

## **Volunteer ESOL teaching: Local pedagogy or teaching without a theory?**

Martin J. Nickson  
University of Hull

### **Abstract**

In the UK, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is a domain of language learning and teaching where teaching strategy in mainstream, accredited provision is influenced not only by pedagogical and language learning theory but also by policy directives concerning citizenship, integration and employability. However, outside this mainstream provision, community and voluntary providers support informal and non-accredited ESOL classes which are not subject to external mandates of policy. This research is a case study of the volunteer teachers who practice in a community ESOL provider and an investigation of what influences their teaching strategy. The results show that in this context, not only is the influence of policy reduced in shaping their teaching strategy, but also mainstream pedagogical and language learning theory is de-emphasized in favor of immediate and individual teaching approaches. The implications of this for the learners are discussed, and a case for further research is presented.

### **1. Introduction**

In the most immediate sense, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is simply a description of one of the conditions under which language learning occurs. However, in the UK, ESOL is a domain of activity not only concerned with language learning and teaching, but is also heavily laden with Government policy on citizenship, integration, and employability. Through policy, ESOL learners are defined as a specific demographic (of migrants) who can be identified socio-politically and economically, legally and linguistically. As a result, from simply being a condition under which language learning occurs, ESOL in the UK has become a complex teaching situation wherein a confluence of language and social policy permeates all activities, including classroom practice. Inherent to this complexity are a series of negotiations between agendas which shape teaching strategy. For example, teachers may disagree, for pedagogical, ideological or practical reasons with externally mandated

agendas, which Little has called a lack of “consilience” between teaching and policy aims (Little, 1995). If there is not “consilience”, Ricento and Hornberger suggest that teachers have a moral duty to resist those policies which conflict with their own ethical beliefs and values (Ricento and Hornberger, 1996).

This research sought to investigate what pedagogies might emerge in circumstances where the problem of ‘consilience’ may be alleviated and where teachers are relatively free to develop their own teaching strategy. The opportunity to address this question arises from current UK policy itself. This is because running parallel with formal and accredited ESOL, UK Government policy on ESOL supports voluntary and community-based ESOL provision as remaining central to its plans for English language learning (Ifl, 2011, Dbis, 2010). Much of this provision is unaccredited and informal. The lack of accreditation means there may be no requirement on teachers working in such provision to include citizenship or integrative materials or indeed adhere to a curriculum.

This research is an intrinsic case study of the influences on teaching of five volunteer ESOL teachers in one such informal, non-accredited community setting. The project sought to investigate what contextual, theoretical or personal factors influenced the teachers’ practice in the setting. Through semi-structured interviews the teachers were asked to talk about their teaching, with a focus on the following four questions:

1. What are the principal needs of the learners?
2. What teaching strategies do the teachers employ to address those needs?
3. What were the theoretical bases of the teachers’ pedagogy?
4. How does the institutional or national policy environment affect teaching?

## **2. Literature review**

Literature about the influences on language teachers' professional practice suggests that a complex interaction between theory, context and experience shape a teacher's practice. For example, Freeman and Freeman (2001) describe seven items which shape language teaching.

These are

- how the teachers were taught languages themselves,
- how the teachers were trained to teach,
- the influence of colleagues,
- the degree of exposure to new ideas,
- the resources available,
- the type of students
- Teacher's personal views of learning and learners.

Freeman and Freeman conclude that a pivotal process in resolving these influences is interaction between theory and reflection, stating that "theory informs practice and reflection on practice can shape a teacher's working theory" (Freeman and Freeman, 2001 p30). Thus teachers may develop an individual working theory in any particular context and engage in a cycle of reflection as they practice. But the nature of teacher training in the UK means that context, experience, reflection and working theory all generally follow academic theory, at least chronologically, as influences in shaping teaching strategy. Language learning in particular is intensively theorized and researched (Hinkel, 2005) with courses designed to train teachers largely based on an 'application-of-theory' model, and even when one particular model is disputed and alternative approaches to training are proposed, those alternatives are also based on a theoretical approach to pedagogy, informed by research (Korthagen and Kessels, 1999).

In contemporary language teaching the dominant paradigm, derived from theory as described above, is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT is an approach where the expression and interpretation of meaning is prioritized above studying formal rules of grammar and syntax, with the principal aim being to develop the communicative competence of learner. CLT approaches are not a prescribed method of teaching: the aim is always on communicative competence, considered in context of the learner's needs (Savignon and Wang, 2003). CLT approaches emphasize learner autonomy (Oxford, 2003), authenticity (Roberts and Cooke, 2009) and draw on a socially mediated understanding of second language acquisition (Savignon, 1987) that provided the basis for the contemporary view that the four principal characteristics of a good language class are context, communication, autonomy and learner-centeredness. Within the framework of Communicative Language Teaching there are various approaches to curricula design including task based learning, process oriented and discovery curricula (Savignon, 2005). Discourse based approaches, also drawing on the communicative approach, may provide the framework for content-based, experiential and negotiated curricula (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2005). Other CLT derived approaches are dialogic approaches to ESOL which underpin frameworks such as Reflect ESOL (see Reflect, 2009) and Dogme (Thornbury, 2009).

In addition to the fact that teachers may have been introduced to these frameworks through training, the internet provides unrestricted access to lesson plans, teaching materials and resources which draw on them, which further increases the range of potential influences on teaching. This proliferation of potential influences and available resources has coincided with more frameworks that teachers can draw on, such as the relatively new 'eclectic' approach to teaching English where teacher's planning is guided by the aims of a particular lesson, and teaching strategy draws on methods or strategies from a number of (previously discrete and

distinct) approaches. However, even if effective ESOL teachers are ‘bricoleur’ (Baynham et al., 2007) as a result, the literature suggests that the new eclecticism is not (and should not be) unbridled. Instead, Kumaravadivelu suggests a “principled pragmatism” should be guide the formulation of teaching strategy (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). The question of principle includes a consideration of the epistemological underpinnings of any given theoretical approach but also focuses attention on Crookes’ observation that “Languages and language teaching are political, and language teachers are political actors (or instruments) whether they like it or not” (Crookes, 1997). Thus, the immediate context of teaching, shaped by a specific policy environment and the teacher’s reaction to that environment, are necessarily influences on the teacher’s practice.

Finally in review of possible influences, Lightbown acknowledges that theory and research influence practice but suggests that teachers draw principally on their own experience to inform their practice (Lightbown, 2000). Experience may be shared, but primarily, utilizing experience as an influence on teaching suggests reflection as an influence on professional practice. Schon is a prominent advocate for reflection, documenting reflection in action and reflection on action in a number of fields and advocating that processes of reflection should be privileged in professional development (Schon, 1983), however other researchers have questioned whether reflection is adequately understood or practised, especially by inexperienced teachers (Bengtsson, 1995, McGarr and Moody, 2010, Marcos and Tillema, 2006). Reflection and experience alone may therefore not be ‘enough’ in developing effective teaching (Day, 1993).

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1. Methods: Overview**

Interviews with teachers were considered the most appropriate research tool to investigate the themes of this study because this investigation was specifically about teachers' perceptions and opinions, and a semi-structured interview was considered a pragmatic way of maintaining focus, while still allowing individual, rich information to emerge (Drever, 1995). An initial interview schedule was devised consisting of questions grouped around each theme. This schedule was reviewed with a supervisor, amended and piloted with an ESOL teacher who works in a different setting, then amended again in light of the pilot. The final schedule consisted of questions which each teacher was asked, maintaining the focus on the three themes of learner needs, teaching strategy and institutional and social agendas.

There were five interviews, one with each teacher, lasting between thirty five and forty five minutes. Each interview was conducted in a quiet room in the setting with no other distractions. All interviews were digitally recorded.

### **3.2 Methods: Analysis**

Once all interviews were completed, each one was listened to without note-taking three times. Notes were then taken of emerging themes in each teacher's responses. On completion of this note-taking process, it became apparent that there was a pattern of teacher responses and a consistency of themes began to emerge. A pragmatic decision was made to approach analysis of teacher's responses thematically, given this emergence, and in view of space allowed for the project. Interpretive analysis involving partial transcription (Drever, 1995 p.63) based around clustering of responses was chosen as the most succinct possibility for the overview presentation of results (Cohen et al., 2007 p368). Each teacher's identity was made anonymous and are referred to as A, B, C, D and E. The partial transcript has been coded numerically and where reference has been made to a specific statement made by the teachers, that reference is identified by teacher identifier – A, B, C, D or E – followed by a numerical

tag. For example the fourth statement made by teacher A is referenced as A1.4 and can be found in the appendix.

### **3.3 Methods: Validity and Reliability**

As this research is an intrinsic case study, reliability and validity are primarily internal. Content validity is supported because all the teachers in the setting were involved in the research (Cohen et al., 2007 p137) and face validity was addressed by the piloting process. However, as this is interpretive research, the principle concerns here are congruency and cogency (Eisenhardt, 1989, Corbin and Strauss, 1990). In respect of this, the research methods are congruent with a qualitative, interpretive approach to research, and while the case for cogency is primarily a matter of judgment, it is proposed that the position that this is an interpretation, not *the* interpretation is been maintained throughout, and that there is thus a consistent internal logic to this study.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Results: Overview**

This research project sought a descriptive analysis of individual teacher's attitudes to their practice within a context that appears to allow a relatively free exercise of agency. It was originally conceived as a series of five case studies, with each teacher's position considered individually. Interview questions asked teachers to talk about their beliefs in three areas – learner needs, theoretical underpinnings of practice, and the influence of institutions on their work – and their actions in one area, namely their teaching strategy. However, when analysing the interviews, a number of themes began to emerge indicating that there were sufficient commonalities in teacher's attitudes and approaches to their work that a thematic approach to this section is both warranted and, pragmatically, more succinct. In respect of this, this section discusses the teacher's beliefs about learners' needs, their relationship to

theory and possible institutional influences in the classroom before describing how teacher's strategies emerge from these suggested influences.

#### **4.2 Results: Teachers' beliefs about learners.**

##### **4.2.1 Teachers' beliefs about learners: Functional Language Needs**

In terms of educational background, linguistic competence, age and gender teacher's descriptions of learners echoed the statistically derived portrait of recent overseas immigrants to Hull as heterogeneous. Some learners had no previous formal education, either in their mother tongue or English, while others were gap year students [A1.2,A1.9,B1.11, B1.13, C1.8, C1.13, D1.4, E1.3]

This heterogeneity was summarized by A:

“... My understanding was that they would be fairly advanced in their knowledge of English, and some indeed have been. Others have been scarcely more than beginners” [A1.2].

Some teachers identified specific cultural groups as associated with particular structural English language learning needs [B1.12, C1.8]. Academic needs of syntax, grammar, vocabulary however were broadly de-emphasized with the majority view that the first priority was communication, primarily to do with functional verbal skills [A1.4, B1.12, C1.8, D1.5, E1.9].

##### **4.2.2 Teachers' beliefs about learners: Confidence**

While teachers believed there was little heterogeneity in the functional learning needs of learners, there was more convergence in their beliefs about the affective needs of learners, particularly the belief that for many learners self-confidence was low [A1.4, B1.12, D1.11].

B's view was that an apparent inability to speak English was sometimes a problem of confidence instead

“It's [confidence] the main one. It's the confidence. I think because of the fact, of what's happened to them before they've got here, particularly if they've been held somewhere, their self esteem is rock bottom. Some of them are quite traumatized, particularly these young women are, you know....” [B1.12].

#### **4.2.3. Teachers' beliefs about learners: Women**

B described how she believed that [particularly] the young women had been traumatized, by life experience before arrival in the UK. She also gave an example where she had accompanied women to sexual health clinics, or rung up for contraceptive advice at the request of the women [B1.3, B1.12]. D characterized the classes as an expression of “independence” for women, and repeated B's belief that many learners – particularly women - had never been to school at all [D1.5, D1.6]. E noted how women might attend initially with male partners, but that the males then leave without visiting again [E1.3]. C noted that most of the women attending classes don't work [C1.13], while A noted an incident where a young woman had been confronted with a cultural dilemma specifically gender related [A1.6]. A theme emerged that all teachers' believed the classes were a site of special significance for women, and the principle significance was possibly not language learning, but that the classes possibly performed a social function, or were an expression of independence for the women.

#### **4.2.4. Teachers beliefs about learners: Cultural, social and economic positioning of the learners**

Teachers drew a vivid picture that some of the learners they inter-acted with were marginalized, traumatized and excluded, economically and socially [A1.9, B1.7, B1.11, B1.12, D1.3]. Teachers' perceptions of how learners positioned themselves in respect of this

marginalization varied. D's view was that learners want to 'fit in to a community' [D1.3] whereas C took the view that many people did not want to integrate [C1.11].

#### **4.2.5. Summary of teacher's beliefs about learners**

Although a language class, teachers' beliefs about learners needs were not based solely, or even primarily on academic language learning, but was that there were identifiable social needs that the classes addressed [B1.5, C1.11, D1.11, D1.5]. Some opinions were that these social needs were more significant than the language needs [B1.7]

#### **4.3 Teachers and Theory**

None of the teachers explicitly referred to theory in interview, indeed B's suggestion "There isn't a text book, is there, that tells you how to deal with that?" [B1.20] is indicative of ambivalence toward theory. C described how she had tried to employ role play techniques that had been recommended by her ESOL course and had rejected them, based on the reactions of her learners [C1.7]. A, despite twenty years experience, and having himself been taught three languages said:

"As far as week by week activities go, they come out of my head. I was told really early when I was teaching that you need access to other resources; you can't do it all out of your head. Well I'm still doing it" [A1.10].

D was aware of AECC but rejected it [D1.14], with E preferring the resources developed with the teacher's group

R: "What about the national curriculum?"

D: "I also think between us, the resources we use are actually better" [E1.6].

#### **4.3.1. Teachers and Theory Summary**

In summary, teachers' beliefs about theory were that they reject the application of theory model, and were also not explicit in expressing support for possible alternative theoretical frameworks.

#### **4.4. Teachers and Social and Institutional Agendas**

Institutional influences are implicit or explicit agendas that position teachers or learners, such as curriculum, policies imposed by the provider and national and local social policy. Institutional agendas were posited as further potential influences on the teacher's practice, based on the researcher's own experience and understandings of literature.

The most immediate potential agenda is that of the provider, and here the unanimous opinion was that the provider had very little influence, verging on lack of interest, in classroom practice [B1.16, C1.12, D1.12]. While this strengthens the teachers' position to practice freely, there may be a sub-text here of disenchantment with the provider evident in E's response to the question about the provider which was "You're joking...no. Nothing.....there seems to be no interest" [E1.11].

The second significant agenda considered was that represented by social policy and what the teacher's position might be in reaction against, or support for the political ideology underpinning national policy on immigration and language learning. Here the teacher's position was complex. Teachers were aware, as described, of issues of marginalization and for D, a significant motivation behind her practice was anti-racism [D1.13]. But there was no evidence in any interview that the teachers were politicized, or saw their work either in the context of a grand narrative of ideology or even that national policy agendas of social cohesion were relevant to their classes: the teacher's focus remained local and contextual. A described an encounter between two learners of apparently different cultures as an example of an integrative process at work in his class, but the emphasis was on the individuals

involved [A1.9]. C rejected the construct of social cohesion as irrelevant to her learners [C1.11]. E saw cohesion as a matter of integration into the community through individual social and personal processes that would be dependent on relationships [E1.8]. B while stating that ESOL had always been a “poor man” nationally was clear “I don’t have any cause and I wouldn’t try to influence anyone” [B1.21].

#### **4.5. Teaching strategy**

The understandings of teaching strategy that were sought in this study were not descriptions of specific techniques or methods, although descriptions of these were informative, but were principally focused on gaining an understanding of the aims of each teacher’s classroom approach. A degree of coherence emerged through analysis, so that the teachers aims could be convergently categorized under two headings: communication and autonomy.

##### **4.5.1. Teaching strategy: Communication.**

Most teachers described functional communication, primarily developing verbal skills as a principal language aim of their classes [A1.4, B1.12, D1.5, E1.9]. For one teacher, the learners’ lack of confidence was the most significant barrier towards this aim.

B: “Language. If they’re Eastern European, they’re grammar and their writing is fantastic. Its spoken English. Across the board its spoken English. It’s like pulling teeth getting them to speak in class”

R: “How big an issue do you think confidence is, in this?”

B: “It’s the main one” [B1.12]

##### **4.5.2. Teaching strategy: Autonomy**

Another strategic aim that could be identified was that the teachers sought to develop autonomy in learners, albeit with a different range of approaches. A described his belief that “You know, in the end, they’ve got to learn for themselves” [A1.7]. C described how she

advised learners to use strategy in the form of notes round their houses identifying objects [C1.6]. D advised learners to use active listening on buses and in their daily lives [D1.10], while E sat inexperienced learners with more experienced ones, an approach which could help learners see themselves as not wholly dependent on their teacher [E1.10].

#### **4.6. Reflection**

In practice, the teachers substantially base their practice on learners needs as described, but further to that reflection- in-action and reflection-on- action are intrinsic to the work of teachers interviewed. For example, C reflected on action, used her own language learning experience to inform her work [C1.2], while D reflected in action, diverging from his prepared lesson plan to follow a naturalistic conversation, led by the learners [E1.9]. D talked about the “hands and on” nature of her approach [D1.9], and A constantly evaluated classroom incidents, noticing when things do and do not work [A1.7]. B talked reflectively about the need for flexibility in approach in a constantly changing context [B1.15, B1.20].

#### **5. Discussion**

This research suggests that to an extent, within the context, a similar set of beliefs about learners, relationship with external agendas and aims of teaching strategy emerged through interview: the teachers viewed the lessons not as just language classes, but also as sites of social focus, and the teaching strategies they use reflect this because the primary aim of those strategies is not to improve academic language skills but to encourage the learners to communicate. This does not mean that anomalies did not exist: given the complexity of data gathered, and the heterogeneity of age, experience and gender of the teachers, it would be surprising if there was complete uniformity.

However, this similarity within does not suggest that the beliefs and attitudes cohered to established or recognizable theoretical approaches to pedagogy which may form the basis of

practice elsewhere. Indeed, while there were some teaching approaches described that were consistent with Communicative Language Teaching (for example the encouragement of forms of autonomy, an emphasis on communication and some willingness to depart from prepared lesson planning), the teachers explicitly rejected the application of theory model and therefore the idea that theory, other than a locally derived or personal theory, was an influence on their teaching.

The emphasis on locally or personally derived theory also extended to the teachers' attitudes and beliefs about the social and policy context of their practice. Although the teachers recognized issues of marginalization, racism and gender as issues they were aware of, they either rejected the grand narratives of state level social policy (as irrelevant) or claimed to have no particular focus in their lessons as ways of addressing these contextual issues. Thus the teachers appeared to be aware of the contexts of their teaching but not influenced by those contexts in any focused way.

What appears to remain is that the teachers appear to rely on their experience which may, to some extent, be characterized as a reflective approach to teaching, albeit a reactive, individualistic reflection. There are two concerns if teachers do practice only reactively. The first of which is that teachers risk repeating the mistakes of the past. For example, in language learning, a number of approaches have arisen, which have later been found to be ineffective, or based on ideas that are inconsistent with what is known about language learning (Varvel, 1979, Richards and Rodgers, 2001). As some teachers draw on the internet (an indiscriminate data base) for resources the possibility arises that practice might be shaped by approaches which are out-dated or ineffective. The second concern is that some learners are, as the teachers have identified, vulnerable and marginalized, and research has drawn attention to the need to consider the effects of marginalization on learners in educational practice, because ill-

informed action 'on' marginalized people can have harmful effects, no matter the good intent (Thompson and Spacapan, 1991, Rose and Shevlin, 2004).

## **6. Conclusions**

It is not clear, based on the available evidence from these interviews, why this research appears to contradict some models of what influences teaching strategy, or why, given the ready availability of theoretical frameworks, teachers in this context appear to believe that theory and/or political context are irrelevant to their practice. However, some indication of why this collective solipsism has apparently arisen may be derived from their responses when questioned about the ESOL provider for whom they volunteer. As reported, their responses indicated that the provider was not interested in what happened in the classroom. It appears that in this context, institutional support for the teachers may be minimal. If this is the case, then the teachers may be isolated, effectively removed from a wider ESOL community of practice, and therefore their exposure to new ideas may be limited.

A limitation of this report is that its conclusions rest solely on one research tool, the semi-structured interview. Thus there is no triangulation of the results which may affect the reliability of the results. To address this issue, observations of practice to assess whether the teacher's expressed opinions were congruent with their actions would represent an improvement in the design.

A further limitation arises from the context of the study, and provides the final conclusion, and recommendation for further study, of this investigation. It will be noted that the literature review did not include reference to previous studies of informal and community ESOL teaching. This is because, although major reviews of ESOL have been undertaken in the UK, little research into informal and community ESOL has been conducted. However, as previously noted, Government policy directly supports this provision, through funding and

ideologically, as intrinsic to its language and social policy goals despite this lack of research. Further research in this area may provide some understanding of community and voluntary non-accredited ESOL, what learning and teaching actually occurs within classes, and therefore how and why, it is best supported.

## **References**

- Baynham, M., Roberts, C., Cooke, M., Simpson, J., Ananiadou, K., Callaghan, J., Mcgoldrick, J. & Wallace, C. 2007. Effective teaching and Learning ESOL. London: National Research and Development Centre for adult Literacy and numeracy.
- Bengtsson, J. 1995. What is Reflection? On reflection in the teaching profession and teacher education. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 1, 23 - 32.
- Celce-Murcia, M. & Olshtain, E. 2005. Discourse based Approaches: A New Framework for Second Language Teaching and Learning. In: HINKEL, E. (ed.) *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning*. New York Routledge.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. 2007. *Research Methods in Education*, New York, Routledge.
- Corbin, J. M. & Strauss, A. 1990. Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 13, 3-21.
- Crookes, G. 1997. What Influences What and How Second and Foreign Language Teachers Teach? *The Modern Language Journal*, 81, 67-79.
- Day, C. 1993. Reflection: A Necessary but Not Sufficient Condition for Professional Development. *British Educational Research Journal*, 19, 83-93.
- Dbis 2010. Further Education-New Horizon. Investing in Skills for Sustainable growth. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.
- Drever, E. 1995. *Using semi-structured interviews in Small-Scale Research* Glasgow, University of Glasgow.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. 1989. Building Theories from Case Study Research. *The Academy of Management Review*, 14, 532-550.
- Freeman, D. E. & Freeman, Y. S. 2001. *Between Worlds: Access to Second Language Acquisition*, Portsmouth, NH., Heinemann.
- Hinkel, E. 2005. Introduction: Part V: Methods and Curricula in Second Language Teaching. In: HINKEL, E. (ed.) *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning*. New Jersey: Routledge.
- Ifl 2011. BIS: Equality Impact Assessment, English for Speakers of Other Languages. London: University of London.
- Korthagen, F. a. J. & Kessels, J. P. a. M. 1999. Linking Theory and Practice: Changing the Pedagogy of Teacher Education. *Educational Researcher*, 28, 4-17.
- Kumaravadelu, B. 1994. The Postmethod Condition: (E)merging Strategies for Second/Foreign Language Teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28, 27-48.
- Lightbown, P. M. 2000. Classroom SLA Research and Second Language Teaching. *Applied Linguistics*, 21, 431-462.
- Little, D. 1995. Learning as dialogue: The dependence of learner autonomy on teacher autonomy. *System*, 23, 175-181.

- Marcos, J. J. M. & Tillema, H. 2006. Studying studies on teacher reflection and action: An appraisal of research contributions. *Educational Research Review*, 1, 112-132.
- McGarr, O. & Moody, J. 2010. Scaffolding or stifling? The influence of journal requirements on students' engagement in reflective practice. *Reflective Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, 11, 579 - 591.
- Oxford, R. L. 2003. Toward a more systematic model of learner autonomy. In: PALFREYMAN, D. & SMITH, R. C. (eds.) *Learner autonomy across cultures: Language education perspectives*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Reflect. 2009. *Reflect ESOL* [Online]. London: Reflect ESOL Available: <http://www.reflect-action.org/reflectesol> [Accessed January 12 2013].
- Ricento, T. K. & Hornberger, N. H. 1996. Unpeeling the Onion: Language Planning and Policy and the ELT Professional. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30, 401-427.
- Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. S. 2001. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Roberts, C. & Cooke, M. 2009. Authenticity in the Adult ESOL Classroom and Beyond. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43, 620-642.
- Rose, R. & Shevlin, M. 2004. Encouraging voices: listening to young people who have been marginalised. *Support for Learning*, 19, 155-161.
- Savignon, S. J. 1987. Communicative Language Teaching. *Theory into Practice*, 26, 235-242.
- Savignon, S. J. 2005. Communicative Language Teaching: Strategies and Goals. In: HINKEL, E. (ed.) *The Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning*. New Jersey: Erlbaum.
- Savignon, S. J. & Wang, W. 2003. Communicative language teaching in EFL contexts: Learner attitudes and perceptions. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 41, 223-249.
- Schon, D. A. 1983. *the Reflective Practitioner: how professionals think in action*, Farnham, Ashgate.
- Thompson, S. C. & Spacapan, S. 1991. Perceptions of Control in Vulnerable Populations. *Journal of Social Issues*, 47, 1-21.
- Thornbury, D. 2009. *Dogme: nothing if not critical* [Online]. London: BBC. Available: <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/dogme-nothing-if-not-critical> [Accessed January 12 2013].
- Varvel, T. 1979. The Silent Way: Panacea or Pipedream? *TESOL Quarterly*, 13, 483-494.

**Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Schedule:**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS.**

Age

Gender

Ethnic background:

Do you speak more than one language?

Can you describe your role in the class, for example teacher, teaching assistant?

How long have you worked as a voluntary teacher?

Can you describe the type of learners who attend your classes?

What functional skills – reading, writing, listening, learning – cause learners the most difficulties?

What part of language – grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation – cause the learners the most difficulties?

How is curriculum developed in your class?

What do you think learners expect to gain from your class?

Why, in your opinion, do learners want to learn English?

What do you want learners to gain from your classes?

Is your teaching guided by a specific theoretical approach to language learning?

You may be aware that ESOL in the UK is the subject of Our Shared Future/New Approach/New Horizons policy initiatives. How much do you know about those initiatives and could you comment on whether it impacts on your classes or teaching?

## **Appendix B: Partial Transcripts of Interviews.**

Teacher A.

### A1.1: Background

Speaks French, Welsh, Latin. 13 months voluntary teacher in the setting . 5 yrs comprehensive school teaching. Ten years part time teaching at secondary and above.

### A1.2: Beliefs about learners

A: "Some seem to be asylum seekers with various sorts of immigration statuses. I've had frankly gap year students. I've had long term residents in this country who have come here because they have married somebody from here. I've had people who have just been passing through, and I've had people, you know, whose reason for being here is completely unclear.....[Laughs].....and sometimes that hasn't been by all means their only problem, but there you are...."

Researcher: "So as a starting point it's a very heterogenous....."

A: Very

Researcher: .....set of people?

A: Very, very mixed indeed

A: I think all of them have some previous knowledge of English. My understanding was that they would be fairly advanced in their knowledge of English, and some indeed have been. Others have been scarcely more than beginners".

### A1.3: Nature of Lessons

A: I cannot offer a coherent course. Every lesson is free standing.

### A1.4: Language needs and confidence.

Researcher : Is there a way of generalizing what language skills the learners want to learn?

A: The skill of understanding what is said to them. Its difficult to get into the flow of a conversation. They're frightened of getting into a conversation that they then get lost. Its not a matter of being unsure of what to say in order to initiate a conversation, it's a matter of being afraid of what will then be said to you. And I find that I do insist that every word that's spoken during the course of a lesson is English and I no ruthlessly split up people of the same language.

### A1.5: Teaching strategy.

Do you have a specific theoretical or philosophical approach to teaching in this informal setting?

A: This may sound more practical than philosophical but I do try to ensure everyone is included. If you have a very wide range of ability in the class [talks about specific learners]..... you've got to be sure that you give everybody equal esteem in that kind of way and make them all feel included.

A1.6: Reflection on teaching strategy: context:

A: [While describing an exercise where learners question each other]. Well I asked an Italian boy to ask a question of , er, an Iraqi, veiled girl. He was about 19. I say girl, she was about 21. And she was somebody who was very good on paper, and she was alright when she was talking to me. But she suddenly went as if she'd never heard a word of English in her life. She could't understand what [...] was saying to her, she got all embarrassed and started giggling, so we never got as far as person 3 and I thought 'ah', you know, 'I have just sort of set a cultural problem that she cannot cope with because I'm asking her to interact with a man who she's never been formally introduce to , who she's not married to, who as far as she knows doesn't know her father or her brothers and he could be anybody', even though its this perfectly safe room in Hull with me to keep order in it. There's a big taboo there"

A1.7: On learners having to learn for themselves: reflection: teaching strategy

Researcher: How do people react to your teaching strategy?

A; That is something else you've got to be aware of when you're teaching in contexts like these. At school, the aim is to get as much right as possible. And so the aim is that if the lesson consists of an exercise that everybody is doing for him or herself, then the aim is to get 10 out of 10. And you use all kinds of means to do that . If you need a bit of help you might look at a dictionary, or as people now have, sort of you know, sort of cyber dictionaries, settings on their mobile phones which seem to give them the answer to everything. But in the end with this, the aim isn't for everybody to get ten out of ten because they aren't all people that are starting from the same point and they're not in a sense comparable like a setted group in a school with the sort of top set where they can do the calculus or something and the bottom set, well they're still doing one and one makes three. THE aim is that everybody should learn something from the lesson, right, so you know, you have to wean them off asking their neighbours for help so they get it right, and wean them on to asking you - you know the teacher – if they dont understand something, and letting you sort of draw the right answer out of them if possible, or in the end you've got to tell them. But you know, in the end they've got to learn for themselves. They haven't got to, sort of get it right by getting help from their friends, because in the end that doesn't help them to learn the language. All that helps them to do is learn the right answer to a particular question. When they may not know why it is the right answer. So does that make sense?

A1.7: Assessment: Reflection in action

R: Given that we have no curriculum, no accreditation, how do you assess?

A: [Describes classroom incident based on teaching of the word trust. He could not convey the meaning of the word "trust". So he got out his wallet and described leaving it on the table while he left the classroom. When he returned his wallet was intact]. They got it! You can tell

really partly by the expression on the face. Also by if they then use the word in a particular way.

A1.8: Autonomy: teaching strategy aims: context

S; {Been talking about informal nature of the classes and what can and cannot be achieved} Given the circumstances, its inevitable, erm. I think it has to be made clear to them [learners] they cannot rely on learning any language on two continuous hours one day a week. Er. They have to try to read as much English, to listen to as much English, and if possible to speak as much English as they can outside the lesson, and they must not worry when they're doing that whether they're getting it right or not. They must just plough on because they will always, I try to say to them, absorb more English than they realize. They are surrounded by it all the time. The trouble is that a lot of them watch television that isn't English television, or they listen to radio that isn't English. And that's perfectly understandable – if they can pick up Radio Kurdistan, they want to find out what's happening in Turkey. But I try to say to them, you know, do try to listen to and expose yourself to as much English as possible. Now I know perfectly well that particularly the Muslim women get very little chance to do this. And they will go home and they may not hear another word of English until next Wednesday. And I think, you know, if you're talking about aims other than getting people to speak other than the Queen's English, one of the hidden aims here is to get people out of – well for want of a better word, its not a very nice word – but to get them out of whatever ghetto they're living in. And make them feel confident about interacting with people they don't actually know. But of course there are huge cultural problems about that in some cases.

A1.9: Teaching strategy: Social cohesion: theoretical approach; context:

A: I don't tend to think in grand terms, I think about how we are helping somebody who is otherwise quite isolated to do. And some of the people are here because they're quite happy to be here. I had a gay Mexican boy for a few months who was just a gap year student [Describes the boy's personal circumstances]. We had a tea break on his last day, and when we went back in there [the class]. I saw him sitting swinging his legs on the table next to a veiled Iraqi girl and she was writing the word [boy's name] for him as a sort of memento in Arabic script. And I thought 'If I've never broken down any other cultural barrier, I've broken down about five there, and I'd done nothing to bring it about' [Talks about the boy leaving and saying farewell being quite emotional]. I do get a huge kick out of the fact that in there [class] there are nationalities who if they were at home would actually be at each other's throats. [Gives another example of animosity between Greek and Turkish people in their home countries, but says that two learners of these nationalities work happily together in his class]. If we can do that in an upstairs room in Hull on a Wednesday afternoon, we're doing something.

A1.10: Theoretical approach.

A: [Describes a couple of text books he refers to for guidance]. As far as week by week activities go, they come out of my head. I was told really early when I was teaching that you need access to other resources, you cant do it all out of your head. Well I'm still doing it.

Teacher B.

B1.1: Background

Female, White British, 20 years ESOL teacher. 3 years in the setting.

B1.2: Position: context: learner needs

R: Can you describe your role in class?

B: Part teacher, part social worker, part.... erm.....confidante. But that's an age thing. That's because of my age in relation to the learners who are usually 20 yrs younger than I am. So that's where that final third comes in...

R: Can you expand on this?

B: I think its because their lives here are so disruptive, chaotic uncertain and so in me they see someone who would be a senior elderly person in their culture.....People do lean towards someone who is older.

R: Do you like that?

B: I do because I like interfering in people's lives. I like knowing what's going on, I'm just basically nosy.

B1.3: Women: Learner needs: context

R: So you would'nt brush aside people's personal problems?

B: Well no, I've sat with students from here in , erm, the sexual health clinic down at ..... I've sat with them , I've rung up for contraceptive advice for ladies who didn't want their husbands to know. .... [Explains process].....and they could do this . It was just basic health. Because they would'nt be able to ask for help within their community. For that type of help. They would'nt ask a peer, they would'nt ask a tutor in their twenties.....

B1.4: Context: curriculum

R: Do you think this would happen if this was a formalized class??

E: No. No chance. I taught in L and it was national curriculum. It was "Yes miss, no Miss". There was no relationship at all other than teacher pupil, whereas here you're like, you know your grandma, your uncle.....

B1.5: Context: teaching strategy.

R: It seems from what you've said there's another dimension to your work with immigrants groups, a social dimension?

E: Oh yes, social, yes. I like that better than anything else. ....The teaching's secondary to me, I don't give a stuff about the teaching. I'd far rather teach somebody to teach because then you're bringing everybody on. ....[Clarifies that what she means is she prefers helping new teachers to develop.]

B1.6: Learning: theoretical approach

E: Unless its enjoyable, unless its social, unless they can learn to trust you.....just teaching them, its just.....its just a small part of it. Is a very small part, I think is the teaching.

B1.7: Learner needs: context:

R: Why do they [learners] come to these lessons?

B: I think the majority of it is social because they're not allowed to work, they don't have relatives here. If they're in accommodation it's usually complete rubbish. In the winter they're sitting in the cold. A lot of the reasons they come here is because it's light, it's nice, we're welcoming, we can make them coffee and they're warm. So that's one bit of it. They come here because it's a nice place to be. Another part is they come here because they feel safe. We're not going to ask any questions, nobody says where's your passport, where's your utility bill? They come here in the beginning because people say to them 'You must learn English because if you want to stay here you have to learn English'. So they come here originally because they're told to by the authorities. And when they get here they think "This is great. I can have some bourbon biscuits, I can make myself a coffee, erm I can chat the odd girl up". .....They see this as a safe place to learn. I think learning is secondary to them, unless they're really focused.

B1.8: Theoretical approach: attitude to formal curriculum

E: What people don't realize is settings like this, people learn by osmosis. Things might be going on, A\_ might come up but they're learning all the time, they're picking stuff up and it's just simple things.....[Gives example of culturally appropriate behavior in England.] ...in a formal setting they would'nt learn anything like that, they'd just be taught, you know, tenses and grammar, and that sort of thing.

B1.9: Women: relationship to national agenda

R: Asks whether B knows if learners progress to accredited programmes 'Skills for Life' etc.

B: No, not really. I don't know whether the majority are women or not, but the majority [of women] just have a baby. [Talks about how lack of crèche facilities mean that once women have baby they do not return to lessons.].

B1.10: Social policy

B; English lessons are bottom of the heap. They're not high profile. It's not going to make headlines in the Daily Mail, is it?

R: So ESOL is still de-prioritised?

B: Oh, it's the real poor man of all these, erm, schemes, always has been.

R: Just locally, or nationally?

B: Nationally. I think nationally.

B1.11: Context: learner's position:

B: But you see, by the very nature of the people that come to the lessons it's chaotic because they can't commit because they don't know when they've got to see a solicitor, an immigration officer, a job centre, do you know what I mean. This is always, always the

problem with ESOL. And people have said ‘Well they don’t – the students – don’t value it because they don’t pay’.

B1.12: Learner needs: confidence:

R: Can you talk about the functional skills, the language skills that cause the most difficulties?

B: Language. If they’re eastern European, their grammar and their writing is fantastic. Its spoken English. Across the board its spoken English. Its like pulling teeth getting them to speak in class.

R; How big an issue do you think confidence is, in this?

B; It’s the main one. It’s the confidence. I think because of the fact, of what’s happened to them before they’ve got here, particularly if they’ve been held somewhere, their self esteem is rock bottom. Some of them are quite traumatized, particularly these young women are, you know. And I think they’re quite happy to just sit there to just listen. It takes weeks to get them to read a sentence. Even if you give them a sentence you know they can read. They wont say it out loud. They’ll write it but they wont say the words.

B1.13: Learner needs: learner context

R; Do the learners come with an expectation of how they’re going to learn?

B: I expect they come with an expectation that they’d learn the way they’ve always learnt, but there again, lots of the Kurdish lads, lots of the people from places like Latvia, they’ve never been to school. They’ve never had any education at all so they’re illiterate in their own language....And - whats she called ? - [name] the [nationality] girl . She’s, you know [describes learner], she’s never had any education at all, ever. And she cant, because she just came with a bit of paper with her name on, that somebody had written for her. She could’nt write her own name in [....].

[Describes that this also has advantages because learners don’t have to ‘Unlearn anything’.]

R: Blank slate?

B; Yeah.

B1.14: Teaching strategy: inclusion

R: How do you deal with the variation of levels of education?

E: What I try to do is, say L---. Just give her work to do, on her own, but in the class so she doesn’t feel left out. [Talks about some specific techniques involving flash cards].

B1.15: Reflection in action; reflection on action

R; Talks about own experience of how difficult it is to assess what to do. Talks about how it takes time to develop the ‘knack’ of spotting when learners are struggling.

E; You just get that as you go along. I’ve had people sit through a solid hour and you ask if they’re ok, and they don’t even know you’ve said “Hello”. [Talks about use of three different

classes to 'stream' people]. We're managing it so much better, but its taken three years. [Talks about how you have to accommodate everyone]. You cant stop people learning. You cant say 'Piss off, you cant come, we don't have enough room'. They've had enough people saying that.

B1.16: Provider: social policy

R: Is the organization involved in management of the classes?

B: Oh no, the organization didn't know it was happening. It's evolved really.

R: Is the funding related to outcomes?

B: No. They [provider]just need to see nationalities going on a data base.

R: So it is a constant process of negotiation with the provider?

B: Yes.

R: Why do you think provider is involved?

B: I think it's a case of 'this is what we should be doing'. Its just PR really.

R: Any influences in the classroom from the organization?

B: No none at all. Each teacher is free to teach what they like?

B1.17: Theoretical approach

R: Can you describe your teaching strategy? Do you have a specific theoretical approach?

B; No. I just teach them what I think they need to learn. The beginning is to teach them what they need to get by so they can go to Sainsbury's they can get a bus ticket they can get a train ticket. Mine is just teach them really, just living skills basically. [Talks about her current class]. Basically its teaching living skills with teaching grammar tagged on. I think with our group you cant really apply anything in a mainstream theory because they don't fit in to .....

R: ...the categories?

B: Yes.

B1.18: Theoretical approach: reflection in action; reflection on action; context

B: Because my background is nursing and social work and ..I'm quite happy for things to be random because I don't have a very orderly – if I have a lesson plan, I cant stick to it. I cant work in that way.

R: So you react to what happens in the classroom?

B: Yes, yes I do. And you tend to just respond to situations as they arise because you cant plan for them anyway. [Talks about an incident where a learner had turned up for lessons having been the victim of a robbery]. So the lesson really was based around how to keep yourself safe, how to go down to the police station, what you report, what you don't. You could have sat up all night preparing the lesson, and it you know, its just not relevant.

B1.19: Teaching strategy: context

R: How do you plan lessons?

B: I plan the lesson on Sunday, photocopy it on Monday and by Tuesday morning you're probably scrabbling for some thing in the cupboard because the people – you might ends up with ten people, there might be three of them just with their names on bits of paper, there might be one like [.....] who could do a Masters. And it doesn't matter that you don't have a lesson plan, you don't need it. They're just not bothered.

B1.20: Teaching strategy: reflection in action:reflection on action: theoretical approach

R: Have you ever been just floored?

B: Oh weekly, weekly. You just think bloody hell what now [Laughs]. [Talks about incident where two learners turned up drunk at 10.00 am and were kissing etc, but she was uncertain of the gender of both] There isn't a text book is there, that tells you how to deal with that.

B1.21: Theoretical approach

R: Do you have a general philosophical approach to teaching?

B; I don't have any 'cause' and I would'nt try and influence anyone.

Teacher C

C1.1: Background:

White British woman. 2 yrs ESOL experience. Learning Kurdish.

C1.2: Reflection

R; Does your own language learning inform your teaching?

C: it does a lot. I've noticed the teaching I did before learning a language is different to the teaching I do now because my experience of what I'm learning and how I'm learning, I'm able to give them tips and advice on help, so I'm giving them a lot more practical advice on the teaching and trying to, you know, match it to their needs better.

C1.3: Learners heterogeneity

C: You don't have the same learners week on week. I never know who's coming, whether they're going to turn up.

C1.4: Social cohesion: Learner heterogeneity

R: In what sense do the class consider themselves individuals or as part of a group?

C: I don't think that they have that kind of feeling of group cohesion, not really. I think it tends to be....even in the way that they sit, you tend to get anybody that's European, they tend to sit together on one side and anybody who' of any Middle Eastern, erm ethnicity, they tend to sit on the other side, so there's quite a divide there.

But its different because a different class in the same organization when I was with erm, B's class, they do work as a team and there is more mixture, so I think it might be different if it's a big class than a smaller class.

C1.5: Teaching strategy

C: I do two to three different lesson plans every week: one in case I get my originals from the week before, then I'm doing another that is a very beginner, then another that's slightly more advanced.

C1.6: Teaching strategy: Autonomy

C: I don't think they practice enough at home, I think they do their lesson here and that's it.

R: Can you talk about assessment and your teaching strategy: Do you have any strategies for either?

C: I don't do this formally. I've given them a list of things to learn at home, the next week I'll go through it. I start off by just doing it as a class and then if I feel they're confident, I'll pinpoint them and just ask. Because I'm only dealing with a class of five, I know who does what, erm, and so if I know for instance with their colours. If one of them didn't know their colours and they still don't know them, then it could be their memory, it could be that they're having trouble or it could be that that just haven't practiced.

And the strategies are I do ask them to learn things at home, but I find that they don't do it, so I have dropped back a bit on that. I have asked them for instance – this is things I do with the Kurdish [her own language learning] – write names on a bit of paper and then just cut them out and stick them on the objects that you're trying to learn the names and that's so effective. Erm, colours? Just draw the colour, stick it on your bedroom wall, somewhere that you're going to go, upstairs whatever. I ask them to do that cos it does make an impact.

C1.7: Theoretical approach: context

[Conversation about her class not liking 'interactive' methods]. I've done a TEFAL course where we did lots of interactive things. We were taught obviously to teach it and then to try to get them to, you know repeat that and then to try to get them to produce something of their own and I've tried to implement that technique, but it just doesn't work, they want traditional teaching methods: Teacher at the front, they sit round the desk and just get on with it.

C1.8: Learner needs: context; heterogeneity of learners

C: Erm, for learners who have to learn a new alphabet i.e. coming from the Arabic Middle east and having to learn a whole new alphabet that kind of approach, definitely the reading and writing is a big struggle for them. I find learners from the Middle East section of the world, if you put it from there, including of course Iran, Kurdish, Arabic, all of that and even going to Pakistan as well, they tend not to have problems with pronunciation at all, its very east for them to pronounce the words, probably because they don't have anything different in their own language. Europeans pick up the reading and writing fantastically, but they struggle with the speaking a bit more, not the pronunciation, just the grammar of English and I'd say the Chinese have great reading and writing, great erm, sentence structure grammar, but I'd say the pronunciation is a huge difficulty for them.

R: What I'm picking up is a complex situation, even in a group of five people?

C: Yeah.

C1.9: Teaching strategy: theoretical approach

C: I do have an ESOL template for teaching, when you're learning a language you should follow 'that' structure, so I do try to go on that path of development, so its building slowly. So I would start with that then I would look for beginner level things form websites, then intermediate, and the intermediate I might just 'dumb it down slightly' or build up the beginner a bit more.

C1.10: Teaching strategy: theoretical approach; context

R: Is your own teaching guided by any theoretical approach to teaching or philosophical approach, more generally? You can break it down into two separate, if you want.

C: For language, obviously I use whatever, sort of resources are available really. Sometimes I can re-use erm, maybe a resource from [another provider locally] and vice versa. I find a lot of the stuff on the internet isn't that great really, so I tend to adapt it. It's very Americanised as well, which is not always appropriate for the English. So I use it, I guess its just a case of taking it as a template and building on it, but again, where I know for example, with my, erm language learning that's where that has helped a lot because I know, you know, I started off by learning lots of nouns, and just general names and things. You know [gives list of types of nouns] just the general basic stuff, and then you start to look at your pronouns, you just move up a step at a time. That's helped my teaching a lot. I can see where they're at just by asking them certain questions.

R: So your theoretical approach, if I can paraphrase is based on your own experiences?

C: A lot. A lot. Yeah. It is.

C1.11: Theoretical approach: social cohesion: learner needs

C: And even philosophical, is a bit more complicated, but erm, I just sort of ...I don't go in for this, erm, you know 'they need to be cohesive and integrate into the community because I don't believe that they do anyway. [Gives example of personal experience]. They don't integrate. The women don't learn English and the men have enough to get by at work. They shop in Polish shops. They don't integrate. So I don't believe we teach English for that reason. I believe its because if you're living in a country you need essential English to get by. And that's what I tend to, you know, go by.

C1.12: Provider: institutional agenda

R: Given the agenda of [provider], which is a community cohesion agenda, do you feel the organisation intervenes in any way in the class?

C: I don't think so, although I have been told that I need to attend an induction. And I don't know what's in that induction, and I am due to attend this week, so I will let you know if there is anything influential, but on the whole I do feel that we have quite a lot of freedom to teach, sort of as and what we want. I don't think they're [the provider] that bothered really, they don't seem to check that much.

C1.13: Social policy: women:context

R: In the city wide context, [talks about BME population growth], is your work related to the change? How do you relate your work to the “demographic” changes in Hull?

C: It is badly needed[classes]. Especially unfortunately with the women. The women are very under-represented, erm, and they just don’t tend to learn, erm, or as much, erm, or you know to be accessible or available for learning another language.

R: Across, you find this across, er, different cultures?

C: Erm, that’s a difficult one to say. I would say across all there’s and underrepresentation of women, definitely. It seems to be men that learn more English, but I’d say Chinese women seem to be very into studying, very into learning English, so not perhaps for them. But for European, erm, and especially Kurdish and Arabic, there are very few that tend to come out, to actively seek you know that chance, if you like.

I know EsOl comes under the skills for life, but most women that come into the UK, they don’t work. They just don’t work. I’m making a big generalization, I know, but based on my experience of people I know, they don’t work, it’s the men that work and they learn English practically anyway in the work place .

C1.14: Context: Teacher positioning

R: If you have any additional comments?

C: Something that is interesting is the fact that I’m Muslim, a lot of the ladies, erm and some of the other Muslim people, they do tend to see that as quite a bonus. And then we do also have a bank of shared experiences relating to Islam as well, and that does help me to sometimes communicate things because I have that shared interest. And of course a lot of the Islamic language is universal to all countries so that’s helped a bit as well.

Teacher D

D1.1: Background

Woman. ESOL teacher one year.

D1.2: Learner heterogeneity: Learner needs

R: Can you describe what you do?

D: Teach basic English to students of all different ages, and all different backgrounds with all different circumstances why they’re here.

D1.3: Teacher position: learner needs: context

R: Why did you enter ESOL teaching?

D: The more I got to know these people, you know, they’re trying their best to make their own way in life, maybe they’ve been persecuted in their own country – which a lot have – bombs going off, and circumstances where they’ve had to come over here. And they’re thinking, ‘Well, to fit into a community, how’re we going to do that if we cant get the

communities help?'. And just by simple sentences that you can make them understand and just get by by saying 'hello' and getting someone to say 'hello' back to them. It just helps them when they're going about doing their daily life.

R: Can you expand on what you think?

D: I just think everybody's the same. It doesn't matter where you come from – you can't help where you come from. Why shouldn't one person get along with another person just because they're from a different place? They can bring ideas to you like you can to them.

D1.4: Learner heterogeneity: women: context

R: Can you describe the groups that come to your class?

D: I think that I teach Eastern European, Somalian, Kurdish, Iranian....

R: In one class??

D: Yeah. And they're all different levels, it's a case of getting to know that person.

D1.5: Learner needs: context: teaching strategy: women

R: Why, in your opinion do learners come to class?

D: I think there's many reasons, but one being that even if they can't write it, or read it, if they can speak it, at least they can communicate with people. ....[Discusses some cultural differences]. To me it's communication, and then, we'll address the written skills after.

.....[Gap in conversation]

Especially the women, I'd say, more than anything else, because they're at home all day. And when they come out, maybe it's just an hour, or two hours when they're on their own, they don't have to be with their children. Their husbands aren't telling them what to do, and it's their little bit of independence.

D1.6: Women:

K: Some of the men, as well, but mainly the women, there's no schooling whatsoever. And the first time they've been to anything like a school is when they come here .

D1.7: Teaching strategy

D: We start just by basic ones, numbers, letters, days of the week, and build – a dog, a cat – and then just building up from there into a sentence. And then say 'You always finish a sentence with a full stop. You start it with a capital letter'. So that's bringing a little bit of grammar in. Then we'll do an audio, where they have to listen to something, and pick words out or sentences, and see who's speaking to somebody else and try and form sentences. And role play [describes other activities – scrabble, bingo, role play].

R: So in class, there's a mixture of teaching strategies?

D: There's a mixture of everything.

D1.8: Teaching strategy; curriculum; inclusion

D: We don't follow no curriculum, its just hands on – What do you think's going to work for this week? What do you think we could try to get them all taking part?

D1.9: Theoretical approach; teaching strategy; context

R: Do you follow any particular theory for your teaching?

D: Its mainly hands on. I haven't got a clue what I'm doing on Tuesday until Monday night – 'Oh that'll do' . Or even sometime Tuesday morning, you'll think 'Oh we'll do that this week'.

D: So you don't have a sort of ideological approach? You'll adapt to each group?

D: No. Really hands on. Because you don't know if you're going to get that same person back .

D1.10: Autonomy

D: A lot of it is when they first come, and they don't understand English, and I say' Just walk around and listen. Just sit there on the bus. Just drive round the city and listen to people talk, and then pick it up that way.

D1.11: Confidence: learner needs; women

R: Do you think the people that come to class think of themselves as a group or as individuals?

D: I think they like to be part of a group . I think they struggle as well sometimes, thinking that they're going to be isolated, but actually taking that step through the door, and actually coming and seeing what its like. A lot of people are scared just to come in. Cos I say to them, you know ' Just come in, try it and see how you like it, and if you don't , don't come back, and if you do, come again'. Especially with the women.

D1.12: Provider; Institutional agenda

R: How is the organization involved in your class?

D: There's not a lot of input at all. It's a case of you go there, you do it and they [the organization] say that you do it [teach classes]. But actually if one manager got in touch with the other one to try and refer say ESOL to basic skills, you could get a lot more done. And download a lot more funding. There's just so many opportunities that they seem to miss out on. Just cos they don't communicate together. That's what I find.

R: They don't communicate at their level? Do they give you feedback , or do they say you should teach this, or you should be doing that?

D: No. They don't tell you what to teach, it's a case of you decide what you want to teach and get on with it.

D1.13: Social policy: learner needs: context

R: The BME population has grown, as you know, in Hull. How do you think our service fit in, or relates to the city?

D: It's a meeting place. There isn't I would say a lot available in Hull. Very behind on it compared to other cities. We need bring up quite a lot more, because there's just so much racism here. And there's no need to be. Well I don't think so, everybody should just get on with what they're doing and should should'n care what anyone else does.

D1.14: Curriculum; social policy; teaching strategy

R: Do you refer to the national curriculum?

D: No, because there's no funding here or no certificate – if there's something I want to use, I'll use it but other wise, I'll just look and teach how I want to really.

Teacher E.

E1.1: Background

White British male. 1 year ESOL teacher.

Note; Interview was conducted in a busy café. Some indistinct parts.

E1.2: Teaching strategy:

E: Normally do a little bit of research the day before. And then get it off the internet. That is of course if I wasn't [indistinct] anything that E had given me. Which I've just finished. I've just finished 'The Community' which [indistinct] split into , I think ten modules, which was 'Shopping', 'Travel', 'Health' and that went on for about six months.

E1.3: Learners context; women

R: Can you give a brief description of a typical class?

E: I can have six, I can have five, but normally, they all know each other. Usually, they're Polish and Latvian.

R: Male or female?

E: Mainly female, I would say. The males don't seem to stay. Ah, the males seem to come with their partner, stay a bit and then go again. Just to keep them happy.

R: So you think that's to settle them in, settle their partner in?

E: Yeah

R: Any idea what the males are doing?

E: Working

R: Working?

E: A lot of them are

R: When you see these guys come in, how are their language skills

E: Good, I would say quite good. If I had to I would say better than females.

R: Age groups?

E: I would say twenty to fifty?

E1.4: Teaching strategy; curriculum: reflection

R: How are you finding it getting resources?

E: Well, as luck would have it, I've got a friend who works in ESOL, as well as working in ESOL [indistinct]. I've got a friend who works in London doing ESOL as a full time job.....

R: Yeah?

E : .....and he's given me the whole website – thousands out there[indistinct]. We don't follow curriculum, do we?

E1.5: Teaching strategy: context: learner needs

R: As you say, we don't follow curriculum. How do you filter it, good/bad, what do you do?

E: I look at it first, and I think 'Would my learners be able to do this?'

R: Right, yeah?

E: And I think if they would, I give I a go.

R: So its related to your experience of your learners in class?

D; Absolutely.

E1.6: Teaching strategy: curriculum; context

R: What about the national curriculum?

E: I also think between us, the resources we use are actually better.

R: Why, because they're shared?

E: I looked at the ones from Hull college, because I do have some learners who are going to Hull College. They brought them in, and I thought 'That is rather difficult'. It was ESOL entry level, and I thought 'That is worded too difficult' . If it was worded in a different way, they would understand that.

E1.7: Teaching strategy: communication

E: [Talking about the details of the ten module unit he has been doing. Then E introduces the subject of accents]. Its one of my styles of teaching, I always make them introduce themselves and where they've come from.

R: Ok, yeah.

E: I say 'Where do you live now'. And the majority will go 'Ull'. [Laughs]. I say 'Hold on. Its got an haitch in it'.

[Laughter].

E1.8: Teaching strategy; autonomy; social cohesion

R: Do you speak to them at all about activities to do outside the classroom?

E: Yeah. I try and integrate them into the community. I say 'What is your hobbies?'...and....I've come to know Hull quite well now – I've been out of Hull for God knows how long, just come back, but I know it quite well. So I know what's going on....and.....so I can signpost [indistinct]...swimming, do you know \_\_\_\_\_ Baths, swimming building, they don't know where the swimming pool is, but if we're doing a reading class and it comes up, I'll research it and let them know.

E1.9: Theoretical approach: communication; autonomy

R: Why do you do it ?[teaching].

E: Because I get satisfaction. ....I absolutely love it.

R: Do you approach it from any sort of theoretical perspective on teaching?

E: Conversation and chat is the way I go.

R: Right yeah?

D: Sometimes we go off on a tangent when we're talking and we'll talk between ourselves.....and while we're not concentrating on what we should be, we're getting more out of conversation and talking between ourselves.

E1.10: Teaching strategy: theoretical approach

R: How do you deal with the complexity of having different levels of learners in class? Do you plan, do you think on your feet?

E: No, I don't. I get one of my experienced learners to mentor them. I get an experienced learner to sit with them and help them .

R: Do you need some sort of framework?

E: I need something to work to.....

R: Like a platform to go off?

E: .....For my own benefit, as well as theirs. I need to have that prompt....then I can go off on tangents.

E1.11: Provider

R: Do you get any suggestions of the organization at all what to teach, or how to teach?

E: Off the organization?

R: This organization?

E: [Laughs]

R: [Laughs] Yes or no's fine

E: You're joking....no. Nothing. ....[Talks about a named individual manager].....There seems to be no interest.