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**Me as Language Teacher: Initial Acts of Identification.**

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**ABSTRACT**

An important component of pre-service second language teacher education is the shift from student as learner to student as teacher. Part of this shift involves identification with and perception of self as teacher through an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of language teachers as enacted by both supervising teachers and by the beginning teachers themselves. What are the interpretations placed on this role which student-teachers accept? What aspects of the enacted role do they reject? What are the personal characteristics, beliefs and experiences which these beginning teachers bring to initial teaching experiences? How do these individual understandings influence the growing identification with other more experienced language teachers?

**INTRODUCTION**

This study charts the developing understanding of the work of the language teacher through the eyes of thirty-one trainee secondary teachers of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) and Languages other than English (LOTE) in a fourth year pre-service education program in the Faculty of Education at Monash University. There are two pathways into this fourth year program. One is via a three-year under-graduate degree before starting a Graduate Diploma in Education. The other is through three years of a double degree program where students combine a Bachelor of Education with a specialist degree. Over the past few years there has been a shift in the make-up of the student group, with an increasing number of students having higher degrees and a variety of work experiences before they start teacher training. (Throughout this paper the trainee-teachers will be referred to as ‘students’. School students will be referred to as ‘pupils’. The only times at which ‘pupils’ will be referred to as ‘students’ will be in discussion of student-centred learning and in quotes from student-teacher discussion and writing).

The course is the usual mix of theory and practice found in teacher education programs. The program runs for nine months with ten weeks of school based teaching practice. There is emphasis placed on the importance of students developing as reflective practitioners, that is as teachers who are able to articulate personal beliefs about teaching and learning, who are enthusiastic in exploring and questioning their own practice, who are open to alternatives, new approaches and new ideas and who are continually developing as both teachers and learners.
BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The task of language teacher educators is to probe students’ conceptions about language teaching and learning to help them to make connections between their prior experiences as language learners and teachers and the experiences in language classrooms and in method seminars. The teacher educator’s role is to facilitate the ways in which student teachers build new knowledge and understanding of their roles as language teachers.

Constructivist views of learning

The general theory of learning which underpins the TESL and LOTE method programs is the constructivist view of learning which is based on the view that learners draw on previous knowledge and accommodate new insights within an existing framework of knowledge. The individual learner constructs his or her own understanding. This construction is substantially influenced by what the learner already knows and believes (Gunstone, 1992). It is "...a cyclical process that involves learners extending, elaborating, and reorganising their knowledge frameworks" (Scarino, 1997: 7).

Student teachers as reflective practitioners

The intention of the TESL and LOTE method programs is to promote student teachers’ ability to reflect on their own practice regularly and effectively. Activities include written reviews of lessons during each teaching round with a focus on identifying factors which contribute to successful language learning and teaching. Such activities are designed to build up a reflective approach to teaching and to introduce methods to facilitate such reflection.

The aims of the TESL and LOTE method programs, therefore, include the development of skills that Schon (1983, 1987) calls "reflecting-in-action", in particular, during teaching rounds, and "reflecting-on-action" in method seminars where students are invited to assimilate new input into their prior conceptions of language teaching and learning. (Schon, 1983; 1987)

The basis for the promotion of reflective approaches in pre-service programs is the argument that Kyriacou (1994) makes that initial teacher training cannot possibly produce LOTE and ESL teachers who know all they need to know about classroom practice. As such, it is vital that student teachers are helped to adopt an approach to thinking about their teaching which will provide a basis for further development.

Loughran (1994: 291) argues that student-teachers

…must experience reflection as a part of their own learning about learning and teaching; then they can, and will, decide how to apply it in their own practice as they better understand how their pedagogy is shaped by the context of the teaching-learning environments in which they work.

Addressing prior beliefs in teacher education

Profiles of the 1999 cohort of LOTE and TESL method students showed that not only were these students very experienced language learners but also the majority of the group had had experience as language teachers. A number of researchers (e.g. Joram and Gabriele, 1998; Bruner, 1996) have discussed the need to study pre-service teachers’ prior beliefs and to take them into account when teaching. Prospective LOTE and TESL teachers have well developed beliefs about teaching and learning languages. These beliefs constitute what has
been dubbed "folk pedagogies" (Bruner, 1996) as discussed in Joram and Gabriele (1998) or personal history based language theories (Holt-Reynolds (1992) in Joram and Gabriele (1998), meaning that student-teachers experiences as language learners and in most cases as language teachers, make up an "apprenticeship of observation".

The implications for teacher-educators, as Almarza (1996) argues, are that if they are able to develop an understanding of student teachers’ knowledge, it may help them to design teacher education strategies and to specify the content of teacher education in ways which can develop that existing knowledge more effectively. Shulman (1988) has called for teacher educators to help learners make tacit knowledge explicit through reflection upon practical experience and theoretical understanding. Bruner (1996:46) argues that it is essential that teacher educators take prior beliefs into account because any new material taught will have to "...compete with, replace or otherwise modify the folk theories that already guide both teachers and pupils".

In the case of student-teachers with prior experiences as language teachers, either in Australia, or overseas, how receptive are they to examining their assumptions about language teaching and learning? Freeman (1994:2) suggests that what teachers already know about teaching is "minimally affected by what they encounter in their professional education". He speculates that as teachers work in their classrooms, they draw upon sources of understanding other than those with which they have been equipped in teacher education programs. If this is so, then as teacher-educators, we need to be aware of the characteristics which students bring with them to their pre-service teacher-training, to recognise the knowledge and skills which they have and to make explicit the pre-existing beliefs about the teacher role (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992:37). It is clear that reflection plays an important part in this process. Zeichner (1994:14) argues that this reflection should draw primarily on students’ own experiences in the classroom and their understandings of these events. The information gathered by this student reflection should then be used to inform program structures and activities and the future work of teacher-educators (Zeichner 1994:21).

In a review of forty studies of pre-service and beginning teachers, Kagan (1992) set out to establish common themes in the development of students at this stage in their teaching career. She suggests that professional growth is most likely when teacher-training programs are built on "naturally occurring processes and stages" (Kagan 1992:162-163). She proposes a new model of teacher development with seven components:

- **An emphasis on procedural, rather than theoretical knowledge.** As teacher-educators we all know the eagerness with which students ask for ‘the tricks of the trade”. Kagan suggests that giving students a bag of tricks answers a real need, enabling them to shift attention from survival in the classroom and start to reflect on the educational value and purpose of their work.
- **The relevance of self-reflection.** The studies suggest that students with a clear image of ‘self as teacher’ are better able to meet the challenges of the classroom.
- **Extended interaction with pupils.** Knowledge of pupils informs our work as teachers and it is only possible to gather this knowledge over time. The length and type of practical teaching experience needs to ensure that students are able know their pupils and the realities of teaching and to adjust their ‘self as teacher’ in response.
- **Cognitive dissonance.** Existing beliefs which are at odds with those of the supervising teacher need to be examined and may need to be changed.
- **Obsession with class control.** This will be of immediate primary importance for all beginning teachers and will continue to be so until classroom routines are established and the student has a clear sense of self as teacher.
• **Developmental readiness.** Some students are unsuited for teaching and should be counselled out of teacher-training programs.

• **The relevance of theory.** The studies lead Kagan to question the relevance of theory to teachers at any stage of their work, but especially at the beginning. The highly contextualised nature of teaching might suggest that ‘theory’ is too highly personalised to be transferable.

Kwo's study of student teachers (Kwo 1994) lends support to Kagan’s model. Kwo collected data on a group of English language student-teachers from the University of Hong Kong during a teaching practice period. The study found that this was a high stress period for students, a time during which they clung to planned routines and highly structured classes even though they saw flexibility and more student-centred teaching as desirable (Kwo 1994:228). Further exploration of the way in which students learn to teach during teaching practice is clearly needed.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

This study set out to explore the way in which students mesh existing beliefs, knowledge and skills with their experiences during teaching practice and in so doing construct a sense of self as teacher. Focussed student reflection after each teaching round aimed to make this process explicit and by so doing assist students in examination and understanding of their experiences. Information gathered by this process would also provide valuable data for pre-service teacher-educators especially those in the area of language teaching.

The specific objectives of the study were:

• to identify student-teachers’ perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of language teachers;
• to identify aspects of the language teachers’ role as enacted by supervising teachers, which student teachers both accept and reject;
• to identify the similarities and differences between the perceptions of TESL and LOTE method students of the roles and responsibilities of language teachers.

After the first teaching practice (a period of two weeks in March) students participated in small group discussion focussing on their observations of language teachers at work. After the second teaching practice (a period of four weeks in May) students completed a piece of writing reflecting on skills which they already had and those which they felt had yet to be developed. After the third and final teaching practice (a period of four weeks in August/September) students wrote a reflective piece describing key incidents during the year which had helped them understand what it meant to be a teacher.

**Student Background**

TESL METHOD CLASS – 1999

There were nineteen students in the class. This number included one student who was auditing the subject, one who had failed the previous year and was repeating and one who withdrew from the course after six months.

There were five male students and fourteen females. Eleven were mature students in that they had not come straight from undergraduate study. Seven were continuing students.

Eight students were from a language background other than English and five of these students had themselves been English as a second language (ESL) learners. There was
only one student who had not experienced learning a second language. Fifteen students had spent time in a non-English speaking country.

Eighteen of the nineteen students had previous teaching experience of some sort. Five had worked overseas as language teachers. Six had taught in an education setting (university, TAFE college or school) in Australia and ten had worked as tutors.

Fourteen had had LOTE as their other method. Two had English, one Psychology, one Music and one Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE). Fourteen of the students had an undergraduate degree. One had an Honours degree, two a Masters and two a postgraduate diploma (one in interpreting and one in linguistics).

There were three main reasons given for selecting TESL Method. Eleven students mentioned career opportunities in the area. Of these, seven were keen to work overseas; six thought the area offered good employment prospects and three thought it was a useful combination with their LOTE method. Eight students saw the contact with ESL learners as being the main attraction. It would be interesting/enjoyable/exciting. Five students spoke of their desire to help non English speaking background pupils.

LOTE METHOD CLASS – 1999

There were twenty-seven students in the class with five men and twenty-two women. The group included the student from the TESL method group who withdrew from the course after the second teaching round. Students were training to be teachers of French, German, Hebrew, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Modern Greek or Spanish. The breakdown according to language method was: three French method, three German method, two Hebrew method, three Indonesian, two Italian, nine Japanese, four Modern Greek and one Spanish method.

Of the fourteen students with TESL as their second method, one student transferred from TESL to Double Japanese method after the first teaching round. The remaining thirteen of the twenty-seven students were enrolled in six other method subjects: two in Business Management, two in English, three in Studies of Society and the Environment, one in Jewish Studies, two in Psychology, and one in History.

Three were continuing students, enrolled in the fourth year of the Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education Double Degree program. In addition to a Bachelor Degree, three students had completed honours, one had taken leave from her PhD, two had Graduate Diplomas (Psychology and Japanese Applied Linguistics), one had a certificate in AUSLAN, two had certificates in Interpreting and one student had a certificate in translating. Nine were from a language background other than English.

All but one of the students had previous teaching experience of some sort, ranging from one-to-one tutoring to current employment as a full-time language teacher. Seven of the twenty-seven students had tutored language students informally at a range of levels. Two students had worked as university tutors in Marketing and History. Three of the four Modern Greek students were teaching in Ethnic Schools with between three and twenty years experience in this setting. One of these Modern Greek method students had also worked as an Ethnic/Multicultural Teacher Aide for fifteen years. Two of the nine Japanese method students had worked in Japan for three years in Junior High schools on the JET program – (Japanese Exchange and Teaching program). Two students had worked in private language schools teaching adults. Three students had taught in primary school language programs. One of the Japanese method students had been employed as a Japanese Language Assistant in a Victorian secondary school. One of the Hebrew method students was
employed full-time in a secondary school program as a teacher of Hebrew and Jewish Studies.

GROUP DISCUSSION POST ROUND 1 AND REFLECTIVE WRITING

The first teaching practicum was four weeks into the course. Students spent two weeks in schools, observing classes and team-teaching. The debriefing for the first teaching round was conducted in groups. A semi-structured interview format prompted students to exchange their experiences and to identify the things that puzzled them or surprised them about the work of a language teacher. Twenty-five of the thirty-one students also completed a written reflection on the first teaching round in which they described the roles and responsibilities of a language teacher. They were encouraged to compare and contrast their views of the work of a language teacher with the work of teachers in other curriculum areas. The fourteen students enrolled in both LOTE and TESL methods were invited to reflect on the similarities and differences in the roles and responsibilities of teachers working in ESL and LOTE programs. Students were encouraged to interpret their experiences in the first teaching round in the light of their prior experiences, if any, as a language teacher. (Only one student had not taught a language in some capacity already.)

The most common images of a language teacher for a LOTE method student were teacher as salesperson, babysitter, entertainer, source of inspiration and coach. A Japanese method student was inspired by her supervising teacher, a passionate linguist:

"It's her love of Japan, the country, its people, language and culture, which is so obvious both to the students and to anyone watching her lessons, that I most hope I can replicate as a training language teacher".

Another LOTE method student defined the role of the language teacher as being "... to motivate and guide students, to help them achieve a level of communicative competence, and probably most importantly help them enjoy the process of obtaining skills in a language".

For TESL method students, a language teacher was a pupil’s life-line, counsellor, nurturer, guardian and bridge to a new world. A student with a placement in a language centre saw that the ESL teacher was the key to education- full stop. He noted the work involved in reaching pupils and easing them into Australian life and was very impressed with the interest that teachers displayed in individual pupil’s well being.

Here is a typical portrait of the exemplary ESL teacher:

"She was a teacher at ease with her students and they with her. Her role was in helping them to adapt and fit in to society without rejecting their background and previous experiences. She was also there as a sounding board for issues that arose in and out of the classroom. The ESL teacher also seems to act as a mediator between students and other staff."

There were stark differences between the views of LOTE and TESL method students on the place of language study in the curriculum. TESL method students saw the study of English as a necessity; a matter of survival for the majority of ESL pupils. For pupils studying a foreign language, language study was seen to be an optional extra. In fact, many students questioned the appropriateness of including LOTE as a part of the core curriculum.

The image of the ESL pupil as a highly receptive learner was somewhat tarnished for the TESL method student who had full-fee paying pupils with hectic social lives, falling asleep in
class. These pupils, according to the supervising teacher, expected to be spoon-fed and would not do any work outside class time, if then.

The attitudes of pupils to language study shaped students’ responses to the challenges of language teaching. A Spanish method student was quite disheartened to hear from her History supervisor that she was lucky doing a method like History because pupils would respect her more than if she was only a language teacher.

Irrespective of teaching method, students identified the main task of the language teacher as being to motivate pupils to study the language.

Students put their energies in the first round into tuning into their pupils’ needs. The main challenges were establishing a rapport with a class, identifying what was required at each level, establishing students’ level of language proficiency and tailoring language input accordingly. Some students felt daunted by the workload of a language teacher, in particular the time required to prepare teaching aids.

Right from this first round, both TESL and LOTE method students were using their previous experiences as language teachers and learners as their basis for evaluating the skills, knowledge and values of their supervising teachers. Students gave little credence to the views of ESL supervisors without specialist training or LOTE supervisors with poor proficiency in the target language. A message here for the selection of supervising teachers.

Several TESL method students with supervisors who had not undertaken specialist training as an ESL teacher, questioned the appropriateness of teacher-centred lessons with a preponderance of teacher talk.

There was a mismatch in views between some LOTE method students and their supervising teachers on the use of the target language as the teacher’s medium of communication and the use of a textbook as the syllabus. Such mismatches in views served to crystallise students’ beliefs about the characteristics of an effective language teacher. Students were critical of supervising teachers whose proficiency in the target language was shaky and who therefore were unable to provide an appropriate model of the language for pupils. In the words of one Japanese method student, "If she can’t model it, how can they learn?"

Many LOTE method students expressed surprise at the amount of English that was spoken in the classroom, particularly the combination of English with single words in the target language – eg "Open your buku". A student-teacher of Japanese was disappointed that teachers made too little use of the target language. She felt quite disillusioned because of the low proficiency of her supervising teacher and was acutely embarrassed by faux pas this teacher made when communicating with Japanese visitors to the school.

Students were critical of LOTE teachers who adopted the textbook as the complete syllabus, particularly when the material in the text was out of date.

Towards a personal theory of how languages are learned

Several LOTE method students questioned the effectiveness of drilling as a technique to help pupils master new language. Their concern was that in classrooms where drilling was given a great deal of emphasis, pupils did not have to actively work with the language and lacked initiative. Students recognised that drilling was a method of class control; a means of keeping a tight rein on students and a way of filling up the lesson. These students were already searching for a repertoire of strategies to develop their pupils’ learning how-to-learn
strategies. As one student put it: "teachers cannot teach students but set the path for students to learn."

REFLECTIONS AFTER THE SECOND TEACHING PRACTICE

The second teaching practice was in May. Students spent three weeks in schools, teaching in both method areas. When they returned to university, they were asked to reflect on the skills for teaching that they had already developed and those skills which they felt they needed to develop. Their reflections took the form of rough notes which were completed in class time and collected after discussion. These notes were checked to see if there were common patterns either across the two method areas or within each method area.

CONNECTING PATTERNS

Developed skills

There were some skills which were mentioned by both LOTE and TESL method students as skills which had already been developed. These can be divided into personal qualities, language teaching skills and classroom techniques.

- Personal Qualities

Patience, understanding and the ability to establish a rapport with pupils were seen to be important qualities which some students felt had already been developed. Although both groups mentioned these qualities, there is an interesting difference in the number of students. Seven TESL method students and one LOTE method student mentioned understanding. The ability to establish rapport was seen mentioned by seven TESL Method students and one LOTE Method student. Three TESL method students and one LOTE Method student mentioned patience.

- Language Teaching Skills

Lesson planning, student centred teaching, identifying learner need and using a range of activities were seen as skills which some students felt had already been developed. The most interesting contrast here was in terms of lesson planning, mentioned by nine LOTE method and two TESL method students.

- Classroom techniques

Both groups saw all classroom management, board skills, the use of equipment, timing of lessons and pacing of activities as important existing skills. Again there is an interesting contrast in the importance placed on classroom management – mentioned by seven LOTE method students and two in TESL Method. Use of voice was mentioned by both TESL and LOTE Method students – a ‘clear slow voice’ in TESL Method and a ‘loud voice’ in LOTE Method.

Skills needing to be developed

Skills needing to be developed were clearly those relating to teaching rather than personal qualities. Both groups spoke of the need for more ideas for student-centred activities and better knowledge of available resources. Both groups felt the need to improve their own understanding of grammar. Again class control was an issue both in common and in contrast.
ten LOTE Method and four TESL Method students felt this was a skill which they needed to develop.

AREAS OF DIFFERENCE

TESL Method

Developed skills

TESL Method students focussed on personal qualities of the teacher. Qualities such as empathy, understanding, sensitivity, warmth, good humour, a friendly and approachable manner were mentioned by the majority of the students. Qualities such as these were seen as important existing skills by all of the students in this group. Cultural awareness, getting to know pupils, establishing areas of need and being able to relate teaching to the pupil world were also mentioned.

Skills needing to be developed

In contrast to the developed skills, these were almost exclusively focussed on teaching skills. Being more student-centred, knowing how to teach grammar and vocabulary, being able to develop a variety of group activities and pacing activities according to pupil need were all seen as important areas needing development. Each area was mentioned by four or more members of the class. Board skills and class control were each mentioned by four students.

LOTE Method

Developed skills

Lesson planning was seen to be a developed skill by nine of the LOTE method students. Confidence in their use of the relevant LOTE and in themselves as a LOTE teacher was also seen to be a skill which had been developed from the first teaching practice. This was mentioned by eight people. Class management was an existing skill for seven and using a student-centred approach to teaching and being able to vary activities were each mentioned by four class members. Personal qualities such as patience and understanding were each mentioned once.

Skills needing to be developed

Class management skills were the main focus, with ten students seeing the need for further development in this area. Class members spoke of the need to ‘get tough’, to ‘be firmer...more in control’. Eight wanted more ideas for activities, with four specifying that these must be student-centred. Timing was seen as an issue for six, with some students saying it was impossible to get through their lesson plan within the time available. Board skills needed development for five students and voice projection was an issue for four.

SECOND PRACTICUM – DEVELOPED SKILLS

TESL METHOD LOTE METHOD

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<tr>
<th>Developed skills</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sensitivity, empathy &amp; understanding</td>
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<td>Lesson planning</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Confidence in use of LOTE &amp; as teacher</td>
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<td>Clear slow voice</td>
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<td>Class management</td>
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<td>Patience</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Student centred teaching</td>
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<td>Ability to explain concepts simply</td>
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<td>Varied activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifying need</td>
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<td>Use of AV and visuals</td>
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<td>Creativity/flexibility</td>
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<td>Material appropriate for student level</td>
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<td>Supportive manner</td>
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<td>Rapport</td>
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<td>Warmth</td>
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<td>Timing</td>
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<td>Able to relate teaching to student world</td>
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<td>Group work</td>
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<td>Good board skills</td>
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<td>Knowledge of VCE</td>
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<td>Identify learner need</td>
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<td>Games</td>
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<td>Understanding</td>
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<td>Use of visuals</td>
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<td>Board skills</td>
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<td>Skill</td>
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<td>Pacing of activities</td>
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<td>Voice projection</td>
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<td>Access to resources</td>
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<td>Communicative teaching</td>
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<td>Voice projection</td>
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<td>Lesson planning</td>
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<td>Use of text books</td>
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<td>Catering for mixed abilities</td>
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FINAL REFLECTION TASK

The third collection of data was after the final teaching practice. This was a block of four weeks in August/September. On their return to university, the students were asked to look back over the year and to choose three incidents that had helped them to understand the role of the language teacher. They were given a week to complete a piece of writing, describing each incident and explaining its significance to them. Approximately half of the group completed this task.

TESL method

Ten TESL Method students completed extended pieces of writing in response to this task. Seven responses were focussed on ESL pupils, the special nature of the relationship which exists between ESL teacher and pupil and the resulting very complex role of the ESL teacher. Two responses were primarily teacher-focused, one discussing the lessons to be learnt from observation of teachers and the other discussing the student’s own sense of herself as a developing teacher. The final response was on specific techniques for teaching.

‘What is hard not to appreciate is the absolute trust which the students have in you as their teacher’.

Being the first point of contact for a newly arrived pupil was an important experience for one student. In her words:

"I was the first classroom teacher that he met and I felt that I had made his first experience a positive one. I noticed that in the classes that I taught him after this initial one, he seemed to be coming out of his shell and felt more at ease with the school and me in general. This was a great experience."

Later the same student talks about the importance of informal contact with pupils and the flow-on effect of this:

“Contact and communication with your students, even outside the classroom environment, is important in order to maintain a good rapport with your students. It is important to get them feeling comfortable with their teachers, to not feel afraid to approach them when they really need their assistance. It was great to see the students coming to me themselves and attempting to make conversation with me in their free time. It showed me that they were just as eager to get to know me as I was to get to know them.”

The importance of interacting with pupils outside the classroom is emphasised by another TESL Method student:

"I would often meet these students during lunchtimes. We would play ball games and discuss different matters. During these lunch times I really had a good opportunity to really get to know my students on a more personal level…(one of my students) had never been to school…When she came to (school in Australia) she was unable to hold a pencil, cut paper, read or write. This saddened me. It has really opened my eyes up concerning a teacher’s role at school. It is very important to be understanding and patient in teaching ESL students. Teachers must realise the difficulties some of the students have had in the past (and) adjust and teach to suit the needs of these students."
This theme of knowing your pupils is one echoed by many of the responses. In his first teaching round, one student was deeply impressed by his supervising teacher's knowledge about each of her pupils and the way in which this background knowledge informed her work in the classroom:

"(The supervising teacher) started telling me about the students I would encounter in each class...I was amazed by the amount of knowledge she had obtained about those students...throughout the round I noticed how she always considered these things when talking to the students, planning lessons and putting them into groups. It was through this that I realised that one of, if not the, most important part of being an ESL teacher is knowing your students."

Lack of background knowledge of her pupils places a student in a potentially damaging situation with one of her pupil.

"Although that topic (fear), in my opinion, was not the ideal one for that particular group of students, I decided to go ahead because my supervising teacher had suggested it. I suspected that some of my students may have had traumatic experiences in their country, before coming to Australia, especially those from Bosnia, and I wouldn't want to hurt them any longer by bringing memories back. (One student refused to take part in the discussion) and I was right with my prediction. As I discovered later from my supervising teacher, that student was in fact faced with a hurting, horrifying experiences from the war which he would not discuss in front of an audience in any way. This event helped me to realise that the ESL teacher has to be aware of the students' backgrounds and must show sensitivity towards past experiences."

This incident is particularly interesting in that the student-teacher did something which she felt was not appropriate because of the advice of her supervising teacher.

Another student is approached by international pupils who fear that she might be a government agent sent to the school to check on visas.

"To suddenly have a new person appear in your class, whether to observe or teach is very unsettling to many Australian students, but the experience is magnified for ESL students...As an ESL teacher you have to be aware of all the associated problems, fears, threats and all the 'other little things' that combine in students' lives."

"As an ESL teacher, it seems as though our role is to open many of these doors for our students."

That the ESL teacher role extends far beyond the classroom and is much more than the teaching of a language was made very clear to the students. One student spent her lunch break working with a Year 11 pupil.

"This incident made me further realise that ESL teachers are more than a teacher of English. Their role extends outside of the classroom to provide support and assist students in other subjects."

Another student placed in a country school is impressed by the efforts of her supervising teacher, the only ESL teacher in the school, on behalf of the ESL pupils.

"My supervisor faced many prejudices within the school and tried so hard to assist her students, she was the liaison between her students and other staff. The students consulted
her with their problems...it is the battle of the ESL teachers to find acceptance for not only their students but themselves too."

And the reward for all of this:

"This will sound very corny and nostalgic...but the last lesson I taught my year 9 ESL class made me realise that the relationship an ESL teacher has with students is extremely important...The manner in which the students interacted with me in this lesson indicated to me that I had developed a very good rapport with them. They respected me, and were not afraid to seek help or talk to me as a person!...I was presented with a thank you card from the class. They had written individual messages expressing their gratitude and welcoming me back to teach anytime."

LOTE Method Response

Twelve LOTE method students completed the final reflection task. There were common threads with the entries of TESL method students. LOTE method students also valued the opportunities to establish a warm relationship with pupils. For one of the Modern Greek students, establishing a rapport with students was the standout experience of her first teaching round –

"I got a feeling for the students I was to teach. I found out what they thought, and from the discussion [about the need to learn Modern Greek] I think they were more comfortable with me also."

Entries identified strategies for establishing an effective learning environment including, encouragement for pupils to be risk-takers, provision of positive feedback, and efforts to make learning a language fun.

Only one of the twelve students centred her discussion solely on the mechanics of language teaching – homework, board work, assessment methods – without extrapolating from the specific examples to conclusions about the roles and responsibilities of a language teacher.

There was a strong sense of self as language teacher in a number of entries. Students were able to articulate their views on the characteristics of effective language teachers, express their guiding principles and identify the methodological implications of these principles. A French method student saw her role as more than a teacher of language. She placed importance on the language teacher’s role in broadening students’ horizons and developing their intercultural understanding.

"A LOTE teacher has the challenge to make some thing that is very far away appear very near and very attractive to all the students in the class through a series of resources and through technology".

She gave specific examples of ways in which the language, culture and learning technologies had been successfully integrated into lessons by her supervising teachers.

Guiding principles for language teaching and learning based on personal theories of language, learning and language acquisition

Based on their reflections of specific incidents, students identified the following principles to guide them as language teachers:
• **Use the target language as the medium of communication.**

This is a typical rationale from an Indonesian student: the teacher who avoids using Indonesian as a medium of communication sells her students short and gives them the impression that it is too difficult to communicate in the language. Or a Japanese method student’s observation that routine use of translation dissuades pupils from operating in the target language. She called for teachers use as much of the target language in the classroom as possible and to encourage pupils to use Japanese as much as possible in the classroom.

• **Cater for individual differences** through the selection of topics, the variety of resources, activities and teaching strategies;

Students were universal in saying that LOTE teachers need to offer a wide range of classroom activities, particularly games, group work and drama activities. According to a Japanese method student, “…classroom instruction must not be limited to textbook work”.

• **Enable all pupils to experience success**;

The advice of one of the students was to include and engage all students – ”don’t pigeon hole troublesome students as underachievers”.

• **Empower pupils to take charge of their own learning**. A Hebrew method student expressed this principle very strongly:

"As a teacher, I tried to put the onus on the students to do their own thinking and working, and just to act as a **scaffold and guiding hand**. … So as a teacher I try to encourage independent thought, work and effort. If I don’t give them the tools to do this, then who will?"

**Confidence to apply personal principles**

The benefits of personal theories of language teaching and learning rather than the theories imposed from ‘the experts’, are the robustness of these beliefs. A Japanese method student described a critical incident in her teaching as her determination to go ahead and put her principles into practice by teaching in Japanese. This was despite the fact that pupils were accustomed to being taught in English and the supervising teacher was sceptical of the effectiveness of teaching in Japanese. This example provides support for Kagan’s (1992) claims that students with a clear image of ‘self as teacher’ are better able to manage the challenges of the classroom.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study demonstrate that a teacher education program that encourages reflection both in-action and on-action (Schon, 1983; 1987), achieves the objective of producing graduates with the skills to be reflective practitioners. Opportunities to observe experienced language teachers during teaching rounds helped students to clarify their perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of language teachers. Confirming the value of these opportunities for classroom observation, one student regretted that his pre-service year might be the only chance to see colleagues in action.
"Once a teacher begins his/her career it is a pity that they don’t have the opportunity to observe, experience and expand on their knowledge of teaching as they progress throughout the years to come."

The study provides support for claims (Zeichner, 1994) that teacher educators should start from students’ current state of knowledge rather than impose on them a pre-ordained sequence of instruction. It indicates that preliminary work in a pre-service program should focus on activities that promote self-awareness as a language learner and teacher and should provide students with a survival kit to ease their way into the challenges of language teaching.

The analysis of students’ reflective writing at different points in the program reminded us of the importance of giving students practical ideas for immediate application in the classroom. The insights into the concerns of students at different stages of the course will be used to refine the curriculum of the TESL and LOTE method programs. Students real concerns about class control have been acknowledged and more attention will be paid to assisting students to develop appropriate classroom management techniques. As Kagan (1992) argues, students who are worried about class control find it difficult to plan and implement activities. By giving students a bag of tricks we enable them to shift attention from survival in the classroom to reflection on the educational value and purpose of their work.

Students in this study who were able to focus on their pupils’ needs had moved from ‘an obsession with class control’ (Kagan, 1992) to a stage where they were able to articulate a personal set of principles for language teaching which were grounded in the reality of classroom practice. Theorizing based on students’ own experiences does have a powerful place in creating a sense of self as language teacher.
REFERENCES


