Reflecting on Language in Education

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Introduction

The chapters in this volume were selected by a panel of independent reviewers from a much larger collection of papers originally presented at the International Language in Education Conference (ILEC) held at the Hong Kong Institute of Education between 13th and 15th December 2001. ILEC has been held annually since 1985 and is a major conference and forum for language educators, co-hosted in 2001 by the Hong Kong Institute of Education, the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Within the overall theme of reflecting on language in education, ILEC 2001 addressed a wide spectrum of sub-themes which are represented in the papers selected for inclusion here. Thus, insights are offered relating to and across notions of language and motivation, language teacher education, languages for specific purposes, languages on the Internet, immersion language education and language reform and implementation. Following the same order, these categories have been used to group the chapters in this volume. Inevitably, this is somewhat of an artificial device which does rather rough justice to the more sweeping vision of many of the authors. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this grouping will assist the reader to access papers of interest quickly and easily.

Zoltán Dörnyei’s comprehensive ‘state of the art’ plenary paper Researching L2 Motivation in the 21st Century was extremely well-received at the conference and is an appropriate access point to this volume, pointing the way forward for research into second language research as it develops significantly and rapidly beyond the accepted wisdoms of the previous century. Befitting a conference that has a real interest in the application of theory, this paper also explores the educational relevance of motivational research, offering indications of a wide range of motivational strategies available to teachers in the language classroom.

In her plenary paper Theory and Practice in Teacher Education: Mind the Gap Marion Williams examines the complex relationship between theory and practice in teacher education, arguing that the two are inextricably linked and that reflection, theory-generation and communication are crucial in mediating between theory and practice in teaching, concluding with broad implications for teacher education methodology. Featured speaker Jennifer Hammond’s paper Balancing Theory and Practice in Teacher Education: the Contribution of
'Scaffolding' then addresses ESL teacher education more specifically, based on a research project carried out in an Australian school context. The paper uses the established metaphor of scaffolding to do so. Issues arise concerning our understandings of processes and practices in effective teaching and learning and the types of pedagogical frameworks available to support new teachers in making decisions about programming and teaching in language and literacy education. The benefits of research design involving collaboration of researchers, educational consultants and teachers are extolled. Andrew Cohen's plenary paper Preparing Teachers for Styles and Strategies-Based Instruction also focuses on a specific aspect of language teacher education, reviewing the field in terms of language learner strategies, learning style preferences and the notion of styles- and strategies-based instruction (SSBI) before moving on to an explication and review of the development of an SSBI course and manual. An interesting additional application of the manual, for language and culture learning strategies for study abroad, is described in the closing a section of the chapter. This section of the volume continues with research-based classroom-oriented contributions: Anne Kavanagh, Mick Kavanagh and Don Snow's report (Learning to Teach EFL by Teaching EFL) on a study of EFL teachers in their first year of teaching overseas, acknowledging anew the complexity of the language teaching 'art' and drawing attention to issues of EFL teacher preparation and support; Alastair Sharp's description (Organisational Patterns of Text: the Effects on Reading Comprehension) of an experiment into the effects of varying rhetorical (text) organisation on Hong Kong Chinese children's comprehension, suggesting that more attention needs to be paid to ensuring that students are familiar with these patterns; Julie Hamston (Reading? No Thanks! Issues of Motivation as Choice), presentation of the major findings from a study investigating gender issues and their impact on educational success and in particular success in reading; offering a view of motivation which is complex and offers some alternative perspectives to more traditional, deterministic aspects of social theory; finally, Nathan Jones (Why Assign Themes and Topics to Teach Writing? A Reply to Tony Silva), argues that content-based instruction has a legitimate place in the foreign language writing class and that the assignment of themes and topics is a perfectly reasonable option in its implementation.

Sophia Arkoudis's chapter ESL and Subject Specialists Negotiating Pedagogic Knowledge considers the differing perspectives of language teachers and subject specialists and offers a model that emphasises pedagogical relations as a basis for ESL to position itself as a 'mainstream' field rather than as a support for content-based subjects. It takes account of
the personal and professional development implicit within the development of language across the curriculum.

The huge increase in interest in the Internet as a means of pedagogical delivery and innovation, together with the quality assurance issues that this raises, are considered in Adams Bodomo’s chapter: Linguistics.com: Evaluating Language Resources on the Internet. Bodomo provides information about types of language website and some basic advice on their creation before proposing a set of specific criteria which need to be taken into account in the development of any effective mechanism for the evaluation of websites with a linguistic focus.

Study abroad, one of the two main strands of immersion language education, is another growth area, not least for Asian students, who are increasingly spending time studying in a country in which English is the first language, developing linguistically and academically and expanding their cultural horizons. Two chapters address this theme: Julienne Kerr’s The Ethical Dilemma Abroad: Preparing Hong Kong Teachers for Oral Assessment at an Australian University, which considers the dilemma implicit in overtly teaching to a language test whilst simultaneously and implicitly seeking to address a variety of desirable but less clearly mandated linguistic and pedagogical objectives and Tim Barker’s Switching Cultures of Learning and Teaching: the Case of Chinese Students on Foundation Programmes in the UK, exploring cultural perceptions and how these may impact positively on motivation and outcomes.

The final two chapters take a more macro perspective, looking into elements of language policy, reform and implementation. Thus, in her paper Languages Curriculum Policy: Teachers’ Perceptions of Policy Implementation Lesley Harbon reports on a research project investigating how primary foreign language teachers operationalise the curriculum, highlighting factors that influence these teachers’ negotiation of the issues affecting the implementation process and in so doing how education policy and practice interact. Freeman Chan’s The Cognitive Element of Curriculum Change then explores the current Hong Kong context for curriculum reform, paying particular attention to the curriculum target framework, how this affects human cognition, teaching and learning and teachers themselves. The pedagogical assumptions implicit in the framework and how these factor into the managerial approach to the introduction of change are also discussed. Chan posits that structural elements of the curriculum framework are a burden on teachers and
adversely affect pedagogical creativity and progress more than other factors such as pace of change and related workload.

The papers contained in this volume provide a rich and varied set of insights into the field of language in education, from both theoretical and empirical perspectives. The editors hope that their selections will stimulate discussion and interest which in turn will generate further research and innovation that will constructively influence the language classrooms of the future.

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Hong Kong, November 2002
Researching L2 motivation in the 21st century

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“I don’t know what motivation is but it definitely keeps me going.”
(source unknown)

Introduction

The study of L2 motivation has reached an exciting turning point in the 1990s, with a variety of new models and approaches put forward in the literature, resulting in what Gardner and Tremblay (1994) have called a ‘motivational renaissance’. A new generation of researchers have joined the ranks of the (largely Canadian) founders of the field and started to apply their expertise in diverse contexts and in creative ways. As a consequence, we now have a colourful mixture of approaches in L2 motivation research comparable to the multi-faceted arena of mainstream motivational psychology. In this paper I will provide an overview of the current themes and research directions that I find particularly novel or forward-pointing. I will also survey the recent efforts to make motivation research educationally relevant, and will argue that teachers have a wide array of useful motivational strategies at their disposal that can help them to generate and maintain increased student motivation in the language classroom.

The traditional conceptualisation of L2 motivation

Contemporary research on L2 motivation represents a somewhat eclectic mixture of approaches and conceptual frameworks. One way to understand the current situation is to take a historical perspective and consider motivation research as it has developed over the past five decades. Let us therefore start our overview of the field by going back to the very beginnings.

L2 motivation research was inspired and spearheaded by social psychologist Robert Gardner and his colleagues in Canada. Facing an ethnolinguistically split society, his main interest in the subject was that the
motivation to learn the other community’s language might be the key to the reconciliation of the Francophone and Anglophone communities. In accordance, Gardner applied in his research a social psychological approach in which the key element was language attitude, referring to the language learners’ perceptions of the L2, the L2 speakers, as well as the sociocultural and pragmatic values/benefits associated with the L2. His initial hypothesis, which was later confirmed by a great number of studies in diverse contexts, was that success in language learning is dependent on the learner’s language attitudes (cf. Gardner 1985, 2001).

Although Gardner’s motivation theory is complex, the primary focus has been on two prominent facets of motivation:

1. An interpersonal/emotional dimension, referred to as an integrative orientation: Language learning is motivated by the positive attitudes towards members of the other language community and by the desire to communicate with them, and sometimes even to become like them.

2. A practical/utilitarian dimension, referred to as an instrumental orientation: Language learning is motivated by the concrete benefits that language proficiency might bring about (e.g. career opportunities, increased salary).

The ‘culmination’ of Gardner’s theory is the conceptualisation of the integrative motive, which is the composite of a number of attitudinal measures, coupled with the learner’s perception of the actual learning situation, more specifically of the L2 teacher and the L2 course (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Gardner’s conceptualisation of the integrative motive
The turning point in L2 motivation research in the 1990s

By placing the emphasis on the sociocultural dimension of L2 motivation, Gardner’s approach offered a macro-perspective that allowed researchers to characterise and compare the motivational pattern of whole learning communities and then to draw inferences about intercultural communication and affiliation. The 1990s brought about a general dissatisfaction with the scope of Gardner’s theory. While no one questioned the significance of the Canadian social psychological approach, the general message coming from various parts of the world was that ‘There is more to motivation!’. There was an increasing shift towards a situated approach – thereby adopting a micro-perspective – examining how motivation affects concrete learning processes within a classroom context. For this reason, this transformation is often referred to as the ‘educational shift’.

The common theme underlying the ‘new wave’ articles was the belief that the classroom environment has a much stronger motivational influence than had been proposed before. Researchers (e.g. Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994, 1996; Oxford & Shearin, 1994) therefore started to examine the motivational impact of the various aspects of the learning context, for example:

- course-specific motivational components (e.g. relevance of the teaching material; interest in the tasks; appropriateness of the teaching method);
- teacher-specific motivational components (e.g. the motivational impact of the teacher’s personality, behaviour and teaching style/practice);
- group-specific motivational components (e.g. the characteristics of the learner group such as cohesiveness, goal-orientedness, norms).

The educational shift had a liberating effect on L2 motivation research, leading to an unprecedented boom in the field (with almost 100 new studies published in the 1990’s; cf. Dörnyei, 1998, 2001a). Within a period of five to six years the complete research scene had been reshaped and classroom issues had been put firmly on the research agenda.

A process-oriented approach to L2 motivation research

The situated approach to motivation research soon drew attention to another, rather neglected, aspect of motivation: its dynamic character and
temporal variation. When motivation is examined in its relationship to specific learner behaviours and classroom processes, there is a need to adopt a process-oriented approach that can account for the daily ‘ups and downs’ of motivation to learn, that is, the ongoing changes of motivation over time. Looking at it from this perspective, motivation is not seen as a static attribute but rather as a dynamic factor that displays continuous fluctuation, going through certain ebbs and flows.

In 1998, István Ottó and I attempted to draw up a process model that would describe some aspects of motivational evolution (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). This model broke down the overall motivational process into several discrete temporal segments organised along the progression that describes how initial wishes and desires are first transformed into goals and then into operationalised intentions, and how these intentions are enacted, leading (hopefully) to the accomplishment of the goal and concluded by the final evaluation of the process. Drawing on the work of German psychologists Heinz Heckhausen and Julius Kuhl (e.g. Heckhausen, 1991; Heckhausen & Kuhl, 1985; Kuhl, 1987, 1992; Kuhl & Beckmann, 1994) we suggested that motivation undergoes a cycle that has at least three distinct phases (Figure 2; cf. also Dörnyei, 2000, 2001a):
Figure 2. A process model of learning motivation in the L2 classroom

Preactional Stage

CHOICE MOTIVATION

Motivational functions:
- Setting goals
- Forming intentions
- Launching action

Main motivational influences:
- Various goal properties (e.g., goal relevance, specificity and proximity)
- Values associated with the learning process itself, as well as with its outcomes and consequences
- Attitudes towards the L2 and its speakers
- Expectancy of success and perceived coping potential
- Learner beliefs and strategies
- Environmental support or hindrance

Actional Stage

EXECUTIVE MOTIVATION

Motivational functions:
- Generating and carrying out subtasks
- Ongoing appraisal (of one’s performance)
- Action control (self-regulation)

Main motivational influences:
- Quality of the learning experience (pleasantness, need significance, coping potential, self and social image)
- Sense of autonomy
- Teachers’ and parents’ influence
- Classroom reward- and goal structure (e.g., competitive or cooperative)
- Influence of the learner group
- Knowledge and use of self-regulatory strategies (e.g., goal setting, learning and self-motivating strategies)

Postactional Stage

MOTIVATIONAL RETROSPECTION

Motivational functions:
- Forming causal attributions
- Elaborating standards and strategies
- Dismissing intention and further planning

Main motivational influences:
- Attributional factors (e.g., attributional styles and biases)
- Self-concept beliefs (e.g., self-confidence and self-worth)
- Received feedback, praise, grades
1. **Preactional Stage:** First, motivation needs to be generated – the motivational dimension related to this initial phase can be referred to as *choice motivation*, because the generated motivation leads to the selection of the goal or task that the individual will pursue.

2. **Actional Stage:** Second, the generated motivation needs to be actively maintained and protected while the particular action lasts. This motivational dimension has been referred to as *executive motivation*, and it is particularly relevant to sustained activities such as studying an L2 and to learning in classroom settings, where students are exposed to a great number of distracting influences, such as off-task thoughts, irrelevant distractions from others, anxiety about the tasks, or physical conditions that make it difficult to complete the task.

3. **Postactional Stage:** Finally, there is a third phase following the completion of the action – termed *motivational retrospection* – which concerns the learners’ retrospective evaluation of how things went. The way students process their past experiences in this retrospective phase will determine the kind of activities they will be motivated to pursue in the future.

A key tenet of the approach is that these three phases are associated with largely different motives. That is, people will be influenced by different factors while they are still contemplating an action from those that influence them once they have embarked on some action. Similarly, when we look back at something and evaluate it, again a new set of motivational components may well become relevant.

**Implications of a situated, process-oriented approach**

By taking a situated and dynamic approach, we can relate motivation research to actual learning processes, which makes it possible to link L2 motivation research more closely with the study of instructed second language acquisition in various classroom situations. This in turn allows for a more elaborate description of student motivation, which can have practical implications in two areas: (a) the systematic development of motivational strategies that the L2 teacher can apply to generate and maintain motivation in his/her learners, and (b) the formulation of self-motivating strategies that enable L2 learners to take personal control of the affective conditions and experiences that shape their subjective involvement in learning.
Revising motivational strategies

With motivation being a key factor in learning success, teacher skills in motivating learners should be seen as central to teaching effectiveness (Galloway, Rogers, Armstrong & Leo, 1998). However, as Good and Brophy (1994) summarise, this practical aspect of motivation has not received much scholarly attention until recently, “so that teachers were forced to rely on unsystematic ‘bag-of-tricks’ approaches or on advice coming from questionable theorising” (p. 212). Indeed, until the end of the 1980’s there had been hardly any attempts in the psychological literature to design motivational strategies for classroom application, and in language teaching methodology it was not until the mid-1990’s that the first descriptions of practical classroom techniques started to appear in print. Obviously, researchers had been far more interested to find out what motivation was than how it could be promoted. During the past six to eight years, however, things have finally started to change. More and more articles and books have been published with the word ‘motivating’ in their title, as if a new spirit had entered the profession, urging scholars to ‘stick their neck out and see what we’ve got’. Luckily, what we have got is nothing to be ashamed of. There is a growing set of core knowledge in motivation research that has stood the test of time and which can therefore be safely translated into practical terms.

In a recent summary of the available practical knowledge on motivating language learners (Dörnyei, 2001b), I have provided a comprehensive framework of a motivational teaching practice, consisting of four main dimensions (cf. Figure 3):
Figure 3. The components of motivational teaching practice in the L2 classroom.

Creating the basic motivational conditions
- Appropriate teacher behaviours
- A pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere
- A cohesive learner group with appropriate group norms

Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation
- Promoting motivational attributions
- Providing motivational feedback
- Increasing learner satisfaction
- Offering rewards and grades in a motivating manner

Motivational teaching practice

Generating initial motivation
- Enhancing the learners’ L2-related values and attitudes
- Increasing the learners’ expectancy of success
- Increasing the learners’ goal-orientedness
- Making the teaching materials relevant for the learners
- Creating realistic learner beliefs

Maintaining and protecting motivation
- Setting specific learner goals
- Presenting tasks in a motivating way
- Making learning stimulating
- Protecting the learners’ self-esteem and increasing their self-confidence
- Allowing learners to maintain a positive social image
- Creating learner autonomy
- Promoting cooperation among the learners
- Promoting self-motivating strategies
1. Creating the basic motivational conditions.
2. Generating initial student motivation.
3. Maintaining and protecting motivation.
4. Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation.

These motivational facets, which are a logical extension of the process model outlined in Figure 2, are further broken down to concrete motivational strategies and techniques, covering areas that range from “Making the teaching materials relevant to the learners” through “Setting specific learner goals” to “Increasing learner satisfaction”.

**Formulating action control/self-motivating strategies**

Besides providing a comprehensive framework to guide practical work on devising motivational strategies, a process-oriented approach has a further, somewhat related feature that makes it beneficial for promoting effective, self-regulated learning: its emphasis on action control mechanisms. These mechanisms, as conceptualised originally by Kuhl (1985), can be seen as a subclass of self-regulatory strategies concerning the learners’ self-motivating function (for a review of self-regulation, see Boekaerts, Pintrich & Zeidner, 2000). In academic situations action control can be characterised, using Corno’s (1993) words, “as a dynamic system of psychological control processes that protect concentration and directed effort in the face of personal and/or environmental distractions, and so aid learning and performance” (p. 16), and it is particularly important in prolonged learning situations such as second language acquisition, because action control mechanisms help individuals to maintain their priorities in the face of temptation and adversity.

Based on Corno (1993), Corno and Kanfer (1993) and Kuhl (1987), I have divided self-motivating strategies into five main classes (Dörnyei, 2001b), which are listed below with two typical example strategies for each:

1. **Commitment control strategies** for helping to preserve or increase the learners’ original goal commitment.
   - Keeping in mind favourable expectations or positive incentives and rewards (e.g. a film director fantasising about receiving an Oscar).
   - Focusing on what would happen if the original intention failed.

2. **Metacognitive control strategies** for monitoring and controlling concentration, and for curtailting unnecessary procrastination.
• Identifying recurring distractions and developing defensive routines.
• Focusing on the first steps to take.

3. *Satiation control strategies* for eliminating boredom and adding extra attraction or interest to the task.
• Add a twist to the task (e.g. reordering certain sequences or setting artificial records and trying to break them).
• Use your fantasy to liven up the task (e.g. treating the task as a game, creating imaginary scenarios).

4. *Emotion control strategies* for managing disruptive emotional states or moods, and for generating emotions that will be conducive to implementing one’s intentions. (Note that these strategies are often similar to ‘affective learning strategies’ discussed earlier).
• Self-encouragement.
• Using relaxation and meditation techniques.

5. *Environmental control strategies* for eliminating negative environmental influences and exploiting positive environmental influences by making the environment an ally in the pursuit of a difficult goal.
• Eliminating negative environmental influences (such as sources of interference: e.g. noise, friends; and environmental temptations: e.g. a packet of cigarettes).
• Creating positive environmental influences (e.g. making a promise or a public commitment to do or not to do something, asking friends to help you or not to allow you to do something).

I believe that the analysis of self-motivating strategies appears to be one of the most promising domains of applied motivation research. Much of past research on self-regulated learning has focused on students’ knowledge and control of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and work by Corno, Kanfer, Pintrich and their colleagues has evidenced that motivational self-regulation, or “metamotivational skills” in Boekaerts’s (1995) term, constitute an important aspect of academic self-regulation skills. Recent empirical support to this claim has been provided by Wolters (1998), who found that college students regulated their effort in academic tasks by using a variety of cognitive, volitional and motivational strategies. Thus, raising learners’ awareness of self-motivation strategies, particularly drawing attention to specific strategies that are especially useful in a given situation, may have a significant ‘empowering effect’ on the students.
Current and future research directions

L2 motivation research is currently a striving area within second language studies. The pioneers of the field have been joined by a new generation of international scholars, and the scope of motivation research has been extended to cover a variety of related issues. As a result, we now have a colourful mixture of approaches to the understanding of L2 motivation, comparable on a smaller scale to the multi-faceted motivational arena in psychology. In the final section of this paper I will highlight some of the emerging new themes in motivational research that I consider particularly fruitful directions.

Task motivation

It follows from the main principles of the situated approach of the 1990’s, and also coincides with practicing teachers’ classroom experiences, that motivational factors show considerable variation according to the particular learning event they are associated with, as evidenced by the varying degree of interest and commitment students demonstrate toward different learning tasks. In a recent theoretical discussion of task motivation, Julkunen (2001) contends that students’ task behaviour is fuelled by a combination of generalised and situation-specific motives according to the specific task characteristics, which is in line with Tremblay, Goldberg and Gardner’s (1995) conclusion that trait motivation influences state motivation. However, in another paper I have argued (Dörnyei, in press) that the picture is more complex than a dichotomous state/trait construct, because the actual degree of motivational force associated with an individual’s specific on-task behaviour is the composite outcome of a number of distinct motivational influences, many of which are related to the various broader ‘contexts’ each task is surrounded with, such as:

- the language class the task takes place in;
- the language course the class is part of;
- the school that offers the language course; and
- the particular language that the course is targeting.

I believe that all these contexts function as ‘motivational contingencies’ in that they have some bearing on the final task motivation, and therefore a key issue in future motivation research will be to determine how these multiple contingencies overlap and interfere with each other. A particularly intriguing aspect of task motivation is the fact that the
motivation of the task participants is not independent from each other. It is easy to see that if one is paired up with a highly motivated or unmotivated partner, this will affect the person’s own disposition toward the task; in other words, task motivation is co-constructed by the participants. Indeed, some empirical evidence has already been provided to support this claim by Dörnyei and Kormos (2000, 2002) and (Dörnyei, in press).

A neurobiological explanation of motivation

A novel line of research that has the potential to revolutionaries the study of L2 motivation has been pursued by John Schumann (1998, 1999, 2001a, 2001b), who has examined second language acquisition from a neurobiological perspective. This work has been one of the first attempts in the L2 field to incorporate the findings of neuroscience and to link the study of language to this particularly dynamically developing discipline within cognitive sciences. The key constituent of Schumann’s theory is ‘stimulus appraisal’, which occurs in the brain along five dimensions: novelty (degree of unexpectedness/familiarity), pleasantness (attractiveness), goal/need significance (whether the stimulus is instrumental in satisfying needs or achieving goals), coping potential (whether the individual expects to be able to cope with the event), and self and social image (whether the event is compatible with social norms and the individual’s self-concept). These appraisals become part of the person’s overall value system through a special ‘memory for value’ and they are largely responsible for providing the affective foundation of human action.

Motivation and self-determination

One of the most influential paradigms in mainstream motivational psychology has been offered by self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002), which includes the well-known distinction between intrinsic motivation (i.e. performing a behaviour for its own sake in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction such as the joy of doing a particular activity or satisfying one’s curiosity) and extrinsic motivation (i.e. performing a behaviour as a means to an end, that is, to receive some extrinsic reward such as good grades or a raise in salary, or alternatively to avoid punishment). Because learning an L2 almost always contains a combination of external and internal regulatory factors, Kim Noels and her colleagues (Noels, 2001a, 2001b; Noels, Clément & Pelletier, 1999, 2001; Noels, Pelletier, Clément & Vallerand, 2000) have set out to explore how the orientations proposed by self-determination theory relate to various
orientations that have traditionally been identified in the L2 field (e.g. instrumental and integrative orientations). Noels argues convincingly that applying the intrinsic/extrinsic continuum can be helpful in organising language learning goals systematically and the paradigm is particularly useful for analysing the classroom climate and the L2 teacher in terms of how controlling or autonomy supporting they are, which has immediate practical implications for educating autonomous, self-regulated L2 learners.

**Causal attributions and L2 motivation**

In spite of a great number of people spending a considerable amount of time studying foreign languages, only relatively few are likely to ever reach a level of L2 proficiency that will satisfy them without any reservations. Accordingly, language learning in most people’s minds is inevitably associated with perceptions of some degree of learning failure. For this reason, attribution theory, that is, the analysis of how people process past experiences of failure (and success), and what consequences these will have on future achievement strivings, is a hugely relevant research area in the L2 field. The effects of causal attributions are complex, varying as a function of the type of attributions made and the attributional style and biases of the learners, and questionnaire-based studies focusing on linear relationships of broad categories have not been adequate to do this intricate process justice. However, recent qualitative research by Williams and Burden (1997, 1999; Williams, Burden & Al-Baharna, 2001) and Ushioda (1996, 1998, 2001) have provided a rich source of insights into the causal attributional processes of L2 learners.

**Willingness to communicate**

A recent extension of motivation research that has both theoretical and practical potential involves the study of the L2 speakers’ willingness to engage in the act of L2 communication. Originally inspired by research in L1 communication studies (e.g. McCroskey & Richmond, 1991), MacIntyre and his colleagues (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément & Dinovan, 2002; MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei & Noels, 1998; MacIntyre, Babin & Clément, 1999) have conceptualised willingness to communicate (WTC) in the L2, thereby explaining the individual’s “readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2” (p. 547). The L2 WTC construct conceived is made up of several layers and subsumes a range of linguistic and psychological variables, including linguistic self-confidence (both state and trait); the desire to affiliate with a
person; interpersonal motivation; intergroup attitudes, motivation and climate; parameters of the social situation; communicative competence and experience; and various personality traits. Thus, the model attempts to draw together a host of learner variables that have been well established as influences on second language acquisition/use, resulting in a construct in which psychological and linguistic factors are integrated in an organic manner. This line of inquiry may have important educational implications in that generating a willingness to communicate in the foreign language is arguably a central - if not the most central - objective of modern L2 pedagogy.

Demotivation (i.e. factors that cancel motivation in the students)

In educational contexts ‘demotivation’ is a regrettable common phenomenon, since we can find countless examples of learners who have lost their initial motivation to learn the L2 for some reason. It is surprising, therefore, that very little has been said in the literature about motivational influences that have a detrimental effect on motivation (for exceptions, see Chambers, 1993; Dörnyei, 2001a; Nikolov, 2001; Oxford, 1998; Ushioda, 1998, 2001). I would encourage future work in this area, particularly because this might be an ideal topic for practicing teachers who are involved in action research or in some sort of in-service training.

Teacher motivation and how to motivate teachers

The final topic that I would like to highlight – teacher motivation – concerns L2 teachers directly. It is an important area because it has been found in various educational contexts that the teacher’s level of enthusiasm and commitment is one of the most important factors that affect the learners’ motivation to learn. Broadly speaking, if a teacher is motivated to teach, there is a good chance that his/her students will be motivated to learn. Dörnyei (2001a) provides an overview of the relevant research conducted in educational psychology, and a number of studies have addressed this issue in the L2 field as well (Jacques, 2001; Kassabgy, Boraie & Schmidt, 2000; Pennington, 1992, 1995; Pennington & Ho, 1995). Yet, it can be concluded generally that far more research is needed to do this important issue justice. Furthermore, if we accept the significance of ‘teacher motivation’ with regard to student learning, it follows that ‘motivating teachers’ is also an important issue, yet this is a completely uncharted area both in educational psychology and L2 research.
References


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Theory and practice in teacher education: Mind the gap

Marion Williams
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Introduction

In this paper I argue that our teacher training methodology should be firmly rooted in a strong and coherent theory to which we feel personally committed, and that our theory should underpin everything that we do in our training of teachers. My aim is to explore the possible roots of such a theory. To do so I shall look at the discipline of psychology and focus particularly on one major approach to psychology, constructivism. I shall then consider the implications for our teacher training practices of taking such an approach. My journey will take us through a consideration of different views of learning, the nature of knowledge, the relationship between theory and practice, and the role of reflection.

In order to delve more deeply into a theory of teacher education to underpin our practice we need to answer such questions as:

- What is education all about?
- How do teachers learn?
- What is the nature of student teachers’ knowledge?
- How is a teacher’s knowledge formed and how does it change?

It is to these that we turn our attention next.

Educational values

Firstly, as educators we have a value system, a belief about what education is all about; whatever our personal beliefs these will influence everything we do in our teacher training classroom. Here I would like to distinguish between education in its broad and narrow sense. In its broad sense it is concerned with educating the whole person to meet the demands of an ever-changing world, and developing the ability to face new challenges in principled and thoughtful ways. A narrow interpretation, on
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the other hand, sees education as involving the acquisition of skills which are useful in the here and now but may not have a wider educational value (Williams & Burden, 1997). If we take a broader view our training will include developing the ability to think flexibly, to solve problems, to make decisions, to respond to unpredictable demands and developing the whole person. If we take a narrower view we are more likely to be concerned with teaching particular techniques which student teachers should follow. Education can never be value free.

However, a theory of teacher education will also be rooted in the view of learning that the educator subscribes to, his or her beliefs about what learning is and how it takes place. I shall now consider two opposing views of learning. Each is underpinned by different views about the nature of knowledge and what is meant by knowing.

A transmission view of learning

A view of learning that has been particularly influential in both teaching and teacher training is a transmission model; that is, learning involves the transmission of knowledge from one person, the expert, to another, the novice. Such a view has implications for the training process. If we subscribe to this approach we would tend to believe that training can be accomplished by breaking knowledge or skills down into manageable chunks, and imparting these to student teachers who absorb them as whole pieces. ‘Theory’ is conceived of as a body of external wisdom which is to be learnt by teachers, and which will inform practice. There is an assumption too about the nature of knowledge, that it is something that can be broken down and transmitted in a linear fashion. Thus knowledge is seen as external, fixed and absolute.

A constructivist view of learning

An entirely different view of learning is a constructivist one. Different psychologists have approached constructivism in different ways. An early constructivist was the Swiss psychologist, Piaget, who conceived of children learning through meaningfully exploring their environments, while quite independently the American psychologist, George Kelly, developed his personal construct theory. An account of a constructivist approach is provided by Thomas and Hari-Augstein (1985).

Basically, to a constructivist, learners are all individuals who will
bring a different set of knowledge and experiences to the learning process and will make sense of the world and the situations they are faced with in ways that are personal to them. From a constructivist viewpoint, learning is not conceived of as the acquisition of predetermined knowledge or skills to be measured according to some external standard. Rather, it is concerned with learners constructing their own knowledge or understandings in ways that are personal to them so that what they learn has personal significance. As a result every learner will learn something different, and what is known will depend on who is doing the knowing.

What learners do when they learn is to raise their existing knowledge into their consciousness and map new information onto their current schemata, thereby constructing new meanings that are personally significant. A constructivist theory of learning therefore is concerned with the ways in which learners organise and change their own behaviour and understandings to produce changes in themselves which they value and which have meaning to them. Knowledge is therefore seen as personal, internal and situated.

The nature of knowledge

Thus far I have discussed two views of learning; learning as the transmission of knowledge and learning as the personal construction of new meanings, and we have seen that each view is underpinned by a different conception of the nature of knowledge itself. The former sees knowledge as something static, as consisting of universal truths or realities, which can actually be cut up and transmitted like the posting of a parcel, and then re-built. On the other hand, a constructivist view of learning sees knowledge as something personally constructed by the individual; in other words it is different depending on who is doing the knowing and there is no such concept as absolute knowledge or truth.

In addition to this, the way knowledge is organised in people’s minds differs from individual to individual; the way in which ideas cluster and link together is highly personal. Moreover, the way in which our knowledge is organised will determine how new information is mapped onto and integrated with our existing understandings.

As Barth (1991) explains, the knowledge of an ‘expert’ is organised in a far more complex way than that of a ‘novice’. An expert situates knowledge in the whole they have worked out whereas a novice’s organisation tends to consist more of isolated bits of knowledge where
connections between the parts still need to be made. Before we can effectively integrate new information we need to be aware of what our existing knowledge is and how it is organised. A trainer’s role, therefore, is to help student teachers to become aware of existing understandings, to organise these and make connections between the parts, and to reshape understandings in the light of new information to form new meanings which are personally significant. In other words, we need to help them to join the bits up.

**Theory and practice in teacher education**

The link between theory and practice is a thorny issue in teacher education, and there is considerable variation in the way the meanings of these concepts and the relationship between them is perceived (Griffiths & Tann, 1992; Eraut, 1994; Williams, 1998). Phrases such as: “a very practical course”, “too theoretical” or even “good balance between theory and practice” all hide a multitude of conceptions as well as frequent misunderstandings of these terms. Can practice, for example, exist without theory? And, does a “good balance” consist of theory and practice in equal proportions according to the time devoted to them on a course? If not, how else should we conceive of a good balance?

Griffiths and Tann (1992) and Williams (1998) argue that the problem lies in actually perceiving a dichotomy between theory and practice. These writers see in particular a need to tease out the meaning of the term “theory”. Eraut (1994) makes the helpful distinction here between public and private theories. Public theories are “systems of ideas published in books, discussed in classes and accompanied by critical literature that expands, interprets, and challenges their meaning and validity”; in other words they are theories that are outside us. Private theories, on the other hand, are “ideas in people’s minds which they use to interpret or explain their experience” (1994, p. 70), i.e. they are internal. Eraut’s distinction is appealing as the notion of private theories sits comfortably within a constructivist framework.

In an attempt to clarify the different relationships between these concepts I have proposed the following model (Williams, 1994; Williams, 1998):
Here, personal theories, public theories and practice are inter-related. Personal theories inform and give rise to practice, whether they are explicitly stated or not. Reflection on practice enables personal theories to be constructed. Personal theories can be made public by writing them down for publication or presenting them to others. Public theories can become incorporated into personal theories by being reconstructed through the process of reflection and theorising. Public theories can be put into practice, but they are necessarily reconstructed in the light of the particular context and participants. Practice can become public through communication.

The point is that it is personal theory that gives rise to practice. Griffiths and Tann (1992, p. 76) state:

the divide usually labeled as theory and practice is, in effect, a divide between personal and public theories

as the practice of any teacher is the result of a private theory, whether this is explicit or not. When a course is labelled as too theoretical, therefore, this probably means that there is too much public theory without the opportunity to reconstruct or process it.

What is important in teacher education is to develop the ability to relate theory to practice in different ways, to put personal theories into practice, to infer personal theories from practice, to theorise from public theories, and to generate personal theories. Student teachers therefore need to develop the ability to theorise. Teacher training courses need to facilitate the process of forming personal theories and finding ways to put these into practice intelligently. Student teachers need to meet different kinds of
theories and be constantly involved in processing them, otherwise public theories just get dumped. They also need to understand how to theorise, when to theorise, how to focus and organise their theorising and to evaluate it. We might call such a process *meta-theorising*. However, in order to understand these processes we need to consider the notion of reflection.

**Reflection**

‘Reflection’ is another problematic term that embraces a range of different conceptual understandings. As Copeland et al. (1993, p. 548) put it:

> Perhaps the most central question on which all subsequent work must be built is that of the nature of reflection itself. What is reflection in practice? How would you recognize a reflective practitioner if you saw one?

There have been many pleas in the literature to clarify what is meant by the terminology used, as well as to provide a research agenda that will further our understanding of the nature and benefits of reflection (Zeichner, 1994; Copeland et al., 1993; Hatton & Smith, 1995).

In attempting to unpick this issue a number of questions arise:

- What happens in the process of reflection?
- What do we reflect on?
- When does reflection take place? What is the time frame?
- What happens as a result of reflection?
- Is it a private or a social activity?

The first question concerns the nature of reflection: whether it is a purely cognitive, rational process, or whether it involves feelings such as care, passion or upset, or broader issues such as political or moral orientation. Many writers, for example, Atkins and Murphy (1993), Von Wright (1992), see reflection as inextricably bound up with notions of self and the analysis of one’s own feelings, thus going beyond cognition.

Others, e.g. Day and Pennington (1993), Von Wright (1992), Copeland et al. (1993), Hatton and Smith (1995), have provided various suggestions as to what is to be included in the concept of reflection. These include the cognitive aspects of thinking and problem solving skills, as well as metacognitive skills such as planning, evaluating and monitoring. It also
includes self knowledge, as well as awareness of personal theories, beliefs and values. Some include awareness of context, as well as political, moral and social awareness. It is also argued that reflection is often bound up with a particular ideology, which forms the basis of what is known as “critical reflection”.

There are different views as to the content of reflection; what is reflected on. Schön (1983, 1987), for example, sees reflection as essentially tied to action. When we teach we make spontaneous decisions such that our knowing is in our action, a process he terms “reflection-in-action”. This involves conscious thinking while teaching. Reflective practitioners make explicit their personal theories, knowledge and beliefs that guide their actions by “reflecting-on-action” after the event. The basis of reflective teaching is that practice is an expression of theory. Teachers need to become aware of their own theories and engage in a process of constantly monitoring them; that is, to ask “what does my practice tell me about what I think and what my beliefs are?” However, other writers, e.g. Ur (1992), argue that reflection can be applied to more than our practice; we can reflect on public theories, personal theories, teacher training sessions, and other people’s experiences.

A further question concerns the time frames within which reflection takes place. Griffiths and Tann (1992, p. 78-79) provide a breakdown of what they call levels of reflective practice which account for the different purposes of reflection, and the different times, speeds and levels of consciousness involved. The notion of levels is not new and these writers’ ideas build on those of Van Manen (1977, 1990), Habermas (1973), Mezirow (1981), and Carr and Kemmis (1986). The model of Griffiths and Tann (op. cit.) is important in that it recognises that all the levels in the model are important to the practitioner at different stages in his or her professional life. A summary is provided below.

1. **Act-react (Rapid reaction)**
   At this level reaction is immediate, for example, praising a child. Not all teachers, though, have the same automatic reaction. This level constitutes reflection-in-action, and is likely to be private.

2. **React-monitor-react rework-plan-act (Repair)**
   At this level there is pause for thought followed by a quick reaction to the situation, for example, altering the lesson plan to suit the situation. This level again constitutes reflection-in-action, and is private.
   Levels 3 to 5 represent reflection-on-action. Here the analysis happens after the event, for example, talking about the progress of a particular child and making plans for how to help the child.

   Observation is now systematic and sharply focused, and the data may be systematically collected over a period of time. Reflection is careful and rigorous.

5. *Act-observe systematically-analyse rigorously-evaluate-plan-act* (Retheorising and reformulating)
   This level involves abstract thinking and reformulation of personal theories over a long period of time. It may involve challenging public theories.

The question of the result of reflection is an important one, which brings us full circle back to the issue of what learning is concerned with. For example, is the outcome of the reflection to be a reformulation of personal theory? Is it to be an increased self-awareness, a deeper understanding of classroom processes or a mapping of public theory onto personal theory? If the educator takes a broad view of education, then the outcome will also be linked to notions of development of thinking, questioning practitioners.

However, the above discussion has so far focused on the learners as individuals, and it is to the notion of reflection as a social activity that I would like to turn next.

**Learning through social interaction**

In order to understand the significance of interaction as a part of learning, it is important to consider one more major psychological perspective, *social interactionism*. Significant proponents of such an approach are the Russian, Vygotsky; the American, Bruner; and the Israeli psychologist, Feuerstein. For a social interactionist, learning occurs through social interactions with other people. We are all born into a social world and it is through our interactions with others that we develop and make sense of the world. Knowledge is perceived of as socially constructed, and we make use of language in order to do this. Thus the approach I am taking in this paper is what I shall call *social constructivist*; teachers construct their own meanings in their own ways, and they do so by interacting socially with
other people. All this takes place within a social context which will influence the personal meanings that individuals make.

Towards a teacher training methodology

Finally, I shall conclude this paper by considering the implications for a methodology of teacher training. If we follow the perspective I have discussed, we need a methodology that helps trainee teachers to make explicit their own constructions of the world; what they know, what they believe, and who they are. Trainee teachers arrive on a programme with their own baggage which they need to unpick before they can reconstruct it. We need a methodology which allows learners to interact with and process new information, to theorise and construct their own understandings and to make these explicit. We need a methodology that develops the ability to reflect on practice. We need a methodology that develops autonomy, allowing student teachers to take control of their learning. We need to develop the habit of learning through social interactions. Finally, we need a method that enables the learners to develop as thinking, questioning, reflective practitioners.

It is beyond the scope of this brief paper to explore specific techniques to carry out such a methodology. These are developed in other papers in this volume. What I hope I have done is to provide a framework from which teacher educators can develop their own ideas in ways that are significant for them.

References


3

Balancing theory and practice in teacher education: The contribution of ‘scaffolding’

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Introduction

In the context of my work in Australia, one of the issues that I continue to grapple with is that of the relationship and appropriate balance between theory and practice in teacher education programmes. The Australian teachers that I work with typically begin their courses by stating that they are less interested in theory than practice in education. As their courses progress, they usually become more interested in theory and, in particular, begin to appreciate the very practical implications of developing a strong theoretical basis in their work. It is my belief that the strongest and most effective pedagogical practices are underpinned by teachers’ abilities to articulate the theoretical principles on which such practices are based. However, for me the challenge in relation to the theory-practice relationship is two-fold. It lies first in the challenge of continuing to develop my own theoretical understandings of language and literacy and of teaching and learning; and second, in the challenge of trying to convince teachers of the value of engaging seriously with theory in order to understand and articulate more clearly the basis of their own pedagogical practices.

In this paper I want to outline the nature, purposes, and some of the outcomes of a research project that I have been involved with recently. This project has a number of features that are relevant to the theory-practice issue. It involves a team of thirty participants, including researchers, educational consultants and teachers from six schools. The project is coordinated by the researchers; however, its progress is dependent on the different, but complementary roles and areas of expertise, of the three groups of participants. The theory-practice issue is, therefore, constantly at the forefront of discussion. An aim of the project is to draw on specific theoretical understandings in order to gain insights into pedagogical practices in the schools, but then to draw on analysis of those pedagogical practices to further inform and enhance the theory. Thus it involves a
recursive process of analysis of practice to inform theory building in order to further inform practice.

This project is located in the educational context of schooling in Australia, and has an emphasis on pedagogical practices that assist English as a second language (ESL) students), rather than English as a foreign language (EFL) students. However, it may be of interest to readers in other countries and in other educational contexts for two reasons. Firstly, the research design is one that focuses on the relationship between practice and theory building through its grounded approach to theory building. Such a research design, with its emphasis on analysis of practice to enhance theory which in turn is used to inform practice, typically resonates with educators as it enables them to reflect on, and continue to develop their own understandings of theories of teaching and learning. Secondly, the broad pedagogical features evident in the programmes of participating schools are relevant, I believe, beyond the context of ESL education, and are likely to be of interest to those working in other educational contexts, including second language education in Hong Kong.

I begin the paper by describing the research project, including the specific theoretical principles that we have drawn on in this work. I then describe the programme in one of the participating schools in some detail in order to provide a flavour of the kind of pedagogical practices that we have documented in this project, and that we consider contribute to effective ESL programmes. Finally, I discuss some of the more general features that were evident in that and other programmes in the other participating schools. These features, in particular, I would argue, are relevant for those working in other educational contexts.

The ESL Scaffolding Project

The project entitled Putting Scaffolding to Work in Language and Literacy Education: New perspectives in ESL education, otherwise known as the ESL Scaffolding Project began in 2001 and is now in its second year. It began as a joint venture between the Multicultural Programs Unit in the NSW Department of Education and Training, and researchers within the Faculty of Education at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). At the time of planning the project, my colleagues and I from UTS and from the Multicultural Programs Unit had independently been working with the notion of scaffolding and were all increasingly interested in its potential to inform and enhance pedagogical practices in the context of ESL education.
Thus the project represented a genuine collaboration in terms of our specific interests both in theory and pedagogy. In addition, we were particularly interested in the needs of students as they make the transition between primary and secondary schooling. There has been a pattern in Australian schools where ESL students who have been making steady academic progress while at primary school, tend to do less well once they reach secondary school.

The specific aims of the project were:

- to develop a greater understanding of the successes and frustrations that second phase ESL students experience as they negotiate the academic language and literacy demands across the major curriculum subjects that they study at school;
- to better understand the teaching practices and conditions that assist them in that task, especially as they move between primary and secondary school;
- to build an enriched model of scaffolding that both draws on good analyses of good practices and further contributes to theories of what constitutes good practices.

In developing the research design of the project we drew on the work of van Lier (1999), who, in describing components of research that contribute to educational change, identified exploration; model building; intervention and evaluation. Stage 1 of this project, conducted in 2001, consisted of exploration and model building. Here researchers and consultants spent time in each participating school documenting teaching practices. Analysis of these teaching practices then informed reflection and further theory building that focused on ways in which our developing understanding of scaffolding and its theoretical underpinnings could further inform effective teaching practices.

Stage 2 of the project, currently in progress, consists of intervention and evaluation. In this stage, teachers in the participating schools have drawn on outcomes from analysis in stage 1, to identify issues of particular concern to their own programmes. These issues then form the basis for action research programmes where the teachers, with support from consultants and researchers, consciously intervene to improve practices and evaluate outcomes. Both stages of the project have involved regular workshops where all participants meet to explore issues and discuss progress of the project. Both stages have also included in-school work with
teams of teachers, consultants and researchers working together.

As indicated above, an impetus in the original planning of the project was a shared interest in the metaphor of scaffolding and its potential to contribute to both theory and practice in the context of ESL education. In the following section, I discuss this metaphor and outline what we perceive to be its potential contribution to the development of more effective pedagogical practices.

**Why scaffolding and what is it anyway?**

The metaphor of scaffolding, adapted from the building industry, has been used extensively in recent years to refer to the temporary but essential nature of the support that teachers provide for students that enables the students to complete tasks or develop understandings that they would not have been able to achieve alone. As Mercer (1994) argues, the metaphor resonates with teachers because it seems to capture something that many regard as central to the core business of teaching. The term scaffolding, in this sense, was first used by Bruner and his colleagues (e.g. Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) in their work on parent-child interactions. This work highlighted the importance of the support provided by parents and the active role of both parent and child in the learning process.

Subsequently, many working in the context of language and literacy education have taken up the metaphor of scaffolding to focus on the nature of classroom interaction (e.g. Gibbons, 2002; Maybin, Mercer & Steirer, 1992; Mercer, 1994; Webster, Beveridge & Reed, 1996). They have used the metaphor of scaffolding to refer to the particular kind of help that assists students move to new skills, concepts or levels of understanding. As Mercer (1994) argues, for learning to be effective, classroom tasks should be ahead of students’ abilities to complete them alone, but within their ability to complete when scaffolding is provided.

Bruner, in his work on the child language development, drew on Vygotsky’s (1962, 1978) theories of learning and, in particular, on Vygotsky’s notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) to explain how the parent’s support enabled the child to work collaboratively to achieve tasks and understandings that were not at that time within the child’s abilities when working alone. Later work on scaffolding in the context of language and literacy education has also drawn extensively on Vygotsky’s work and on the notion of the zone of proximal development.
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Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) described the zone of proximal development as:

The distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

According to Vygotsky that the best learning occurs when learners are working within this zone.

As Gibbons (2002) argues, an important implication of Vygotsky’s theoretical perspective is its emphasis on nature of the teaching-learning relationship, and on the different but complementary roles of both teacher and students in the teaching-learning process. From this perspective, both teacher and students are seen as active participants in the learning process and as integral to it. Thus the achievements of students cannot be seen simply as the result of individual aptitude, background or motivation, but as also dependent on the social and linguistic frameworks within which their learning takes place. This implies that what teachers choose to do in their classrooms and, in particular the kinds and degrees of support they provide, are of crucial importance in the educational success of their students.

A useful way of further elaborating the crucial nature of this teacher’s support can be found in the work by Mariani (1997). Mariani has argued that the most effective classrooms are those where there is both high challenge and high support for students. He contrasted this kind of classroom environment with those where there is high challenge but inadequate support (resulting in learner frustration); low challenge but high support (feel good classroom where students operate in their comfort zones but where little learning occurs); and low challenge and low support (classrooms where boredom sets in and where behavioural problems are a likely outcome). Classrooms with high challenge and high support are those where scaffolding is most likely to occur and where students are working within the zone of proximal development.

A significant feature of this work then is a belief that, at least in the first instance, learning is social in nature. That is, effective learning occurs through the interactions between teacher (or more capable other) and students. An important implication of Vygotskys’
Theories is that the ZPD is also socially constructed. It is constructed in the interactions that occur between more capable others and students as they engage in tasks. Thus the ZPD exists in relation to the interactive engagement with specific tasks, rather than as an attribute which is located within any individual.

The emphasis in Vygotsky’s work, and in subsequent work on scaffolding on the social nature of learning, highlights the role of language in learning. More specifically, it highlights the role of language in mediating the construction of knowledge in and through the classroom interactions that occur between teacher and students. In exploring this issue in the ESL Scaffolding Project, we have turned to the work of Halliday and his colleagues (e.g. Halliday, 1993, 1994; Martin, 1992, 1993). Halliday’s systemic functional model of language is a model of language as a social semiotic. It is a functional theory in the sense that it is concerned with the ways in which language functions to make meanings in various cultural, social and vocational contexts. Central to the theory is its explanation, through the notions of register and genre, of the interrelationship between contexts and patterns of language choice in the construction of meaning.

Halliday’s functional model of language has had a significant impact on language and literacy education in Australia, and has enabled us to focus closely on the role of language in classroom interactions. As Wells (1999) has pointed out, the intersection between Vygotsky’s socially oriented theories of learning and Halliday’s socially oriented theories of language is a productive one. We have found that these complementary perspectives on language and learning have provided a strong theoretical frame within which to reflect on and analyse pedagogical practices (Hammond, 2001).

In order to illustrate the nature of the pedagogical practices that were typical of programmes in the participating schools in the ESL Scaffolding Project, I turn now to a description of one of these programmes.

Anderson school

Anderson school is a primary school (kindergarten to year 6) located in a moderately well to do suburb in Sydney. In recent years significant numbers of recently immigrated, primarily South East Asian families have moved to this suburb. This means that the school population now consists of approximately 60% of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. These students range from those who have been in Australia for a number of
years and whose English language development is progressing well, to those who have very recently arrived in Australia and who are in the relatively early stages of English language development. In the year 6 programme described below, all students (English speaking and ESL students) were expected to participate in the various classroom activities. However, the classroom teacher was supported by an ESL teacher who both co-taught the programme and provided additional support for the ESL students.

The programme for this year 6 class was based on a science and technology unit that was available in one of the syllabus documents provided to all primary schools in NSW from the Department of Education and Training. The programme which covered ten weeks was entitled ‘Light up my Life’ and was based around the study of light. The specific goals of the programme in regard to science were:

- to investigate the sources of light;
- to investigate the effect of light on various materials;
- to investigate how sound and light can be used to create special dramatic effects;
- to design and make a puppet and prepare a puppet show (in which the special effects of light are a feature).

The programme had an additional number of goals that related specifically to the teaching and learning of the language of science. There were:

- to assist students to develop control of appropriate technical vocabulary and patterns of grammar in order to be able to talk clearly and explicitly about the scientific phenomena under investigation;
- to extend students’ existing knowledge of the rhetorical structure and grammatical patterns typical of oral and written explanations of scientific phenomena.

The programme itself consisted of carefully selected and sequenced activities that at times focused specifically on the build up of scientific knowledge and at other times focused on teaching the language of science. These activities included:

- hands on science experiments where students manipulated objects to observe the effects of light (language accompanying action);
- discussion of what had occurred in these experiments and why it had
occurred (language for reflecting on and reconstructing action);

- work on the nature and structure of cause and effect sentences:
  identifying cause and effect elements and relevant conjunctions in such sentences;

- identifying the pathway of light as it passes through an overhead projector (consolidating meaning of technical vocabulary);

- identifying components of an overhead projector and explaining their functions (extending technical vocabulary; language for explaining cause and effect);

- writing up of science reports (and in doing so, reviewing prior knowledge of purposes and rhetorical structure of science reports);

- review of purposes and rhetorical structure of explanations (focus on nature of a specific genre);

- construction of shared oral explanations of how light works in certain contexts;

- independent construction of written explanations of how light works in specific contexts (extended oral texts);

- identifying appropriate procedures for making shadow puppets (language of instructions);

- selection of appropriate stories for shadow puppet show (negotiation in groups);

- making of puppets (language accompanying action);

- group preparation and presentation of shadow puppet show (oral story telling; acting out character roles).

A number of features in the programme that was taught at Anderson school are relevant to the above discussion of scaffolding and in particular to the emphasis on the theory practice relationship and the role of language in mediating learning. They also draw on the theoretical perspectives of both Vygotsky and Halliday.

The programme taught both science and language. It had clear goals that reflected the scientific content to be taught, but it also had goals that specifically addressed the language demands that students faced as they engaged with the science. In this it is an example of a ‘language across the curriculum’ programme. For the ESL students, as well as for native English speakers, this dual focus on science and language provided necessary support for their successful learning in one of the key curriculum areas of schooling.

A further feature of the programme was its inclusion of shifts between
spoken and written language, between everyday and technical language, and between minimal to extended responses in both oral and written modes. These shifts meant that students were engaged in hands-on activities where language accompanied action, they were engaged in activities where language was used to reconstruct actions and events, and they used language to reflect on and explain actions and phenomena. The extent and range of oral language work undertaken prior to the students being expected to produce any extended written work constituted part of the support provided for them. It also builds on Halliday’s descriptions of the different but complementary natures and roles of spoken and written language in learning (Halliday, 1985; Hammond, 1990).

There was considerable teaching about language. The programme included explicit teaching of technical vocabulary, of spelling, of sentence organisation, of specific aspects of grammar (types of verbs typically used in reports and explanations, appropriate tense, use of adverbs, patterns of noun groups); overall rhetorical structure of reports and explanations. This teaching about language occurred in relation to the context of language use. That is, students’ attention was directed to specific features of language as and when they arose within the context of the study of scientific concepts. Thus, while there was extensive work on vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and the rhetorical patterns of text organisation, this work occurred in order to assist students to meet the language and literacy demands of the curriculum area that they were studying. The science and language goals of the programme worked simultaneously and harmoniously in support of each other, and were informed by the teachers’ beliefs that the language and content of all curriculum areas are closely interwoven (Lemke, 1990).

The activities within the programme are sequenced to reflect the goals, to support students to achieve the goals, but also to withdraw that support as students are able to ‘go it alone’ and to work independently. The sequence of moves between ‘controlled, guided and independent’ activities however, is not a linear one. Support is provided as and when it is needed. It is withdrawn when students are able to work independently, but provided again in relation to new goals, or when students indicate they are not yet ready to work alone. As part of this process of providing support according to need, the programme included whole class activities where the teachers provided explanations or where they reviewed and extend previous understandings. The programme also included group work; pair work and independent work as the level of support was adjusted to meet the specific learning needs of students. These varied patterns of activities also enabled
the same concept to be approached from a variety of angles and with varying degrees of ‘hand over’ to students as their understanding of concepts developed and they became increasingly able to work independently.

These features I would suggest contributed to a classroom context where there was both high challenge and high support and where scaffolding was evident – both in the nature of support that reflected specific programme goals and also in the systematic handover that occurred in the sequencing of controlled, guided and independent activities.

**Principles of ‘scaffolded’ pedagogy of relevance in other educational contexts**

A number of the features in this programme were evident in the programmes of other schools within the *ESL Scaffolding Project*. The student profiles of these schools varied - some drew students from lower socio-economic backgrounds; some had higher proportions of ESL students. The teaching practices in the schools varied to meet the specific needs of the students in each school. However, because the teachers drew on similar broad principles in their programmes, there were also consistencies in the features of their teaching practices. The fact that these principles were relevant to teachers working with different groups of students within the Australian context, suggests that they may be of broader relevance and therefore of interest to those working in other educational contexts, including Hong Kong.

These principles included:

**High overall level of support**

The most obvious feature across all schools was the overall level of support that teachers provide for students. Consistent aspects of this support included:

- consistently reviewing previously learned work and building carefully and systematically on those reviews to introduce new concepts;
- tackling complex concepts from a number of ‘angles’ thereby enabling students both to develop control of relevant language and to develop control of concept;
- ‘grounding’ complex or abstract concepts (for example, by referring
back to familiar work; by working between ‘commonsense’ language that students are familiar with and more abstract and technical terms; by referring back to concrete ways in which abstract notions are realised linguistically etc);

- using a variety of semiotic systems to support learning (teacher explanations, hands on activities, board work, diagrams, videos, etc);
- addressing both the content of the lesson (eg content of science unit or specific English text etc) and the language of that content (eg the generic structure of specific texts; the grammatical features of cause and effect sentences etc);
- building opportunities for students to articulate and recapitulate what they have learned.

The specifics of high levels of support will vary depending on the particular group of students in any programme. However, the principle will remain constant - effective second language programmes need to build in these high levels of carefully planned systematic and explicit support (Gibbons, 1998; Hammond & Gibbons, 2001). This support occurs through the careful selection and sequencing of activities that are relevant to the goals of the programme and that take account of the where the students ‘are at’ when they begin the programme. While, in itself, this principle is not new, the challenge lies in putting it into practice. The examples listed above suggest how this principle can be put into practice in ESL programmes in Australian schools. Analysis of effective EFL programme, I would suggest, are likely to reveal similar high levels of carefully planned and sequenced support, although the details of how such support is realised in EFL programmes may differ from those listed above.

**Language learning in relevant contexts of use**

A feature of the programmes analysed in the *ESL Scaffolding Project* was that all taught English language within the context of the teaching of specific curriculum content. One programme taught English language within the context of a Maths programme, another in the context of Science, another in the context of English literature. Thus language was taught, not for its own sake, but to assist students to use language effectively to engage with the curriculum subjects that they were required to study at school. The emphasis was on a functional approach to language learning – learning language in make meanings. In this respect there were similarities with processes involved in mother tongue language development where young children learn language in order to be able to share wants, needs, feelings
and information with others.

The principle of learning language in the context of meaningful language use is one that is relevant to programmes beyond those in Australian schools (Hammond, 2001). However, while this principle is logical and easy to implement in an ESL context, it is considerably more challenging in an EFL context. For ESL students who need to learn English in order to be able to participate in an English speaking community or, in the case of school students, who need to learn English in order to be able to learn through English the context of use is obvious. For EFL students who may have no immediate need to use English beyond the foreign language classroom, the context of use must be constructed. Foreign language textbooks abound with attempts to do this through the construction of scenarios such as travel, meeting people at parties, eating in restaurants etc. In my view, differences in what constitutes relevant contexts of use represent the major differences between ESL and EFL programmes.

Despite the challenge of constructing relevant contexts of use, the principle of teaching and learning language in meaningful context remains important. It is a principle that lies at the heart of communicative approaches to foreign language teaching. A possible positive outcome of the worldwide impact of the internet is that relevant contexts of use may now be more readily available to many more EFL teachers and learners.

*Designed-in and contingent scaffolding*

In discussions of their programme planning procedures, the teachers in Anderson and other schools described the ways in which they planned support for their students. This planning occurred primarily at the macro level, as they prepared their programmes or units of work. In identifying their goals, they drew on understandings of their students’ current strengths and weaknesses, including the students’ developing abilities in English. They also drew on their understandings of the curriculum demands faced by the students. They then selected and sequenced activities both to reflect the specific teaching goals, and to plan deliberately for targeted support to meet the needs of the students. Thus at a macro level, scaffolding was deliberately designed-into the programme.

Scaffolding also occurred at a micro level, although deliberate planning for micro-level planning was more difficult. Micro level scaffolding depended on the responses that teachers made to students at
point of need. Teachers recognised the importance of being responsive to students and of working with the whole class, or perhaps with just a couple of students, to take up the ‘teachable moment’ as it occurred. However, as they explained, they could not plan precisely when or how such moments would occur. It was important, however, that the teacher had a clear sense of the programme goals, and of the specific needs of the students, so that he or she could respond contingently without losing the overall focus of the lesson (Gibbons, 2002; Sharpe, 2001; van Lier, 1996).

The principle of including designed-in and contingent scaffolding is one that has relevance beyond the six schools that participated in the ESL Scaffolding Project. It recognises the importance of clear and informed programme planning: of identifying realistic goals; of careful selection and sequencing of activities designed to help students achieve these goals; of ongoing assessment and evaluation. However, it also recognises the importance of responding to students as the programme unfolds, and of maintaining sufficient flexibility so that the teacher can respond contingently to the teachable moments. van Lier (1996) argues that the ability to respond contingently is one of the markers of excellent teaching.

Handover of responsibility for learning

A core feature of scaffolding is that of handover. Initially, support is provided to students to enable them to succeed in tasks and understandings that would not be possible alone. However, as students begin to be able to work independently, that support is gradually withdrawn. Thus a central feature of scaffolding is that responsibility for learning is handed over to students. While the notion of handover sounds simple enough, in actual classroom contexts it is more complex.

Analyses of lessons in this project suggest that handover is not a one-off thing and does not occur at just one point. It can occur in quite subtle ways within activities; it can occur between activities; and it can occur over a sequence of lessons. In addition, if teachers find that students are not yet ready for handover, then a higher level of support is reintroduced before handover is attempted again. Evidence that handover has been successful is often difficult to identify. It may not be possible to conclude that successful handover has occurred until several lessons later.

Recognition of what handover looks like in classroom contexts is a complex matter. For example, our analyses have indicated that the nature of
teachers' questions significantly but subtly changed the nature (length and extent of higher order thinking) of the students' contributions. This changed nature of students' contributions in our view constituted evidence of partial handover. In addition, different activities required different levels of participation from students. By carefully sequencing activities so that the level of student participation gradually increased, the teacher was able to effect further partial handover between those activities. Typically partial handover occurred a number of times prior to the obvious point of handover in a lesson or sequence of lessons where students were required to undertake independent work. The time taken to build up levels of understanding and the attention to partial handover within and between activities helped ensure that students were able eventually to work at greater levels of independence.

The point to make here is that handover is crucial to successful learning (Gibbons, 1998, 2001). Successful handover however is likely to occur on a number of levels, and gradual handover in the long run is likely to contribute to greater student responsibility in learning and a greater ability to work independently. This principle I would suggest is as relevant to other second language programmes.

Reflecting on learning and reflecting on language use

A feature of schools in the ESL Scaffolding Project was their emphasis on meta-awareness – of what students were learning in the programmes and more particularly of what they were learning about language and language use. There was considerable talk between teacher and students about the purposes of the programmes and about the purposes of specific activities. There was also talk between teacher and students about what students had learned, particularly in relation to the curriculum content that they were studying.

But in addition, there was considerable talk about language. In fact a very noticeable feature of the programmes analysed in this project was the amount of talk about texts that occurred on a regular basis. Not only did students learn about specific topics such as how light works; specific mathematical principles; or the play Romeo and Juliet, they also learned about how to write explanations of how light works or how to write news reports based on events that occurred in Romeo and Juliet.

In these lessons, the students talked about the rhetorical structure of such texts, they talked about specific grammatical features, and they talked
about the meaning of vocabulary items. They talked about paragraph order and organisation, they talked about spelling and punctuation. As they talked about such features they developed a shared language that enabled them, at other points and in other contexts, to talk explicitly about language (a metalanguage), and to analyse their own and others use of language.

The principle of meta-awareness of learning and particularly of language learning is one that is relevant beyond the specific programmes in the ESL Scaffolding Project. There is a considerable literature on the value of metalanguage development (e.g. Freebody & Luke, 1990; Hasan, 1996; Olson, 1989). This literature suggests that meta-awareness of language and of language learning contributes to students’ insights into their own use of language (and of the strengths and weaknesses of their own language use). In particular, it assists students to view written texts as ‘crafted objects’, and it contributes to their abilities to engage in critical analysis of their own and others’ texts.

Conclusions

In the introduction to this paper I argued that an issue of concern in teacher education is that of the relationship between theory and practice. More specifically, I suggested that the challenge for me (and for other teacher educators) in relation to this issue lies both in continuing to develop my own relevant theoretical understandings of what constitutes good practice, and in convincing teacher education students of the practical benefits of engaging seriously with theory. In concluding this paper, I comment briefly on what I see as the contribution of the ESL Scaffolding Project to these challenges.

Research design

The research design of the project brings together three groups of participants: researchers, educational consultants and teachers. Each group of participants brings their own areas of expertise and their own particular perspectives. These areas of expertise and perspectives are complementary but they are not the same. Predictably, the teachers approach the theory-practice relationship from the perspective of their own teaching practices, and they engage with theory as and when it informs such practices. Researchers typically engage more broadly with theory and then explore implications for teaching practices. Educational consultants are frequently in the position of mediating between these perspectives. The interactive
participation of these different groups in the project over an extended period of time has resulted in an intense dialogue that has pushed each group into a deeper understanding of each others’ perspectives. As indicated earlier it has also involved a recursive process of reflecting on practice to inform theory to then further inform practice.

Such a research design has had the benefit for me as a teacher educator of forcing more direct engagement with the lived experiences of practicing teachers. Through our shared exploration of scaffolding and its theoretical underpinnings it has also extended my own understanding not only of this particular theoretical perspective but also, more generally, of the integrated nature of the theory-practice relationship. Research of this nature which brings together different groups of participants to engage in shared areas of educational concern may be of interest and relevance to other teacher educators in other contexts. It provides exciting possibilities for interactive engagement and exploration of educational issues, and has the potential for positive outcomes for all participants.

Outcomes from analysis of lessons

The outcomes from analysis of lessons in the project, I would suggest, are also relevant for other teacher educators and students working in the fields of language and literacy education. I argued earlier that features of the programmes analysed in this project are likely to be relevant to analysis of good pedagogical practices in second language programmes in educational contexts other than Australia. Teacher educators may therefore find that the specific outcomes from the project can be of use in their work with student teachers. But in addition, the very practical orientation of these outcomes, and the emphasis in the project on grounded theory building, may be of further use in convincing student teachers of the practical value of engaging seriously with theory.
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Preparing teachers for styles- and strategies-based instruction

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Introduction

Focus on the processes of language teacher education

This paper takes the view that styles- and strategies-based instruction is a valuable area for teacher development and for language instruction. How often have we heard a testimonial from a language learner that s/he studied three years of high school French or Spanish or German but does not remember a word of it today? Why is it that “seat time” in a language classroom does not necessarily translate into language achievement? One small part of the explanation may be that the learners are not as engaged in learning the language as the teacher is in teaching it. No matter how motivated the teacher is to transmit his/her passion for the target language to students, if those very students are not aware of how they will learn that language most effectively - given their learning style and language strategy preferences for any given task - then whatever goes on in the classroom may have somewhat or substantially limited impact.

That is why in recent years language educators have been paying extra attention to the processes of language learning and considering means for supporting that effort more fully (see, for example, Oxford, 2001). One way is through styles- and strategies-based instruction, where the teacher not only teaches the language but also assists learners in: (1) developing their awareness of their own preferred learning styles, (2) determining the nature of their current language learning and language use strategy repertoire, and (3) both enhancing their current strategy repertoire while at the same time complementing it with additional strategies that may be of benefit, given their style preferences and the task that they need to accomplish in the target language. Let us now review some basics concerning learning style preferences and language strategies before discussing styles- and
Learning styles

Learning styles are the learners’ typical preferences for approaching learning. We learn in different ways and what suits one learner may be inadequate for another. Learning styles seem to be relatively stable, and so teachers may not have such a direct influence on this learner. However, teachers can modify the learning tasks they use in their classes in a way that may bring the best out of particular learners with particular learning style preferences. It is also possible that learners over time can be encouraged to engage in style-stretching so as to incorporate approaches to learning they were resisting in the past. For example, let us say that a given reader may have been so global in her approach to reading academic texts that she was missing specific details that could have assisted her in deriving meaning from the texts. With proper encouragement from the teacher, she can become more versed at both maintaining her global perspective, while at the same time paying more attention to particulars as well.

Learning style researchers have attempted to develop a framework that can usefully describe learners’ style preferences, so that instruction can match these. Although numerous distinctions are emerging from the literature, the following style preferences are considered particularly relevant and useful to understanding the process of language learning (see Reid, 1995; Ehrman, 1996):

- being visual (relying more on the sense of sight and learn best through visual means – books, video, charts, pictures), auditory (preferring listening and speaking activities – discussions, debates, audiotapes, role-plas, lectures), or hands-on (benefiting from doing projects, working with objects and moving around).
- being more extroverted (enjoying a wide range of social, interactive learning tasks – games, conversations, debates, role-plas, simulations) vs. being more introverted (preferring more independent work (e.g., studying or reading by oneself or learning with the computer or enjoying working with another person).
- being more abstract-intuitive (future-oriented, enjoying abstract thinking, and happy speculating about possibilities) vs. more concrete-sequential, that is, thinking in step-by-step sequence (present-oriented, preferring one-step-at-a-time activities and wanting to know where they are going in their learning at every moment).
- preferring to keep all options open (enjoying discovery learning where they pick up information naturally and prefer to learn without concern
for deadlines or rules) vs. being closure-oriented (focusing carefully on all learning tasks and seek clarity, meeting deadlines, planning ahead for assignments and staying organised, and wanting explicit directions and decisions).

being more global (enjoying getting the main idea and comfortable communicating even if they don’t know all the words or concepts) vs. more particular (focusing more on details and remember specific information about a topic well).

being more synthesising (summarising material well and noticing similarities quickly) vs. being more analytic (pulling ideas apart, doing well on logical analysis and contrast tasks, and tending to focus on grammar rules). ²

Now that we have looked at some significant style variables, let us consider language learner strategies.

Language learner strategies

Language learner strategies are learners’ conscious and semi-conscious thoughts and behaviours, having the explicit goal of improving the learner’s knowledge and understanding of the second language, as well as strategies for using the language that has been learned or for getting around gaps in language proficiency. Second-language researchers first noticed the importance of various learning strategies when they were examining the ‘good language learner’ in the 1970’s (see for instance, Rubin, 1975). The results indicated that it was not merely a high degree of language aptitude and motivation that caused some learners to excel but also the students’ own active and creative participation in the learning process through the application of individualised learning techniques (for a review, see Cohen, 1998). Research has found that the ‘good language learner’ is in command of a rich and sufficiently personalised repertoire of such strategies.

What has become increasingly clear as the field of strategy work has developed is that strategies can be classified in a number of equally useful ways, each providing its contribution to the descriptive process. Needless to say, the very same strategies may appear in these different classifications, but the focus is different. The following are some of the more common approaches to strategy description:

- By function: language learning strategies vs. language use strategies. In this classification system, strategies to increase target language
knowledge and understanding are distinguished from strategies aimed at using what has already been learned. **Language learning strategies** include strategies for (a) identifying material to be learned, (b) distinguishing it from other material, (c) grouping it for easier learning (d) engaging in repeated contact with it, and (e) formally committing it to memory (e.g., using rote memory or mnemonics). **Language use strategies** include retrieval, rehearsal, communication, and cover strategies. (The last refers to strategies that learners use to look good when they do not have full control over language material.) Language use strategies refer to strategies for using the language that has been learned however incompletely, including four subsets of strategies:

a. **retrieval strategies** – strategies used to call up language material from storage – e.g., calling up the correct verb in its appropriate tense or retrieving the meaning of a word when it is heard or read.

b. **rehearsal strategies** – strategies for practicing target language structures – e.g., rehearsing the subjunctive form for several Spanish verbs in preparation for using them communicatively in a request in Spanish to a teacher or boss to be excused for the day.

c. **communication strategies** – strategies used to convey a message that is both meaningful and informative for the listener or reader (e.g., when we want to explain technical information for which we do not have the specialised vocabulary); the verbal (or nonverbal) first aid devices that can be used to deal with problems or breakdowns in communication. Purposes: (1) to steer the conversation away from problematic areas, (2) to express their meaning in creative ways (e.g., by paraphrasing a word/concept), (3) to create more time for them to think (e.g., by using fillers or other hesitation devices), or (4) to negotiate the difficult parts of their communication with their conversation partner until everything is clear. (See Appendix A for examples of communication strategies.)

d. **cover strategies** – strategies for creating an appearance of language ability so as not to look unprepared, foolish, or even stupid (e.g., using a memorised and partially understood phrase in an utterance in a classroom drill in order to keep the action going, or laughing at a joke that you did not understand at all).

- **By purpose:** metacognitive, cognitive, affective, and social strategies. **Metacognitive strategies** are defined as strategies for planning what the learners will do, monitoring what they are doing, and evaluating what they did. **Cognitive strategies** include the language learning strategies of identifying, retention, and storage of language material,
as well as the language use strategies of retrieval, rehearsal, and comprehension or production of words, phrases, and other elements of the target language. Affective strategies serve to regulate emotions, motivation, and attitudes (e.g., strategies for reduction of anxiety and for self-encouragement). Social strategies include the actions which learners choose to take in order to interact with other learners and with native speakers (e.g., asking questions to clarify social roles and relationships or cooperating with others in order to complete tasks). Strategies are usually directed at increasing the learners’ exposure to target-language communication and to interactive practice.

Note that in reality the very same strategy (e.g., interrupting an ongoing conversation to ask for clarification) may serve all four of the above purposes for a strategy. The learner is monitoring her listening and has found that she does not understand what was just said so she decides she needs to stop the flow and check it out. This part is metacognitive. The actual act of interrupting and clarifying involves cognitive processing of language material in the target language. The act of seeking clarification by interrupting can also serve as an affective strategy if it makes the learner feel better to get that kind of closure on what is going on. Interruption for clarification can also serve as a social strategy - knowing how to do it without offending the speakers.

By skill area: listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary learning, and translation strategies. Listening strategies deal with increasing exposure to language, becoming more familiar with sounds, and for better understanding language in conversation. Reading strategies include those for building reading habits in the target language, for developing basic decoding skills in reading, and for determining what to do when encountering unknown words and structures. Speaking strategies are for practising for speaking, engaging in conversations, and when not able to think of a word or expression. Writing strategies include both basic encoding strategies, as well as those for, say, writing a particular genre of a text such as a letter or an essay, and for dealing with the revision of the text one has written. Vocabulary strategies include those for memorising new words, for reviewing and recalling vocabulary, and for making use of new vocabulary. Translation strategies refer to strategies for selectively engaging in translation to a more dominant language as a means of enhancing language learning and use, as well as strategies for avoiding the use of translation as a crutch by working directly through the target language as much as possible. (See Appendix B for examples of strategies by skill area.)
By other means of classification:

a. proficiency levels: strategies for beginning, intermediate, or advanced learners.
b. culture: strategies for learners of languages with strikingly different cultures. For example, there are strategies for determining socially appropriate ways to break into a conversation in the target language so as not to offend the interlocutors.
c. language: strategies for learning language-specific material – for example, kanji (pictographic characters) in Japanese.
d. age: strategies for language learners and users at different age levels – e.g., strategies for elementary-school full language immersion pupils vs. strategies for senior citizens who are immigrants to a new country.

There are even more ways of classifying strategies but some of these have fallen into disuse such as the “good/poor strategy” and the “direct/indirect” distinctions. It has been demonstrated that strategies are not inherently good or bad but rather may be appropriate or inappropriate for a given learner at a particular instant on a given task, given the manner in which the learner is using that strategy. In addition, where direct strategies are intended to refer to those involving direct use of language and indirect strategies refer to strategies a step away from this (such as most metacognitive or affective strategies), the reality is that the distinction can become blurred and may not be that useful.

The intersection of learning style and strategy preferences with task

As work on styles and strategies progresses, it is becoming increasingly clear that style and strategy preferences depend in part on the nature of the task at hand. A language learning or language using task is an activity which, according to Skehan (1998), may vary depending on:

1. the complexity of its content: whether it deals with concrete and immediate information vs. that which is abstract and remote;
2. the stressfulness of the communication: whether it is timed or not, whether it is spoken or written, whether it is performed alone or with others, whether it is considered important and errors in performing it “count,” and the control the speaker has over changing the goals of the task;
3. the ease at interpreting the task goal;
4. the difficulty of the linguistic code itself, and whether the learners can avoid the use of language structures being targeted in the task;
5. the familiarity of the task type and the ease of performing it – for example, whether it constitutes one-way or two-way communication, with open vs. closed, fixed-answer responses.

All of these task features then intersect with the style and strategy choices. So, a given task will be undertaken by a learner whose style preference is more visual, auditory, or hands-on; more abstract-intuiting or concrete-sequential; more global or particular, and so on. In dealing with this task, the learner will draw on a series of strategies that are presumably consistent with his/her style preferences. Consequently, no single strategy will be appropriate for all learners or for all tasks, and invariably individual learners will apply the very same strategies in different ways, both due to style preference differences as illustrated above by the strategy of looking for textual clues in an inferencing task and due to age, proficiency, and motivation to learn the language in general and to do this task in particular.

What is becoming increasingly clear is that there is an important link between the style preferences that learners have and the language learning and use strategies that they select in order to accomplish language tasks. Several M.A. studies at the University of Minnesota have demonstrated this link. One study showed a relationship between being more intuitive in cognitive style preference and being more likely to use the strategy of inferencing while reading (Gallin, 1999). In other words, the three ESL readers in this case study who were better at inferring the gist were also more intuitive in terms of their style preference. And the one reader who was clearly not intuitive was good at some details but was not so good at inferring the gist. The investigator concluded that whether or not learners prefer intuitive vs. concrete-sequential learning styles might affect the strategies they use while reading in a second language.

The other study looked for relationships between learning style preferences and listening strategy use among thirteen advanced ESL learners (Chi, 2001). The strongest relationship between style and strategies was between the style preference of synthesising (i.e., summarising material well, guessing meanings and predicting outcomes, and noticing similarities quickly) and summarising strategies ($r = .70, p < .01$), planning strategies ($r = .74$), and social strategies ($r = .78$). Learners who had a more open style preference (i.e., enjoying discovery learning, and learning without concern for deadlines or rules) also reported using more social strategies ($r = .69$). In addition, those
learners who are more auditory and tactile-kinesthetic in style preference also reported using more social strategies. In addition, more concrete-sequential learners reported using fewer resourcing strategies (e.g., looking up unknown words in a dictionary) (r = -.72).

The origins of styles - and strategies-based instruction (SSBI) and an historical sketch

The work in SSBI has its roots in a series of colloquia that were held in the 1970’s at TESOL Conventions. Among the principal players in that era were Joan Rubin, Anna Chamot, Michael O’Malley, Rebecca Oxford, Anita Wenden, David Mendelsohn, Carol Hosenfeld, and the author of this paper. These colloquia focused on the work that each of these people was doing individually and collectively to apply insights from research on language learner strategies to second and foreign language instruction. It was not until the early 1990’s, however, that the author arrived at the University of Minnesota and that this information started to be transmitted to instructors at this institution.

Before any funding was available, the author gave a series of sessions directly to language learners, under the auspices of the university counseling services. In parallel, he led several-hour workshops for language teachers. The problem with this approach was that the number of language learners who could be reached was limited, and the impact on teachers was also limited because of the limited nature of the sessions. What was needed was reaching teachers through a regular course with an established, written curriculum.

It was with this plan in mind that once the strategies work started to receive funding through the University of Minnesota’s National Language Resource Center (NLRC) at the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA). Susan Weaver was hired and set about to teach a Spring trimester seminar on SSBI. The first seminar was taught in the Spring of 1993, and then a subsequent one in the Spring of 1994. Each of the two seminars had at least fifteen participants, usually including both professors, education specialists, and teaching assistants representing some ten or more languages.

In part as a result of the findings from a research study which demonstrated the benefits of strategies-based instruction at the University of Minnesota with French and Norwegian intermediate learners (Cohen, Weaver
Preparing teachers for styles- and strategies-based instruction

& Li, 1996; Cohen, 1998, Ch. 5), plans were made to open up the seminars into international summer institutes, with Susan Weaver, Andrew Cohen, and Rebecca Oxford as instructors. These institutes started in the summer of 1996, with the sixth taking place in the summer of 2001. The institutes have drawn teachers of second and foreign language from all levels, (Kindergarten to university), many languages, and from many regions of the world. On the basis of the two seminars just for University of Minnesota language instructors and the first international summer institute, an SSBI training manual was developed (Weaver & Cohen, 1999).

The summer of 2002 (August 5-9) will mark that seventh summer that the University of Minnesota has run a 5-day (30-hour) SSBI institute. Participants in these institutes are expected to obtain or refine their knowledge of and ability to conduct SSBI with learners as part of their instructional programme. The participants also learn how to create their own materials and explore ways to incorporate these strategies materials into their language curricula. The 2002 institute will also provide tracking on the fifth day into three streams – for teachers, teacher-trainers, and researchers, in order to cater to differences in interest. Teachers want ideas for conducting SSBI in their classrooms. Teacher trainers want ideas for how to bring SSBI to their colleagues or to refine its use. Researchers want assistance for ongoing research or support in planning and conducting a new piece of research on some aspects of SSBI.

Describing styles- and strategies-based instruction

*Styles- and strategies-based instruction (SSBI)* entails a learner-focused approach to teaching which integrates strategy training with embedded strategy practice in the foreign language classroom. SSBI provides teachers with the knowledge, tools (e.g., styles and strategies inventories), and scripted classroom activities in order to enhance their students’ learning. The ultimate goal of SSBI is to help students become more effective, efficient, and responsible foreign language learners.

Participants in SSBI institutes are expected to obtain or refine their knowledge of and ability to conduct SSBI with learners as part of their instructional programme. They also learn how to create their own materials and explore ways to incorporate these strategies materials into their language curricula.
The components of the SSBI teacher manual

Strategies-based instruction: A teacher-training manual (Weaver & Cohen, 1999) contains 30+ hours of scripted lessons for use by teachers and teacher developers dealing with styles- and strategies-based instruction (see Appendix C for the Table of Contents of the manual). The manual integrates theoretical background information with practical suggestions. It is replete with material to provide a theoretical framework for styles and strategies in order to enhance their students' learning. So, for example, along with activities that describe categorisations of styles and strategies, the manual provides instruments for collecting style and strategy information from learners that can benefit both the instructors and the learners. The manual has activities that are primarily for awareness-raising, others primarily for training for learners in SSBI, and others focusing on practice. The latter part of the manual concentrates on activities aimed at getting participants self-sufficient with regard to developing their own SSBI activities in their language classrooms. The ultimate goal is to encourage students to take an active role as partners in the learning process.

Now let us look at sample awareness raising, training, and practice activities:

- A sample awareness-raising activity, involving vocabulary learning strategies: Learners receive 10 difficult words to learn in 4-5 minutes (in English or other language). Then the teacher reads aloud a vocabulary test – with half of the items calling upon participants to define the word and half to produce the word from a synonym. Finally, learners share their vocabulary learning strategies with their peers.

- A sample strategy training activity, involving strategies for learning grammar: In this activity, the teacher reads aloud a short passage and learners listen with their eyes closed and visualise images in their minds. The focus is on “used to” and the passage is about what they, the learners, did at age 10 at grandfather’s farm in the summer. After the eyes-closed exercise, the students turn to their partner and share their experience of focusing on the story and on grammar.

- A sample strategy practice activity, involving the use of speaking strategies in a role play calling for the speech act of complaining: This activity starts with a jigsaw exercise with three groups, discussing strategies for preparing for speaking, performing a role play speaking task, and evaluating a speaking task respectively. Then, students within