouring interpretive analyses. Nunan criticised the way statistical analyses were designed and reported, arguing that basic information about the subject pool was often missing or difficult to find, and that the statistical tests conducted were often inappropriate given the characteristics of the sample that was being analysed.

Nunan concludes his review by discussing the implications for future research, with the following five key suggestions:

1. the implementation of more contextualised classroom-based research, such as the current study, as opposed to decontextualized classroom-oriented research
2. an extension of the theoretical bases of research agendas
3. an extension of the range of research tools, techniques, and methods, adopting and adapting these where appropriate from content classroom research
4. a re-evaluation of the distinction between process-oriented and product-oriented research
5. a more active role for classroom practitioners in applied research, a criterion which is also fulfilled in this study.

3.9 Metaphors We Work by: ELT and its Metaphors

This short article, published by Thornbury in the *ELT Journal* (1991), was inspired by the responses of a small group of EFL teachers to their first ever Japanese language lesson. The paper showcases Thornbury's belief that the metaphors practitioners use to talk about language learning reflect their beliefs about how language is taught and consequently their own teaching styles. Thornbury identifies three recurring types of metaphors of language learning: the journey, the mechanical or computational process, and puzzle-solving. He goes on to argue that these self-held images will

undoubtedly shape the way that the practitioners approach their teaching. Thornbury believes that these images can be a powerful force for change in EFL practice, and that the field would benefit from increased awareness of the power of metaphors. He concludes by advocating for greater incorporation of this understanding in teacher training, suggesting that trainees should be allowed and indeed encouraged to break down and re-imagine the teaching process using new and creative metaphors, thereby leading to new and creative teaching practices.

3.10 Paying Lip Service to CLT

Thornbury's 1996 paper is highly critical of the current incorporation, or lack thereof, of true CLT practices in the EFL classroom (see also Nunan, 1987), and draws heavily on his experience as a teacher trainer over the preceding decade or more. He begins this article by pointing out a discrepancy between the theory and practice of CLT, quoting both Nunan (1987) as well as Legutke and Thomas (1991; cited in Thornbury, 1996), he posits that the so-called failure of self-styled communicative teachers to actually provide opportunity for authentic language use to their students is well documented. He proposes that the cause of this discrepancy at least somewhat related to the failure of teachers' initial training programs. Using several examples from teacher training courses, he elaborates on what he calls the hidden grammar-driven agenda present in teacher training courses. This teaching of form rather than meaning is portrayed as being in fundamental opposition to true CLT. Thornbury does acknowledge that his argument is exclusively based on observations of trainee teachers, and as such may not be entirely representative of the overall practice in the field. In this regard, the current study offers valuable insight into the practices of teachers in the course of their

post-training practice. However, his analysis of training materials reveals that many training centres, perhaps stuck in the ways of the past, overemphasise grammar-driven teaching even as they espouse the new and trendy communicative theories. His suggestions for improving training programs include placing a higher priority on lesson personalisation, re-wording enrolment and documentation procedures to de-emphasize grammar, re-designing curriculums to reflect a prioritisation of learning over language, and a greater inclusion of student-led, authentic use, and fluency-type activities.

3.11 A Dogma for EFL

In this editorial Thornbury (2000) draws a comparison between the EFL classroom and contemporary cinema, arguing that EFL classrooms are over-resourced, leading to a crowding out of authentic language use and real communication. Describing his recent work as “waging war on materials-driven lessons”, he proposes a radical re-thinking of the EFL classroom using “Dogme” principles, borrowed from the cinematic movement of the same name. Taken literally, this means that no contrived materials should be used, including coursebooks, grammar exercises, recordings, or anything else other than whatever was brought in by the participants or found naturally in the environment. Similarly, no methodological structures should contaminate the “free flow of participant-driven input, output, and feedback”. Thornbury concludes his article by advocating for a return to a pre-method era, before the educational machine inundated the field with theories and coursebooks. A time when learning was jointly constructed by the participants through dialogue, which he sees as a more natural way to learn.

3.12 The Unbearable Lightness of EFL

Thornbury expands on his ideas in another editorial (2001). Acknowledging the widespread public stigma against TEFL as a low-status profession of dubious merit, due in part to its association with backpacker teachers, he goes on to describe two competing counter-movements in the industry, which he names the academic and therapeutic models. Put simply, the academic model seeks to elevate TEFL to the same respected status as other professions by “emphasising the consensual knowledge base of EFL” as determined by the study of linguistics and thus dependent on subject matter experts in university offices. The therapeutic model, borrowing from new age doctrine, re-casts practitioners as therapists and encourages them to focus on the students’ personal development and self-esteem. This model closely resembles personal development ideologies of the day, relying on theories derived from Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP), a type of personal development theory popular in self-help circles.

Thornbury suggests an alternative third way, which he labels “the dialogic model”. Borrowing heavily from Freire, he critiques the banking concept of education and, as in his earlier writings, makes a strong argument in favour of language learning as jointly constructed by teachers and students through dialogue. His discourse also claims solidarity with the social-constructivist view of education, which similarly emphasises dialogue.

3.13 Dogme: Dancing in the Dark

In 2005, Thornbury expanded on his Dogme ideology and its developments in the preceding years. Admitting that perhaps the movement, having made its point, is at its natural conclusion, he compiles a list of 10 features of a hypothetical “Dogme

Coursebook”, symbolically acknowledging that even though coursebooks are not going anywhere, they may at least be improved by adopting Dogme principles.

3.14 Legislation by Hypothesis: The Case of Task-Based Instruction

In 2005, Swan released one of his more impactful critiques of Task-Based Instruction (referred to hereafter by the more common TBLT for the sake of consistency).

Swan elaborates his stance on TBLT in 4 distinct critiques:

1. The theoretical underpinnings of TBLT are inconclusive and myopic, lacking as it is in empirical evidence and discarding other worthwhile theories
2. Dubious grounds for rejection of traditional instructional paradigms, reflecting a prejudicial view on the part of TBLT advocates
3. Naturalistic instruction emphasises pre-existing knowledge at the expense of expanding the learner’s knowledge base and therefore inefficient
4. TBLT is inappropriate for the vast majority of the world’s language learners due to cultural and contextual limitations on time and availability of input

In conclusion, Swan claims that the one-sided advocacy of TBLT reveals a recurring pattern of ideological swings in language teaching theory and practice, a pattern which he believes is ultimately damaging to the profession. He credits this tendency to cycle through theories of the day to the innately unsatisfactory nature of second language learning and warns that this is a case of “legislation-by-hypothesis” which can be severely damaging if inappropriate policies are adopted as a result.

3.15 Language Education Past, Present and Future

In 2008, Krashen published a reflective paper on the past, present, and future of language education, showing how his views have developed over the previous two decades. The most important of which is that Krashen now describes CLT as being ideologically based on the Output Hypothesis and therefore antithetical to his CI approach. This represents a deviation from his views reflected in his 1981 article where he believed the then-new Communicative Approach to be more or less aligned with his theories. This shift can be explained by the fact that CLT was in its infancy at the time of Krashen's first paper and was perhaps seen more optimistically then it turned out to be. Krashen does say that in theory the Communicative Approach can be rich in CI, however in practice it seems to be entirely focused on output rather than input.

3.16 Task-Based Language Teaching: Sorting out the Misunderstandings

In 2009 Ellis tackled the misunderstandings of TBLT which he saw as prevalent in the profession, arguing against 12 misunderstandings about TBLT that he saw as widespread in the academic community. He specifically attempts to refute criticisms made by several scholars, including Michael Swan who is addressed elsewhere in this review, that TBLT lacks sufficient empirical evidence to recommend it. Ellis argues that TBLT has been shown to facilitate incidental learning, and that it draws from a theoretical basis that extends beyond Second Language Acquisition (SLA) into general education theory. Nevertheless, Ellis does identify several problems in the implementation of TBLT, and offers the following principles as solutions:

1. The tasks must be tailored to the proficiency levels of the students
2. Tasks need to be trialled to ensure that they result in appropriate L2 use

and revised in the light of experience

3. For TBLT to work, teachers need a clear understanding of what a task is

4. Teachers and students need to be made aware of the purpose and rationale for performing tasks

5. Ideally, the teachers involved in teaching a task-based course must be involved in the development of the task materials.

Ellis concludes by re-emphasizing his belief that TBLT offers several distinct advantages to the language classroom, the least of which being that it allows for organic acquisition and is intrinsically motivating.

3.17 The Learning Styles and Strategies of Effective Language Learners

This study used a mixed methods approach, comparing self-reported data collected via questionnaire about the learning strategies and study habits of 110 undergraduate students in Hong Kong with their scores on standardised public English examinations administered at the end of secondary school (Wong & Nunan, 2011). Statistically significant differences were found in the learning styles of more vs. less effective students, with the more effective group reporting communicative approach while the less effective appeared more authority oriented. The authors stressed that all types of learning styles were reported in both groups at nearly equal levels, and the main difference from their perspective was attitudinal, meaning that more effective learners were more likely to use and study the language on their own outside of the classroom.

3.18 Resisting Coursebooks

In 2013 Thornbury laid out in detail his critique of coursebooks and their pervasive appearance in EFL classrooms. In the context of progressive education, textbooks and classroom materials are seen as embodiments of the dominating system and quickly become targets for the reformers seeking to change that system. Similarly, advocates of critical pedagogy correlate textbooks with the values of powerful, perhaps sinister, elites. When it comes to EFL coursebooks, these too have been widely criticised by academics as being a barrier to authentic learning and problematic for their apparent complicity in perpetuating injustices and linguistic imperialism by virtue of their common enshrinement of native-speakerism. The merit of this line of argument depends largely on one's ideological position, insofar as some see injustice where others see only an attempt to offer high quality materials, rich in authentic texts, which coincidentally is what the market largely demands.

Thornbury goes on to highlight several alternatives to problematic grammar-driven coursebooks, including Dogme, locally produced materials, critiquing coursebooks, and replacing them with student-generated materials.

3.19 Language-teaching Method Revisited

Last in our review is Penny Ur, who has written extensively about the relationship between theory and practice. This paper is primarily an argument against the primacy of TBLT and method in general in modern language classrooms (2013). Ur contests any claims made by her contemporaries that ELT has entered a post-method stage, going so far as to suggest that the field has backtracked from whatever anti-method sentiment had been expressed in recent years. She also argues that many of the alternatives suggested by

anti-method writers, such as Kumaravadivelu, are not sufficiently distinct so as to not be considered methods themselves, and that the general trend reflects a resurgence of the dominance of the method (Waters, 2012 cited in Ur, 2013).

She suggests that the field and its students would be better served by encouraging teachers to adopt situated methodologies rather than methods. This is defined as a teaching practice which is based on general educational theory but personalised by the teacher to the specific context of the classroom. By considering practical classroom decisions, the demographics of the students, cultural factors, external stakeholders, examination practices, as well as their own individual skills, talents, and experience, teachers can develop a context-specific situated methodology for their practice. Ur supports her argument by pointing out several key findings from the literature. Firstly, that different methods seem to have drastically different results in different contexts, regardless of their current trendiness or lack thereof. Secondly, various methods which are theoretically contradictory have proven wildly successful in different classes or with different teachers. Thirdly, Ur claims that in most real-life contexts practitioners already naturally revert to situated methodologies, but that this leads to a dissonance between practitioners and theorists which cause intellectual discomfort and confusion to both sides. Finally, Ur recommends that theorists and practitioners alike abandon their focus on developing and implementing any one ace method, something she dismisses as an impossibility and therefore irrational. They should instead focus on sharing the best principles, practices, and research insights, allowing teachers to curate a well-informed situated methodology.

3.20 Where do we go from here? Method and Pedagogy in Language Teaching

Ur's 2014 follow-up article expands on these ideas, introducing us to the concept of a language pedagogy. This term has replaced the earlier situated methodology, but the concept is based on the same principles. This pedagogy should be principled and localised, meaning that instructional procedures are chosen for their relative educational merit and their effectiveness in the immediate context, considering general educational principles, not just SLA principles. The pedagogy should also be determined primarily by the teachers and informed by their reflected experience, insights from colleagues and students, professional development, and cutting-edge research. Ur concluded this article by reiterating her call for practitioners and theorists to abandon the method and embrace language pedagogy.

3.21 Theory and Practice in Language Teacher Education

This is a write-up of a plenary speech given by Ur at a conference on the topic of theory and practice in language teacher education (2019). Ur attempts to bridge the gap between theory and practice by arguing that it's not a gap at all, rather it should be thought as a continuum where theory and practice blend into one another. Ur makes several clarifications about the confusion surrounding this topic, chiefly that theory and practice are complementary rather than opposing forces, that research and theory are not the same thing, and that the function of published theories is to prompt reflection by practitioners rather than to be implemented blindly. The paper concludes with several suggestions for how teacher training courses can implement these ideas.

3.22 Concluding Remarks

Looking at the selection of papers that have just been covered in this review, we can deduce several interesting remarks. Notably, although just 4 papers (see Table 1.1 nos. 4, 8, 10, 17) had an investigative bend, only one of them (no. 17) sought to generate new knowledge from actual classrooms, like this study does. None of the studies sought to generate new knowledge based on the teacher's pedagogy, as no. 17 was about the effects of students' study habits. This shows us that most of the research reviewed had a top-down ideology, and teachers were not perceived as being suitable sources of new knowledge about their own profession. Despite near-unanimous calls for increased research in the classroom and practitioner engagement, the lack thereof has persisted over the last 40 years. This project, being an investigation into classroom practices conducted by a practitioner, is a direct answer to those calls.

From an academic perspective, the literature goes back and forth between theories, seemingly unable to reach any meaningful consensus about the ever-increasing number acronyms and theoretical models. Most recently it seems that some academics would rather we abandon "Method" altogether (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; cited in Ur, 2013) and democratise the classroom by enabling and encouraging practitioners to develop their own distinct situated methodology (Ur, 2013; 2014). This study is therefore also valuable in this regard, as it may well shed light on the issue by going to the source, the modern language classroom.

Chapter IV

Findings

Despite the original plan of finding six to eight participants, only two suitable volunteers were found in time for the collection of data to be included in this paper. As such, this section will delve deeper into each participants' data, following a case study paradigm. This approach enables extraction of useful interpretations from the limited data which is available and, I believe, will clearly demonstrate that this kind of study is vital to our understanding of what happens in the EFL classroom. Firstly, I will present the findings of the first candidate, starting with the interview and then the observation. I will then present the same set of findings from the second candidate. After the presentation of findings, a discussion will follow to compare and contrast the two sets, and discern whatever insights are there to discover.

4.1 The Career TEFL Teacher

4.1.1 The Interview

The first subject will be referred to as the Career Teacher, in reflection of this line of work being her first and only serious professional pursuit. She began working in TEFL immediately after graduating from post-secondary even though her education was in an unrelated field (governance & politics). Her motivation for this work was incidental to the work itself as she chose it for being a suitable vehicle to allow for extended

international travel. This is common for many TEFL teachers, myself included, since TEFL promises a relatively easy way to find gainful employment in many foreign countries, especially for native English speakers.

The Career Teacher began her career with even less experience and preparation than is common today, since she began working without any kind of TEFL certificate. Slovakia, where the Career Teacher first started, did not mandate TEFL certification for EFL teachers at that time, so after just 1 week of basic training, she was allowed to begin teaching. Describing it as a “rough start” she nevertheless “fell in love with teaching”, which she attributes to her “delightful and lovely” students. She stayed in this position for two years, at which time she moved back home to the U.S.A. and pursued a TEFL certification course.

Lacking any guidance, she chose a course which she describes as low-quality, was mostly online, and lacked practice. Nevertheless, she obtained a TEFL certificate and began working online for VIPKid, a Chinese company geared towards school-aged children, and a juggernaut in the industry until a Chinese governmental policy change essentially outlawed their practice some years ago. After working for them for one year, the Career Teacher then enrolled into a Masters of TESOL program in her home country, where she “finally got the training she needed”. Sometime after completing this program, she moved to The Czech Republic where she continued teaching as well as began working as a teacher trainer in the on-site TEFL course offered at Spěváček, which will have implications for her practice.

The Career Teacher defined the purpose of education, including her own work, as “helping people” or “giving them the tools they need” to achieve their goals and “be

productive”. In describing her own role in that process, the Career Teacher used several interesting analogies. Thornbury (1991) made the case that metaphors are important because how teachers see themselves and their practice influences that practise. The Career Teacher used metaphors of helping, tooling, guiding, coaching, and fountain of ideas. She sees herself as an authority due to her subject matter expertise, but refrains from becoming authoritarian, instead letting the students use her as a resource. An example of a student-centred approach. Speaking about individual lessons, she said that the goal for each lesson is largely determined by the student and the overall goal for their course. Interestingly, she doesn’t depend only on the prescribed goals of the course for this analysis, but also tries to interpret the student’s personal needs and desires from an emotional perspective. She gave several examples of her students during this part of the interview which gave the impression that she is emotionally attuned to her students and their nonverbal cues. One such example is the working single mother, for whom the English classes are an “escape” from an otherwise stressful life full of competing familial and professional pressures. The Career Teacher described her approach to this and other similar students as providing “a space where students can feel relaxed” and choosing topics that are completely unrelated to the students’ own lives. This relational aspect of the Career Teacher’s pedagogy is notably absent from the literature, other than the related concept of students’ affective filters and their impact on performance (Krashen, 1981).

The Career Teacher defined a successful lesson as one where the student appears happy, that covered some tangible teaching, and that fostered high student talk time. This stands in stark contrast to the Comprehensive Input theory (Krashen, 1981), and is more aligned with CLT and the Output Hypothesis (Krashen, 1989). Finally in describing the

challenging aspects of the job, the Career Teacher talked about finding a balance between her personal motivations for the class and her professional duties. She finds it challenging to make sure that she is not implementing activities only because she finds them personally rewarding rather than being effective teaching tools.

The next section of the interview, on lesson planning, revealed several important points about how the Career Teacher structures her lessons. It is important to remember that the Career Teacher is also a TEFL teacher trainer, and therefore TEFL practices will naturally be more emphasised in her work. Despite this, the Career Teacher expressed a relatively low level of structure in her syllabus, and even allows for spontaneous free-talk lessons with certain students. She also regularly allows her students to prep and plan the lesson using resources she provides (e.g., choose a topic from this website) and generally follows a student-centred approach. It does not appear that this actually crosses over into student-led, however. In addition, certain types of lessons, such as grammar, are much more heavily structured, a practice which supports the argument that there is a need for some artificiality in the language classroom (Swan, 1985).

The syllabus for each course is loosely structured as a running list of what was covered and updated weekly with ideas for future classes categorised into vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation etc. She usually covers everything she means to during a particular class, except if timing constraints force her to shift activities between lessons. In regard to TEFL techniques the Career Teacher picks and chooses techniques based primarily on pragmatic considerations, meaning on their usefulness to her immediate goals, and avoids techniques or materials which are too time-consuming. This aversion to having her class taken over by lengthy materials is reminiscent of the Dogme

philosophy's war on materials-driven classrooms, although it is not so radical (Thornbury, 2000). Although she doesn't explicitly state so, it's possible her aversion to lengthy materials has to do with the crowding out of genuine communication in such materials. She specifically criticised recent lesson plans from a particular publisher for getting longer and having a lot of contrived language studying activities as opposed to authentic materials and communicative activities. The undesirability of time-consuming activities and techniques came up several times during the discussion, revealing a preoccupation with time which suggests that this is one of the more valuable resources the Career Teacher rations throughout her syllabus. Elicitation also came up several times in the discussion and is certainly one of the more actively emphasised techniques in the Career Teachers toolbox.

Other points which came up are the use of various websites and textbooks. She is not particularly beholden to any one resource and simply chooses whichever fits her requirements at any given point in the course. She also does not consciously depend on any particular methodology but has more or less internalised the Present-Practice-Produce (PPP) methodology¹⁰.

The Career Teacher views her students as primarily extrinsically motivated, usually due to career pressures in an increasingly anglicised business environment. Although some of her students pursue classes for personal reasons, even just for fun, they are in the clear minority. Being aware of this, the Career Teacher actively attempts to

¹⁰ PPP refers to a type of lesson plan structure wherein students are first presented with a particular language form or function, then are given specialty exercises to practise the language in its varying uses, and finally encouraged to produce the language in meaningful output. Ideologically it is based on CLT and TBLT, although it could be criticised for its reliance on contrived exercises for practice. PPP is common in most modern TEFL courses and is one of the most enthusiastically promoted methodologies.

foster intrinsic motivation by setting a casual tone in the classroom and emphasising having fun. When asked what if any student characteristics are correlated with speed of progress, the Career Teacher vehemently expressed her belief that preference for homework and consistency in doing homework is the number one predictor of speed of progress. This indication could be seen as evidence for several different theories, although it is impossible to be more specific without more data about the students' study habits. It could be that pursuing homework increases the amount of Comprehensible Input the student is exposed to and that is what drives the progress (Krashen, 1981; 1989). Nunan (2011) discovered that students who were more likely to engage with the language on their own outside of the classroom were more effective learners, also supporting the Career Teacher's claim that homework is the primary predictor of speed of progress. It is also possible that preference for homework is correlated with higher motivation which may in turn indicate that the student makes more communicative use of the language (Nunan, 2011). Another possibility is that students who prefer more homework are also more likely to practise producing the language, pointing to the Output Hypothesis (Krashen, 1989). Most likely it is a combination of these factors. When asked about the absolute progress that a student is likely to make, meaning to how high a level they will improve their skills, the Career Teacher claimed it is primarily determined by the force of extrinsic factors, e.g., an imminent move abroad for a work position, or beginning a romantic relationship with an anglophone. This again could point to CLT, CI, or OH and it is again impossible to be more specific without further data.

As to the concept of aptitude, the Career Teacher does perceive that different students vary but stated she cannot explain why. What is apparent is that those with

higher aptitudes, defined as those who seem to progress faster and farther, are also more likely to exhibit confidence and risk-taking behaviours in class. The correlation or causality relationship of these factors is unclear. I am not aware of any research being done on student aptitude in SLA, which is either an oversight on my part or a gap in the research. Anecdotally it seems apparent that different students exhibit different levels of aptitude for languages, and this phenomenon could yield useful insights into SLA if properly researched and understood.

Based on the interview data, the Career Teacher's methodology can be described primarily as a balanced approach. Her practice is rooted in modern TEFL techniques with which she is familiar due to her graduate level education in TESOL and her work as a teacher trainer. Whether knowingly or not, her approach to teaching is shaped by the contradictions in the field, and her pedagogy ultimately boils down to an attempt to balance competing interests in a limited time using available resources. Practically this means that she allocates her energy more or less evenly between fostering authentic dialogue, studying forms and grammar, and placing the student and their needs at the centre of the lesson. She attempts to do this by employing an array of techniques based on a multitude of theories such as CLT, TBLT, CI, and OH.

4.1.2 The Observation

Based on the interview I expected to observe a student-centred class, possibly with lots of free-flow conversation and high student talk time. I also expected to see some of the Career Teacher's favourite techniques such as elicitation, and a degree of tie-in to past lessons.

Overall, the lesson was fairly structured, although the structure was not very strict. This is in line with the Career Teachers description of her planning process and following the structure loosely. The lesson was clearly student-centred, although not necessarily student-led, again in line with expectations. The first fifteen minutes were spent on free talk. It's important to note that the student and teacher also happen to be friends outside the classroom so this warmup was likely more familiar than it would have otherwise been. Afterwards, the teacher shared a whiteboard and began a five-minute pronunciation exercise, wherein she would write certain words on the board and the student had to pronounce them, with ongoing corrections where necessary. This was followed by a gap-fill exercise. The target language was varied, including some idiomatic phrases, prepositions, and vocabulary. Although the selection appeared mostly random, it was most likely pulled from the student's previous work as she seemed to be mostly familiar with them. This exercise relied heavily on elicitation, using prepared prompts, and had all the hallmarks of the weak form of CLT (Nunan, 1987) which relies on repetitive drills and contrived dialogue. Although they also bear resemblance to TBLT, the chosen exercises fail to meet the criteria for a Task as using the language for a purpose besides learning the language (Nunan, 1991). Thus far, the observed lesson was not substantially different from the ones Thornbury studied and described as paying lip service to CLT while still being focused on forms (1996). This may indicate that despite calls for reform in the literature, teacher training courses are still driven by a grammatical agenda.

Afterwards a lead-in activity introduced certain themes as an introduction to the topic of the next activity, a video-based exercise which was used to elicit vocabulary. The

video had no dialogue, so it didn't represent input, only an audio-visual elicitation prompt. This was watched twice, although not in its entirety. The first time, the student was allowed to watch with no interruptions and was instructed to take note of any vocabulary she sees or hears. These words were then shared with the teacher, who corrected them when needed. On the second watch-through, the video was paused frequently for eliciting additional specific vocabulary, and the teacher allowed the student to initiate several lengthy free discussions about any given prompt. This exercise is typical of the weak form of CLT (Nunan, 1987) as it is based on a contrived exercise but the student is encouraged to engage in authentic discourse throughout. Finally, a flash-card gap-fill activity borrowed from an e-coursebook was used to review vocabulary the student had previously studied.

Identification of TEFL techniques:

1. Elicitation (gap-fill and verbal prompts)
2. Use of whiteboard and third-party materials (audio-visual, flashcards)
3. Student allowed to lead conversation, if it happened organically, throughout the lesson
4. Open-ended questions
5. Chat-box used for error correction and elicited vocabulary when not using whiteboard

The observed lesson greatly matched expectations, reflecting a high degree of self-awareness when compared to the interview. It had a very casual tone and allowed for extensive, undirected conversation, while still maintaining a clearly recognizable structure. The student was encouraged to initiate free conversation and to pursue

whatever tangential narratives she wanted based on the vocabulary she was learning. The use of a video without dialogue was surprising, but highly effective in eliciting vocabulary, and was a rich source of the same. All chosen exercises were adeptly executed and seemed to achieve their goals. The student seemed to be enjoying the class and was engaged with the target language. In conclusion, the Career Teacher's lesson blended techniques from several major theories in the field and attempted to find a balance between their competing priorities. A little bit of everything but not too much of anything. On the question of efficacy, the data is inconclusive, but we can say that the practice mostly reflects the theory with the notable exception of the emphasis on relational factors.

4.2 The Vocational TEFL Teacher

4.2.1 The Interview

The second candidate will be referred to as the Vocational Teacher. This pseudonym reflects her journey, coming from a very different professional background and feeling a calling to this work. Initially, like the first candidate and many other TEFL teachers, this profession was chosen because it gave the Vocational Teacher an opportunity to move to Europe. Her previous work experience was in robotics training, and she also studied psychology and worked with mentally ill patients. This is unrelated to TEFL but the Vocational Teacher feels that many of the skills she developed are transferable, especially the skills used for training and for working with patients. She mentioned multiple times that her preparation in psychology has greatly influenced her teaching style and has been very helpful in connecting with her students.

She also expressed that the decision to move to Europe and teach English was quite a dramatic event in her life, as it entailed selling her possessions, quitting her career, and radically transforming her life, all on her own. She therefore had an all-in mentality and decided to take it very seriously. She felt some alienation to her colleagues on the TEFL course, since for many of them this experience seemed to be a prolonged vacation, while she felt that she was here to change her life. The phenomenon of the backpacker teacher is clearly alive and well (Thornbury, 2001). When discussing the TEFL course itself, she described it as having a heavy focus on grammar, which she saw as a good review of certain things that she hadn't thought about since graduating high school. The course also covered lesson planning and some teaching techniques; however, the Vocational Teacher believes it was a very basic preparation and stated multiple times she has not referred to her notes or utilised much of what was taught there in her actual work. Indeed, she seemed fairly dismissive of the value of the course, appearing to view it as something that has to be learned and checked off the list, but is of little utility after the fact. It will be interesting to see how this attitude, so different from the Career Teacher's, manifests itself in the classroom.

Now discussing her educational philosophy, she describes the general purpose of education as preparing students for life, which she sees holistically as including career, relationships, family, civic life etc. The purpose of her teaching specifically, while not so clearly articulated, seemed to be fulfilling a need for her students. In this regard she shared the views of the Career Teacher. She spoke at length about the generational differences in working with students from a Slavic country, wherein the older students are ill-prepared for an anglicised world having grown up in Soviet times. Her comments

suggest a preoccupation with her students' needs, seeing her purpose as filling a gap in the society. The extent to which she refers to the students' cultural and historical backgrounds suggests that her pedagogy follows a situated methodology which is very specific to the context of her practice (Ur, 2013).

Like the Career Teacher, the Vocational Teacher also sees her adult students as more motivated, referring specifically to career requirements. Her approach is very student-specific, possibly going as far as being almost entirely student-led. She gave multiple examples of students who come into the lesson and just talk about their family or what they did on the weekend or showing pictures of their pets. The Vocational Teacher allows students to essentially take over the class and discuss whatever they want, believing that whatever lesson plan she prepared is just there to fall back on rather than take priority. Her pedagogy is an example of the strong form of CLT, wherein the participants choose if, when, what, and to whom they will speak (Nunan, 1987), although she is prudent in prompting both students to speak in equal quantities. Principles of Dogme theory, which advocates against bringing outside materials into the classroom, are also reflected here (Thornbury, 2000). Her criteria for a successful lesson are having a positive connection, a happy student, and the conversation was in English. She repeatedly emphasised the importance of building trust and openness in the relationship, perhaps a reflection of her training in psychology. Finally, she believes that many of her students simply want contact with a native English speaker and to have her full attention during their time together.

Digging deeper now into the Vocational Teacher's lesson planning process, I learned that not only does she not prioritise her plan, she views it as a crutch to beginning

the relationship with the student which can be discarded at the earliest opportunity. She also avoids traditional lexis or grammar lessons unless requested, unlike the Career Teacher. Although she does some planning for her courses, she doesn't really plan more than one lesson at a time, nor does she strictly stick to her plan since the students' needs might be different every week or change spontaneously. This suggests a very high degree of comfort and confidence in her work and in her ability to spontaneously pivot during the class to respond to what she feels the student needs in that moment. Again, I believe this reflects her psychology training. Furthermore, she encourages students to choose their own materials and to request specific topics on which she will then plan the lesson. In another interesting contrast to the Career Teacher, the Vocational Teacher doesn't seem concerned with time and doesn't time her lessons. For example, if following some coursebook, which the student likely chose, she may spend the whole class on one page or cover several pages. She allows the pace to be dictated by how fast the student is absorbing the information.

When asked about what, if any, specific techniques she's mindful of using, the first ones she mentioned are empathy and compassion. This is shown by her focused attention on nonverbal cues from her students and her awareness of cultural factors. These relational factors also appeared in the Career Teacher's practice, and it is important to note again their absence in the literature. When prompted with more specific examples of TEFL techniques, she recognized that she tries to encourage high STT, although she couldn't recall the terminology initially. This is in line with her earlier comments that she doesn't refer to her TEFL training in her actual work, and she isn't conscious of any methodologies when teaching. Nevertheless, in this case her practice refutes the CI

hypothesis and affirms the Output Hypothesis (Krashen, 1981), much like the Career Teacher. She explained her emphasis on STT by pointing out that many students, particularly older ones, have much higher reading and writing skills than verbal skills. She attributes this to their background in a soviet-style educational model which emphasised drilling and rote memorization and a classroom culture which discouraged speaking. We see again that the Vocational Teacher situates her methodology according to the cultural and historical context in which she's working (Ur, 2013). As for using materials in her lessons, she uses whatever she can find for free which suits her immediate needs and doesn't place much importance on them beyond that, sharing the position of coursebook critics in the literature (Thornbury, 2013).

Moving on to student characteristics, the Vocational Teacher was ardent that most adult students do not request or want homework, only recalling one exception to this rule. An interesting remark in light of the Career Teacher's insistence that homework is the main predictor of speed of progress. She also described them as quite calm and relaxed, with a professional air, and highly self-motivated. Whether this motivation is intrinsic or extrinsic was not clearly articulated, although the mention of career requirements earlier in the interview suggests extrinsic motivation, which also reflects the Career Teacher's interview.

When asked if there are any characteristics that affect students' speed of progress, she instead answered that getting praised makes them want to do more and that this can improve their rate of advancement. She also attributes this to socio-cultural factors and believed that praise was not so readily given in their previous educational experiences, leading to low confidence and poor self-esteem. This suggests that students' self-image

may have a significant impact on their performance, thereby validating the role of the affective filter (Krashen, 1981) as a barrier to language acquisition. Furthermore, it suggests that teacher interventions can positively or negatively affect the same. As for the absolute progress, or overall skill that a student is likely to attain before reaching a natural plateau, the Vocational Teacher believes it is primarily determined by the age at which they started learning the language and stressed the importance of early exposure. However, this can be mitigated by the level of investment of the students; how much they practise on their own, if they consume media in the target language, etc. The importance of organic engagement with the target language is clear, and confirms several points put forward by advocates of the communicative approach (Nunan, 1991a) as well as comprehensive input (Krashen, 1981 & 1989).

4.2.2 The Observation

I expected to observe a loosely structured class, probably conversational rather than focused on any specific language point. I was also looking for high STT, and to see how the students were empowered to lead to class. I didn't expect to see any specific TEFL techniques but looked for evidence of empathy with the students. The observed lesson was with two students.

As expected, the lesson was loosely structured and showed little evidence of pre-planning. It was a conversational lesson and the main strategies employed were conversational, not specific to TEFL but clearly learned (e.g., active listening techniques). The Vocational Teacher was very conscious of not interrupting her students and of giving them both equal talking time. She also spoke at length in the first half of the class, as the students were asking her to tell them certain stories, providing them with

plenty of comprehensive input (Krashen, 1981). In the second half of the class, she made more of an effort to redirect the questions to each of them, thus ensuring a relatively balanced, high STT.

As expected, she was very empathetic, a patient listener, and a calm questioner. Even when certain potentially contentious topics came up, she maintained a professional demeanour, showing only calm curiosity and encouraging her students to follow their ideas to their conclusion. Why questions were heavily featured, and I saw extensive evidence of the Socratic method¹¹ being used, whether intentionally or not. Most of the teacher's questions were ones to which she did not know the answer and were therefore authentic attempts at communication (Nunan, 1987). The Vocational Teacher was very attuned to her students emotionally and maintained a warm and welcoming tone to the whole class, effectively disarming her students and lowering their inhibitions. This relational technique, if it can be called such, allowed the students to speak more liberally than they otherwise might have and therefore engineered authentic expression and high STT in the target language. It is also not one that appears in the literature and may merit further study. We know from the interview that the Vocational Teacher is very aware of her students' history, both as individuals and societally, and this is reflected in her teaching practice, a good example of a situated methodology (Ur, 2013). Her style is also more in line with what Nunan calls the strong form of CLT (1987) as it makes heavy use of referential questions, and with Thornbury's Dogme (2000) as it does not rely on anything external to the classroom.

¹¹ Based on the writings of ancient Greek philosopher Socrates, this method uses carefully crafted questions to provoke thought, stimulate debate, and ultimately cause the student to learn something new or change their opinion in some way.

Overall, the Vocational Teacher's practice matched her self-perception, revealing a high level of self-awareness, similar to the Career Teacher. At first glance, during the observation itself, it was difficult to determine if any kind of teaching was actually happening, beyond the occasional error correction. It seemed like nothing more than a casual conversation between friends. However, upon review, it became clear that the Vocational Teacher was very deliberate in crafting her questions, tone, hand gestures, and even the wording of the questions to subtly steer her classroom's discourse. Her control of the discourse was surprisingly powerful while being subtle enough to go unnoticed, allowing her to practically manipulate her students into performing authentic expression. She expressed at various times in the interview that her training in psychology comes into use in the classroom, and according to my observation this is a very accurate statement.

Chapter V

Discussion

To begin interpreting the findings, it is first important to understand the similarities and differences between the two participants. The biggest difference between the Career Teacher and Vocational Teacher is apparent from the pseudonyms I have chosen for them. Although both teachers expressed personal satisfaction from their work, The Career Teacher can be said to derive more of their motivation from professional ambition, while the Vocational Teacher derives most of her motivation from the inherent satisfaction she finds in the job. This is apparent if one considers that the Vocational Teacher left her actual career, a seemingly comfortable and successful one, behind in her home country to pursue a profession which is very likely less lucrative and less prestigious. In contrast, the Career Teacher has pursued higher education in this field and has advanced to the role of teacher trainer. It is clear that these two teachers, both coming from different backgrounds, have been on significantly different professional tracks in the TEFL industry, notwithstanding the possibility of future changes.

Another critical difference is that the Career Teacher relies on her education and training for this job, specifically her Master in TESOL, while the Vocational Teacher relies mostly on her education and training in psychology rather than explicit training for this job. This difference is apparent in the stark contrast between the two teachers' practice especially in lesson planning, use of materials, and degree of structure in the lesson. The Career Teacher employs an organised system consisting of running syllabi,

EFL materials, and structured lessons on vocabulary, grammar, and free conversation. Meanwhile, the Vocational Teacher apparently does her best to leave behind lesson plans and contrived materials as early and as much as possible, only using them when necessary or when specifically requested by her students.

This leads into the next major difference between the two which is in how they conduct their lessons. Of course, this study was limited to only one observation per teacher, so the results cannot be generalised without a broader sample of each teacher's classes. Nevertheless, both teachers demonstrated a high level of self-awareness about their teaching style, evidenced by correlation between their respective interviews and observations, so it is fair to say that the observed practice is at least partly representative of the whole. The Career Teacher, consistent with her training and her work as a trainer, has internalised modern TEFL techniques, particularly elicitation, lead-in activities, and a PPP structure to the lesson plan. Coupled with her indication of even more structured lessons for grammar topics, it is fair to say that her lessons likely follow the generally prescribed mainstream method. The Vocational Teacher on the other hand, prefers as little pre-planning as possible, uses materials haphazardly and from whatever source she can find at any given moment, and has no discernible structure to her lessons or how she spends her time.

Despite these major differences, both teachers appear to be effective and respected in their communities and have plenty of experience to apply in their lessons. One interesting finding to come out of this study is that two very different styles can both seemingly produce effective results. Of course, given the limitations of the study, it is impossible to say whether one of these styles has more merit than the other or to gauge

the true effectiveness of either one as this would require collecting data from their students. Nevertheless, these findings are supported by the literature which has found that even contradictory methods can be successful in the hands of different teachers or in different classrooms (Ur, 2013).

The teachers do also share some interesting commonalities. Both of them came to TEFL from an unrelated background, and both of them did so in order to pursue opportunities for travel and emigration. Contradicting Krashen's (1981; 1989) assertion that Output is inferior to Input, both teachers stressed the importance of high STT in their classes. According to them, students who talk more also seem to have higher levels and aptitude, although causal relationship is unclear.

Beyond similarities and differences between the teachers, the study reveals that although the teachers' practice does often reflect the literature, there is a glaring disconnect between the two. Both teachers emphasised relational factors in their practice and demonstrated a high level of empathy towards their students. Their heavy emphasis on relational, emotional, and psychological considerations in their practice doesn't seem to be reflected in the literature at all. There has been much written on CLT, TBLT, authentic use, and the relative merits of coursebooks, but little to none on the relational aspect of the TEFL classroom. The data from the Vocational Teacher is particularly striking in this regard. Her developed practice is deeply reflective of several theories, including CI (Krashen; 1981) , CLT (Nunan, 1987), Dogme (Thornbury, 2000) and situated methodology (Ur, 2013) even though she herself is completely ignorant of these names and their various theories. Instead, by approaching her students from almost a

psycho-analytical perspective, she seems to have intuited their needs and arrived almost entirely by accident at the same conclusions as many distinguished academics.

This suggests that what we are actually studying when we are studying the TEFL classroom is fundamentally a natural human social phenomenon. One possible conclusion may be that TEFL is a distinct genre of educational activity which has more in common with social relationships than with traditional classroom instruction. After all, language is the medium by which we build relationships, it is initially learned in the context of familial relationships, and is used for mediating relationships and navigating the social fabric of our world. As such, perhaps the field of TEFL research should look beyond general educational theory to the fields of anthropology, sociology, or psychology.

On the other hand, the Career Teacher's more polished and informed practice blends the very best and latest of theories with several practical considerations, much like Ur's language pedagogy model (2014). This is not surprising considering her recent completion of a Master's in TESOL, and it's obvious that she has put her education to excellent use and consistently delivers high-quality and well-rounded lessons. However, her efforts to cover different aspects of language, including grammar, lexis, input, and output, come at the expense of being able to fully embrace student leadership, authentic communication, and naturalistic Tasks as defined by Nunan (1991) and Ellis (2009). Her preoccupation with time reveals that she is intuitively aware of this contradiction and actively tries to find a balance between natural dialogue and educational exercises. By contrast, the Vocational Teacher, seeing little value in grammar or lexis lessons, has abandoned any pretence of finding this balance and fully embraced genuine communicative techniques as described by Nunan (1987) or Thornbury (1996). Her

reliance on psychological techniques to foster authentic communication raises the question of whether incorporation of some psychological techniques in teacher training courses may be beneficial.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

This project is very personal to me. Besides being my dissertation and therefore representing the culmination of more than two years of study, in many ways it is also about me, or at least my chosen profession about which I am very passionate. Although I was not a subject of the study myself, the subjects were my colleagues and I share a great many characteristics with them. As such I hope I may be forgiven for indulging in a little personal reflection here in the conclusion.

Combing through more than four decades of scholarly articles for the literature review, it was difficult not to feel dwarfed by these distinguished academics and their sophisticated theories about my job. In the face of this monolithic body of knowledge, what could I possibly hope to contribute? Yet, I found encouragement as I came across repeated calls for the kind of research which I had in mind: in-classroom studies led by a teacher-researcher. I realised that this was what had been missing from the conversation. Moreover, I had access to a field of the industry which is almost completely absent from the literature: the private language classroom.

As I pursued this line of thinking, however, my feelings gave way to frustration as I began to notice a pattern in the literature. Study after study, regardless of ideological persuasion, would start and end the same. A researcher or team would have some theory or hypothesis which they were for or against, or perhaps would seek to develop their own theory, all in the attempt to improve our knowledge and practice of ELT. None of them seemed preoccupied with asking the teachers what they thought, even though so many of

them repeatedly said we need more classroom-based and teacher-led studies. So where were they? I felt again somehow diminished, because apparently my colleagues and I were not considered as authorities on the subject of our own jobs. I began to read the literature with a different perspective, seeing it as the self-important ramblings of ivory-tower academics talking down to those of us actually doing the job.

While I was struggling with this internal dilemma, my proposed study finally received ethical approval. Now was my chance, I would go out there, recruit my subjects, collect my data, and make my ground-breaking contribution to modern TEFL literature! My grandiose plans quickly ran into the sad reality of teacher apathy, as I struggled to recruit volunteers even after more than one month of efforts. I put out the call to a collective of thousands of TEFL teachers, and I got two volunteers. I felt defeated and began to question the validity of my study.

Nevertheless, I committed to do my best with what I was given. Having only two subjects changed the nature of the study somewhat and allowed me to spend more time with each one, giving my insights depth. As I collected my data, I came to understand that my earlier negative feelings towards the scholars of the past were misguided. As it turns out, it is very hard to study what teachers do, or even to find opportunities to try. Indeed, given the difficulty in accessing these spaces which I was now intimately familiar with, the efforts of those scholars now seemed downright admirable.

If I had to summarise my findings and make some suggestions for future study, I would say that:

1. The disconnect between theory and practice will persist until the theorists and the practitioners decide to make a concerted effort to engage in meaningful collaboration.
2. The teaching profession has become over-analysed, over-theorised, and over-politicized. If we truly mean to undertake genuine inquiries into the practice, we must first abandon our ideological dogmas and approach our study of the classroom with a truly open mind.
3. Theorists should spend more time studying teachers to learn how to teach and less time studying them to prove themselves right and their opponents wrong.
4. Teachers should cultivate an appreciation for the scholars; after all it is them who have been working for over a century to improve our practice.

Finally, I set out to discover new knowledge about TEFL by studying other teachers, and I have not been disappointed. My subjects in this study have taught me several important lessons. First, teaching is primarily relational, not academic, and students do best when they have a good relationship with their teacher. Second, precise methods used are of auxiliary importance, and just as every human relationship is unique, every teacher-student relationship is unique.

Appendix 1.

Teacher Interview Questions

Section 1: Background Information

1. Tell me a little about yourself, what was your background before you became a TEFL teacher?
 - a. How did you make the decision to do this kind of work?
2. Briefly describe your career as a TEFL teacher, how and when did you get started?
3. Obviously, you have a TEFL certification, can you tell me your journey of getting that?
 - a. Have you taken part in any other training that you feel is relevant to your work as a TEFL teacher?

Section 2: Educational Philosophy

1. What do you think is the purpose of education generally and your teaching specifically?
 - a. What would you say is your overarching goal for an individual lesson?
 - b. How would you describe a “successful” lesson?
2. Which of the phrases below best matches your own view of teaching?

<i>to instruct</i>	<i>to stuff with knowledge</i>	<i>to indoctrinate</i>
<i>to guide</i>	<i>to open the mind</i>	<i>to cram</i>
<i>to nurture</i>	<i>to inform</i>	<i>to lick into shape</i>
<i>to enlighten</i>	<i>to instil</i>	<i>to nurse</i>
<i>to coach</i>	<i>to mould</i>	

3. In your opinion, the teaching of language is most similar to the teaching of which of the following? (Choose one only.) Why?

maths	history	swimming	piano
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chemistry	carpentry	typing	law
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4. In your opinion, which of the following jobs would best prepare a person for language teaching? (Choose one only.) Why?

sports coach	lecturer	nurse
tour group leader	actor	social worker

5. In your experience, what works well for your students in the classroom?
- Describe the most challenging aspect of your work.

Section 3: Lesson Planning

- Tell me about your lesson planning process.
 - How specifically do you plan them, what's the typical structure(s)?
 - Are your individual lesson plans part of any kind of longer multi-lesson plan or curriculum? How far in advance do you plan your lessons?
- Do you actively work in any learned techniques or methods in your plan?
 - Which ones?
 - Are there any which you avoid?
- Are there any specific exercises or lesson plans you like to use regularly?
 - Why?
 - Any which you try to avoid and why?
- Has your planning process changed over time?
 - In what way?
 - What prompted these changes?
- What kind of resources do you use in the classroom?
 - Are there resources which regularly make an appearance in your plan?
 - Do you use any resources spontaneously?
- Is your approach to planning substantially different between some or all of your students?
 - What makes it different and why?
 - Were these differences inherent or did they develop over time?
- Are there any environmental factors which impact your lesson plans?

Section 4: Student Characteristics

1. How would you describe your students' learner characteristics? Are they very serious or more casual in the classroom? Is their motivation high, low, intrinsic, extrinsic? Preference for homework?
 - a. Which characteristics might impact students' progress in terms of speed (how fast they progress through levels (A0-C2))?
 - b. What about their absolute progress, meaning to what level in the language they will or intend to progress to?
2. What do you think of your students' aptitudes for the language?
 - a. Are there substantial differences in aptitude between students?
 - b. Where do you think those might come from?
 - c. Impacted by teacher methods?
3. What about the students' position in leading the classroom? Are they more passive or active?

Conclusion: Is there anything else about your methodology, approach, lesson planning, structure, or conduct of your class which we have not covered which you think may be relevant?

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